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Belfast's Busiest Ever Cruise Season Kicks Off



The 2008 Belfast Cruise season has kicked off with the arrival of the Celebrity Cruises vessel, The Constellation, into the Port of Belfast. The Constellation is one of a record 37 cruise ships scheduled to visit the city this year as a result of the work carried out by the **Belfast Cruise Initiative**, a partnership between the Port of Belfast and the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau (BVCB).

Photo caption: (L-R) Susie McCullough of the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau, the former Lord Mayor of Belfast Councillor Jim Rodgers and Joe O'Neill of the Port of Belfast were onboard the Celebrity

Cruises vessel Constellation as the 2008 Belfast Cruise season kicks off.

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BVCB celebrates Conference Ambassador Programme



BVCB recently celebrated the success of Belfast Conference Ambassador Programme at a civic reception held in the Harbour Office, Belfast Harbour Commissioners. Over one hundred ambassadors from various fields including medicine, academia and business were thanked by Councillor Jim Rodgers, the former Lord Mayor of Belfast, on behalf of the city for bringing both international and national conferences to Belfast.

Photo caption: (L-R) Gerry Lennon, BVCB; James Uhoimobhi, International Network for Engineering, Education and Research; Jennifer Patterson, Belfast Waterfront Hall; former Lord Mayor of Belfast, Councillor Jim Rodgers.

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BWC & NITB host Greater Belfast fam trip



The **Belfast Welcome Centre** and the **Northern Ireland Tourist Board** recently hosted a familiarisation trip of Greater Belfast. Over 40 staff from Northern Ireland Tourist Information Centres, transport providers, Belfast hotels and both Airports attended and visited attractions and accommodation providers throughout Belfast, Newtownabbey, Lisburn, Antrim and Carrickfergus, including Pattersons Spade Mill, Hillsborough Castle and the Belfast Wheel to become better



acquainted with the range of activities and facilities available in the area.

Photo caption: Lisa Prior, Belfast Welcome Centre joins the group at the

Belfast Wheel

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New Visitor & Accommodation Guide for Antrim

Antrim Boroughs new Visitor and Accommodation Guide provides up-to-date information on the Boroughs expanding list of attractions including Clementsmount Fun Farm in Crumlin, World of Owls in Randalstown, Paintballing at Shanes Castle. The guide also features some of the finest sporting and leisure offerings including Allen Park and Antrim Forum and fishing on Lough Neagh as well as extensive accommodation listings.

Photo Caption: (L-R) Sara Graham, BWC, Sarah Gibson, GBBCA TIC and Lorna Russell, BIA TIC help to launch Antrim Borough's new Visitor and Accommodation Guide

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Access



New Look Stena HSS Unveiled Following 2m Refit

Stena Line has launched the new-look HSS Stena Voyager following a 2m refit which was officially unveiled to the former Lord Mayor of Belfast, Councillor Jim Rodgers, during a sailing from Belfast to Stranraer. The onboard improvements on the HSS Stena Voyager vessel include an expansion of the Stena Plus service with a 160-seater lounge at the front of the vessel and a separate family area which now houses Playstation 3 consoles. Other improvements include a new treatment zone in association with New York City Nails, two new barista coffee houses, and a

metropolitan bar as well as kids area and teen town section.

Photo caption: Stena Line onboard service manager Gordon Irons (l) and Stena Line UK Communications and PR Manager Nigel Tilson (r) reveal the new-look HSS Stena Voyager to the former Lord Mayor of Belfast, Councillor Jim Rodgers and Belfast City Council tourism development manager Pier Morrow

Translink launch "My Metro Belfast"

Translink has produced a visitors guide to making the most of Belfast's bus network to discover the city. For previous visitors who wish to explore a certain area in more depth, or for the new tourist wishing to see the whole city, the new Metro Day ticket booklet My Metro Belfast Explorer Day ticket is an ideal guide to independently see the sights of Belfast city centre and the outskirts of the city.

New route from Dundee to Belfast with Loganair

Flybe's new franchise partner Loganair are offering a new route from Dundee to **Belfast City Airport**

easyJet launch new early bird service

easyJet has commenced a new 'early bird' service from Belfast International Airport to London Gatwick. The weekday flight which started on 31 March leaves **Belfast International Airport** at 0630 and arrives at Gatwick at 0755.

Aer Lingus announces three new routes

Belfast International Airport has welcomed the arrival of three new routes as **Aer Lingus** announced its winter schedule for 2008/09. Munich, Milan and Lanzarote have been added to the network out of Belfast bringing to 34, the number of direct scheduled international destinations available from the international airport.

New Coach Park Opened in Belfast

Belfast's first designated **Coach Park** in association with **Belfast City Sightseeing** opened on 1st March 2008 to service the growing number of buses and coaches now visiting the city. Situated within the Belfast Harbour Estate, the coach park is only a five minute drive from Belfast City Centre, and is located in a fully secured area. Services also include overnight parking, coach washing facilities, interior valet and light maintenance. For more information contact 02890 9073 9072 or 07789 222 999.

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Awards

Botanic Inns win at Publican Awards 2008

Botanic Inns won the Best UK Multiple Operator Award at the recent UK wide Publican Awards defeating companies from London, Cardiff, Nottingham and Manchester in the 2-19 category.

Photo caption: Stephen Magorrian, Managing Director, Botanic Inns picks up the award



Old Bushmills Distillery scoops Outstanding Contribution accolade at Tourism Awards

In their 400th anniversary year, the Old Bushmills Distillery was recognised for its Outstanding Contribution to Tourism at the 30th annual Northern Ireland Tourism Awards. The Distillery was

described as an icon for Northern Ireland with visitors from across the world making it an essential stop on their north coast itineraries. The visitor centre at the Distillery welcomed more than 135,000 visitors in 2006, making it one of Northern Ireland's most popular attractions.

Other winners at the awards included:-

Tourism Partnership Initiative of the Year

Winner **Belfast City Councils Cultural Tourism Initiative**

Marketing Excellence

Winner **Belfast Zoo**

Highly Commended **Clearsky Adventure Centre,**

People Development

Winner **Radisson SAS Hotel, Belfast**

Highly Commended **Hastings Hotel Group**

Commended **Holiday Inn, Belfast**

Hotel

Winner **The Merchant, Belfast**

Visitor Attraction

Winner **Ulster American Folk Park, Tyrone**

Highly Commended **W5, Belfast**

Tourism Innovation

Winner **Bunk Campers**

Highly Commended **I Spy Northern Ireland**

Tourist Information Centre

Winner Fermanagh Tourist Information Centre

Highly Commended **Belfast Welcome Centre**

Receptionist of the Year Competition winners

The Northern Ireland Hotels Federation (NIHF) hosted the fifth Receptionist of the Year competition and Tammy Stephenson from the **Beechlawn Hotel** walked away with the Best Receptionist in Northern Ireland accolade with Heather Anderson (**Hilton Belfast**) winning third place. The Most Promising Receptionist category was won by Julie Dutkiewicz from the **Merchant Hotel** with Sara Beltran of the **Radisson SAS** runner up.

Belfast Telegraph Northern Ireland Business Awards 2008

Hastings Hotels have won the Excellence in Marketing Achievement accolade at the Belfast Telegraphs Northern Ireland Business Awards 2008. **Belfast Zoo** and **W5** were both commended in this category, whilst the zoo has also won the Best Public Relations Campaign accolade at the All Ireland Marketing Awards 2008.

Northern Irelands Top 100 Companies

Translink have ranked 7th in the Belfast Telegraph Northern Irelands Top 100 companies. **Diageo, Belfast International Airport, Hastings Hotel Group, Botanic Inns** and **Belfast Harbour Commissioners** were also placed within the top 100.

Belfast Waterfront MD scoops award

Belfast Waterfront Managing Director, Tim Husbands, has won the Institute of Hospitality's Professional of the Year (Public Sector) award at this year's Janus Awards for Professionalism.

Spa at Galgorm recommended by Conde Nast

Galgorm Resort & Spa has won a coveted place in Conde Nast Traveller Magazine as one of the hottest new spas in the world.

Antrims Express by Holiday Inn and Avenue House Guesthouse awarded 3 star ratings

Antrims Express by Holiday Inn is celebrating after being awarded a three-star rating. The rating, given by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board, was awarded due to the services and facilities available for clients.

Avenue House Guesthouse on Eglantine Avenue are also celebrating after being awarded a 3 star rating

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Attractions



IKEA Belfast Welcomes 1,000,000th Visitor

Just four months since opening, **IKEA Belfast** has welcomed its 1,000,000th visitor to the store. The Swedish home furnishings giant, which recently celebrated 21 years in the UK, said it was delighted by the public's response to the new store.

Photo caption: Lucky 1,000,000th visitor, Catherine McGarry from Loughgiel, County Antrim, was presented with an IKEA gift card and bouquet of flowers by assistant store manager Stephen Gibson.

Belfast Zoo celebrates another new arrival

Belfast Zoo has celebrated the arrival of Arthur the first sifaka baby to be born in the British Isles, which brings the number of sifaka at Belfast Zoo to five. The group at Belfast Zoo are Crowned Sifaka, on loan from the Madagascar government. The sifaka is a type of lemur classified as critically endangered with population estimates varying between just 100 and 1,000 individuals left in the world.

CS Lewis Tour

The CS Lewis guided bus tour departs from the Linenhall Library at 2pm every Sunday from 1st of June to 14th September inclusive. The tour lasts 2 hours and fifteen minutes and will include Little Lea, Campbell College, and St. Marks Church. Tickets are available from **Belfast Welcome Centre** at 028 9024 6609 and cost 8 for Adults and 5 concession.

The Gateway to Ulster Tours

A new Gateway to Ulster promises to give a feel for the history and story of the Ulster-Scots and the role they played in Ulster and North America. Included will be a fully guided return trip from Belfast to Carrickfergus Castle, with an opportunity to stand in the footsteps of historic figures such as King John (of Magna Carta fame), the Duke of Schomberg and King William of Orange - and afterwards visiting the Andrew Jackson Cottage and US Rangers Centre as well enjoying live Ulster-Scots Music and a meeting the Mayor of Carrickfergus. The tour will run every Sunday in July departing 2pm from Belfast Welcome Centre returning back 5pm. Tickets are available from **Belfast Welcome Centre** on 028 9024 6609 and cost 10 for adults and 8 concession

Crumlin Road Gaol Tours

Guided tours of one of Belfasts most distinctive and notorious buildings, Crumlin Road Gaol, will commence on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from 13 June 08 to 12 September 08. Tours will be conducted by qualified Blue Badge guides and will last approximately one hour. Tickets are available from the **Belfast Welcome Centre** at 028 9024 6609 costing 5 for Adults, 3 groups and concessions free.

Ulster American Folk Park Draws Biggest Numbers Ever

Culture Minister, Edwin Poots, MLA, has announced record visitor figures for the **Ulster American Folk Park** in Co Tyrone. Nearly 165,000 visitors were welcomed there between April 2007 and March 2008 - an 11% increase over the previous year and the highest since the Ulster American Folk Park opened over 30 years ago.

New Collection launched at Equinox

Equinox in Belfast will launch the new collection from Rosenthal Home Designs in June 2008. The new collection of tableware, vases, dishes, candles and accessories will be presented in Equinox throughout the month of June. Prices range from 5.00 to 70.00.

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Development

New Exhibition Centre for Europa Hotel

The world famous 4 Star **Europa Hotel** in Belfast has completed its new Conference and Exhibition Centre. Equipped with the latest state-of-the-art technology, the Centre offers one of the largest and most dynamic conference and exhibition spaces on the Island of Ireland.

The new Exhibition Centre joins the already extensive conference facilities of the City centre hotel which boasts the Grand Ballroom, a rooftop banqueting facility with panoramic views over the City and the nine syndicate room Eurobusiness Centre.



Photo caption: Jody Stubbs, Event Co-ordinator at the Europa Hotel and Gerard O'Hara, Banqueting Porter take a look at the finished room.

Conference centre plan likely for Presbyterian headquarters

The Presbyterian Churchs headquarters in Belfast City Centre are likely to be developed into a conference centre as part of suggested plans for multi million pound restoration of the site. Church House which currently houses Spires Shopping Centre occupies a landmark location near City Hall.

Work begins on 6m centre at Titanic Quarter

Construction has begun on a new 6.25m business facility at the **Northern Ireland Science Park** at Belfasts Titanic Quarter. The Concourse development which consists of three interlinked buildings will provide over 210,000 sq ft of high tech flexible workspace for emerging local and international and innovation based businesses. The total complex represents a total investment of more than 20m. Work has started on Building One which is due for completion in August 2008.

Rejuvenated museum to Reopen Summer 2009

The refurbished **Ulster Museum**, one of Northern Irelands most important cultural regeneration projects, will reopen its doors in June 2009. The 14.7million project which is set to transform the Ulster Museum into a truly world class venue for the 21st century - will include a new entrance and arrivals space, a dramatic Hall of Wonders, the transformation of the museums history and natural science galleries and a new rooftop gallery. A new caf and restaurant will also be created on the ground floor overlooking Botanic Gardens. The revitalized Ulster Museum will play a pivotal role in delivering learning programmes and in providing a major tourist attraction.

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Miscellaneous



Premier Inn celebrates 1st birthday

Photo caption: The Lord Mayor of Belfast Councillor Jim Rodgers joined Cathy Hopkins, Sales Manager, Premier Inn and Keith Freeman, General Manager, Premier Inn to celebrate the hotel's 1st birthday.

New events Section for Culture Northern Ireland website

Culture Northern Ireland have launched the Culture Live! section on their website. Culture Live! is a comprehensive guide to everything thats happening in

Northern Ireland. Whether you're seeing the latest play, seeing a band, watching a film or going out for the night. Choose from sixteen categories covering everything from theatre to art, cinema to music, museums to readings. Use the Culture Live! What's On Search (top right) to find events by type, date or location.

Noel McMeel takes up a new culinary challenge at Lough Erne Golf Resort & Spa

After seven years at the helm at Castle Leslie, top chef Noel McMeel is now taking up a new challenge at Irelands latest food and tourism adventure, the **Lough Erne Golf Resort & Spa** at Castle Hume, County Fermanagh, home to Irelands only Nick Faldo championship golf course.

Design Award for Open House Festival Programme

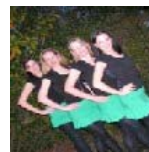
Local company, Tandem Design in Hollywood, has been commended at one of the UKs top creative awards. Their design for the 2007 **Open House Festival** Programme was awarded a Highly Commended in the catalogue category at the prestigious McNaughton Review at Gleneagles in March.

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Events and Belfast Welcome Centre News

Newly Founded Ameli Events launches the O'Malley Experience

Launching in May 2008, The O'Malley Experience is set to be Belfasts ultimate live Irish music and dance event. **The O'Malley Experience** Belfast offers an exhilarating display of traditional Irish music and dance. A performance not to be missed, the show brings alive Irish culture through energetic and passionate music, combined with a blend of enchanting Irish dancing.



Musicians Niall Mc Clean (current All Ireland Fiddle Champion), Mary Mc Clean, Damian Mc Coubrey and Bronagh Donnelly are no strangers to the Irish music scene, having shared the stage with many legendary artists including the Three Irish Tenors and Planxty. Together with The Realta School of Irish Dance, the show brings a flavour of the best in Irish entertainment to the City.

The O'Malley Experience is a cultural visitor attraction; a traditional Irish event which will be held every Wednesday evening from June to September 2008 in the Empire Music Hall and will be launching on 29th May. Aimed at the leisure, business and domestic tourism market, the event offers a new element in the tourism product mix. In addition to the weekly evening shows, 11 day time shows will be held to coincide with the 11 largest cruise ships coming into the city, two of which will take place on a Sunday.

August File 2008: 20th Birthday Celebrations

File an Phobail, one of the largest community festivals in Europe is celebrating its 20th birthday. Once again between 3-10th August 2008 File will bring to the community, its visitors and guests an excellent programme which will provide a unique mix of entertainment, sporting and community events, discussions and debates, exhibitions and dramas, tours and workshops. The annual carnival parade will kick off the celebrations on Sunday 3rd August to open the 20th birthday celebrations followed by the hugely popular Party in the Park and other family, childrens and outdoor events

Upcoming Events

Choking the Butterfly 4-7 June **Old Museum Arts Centre**
 Sing-a-Long Sound of Music 11 June **Grand Opera House**
 Mary Black 8 June **Belfast Waterfront**
 Opera at the Culloden 16-18 June **Culloden Estate & Spa**
 My Giant Colouring Book 7 Jun-5 July **Ormeau Baths Gallery**
 Summer Madness 27 June-1 July **Kings Hall**
 Rise and Shine Guided Tour 21 June **Belfast Zoo**
 Storytelling Festival 28 June **Ulster Folk and Transport Museum**

Tickets currently on sale at Belfast Welcome Centre

Titanic Dock & Pump-House Tours Wed, Sat, Sun @ 2pm
 CS Lewis Bus Tours - each Sunday from Jun to Sep @ 2pm
 Coiste Political Walking Tours Daily
 Historic Belfast Walking Tours Wed, Fri, 2pm, Sat 11am & 2pm & Sun 2pm
 Daily Bus Tours to Giants Causeway
 Northern Walking Tours Walking tours of Giants Causeway & Rathlin Island
 Emmerdale Extravaganza 7th Jun Ulster Folk & Transport Museum
 Range of events in the Black Box
 Range of events by Moving on Music

New mobile phone charging facility at Belfast Welcome Centre

A new public mobile phone charging machine has been installed at the Belfast Welcome Centre. The **Quickie Express Machine** charges mobile phones (and other handheld devices) in just 10 minutes for one pound.

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