

Adventures in Northern Ireland | Easter 2019 | A Summary

It's been almost a week since we arrived home from one of our most favourite tours yet – our tour of Northern Ireland. Since the weather has been so good, and the schools aren't quite back, we've been carrying on in holiday mode with BBQs, al fresco family lunches and trips to the Norfolk Broads. We've had time to catch our breath a little, and digest on what a wonderful time we had

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in Northern Ireland so thought we'd do a little final summary of our trip. We don't tend to hear of many people travelling from England to Northern Ireland in their campervans and its such a great shame as its just spectacular, so we thought we'd put all the info down in one post here, with the hope it may inspire/encourage you to follow our footsteps and go and experience it for yourself!

The Complete Series of Blog Posts

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Travel

We used Stena Line Cairnryan to Belfast crossing. Yes, we had to drive a bit further than Liverpool, but the crossing was only 2 and a quarter hours long which is much shorter and we could bring Jazz the dog upstairs with us in his travel crate (this had to be pre booked and he wasn't allowed to get out of it). We paid mainly in Tesco Clubcard points.

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The small ferry at Strangford saved us having to go back on ourselves route wise, was very pretty and fun, and cost £6.80 (I think!)

Campsites

Glenariff Forest Park £25.50 pn

Lovely facilities, and great view. Right on the start of several walking trails. The waterfall walk is fairly strenuous but worthwhile – lovely and scenic. Be warned- you need to book in advance as you get sent the barrier code by email prior to arrival (this isn't automated). No warden on site permanently but he came around 8pm to clean and check everything ok. 15 mins drive from the Causeway Coastal Route.

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Ballyness Caravan Park £26pn

Fantastic campsite. Spotless facilities – clean, modern and spacious. Great location. Walk to Giants Causeway (about 3-4 miles, mainly off road) or bus service which comes into the campsite and takes you to all the tourist locations along the coast. Dogs allowed on bus. Free Wifi. Walking distance to Bushmills Distillery.

National Trust Castle Ward Caravan Park £25pn

Great location, but very dated facilities. Reminded us of an old scout camp! Needs some investment into new facilities block. Location excellent for Castle Ward/Winterfell

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and Strangford or Portaferry.

Dundonald Touring Park, Belfast £24pn

Great location, right on the bus route to Belfast City Centre. Facilities fairly good but shower pressure almost non-existent! Nice washing up area/kitchen. You need to book in advance as you get sent the barrier code by email prior to arrival (this isn't automated).

On all 4 campsites our pitch had electric hook up, waste water and a freshwater tap.

In Ireland there is a good selection of continental style overnight stopover "aires" you can use. We passed the one in Waterfoot and the one in Portrush- they looked fine, but we

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need facilities and areas to “spread out” now we’re in the VW rather than the motorhome. For help sourcing these stopovers, [this](#) Facebook page is excellent and has a very useful map of stopovers in Ireland. [Britstops](#) also have a number of locations in Ireland.

Sightseeing

We used our National Trust Membership almost daily – the coverage of NT sites is excellent, including The Giants Causeway (although you only pay to park and visit the Visitor Centre and Toilets) and the Carrick a Rede rope bridge, and Castle Ward. We think our joint membership fee was made back on visits just on this trip alone. The Titanic Museum in Belfast is great and well worth the £19

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pp entry charge (we debated whether it would be or not)

Food and Drink

We didn't end up eating out other than Fish and Chips in Belfast. We did however stock up on local produce at every opportunity. We used the local Spa shops (which tended to stock local meat), Farm Shops and the fishmonger who visits Portrush on a Thursday and veg. We loved the local ice cream and also the Bushmills whiskey. There were lots of local ciders and ale to sample along with Guinness of course - oh and the Jawbox Belfast Gin was great. We often had to buy alcohol separately to food - the Spar shops didn't stock both so we used Wineflair quite a lot.

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Centra supermarkets along the Causeway Coast had alcohol too, but not the one in Belfast city centre. McKee's Farm shop near Belfast was amaaaaaazing.

Walking and Cycling

❌ Ordnance Survey hasn't mapped NI so memory map/ordnance survey apps don't work. Routes can be found on [Walk NI](#) but we missed not having mobile maps tracking us. We enjoyed the walk around the city walls of Derry. There were good off road bike ride and walking routes at Glenariff Forest Park, Bushmills to Giants Causeway, Lough Antrim Shore Park, Castle Ward, Mount Steward and The Greenway in Belfast.

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Dog Friendly?

Along the North Coast, yes. Giant's Causeway/Carrick a Rede – Yes. Derry City Walls – yes. Derry pubs – no.

Belfast – several dog friendly pubs, some which serve tasty looking food.

Use [this site](#) to help you plan.

Fuel economy

From Norfolk to Cairnryan in just over half a tank – go Ruby! Filled up at Morrison in Stranraer before the ferry. Only used just over half a tank in NI. Filled up at the docks for £1.30 pl. Most supermarkets were around £1.27 so

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around the same as England.

Holiday Highlights

✖ Carrick a Rede Rope Bridge – even if you don't do the bridge walk the scenery along the coast is spectacular.

Giant's Causeway – obviously! ✖

Port Stewart Strand – still excited that we drove onto the beach for a posh picnic!

✖

Titanic Museum Belfast

✖

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Now, what are you waiting for?! Get your trip booked- I promise that you won't regret it!



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