

# EVENTS IN BELFAST



Left: Belfast is a city of festivals and celebrations. Amazing firework displays often light up the night sky.

Below: Belfast folk know how to have a good time. The city has been described as "Europe's friendliest regional capital".

Bottom: Tourists and locals alike crowd onto the streets at festival-time.



November/December  
**Cinemagic** — World Screen Festival for young people. [www.cinemagic.org.uk](http://www.cinemagic.org.uk)  
**Christmas Craft Fair** for unusual Christmas gifts at the King's Hall. [www.kingshall.co.uk](http://www.kingshall.co.uk)

**March**  
**Belfast Film Festival** at various venues across the city. [www.belfastfilmfestival.org](http://www.belfastfilmfestival.org)

**St Patrick's Day Festival** with street carnival and 'live music'. [www.belfastcity.gov.uk/events](http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/events)

**April**  
**Titanic Made in Belfast** — exhibition celebrating Belfast as the largest shipbuilding port in the world. [www.belfastcity.gov.uk/events](http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/events)

**May**  
**The Cathedral Arts Quarter Festival**, featuring music, literature, comedy and visual arts. [www.cqaf.com](http://www.cqaf.com)  
**Balmoral Show**, town meets country in Ireland's major agricultural/food event. [www.balmoralshow.co.uk](http://www.balmoralshow.co.uk)  
**Lord Mayor's Show**, colourful Lord Mayor's show takes place in the city centre with something for everyone. [www.belfastcity.gov.uk/events](http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/events)

**May/June**  
**Belfast City Summer Festival**, culminating in the Belfast Carnival Parade at the end of June.

**June**  
**Shankill Community Festival** featuring a wide variety of community-based events.

**July**  
**International Rose Week**, a great floral spectacle at Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park. [www.parks.belfastcity.gov.uk](http://www.parks.belfastcity.gov.uk)

**August**  
**Feile an Phobail**, West Belfast — Europe's largest community arts festival. [www.feilebelfast.com](http://www.feilebelfast.com)  
**Gay Pride**, a celebration of Belfast's gay community.  
**Belfast City Speed Festival**, celebrating Northern Ireland's contribution to the world of motorsport.

**October**  
**Hallowe'en**, carnival parade and firework display.

**October/November**  
**Belfast Festival at Queen's** — Ireland's largest arts festival, at a range of city venues. [www.belfastfestival.com](http://www.belfastfestival.com)

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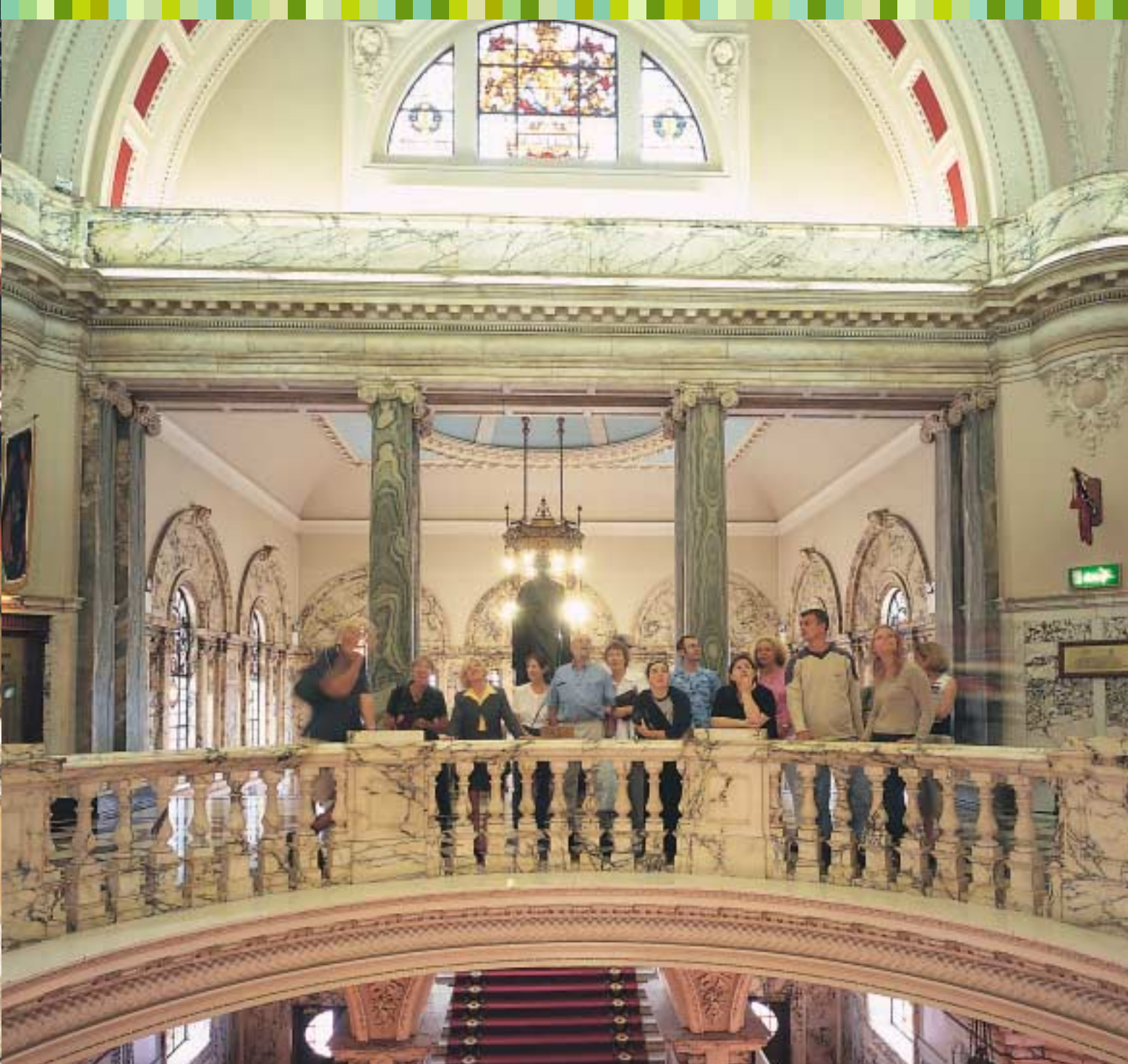
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Front cover: *Inside City Hall* — a fine monument to Belfast's civic pride.

Back cover: *'Masquerade'*, one of many theatrical productions enjoyed in Belfast.

All photographs are courtesy of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board.



Belfast stretches out along the banks of the River Lagan. Covering 115 square kilometres, it is much larger than any of Northern Ireland's four other cities.

The Ulster Folk and Transport Museum contains one of the world's best collections of vernacular architecture and historic transport, from cornmills and sawmills to railways, trams, buses and bicycles. There is also an exhibition about the ill-fated liner, Titanic.

Visitors and office workers relax outside City Hall in the heart of Belfast. The lawns surrounding this famous building are lined with monuments.

The sumptuous interior of the Grand Opera House has been fully restored to its former glory. Its audiences enjoy world-class performances of opera, drama, musicals, ballet and comedy.

BELFAST, CAPITAL OF NORTHERN IRELAND is a vibrant, prospering city, home to 282,000 people. Surrounded by green hills and craggy peaks, Belfast is located where the River Lagan flows into Belfast Lough, a sheltered inlet of the Irish Sea. A thousand years ago it was known in ancient Irish as Béal Feinste, 'the sandy ford across the mouth of the river'.

Once a quiet fishing village, Belfast blossomed into a thriving city during the Industrial Revolution of the 18th century. Its linen manufacturing, engineering and shipbuilding industries prospered and the population increased dramatically. Queen Victoria granted Belfast full city status in 1888. By the time the great liner, Titanic was launched by Harland & Wolff in 1912, Belfast had the world's biggest weaving mills and tobacco factories, the most extensive ropeworks ever built, and the world's greatest shipyard.

Although traditional industries declined following the Second World War and civil unrest and terrorist activity added to Belfast's social and economic problems, since the 1990s Belfast has enjoyed a remarkable renaissance.

BELFAST BOASTS SOME MAGNIFICENT ARCHITECTURE both Victorian (1837–1901) and Edwardian (1901–1910). The City Hall (1906) is regarded as one of the finest Classical Renaissance buildings in Europe. It dominates the buzzing downtown area and is the focal point of civic entertainment, rallies and celebrations.

The Grand Opera House nearby is Northern Ireland's premier theatre. Its extravagantly opulent gold and crimson interior is almost upstaged by the ornate Crown Liquor Saloon across the street. Gilded mirrors, glazed tiles, and the world's only gas-lit webcam make it Belfast's favourite pub!



The huge £91 million Odyssey complex, seen here under construction. It contains the largest indoor arena in Northern Ireland where a wide range of events are staged, including indoor athletics, boxing championships and rock concerts.



St Anne's Cathedral was partly completed and opened in the 1890s, but only finished almost a century later. Inside are some wonderful mosaics, including one with over 150,000 pieces.



The Albert Memorial Clock, one of the city's best-known landmarks, was designed by J W Barre. Its famous 'leaning tower' has been left unaltered by recent refurbishment.



The modern Castle Court shopping centre in Royal Avenue.

On the river, the £750 million Lagan side redevelopment project is one of the most ambitious in the UK with hotels, offices, riverside apartments, new bridges and the Waterfront Hall, a concert and conference venue. Lagan side's dominant attraction is the Odyssey complex, home to the W5 interactive discovery centre, a 10,000-seat arena, cinema, restaurants and bars.

In a city which seems to have a church on every corner, St Anne's Cathedral in the heart of the trendy Cathedral Quarter is the biggest. St Malachy's Church can only be described as a 'castle', with its pink turrets and ceiling like an upside down wedding cake. Belfast Castle, built in 1870, rises from the rugged splendour of Cave Hill Country Park, under a crag known as Napoleon's Nose.

INVENTIVE GENIUS and engineering excellence once earned Belfast the title 'City of the Tyre, Tractor and Titanic'. That spirit of enterprise and innovation endures and today's Belfast is better described as 'City of Technology, Trading and Tourism'.

Pneumatic tyres were developed by John Boyd Dunlop in his workshop in May Street in 1888 and the Dunlop name is still one of the world's 50 most recognisable brands. Incredibly, in a neighbouring workshop, Harry Ferguson devised the hydraulic tractor system which revolutionised world farming. And history's most famous ship, Titanic, which sank on her first voyage across the Atlantic in 1912, is remembered by the many visitors who follow the 'Titanic Trail' through the city.

New technology to develop electronics, computer software, medical equipment, textiles and aerospace components has been harnessed by Belfast's many modern businesses. Health services, distribution, public administration, business services, manufacturing, education, tourism and transport are the main areas of employment.



The Waterfront Hall, Belfast's foremost conference and concert venue, was recently world-wide runner-up in the Association of Conference Centres' Apex Awards. Conferences are one of Belfast's greatest tourist growth areas.



The original Tudor-style red and yellow brick building of Queen's University was designed by Sir Charles Lanyon. Belfast's great architect of the Victorian Age. Since it was founded in 1845, the university's estate has grown to more than 300 buildings.



Majestic Stormont stands at the top of a 1.6 km avenue bordered by parkland. It was designed to house the Northern Ireland Parliament.

The city's many corporate overseas investors benefit from competitive costs, good communications and well-educated staff, while tourism contributes more than £114 million annually to Belfast's economy.

OVER 3,000 UNIVERSITY GRADUATES enter the labour market every year. Queen's University Belfast, founded in 1845, and the newer University of Ulster are both top-class international institutions. Queen's, with 18,500 students, is one of the Top 20 UK universities out of 170 independently assessed on teaching and research.

The city is proud of its many libraries. The Linen Hall Library, dating from 1788, is one of the oldest subscription libraries anywhere. The Belfast Central Library and Public Records Office NI are also reference sources of international standing. It is said together they contain more than 160 kms of shelving!

THE NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY was established following the historic Good Friday Agreement of 1998. Power was devolved to the people through 108 democratically elected members of the Assembly, based at Stormont, one of the city's most famous landmarks. The Assembly's Executive Committee, consisting of a First Minister and Deputy Minister and ten other Ministers, were appointed on a proportional basis. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland remained responsible for matters not devolved to the Assembly, including policing, security policy, prisons, criminal justice and international relations. The Assembly and Executive have been suspended since October 2002 and the Secretary of State has assumed responsibility for the direction and control of Northern Ireland departments.



Shopping streets like Royal Avenue have huge malls and arcades offering top international retail names. One of the UK's biggest department stores planned for the city centre will help to keep downtown Belfast buzzing with shoppers.

Belfast's citizens have been described by one columnist as "the most honest, cheerful, friendly and well-mannered people in the British Isles."

Carnival-time comes to Belfast, a place where young and old alike love to celebrate.



The Botanic Gardens, close to Queen's University, provide a tranquil and colourful haven in the midst of the city.



The Giant's Ring is a mysterious site estimated by some to be 4000 years old. From the embankment there are splendid views across the Lagan Valley towards the Belfast Hills.

Belfast City Council is the largest of Northern Ireland's 26 local government authorities. It provides a huge range of services, from leisure centres and parks to waste recycling. The Chief Executive is responsible to a Council of 51 members who are elected every four years and reflect the city's diversity of political and religious affiliations.

BELFAST IS A CITY OF NEIGHBOURHOODS, where most families live in houses with gardens rather than apartments. Many areas, such as Stranmillis, Cherryvalley, Knock, around Queen's University and the Lisburn Road, have a 'village' atmosphere.

While the population is almost equally divided between indigenous Protestants and Catholics, Belfast is also home to thousands of people of Asian origin, mainly Cantonese-speaking Chinese, Indians and Pakistanis. Jewish people have always been prominent in the commercial and cultural life of the city, and there are increasing numbers of Muslims and people of other faiths.

SURROUNDED BY COUNTRY parks teeming with wildlife, and nearly 50 neighbourhood parks, playing fields and playgrounds, Belfast is one of Europe's greenest cities. Indeed, it boasts all of Ireland's famous 40 shades of green.

Rose lovers delight in the summer Rose Week when Belfast International Rose Garden displays a half-million blooms of every shade and shape, confirming why Northern Ireland has been a world centre of rose expertise for generations. The colourful Botanic Gardens with its magnificent Palm House and Tropical Ravine brings the exotic to the city, while Cave Hill Country Park with its spectacular views and nesting falcons, is a favourite haunt of wildlife enthusiasts.



The city holds no fewer than 13 annual arts events and the Belfast Carnival Parade is one of the most popular events on the calendar.

Traditional Irish dancing is as popular as ever.



Belfast nightlife ranges from throbbing dance clubs to more intimate pubs where drinkers enjoy the soothing sounds of traditional Irish ballads.



Malone House, an elegant 19th century mansion in South Belfast, houses the Higgin Art Gallery.



Golf-players have no shortage of courses on which to practise their 'swing'. There are ten courses within the city boundary.

BELFAST PEOPLE love to celebrate, and so enjoy the many entertainment and sports festivals. Most famous of the 13 annual arts events is the Belfast Festival which has been a showcase of outstanding international talent for more than 40 years. Feile an Phobail in West Belfast claims to be Europe's largest community festival. The Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival is at the cutting edge of contemporary arts.

Musical tastes in the city are more varied than most, and country and western, rap, blues and jazz as well as classical attract large audiences. The Belfast-based Ulster Orchestra is thought of as one of the finest in the British Isles and enjoys an international reputation. It is often to be heard at the Ulster Hall and at prestigious events such as the Last Night of the Proms in London.

Of Belfast's numerous museums and galleries, the Ulster Museum is a treasure house of art and artefacts from every period and every part of the world. Here, works by the city's most famous painters, Sir John Lavery and William Conor are on display. The Lisburn Road has art galleries catering for every taste and there are museums specialising in everything from policing and local history to wastewater.

FROM ATHLETICS TO SOCCER, Belfast is famous for its sporting champions. Nowadays ice hockey at Odyssey Arena attracts almost as many spectators as soccer or Gaelic football. Windsor Park is home to the Northern Ireland international football team and where many Irish League club games are played. Gaelic games are played at Casement Park. As well as venues for rugby, hockey, squash, netball, basketball, tennis and bowls, there are no fewer than ten golf courses within the Belfast boundary!