

## **Travel report**

### **Belfast**

Belfast is a unique and interesting city, with a rich but complicated history that still manifests itself in many ways in the city. Located in Northern Ireland, a nation that is part of the United Kingdom but share a history and culture with the rest of Ireland, the republic, that became a sovereign state in 1922. Belfast is today influenced by the long civil conflict called "the Troubles", that went on from the late 1960s until 1998. The conflict was essentially between Irish Catholics, the loyalists, and British protestants, the royalists. Being a part of a protestant state, the catholic inhabitants in Belfast and Northern Ireland were tired of structural discrimination against them, and demanded better opportunities in life. There are many city tours that describe this history and the city is filled with murals with political messages.

Belfast is a relatively small capital city, with about 500 000 inhabitants. There is however a lot to do and see in and around the city, including a weekend in-door market with antiques, art and lots of food. Nature is just outside the city, from Belfast Castle there is a beautiful hike called Cave Hill that gives a view of the whole city and all the way to Scotland. The city is also filled with Irelands famous pubs, and it is possible to hear live music every night. Ireland is a relatively small island, so it is also possible to visit all its sights by going on day- or weekend trips. A visit to Northern Irelands Causeway Coastal Rout is a must!

### **Queen's University**

Queen's University is located in beautiful buildings in the vibrant University Courter, with great facilities for studying, having a coffee or lunch. The McLay Library is especially great with lots of space to study and many computers for loan. The lecturers and staff are very friendly, and there is a relaxed relationship between students and teachers, similar to Sweden. The work load is more compromised to the end of the semester, during the semester it is mostly your own responsibility to read and prepare for the exams or essays coming up. If you plan your time right, this means there is great opportunities to travel throughout the semester as you will not be overwhelmed with work. At least this was the case for me, studying geography!

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## **Arrival**

I had no problem arriving to Belfast or to my accommodation. People in Ireland are very friendly so it was easy to get any help needed. I arrived in Dublin and then took the train to Belfast. During the first week, I attended orientation activities in and outside of school, such as a free dinner and pub crawl, where I made many of the friends that I had for the rest of the semester.

## **Courses**

During my time at Queen's I mostly had lectures, a couple of hours a week for each module, when the professor would describe and discuss the different subjects. I also had a few seminars, where the students had time to discuss amongst ourselves, and in one module I had a group debate and presentation. Most of the time however it was my own responsibility to read the literature supplied by the lecturers and prepare for the essays in the end of the semester.

### *Environmental Geopolitics: Tristan Sturm.*

A module on how environmental change caused by humans are increasingly becoming a part of global politics as its effects are becoming more and more known. The spatial dynamics of climate change is discussed, how some countries are contributing more to destroying the environment whilst others are hit harder by the consequences. Part of the module was weekly discussions on the topics, one group debate and a graded group presentation. In the end, there was an individual essay that stood for the main part of the grade. Tristan was a very engaged and fun lecturer, he made each topic interesting and motivated us students to take part of the discussion. Overall a very good module!

### *Geographies of Economic restructuring and Social change: Ian Shuttleworth.*

A module that describes the development of uneven geographies in our modern society, with a focus on Britain and Northern Ireland. An economic restructuring mean that traditional jobs are lost, leading to social deprivation as some are left out of work. Northern Ireland and Belfast are used as examples, which is interesting and gives an insight in the local context. The examination was writing a research bid, the module therefore also had a focus on method and how to write a literature review. It will be helpful in writing a thesis!

### *Contemporary approaches to geographical enquiry: Nuala Johnsson.*

This module examines key theoretical debates within geography, such as Marxism,

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post-modernism and feminism that are used within research. It developed a understanding on how to use these theories, and what there implications, such as social, cultural and ethical, might be. In this module we had to write two essays, and to help us prepare we had seminars where we had the opportunity to discuss with other students. This was very helpful in writing the essays and a good way to understand some of the complicated theories.

### **Accommodation**

I lived at the accommodation offered by Queen's University, in a complex of student homes called Elms Village. There was a walk of 15 minutes to the university, and 15 more to the city centre. I lived in a corridor with 10 other students, both from Northern Ireland and from other parts of the world. The accommodation worked fine for me, and was easy to arrange. The cost was a bit higher than renting a private apartment, but was beneficial since it was possible to only rent for the semester rather than for 6 months or even a year.

### **Fun and leisure**

Belfast is a city full of fun things to do as a student. The student pubs in the University courter are cheap and always filled with other students. In the city centre there are loads of bars, pubs and cafés. And cheap cinema! In addition to studying, seeing my friends and going to pubs I really enjoyed going to a yoga studio close to Elms Village. They were super friendly, great teachers and the place was not too expensive. It is called Abhayasa yoga Belfast!

### **Costs**

Overall I would say that the costs were pretty similar to Sweden, only a little bit cheaper. Food costs in supermarkets were good, going out for dinner was more expensive but overall Belfast is an affordable city. It was about as expensive as I had imagined it to be!

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