Join us in Belfast for a Black Cab Tour, Peace Wall, Murals, the Titanic Museum, and more Go World Travel is reader-supported and may earn a commission from purchases made through links in this piece. A light drizzle fell onto the cobblestoned street as our taxi arrived. Stepping into the black cab felt like diving headfirst into Belfast’s tempestuous past. We were in for a raw and personal tour of the city. Our Taxi driver, Pat, welcomed us with a rough, smokey voice. “Craic alright?” A little confused by his phrase, we smiled and nodded our good mornings to him. Cheerful as his projection was, it looked like maybe he was having a bit of a rough morning. “More about the craic later,” he said, and we remembered that in Ireland, craic referred to fun. “Let’s be on our way.” Nataliya and I were in Belfast, Ireland, for the day, taking a break from our time in Dublin. This was our first visit to Northern Ireland (or North of Ireland as Dubliners prefer to call it). Unlike the fully independent Republic of Ireland to the south, Northern Ireland remains a part of the United Kingdom, under the protection of the Crown—or under the thumb of it, depending on who you ask. “The Troubles” have lessened, and things seem calm and peaceful in Belfast today. But the memory of those times—from the late 1960s to the late 1990s—still lives in the memories of many citizens, including the cab drivers who have made it a profession and a passion to share the stories of that time with visitors. The conflict was between England and Ireland, but closer still, it was between the residents of Belfast, between unionist Catholics who wanted to unite with the Republic of Ireland and loyalist Protestants who were loyal to the crown and wanted to remain part of the United Kingdom. These political disagreements still exist today, but they’re negotiated in political conversations rather than with bullets and bombs. Differently opinioned communities were walled off from one another. The tenement houses were so close together, that neighbors from opposite sides of the wall on the upper floors could see one another, but it took the open gate door of daytime and a good 20-minute drive to get from one side to the other. Pat asked us where we were from. “Why the hell would you want to come to Belfast?” He laughed. “A little like taking a holiday to a war zone, eh?” We weren’t sure how to respond. There was a bit of cough to his laugh. “Don’t worry, the troubles aren’t what they used to be. Don’t mind all of the barrier walls or bullet holes. All part of the past. Belfast is a lovely place to visit today.”