

Northern Ireland Travel Guide

The best things to see and do



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Table of Contents

[1. Why should you visit Northern Ireland?](#)

[2.1 Disclaimer](#)

[2.2 Copyright](#)

[3. General Information about Ireland](#)

[3.1 How much time do you need to visit Northern Ireland?](#)

[3.2 What is the best time to visit Northern Ireland?](#)

[3.3 The highlights of the history of Northern Ireland](#)

[3.4 Driving a car in Northern Ireland](#)

[3.5 Public Transportation in Northern Ireland for rail and bus](#)

[3.6 Money and Credit Cards in Northern Ireland](#)

[3.7 Tap water in Northern Ireland](#)

[3.8 Telephone](#)

[3.9 In which Time Zone is Northern Ireland](#)

[3.10 Visa requirements for Northern Ireland](#)

[3.11 Languages spoken in Northern Ireland](#)

[4. Itinerary for your Ireland and Northern Ireland visit](#)

[5.13 Entering Northern Ireland and Self-Guided City and Murals](#)

[Tour of Derry – Day 13](#)

[5.13.A Where to stay in Derry](#)

[5.13.B Groarty House & Manor](#)

[5.13.3 Self-guided tour of Derry](#)

[5.13.4 Murals on Rossville Street - The People's Gallery](#)

[Battle of the Bogside](#)

[Bloody Sunday / Bogside Massacre](#)

[5.13.5 Free Derry Corner](#)

[5.13.6 Hunger Strike memorial](#)

[5.13.7 The People's Monument](#)

[5.13.8 Bloody Sunday Obelisk Memorial](#)

[5.13.9 Museum of Free Derry](#)

[5.13.10 The Derry Walls](#)

[5.13.11 Guildhall](#)

[5.13.12 Peace Bridge](#)

[5.13.13 Derry Girls Mural](#)

[5.13.14 St Columb's Cathedral](#)

[5.14 Exploring Giant's Causeway; Dunluce Castle; Bushmills Distillery; Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge; and Dark Hedges – Day 14](#)

[5.14.A Where to stay in Belfast](#)

[5.14.B Holiday Inn Belfast](#)

[5.14.1 Giant's Causeway](#)

[5.14.2 Dunluce Castle](#)

[5.14.3 Bushmills Distillery](#)

[5.14.4 Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge](#)

[5.14.5 Dark Hedges](#)

[5.15 Self-Guided City and Murals Tour of Belfast – Day 15](#)

[5.15.A Grand Opera House](#)

[5.15.B Belfast City Hall](#)

[5.15.C Spirit of Belfast on Arthur Square \(Corn Market\)](#)

[5.15.1 Street Art Walk – Bridge St and North St](#)

[5.15.2 Street Art Walk – Royal Ave, Kent St, Union St, Library St](#)

[5.15.D Belfast Central Library](#)

[5.15.E St Anne's Cathedral](#)

[5.15.F Merchant Hotel](#)

[5.15.G Albert Memorial Clock](#)

[5.15.H The Big Fish](#)

[5.15.I Nuala with the Hula / Beacon of Hope](#)

[5.15.J Victoria Square Shopping Centre](#)

[5.15.K Old Town Hall](#)

[5.15.L St George's Market](#)

[5.16 Self-Guided Belfast Tour – Day 16](#)

[5.16.1 Titanic Belfast](#)

[5.16.2 Crumlin Road Gaol](#)

[5.16.3 Bobby Sands Mural](#)

[5.16.4 Botanic Gardens](#)

[6. Closing Remarks](#)

1. Why you should visit Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland is known for its stunning natural landscapes, like Giant's Causeway.

Some of those scenic sites, like the Dark Hedges, have been used as filming locations in Game of Thrones.

Like its neighbor Ireland, Northern Ireland has a rich history, and is home to many castles.

But unlike its neighbor, Northern Ireland was nearly torn apart during 'The Troubles', which was a 30-year ethno-nationalist conflict from the late 1960s to 1998. This deadly conflict was fought between the overwhelmingly Protestant unionists (loyalists), who wanted the province to remain in the UK, and the overwhelmingly Roman Catholic nationalists (republicans), who wanted it to become part of Ireland.

In Derry, the epicenter of 'The Troubles', many artistic murals are a reminder of the conflict and its victims.



2.1 Disclaimer

In this guide we are doing our best to give you the most accurate information. Over time, however, prices, times, and even attractions are subject to change. Therefore, I and backpackandsnorkel.com cannot be held responsible for the experiences of users while traveling. I strongly suggest that you write or call the attractions you plan to visit for confirmation when you make your travel plans.

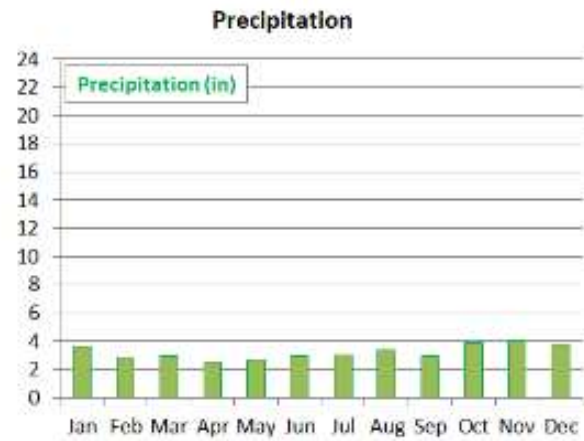
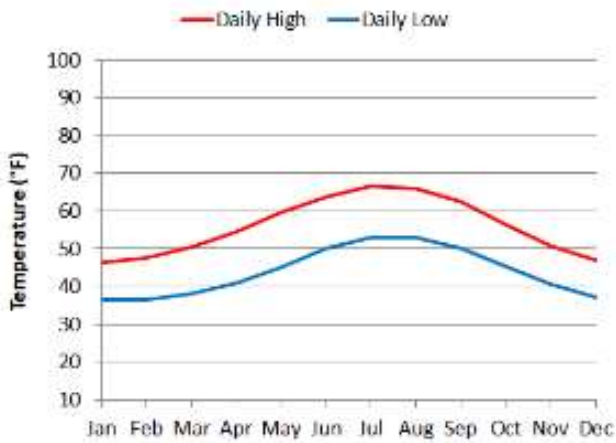
Also, please stay alert, be aware of your surroundings and keep an eye on your belongings. Pickpockets and other criminals can easily ruin even the best planned vacation.

2.2 Copyright

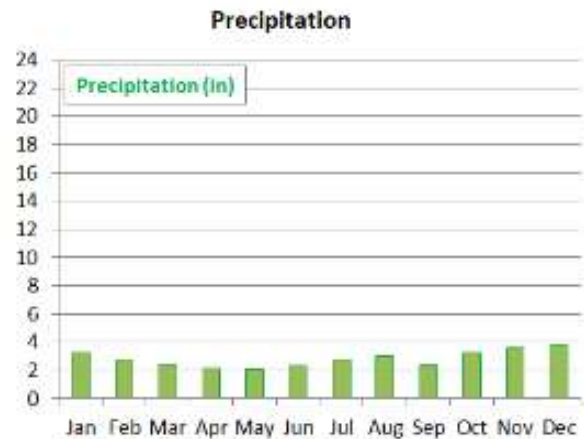
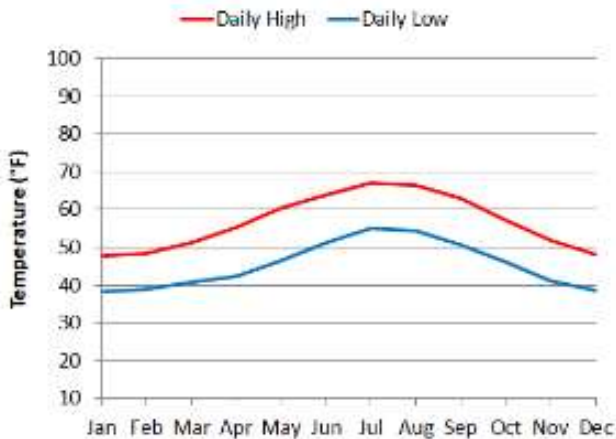
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Northern Ireland Travel Guide

Below is the climate that you can expect on your trip to Belfast in Northern Ireland:



Below is the climate that you can expect on your trip to Derry in Northern Ireland:



3.3 The highlights of the history of Northern Ireland

- 115,000 - 16,000 BC: Northern Ireland is periodically covered with ice that is more than 10,000 ft (3 km) thick, resulting in an ice bridge between Ireland and Great Britain
- 14,000 BC: the ice bridge only exists between Northern Ireland and Scotland
- 12,000 BC: the ice bridge is gone - Northern Ireland and Great Britain are completely separated
- 8,000 BC: middle stone age communities are present in Northern Ireland
- 4350 BC: farming of crops and domesticated animals (cattle and sheep) in multiple locations in Northern Ireland. People start building megalithic monuments - more than 1,200 are known today
- 3,500 BC and 3,000 BC: the oldest field system with dry-stone walls in the world is operated and the main crops are wheat and barley
- 2,500 BC: the bronze age starts and some notable inventions are: the wheel, brewing alcohol, textile weaving, skillful metalworking, oxen harnessing
- Sometime around 2,500 BC: The Bell Beaker culture expands to Northern Ireland. The Celtic language is being brought to Ireland either during the Bronze Age or the later Iron Age
- 500 BC: the population is somewhere between 100,000 and 200,000 people
- 500 BC: The iron age starts in Ireland and written records are being created by Greco-Roman geographers

- 2nd century AD: Ptolemy calls Ireland Mikra Brettania (Little Britain) and Great Britain: Megale Brettania (Great Britain). He later uses the word Iouernia for Ireland and calls Great Britain Albion. The Romans call Ireland Hibernia and later Scotia
- 150 BC: Before 150 BC, items like vases, etc. have mostly European styles and afterwards, mostly show influence from Great Britain
- 100 BC – 300 AD: The Irish Dark Age leads to economic and cultural stagnation. Ireland is a patchwork of many rival kingdoms
- 432 AD: Romano-British Christian missionary Patrick arrives in Ireland. His work and the work of other Christian missionaries eventually leads to a collapse of the druid tradition
- 840s: The first High King of Ireland appears. A High King of Ireland is a king who claims to have or actually has, lordship over all of Ireland.
- 9th century: Viking raiders start plundering Irish monasteries and towns
- 1169: Anglo-Normans invade the Kingdom of Leister with 40 knights, 60 men-at-arms and 360 archers
- 1170: More landings by Anglo-Norman nobleman Richard de Clare, known as 'Strongbow', with at least 200 knights and 1,000 soldiers to invade other parts of Ireland – the military interventions were sanctioned by King Henry II of England

- 1171: Fearing that Strongbow will set up his own kingdom in Ireland, King Henry lands in Ireland with a large army (at least 500 mounted knights and 4,000) to gain control over both the Anglo-Normans and the Irish – his move is supported by the Roman Catholic Church. Henry grants Strongbow the Kingdom of Leinster but seizes the rest of Ireland
- 1172-1175: fighting all over Ireland
- 1175: Henry II of England and High King Ruaidrí agree to the Treaty of Windsor, dividing Ireland into a Norman-held territory that acknowledges Henry as overlord, and the rest of Ireland with Ruaidrí as overlord
- 1176: The Treaty of Windsor falls apart and fighting starts again
- 1177: Henry II repudiates the Treaty, declares his 10-year-old son 'Lord of Ireland', forms the Lordship of Ireland from the territory held by the Anglo-Normans and encourages the Anglo-Norman lords to conquer more territory
- Starting in 1169: Norman lords start building their own castles
- 1216: A version of the Magna Carta (the Great Charter of Ireland) is created by replacing London with Dublin and the English church with Irish Church
- 1297: The Parliament of Ireland is founded
- 14th century: More and more of Ireland comes under rule of native Gaelic chieftoms
- 1367: The Irish parliament passes the Statutes of Kilkenny to uphold Norman rule and prevent assimilation of the Normans into the Irish society. English subjects must speak English and follow English law.

3.4 Driving a car in Northern Ireland

([book your rental car here](#))

Cars are driven on the left-hand side of the road. It is important to note that some roads in Northern Ireland are narrow and opposing traffic may only be a few inches (cm) away from your car on certain roads. Roads are, however, typically wider than in Ireland.

Here is an overview of the different road types:

- The Motorways (M Roads) are wide highways with 2 lanes in each direction and often very little traffic.
- The next lower tier of roads are regional highways, called 'A Roads'.
- Regional Roads (B Roads) and Local Roads (C Roads) are lower tier roads.

In contrast to the Republic of Ireland, speed limits in Northern Ireland are in miles per hour.

The speed limits for regular cars without trailers and motorcycles are as follows ([booklet](#)):

- Motorways: 70 mph (112 km/h)
- Dual carriageways: 70 mph (112 km/h)
- Single carriageways: 60 mph (96 km/h)
- Urban areas: 30 mph (48 km/h)
- In high pedestrian traffic areas, you will see: 20 mph (32 km/h)

3.5 Public Transportation in Northern Ireland for rail and bus:

Some cities, like Dublin, have excellent and frequent bus transportation. Dublin, as the only town in Ireland, even has a tram.

To travel between cities, you can either take a bus or train. Northern Ireland has an excellent clean, save and punctual public transportation system. Trains and Buses are operated by **Translink** ([website](#)). Tickets can be bought online and at the railway stations or inside the bus you want to take.

If you plan to use a lot of trains or buses, then you may want to consider one of the discount cards available.

- The **iLink card** ([website](#)) provides unlimited travel for a specified period of time (1 day, 1 week, 1 year) within 5 Zones in Northern Ireland
- **Belfast Visitor Pass** ([website](#), [brochure](#)): For a duration of 1, 2, or 3 days, the pass offers free travel on buses and trains in the e Belfast Visitor Pass Zone (excludes the airport route) and discounts on admission to lots of attractions, tours, shopping, and restaurants

3.6 Money and Credit Cards in Northern Ireland

The currency used in Ireland is the British Pound Sterling. You can find the current exchange rate [here](#).

Credit cards (MasterCard and VISA) are widely accepted, except on buses.

3.7 Tap water in Northern Ireland

Tap water is safe to drink in Northern Ireland, but it has a more or less strong chlorine taste and therefore we preferred to filter it to remove the chlorine taste.

3.8 Telephone

The country code for Northern Ireland is the same as for England: +44

3.9 In which Time Zone is Northern Ireland

Ireland is on Ireland Time: UTC/GMT +0 h and observes Daylight saving time (DST).

You can find the current local time [here](#).

4. Itinerary for your Ireland and Northern Ireland visit

The best way to experience this part of the world is by combining Ireland, and Northern Ireland. This can easily be done on a 2-week or 3-week trip.

The itinerary in this travel guide is a 2 1/2-week itinerary that will allow you to see the highlights of both countries.

You can use this itinerary as it is or modify it to fit your interests and travel style.

Please be advised that it can rain at any point on the island, so adding a few buffer days in the areas that you are most interested in could be a good idea.

Northern Ireland Travel Guide

	Day	Night
Day1-12	Self-guided Tour of Ireland – see the Ireland Purple Travel Guide	
Day 13	Carrowmore ; Mullaghmore Peninsula ; Derry (Murals , Free Derry Corner , Hunger Strike memorial , The People’s Monument , Bloody Sunday Obelisk Memorial , Museum of Free Derry , Butcher's Gate , Guildhall , The Peace Bridge , Derry Girls Mural , St Columb's Cathedral)	Derry
Day 14	Giant’s Causeway ; Dunluce Castle ; Bushmills Distillery ; Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge ; Dark Hedges	Belfast
Day 15	Grand Opera House , Belfast City Hall , Corn Market , Street Art Walk , Belfast Central Library , St Anne’s Cathedral , The Merchant Hotel , Albert Memorial Clock , The Big Fish , Nuala with the Hula , Victoria Square , Old Town Hall , St. George's Market	Belfast
Day 16	Titanic Belfast ; Crumlin Road Gaol ; Bobby Sands Mural ; Botanic Gardens	Dublin
Day 17	Flight home	

5.13 Entering Northern Ireland and Self-Guided City and Murals Tour of Derry – Day 13

This morning we have explored the Carrowmore Megalithic Cemetery and Mullaghmore Peninsula in Ireland in the morning, and crossed into Northern Ireland in the afternoon.

At the time of writing, there are no border patrols between Ireland and Northern Ireland at any of the many roads that connect both countries.

You may not even notice that you cross into Northern Ireland, as not every road has a sign that makes you aware of the border crossing.

The only thing that notifies you of the border crossing may be:

- Your GPS announcing ‘Welcome to Northern Ireland’ or ‘Welcome to the United Kingdom’
- The speed limit signs becoming a bit more frequent and showing smaller numbers, as Northern Ireland is part of the UK and speed limits are now in miles per hour, instead of km per hour in Ireland
- When you get out and try to pay at a gas station or restaurant, the prices are now in British Pounds instead of the Euros that are used in Ireland

This [Northern Ireland Purple Travel Guide](#) begins with the self-guided city-and-murals tour in Derry. The sights we saw in the morning in Ireland are described in our [Ireland Purple Travel Guide](#).

5.13.A Where to stay in Derry

With a population of 85,000 people (105,000 in the urban area), Derry is the second largest city in Northern Ireland.

Derry was the epicenter of The Troubles, and the Battle of the Bogside in Derry its starting point.

Here is the accommodation that is available when you visit:



5.13.3 Self-guided tour of Derry

Today, Derry is the only town with a completely intact city wall in Ireland and Northern Ireland. The Walls were built from 1613 – 1619 and are about one mile (1.5 km) in circumference and have a height of 12 – 35 ft (3.7 - 10.7 m).

Through the walls lead four original gates (Bishop's Gate, Butcher Gate, Ferryquay Gate, and Shipquay Gate) and three newer gates (Castle Gate, Magazine Gate, and New Gate).

The Derry city walls were never breached, even though attackers besieged the city several times, including in 1689 when the Siege of Derry lasted 105 days, leading to the creation of the city's nickname: The Maiden City.

The area where Derry is located has a continuous recorded history since the 6th century when Saint Columba (Colmcille) founded a monastery at this site. But archeologists say that this area was inhabited before that time.

Until the 11th century, this area was mostly known for its monastic site. Over time, a village developed outside of the monastery. Its original Irish name was Daire or Doire, which was anglicized to Derry.

In 1608, the town was attacked and much of it was burned. In 1610, the west bank of the remains of town were transferred by the English Crown to The Honourable Irish Society. Under their leadership, and people and money from London, the town was rebuilt, and city walls were built from 1613 – 1619 . In 1613, the name was changed to Londonderry in honor of the London guilds who rebuilt the city. Londonderry is still the official name of the city today, even though most people just call it Derry.

Northern Ireland Travel Guide



1 = [Tour start](#)

2 = [Free Derry Corner](#)

3 = [Hunger Strike memorial](#), [The People's Monument](#), [Bloody Sunday Obelisk Memorial](#)

4 = [Museum of Free Derry](#)

5 = [Butcher's Gate](#)

6 = [Guildhall](#)

7 = [The Peace Bridge](#)

8 = [Derry Girls Mural](#)

9 = [St Columb's Cathedral](#)

To start your Self-Guided-Walking Tour of Derry, find a parking lot near your first destination, e.g. **William Street Car Park** ([map](#)).

5.13.4 Murals on Rossville Street - The People's Gallery ([map](#), [reviews](#), [website](#))

Start at the roundabout where William Street, Rossville Street and Little James Street intersect and walk south on Rossville Street. You will see colorful murals while you walk. End this murals walk at the [Free Derry Corner](#).

To better understand the murals, their importance, and their backstory, we encourage you to read up on [The Battle of the Bogside](#), [Bloody Sunday / Bogside Massacre](#) and **The Troubles**. The following descriptions of [The Battle of the Bogside](#), [Bloody Sunday / Bogside Massacre](#) are very brief and we like to encourage you to read specialized literature about this defining time in Northern Ireland history.

Northern Ireland Travel Guide

The Peace Mural (2004), painted by the Bogside Artists (brothers Tom and William Kelly, and Kevin Hasson).

The dove, a symbol of peace, emerges from an oak leaf, which is a symbol of Derry. Derry comes from the Irish word Doire, which means oak wood. Derry is located in County Derry and the county's nickname is Oak-Leaf county.

Each square has equal size, representing the equality of all citizens.



Northern Ireland Travel Guide

Mothers and sisters

Peggy O'Hara was the mother of hunger striker Patsy O'Hara. The little girl is pointing towards the dove in the Peace Mural on another building.



A Tribute to John Hume (2008), painted by the Bogside Artists (brothers Tom and William Kelly, and Kevin Hasson).

The mural shows four Nobel Peace Prize laureates who were primarily champions of the little people:

- **John Hume**, an Irish nationalist politician in Northern Ireland
- **Dr Martin Luther King Jr.** Hume cited him during the unveiling as the man who influenced him most during his campaign for democratic rights for the oppressed Catholics of the north of Ireland
- **Mother Theresa**, who was educated in Dublin and was involved in the quest for peace in the north
- **Nelson Mandela**, whose fight for justice in South Africa ran parallel to the fight for justice on Northern Ireland
- **Brooklyn Bridge** as a metaphor as all four have been bridge builders, three of them politically and Mother Theresa spiritually

William Kelly (Bogside Artists): "In art as in life, there are the contenders and the pretenders. John Hume is a contender. There is genuine achievement and mere celebrity. John Hume belongs to the former and his legacy will live long after him." Tom then read out a statement from Bono of pop-group U2 fame: "We have one rule here at U2. Whatever John Hume wants, the answer is 'Yes'. As Dr King's visionary leadership changed the United States, so did this man for the people of Ireland."

The unveiling received massive media attention. For the artists it is, "the signature of The People's Gallery and a tribute to a great man that was long overdue."



The Civil Rights Mural (2004), painted by the Bogside Artists (brothers Tom and William Kelly, and Kevin Hasson).

William Kelly (Bogside Artists): "This mural commemorates the beginning of the struggle in Derry for democratic rights. It cannot be stressed too often that this struggle involved Protestants as well as Catholics. The 5th October 1968 march ended in bloodshed in Duke Street Derry when the RUC ran amok beating up on protesters with all the hostility and abandon of a group of Stormtroopers. The event was captured by television crews and sent shock waves throughout the civilized world. Our mural shows a typical march of the period. Our intention was to describe it as it was, a happy, almost festive occasion conducted by people who were content that they were standing up, at long last, against prolonged injustice. These early marches were inspired by the civil disobedience campaigns of Martin Luther King."



Northern Ireland Travel Guide

The Saturday Matinee/The Rioter (2001), painted by the Bogside Artists (brothers Tom and William Kelly, and Kevin Hasson). The scene depicted is typical of many riots that happened in the Bogside from 1969 through the early 1970s. The riots were commonplace with many happening on Saturday afternoons hence the title 'The Saturday Matinee'.



5.13.10 The Derry Walls

([map](#), [reviews](#))

Today, Derry is the only town with a completely intact city wall in Ireland and Northern Ireland. The Walls were built from 1613 – 1619 and are about one mile (1.5 km) in circumference and have a height of 12 – 35 ft (3.7 - 10.7 m).

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The Derry city walls were never breached, even though attackers besieged the city several times, including in 1689 when the Siege of Derry lasted 105 days, leading to the creation of the city's nickname: The Maiden City.

From the [Museum of Free Derry](#) you can either walk up the hill on the pedestrian path to the city wall, or walk along Fahan Street, which will bring you to **Butcher's Gate** ([map](#)), one of the four original gates. At the gate, you can walk up on top of the wall and walk on the wall towards the north.



Northern Ireland Travel Guide



5.13.11 Guildhall

([map](#), [reviews](#), [website](#))

After the City wall makes a 90-degree right turn, you will see Guildhall. Walk a little farther to the right and you will see stairs going down to the street level. There, you can exit the walled city through **Shipquay Gate** ([map](#)) and walk over to Guildhall.

The Guildhall is the meeting place of the Derry City and Strabane District Council.

The original town hall (Market House) was built in the 17th century and destroyed in the Siege of Derry in 1689.

It took until that a new town hall was built in 1890 – its clock tower was designed like the Elizabeth Tower in London.

In 1908, a disastrous fire destroyed all but the tower and rear block, and repairs took until 1912 to finish.

In 1972, during The Troubles, the building was severely damaged by two bomb explosions. Repairs took until 1977.

In 1995, US President Bill Clinton gave a speech on the square in front of the Guildhall.

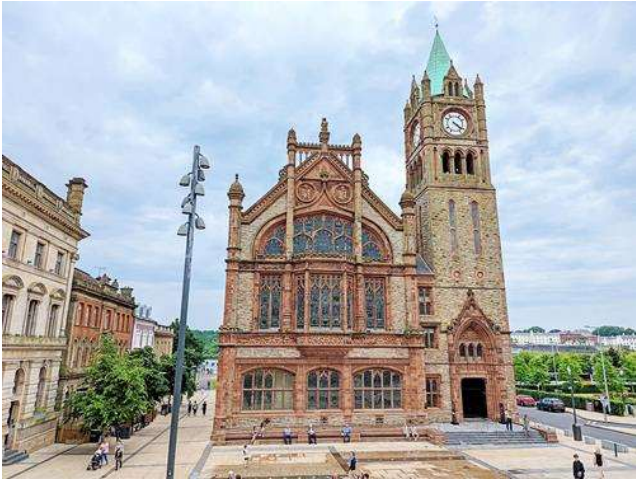
At the time of writing, Guildhall is open to the public:

Mon – Fri: 9am – 8pm (last admission 7pm)

Sat – Sun: 9am – 6pm (last admission 5pm)

Admission is free, but you can book a guided tour for £2 per person.

Northern Ireland Travel Guide



5.13.12 Peace Bridge

([map](#), [reviews](#))

The Peace Bridge is a 771 ft (235 m) pedestrian and bicycle bridge across the River Foyle. It opened in 2011 and connects the mostly unionist Waterside on the east bank of the river with the predominantly nationalist Cityside on the west bank. As the name suggests, the bridge is intended to improve relations between both sides.

The bridge has an asymmetrical shape that is composed of two identical sides that are supported by two sloping pillars. The design is a symbolic outreach to the two communities to peacefully come together.



5.13.14 St Columb's Cathedral

([map](#), [reviews](#), [website](#))

St Columb's Cathedral is the cathedral church and episcopal see of the Church of Ireland's Diocese of Derry and Raphoe.

It is dedicated to Saint Columba (Colmcille), the patron saint of Derry. Columba (521 –597 AD) was an Irish abbot and missionary evangelist who established a Christian settlement in the Derry area, and then went on to spread Christianity to, what is now, Scotland.

The church construction started in 1628, and consecration was in 1633.

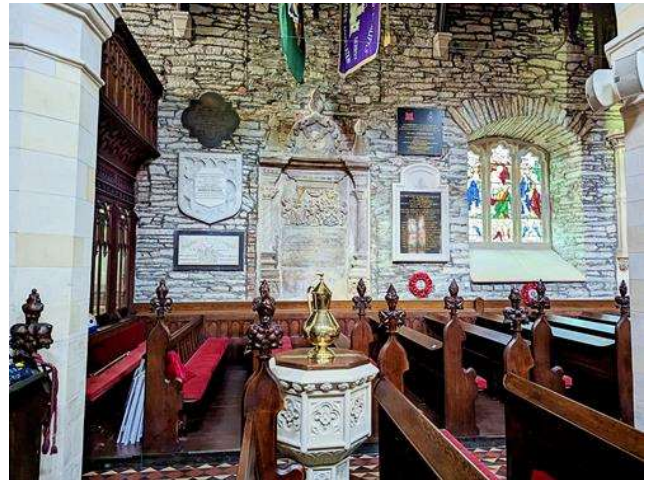
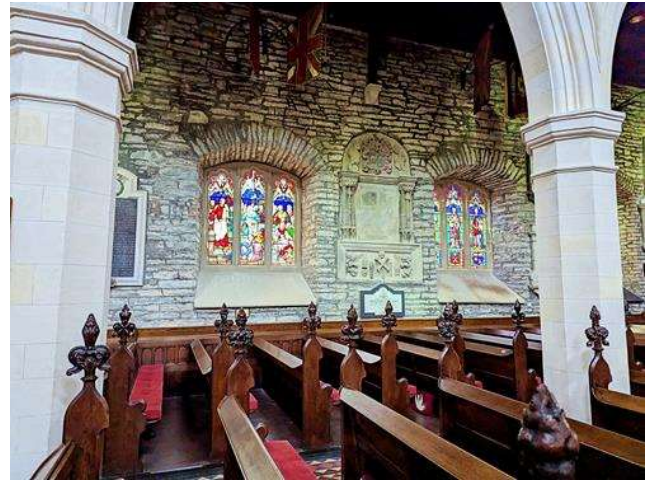
Stones from local quarries were used and the building style is called: Planter's Gothic.

Parts of its exterior and interior were remodeled over the years, including:

- a complete remodel of the interior from 1861-1862
- the addition of the chancel in 1887, on the foundations that had been laid in 1633 and were discovered during foundation work for the new chancel, which completed the cathedral
- the construction of the Chapter House in 1910

The cathedral is typically open for visitors from 10am – 3pm from early April – late September and until 4pm in August.

Northern Ireland Travel Guide



5.14 Exploring Giant's Causeway; Dunluce Castle; Bushmills Distillery; Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge; and Dark Hedges – Day 14

Today we will see one of the major highlights of Northern Ireland: Giant's Causeway.

Afterwards, we will pay short visits to Dunluce Castle, and Bushmills Distillery, and then visit two very instagrammable sites: the Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge, and the Dark Hedges that you may remember from Games of Thrones.



- 1 = [Derry](#)
- 2 = [Giant's Causeway](#)
- 3 = [Dunluce Castle](#)
- 4 = [Bushmills Distillery](#)
- 5 = [Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge](#)
- 6 = [Dark Hedges](#)
- 7 = [Belfast](#)

5.14.A Where to stay in Belfast

Belfast is the capital city of Northern Ireland, and its largest city with a population of 345,000 people, and a metropolitan area population of 672,000.

The city was the hardest hit area during The Troubles. The 21st century has been good for Belfast. Through special agreements, Belfast is the only region in the world that is able to trade goods freely with both GB and EU markets. And tourism is booming.

Here is the accommodation that is available when you visit:



5.14.1 Giant's Causeway

([map](#), [reviews](#), [website](#))

Giant's Causeway consists of about 40,000 interlocking basalt columns, which are the result of an ancient volcanic fissure eruption from 50 to 60 million years ago, where lava flowed through a long volcanic fissure forming a huge lava field that reached from Ireland to Scotland.

When the lava cooled, it contracted vertically into hexagonal columns to relieve stress. Further cooling led to horizontal fractures (biscuits). In many cases, the horizontal fracture resulted in the upper part having a concave shape, while the bottom part's surface had a convex shape. Those are called Ball and Socket joints.

The size of the columns is dependent on the speed at which the lava cooled.

Irish legend has its own explanation:

Irish giant Fionn mac Cumhaill (Finn MacCool) was a giant who was brave and kind, but he liked to brag that he was the tallest and strongest. Across the ocean in Scotland, there lived a mean giant called Benandonner.

Benandonner heard of Fionn's bragging and both got in a shouting match across the sea, and the result was that both agreed to a fight.

To get to each other, they started building a causeway from each side by taking rocks and throwing them into the sea.

After a hard day's work building the causeway, Fionn's was exhausted and he got more and more scared, as Benandonner got bigger and bigger the closer they came to each other. And he realized that he would not stand a chance as Benandonner was much bigger than he was.

Fionn ran home to his wife and told her that he's in big trouble. Luckily, Fionn's wife Sadhbh was very smart. She told him to disguise himself as a baby and then she tucked him in a cradle in the living room of their house.

The next day, Benandonner finished building the causeway and he ran straight to Fionn's house and banged on the door.

Sadhbh told him that Fionn was out, but would come back later.

In a video they show at the visitor center, Sadhbh plays several tricks on Benandonner and always told him that Fionn did things better and faster. This may, however, be the museum's legend.

Anyway, Benandonner searches the house and finds the baby.

Sadhbh told him that this was their son. Judging by the size of the baby, Benandonner thinks that its father, Fionn, must be much bigger than he is.

Scared for his life, he flees back to Scotland and tears the causeway up behind him.

And as the story goes: Fionn and Sadhbh lived happily ever after.

By the way, across the sea in Scotland, there are identical basalt columns at Fingal's Cave on the Scottish isle of Staffa.

Northern Ireland Travel Guide

At the time of writing, Giant's Causeway is open dusk to dawn, while the visitor center and parking lot are open from 9am – 5pm (March to November).

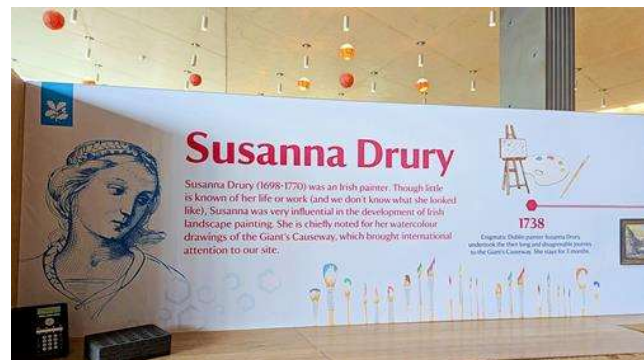
Admission is £15.50 per adult, children pay half.

It is important to note that the tickets give you a 30min window to enter. So, make sure that you don't arrive late, as you could be refused admission.

The ticket includes parking, access to the visitor center with its small museum and restrooms, and a guided tour.

There is no need to take the guided tour, but we recommend it as we found it very interesting.

From the visitor center, you will need to walk downhill for 0.75 miles (1.2 km) to the basalt columns, or you can take the shuttle bus for £1 per person per one way trip.



Northern Ireland Travel Guide



Northern Ireland Travel Guide



Northern Ireland Travel Guide



5.14.4 Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge

([map](#), [reviews](#), [website](#))

The Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge is one of those instagrammable places in Northern Ireland that has catapulted the visitor numbers to 400,000-500,000 people per year. Nowadays, they even charge for parking.

The Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge was only built for tourists so that they can experience walking over a rope bridge that spans from the mainland to a small island over deep cliffs with ocean water below. The bridge is 66 ft (20 m) long and 98 ft (30 m) above the water. Since there can be strong winds in this area, the bridge closes, sometimes on short notice, when it gets too dangerous to cross.

Local salmon fishermen had built bridges to the island for over 350 years, as this area was a popular route of the salmon to their spawning grounds from June until September. Unfortunately, there are now very few salmon left, so salmon fishing has stopped.

At the time of writing, the rope bridge is open from Feb through Nov, typically from 9am – 4:30pm.

The admission ticket which includes bridge crossing and parking is £13.50 per adult, while parking-only is £10 per car.

Northern Ireland Travel Guide

To get to the rope bridge, you will need to follow a 0.7-mile (1.1 km) trail from the parking lot along the cliffs. The trail is open for people that only paid for parking, too, and it has beautiful scenic views.



5.14.5 Dark Hedges

([map](#), [reviews](#), [website](#))

Dark Hedges is another instagrammable location in Northern Ireland.

Popularized as the filming location for King's Road in Game of Thrones, and the 2017 Transformers movie The Last Knight, this site sees lots of visitors. Admission is free, but you will be directed to a paid parking lot from which you follow the masses to Dark Hedges on Bregagh Road between Ballinlea Road and Ballykenver Road.

The road itself is closed to vehicular traffic.

Due their age and vandalism, only a bit more than half of the originally more than 150 beech trees are still standing and some are so damaged that they will likely be felled in the new future.

The original beech trees were planted at around 1775, when a mansion called Gracehill House – named after the owner's wife – was built and the trees were planted to create an imposing road to the estate.



Northern Ireland Travel Guide



Northern Ireland Travel Guide



Northern Ireland Travel Guide



5.15.1 Street Art Walk – Bridge St and North St ([map](#), [website](#))

From [Arthur Square](#), walk north east for 280 ft (85 m) on High St and then turn left on Bridge Street ([map](#)).

Enjoy the murals on Bridge St and continue walking north even when the street name changes to North St ([map](#)) after 310 ft (95 m).

North Street has lots of murals, make sure to also check out the side streets, where there are more.

Walk on North St for a total of 1,300 ft (400 m) until just after Winetavern St ([map](#)) and enjoy the many murals.



5.15.2 Street Art Walk – Royal Ave, Kent St, Union St, Library St

([map](#), [website](#))

Now walk back to the intersection of North St with Royal Ave ([map](#)) and turn left on Royal Ave where you will see more murals. From Royal Ave take the first left on Kent St for more murals, then the first right on Union St and then another right onto Library St. There are murals on all these streets and some side streets. End your murals tour [Belfast Central Library](#).



Northern Ireland Travel Guide



5.15.J Victoria Square Shopping Centre

([map](#), [reviews](#), [website](#))

Opened in 2008, Victoria Square is a 4-story 800,000 square feet (74,000 m²) shopping mall and residential complex with 62 stores, 16 restaurants, and movie theater.

The centerpiece that makes it special is a huge glass dome, which is 121 ft (37 m) in diameter and 148 ft (45 m) tall. It covers a public courtyard with central access to an elevator and escalators to all floors.

In front of the mall stands the Jaffe Fountain, which was constructed in the 1870s by former Lord Mayor Otto Jaffe in memory of his father.



Northern Ireland Travel Guide



5.16.1 Titanic Belfast

([map](#), [reviews](#), [website](#))

The Titanic Belfast museum is located on the site of the former Harland & Wolff shipyard where the RMS Titanic was built. It was opened in 2012, one hundred years after the RMS Titanic held its maiden voyage, hit an iceberg, and sank.

The museum building is 126 ft (38 m) tall (same height as the Titanic's hull) and much of its façade is covered with 3,000 silver-anodized aluminum panels.

The interior of the eight-story building has 130,000 sqft (12000 m²) of exhibition and meeting space.

A reproduction of the iconic staircase that was popularized by the 1997 James Cameron film Titanic is located on the top floor – it is a reimagined staircase as there are no original drawings.

The lower floors have galleries that tell these stories:

- Boomtown Belfast – the city at the start of the 20th century
- The Shipyard – a ride aboard a mini-car up and around a replica of Titanic's rudder
- The Launch – how Titanic was launched on 31 May 1911
- The Fit-Out – the fitting-out of Titanic from her launch through to April 1912
- The Maiden Voyage – the journey from Belfast to Southampton, and from there to Cherbourg, Cobh and westwards
- The Sinking – the disaster of 14/15 April 1912

5.16.2 Crumlin Road Gaol

([map](#), [reviews](#), [website](#))

Crumlin Road Gaol (gaol = jail), also known as HM Prison Belfast, The Crum, or Europe's Alcatraz, is a former prison on Crumlin Road.

The gaol was built from 1843 - 1845 and closed in 1996 and then sat empty until it was restored, and opened as a tourist attraction, conference center, concerts event space in 2012.

Queen Elizabeth II visited the goal in 2014.

When it was built, Crumlin Road Gaol was one of the most advanced prisons of its day – it separated prisoners in their individual cells from each preventing any communication between them.

Enclosed by a five-sided wall, it consisted of a central building (The Circle) with four wings that are up to four stories tall. In the early 1970s, sometimes up to three prisoners were placed in cells that were designed for only one 12 × 7 ft, (3.7 m x 2.1 m). In 1971 the International Red Cross found 864 prisoners in 475 cells.

The original prison did not contain a space for executions and thus, they were carried out in public view until 1901. Afterwards, an execution chamber was built. The 17th and last hanging occurred in 1961. The bodies of most executed were buried inside the prison in unconsecrated ground, against the back wall beside the prison hospital.



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6. Closing Remarks

ABOUT RUDY FROM BACKPACK & SNORKEL

I was born in Germany and emigrated to the US in 2003. My wife and I are a truly multinational couple: I, with my German background, and she with her Chinese heritage. Both of us live in the USA.

Sadly, working in the US means we have much fewer vacation days compared to other countries like e.g. Germany and thus we cannot travel very frequently.

Through a lot of trial and error, we have found our ideal travel and vacation style. **Making Memorable Moments** by focusing on important destinations, planning time for meeting the locals and, of course, for relaxation are our priorities.

We have also learned to appreciate local foods and try to eat as many local dishes as possible. Just for fun, we try to eat at one Chinese restaurant in each country we visit. It is absolutely amazing how different Chinese food is all over the planet.



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MAKING MEMORABLE MOMENTS

You may take 10,000 photos during your vacation, rush from one attraction to the next, but what you will remember in your heart is how you were **Making Memorable Moments**.

For me, that was e.g. Spider Rock in Canyon de Chelly (ever heard of this US National Park?). When I first saw it, I was blown away by this majestic natural obelisk and the beautiful canyon that it sits in. I have been there two more times and still feel the same.

Or think of Isla Mujeres, a small island outside Cancun, Mexico. On the surface, Playa Norte is supposedly Mexico's most beautiful beach and it is always crowded and the boats that anchor there play loud music. Below the surface, Isla Mujeres is very relaxed, quite walkable and it has friendly locals, good authentic Mexican food and good international cuisine and is often very affordable.

Isla Mujeres is our personal paradise!



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PACK YOUR BACKPACK & SNORKEL AND LET'S GO

Our travel style has evolved over the years. We are packing light these days when we travel and typically only need a small backpack per person - see our [Traveling Light Guide](#).

With this guide, I want to provide value to you and help you plan your own relaxing vacations with the goal of **Making Memorable Moments!**

Please contact me if you have any questions or comments.