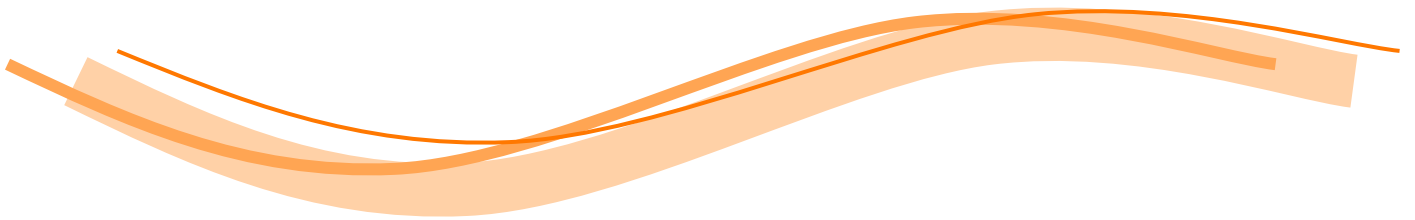




NORTHERN IRELAND





IRELAND	
Location	Western Europe, between the UK and the Atlantic Ocean
Geography	Ireland is divided into 4 provinces: Ulster, Connacht, Leinster, and Munster; Northern Ireland is the northernmost province of Ulster. With a landmass of approximately 84,434 sq. km (32,929 sq. miles), it is at most 484km (300 miles) north to south, and 274km (170 miles) east to west. No point in Ireland is farther than 113km (70 miles) from one of its encircling waters: the Atlantic Ocean, the Irish Sea, or the St. George and North channels.
Name	From Irlanda, meaning the land of Ir, who was the son of Mile, the first man of that clan to be buried on the island
Population	Ireland has 6 million people.
Language	English in Northern Ireland and both English and Gaelic in Eire where road signs are bilingual
Currency	In Northern Ireland, the British Pound is the currency; one Pound = \$2.26 (April 13, 2007) In the Republic of Ireland the currency is the Euro; one Euro = \$1.54 Cdn (April 13, 2007)
Tipping	Most hotels and guesthouses add a service charge to the bill, usually 12.5% to 15%, although some smaller places add only 10% or nothing at all. Always check to see what amount, if any, has been added to your bill. For taxi drivers, hairdressers, and other providers of service, tip as you would at home, an average of 10% to 15%.
Government	Northern Ireland is part of United Kingdom Republic of Ireland is a parliamentary democracy headed by President
Documentation	A valid Canadian passport is needed to visit the island of Ireland. If traveling on a Canadian passport, no visa is required.
Time zone	5 hours ahead of EST
Health	No health documents or vaccinations are required to enter Ireland or Northern Ireland from Canada, but you should ensure that you have adequate travel insurance for your trip
Safety tips	Northern Ireland has been noted as one of the two safest destinations in the world for travelers (the other is Japan). Advice is standard for travel anywhere: don't leave cars unlocked or cameras, binoculars, or other expensive equipment unattended. Be alert and aware of your surroundings, and do not wander in lonely areas alone at night. Other than that, Ireland is one of the safest destinations for visitors to Europe.

CLIMATE	
General climate	January and February bring frosts but seldom snow, and July and August are very warm, but rarely hot. Summer temps are 15-20 C, with rain at any time!
Today's weather	Seventeen degrees Centigrade and sunny (14 April 2007)
Best time to visit	Perhaps the best time to visit is in spring and fall, when weather falls somewhere in between bad and good, and you still get winter prices and no crowds

GETTING THERE	
Flying time	Toronto to Belfast: 6 hours 20 minutes (Zoom Airlines)
Cities	Belfast: is the capital of Northern Ireland Website: www.GoToBelfast.com There is a tangible sense of renewal in the city; the Titanic built there; like Toronto: diversity is celebrated, it is a modern vibrant city and very upbeat. Derry: the walls of Derry date from 1613-18, with 4 original gates and bastions intact; the Tower Museum presents the city's history; St Columb's Cathedral is 17 th century;

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	Foyle Cruises serve up great craic on evening cruises! Londonderry, also known as Derry, is a centre of culture and creativity, and is now as famous for its confident modern outlook as it is for the timeless quality of its craic. Meander through the bustling streets of the only completely Walled City in the British Isles and listen to the echoes of 1450 years of history. Stroll along its 17th century Walls, and marvel at the ever-changing skyline of a city which is constant only in the warmth of its welcome. Here you can expect many a smile of greeting from people who are noted worldwide for their friendly hospitality. Gateway to Ireland's Northwest, the city is pulsing with life, resonant with centuries of heritage and passion, yet fresh as an Atlantic breeze.
Distances	Belfast to Dublin: 2.5 hrs by road; 165 km Belfast to Derry: 117 km
Ferries	Ferries link Northern Ireland with Scotland, the Isle of Man and England from Belfast and Larne. There is also a ferry to Rathlin Island off the north coast.
Trains	8 trains daily Belfast to Dublin; express in 2 hours; Irish Rover Rail Pass - 5 out of 15 days rail travel throughout Ireland Cost: £99 / €142.
Car Rental	All major car rental companies are represented; renting is fairly expensive as is gas. Normal age limits: 23 to 70 years. Rentals start from 100 Pounds per week. Driving is on the left and most cars are manual
Buses	Buses link towns and cities by convenient frequent service all across Ireland north & south. The Dublin - Belfast Express coach service operates 7 times daily Monday - Saturday
Passes	Freedom of Northern Ireland ticket gives unlimited bus and rail travel in Northern Ireland; the Emerald Card covers both Northern Ireland and the Republic.

ACCOMMODATION TYPES	Castle and manor houses; hotels and guesthouses; B&B; Farmhouses \$60pppn; Hostels; Cottages and holiday homes; Castle hotels: Ashford Castle, Co Mayo dates from the 13 th century; Castle Ward on Strangford Lough is a quirky 18 th century wonder. Be our Guest Guide: over 1000 hotels and guesthouses, 1-5 stars, from 22 Euros pp B&B, 500 pages, irelandhotels.com – many bookable on-line Bed and Breakfast Guide to Ireland 2007 One personal favourite of mine: Malmaison Hotel in Belfast was originally two seed warehouses belonging to two rival firms, McCausland and Lytle. Look at Lytle's (on the left) for its fantastic stonework friezes of nutcrunching squirrels, exotic birds and plants; and at McCausland's for heads illustrating five continents, Africa, America, Asia, Europe and Oceania. Now one of Belfast's most prestigious hotels, with an inviting bar and superb French Brasserie Restaurant.
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TARGET GROUPS	
Kids	The Irish love kids, and Ireland is a wonderfully welcoming place to visit for families with children. Most public places and visitor attractions cater for those children, with changing facilities, children's menus, high chairs and ramps for strollers. Child-friendly activities available in Ireland's West include pony trekking, sandcastles, swimming, sailing, adventure centres, boat rides, canoeing, learning music The Odyssey Complex in Belfast is great for kids and is home to W5 Interactive Discovery Centre, the IMAX Cinema, Hard Rock Café and the Odyssey Arena – home of the Belfast Giants Ice Hockey Team. Experience exotic animals at close range in Belfast Zoo, built into towering Cave Hill, or get a more 'hands-on' experience at Streamvale Open Farm.
Teens	W5 in Belfast: (Who, What, Where, Why and When?) Ireland's first purpose-built interactive discovery centre, located at the Odyssey complex in the heart of Belfast.

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	<p>The centre has amazing interactive exhibits, which offer fantastic fun for all the family. W5's 140 interactive exhibits are spread over five action-packed exhibition areas. In WOW, create cool cloud rings and watch the fire tornado rise to the ceiling. In START you will find a world of wonder for the eights and under where they can build a house, make a splash and dance to music. Visit GO where you can make and race your own cars and boats, make magnets move and discover outer space. Discover SEE and beat the lie detector, play music on the laser harp, and boggle your mind with optical illusions. Be creative, design and build structures and robots and make your very own animated film in DO.</p> <p>Also: the ECOS Environmental Centre in Ballymena. Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge: a scary swinging rope bridge to a sea stack off the North Antrim coast.</p>
Romance	A lovely people and country to spend time together...
Honeymoons & Weddings	Great venues – including castle hotels and dramatic scenery – help make Ireland a good destination to make these arrangements
Genealogy	Church and civil records throughout Ireland are computerised: Irish Gen Project; Tourism Ireland: "Tracing your Ancestors in Ireland" Websites: www.irishgenealogy.ie ; www.familyrecords.gov.uk for Northern Ireland
Seniors	The gentle pace of the countryside and the easy availability of coach touring options makes Ireland a good choice for seniors Tour operators include: Royal Irish Tours (www.royalirishtraveltours.com) , Transat Holidays (www.transatholidays.com) , Trafalgar Tours (www.booktt.ca) , Insight (www.insightvacations.com) and Globus (www.globusjourneys.ca)

UNIQUES	<p>"Craic", pronounced "Krak" means good music, good story telling, conversation and drink in Gaelic. Irish blessings and greetings abound: "May the roof above us never fall in. And may the friends gathered below it never fall out". "May the saddest day of your future be no worse than the happiest day of your past". "May you live as long as you want. And never want as long as you live".</p>
Surprising	Navan Centre and Fort: Armagh This was the royal seat of the Kings of Ulster and the province's ancient capital. Start your tour in the 'Vanished World' of lost myths, travel into the 'Real World' of archaeology and then enter the 'Other World' to hear the legends of the Ulster Cycle. Visit the Iron Age/Early Christian period dwelling and, through Living History interpretation, learn about that way of life. Finally, walk the path of history to the great Ancient Seat of Kings, Navan Fort.
History	<p>Ireland is thought to have been inhabited from around 6000BC by people of a mid-Stone Age culture. And about 4,000 years later, tribes from Southern Europe arrived and established a high Neolithic culture. The best-known Neolithic sites in Ireland are the megalithic passage tombs of Newgrange and Knowth in County Meath. Both were built around 3200BC, making them older than Stonehenge in England, and the Pyramids of Giza in Egypt.</p> <p>The Vikings first launched their attack on Ireland in 795AD. And in 837AD, 60 Viking Dragon warships appeared at the mouth of the River Liffey. Five years later, Dublin was taken under force, but the Vikings were attacked by the local Irish and fled. They returned 17 years later under Olaf the White and made a permanent settlement at Dyflinn (later to be Dublin). The King's Palace stood on the present Dublin Castle site and part of the town's defences can still be seen at the Undercroft in Dublin Castle.</p> <p>The latter half of the 19th century was a period of tragedy in Irish history. Ireland was struck by the Great Famine caused by a potato blight that struck crops over a four-year period from 1845-49. Over a million of the population died from starvation, with many more falling prey to diseases such as typhus. Over two million people</p>

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	emigrated to countries including the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia, and from 1848-1950 over six million Irish fled the land. Now the Irish diaspora is thought to contain over 80 million people scattered all over the globe.
Books	Frommer's Ireland 2007 "Ireland" by Dervla Murphy, photos by Klaus Franke "The Princes of Ireland" The Dublin Saga by Edward Rutherford
1000 Places to see before you die	Giant's Causeway; Mourne Mountains.
Must Sees	Giants Causeway on the North Antrim Coast in 1986 became Ireland's first UNESCO World Heritage Site; Legend says that it's the work of Finn McCool, local giant, who built the Causeway to a lady giant he fancied on the Scottish Isle of Staffa. There are 40,000 stone columns, averaging 40ft wide. The causeway was formed during the early Tertiary period some 62 - 65 million years ago over a long period of igneous activity. Three lava outflows occurred known as the Lower, Middle and Upper Basaltic. The causeway area would have been situated in an equatorial region at that time, experiencing hot and humid conditions. The hexagonal columns of the causeway occur in the middle basalt layer, the same formations can be seen at Staffa in Scotland (Fingal's Cave) and they also occur in the surrounding landscape of North Antrim. The fascinating pattern that we see in the causeway stones formed as a result of rock crystallization under conditions of accelerated cooling, this usually occurs when molten lava comes into immediate contact with water, as happens today in Hawaii, the resulting fast accelerated cooling process causes cracking and results in what we see today at the Causeway.

SPORTS ACTIVITIES	<p>Hockey: Elite League Ice Hockey Heroes, the Coors Belfast Giants at the Odyssey Arena.</p> <p>Gaelic Games: Hurling, gaelic football and camogie are indigenous to Ireland but enjoyed by everyone who loves to see speed and skill - combined with high-levels of risk. Casement Park in Andersonstown, west Belfast, is the best-known city venue on Sunday afternoons.</p> <p>Outdoors Northern Ireland: surf the Atlantic at Portrush; canoe the rapids at Benburb beneath castle ruins 120 ft above, sailing – Portaferry in June for the red sails of the Galway Hookers in Strangford Lough; diving Rathlin Island, north coast for deep underwater cliffs; parasailing, waterskiing, rock climbing</p>
Golf	<p>Ireland is a natural golfing country and is recognised as a world-class golfing destination. With more than 400 golf courses to choose from, the island of Ireland offers the Canadian golfer a challenging and memorable golfing experience. Home to more than one-third of the world's true links courses, Ireland offers four distinct golfing regions which can be explored individually or as part of a more extended itinerary. All around the island, world-famous championship links courses rub shoulders with lesser-known yet spectacular hidden gems. What's more, tee times can be booked easily and green fees are moderate (from \$40 to \$185 for signature championship courses).</p> <p>Green fees for parkland courses are approximately £6.00 - £40.00 or €10.00 - €60.00 on weekdays and £8.00 - £50.00 or €12.00 - €80.00 on weekends. Green fees for links courses are approximately £40.00 - £95.00 or €50.00 - €150.00 in the winter or £60.00 - £100 or €50.00 - €240 in the summer.</p> <p>Belfast is a golfer's paradise, with eleven high quality courses and golf centres located inside the city boundary to choose from. Ireland's oldest golf club, The Royal Belfast and Malone Golf Club are located within 20 minutes of the city centre.</p> <p>In Northern Ireland - Royal County Down, Royal Portrush, Ardglass, Portstewart, Royal Belfast are must-play courses.</p>

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	An excellent golfing website is www.northandwestcoastlinks.com
Fishing	Salmon, brown, rainbow and sea trout fishing is good; Coarse fish include roach, dace perch, pike, rudd, bream; deep sea fish: pollock, skate, ray, turbot, blue shark
Horse riding	Ireland is often called "The Land of the Horse". Companies offering riding vacations include www.Bonaventuretours.com ; and www.HiddenTrails.com Equestrian Holidays Ireland is a selection of Ireland's top horseback riding establishments, each with its own individual character and style. Every centre is Irish Tourist Board listed and Association of Irish Riding Establishments approved.
Hiking	Hill-walking: waymarked ways, Ulster Way – Europe's longest marked footpath at 560 miles, Holywood Hills – inspiration for CS Lewis' Narnia; the Lagan and Lough Cycle Tour, Belfast, Tours: Hidden Trails, Active Journeys, Bonaventure Tours
Cycling	Cycle the River Lagan towpath in Belfast or the Kingfisher Cycle Trail – 230 miles through the lakes of County Fermanagh; Cycling companies – check out GAP Adventures, Randonnee Tours, Butterfield and Robinson.
CULTURE	There are many literary associations: CS Lewis; Louis MacNeice; Seamus Heaney; Samuel Beckett; Brendan Behan; and more.
Arts	The Saint Patrick Centre is in Downpatrick, just 30 minutes from Belfast: Ego Patricius Exhibition: new 21st century interactive experience telling story of patron saint. There is a Cathedral Garden Restaurant and Art Gallery Craft Shop.
Music	Two of the most enduring and internationally famed traditions, however, are Irish traditional music, and Irish dancing. Traditional music can be heard all over the country from city centre pubs to rural festivals. The bodhrán, which is like a hand-held drum, is one of the most popular instruments in Irish music, along with the fiddle and the tin whistle. "Danny Boy" was a traditional street fiddle tune and was only 'discovered' in 1851 when Jane Ross wrote down the notes she heard in the street!
Films	Michael Collins (Neil Jordan, 1996) is a fine biopic about the Irish rebel, filmed largely on location. Nora (Pat Murphy, 2000) is a good biographical film about James Joyce's fascinating and long-suffering wife. Veronica Guerin (Joel Schumacher, 2003) is a dark, fact-based film with Cate Blanchett about a troubled investigative reporter. Bloom (Sean Walsh, 2004) is a brave adaptation of Ulysses, with Stephen Rea. Intermission (John Crowley, 2003) has Colin Farrell talking in his real accent, in this Irish romance.
Museums	Ulster Museum: a truly great museum and art gallery that deserves a full day. Rich displays of archaeology, ethnography, art, history and natural sciences. Award-winning Early Ireland gallery and the Made in Belfast exhibits are outstanding. Don't miss Treasures of the Armada, featuring intriguing and spectacular items recovered from the Spanish galleass Girona. Ulster Folk and Transport museum at Cultra brings history to life, with exhibit buildings including furnished houses, mills, shops, schools and churches which illustrate how people in Northern Ireland lived in the past. The museum also boasts the only permanent Titanic exhibition in Northern Ireland. Irish Linen Centre and Lisburn Museum
Festivals	Festivals Festivals: Belfast plays host to some of the most vibrant festivals in Europe including Belfast Festival at Queen's, Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival, Titanic Festival and Féile an Phobail. Lammas Fair is Ireland's oldest traditional market fair with horse trading and entertainment; It's held at the end of August.

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ATTRACTIONS	
Beaches	Beaches abound on this island – from long glorious deserted strands to the popular beaches close to Dublin and Belfast; there's a beach for everyone...even if the sea temperature may be a little chilly!
Wildlife	Bird watching is wonderful and in the National Parks you can see deer...but there's no snakes, thanks to St Patrick!
Parks	Ireland has 6 national parks: The Burren NP in Co Clare; Connemara NP in Galway; Glenveagh NP in Co Donegal; Killarney NP in Co Kerry; Mayo NP; Wicklow Mountains NP. There are also 12 Forest Parks and 71 National Nature Reserves
Gardens	National Trust gardens in Northern Ireland: Gosford, Castlewellan; roses, daffodils, wild bluebells, primroses. Also: Mount Stewart (agapanthus display) and Rowallane (blue Himalayan poppies)
Castles/Forts	Dunluce, 16c Stronghold of MacDonnells, teetering on cliff edge, it has a secret entrance through a sea cave Belfast Castle (1870): on the slopes of Cave Hill, is a great place to sample excellent cuisine, historical atmosphere, beautiful gardens and friendly service Derry is the only walled city in Ireland.

OTHER ACTIVITIES	
Shopping	Irish linen, crystal, Bushmills whiskey; A must for all shoppers is the central shopping area which runs from Donegall Place to Royal Avenue, and is easily explored on foot. St George's Market (the oldest covered market in Ireland) runs a Variety Market every Friday morning which boasts the largest indoor fish market in Ireland with 23 seafood stalls! The Saturday morning Farm & Speciality Food Market offers a wide range of local high quality specialist food products. The Lisburn Road in the south of the city boasts a trail of chic designer boutiques, with plenty of al fresco cafes to offer a rest stop along the way. There are also many fine shopping centres throughout the city and suburbs. Tyrone Crystal offers the chance to see crystal being blown by mouth then cut and polished by hand...as well as shopping opportunities!
Markets	St Georges Market in Belfast is an over 100 yrs old covered market with over 230 stalls ranging from zips to shark meat. It was recently voted one of the top three markets in the UK.
Nightlife	Everything under the sun – but perhaps the quintessential evening is spent in a warm Irish pub with the locals experiencing the camaraderie and craic that is so unique to the Irish people. In Belfast, the Crown Liquor Saloon: Great Victoria St. 1839-1840; The Crown is owned by the National Trust. Drinkers of the city know well its opulent marble, brilliant Italian tilework, fine glass engraving, embossed ceiling, and cosy booths bedecked with gryphons and lions. Panels in the restaurant on the first floor were meant for Brittanic, Titanic's sister ship.

CUISINE	
Food	Food: Ulster Fry: potato bread fried with local-cure bacon, Moira pork and apple sausages, free-range eggs, Amargh mushrooms, bunch of dulse (edible seaweed); breads: afternoon tea: soda farls, treacle farls; pubs: locally harvested oysters with glass of Guinness; beef fillet flamed in Bushmills whiskey
Wine and spirits	Bushmills Distillery: At the top of the village you will find what Bushmills has become known worldwide for - the famous Old Bushmills Whiskey Distillery. The Victorian architecture of the Distillery dates from 1885 when it was rebuilt due to a fire. It is located on the on the banks of St. Columb's Rill and reputed to be the oldest licensed Distillery in the world - being given legal status in 1608 when King James 1st granted a

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	license to local landowner Sir Thomas Phillips. The process of illegal distillation in the village goes back even further than 1608. Local folklore tells of whiskey being made illegally in the 1400's, there are also records of a Sir Robert Savage enjoying the 'aqua vitae' (whiskey) with his troops in 1276 and the drink is even mentioned in the Book of Leinster. The company itself was founded in 1783 and in 1800's we find records of the S.S. Bushmills, a large sailing ship own by company which transported whiskey across the Atlantic.
Restaurants	Ireland has an admirable range of restaurants in all price categories. The settings range from old-world hotel dining rooms, country mansions, and castles to sky-lit terraces, shop-front bistros, riverside cottages, thatched-roof pubs, and converted houses. The Merchant Restaurant in Belfast is a wonderful example of the resurgence of top notch cuisine in Belfast.

MORE INFO	
Brochures	Call 1-800-223-6470 for Tourism Ireland to request brochures or go to www.shamrock.org Northern Ireland Visitor Guide; B&B Guide; Hotel and Guesthouses Guide
Websites	www.discoverireland.com www.gotobelfast.com www.titanicinbelfast.com www.flyzoom.com

HOTEL PRIZE PARTNERS	Two nights' accommodation in Belfast, two nights along the Causeway Coastal route, one night in the walled city of Derry, and two nights in the Fermanagh Lakes.
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AIRLINE PRIZE PARTNER	<p>Zoom Airlines</p> <p>Zoom Airlines Inc. was incorporated in May, 2002 by a team of industry veterans with extensive travel and aviation experience. Based in Ottawa, Canada, the company was created to fill an emerging opportunity in the Canadian leisure travel market. Zoom now operates a combination of scheduled and charter services to destinations including the U.K., France and the Caribbean. Zoom Airlines Ltd, a UK sister company based at London Gatwick, was incorporated in 2006 and will launch flights in Summer 2007. It will offer the same high standards of service as its Canadian partner, extending the Zoom travel concept to an exciting range of new routes from the UK to the USA and Bermuda.</p> <p>Mission - Zoom Airline's goal is to become Canada's most popular and trusted leisure airline, delivering a professional, yet relaxed experience to customers, while ensuring compliance with rigorous safety standards.</p> <p>Customers - Zoom operates transatlantic services linking eight Canadian cities (Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Winnipeg, Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal and Halifax) to five points in the UK (London Gatwick, Glasgow, Manchester, Belfast and Cardiff) and to Paris Charles de Gaulle. The majority of flights are sold directly to the public, although they also work with selected high-quality travel partners to offer a range of city breaks, ski holidays and touring holidays throughout Europe and Canada. In Canada, Zoom partners with GO Travel Direct, which specialises in direct-sell vacations to destinations in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, USA, Mexico and the Caribbean from Ottawa and Montreal.</p>
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	<p>Aircraft - Zoom operate Boeing 767 wide bodied aircraft on both long haul and short haul routes to Europe and the Caribbean.</p> <p>Environment - Zoom Airlines takes its responsibility towards the environment very seriously indeed. Their Boeing 767-300ER aircraft are equipped with efficient General Electric CF6 engines. These are the most efficient engines in their class, and it means that the overall level of carbon (CO2) emissions on each flight is lower than for many equivalent aircraft and engine types. Consistent with their safety policy, they also make every effort to avoid unnecessary fuel burn by operating aircraft at the most economic cruising speed during each flight. Their aircraft are not fitted with First Class or Business Class seating, which waste space in the forward cabins of aircraft operated by their major competitors. This means that their CO2 emissions per passenger are up to 20% lower than those of major airlines on comparable flights.</p>
Flight details	<p>Seasonal daily service from Toronto, Vancouver and Halifax to Belfast. Flight time Toronto to Belfast: 6 hours 20 mins</p>
CURRENT DEALS	<p>Belfast from \$199 each way with Zoom</p>

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