

Belfast: A City Reborn [B2]

La capitale dell'Irlanda del Nord sta cercando di superare decenni di violenza settaria, puntando a costruire un futuro solido grazie al suo robusto tessuto industriale e a un carattere vivace e accogliente.

Belfast, the capital of Northern Ireland, is a city of contradictions. Located near sea and mountains, it has a [mild](#) climate and a radical history. A violent past of conquest and rebellion has [given way](#) to today's vibrant city of innovation, industry, creativity and culture. Belfast is a [UNESCO](#) City of Music, with museums, galleries, gardens, restaurants and [state-of-the-art](#) visitor attractions.

RIVER CROSSING

Belfast is located in the ancient Irish province of Ulster in the northeast of Ireland. Ulster is divided into nine counties: three now [lie](#) in the Republic of Ireland and six in Northern Ireland, which forms part of the United Kingdom. Belfast began as a crossing for the River Lagan and later grew into a [harbour](#), major seaport and [sprawling](#) industrial [hub](#). It is the birthplace of the footballer George Best, author C. S. Lewis and musician Van Morrison. It is also where doomed ocean liner the [HMS](#) Titanic was constructed.

RADICALS

Religion has played a major role in Belfast's complex identity. The Normans built a castle here in the late 12th century, and the Church of Ireland was placed under the authority of the Catholic Church. During the 16th century the English conquest (or reconquest) of Ireland took place under the Tudor dynasty, which [ruled](#) the Kingdom of England and then in 1609 King James I began what was known as the Plantation of Ulster, under which Scottish and English Protestants were given lands confiscated from Gaelic Irish nobility. Large numbers of Scottish Presbyterians [settled](#) in Belfast. Radical thinkers,

they were the [driving force](#) behind advances in medicine, engineering, education and the arts.

INDUSTRIAL POWER

[Granted](#) city status in 1888, Belfast became an industrial giant. This was the world's largest centre of [linen](#) manufacture and its [shipyards](#) built a quarter of total UK [tonnage](#). Belfast was a major centre of employment. However, the vast majority of the political elite, the business owners and wealthy merchants, were Anglicans and Presbyterians. The growth of an Irish Catholic working population, facing discrimination and inequality, led to sectarian tensions.

A TROUBLED CITY

Violence occurred during 1920-22. Ireland fought for independence and Belfast emerged as the capital of a newly-declared (British) Northern Ireland. Decades later, serious conflict again erupted in 1969, and lasted for over three decades, a period known as the Troubles. [Loyalists](#) (mainly Protestant unionists) fought to remain part of the United Kingdom, while republicans (mostly Catholic nationalists) battled to be part of the Republic of Ireland. With British troops on its streets, Belfast became a divided city.

PEACE DIVIDEND

By the time of the peace agreement in April 1998, more than 3,600 people had died and around fifty thousand had been injured. The economic and psychological damage was immense. Belfast began the task of [healing](#), regenerating its [docklands](#) and replacing its old industries with new services and tourist attractions. Peace provided a dividend to the city and its people in the form of business investment and employment.

A CITY OF QUARTERS

Traditionally home to different districts, Belfast today is defined by its cultural [quarters](#). The Cathedral Quarter surrounds St. Anne's Cathedral, home to an annual arts festival. The Queen's Quarter, near the world-famous Queen's University, includes the Botanic Gardens and Ulster Museum. The Titanic Quarter attracts millions of visitors every year to what was once a busy [docklands](#). It is home to the world's largest Titanic visitor attraction, an entertainment complex, and TV and film studios.

INSPIRATION AND HOPE

Belfast has so many faces: St. George's Market, Samson and Goliath (the giant Harland & Wolff [cranes](#)), political murals, City Hall, [fine dining](#) live music, one of Ireland's oldest libraries, and 1,200 hectares of parks. While tensions between political powers and religious communities remain, Belfast is moving inexorably towards a more hopeful and inspiring future.

Glossary

- **healing** = sanare
- **quarters** = quartieri, rioni
- **harbour** = porto
- **sprawling** = in espansione
- **HMS** = nave di sua maestà (His/Her Majesty's Ship)
- **state-of-the-art** = all'avanguardia
- **lie** = trovarsi
- **settled** = stabilirsi
- **driving force** = forza trainante
- **Loyalists** = lealisti
- **mild** = mite
- **given way** = cedere il passo
- **UNESCO** = United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
- **docklands** = zona portuale
- **cranes** = gru
- **fine dining** = cucina raffinata
- **linen** = lino
- **shipyards** = cantieri navali
- **tonnage** = tonnellaggio
- **hub** = centro
- **ruled** = governare
- **Granted** = concedere