

Belfast, an experience waiting to be discovered

Irish tourism bosses visited the capital in a bid to woo Scots visitors to Belfast, a city with a rich history and culture and already a popular destination for city breaks.

It is, undoubtedly, an easy hop over the Irish sea with flights and ferries and the latest addition is Emerald Airlines who offer daily flights from Edinburgh and Glasgow to Belfast City Airport, just minutes by taxi to the vibrant city centre.

Belfast is now much removed from the troubles of yesteryear and a magnet for visitors is the Titanic Quarter where the RMS Titanic, which sank in April 1912 after striking an iceberg on her maiden voyage from Southampton to New York, was built.

The museum is an attraction which draws visitors from around the world and the surrounding Maritime Mile is an extension of the experience, from the historic docks where Titanic was built, to the SS Nomadic, a tender to the Titanic and the last remaining White Star Line ship in the world. It has been restored to its original.

The Titanic Quarter is a comfortable walk across the River Lagan from the city centre and here visitors can enjoy art, architecture plus an array of bars and restaurants.

The Crown Bar, the most famous pub in the city, is a must and it is easily found opposite the Europa Hotel. Try the Irish stew.

Most eateries celebrate the local food and drink culture and now there are roof-top bars and Michelin star restaurants which add to the heady choice for visitors.

Of course, traditional music in watering holes in the city is another attraction as is the retail sector which offers good shopping. Don't miss Victoria Square where most shops are under cover.

The PR blurb says: "Belfast is a city that invites exploration, connection, and enjoyment. Belfast is a city where history meets modernity, where creativity flourishes, where luxury, and culture converge to create unforgettable memories."

Where to stay? There are numerous options and The Galgorm Collection is one, catering for different tastes.

Bosses are spending millions developing their chain and each of the Collection's destinations is said to offer a unique experience.

The flagship property, Galgorm, is described as a "luxurious" spa retreat, but an alternative is "its laid-back sister", The Rabbit Hotel & Retreat. There is also the The Old Inn, built around a coaching house established on the spot in 1614 and now a modern, 34-bed, five-star hotel.

There are two city centre restaurants in the group, Fratelli (gourmet pizza, risotto and Italian mains) and Parisien (classic French in "elegant old-world environs", also serving afternoon tea).

Belfast boasts a number of walking tours and don't forget sport. Golf is huge in Ireland which hosts the 153rd Open at Royal Portrush in 2025, but there are a host of other golf courses to test you not far from the city.

Fishing is another sport which has much to offer near Belfast and, of course, ice hockey fans from Scotland know all about the Belfast Giants, one of Britain's leading Elite League ice hockey teams. Dundee Stars, Fife Flyers and Glasgow Clan are regular visitors to the 10,000-capacity, SSE Arena which is a

walk away from the city centre.

Anne McMullan, senior director, marketing and communications, for Visit Belfast said: "Belfast is more than just a destination, it is an experience waiting to be discovered."

PICTURE: Belfast City Hall, courtesy of Visit Belfast



FESTIVE FUN: The Christmas Market in Belfast, courtesy of Visit Belfast



THE BIG FISH: An example of art in the city centre of Belfast,
courtesy of Visit Belfast