

# Positive Impacts of Tourism in Northern Ireland

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## TAB 1

**QUESTION – Why is Northern Ireland so appealing to its visitors?**



Were you surprised at any of the answers?

Does your group know any other facts about Northern Ireland?

## INFORMATION

In recent years Northern Ireland and its capital city Belfast, have seen increased visitor numbers and a series of tourism development initiatives have been put in place. The city of Belfast has a number of attractions and is very much associated with the liner *Titanic* since the ship was built in Belfast one hundred years ago. The countryside of Northern Ireland contains a variety of landscapes and some spectacular coastal scenery.

For over 25 years, Northern Ireland hardly existed as a tourist destination. The civil unrest and violence which began in 1969 virtually destroyed the incoming tour business and many people associated the country with guns and bombs. Whilst many tourists from UK, Europe and North America visited the Republic of Ireland, few dared to cross the border.

The city of Belfast developed over time with mixed populations of Anglicans, Scottish Presbyterians and native Irish Roman Catholics. During the height of 'The Troubles' terrorist groups linked to different religions were involved in a series of bombings and murders. These different religious groups lived in separate areas of the city and this is still very much the case today. Murals, painted on walls and the sides of houses give clues as to which religious group lives in the area.

Much of the civil unrest was focused on Belfast, but during the height of 'The Troubles' conflict between the religious groups spread to many towns within Northern Ireland. Sporadic violence between religious groups has always given the city an "edgy" feel and even to this day, minor disputes rapidly escalate to headline-making news. The link below provides an example of the localised unrest which still occurs from time to time.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-19483426>

The situation began to change in the mid 90s after the terrorist groups declared ceasefires. With their personal safety assured, many people were curious to see a country



where media reports had spoken about the tragedy of “The Troubles” taking place in such beautiful countryside.

The Belfast Agreement of 1998 set up the new institutions of government and, although it was to be five more years until the Northern Ireland Assembly began work in earnest, the atmosphere of peace and normality was quickly restored and consequently, visitor numbers began to climb.

Northern Ireland is a unique destination within the British Isles. The six counties of Northern Ireland have total land area of just over 5,200 square miles, its diversity lies in its scenery: lakes, coastline, mountains up to 3,000 feet and the spectacular World Heritage Site that is the Giants Causeway, which attracts over 850,000 visitors a year. It is the only part of the United Kingdom which shares a land boundary with another EU member, although Northern Ireland still uses the pound sterling while the Republic of Ireland uses the euro.

## QUESTION – How can visitors get to Northern Ireland?

### EVIDENCE LOG 1 – Travelling by ferry

Research the Stena Line and P&O ferries websites to complete the table on the Evidence Log. Can you provide details of four ferry routes between Great Britain and Ireland?

## EVIDENCE LOG 2 – Travelling by air

Using the websites of the four airports in Northern Ireland and Dublin airport, complete the table below.

<http://www.dublinairport.com>

<http://www.belfastcityairport.com>

<http://www.belfastairport.com>

<http://www.cityofderryairport.com>

From which of the four airports above could you fly to? (Some destinations might be served by more than one airport).



## INFORMATION

Northern Ireland has good ferry connections to Great Britain with the main ferry terminals at Larne and Belfast offering routes to ports in England and Scotland. The province is also served by three airports, two in Belfast and one in Londonderry. The two Belfast airports compete fiercely for business, with major airlines such as Aer Lingus, easyJet, Ryanair and British Airways often moving routes from one airport to another to offer new routes and increase passenger numbers. Air links to other parts of the United Kingdom are good, and have continued to improve in recent years. However, its connections to Europe and North America are limited in comparison with competitors such as Dublin airport.

One factor that makes calculating visits to Northern Ireland difficult is that there are no border checks between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Every day thousands of people cross between the two parts of Ireland for a number of reasons. Tourists travelling by car can easily enter



Northern Ireland by car after flying into Dublin airport or travelling by ferry to a port within the Republic of Ireland.

## **TAB 2**

**QUESTION – How is the marketing of Northern Ireland being managed?**







### **EVIDENCE LOG 3 – Cruise Lines**

Using the link below, research the cruise line identified to find out the number of passengers each ship can carry.

<https://www.belfast-harbour.co.uk/port/cruise-schedule>

### **EVIDENCE LOG 4 – The positive impacts of cruise ships**

Think about the positive impacts that cruise ship arrivals have on a destination. Use the information below to support your answer if required.

Explain why the excursions from a cruise ship:

- a) Is a good example of how the 'multiplier effect' works in the travel and tourism industry
- b) Show how organisations from different sectors of the travel and tourism industry work together.

Record your findings on the Evidence Log.

## **INFORMATION**

Despite the recession which occurred from 2008 onwards, Northern Ireland has experienced steady growth in visitor numbers in recent years. Discounting VFR traffic, Northern Ireland has experienced more UK visitors who come for business. Also, there are increased numbers of leisure travellers who may include Northern Ireland as part of an all-Ireland self-drive holiday. And golfers from both the UK and North America who are attracted by the famous links courses such as Royal Portrush and Royal Co Down.

In recent years changes have been made to the way in which tourism to Ireland, including Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland is marketed.

In the public sector, Northern Ireland is marketed domestically by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board, based in Belfast. The NITB [www.nitb.com](http://www.nitb.com) and its sister consumer site [www.discovernorthernireland.com](http://www.discovernorthernireland.com) is responsible for research, accommodation grading, marketing and allocation of capital grants. Under the terms of the 1998 Belfast Agreement, Northern Ireland is marketed "off island" by Tourism Ireland [www.tourismireland.com](http://www.tourismireland.com), many of whose employees have worked for NITB and its Republic of Ireland counterpart, Bord Failte Eireann [www.failteireland.ie](http://www.failteireland.ie). Tourism Ireland has offices in all Ireland's main markets and is currently working very hard in the NMD's (New & Developing Markets) of China, India and Brazil.

One of the functions of Tourism Ireland and other bodies has been to instil confidence into tour operators to offer tours to the island of Ireland, incorporating visits to both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.



As an example of the north-south co-operation which the new political climate has brought about, one has only to look at operators such as Cosmos. The itinerary suggested from the link below would not have been considered possible 20 years ago.

[http://www.cosmos.com/Product.aspx?trip=29200&content=overview&source=CO\\_Product\\_Britain](http://www.cosmos.com/Product.aspx?trip=29200&content=overview&source=CO_Product_Britain)

Today, Northern Ireland is once again an attractive destination. Its main markets are:

**Leisure travel** – Belfast is highly rated by many travel writers as a “must see” weekend destination. In addition, many all-Ireland coach tours now feature 2-3 days in Northern Ireland on their itineraries. Fly-drive holidays are popular with increasing numbers of tourists from the Republic of Ireland, Great Britain and other parts of Europe.

**Cruise ships** – Belfast is one of only three deep water ports in Ireland, meaning that ships up to 135,000 tonnes can safely berth there. The day excursions mostly



offer the Giants Causeway and the Antrim Coast; coach and walking tours of Belfast; tours of the Ards peninsula and the National Trust property at Mount Stewart.

**‘2012 sees a huge 32% increase on last year with 41 cruise ships bringing almost 75,000 visitors to the port. The continuing success of Belfast as a cruise call is testimony to the efforts of the Cruise Belfast Initiative; a marketing initiative between Belfast Harbour and Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau (BVCB) which markets Belfast internationally as a leading**

destination for cruise ships visiting Northern Europe in the summer.’ (Belfast Harbour Authority)

The link below gives details of the schedule of cruise ship arrivals in the Port of Belfast during 2012.

<https://www.belfast-harbour.co.uk/port/cruise-schedule>

On each of these days, the tourism industry in Northern Ireland has to supply coaches and drivers plus tour guides to take the passengers from the ships on tours of Northern Ireland. These passengers may well need to have lunch at a hotel and spend time at an attraction.

**Golf** – Northern Ireland has some of the world’s finest links courses and, remarkably, produced three major golfing champions in the space of 15 months.

This has raised the profile of Northern Ireland worldwide and has generated many enquiries, particularly from the USA.



## EVIDENCE LOG 5 – Royal Portrush Golf Club

Investigate the website of Royal Portrush Golf Club. Think about three other sectors of the travel and tourism industry that would be involved in organising a tour for a group of golfers.

<http://www.royalportrushgolfclub.com>

**MICE** – (Meetings, Incentive, Conferences and Exhibitions) the film industry in particular is very important to NI and the former Paint Hall from the Harland & Wolff shipyard has been converted into one of the biggest sound stages in Europe. A day's filming is sent to Hollywood for overnight editing by high speed undersea cable.



**Sporting activities** – there are many activity centres which offer, for example, four- wheel drive courses, canoe trails and rock climbing. With a population of only 1.6 million in 5,200 square miles, there is plenty of room for outdoor activities. The Ulster rugby team also brings in regular visitors for league and European Rugby Cup matches.

**Music and festivals** – Derry/Londonderry will be the UK Capital of Culture in 2013 and was also the first city in Northern Ireland to host the all-Ireland “Fleadh Ceol” (Music Fest). In addition to traditional Irish culture, Northern Ireland can offer that of the Ulster Scots tradition.



### **Accommodation**

Northern Ireland has the usual range of accommodation: hotels, guest houses, hostels and apartments. In addition, Northern Ireland has a very strong range of bed and breakfasts, all of which are annually inspected by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board [www.nitb.com](http://www.nitb.com)

Most of the hotel stock has been built in the past 15 years. Some “country house” hotels are converted mansions but many now boast spa and golf course facilities (Slieve Donard, and Galgorm Manor). Many of the more modern hotels are purpose-built to the same model as their counterparts in Great Britain.



During “The Troubles” very few investors would have considered NI and the main hotel group was Hastings Hotels <http://www.hastingshotels.com/> which owns six hotels. However, the better security conditions and growth of tourism since 2000 has seen some GB chains enter the market including Premier Inn and Travelodge.

### **EVIDENCE LOG 6 – Tourist accommodation in Northern Ireland**

Using the Northern Ireland Tourist Board website, research accommodation for the following customers and complete the table on the Evidence Log.

In your groups, think about why the accommodation you have selected would be suitable for each group and give your reasons.

## **TAB 3**

**QUESTION – What else is Northern Ireland doing (to promote the positive impacts of tourism)?**





## **EVIDENCE LOG 7 – The Titanic Exhibition**

Find out more about the new Titanic exhibition in Belfast at

<http://www.titanicbelfast.com>

Think about four types of visitors in particular the exhibition might appeal to and explain your reasons on the Evidence Log.

### **INFORMATION**

Prior to 2000, Northern Ireland's main attractions consisted mainly of natural landscape. For such a small country, comprising only six counties, the diversity of scenery is unique. From the hexagonal stones of the Giant's Causeway to the limestone caves at Marble Arch; from the beaches of the north coast at Portstewart and Portrush to the mountains of Mourne and the lakes of Fermanagh, Northern Ireland has superb scenery.

However, tourism strategy began to change in the 90s when the Tourist Board realised that "scenery is not enough" and in recent years, there has been major investment in attractions which relate the history of both cultural traditions.

As part of this strategy a number of major projects have been identified. These include:

### **The *Titanic***

The Titanic was built and launched in Belfast 100 years ago and the city has been able to capitalise on the ongoing interest in the 'unsinkable' vessel which was hit by an iceberg and sank during her maiden voyage across the Atlantic. A major new exhibition, housed in an iconic building next to the dock where the ship was built in 1912, has recently been opened.

### **The Giant's Causeway**

The Giant's Causeway has always been one of the 'must do' attractions in Northern Ireland. Most tourists to the province will pay a visit to the attraction, which is seen very much as a 'honeypot' destination.

In 2012 a new visitor centre was opened at the Giant's Causeway by the National Trust to cater for the ever increasing number of visitors. This 'state-of-the-art' facility provides audio tours in a number of languages and can manage the increasing number of coach parties from tours and cruise ships.

The increasing popularity of the Giant's Causeway has meant that in busy periods parking has become an issue and so park and ride scheme from the nearby town of Bushmills is now provided.

### **EVIDENCE LOG 8 – Tourist facilities**

Summarise the facilities provided by the National Trust at the Giant's Causeway using the link below. Use the Evidence Log to record your findings:

<http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/giants-causeway>

## Major events

The 2012 Irish Open at Portrush generated an income of over one million euros and brought in 130,000 visitors to Northern Ireland during the four days of the tournament.



In 2013 the World Police and Fire Games will be held in Belfast and other towns in Northern Ireland. Building on the legacy of the London Olympics and the new-found confidence in hosting major events, the event is expected to attract 10,000 competitors and 15,000 visitors.

## **TAB 4**

**QUESTION – What positive impacts has Northern Island witnessed so far?**

### **INFORMATION**

- **Employment** in tourism and related industries is now over 10% of total employment in the province. Many students enter the industry directly and the culture of CPD (Continuous Professional Development) is being embedded for staff at all levels from NVQ2 to post-graduate. No longer is tourism regarded as “just a holiday job.” Major employers such as Hastings Hotels encourage all staff to gain professional qualifications.



- **Improvement in facilities.** The new “Titanic Belfast” visitor centre cost £97 million and has targeted over 300,000 visitors each year. The new Giants Causeway Visitor centre cost £18 million and is capable of handling over one million visitors annually.



- **Improvement in the general pride and sense of well-being** of the people of Northern Ireland. For over 30 years, the people of Northern Ireland regarded tourists as a curious phenomenon. There was always the suspicion – often justified – that people came here for “dark tourism” i.e. to see the damage and destruction. Slowly, people are taking pride in the fact the Northern Ireland can offer the best – and not the worst – of the two traditions which comprise its people.



- **Revenue:** tourism represents one of the best hopes that Northern Ireland might reduce its dependence on the annual subsidy from HM Treasury (approx £10 billion annually). No-one really expects Northern Ireland to become one of the world's "hot" destinations but the more Northern Ireland is exposed to outside visitors, the better the connections it can establish with future influential figures who might have visited the province as backpackers.
- **A better co-operation with its neighbours in the Republic of Ireland.** The establishment of Tourism Ireland and the marketing featuring the best of the north and the south further reinforces the understanding that Ireland is really just one product fighting for its share of a very competitive international market.



Detailed data relating to tourism trends in Northern Ireland can be found at

<http://www.nitb.com/ResearchIntelligence.aspx>