

34 Fun Facts About Belfast, Northern Ireland

Last week when we were discussing her upcoming trip to Ireland this summer, a woman named Donna asked me what I knew about Belfast, Ireland. I had to answer, *“Not much, except that I know there is a Titanic Museum there where the Titanic was built.”* Our discussion made me curious, so I researched Belfast.



Belfast is the political capital of Northern Ireland.

Here are 34 fun facts I learned about Belfast, the capital and largest city of Northern Ireland.



Collage of Belfast photos

1. **Belfast is the second largest city on the island of Ireland.**
2. **Northern Ireland, along with England, Scotland and Wales** make up the “United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.”
3. The land that _____ **Belfast has been occupied since the Bronze Age.**



The Giant's Ring is a prehistoric henge site just south of Belfast in Northern Ireland.

It _____ for horse racing in the 18th century.

4. **The 5,000-year-old henge, known as Giant's Ring,** is located near Belfast, and Iron Age hill fort _____ still are present in the surrounding hills.
5. While Belfast stayed a small settlement during the Middle Ages, **the city _____ a leading role in the Industrial Revolution** and was Ireland's largest city around the early part of the 20th century.
6. **When the U.S. Civil War disrupted Europe's cotton _____, Irish linen experienced a revival.** Linen companies flourished, and **Belfast became the world's largest linen-producing area, hence its nickname, Linenopolis.**



Workers ending their shift at the Harland & Wolff shipyard in Belfast in 1911. The ship in the background is the Titanic.

7. Its location at the mouth of the River Lagan _____ **Belfast an ideal location for the shipbuilding industry.** Harland and Wolff had the largest shipyard in the world when it built the RMS Titanic during 1911-1912.
8. During the last part of the 19th century, **large numbers of Catholics began to migrate in to the prosperous Protestant city of Belfast in search of work.** This migration _____ tensions as Catholics and Protestants competed for jobs. As the minority, Catholics felt discrimination.

9. With a majority of the residents in the northern part of Ireland being Protestant descendants of colonists from Great Britain, **the British parliament** _____ **Northern and Southern Ireland in 1921, creating Northern Ireland.**

10. The constitutional status of Northern Ireland was the key _____ during **The Troubles**, the conflict in Northern Ireland that began in the late 1960s. Unionists/loyalists (primarily Protestants) wanted Northern Ireland to stay in the United Kingdom, while Irish nationalists/republicans (mostly Catholics) wanted to leave the UK and join a united Ireland. The conflict began amidst a campaign to end discrimination against the Catholic/nationalist minority by the Protestant/unionist-dominated government and police force.

11. **The Belfast “Good Friday” Agreement of 1998** was seen as the end of **The Troubles**.

12. **By 2014, the Catholic population in Belfast has** _____ **to 49 percent**, while the Protestant population has dropped to 42 percent, according to BBC News.

13. Readily _____ from any area of the city, **Belfast’s famous cranes are called Samson and Goliath**, still the biggest free-standing cranes anywhere in the world. They have been classified as official historical monuments.

14. **A series of hills** _____ **the northwestern side of Belfast**, including Divis Mountain, Black Mountain and Cavehill.



Cave Hill overlooking the city of Belfast. It is distinguished by its famous 'Napoleon's Nose', an outcrop which resembles the profile of the famous emperor Napoleon.

15. **Cave Hill is believed to have inspired author Jonathan Swift’s sleeping giant in his *Gulliver’s Travels* novel.** When Swift resided at Lilliput Cottage near the bottom of Belfast’s Limestone Road, he imagined that the Cave Hill _____ the shape of a sleeping giant safeguarding the city.

16. The shape of the giant’s nose, known as **Napoleon’s Nose**, is **officially named McArt’s Fort after Art O’Neill**, a 17th-century _____ who controlled the area.

17. On _____, **it rains 157 days a year in Belfast**, less than Scotland, but more than Dublin.

18. **Snow typically falls in Belfast less than 10 days a year.**

19. Since 2001, the Belfast city council has developed a number of cultural quarters:

- The Cathedral Quarter _____ its name from St Anne's Cathedral (Church of Ireland).
- **The Gaeltacht Quarter around the Falls Road in west Belfast promotes and _____ the use of the Irish language.**
- The Queen's Quarter in south Belfast, named _____ Queen's University, is home to Botanic Gardens and the Ulster Museum.
- **The Golden Mile describes the area between Belfast City Hall and Queen's University, with some of the best bars and restaurants in the city.**
- The Titanic Quarter is named after the RMS (Royal Mail Ship) Titanic, built here in 1912. This quarter includes reclaimed land adjacent to Belfast Harbor, _____ known as Queen's Island, and today is home to the Titanic Museum.



The Titanic Museum.

20. Opened in March, 2012 on the site of the former Harland & Wolff shipyard, the Titanic Belfast is a monument to Belfast's maritime heritage, _____ nine high-tech galleries amidst a crisscross of escalators and suspended walkways.

21. Actor Liam Neeson had his stage _____ at Belfast's Lyric Theater. Neeson was born in the town of Ballymena, County Antrim, located 28 miles northwest of Belfast.



Lanyon Building Square at Queen's University Belfast.

22. Women could _____ any office at Queen's University in Belfast, twelve years before they could study at Oxford.

23. Surrounded by mountains that create a micro-climate conducive to horticulture, Belfast contains 3,000 acres of parks, many of them _____.



The Palm House at the Botanic Gardens.

24. The Botanic Gardens Palm House — designed by Sir Charles Lanyon and built in the 1830s — is one of the earliest examples of a curvilinear and cast iron glass-enclosed greenhouse. The Botanic Gardens Park also hosted a U2 concert in 1997.

25. South of the Belfast city center, the Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park attracts thousands of visitors each year to its International Rose Garden. Every July Rose Week features more than 20,000 _____.

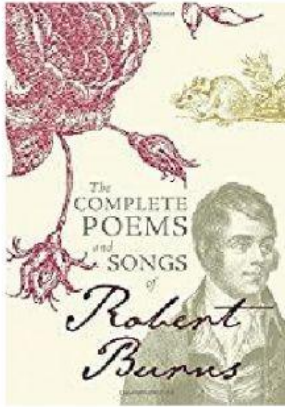
26. John Wood Dunlop invented the pneumatic tyre in Belfast.

27. Led Zeppelin's Stairway To Heaven was first played live in the Ulster Hall.



Obel Tower is the tallest building in Belfast and Ireland.

28. The Obel Tower is the tallest building in Belfast, and in Northern Ireland.



29. Opened in 1788, the Linen Hall Library is Belfast's oldest. It **houses a large collection of work by writer Robert Burns**, as well as more than 20,000 archive items relating to Irish politics and culture. Guided tours of the library are offered in the summer months.

30. James Murray invented Milk of Magnesia in Belfast.

31. Oscar Wilde thought that there was only one beautiful building in Belfast. It is now home

to a Marks and Spencer department store.

32. The Glass Jar is **the narrowest bar in Belfast**.



Belfast Castle

33. There have been three different “Belfast Castles.” The current building at the Cave Hill site was finished in 1870. It was designed by Charles Lanyon in a deer reserve, and was the residence of the 3rd Marquis of Donegall. The first “Belfast Castle” was built by the Normans in the late 12th Century. The second was the home of Sir Arthur Chichester and was built in 1611, only to burn down in 1708.

34. The Crown Bar, one of the most famous pubs in Belfast, **was originally a Railway Hotel dating to 1826 when the first train ran from Belfast to Lisburn.**



Write short answers to these questions.

1. What is The Giant's Ring?

2. What major event took place in 1921?

3. What inspired author Jonathan Swift's sleeping giant in his *Gulliver's Travels* novel?

4. Where did actor Liam Neeson have his stage debut?

5. Which band gave a concert at the Botanic Gardens Park in 1997?

6. Where was Led Zeppelin's *Stairway To Heaven* first played?

7. Which is the tallest building in Northern Ireland?

8. Whose literary works can you find in the Linen Hall Library?

9. Which is the narrowest bar in Belfast?

10. What itinerary did the first train cover?
