



## BELFAST

### NORTHERN IRELAND

**B**elfast, the capital of Northern Ireland lies on Belfast Lough, at the mouth of the River Lagan on Northern Ireland's east coast. With a population of nearly half a million people, Belfast is Northern Ireland's largest city. The port of Belfast is Northern Ireland's principle maritime gateway. It is also home to the world's largest dry dock and the Harland and Wolff shipyard, famous for building the Titanic.

Northern Ireland, with an area of 5463 square miles, is also known as Ulster because it comprises six of the nine counties that used to constitute the former province of Ulster. Northern Ireland enjoyed a reputation for science, innovation and was a leading force in the Industrial Revolution. Industries like rope-making, linens and shipbuilding created an economic powerhouse. Wealth from the period is reflected in stately Edwardian and Victorian architecture found throughout Belfast. The city is once again a driving force into the future. The economy is thriving and Belfast is re-inventing itself.



### HISTORY

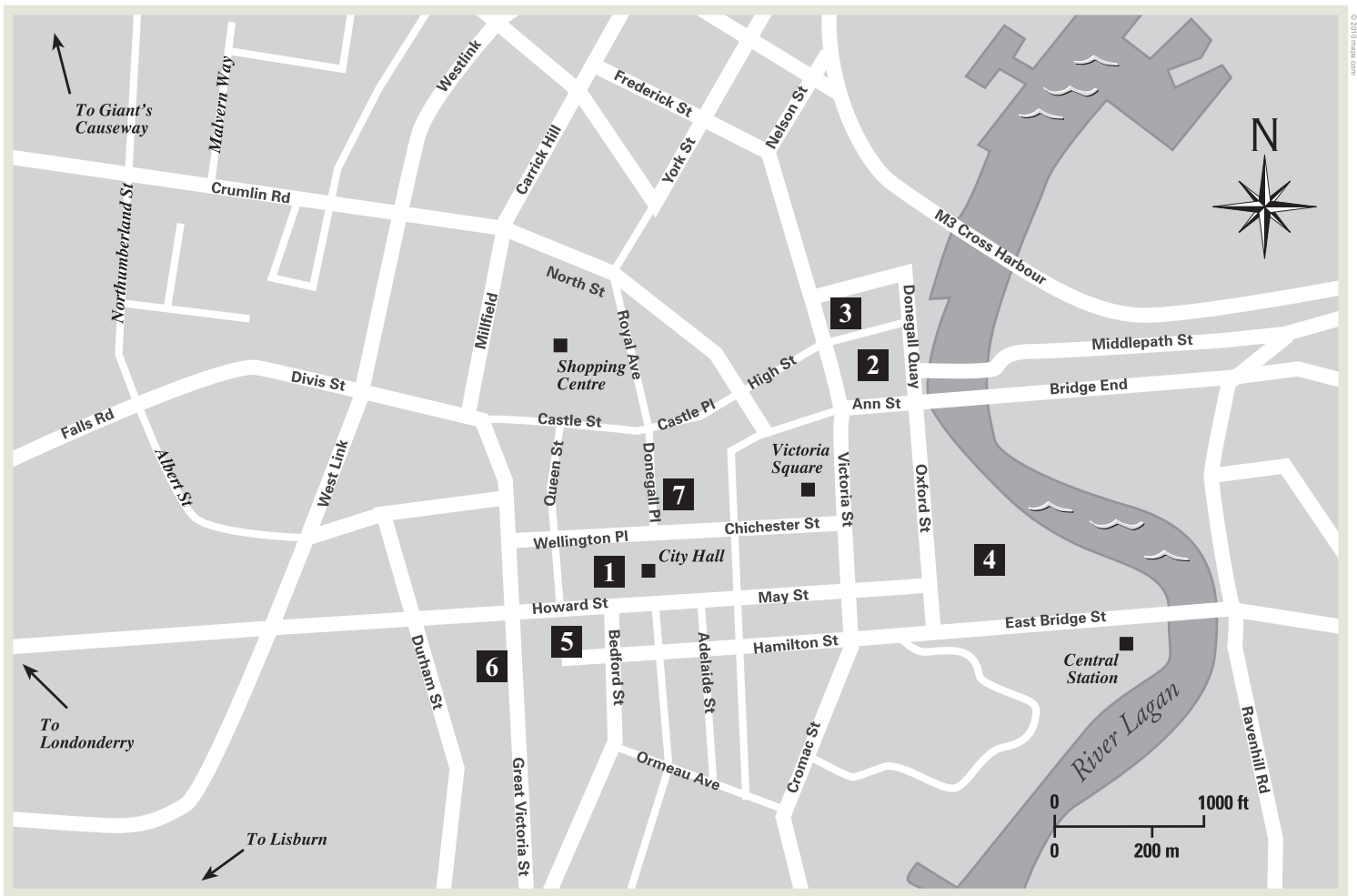
First inhabitants of the Belfast area can be dated back as early as the Bronze Age. During the Iron Age, the Celtic culture flourished and the distinctive language and culture was spread throughout the region. The name Belfast comes from the Irish Béal Feirste, or mouth of the Farset, the river on which the city was established.

Christianity arrived in Ireland during the 4th century with Saint Patrick. Ireland endured Viking raids in the 9th century followed by Norman conquest in the 12th. English and Scottish settlers began arriving in Belfast early in the 17th century. Tensions grew and the Irish Catholic population rebelled against the settlers in 1641.

Ulster became increasingly separated from the south, isolated by geography and religion. Belfast became the center of Irish Protestantism and was declared the capital of Northern Ireland in 1922.

During the Second World War, the city was targeted for its shipbuilding facilities. Much of Belfast was destroyed by heavy bombing.

Divisions between Catholics and Protestants came to a boiling point in the 1960's, which led to 'The Troubles,' a time of urban conflict. In the late 1990's the cease-fire agreement has led to a vibrant revitalization of the city.



## BELFAST PLACES OF INTEREST

**1 Donegall Square** is the heart of Belfast. Most of the main streets of the city radiate outward from the square and it is home to City Hall. The vast rectangular Edwardian City Hall has an elaborate tower at each corner and a central copper dome that rises to a height of 173 feet. Outside City Hall is the Titanic Memorial standing as a poignant reminder of the ill-fated liner built in the nearby Harland & Wolff shipyard.

**2 Queen's Square** was constructed for the visit of Queen Victoria in 1849. Located nearby are the impressive Custom House and McHughes Bar, which occupies the oldest surviving building in Belfast – a house built in 1715.

**3 Albert Memorial Clock** was dedicated to Prince Albert after his death and is famous for its distinctive leaning position. Over the years as the clock has settled it has come to rest more than a yard from the vertical.

**4 Waterfront Hall** is a state-of-the-art concert and conference center and part of the ongoing revitalization of the waterfront area. Located on the banks of the River Lagan, the Hall has extensive panoramic views across the city from the glass enclosed viewing platform.

**5 Crown Liquor Saloon** is a flamboyant Victorian drinking palace whose multi-colored tiled façade dates back to the 1880's. The establishment remains much as it was when first built over a hundred years ago.

**6 Grand Opera House** is a monument to Victorian design. Dating from 1895, the Opera House with its lavish interiors is Northern Ireland's premier theater.

### Beyond Belfast

**The Murals** During the 'Troubles,' popular art played a conspicuous role in proclaiming the loyalties of Belfast's conflicting communities. The gable ends of houses were decorated and painted with vivid murals expressing affiliations. They remain today as a much photographed part of Belfast's past.

**Falls Road and Shankill Road**, locations of much of the rioting during the troubled times. Opposing communities lived very close to each other, and security gates were installed to prevent conflict. The gates are now open and unused but remain as a reminder of what Belfast has experienced in recent history.

**Parliament Building** is situated outside of city center in the suburb of Stormont and is designed to house government administrative offices. The building is made of Portland stone and Mourne granite and stands elegantly at the end of a majestic one-mile long avenue, bordered by parkland.

**Botanic Gardens** are located near the prestigious Queen's University and Ulster Museum. The gardens feature a large variety of plant species. Highlights include rose gardens, a cast iron and glass palm house and a tropical ravine.

**Cave Hill Country Park** consists of approximately 740 acres and is home to many ring forts, evidence of Belfast's Iron Age heritage and five Neolithic caves. Belfast Castle constructed in the 1870's for the 3rd Marquess of Donegall is also situated on the slopes of Cave Hill. The park has panoramic views overlooking the city.

**Ulster Folk Museum** provides a record of the way of life and traditions of the people of Northern Ireland. The museum has an extensive collection and exhibit buildings. Many of the buildings have been removed stone by stone from the countryside and re-erected in a setting as close as possible to the original landscape.

**Londonderry** located on the River Foyle dates from the 6th century. Modern Londonderry has retained much of its 17th century layout and the city has some of the best-preserved city fortifications in the western world. The walls rise to a height of 26 feet and in some places are nearly 30 feet thick. The ramparts provide an interesting walk and views of the pedestrian oriented city. The Gothic Guildhall has dozens of stained glass windows illustrating the city's long and eventful history.

The **Ards Peninsular** lies not far from the metropolis of Belfast. Geographically located in Northern Ireland's County Down, the Ards Peninsular has some of the richest farmland in Ireland. This scenic area has an attractive coastline and the Strangford Lough, a sheltered and placid stretch of water, which is the largest sea inlet in the British Isles.



**Antrim Coast** has the well-deserved reputation for being one of the loveliest and most spectacular in Europe. Home to fishing villages, coastal resorts and farmland it is also the site of

Dunluce Castle, one of Ireland's most atmospheric castles.

**Giant's Causeway** has inspired folklore and legend from ancient times and today is a World Heritage Site. The Causeway proper is a mass of basalt columns packed tightly together. The column tops form stepping stones that lead from the cliff's foot and disappear under the sea. Altogether there are approximately 40,000 stone columns, mostly hexagonal but some with four, five, seven and eight sides. The tallest are about 40 feet high, and the solidified lava in the cliffs is 90 feet thick in places.



**Lisburn** is just to the south of Belfast and is home to the Irish Linen Center dedicated to the collection and interpretations of artifacts related to the Irish Linen industry. The museum is located in the historic Market Square.

## SHORE EXCURSIONS

To make the most of your visit to Belfast and surrounding areas we suggest you take one of our organized Shore Excursions. For information concerning tour content and pricing, contact the Shore Excursion Desk. When going ashore, be advised to take with you only necessary items and secure any valuables onboard.

## LOCAL CUSTOMS

**Bargaining:** Shop prices in Northern Ireland are fixed.

**Tipping:** Where service charge is not included in a restaurant bill, 10-15% is a good guideline.

## LOCAL CUISINE AND DRINK SPECIALTIES

Traditional cuisine in Ireland is simple and wholesome, Irish Stew being an example. Shellfish, home made vegetable soups, fish and chips are typical fare. Northern Ireland is well known for its breads. Boxty is a traditional Irish potato bread, made pancake thin and often served with a savory filling. Soda, currant and wheaten bread are also favorites. Pub lunches are popular and Belfast has a wide variety of restaurants including some of the best in Ireland.

Irish Whiskey is perhaps the most famous, and then there's Irish Coffee. Guinness, a dark heavy stout with a creamy head is the popular beer served at room temperature.

## SHOPPING FACILITIES

Shopping hours are generally from 9:00 am to 5:30 pm Monday thru Saturday and 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm on Sundays. Shopping centers located on the outskirts of town stay open later. There is a wide variety of shopping to be found in Belfast. The prime shopping areas are located near city center and at Donegall Place and Castlecourt Centre.

Items of interest include: souvenirs, quality woolens, hand-knit sweaters and tweeds, Tyrone Crystal, Belleek China, hand crafted Celtic jewelry, Irish linen, music, Guinness products, chocolate and confectionaries.

Value added Tax (VAT), is added to most purchases. Visitors who spend over a certain amount may be entitled to re-claim some or all of the tax paid; however, regulations and conditions governing the refund of VAT are subject to change and Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd.® cannot guarantee the cooperation of local authorities.

## LOCAL CURRENCY

The unit of currency in this port of call is the British Pound Sterling. There are 100 pennies to every pound. Notes are available in the following denominations; 5, 10, 20 and 50 pounds. Coins are issued to the value of 2 and 1 pound, 50p, 20p, 10p, 5p, 2p and 1p.

Most stores accept major credit cards. Automatic Teller Machines (ATM's) can be found all over the city.

