

David Hampshire

GREAT BRITISH WEEKEND ESCAPES

70 Enticing
Weekend Getaways



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David Hampshire



King's College, Cambridge



City Books • Bath • England

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The Author

David Hampshire's career has taken him around the world and he lived and worked in many countries before taking up writing full-time. He's the author, co-author or editor of over 30 titles, including *London's Green Walks*, *London's Village Walks*, *London's Monumental Walks*, *London's Waterside Walks*, *Hidden London*, *Quirky London*, *Peaceful London* and *London Escapes*. David was born in Surrey and lived and worked in London for many years and still considers himself a Londoner. Nowadays he divides his time between London and Bath (Somerset).

The Publisher

City Books is an imprint of Survival Books, which was established in 1987 and by the mid-1990s was the leading publisher of books for expats and migrants planning to live, work, buy property or retire abroad. In 2000 we published the first of our London books, *Living and Working in London*, and since then have published over 20 additional London titles, including a series of walking guides. We now specialise in alternative London and UK guidebooks for both residents and visitors. See our websites for our latest titles.

Readers' Guide

- ◆ **Address:** The city or town's postcode (usually the town or city hall) and tourist website are listed. You can enter the postcode to display a map of the location on Google and other map sites or, if you're driving, enter the postcode into your satnav.
- ◆ **Getting there:** The nearest airport (distance in miles), railway station (and main service provider) and major roads are listed.
- ◆ **Highlights:** These may include notable buildings (e.g. cathedral, castle, guildhall, etc.), harbour/port, waterways, museums & galleries, parks & gardens, markets, theatres, nightlife, etc. Many museums and galleries offer free entry, as do notable national collections and those run by local councils, while National Trust and English Heritage sites are free to members (otherwise there's usually a hefty fee). Some cathedrals levy an entrance fee, while others solicit donations (usually at least £5 per person) for their upkeep.
- ◆ **Nearby:** A selection of nearby interesting places and attractions is listed, with those featured in this book shown in **bold**.
- ◆ **Sleep:** Three recommended hotels (or B&Bs) are listed for each entry, one each in the categories of luxury, moderate and budget; most are located in city/town centres but a few are out of town. Note that in some popular tourist towns budget-priced hotels are rare, while in many towns and cities real 'luxury' hotels are non-existent. Rates depend very much on the time of year and local demand; when demand is high a budget hotel can cost as much as a luxury hotel in a quiet period! **Always shop around for the best rate.**
- ◆ **Food & Drink:** Recommended eateries are listed for all cities and towns. It isn't always necessary to book (telephone numbers are listed), although you usually need to book well in advance for popular and first-class restaurants; if you wish to visit a particular restaurant it's advisable to book before planning a trip. A rough price guide is included: £ = inexpensive (< £20 for two courses), ££ = moderate (£20-40), £££ = expensive (over £40). Most recommended restaurants fall into the inexpensive and moderate categories, although we have also included many 'fine dining' establishments. **Note that opening times may vary from those listed due to the uncertainty wrought by the covid epidemic.**

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Disabled Access

Many historic public and private buildings don't provide wheelchair access or provide wheelchair access to the ground floor only. Wheelchairs are provided at some venues (although users may need assistance) and you may also be able to hire a mobility 'scooter'. All museums, galleries and public buildings have a WC, although it may not be wheelchair accessible. Contact venues directly if you have specific requirements. The Disabled Go website (disabledgo.com) provides more in-depth access information for many destinations.



Castlefield Conservation Area, Manchester (see page 58)

Introduction

Britain offers a wealth of options for memorable weekend breaks, from exciting historic cities and charming towns to magnificent architectural gems and fascinating overlooked cities, stunning countryside to beautiful coastline. Whether you're looking to discover a new city, indulge in a cultural or foodie weekend, enjoy a ramble in the countryside or experience an exhilarating coastal break, you'll find them all in *Great British Weekends' 70* enticing getaways.

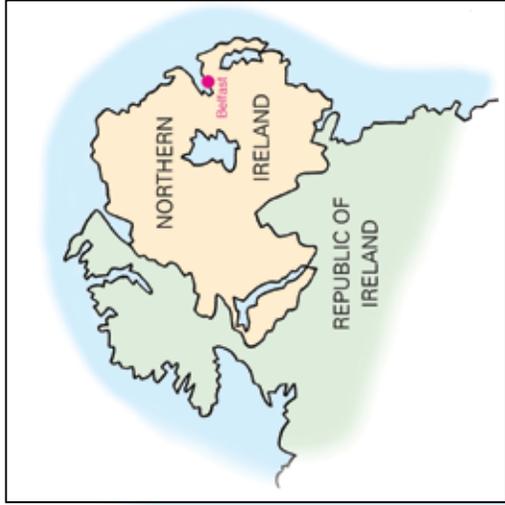
If your chosen destination is within a few hours by road you simply need to throw a few things in the car and off you go, although many destinations can also be reached via domestic flights and most have excellent rail connections. Don't let the weather deter you as every season has its attractions: the enchanting renewal of spring, summer's long balmy days, autumn's ravishing golden landscapes and the invigorating frosty days of winter. There's also a lot to be said for a break outside the most popular times – such as public holiday weekends and peak holiday periods – when hotels are usually less expensive and you can avoid the crowds.

Whether your passion is for architecture, culture, gastronomy, nightlife, green spaces, shopping or adventure, it's covered in *Great British Weekends Escapes*. From the delightful tourist hotspots of Bath and Cambridge, Edinburgh and Oxford, to the architectural treasures of Durham and Salisbury, Chester and Wells, and the unexpected pleasures of Bradford and Nottingham, Coventry and Rochester. If country pursuits are more your thing, then head for delightful Bakewell or Buxton for the magnificent Peak District and Derbyshire Dales, historic Cirencester in the enchanting Cotswolds, beautiful Beaulieu in the New Forest or captivating Kendal in the Lake District, while coastal lovers can take their pick from Brighton and Ramsgate, Falmouth and Southwold, Conwy and Whitby – and many more.

Bear in mind that it's often impossible to see and do everything in a few days, so you'll need to do some research and draw up a 'must-see' list. You may also wish to time your visit to take in a particular celebration, festival or fair, such as Edinburgh's Fringe or Hogmanay, the Isle of Wight (music) Festival or Cowes Week, York's JORVIK Viking Festival or London's celebrated Notting Hill Carnival.

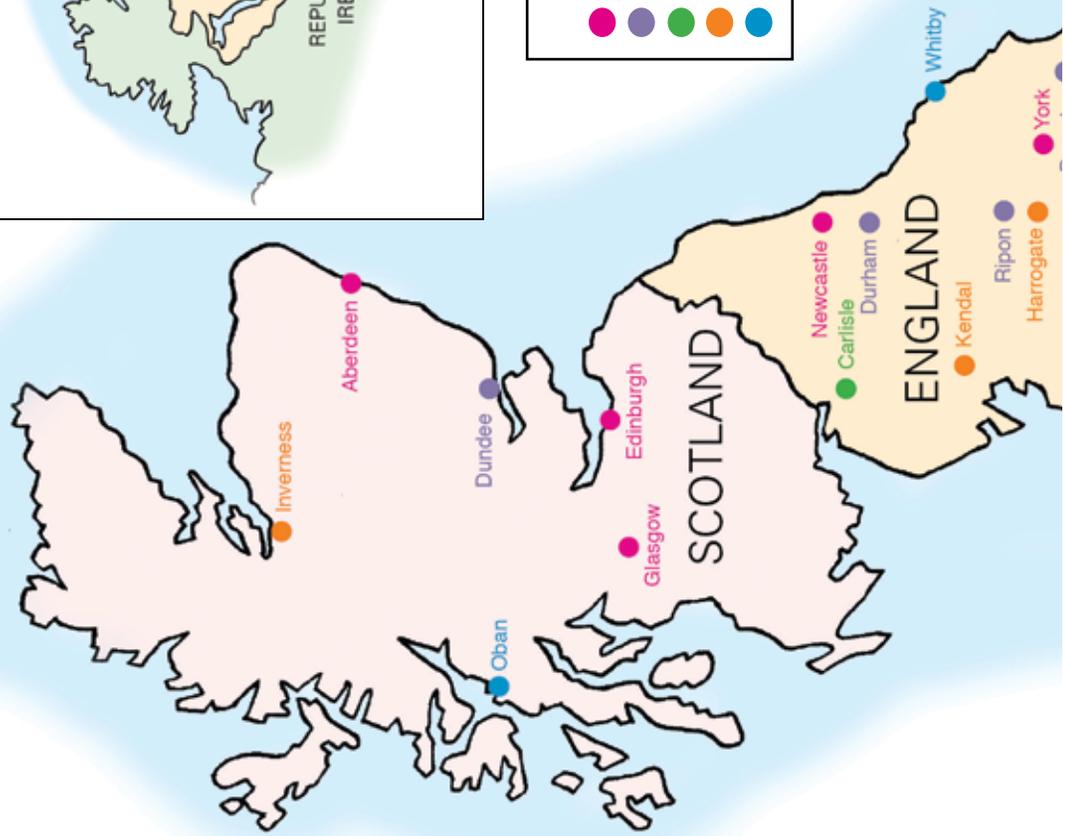
So, why not escape the rat race for a few days and explore the exciting world just a few hours from your doorstep? We trust that you'll enjoy discovering it as much as we did.

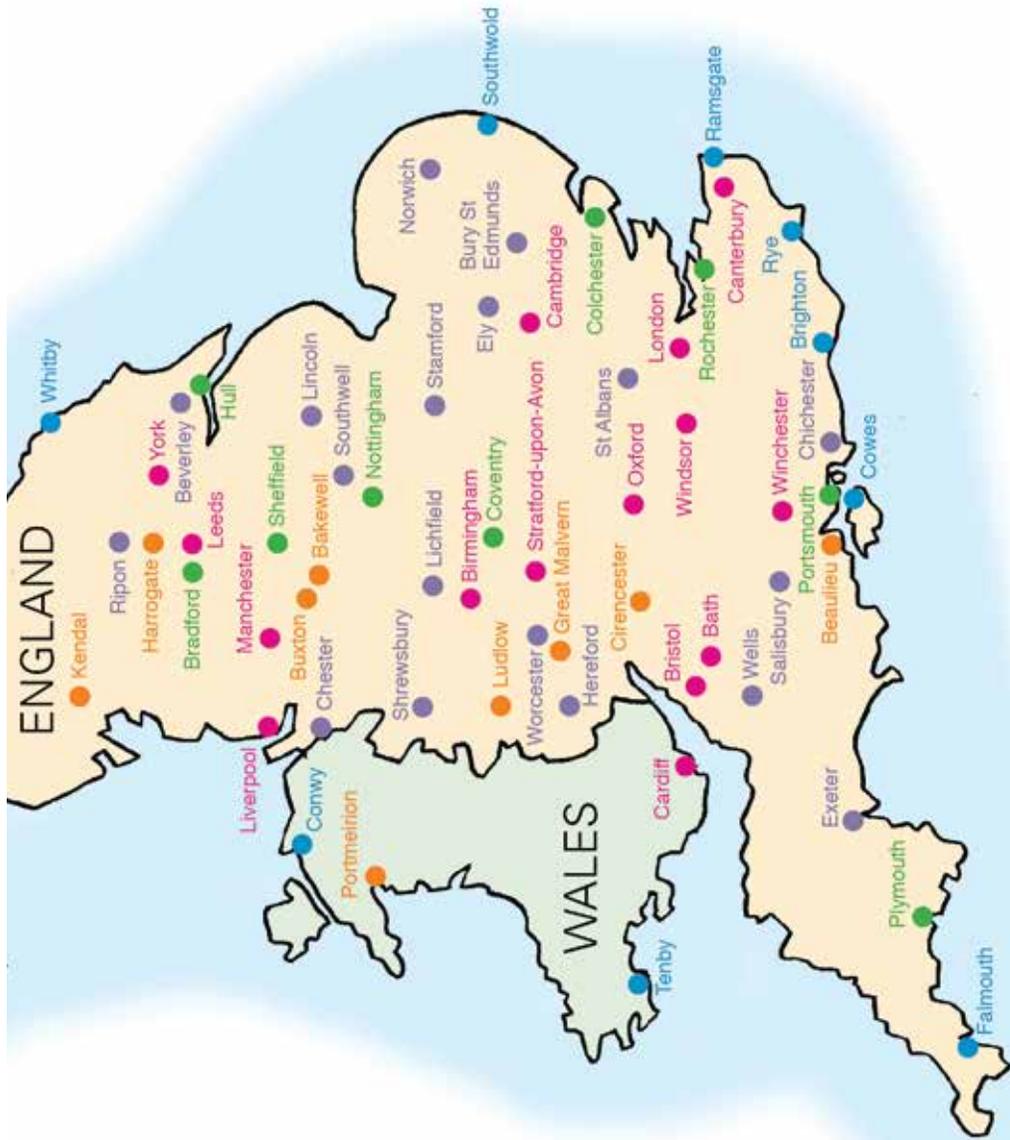
David Hampshire
July 2021



Key

- Tourist Hotspots (pink dot)
- Architectural Treasures (purple dot)
- Unexpected Pleasures (green dot)
- Gateway Gems (orange dot)
- Coastal Delights (blue dot)







Roman Baths, Bath (see page 15)

1. Tourist Hotspots

The UK's tourist hotspots attract millions of visitors annually from around the globe and include many of the country's great historic cities, such as Belfast and Cardiff, Edinburgh and Glasgow, Liverpool and Manchester. They also include the UNESCO World Heritage city of Bath, the ancient university cities of Cambridge and Oxford, the Bard's birthplace, Stratford-upon-Avon, and regal Windsor and its majestic royal castle. What all 20 cities and towns have in common is a wealth of attractions, from stunning ancient and contemporary architecture to world-class museums and galleries, beautiful parks and gardens to outstanding hotels, restaurants and shopping. Bear in mind that it's often impossible to see everything in a weekend, so you'll need to decide your priorities.

Aberdeen



Address: Aberdeen AB10 1AR (visitabdn.com)

Getting there: air (Aberdeen, 6mi), rail (Aberdeen, Scotrail), road (A90/A92)

Highlights: granite architecture, St Machar's Cathedral, Mariscal College, Sir Duncan Rice Library, Maritime Museum, riverside parks, waterfront walks, City beach, seafood restaurants

Nearby: Cairngorms, Peterhead, Speyside, Stonehaven

Scotland's third most populous city and the county town of Aberdeenshire, majestic Aberdeen lies on the River Dee in northeast Scotland. The friendly 'granite city' and its surrounds offer the perfect balance between vibrant city life, sandy beaches and spectacular countryside, and is considered one of the top ten places to live and work in the UK.



- **Luxury:** Marcliffe Hotel & Spa (5*), N Deeside Rd, Pitfodells, AB15 9YA (01224-861000).
- **Moderate:** Chester Hotel (4*), 59-63 Queen's Rd, AB15 4YP (01224-327777).
- **Budget:** Mercure Caledonian (4*), 10-14 Union Ter, AB10 1WE (0871-376 9003).

The modern city grew up as two separate burghs: Old Aberdeen, the university and cathedral settlement at the mouth of the River Don (north of the modern city), and New Aberdeen (from the 12th century), a fishing and trading settlement where the Denburn waterway enters the Dee estuary. The modern city was constructed between the mid-18th and mid-20th centuries, mostly using local grey granite – hence it being dubbed the 'Granite City'. Today, the traditional industries of fishing, papermaking, shipbuilding and textiles have been overtaken by the oil industry, following the discovery of oil under the North Sea in the '70s.

Aberdeen boasts a wealth of beautiful architecture, including **St Machar's Cathedral Church** in Old Aberdeen, built by the Normans in 1132, although little remains of the original building, the present church mostly dating from the 15th-16th centuries. The cathedral has a stunning interior, particularly its striking wooden heraldic ceiling. Among the city's oldest churches is the **Kirk of St Nicholas** (the patron saint of Aberdeen) – the mother church of the city – built in 1151 and enlarged in the 15th century. Another must-see is



St Machar's Cathedral

King's College Chapel (1495) – containing the most complete medieval church interior in Scotland – the centrepiece of the **University of Aberdeen** campus, which is complemented by grand **Elphinstone Hall** (1931) and the **Quadrangle of King's College**.

After visiting Old Aberdeen take a walk along Union Street – Aberdeen's sparkling Granite Mile – home to many notable buildings (or located close by), including **Provost Skene's House** (1545); the **Old Aberdeen Town House** (1789); **Aberdeen Music Hall** (1822); majestic **Mariscal College**

(1837), the second-largest granite building in the world, now the Aberdeen City Council's HQ; Flemish-Gothic **New Town House** (1870s); and **His Majesty's Theatre** (1906), with twin domes, designed by acclaimed architect Frank Matcham. The theatre forms a handsome row of buildings that include **St Mark's Church** (1892), with a dome modelled on St Paul's Cathedral (London), and the **Central Library** (1892). More recent buildings include award-winning **Sir Duncan Rice Library** (2012), an imposing cube-shaped building that's the main academic library of the University of Aberdeen; the interior is even more impressive, with curved floors around a central atrium.

Aberdeen has a number of museums, including the striking glass-fronted **Aberdeen Maritime Museum**, which poignantly illustrates the decline of the oil and

Sir Duncan Rice Library



Food & Drink



- **Café 52:** rustic café service light bites, tapas and modern British dishes (52 The Green, AB11 6PE, 01224-590094, noon-midnight, Tue 6pm-midnight, closed Sun-Mon, £).
- **Moon Fish Café:** Cosy, chic bistro offering creative British-Scottish cuisine (9 Correction Wynd, AB10 1HP, 01224-644166, noon-10.30pm, Sun noon-6pm, closed Mon-Tue, £-££).
- **Silver Darling:** Light-filled restaurant specialising in local fish/seafood dishes (Pocra Quay, AB11 5DQ, 01224-576229, noon-2pm, 5.30-8pm, Fri-Sun, noon-8pm, ££).

gas industry since its '70s heyday; **Aberdeen Art Gallery**, one of Scotland's finest art galleries recently redeveloped; the **Tolbooth Museum**, set in one of the best-preserved 17th-century gaols in Scotland; while



Marischal College

close by (in Castle Street) is the 17th-century **Mercat Cross** (market cross). Other museums include the **Gordon Highlanders Museum**, which tells the history of one of Scotland's finest regiments, the hands-on **Aberdeen Science Centre** and the vast, eclectic **University of Aberdeen's Collections**.

If you fancy stretching your legs or just relaxing, Aberdeen – the floral capital of Scotland – is home to some fourteen public parks and gardens. These include the lovely **Union Terrace Gardens** (currently being rejuvenated) in the centre of town and **Duthie Park** (44 acres) on the banks of the River Dee, which incorporates the **David Welch Winter Gardens**, one of Europe's largest indoor gardens and Scotland's third most visited garden. To the west of the city centre is 180-acre **Hazlehead Park**, with woodland walks and a maze, while in Old Aberdeen is beautiful **Seaton Park** (adjacent to St Machar's Cathedral), just south of which is gorgeous 11-acre **Cruickshank Botanic Garden** on King's College campus. While wandering around the city, keep an eye out for striking murals and painted doors, a unique local art form (see nuartaberdeen.co.uk).

When you need a break from sight-seeing, Aberdeen has a host of excellent eateries – it's particularly noted for its superb seafood and Scottish restaurants – and is

An enjoyable 5-mile walk takes you along the Esplanade (seafront) and sandy beach past the Art Deco Beach Ballroom, inland along the River Don, over the ancient Brig o' Balgownie and back to town via the Old Town and university.

one of Scotland's largely unheralded foodie hotspots. If you fancy a spot of retail therapy, then look no further than Union Square Shopping Centre, with over 50 top stores plus some 30 (mainly chain) restaurants and a ten-screen cinema. The brutalist circular muralled Indoor Market building on Market Street has some independent shops on two levels and a few good eating places, such as the Sushi Box and Madame Mew's Thai Café.

With a student population of over 50,000, Aberdeen has a vibrant nightlife, from theatres and cinemas to an abundance of pubs (Brew Dog was founded here), bars, comedy, live music venues and nightclubs, some of which occupy disused churches such as the 'Gothic' Slains Castle pub and Triple Kirks nearby. The city stages some interesting cultural festivals such as a 10-day jazz festival in March and the Sound Festival of new music in October.

If you have some spare time, you may wish to sample some malt whiskies in Speyside, go hiking/skiing in the Cairngorm Mountains or river fishing for salmon, cycle along the Deeside Way to Crathes Castle or enjoy outstanding fish and chips after a bracing beach walk at Stonehaven.



Brig o' Balgownie

Bath



Address: Bath BA1 5AW (visitbath.co.uk)

Getting There: air (Bristol, 19mi), rail (Bath Spa, SW trains), road (M4/M5, A46)

Highlights: Georgian architecture, Bath Abbey, Roman Baths, Holburne Museum, American Museum, Royal Victoria Park, Thermae Bath Spa

Nearby: Bradford-on-Avon, **Bristol**, Castle Combe, **Cotswolds**, Dyrham Park, Lacock

Set in the rolling countryside of the River Avon valley in North Somerset, beautiful Bath – the only city in the UK designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site (since 1987) – is located 97 miles west of London and 11 miles southeast of Bristol. Famous for its natural hot springs and ravishing Georgian architecture – built from local honey-coloured Bath stone (limestone) – a stroll around Bath is a journey through centuries of architectural delights. These include splendid 16th-century **Bath Abbey**, noted for its fan-vaulting, tower (which you can climb) and lovely stained glass windows;



Pulteney Bridge



- **Luxury:** Bath Priory (5*), Weston Rd, BA1 2XT (01225-331922).

- **Moderate:** The Ayrlington (5*, B&B), 24/25 Pulteney Rd, BA2 4EZ (01225-425495).

- **Budget:** Parade Park Hotel (3*), 8-10 N Parade, BA2 4AL (01225-463384).

the majestic **Royal Crescent** and inspired **Circus**. Don't miss the **Assembly Rooms**, the social hub of Georgian Bath, or a stroll along grand Great Pulteney Street and across **Pulteney Bridge**, inspired by Florence's Ponte Vecchio, one of only four bridges in the world lined with shops.

Roman Baths



Built for pleasure and relaxation – it was the centre of fashionable life in England during the 18th century –

Bath has been a spa destination since Roman times. The waters remain a big draw, both the ancient **Roman Baths** (*Aquae Sulis*) and the modern **Thermae Bath Spa** (see box), the only natural thermal hot springs in Britain where you can still wallow in the waters. Restored in 2011, the Roman Baths are now a museum and include the Great Bath, Roman statues and a temple, comprising one of the finest historic sites in Northern Europe. The city's unique thermal springs rise here and the Baths still flow with natural hot water, while interactive exhibits and computer-generated reconstructions illustrate their importance to our Roman ancestors.

If it's culture you seek, Bath offers plenty of options, including the impressive **Holburne Museum** (home of the eclectic private collection of Victorian art enthusiast Sir William Holburne); the **Fashion Museum** at the Bath Assembly Rooms; the museum of Georgian life

Thermae Bath Spa



Although you can no longer take the waters at the Roman Baths, you can enjoy the same natural hot spring water at the award-winning Thermae Bath Spa, which brings the spa into the 21st century, with luxurious treatments and a rooftop pool offering panoramic views over the city (thermaebathspa.com).

Parade Gardens



at **No 1 Royal Crescent**; classic and contemporary art at the splendid public **Victorian Art Gallery**; Bath's **Old Theatre Royal**, opened in 1750, now home to the excellent **Masonic Museum**; and the **Jane Austen Centre**, which celebrates one of Britain's favourite authors who lived in Bath from 1801 to 1806. A short way out of town is the **American Museum**, set within 125 acres of beautiful grounds, home to the finest collection of Americana outside the United States. Bath also offers an abundance of commercial art galleries and antiques shops, such as Beaux Arts and the Rostra Gallery.

If you wish to stretch your legs, Bath has some beautiful parks and gardens, including the expansive **Royal Victoria Park** (57 acres) and **Botanical Gardens**, the bijou riverside **Parade Gardens**, charming **Henrietta Park** and delightful **Sydney Gardens** straddling the Kennet & Avon Canal. A short walk from the centre, **Alexandra Park** offers spectacular views over the city, while a bit further afield is magnificent **Prior Park** (National Trust), an 18th-century landscape garden created by Bath entrepreneur Ralph Allen (1693-1764).

Royal Crescent



When it's time for some refreshments, the city is overflowing with places to eat and drink – it has a well-deserved reputation as a foodie destination – and also offers some of the best independent shops and boutiques in the UK (particularly for fashion), along with the indoor **Guildhall Market**, a weekly farmers' market, and regular antiques fairs and markets. Come the evening Bath offers plenty of entertainment options, including no less than five theatres, three cinemas, live music and comedy, numerous pubs, bars and clubs and


Food & Drink


- **Circus Restaurant:** award-winning restaurant serving modern British cuisine (34 Brock St, BA1 2LN, 01225-466020, Mon-Sat 10am-11pm, closed Sun, ££).
- **Pump Room Restaurant:** elegant restaurant housed in the splendid Georgian Pump Room (13 Abbey Churchyard, BA1 1LZ, 01225-477785, 10am-5.45pm, breakfast, lunch, afternoon tea, ££).
- **Sotto Sotto:** popular Italian restaurant in atmospheric 18th-century barrel vaults (10 N Parade, BA2 4AL, 01225-330236, noon-2pm, 5-10pm, £).

a casino – along with a comprehensive programme of concerts, fairs, festivals and sports events.

Bath Panorama



Belfast



Address: Belfast BT1 5GS (visitbelfast.com)

Getting there: air (Belfast, 13mi), rail (Great Victoria St, NI Railways), road (M1/M2, A20/A24)

Highlights: Docklands, Titanic Belfast, St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast City Hall, Ulster Museum, Crumlin Road Gaol, Botanic Garden, St George's Market, seafood restaurants

Nearby: Bangor, Carrickfergus, Larne, Lisburn, Lough Neagh

The capital of Northern Ireland, Belfast stands on the banks of the River Lagan on the east coast of Northern Ireland. The city has undergone rapid expansion and regeneration since the late '90s and is now one of the UK's most vibrant cities and a major tourist centre.

The city developed into a major settlement in the 17th century after being established by Sir Arthur Chichester and was initially settled by Protestant English and Scottish migrants. A major port since the early 19th century, during the Industrial Revolution it was the largest linen producer in the world ('Linenopolis') and by the time it was granted city status in 1888 had the world's

Belfast City Hall



- **Luxury:** Merchant Hotel (5*), 16 Skipper St, BT1 2DZ (028-9023 4888).
- **Moderate:** Bullitt Hotel (4*), 40a Church Ln, BT1 4QN (028-9590 0600).
- **Budget:** The Crescent Townhouse (3*), 13 Lower Cres, BT7 1NR (028-9032 3349).

largest shipyard (Harland and Wolff), which built the *RMS Titanic* in 1912 and many other famous ships. Following Ireland's partition in 1922, Belfast became the capital of Northern Ireland, which remained part of the United Kingdom. The city was heavily bombed during the Second World War and also suffered greatly in 'The Troubles', the sectarian violence between Roman Catholics and Protestants, which ended in 1998 with the Good Friday Agreement (although the city is still divided along sectarian lines by the so-called 'Peace Lines' or 'Peace Wall').

A visit to Belfast wouldn't be complete without visiting the **Docklands** and **Titanic Belfast** – you can cross over the River Lagan via the Lagan Weir footbridge and stroll along the riverside – northeast of the city centre. Housed in an iconic,

Titanic Belfast



futuristic building shaped like a ship's bow, the museum tells the story of the world's most famous ship, which hit an iceberg and sank on its maiden voyage to New York in 1912 with the loss of over 1,500 lives. Nearby is the **SS Nomadic**, Titanic's sister ship built at the same time, now refurbished as a visitor attraction, while to the north is **Titanic Studios**, where scenes from the legendary *Game of Thrones* TV fantasy drama were filmed.

Returning to the city centre, a tour of some of the city's impressive architecture is in order – you can take a walking tour with tips-based Belfast 'Free' Walking Tours (belfastfreewalkingtour.com) – taking in beautiful **St Anne's Cathedral** (1904), a Romanesque Anglican church constituting the heart of the Cathedral Quarter

St George's Market

St George's is the last surviving Victorian (1890-96) covered market (Fri-Sun) in Belfast, with some 250 traders selling everything from artisan foods to flowers, vinyl records to vintage jewellery (with live music at weekends).

(noted for its colourful murals); **Belfast City Hall** (1906) – a Baroque Revival masterpiece with a grand marble hall (outside is the poignant Titanic Memorial Garden); the **Grand Opera House** (1895), an innovative design by Frank Matcham with a breathtaking auditorium; and **Ulster Hall** (1859), which has a superb English pipe organ (Mulholland Grand Organ). To the south of the city is Queen's University, where the **Lanyon Building** (1849) is a majestic Tudor-Gothic, red-brick building famous for its Hogwarts-esque character, while north of the city is **Belfast Castle** (1870), a fairy-tale fortress at the foot of Cavehill, which is close to **Belfast Zoo**. Six miles east of the city centre is the handsome Neo-Classical **Stormont Parliament Building** (1932), home to the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Belfast Castle



If museums and galleries are your thing, then don't miss the **Ulster Museum**, located in the Botanic Gardens, which explores 9,000 years of Irish culture and has a rich collection of art, history and natural sciences. The city has many interesting smaller museums and visitor attractions, including the haunting **Crumlin Road**