

Spain in Northern Ireland: A Guide to Places Connected with Spain

1. Belfast

Ulster Museum



Among many other objects, the museum displays a Bronze Age necklace made in Spain from the Cathedral Hill hoard. It explains the medieval pilgrimages to Compostela and features a gallery dedicated to the Spanish Armada, including artefacts from the wrecks of La Girona and La Trinidad Valencera. It also covers Spain's involvement in the Battle of Kinsale (1601) and the flight to Spain of leading Gaelic families such as the O'Neill, Maguire and O'Donnell dynasties (the latter being ancestors of General Leopoldo O'Donnell, who served as President of the Spanish Council of Ministers in the 19th century). The most famous piece recovered from La Girona is the celebrated gold salamander, now an iconic object of the museum.

Queen's University



In 2026, Queen's University Belfast celebrated the centenary of the Musgrave Chair of Spanish (1926–2026), one of the earliest of its kind in Great Britain and Ireland. This makes the year especially significant both for the Spanish community in Northern Ireland and for the university itself. Its first holder, Professor González i Llubera, was one of the most influential scholars of his time. Queen's was the first university in the United Kingdom to establish a chair of Spanish, a language that continues to thrive within its academic programmes.

City Hall



Belfast City Hall, the city’s most emblematic building, contains a stained-glass window commemorating the participation of people from Northern Ireland in the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War.

International Brigades Memorial



A bust near St Anne’s Cathedral, bearing the slogan “They shall not pass”, commemorates the brigadists who took part in the Spanish Civil War.

2. The Rest of Northern Ireland

Omagh

A memorial to the victims of the Omagh bombing (15 August 1998) commemorates the 29 people who were killed, including two Spaniards, and the more than 200 who were injured.



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Portballintrae – Dunluce Castle – Giant’s Causeway



After rescuing sailors from other ships, the galleass La Girona was wrecked at Lacada Point (Port na Spaniagh), near the famous Giant’s Causeway. The wreck still lies offshore, and numerous artefacts—artillery, jewellery and everyday objects—have been recovered, many of which are now held in the Ulster Museum.

It is estimated that around 1,300 Spaniards died, either at sea or after being executed upon reaching land. Most are buried in a mass grave at the churchyard of St Cuthbert’s (now in ruins). Some survivors found refuge at nearby Dunluce Castle thanks to the local MacDonnell clan.

In Portballintrae, the Portballintrae Heritage Society (<https://portballintrae-heritage.co.uk>) has erected a memorial in their honour.

Derry

Tower Museum



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Cannons and artefacts from the *Trinidad Valencera*, which sank in Kinnagoe Bay in County Donegal (Republic of Ireland), have been preserved.

The Grave of Sister Clare



Clare Crockett entered the Servant Sisters of the Home of the Mother after a trip to Spain and lived in several convents in Spain, the United States and Ecuador. She died in an earthquake in Ecuador in 2016. Her personality and life story have made her a powerful symbol for the Catholic community in Derry and across Northern Ireland. In 2025, the cause for her beatification was opened in the Diocese of Alcalá de Henares in Spain.

Enniskillen Castle



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Hugh Maguire the Hospitaller made a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela and died in this castle. One of his descendants fled to Spain in the early 17th century after taking part in the Battle of Kinsale, settling there along with other Catholic families.