

Information on Belfast

Belfast Welcome Centre

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Opening Hours: (1st June to 30th September)

Monday to Saturday: 9.00am to 7.00pm

and Sunday 12noon – 5.00pm

Di, 13.06.2006:

- Ø Bus - No 200
- Ø Dublin Busareas ab 7:00 h
Belfast (Centre) City Hall an 9:36 h
- Ø Belfast (Europa Buscentre) ab 17:00 h
Dublin Busareas an 19:40
- Ø Kosten EUR 17.-

Black Taxi Tour of Belfast's City Centre

> Die Taxitour beginnt um 11:00 Uhr bei der City Hall

Kosten: GBP 8.-

- Political Districts
- Wall Murals
- Cemetary and Graveyard
- Titanic Shipyards
- City Hall
- Traditional Pubs and Bars
- St Annes Cathedral
- Cave Hill
- Queens University
- Belfast Peace Wall

POINTS OF INTEREST

The City Hall (dating from 1906) The home of Belfast City Council. A magnificent Edwardian "wedding cake", built to reflect Belfast's City status, granted by Queen Victoria in 1888. The Dome is 53 metres (173 feet) high. Figures above the door are "Hibernia encouraging and promoting the Commerce and Arts of the City". Go inside to find out about guided tours and to pick up a leaflet about the statues in the gardens.

Among the grandest buildings are two former banks: Ulster Bank (1860), in Waring Street and Northern Bank (1769), in nearby Donegall Street. Also notable is the Linenhall Library (1788), in Donegall Square North. Architect Charles Lanyon is responsible for many of the city's Victorian buildings.

The world's largest dry dock is located in the city, and the giant cranes (Samson and Goliath) of the Harland and Wolff shipyard, builders of the Titanic, can be seen from afar. Other long-gone industries included Irish linen and rope-making.

Sections of the city contain numerous sectarian murals, reflecting the political and religious allegiances of the communities living there. Areas such as the Shankill Road contain murals which are almost entirely Protestant, depicting republican violence, loyalty to the British Crown, the Ulster Volunteer Force and Ulster Defence Association. Conversely, murals in areas such as the Falls Road, which is almost entirely Roman Catholic, feature political themes such as a united Ireland, and the Provisional IRA, as well as traditional folklore and the Irish language. The Irish folk hero Cú Chulainn has appeared on both republican and loyalist murals, representing the heroic Celtic past for the

former and legendary battles between Ulster and the other provinces for the latter. In recent years some paramilitary murals have been replaced, in both loyalist and republican areas, with less controversial images. These include memorials to the late Belfast footballer George Best.

The ornately decorated Crown Liquor Saloon in Great Victoria Street is notable as being the only bar owned by the National Trust. Drinkers of the city know well its opulent marble, brilliant Italian tilework, fine glass engraving, embossed ceiling, and cosy booths bedecked with gryphons and lions. Panels in the restaurant on the first floor were meant for Britannic, Titanic's sister ship.

The Royal Courts of Justice in Chichester Street is home to Northern Ireland's Supreme Court.

The Belfast Botanic Gardens has many features, including a unique palm house.

Belfast also contains the tallest building (as distinct from structure) on the island of Ireland. Windsor House stands at 80 metres (262 feet) and has 23 floors.

The Albert Clock stands at the end of High Street, and was built in memory of Queen Victoria's Prince Consort, Prince Albert. Leaning 1.25 metres (4 feet) off the vertical, the Clock's unsteadiness is due to the fact that it was built on land reclaimed from the river. The tower is 35 metres (113 feet) high and centres around Prince Albert, Victoria's consort. Crowned lions holding shields and floral decoration surround the clock itself.

Belfast Zoo is located in the north of the City, on the slopes of Cavehill.

Grand Opera House

Matcham was the leading theatre architect of his time. Notice the twin domes, Moorish lantern and ornamental pediment. Restored in 1980 following bomb damage and years of dereliction, and bombed twice since. Now restored to glory, and the centrepiece of Belfast's 'Golden Mile'.

St Anne's Cathedral has impressive stained glass windows, and figures of Courage, Agriculture, and Justice. Look out for the four Archangels around the nave, Michael, Gabriel, Uriel and Raphael. The tops of the pillars depict Courage, Science, Commerce, Healing, Agriculture, Music, Justice, Masonry, Arts, Women's Work, and Wisdom. Baptismal area contains an amazing mosaic of The Creation. Made of over 150,000 pieces of glass, it shows the four elements, Fire, Earth, Air and Water.

Town Hall

When Belfast achieved city status in 1888, the Town Hall was not considered imposing enough and the City Hall was built instead. The Town Hall is currently used as Belfast County Court, but before that was occupied by offices of the Ulster Unionist Party.

Ulster Museum

Rich displays of archaeology, ethnography, art, history and natural sciences.

Don't miss Treasures of the Armada, featuring intriguing and spectacular items recovered from the Spanish galleass Girona.

The spacious art galleries on the top floor provide a splendid showcase for changing exhibitions from the fine and applied art collections, as well as exhibitions on loan.

The Troubles

The Troubles were 30 years of sporadic violence between elements of Northern Ireland's Unionist community, which is primarily Protestant, and Nationalist community, which is chiefly Roman Catholic. The conflict was caused by the disputed status of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom and the domination of the nationalist community by the unionist majority. The violence was characterised by the armed campaigns of paramilitary groups. Most notable of these was the Provisional IRA campaign 1969–1997 which was aimed at the end of British rule in Northern Ireland and the creation of a new all-Ireland Irish Republic. In response to this campaign and the perceived erosion of the British character and unionist domination of Northern Ireland, loyalist paramilitaries such as the UVF and UDA launched their own campaigns against the nationalist population. The state security forces - the British Army and the police (the Royal Ulster Constabulary) - were also involved in the violence. The British government point of view is that its forces were neutral in the conflict and trying to uphold law and order in the North. Irish republicans, however, regarded the state forces as "combatants" in the conflict and point to evidence of collusion between the state forces and the loyalists as proof of this.

Alongside the violence, there was a political deadlock between the major political parties in Northern Ireland, including those who condemned violence, over the future status of Northern Ireland and the form of government there should be within Northern Ireland.

The Troubles were brought to an uneasy end by a peace process which included the declaration of ceasefires by most paramilitary organisations, the corresponding withdrawal of most troops from the streets and the reform of the police, as agreed by the signatories to the Belfast Agreement (commonly known as the Good Friday

Agreement). This reiterated the long-held position that Northern Ireland will remain within the United Kingdom until a majority votes otherwise. It also established a devolved power-sharing government within Northern Ireland (currently suspended), where the government must consist of both unionist and nationalist parties.

Though the number of active participants in the Troubles was relatively small, and the paramilitary organisations that claimed to represent the communities were sometimes unrepresentative of the general population, the Troubles touched the lives of most people in Northern Ireland on a daily basis, while occasionally spreading to Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland. In addition at several times between 1969 and 1998, for example in 1972, after the Bloody Sunday, or during the Hunger Strikes of 1981, when there was mass, hostile mobilisation of the two communities and it seemed possible that the Troubles would escalate into a genuine civil war. Many people today have had their political, social and communal attitudes and perspectives shaped by the Troubles.

www.wikipedia.org, www.gotobelfast.com www.belfasttours.com