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Titanic: Experience the Legend in Belfast and in Canada

by [Josephine Matyas](#), Posted Tuesday 3rd April

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In Belfast, they like to point out: "She was alright when she left here."

It's a poignant anniversary for the city of Belfast. In March 1911, the luxury liner RMS Titanic sailed from the dockyards of Northern Ireland's great shipbuilding city. Less than a year later (in the darkness of April 14, 1912) the mighty ship collided with an iceberg south of Newfoundland and plunged to the bottom of the North Atlantic Ocean.

The vessel they claimed was "unsinkable" sank on her maiden voyage.

The centenary of the tragic event is being marked on both sides of the ocean.

In Belfast . . .

The city is commemorating the anniversary with the [Titanic Belfast Festival 2012](#) (March 31 to

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April 22).

The world's greatest collection of Titanic memorabilia opens in early April 2012 at the new [Titanic Quarter Maritime Museum](#). The multi-million pound building was designed so that no matter what angle you approach from, it looks like the ship's signature hull.

At the turn of the 20th century, the shipyards were one of the main economic engines driving the city of Belfast. For two years, the superstructure dominated slipway No. 3 in East Belfast's Harland & Wolff shipyard. It's rumoured that grown men broke down and cried when they heard the news of the sinking.



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The dry-docks in the Quarter are a slice of living history and were the inspiration behind the cutting technologies of the time. You can gaze into the depths of the gargantuan Thompson dry-dock – the slipway where the mighty Titanic was built and launched. Alongside, in the pump house, four engines could drain 23-million gallons of water in a startling 100 minutes.

Belfast City Hall is the perfect spot to start a walking tour of the city core. Out front, the commanding Titanic Memorial features the mythical Greek goddess of death looking down on a drowning sailor. The stone statue faces east, towards the shipyards where Titanic was built. Inside the massive Portland limestone City Hall (nicknamed The Stone Titanic) a commemorative stained glass window depicts the tragic vessel.

The [Ulster Folk & Transport Museum](#) (about 11-km east of the city centre) has the world's largest collection of Titanic memorabilia. It's a feast for the senses, with more than 500 pieces of history including the ship's original design plans.



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Take a break to contemplate at one of Belfast's atmospheric pubs. Start at the [Crown Bar](#), a Victorian time capsule and a spot where they're very, very picky about *how* they pour their Guinness. Move on to [McHugh's](#) bar, at home in the oldest surviving building in the city (dating back to 1711, at one time it also included a brothel).

Indulge in [Titanic Tours Belfast](#), a three-hour driving tour of the Titanic highlights - provided by the great granddaughter of a crew member who perished when the ship sank on her maiden voyage.

In Halifax . . .

In 1912, the [Nova Scotia city](#) was the closest port to the site of the ship's sinking. Search and rescue efforts were mounted, funerals were organized and many of Titanic's victims lie in graves in Halifax (especially [Fairview Cemetery](#) in the downtown core, which is the final resting place of 150 victims, more than any other in the world).

The [Maritime Museum of the Atlantic](#) is home to the world's largest collection of wooden artifacts from the vessel (including one of the few original deck chairs known to exist).

An Ottawa connection . . .

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the opening of Ottawa's famed castle, the [Fairmont Château Laurier](#) hotel. The visionary behind the building of the grand hotel (his goal was to link westward stops along the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway), Charles Melville Hays was returning from England on the ill-fated Titanic. Hays perished just days before the scheduled opening of the hotel; out of respect, the official opening was delayed by several weeks.

In 1912, rooms in the regal Château were \$2 per night (it was one of the few hotel rooms in the city to offer indoor plumbing). To commemorate the centenary, the Château Laurier will offer a Centennial Tea in Zoe's Lounge, special period costume tours (on June 2 and 3, marking the official grand opening date) and a fun memorabilia search, where amnesty is in place for long, lost treasures that have gone "astray" through the years. So far, the hotel has recovered a full set of eight chairs, *Limoges* dishware and rare photographs.

So, if you've got any of those missing treasures, now is the time to pony up, no questions asked!

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