

A Tour to Ireland (Belfast)

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Belfast

- ▶ Area: 115 km²
- ▶ Population (city of Belfast): 333,871



Map



Belfast Coat of Arms

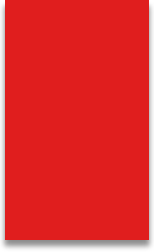
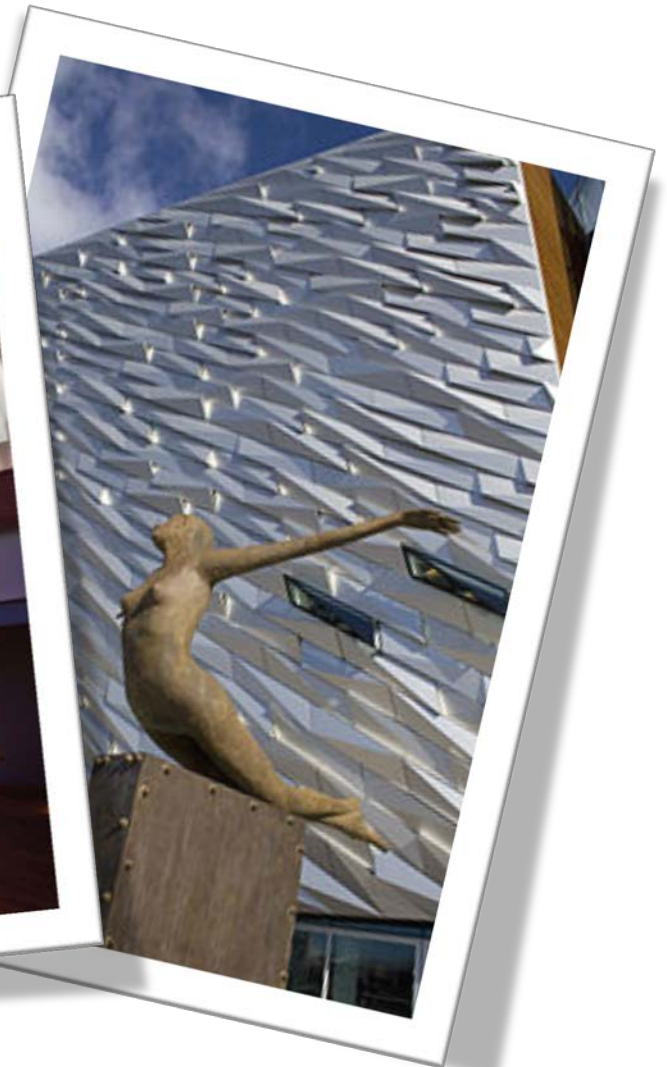
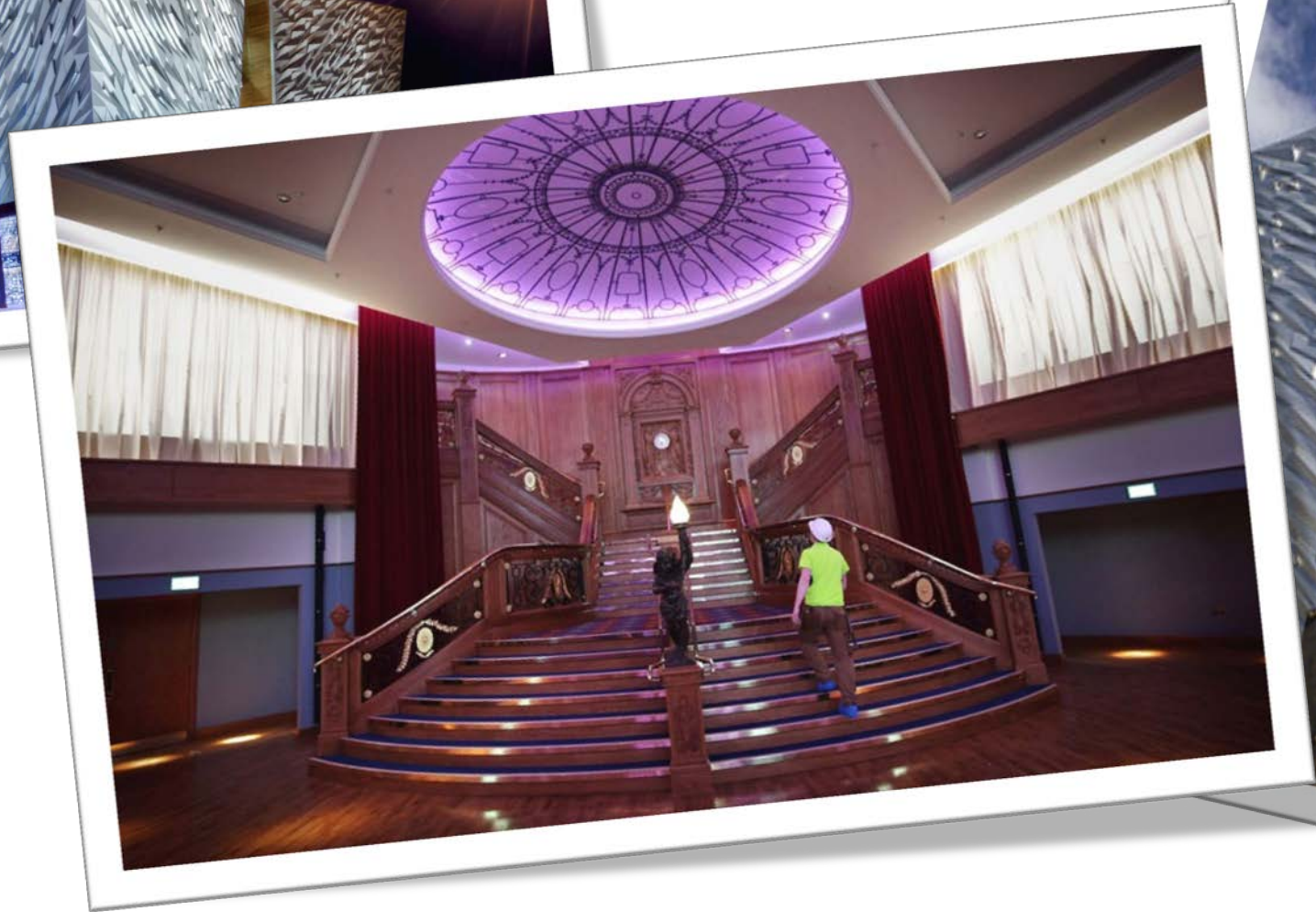
Name

- ▶ The name *Belfast* is derived from the Irish *Béal Feirsde*, which was later spelled *Béal Feirste*. The word *béal* means "mouth" or "rivermouth" while *feirsde/feirste* is the genitive singular of *fearsaid* and refers to a sandbar or tidal ford across a river's mouth. The name would thus translate literally as "(river) mouth of the sandbar" or "(river) mouth of the ford". This sandbar was formed at the confluence of two rivers at what is now Donegall Quay: the Lagan, which flows into Belfast Lough, and its tributary the Farset. This area was the hub around which the original settlement developed. The Irish name *Béal Feirste* is shared by a townland in County Mayo, whose name has been anglicised as *Belfarsad*.

Places to visit

Titanic Belfast

- ▶ Titanic Belfast is a visitor attraction and a monument to Belfast's maritime heritage on the site of the former Harland & Wolff shipyard in the city's Titanic Quarter where the RMS *Titanic* was built. It tells the stories of the ill-fated *Titanic*, which hit an iceberg and sank during her maiden voyage in 1912, and her sister ships RMS *Olympic* and HMHS *Britannic*. The building contains more than 12,000 square metres (130,000 sq ft) of floor space, most of which is occupied by a series of galleries, plus private function rooms and community facilities.



Castles

- ▶ Belfast Castle
- ▶ Carrickfergus Castle
- ▶ Dunluce Castle etc.

Belfast Castle

- ▶ The first Belfast Castle was built by the Normans in Belfast city centre in the late 12th century. A second castle, made of stone and timber, was later constructed by Sir Arthur Chichester, Baron of Belfast, on the same site in 1611.

Sadly, the castle burned down almost 100 years later, leaving only street names, such as Castle Place, to mark its location.

Donegall period

- ▶ In 1862, the third Marquis of Donegall, a descendant of the Chichester family, decided to build a new castle within his deer park, situated on the side of Cave Hill in what is now north Belfast.

Designs for the new building were completed by architect John Lanyon and reflected the popular Scottish baronial style.

The castle was finished in 1870 and cost far more than the £11,000 set aside by the Marquis. In order to complete the building, he received financial help from his son-in-law, Lord Ashley, heir to the title of Earl of Shaftesbury.

Shaftesbury period

- ▶ When the Marquis died in 1884, the castle and its estate passed to Lord Ashley, the seventh Earl of Shaftesbury.

Lord Ashley and his wife, Harriet Augusta, as well as their ancestors, are remembered in many famous Belfast street names, such as Donegall Place, Donegall Square, Donegall Road and Shaftesbury Square.

The Donegall coat-of-arms appears over the front door and on the north wall of Belfast Castle. A section of the Shaftesbury crest also appears on the exterior staircase, now a popular spot for wedding photographs. This was not part of the original castle plans - instead, it was added in 1894 by the ninth Earl of Shaftesbury as a present to his mother.

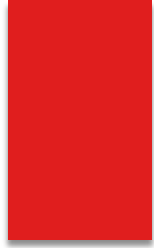
The Shaftesbury family was very generous donor to Belfast, supporting many charities and hosting garden fetes in the castle grounds. The ninth Earl became Lord Mayor of Belfast in 1907 and chancellor of Queen's University in 1908.

The castle remained with the family for many years, before they eventually presented it and the surrounding estate to the City of Belfast in 1934.

Modern History

- ▶ Between 1945 and the 1970s Belfast Castle was a popular venue for wedding receptions, dances and afternoon teas.

In 1978, the castle closed as part of a £2 million refurbishment programme, overseen by Hewitt and Haslam Partnership architects. It reopened on 11 November 1988 and is now a popular venue for weddings, conferences and other events.



Giant's Causeway

- ▶ The Giant's Causeway is an area of about 40,000 interlocking basalt columns, the result of an ancient volcanic eruption.
- ▶ It is located in County Antrim on the northeast coast of Northern Ireland, about three miles (4.8 km) northeast of the town of Bushmills. It was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1986, and a national nature reserve in 1987 by the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland. In a 2005 poll of *Radio Times* readers, the Giant's Causeway was named as the fourth greatest natural wonder in the United Kingdom. The tops of the columns form stepping stones that lead from the cliff foot and disappear under the sea. Most of the columns are hexagonal, although there are also some with four, five, seven or eight sides. The tallest are about 12 metres (39 ft) high, and the solidified lava in the cliffs is 28 metres (92 ft) thick in places.
- ▶ Much of the Giant's Causeway and Causeway Coast World Heritage Site is today owned and managed by the National Trust and it is one of the most popular tourist attractions in Northern Ireland. The remainder of the site is owned by the Crown Estate and a number of private landowners.

