



# Belfast

POPULATION 277,000 / AREA 115 SQ KM

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## Best Places to Eat

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## Best Places to Stay

- » Old Rectory (p590)
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## Why Go?

Once lumped with Beirut, Baghdad and Bosnia as one of the four 'Bs' for travellers to avoid, Belfast has pulled off a remarkable transformation from bombs-and-bullets pariah to a hip hotels-and-hedonism party town. The city's skyline is in a constant state of flux as redevelopment continues apace. The old shipyards are giving way to the luxury waterfront apartments of the Titanic Quarter. Victoria Sq, Europe's biggest urban regeneration project, has added a massive city-centre shopping mall to a list of city tourist attractions that includes Victorian architecture, a glittering waterfront lined with modern art, foot-stomping music in packed-out pubs and the UK's second-biggest arts festival.

It might seem strange to celebrate a ship that is famous for sinking on its maiden voyage, but it's somehow fitting that Belfast should mark the centenary of the *Titanic's* creation in 2012, as it builds new pride and optimism out of the wreckage of past disaster.

## When to Go

April can be a great time to visit Belfast, when spring flowers in the parks and the annual Titanic – Made in Belfast festival is held. August brings good weather for walking and cycling, along with celebrations of Irish music and dance in West Belfast. October can start to get chilly, but the Festival at Queen's, the UK's second largest arts festival (after Edinburgh), warms things up.



## Belfast Highlights

- 1** Discover prehistoric treasures, an ancient Egyptian mummy and sunken Armada gold at the revamped **Ulster Museum** (p579)
- 2** Sup on a Guinness or three in some of Belfast's beautiful **Victorian pubs**
- 3** Ruminating on the powerful **political murals** in West Belfast (p584)
- 4** Hire a bike and take a spin along the **Lagan Towpath** (p577) to the former linen town of Lisburn
- 5** Learn about the shipyards that gave birth to the *Titanic* in Belfast's **Titanic Quarter** (p578)
- 6** Enjoy a panoramic view over the city from the top of **Cave Hill** (p585)
- 7** Check out the iconic DeLorean DMC at the **Ulster Transport Museum** (p581)