

# Exploring Northern Ireland's History and Culture



*Giant's Causeway*  
cc. Jal74, Wikimedia Commons

## Tuesday 22 - Saturday 26 September 2026

Join us on our tour of Northern Ireland from our comfortable base in Belfast. The city's architecture reflects the affluence and wealth enjoyed from the linen trade and its status as a major urban centre. These commercial links continue to prosper and following a renaissance of Belfast the city is peaceful once again, and undergoing a radical programme of redevelopment and renovation.

The city's history is inextricably bound with the fortunes of the Harland and Wolff shipyard and the tragic loss of the RMS Titanic. The Titanic Experience, which we will visit, charts the history of the ship from its inception to its demise in the icy waters of the North Atlantic on 15 April 1912. Visits outside the city will include Glenarm Castle and the private estate of Grey Abbey House. We shall also journey up the north Antrim Coastline to the breathtaking Giant's Causeway, a unique configuration of naturally created stone columns.

## TUESDAY 22 SEPTEMBER 2026

*Independent travel arrangements to Southampton Airport.*

We will check in for our scheduled flight with Aer Lingus from Southampton to **Belfast City Airport**, due to depart at 08.55 and arrive at 10.35. *Please note that the schedule may be subject to change by the airline.*

On arrival we will be met by our local coach for travel to **Titanic Belfast**. There will be free time for lunch on arrival, followed by a self-guided visit. The exhibition consists of nine galleries retelling the Titanic story from the building of the ship in Belfast in the 1900s through to her tragic end. The museum features full-scale reconstructions as well as dramatic special effects.

We will continue to the centrally-located **Europa Hotel** where we will check in for 4 nights' bed and breakfast accommodation. After some time to freshen up, a **welcome dinner** will be taken this evening in the hotel restaurant.

## WEDNESDAY 23 SEPTEMBER 2026

After breakfast at the hotel we will meet our local guide and begin our morning with a **panoramic coach tour** of Belfast, to include the City Hall, the Parliament Building and the Cathedral Quarter. The City Hall was designed by Alfred Brumwell Thomas and completed in 1906. It has strong connections with the creator of the ship the Titanic, William Pirrie, who was Lord Mayor in 1896 and is now the home of Belfast City Council. The

Parliament Building houses the Northern Ireland Assembly, is located in the Stormont area of the city and served as the seat of the Parliament of Northern Ireland from 1932 to 1972. The Cathedral Quarter was formerly the centre of Belfast's trade and warehousing district, which developed directly from the city's linen and shipbuilding industries. After a period of decline in the last century the area has emerged in recent years as Belfast's cultural quarter. Our tour will include Falls Road, Shankill Road and Donegall Street in order to explore the more recent troubled past of Northern Ireland. We will also pass by Crumlin Road Gaol, the only remaining Victorian era prison in Northern Ireland. Built in 1846, it served as a prison for over 150 years.



*Titanic Belfast*

We will continue to the **Ulster Museum** for a **guided tour** with our local guide. The Museum's exhibits have evolved over a number of years and today boast an excellent applied arts collection of ceramics, glass, silverware, furniture and wood, costume, textiles and jewellery. The fine arts collection is of significant national and international importance and includes works by Gainsborough, Reynolds and Turner, plus Irish paintings from the late 17<sup>th</sup> century to the present day. 20<sup>th</sup> century and modern art is well represented by both British and foreign artists including Francis Bacon and the sculptor Henry Moore. There will be free time after the tour to take lunch at the on-site café or in the nearby Lisburn Road area, where there are numerous restaurants and cafés.

This afternoon we will travel by coach to **Hillsborough Castle** for a **guided tour** with a resident guide.

Hillsborough is the official government residence in Northern Ireland and the home of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. It is in fact a Georgian mansion house built in the 18<sup>th</sup> century for the Hill family who owned it until 1922 when they sold it to the British Government. In the last 20 years Hillsborough Castle has become a key venue for political events in Northern Ireland and the royal family visit regularly. After the tour there will be some time to explore the gardens.

We will return to our hotel for an evening at leisure. Members may wish to visit The Crown Liquor Saloon, located directly opposite the hotel, a historic pub known for its Victorian-era decor. The Cathedral Quarter is also within walking distance and there are numerous restaurants and bars offering traditional Irish music.

## THURSDAY 24 SEPTEMBER 2026

After breakfast at the hotel we will travel by coach to Glenarm for a **guided tour** of **Glenarm Castle** with a resident guide. Built in 1636, it is one of the oldest estates in Northern Ireland. It has been the home of the McDonnell family since the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the current owner is Viscount Dunluce. The Walled Garden, situated in the grounds of the Castle, is one of the oldest gardens in Ireland, dating from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and is filled with an array of flowers and specimen plants. There will be free time to take lunch prior to departure. *Please be aware that Glenarm's seasonal opening date is subject to weather conditions. Should this visit be unavailable, we reserve the right to change the programme.*

We will rejoin our coach and travel northwards, enjoying the beauty of the North Antrim Coastline en route to the **Giant's Causeway**. The actual causeway is a series of 40,000 stone columns that form steps leading from the foot of the cliffs into the sea. Many of the columns are six sided and some are 40 feet tall. Created during volcanic activity some 60 million years ago, local legend attributes the Causeway to the Irish Giant Fin MacCool who built it to cross the Irish Sea to rival a Scottish challenger! The hues of red sandstone, white chalk, black basalt and blue clay mingle with touches of sea pink to create a unique seascape of outstanding beauty. *Please note that it is a steep walk to and from the causeway. There is a shuttle that provides transport at a small charge (free to National Trust members).* We will return to our hotel for an evening at leisure with independent arrangements for dinner.

## FRIDAY 25 SEPTEMBER 2026

After breakfast at the hotel we will travel to Ards Peninsula for a private visit of **Grey Abbey House**, considered one of the finest Georgian Country Houses in Ireland. The Church Hill, to the South of the Abbey ruins, is believed to be one of the first landscaped parks in Ireland. The house contains interesting architectural features including a cantilevered staircase and some watercolour paintings by Lady Charlotte Herbert, the wife of one of the Montgomery family line. We will enjoy a **private guided tour** of the house, followed

by a **light lunch**. During our visit we will also see the **Grey Abbey ruins** that are adjacent to the house. The former Cistercian Priory was founded in 1193 by Affreca, wife of John de Courcy and daughter of Godred Olafsson, King of the Isles.

We will continue to **Mount Stewart House and Gardens** (*National Trust*) for a free-flow visit. The House has been the home of the Londonderry family since the 18<sup>th</sup> century and its primary exhibit is George Stubbs' famous painting of the race horse 'Hambletonian'. The gardens were planted in the 1920s by Lady Londonderry and have evolved around a series of 'outdoor rooms'. The mild climate encourages the many rare and colourful plants to thrive.

We will return to our hotel in Belfast by coach. A **final dinner** will be taken together this evening in a nearby local restaurant.

## SATURDAY 26 SEPTEMBER 2026

After breakfast there will be a little time at leisure this morning. Members may wish to visit St George's Market, located within walking distance of the hotel, that will be running the 'Saturday city food and craft market'.

We will reconvene at the hotel and transfer by coach to the Cathedral Quarter to embark on a **street art walking tour**, discovering the contemporary street art murals with a local guide. Unlike the political murals of the Shankill Road and Falls Road area, these contemporary murals, works by worldwide street artists, have a positive and forward-thinking perspective.

We will transfer to Belfast City Airport for our return scheduled flight with Aer Lingus to Southampton, due to depart at 14.40 and arrive at 16.15. *Please note that the schedule may be subject to change by the airline.*  
*Independent onward travel arrangements.*

### Please Note:

*As this tour has been planned many months in advance, the final itinerary may vary slightly from the above.*

## TOUR PRICE

**£1,770** per person sharing a twin/double room (*including flights*)

**£280** single supplement

### PRICE INCLUDES

Return flights with Aer Lingus (Southampton/Belfast City)  
4 nights' bed and breakfast accommodation  
2 dinners  
Services of a local guide for 1 half day and 1 full day  
Guided tour of the Ulster Museum  
Guided tour of Hillsborough Castle  
Guided tour of Glenarm Castle (*subject to availability*)  
Private guided tour and lunch at Grey Abbey House  
Street art walking tour  
All coach travel in Ireland as per the itinerary  
All booking and entrance fees as per the itinerary  
VOX audio headsets days 2-4  
Gratuities

*Entry to National Trust properties is free of charge to National Trust members upon production of a valid membership card. Any non-members (as indicated on the enclosed booking form) will be charged an **additional £27** on their final invoice in respect of entry fees to NT properties, as these must be settled in advance.*

### HOTEL DETAILS

**Europa Hotel** (4 star)

Great Victoria Street, Belfast, BT2 7AP

[www.europahotelbelfast.com](http://www.europahotelbelfast.com)

### FLIGHTS

We have included the following flights with Aer Lingus:

22 Sep - Southampton/Belfast City - 08.55 (10.35) EL 3601

26 Sep - Belfast City/Southampton - 14.40 (16.15) EL 3606

*Flight seats cannot be booked until we are in receipt of client deposits. The schedule may be subject to change by the airline.*

### IDENTIFICATION

Please note that photographic identification will be required for the flight (i.e. passport, driving license).

### MINIMUM NUMBERS

The price of the tour is based on a minimum of 25 paying participants.

### OPTIONAL TRAVEL INSURANCE

Travel insurance is not mandatory for the UK, but we strongly recommend that you have adequate insurance in place to cover any COVID-related issues. We have arranged a scheme with specialists Brokersure Limited who are fully authorised and regulated by the FCA (firm reference number 501719) full details of which can be found on the FCA website [www.fca.org.uk](http://www.fca.org.uk). Please call Brokersure on 0330 880 3625 for a quote.

### FINANCIAL PROTECTION

Our ATOL Number is 3622. All the flights and flight inclusive tours in this brochure are financially protected by the ATOL scheme. When you pay you will be supplied with an ATOL Certificate. Please ask for it and check to ensure that everything you booked (flights, hotels and other services) is listed on it. Please see our booking conditions for further information or for more information about financial protection and the ATOL Certificate go to: [www.atol.org.uk](http://www.atol.org.uk) ATOLCertificate.

### BOOKING & FINAL TRAVEL DETAILS

To reserve your place on the tour, please send your completed booking form and deposit of **£475 per person**, to **Heritage Group Travel**, as soon as possible and no later than **Friday 27 February 2026**. Please note that as places on the tour are limited, bookings will be accepted on a 'first come, first served' basis. You will receive a confirmation of your booking combined with an invoice for the final balance. The final travel details (itinerary, hotel details, flight ticket and luggage label) will be available approximately 10-14 days prior to travel. The final balance is due by **Monday 29 June 2026**.

*Heritage*  
GROUP TRAVEL

Charlotte House, 12 Charlotte Street

Bath, BA1 2NE

Tel: 01225 466620

[www.grouptravel.co.uk](http://www.grouptravel.co.uk)

