

## The Rebirth of Belfast



ONCE considered one of the four “B’s”, alongside Bosnia, Beirut and Baghdad, as a place to avoid, Belfast has transformed itself beyond recognition. Today Belfast is a prosperous, thriving and successful city. The economy of the city is once again blossoming; new industries are being created and it proudly boasts one of the largest, brightest and most-educated workforces in the world. Investment into regeneration projects in recent years has seen the city of Belfast really come to life. The administrative capital and largest city of Northern Ireland is now one of the most visited cities in the U.K. and second most visited city on the isle of Ireland. Tourism in the city has seen a huge boost in recent years with attractions such as the Titanic Quarter, Ulster Museum, Belfast City Hall and the Victoria Square shopping centre enticing tourists in their droves. For anyone visiting the city, Titanic Belfast is a “must-see”. The rebirth of Belfast Located in the Titanic Quarter, alongside the historic site of the iconic ship’s construction, Titanic Belfast is the world’s largest Titanic visitor centre. Visitors journey through an interactive exhibition of nine galleries in the exemplary six-floor building and can relive the full story of this world renowned ship; from her conception in Belfast, through her construction, launch, voyage and ultimate fateful end. Tickets are reasonably priced ranging from £7.25 per child and £15.50 per adult. Children under five go free and there are also special discounts available for students, senior citizens and families. As well as housing Titanic Belfast, the Titanic Quarter also boasts one of the sets of Game of Thrones, where production for seasons one, two and three were filmed. So if you are a Game of Thrones fan and happen to be holidaying in Belfast you are in luck. This summer the Game of Thrones exhibition will take place at the Belfast Waterfront from 11th-15th June. The exhibit, which is free of charge, is designed specifically for fans of the acclaimed TV series, and aims to bring the captivating and magical world of the show to its viewers. This is the second year the exhibit will run in Belfast and, if reviews of last summer are anything to go by, fans are in for an unforgettable experience. As well as enjoying the sightseeing and cultural attractions Belfast has to offer, if you’re looking to fit in some retail therapy, look no further than the Victoria Square shopping centre. Located in the heart of the city centre, this state-of-the-art shopping complex is home to over 70 stores including Hollister, House of Fraser, River Island and Tommy Hilfiger to name but a few. Opened in March 2008, this is a partly enclosed, partly open air shopping centre, offering customers a vast array of eateries such as an oyster bar, Spanish Tapas bar, McDonalds and O’Briens as well as many coffee shops, cafes and grill bars. If it’s not shopping you crave Victoria Square also has an impressive Odeon cinema, with eight screens, located on the second floor of the shopping centre. If none of these eateries tickle your fancy then the Golden Mile will sort you out. Starting at Great Victoria Street, it offers a vast array of restaurants, bars, pubs and nightclubs to suit everyone. For those interested in the history of Belfast and Northern Ireland, the Ulster Museum is the perfect place for you. Like the Titanic experience, this is an interactive museum, designed to showcase the history, art and natural sciences of the North. Entry is free so if you can visit it is definitely worth it. Another historical attraction worth seeing is Queen’s University. Located in the city, Queen’s University Belfast, was founded by Queen Victoria in 1845 and is the ninth oldest university in the U.K. The Welcome Centre, based at the university, is an ideal spot for tourists as it offers a regular programme of exhibitions and serves as an important information stand for visitors unfamiliar with the area. If you are holidaying in Belfast for a little bit longer and want to escape the hustle and bustle of the city for a day then a trip to the Giant’s Causeway is the solution. Although it is situated in quite a remote area on the Antrim coastline, it draws in almost three quarters of a million visitors every year to admire its breathtaking landscape. Belfast has something to offer everyone and, if you are thinking of making your summer holiday a little more local, then a trip to the North is the perfect answer. Today Belfast, and Northern Ireland as a whole, is a far cry from the troubled and conflict-ridden area it once was. Today the people of Belfast are discovering pride in their country. They have found a new cultural vitality and optimism and are eager to share it with the rest of the world. Today they are confidently looking forward to building a future together.