

CITY A.M.

BUSINESS WITH PERSONALITY



A new kind of home broadband is here

Vodafone
Power to you

Vodafone Connect app available on Android™ devices. Device required to use full speed and functionality. 18-month agreement and credit checks apply. Subject to availability in your area. Full terms and details at vodafone.co.uk/broadband

TRAVEL

40 HOURS IN...

DAYLESFORD,
GLOUCESTERSHIRE

WHERE TO STAY
If it's luxury village farm life you're after, there's nowhere better than Lady Bamford's fresh food and relaxation farm, Daylesford Organic, staying in one of their stone-clad holiday cottages. daylesford.com



WHERE TO GO
Step out into a glittering blast of autumnal colour at the 56 acre Batsford Arboretum, home to one of the country's finest botanical collections and giant trees that are extinct in the wild. batsford.co.uk



WHERE TO EAT
The Wild Rabbit, aka 'the poshest pub in Britain', is a short walk away. Head chef Adam Caisley prepares dishes of home-cooked classics with an Italian twist in a converted 18th century fireplace. thewildrabbit.co.uk



WHERE TO DRINK
Sample the array of homemade fizzante Rose, prosecco, cider and best bitters, with a slice of fresh pizza from the wood-fired oven in the main courtyard of the Daylesford Farm. daylesford.com

Play your own Game of Thrones in Northern Ireland

A whole spin-off tourism industry has developed in Northern Ireland off the back of the hit series.

Daniel Scheffler investigates – beware, spoilers lie ahead

Thrones, as they call themselves, have known for an age that the city of Belfast, and Northern Ireland in general, is the perfect spot Game of Thrones film locations. Now even casual viewers (and readers) are following in the wake of the mythological series, with popularity soaring for these epic, windswept landscapes.

Based on the fantasy book A Song of Ice and Fire by George RR Martin, it follows several families and their various intrigues – which include plenty of sex, violence and death – across seven landscapes. The dark storyline dovetails perfectly with the hostile landscape on the east coast of the country and it's there I am now, in the Culloden Estate & Spa, a converted 18th century Argyllshire manor house up at Culloden Estate & Spa and a die-hard Thronie green me with excitement. "Hi, I'm Philip McComb, from Belfast. Tom, I hope you're ready to geek out." Tom expects him to be in a Game of Thrones costume; maybe it was laundry day. We start at Belfast's Titanic Quarter, where the first signs of the show make their debut.

Although McComb is for anyone who doesn't work out, a glinting showbiz star was in town, and in the studio he stands next to the famously recreated Titanic Hull. We drive past again and again, hoping to catch a glimpse of the show, but on this damp Belfast day everyone seems to be indoors – if I wasn't for some weapons ("Is that an axe?") and a few hundred extras, you'd never know what's lurking within.

Despite its varied landscape, the fact it often experiences four seasons in a single day and its generally tax incentive for Northern Ireland was the first choice for Game of Thrones – that honour went to Scotland. Luckily they wanted too much money and so HBO looked elsewhere. Northern Ireland, however, this part of the British Isles has a few more years of being part of one of the most popular TV series of all time.

The hills and mountains offer seen walking around Belfast, providing a sneaky indication of what's happening in the show. "After all," says McComb, "the show is notorious for killing off its main characters."

But I don't have time to play this



guessing game today. "We need to get away from our little city for you to really feel like you're on the show," says McComb. "We've got our wigs and makeup on, the dark cloaks and sand beaches contrast with green fields island. The sky, blackening as we drive, seems more than happy to play along with the mood of the show." We're here. From the windswept freeway arrives at a little town called Ballintoy. Here Ballintoy Castle, which isn't a castle but a bit of a tower built to all kinds of ghoulish purposes, is where Gaelic and Celtic fables and legends are divvied up by locals. The Thronies are all ears.

Then the castle gave up the escarpment behind the tower and beyond Cairncastle (again, not a castle) are the mountains, where another alert "Ned Stark executed" will bring the dinner from the Night's Watch at Knock Dhu.

Despite its varied landscape, the fact it often experiences four seasons in a single day and its generally tax incentive for Northern Ireland was the first choice for Game of Thrones – that honour went to Scotland. Luckily they wanted too much money and so HBO looked elsewhere. Northern Ireland, however, this part of the British Isles has a few more years of being part of one of the most popular TV series of all time.

The hills and mountains offer seen walking around Belfast, providing a sneaky indication of what's happening in the show. "After all," says McComb, "the show is notorious for killing off its main characters."



STORY FACT
Forthill Farm, near Go's shooting location in Co Armagh, breed rare Irish piglets for the show. The farm owner Kenny Gracey says the new venture has saved his business

for "more spoilers – last warning" the priestess Melisandre (Carice van Houten's character) to give birth to a piglet. "She was so excited to see how they shot the scene, the angles and views, and how the priestess had to be naked in this freezing, watery cave."

The day's most memorable moment is the Dark Hedges. Not that they're dark or indeed hedges, but rather a path of interlocking trees that's been man-made, brought to life in Season 2 when Arya Stark (a royal girl pretending to be a boy, played by Maisie Williams) flees her enemies in a cart. It's now one of Ireland's most visited sites, where the mystique of days of yore lives on. The Iron Throne? Celts, Gaels and even Vikings roamed these lands, lopping the heads off their enemies.

A crow flies through the gnarled trees and watches the onlookers. The crows are everywhere and fans of the show will certainly recognise them.

People visit as they want to see if they can see behind the scenes, spot some extra features or find secrets that no one else has discovered

“



NEED TO KNOW

Hastings Hotels (hastingshotels.com, 020 9047 1066) offers accommodation at The Culloden Estate & Spa, from £150 per room per night on a B&B basis. Private Game of Thrones tours are available through Hastings Executive Travel & Tours (mcombscoachesc.com, 020 8933 5333). Cheapflights offers return flights to Belfast from London Gatwick from £56 return. Visit cheapflights.co.uk. Daniel travelled courtesy of Tourism Ireland (tourismireland.com, 0800 039 7000).



- 1 Tynedale Inn
- 2 Abersoch
- 3 Bala Adventure and Watersports
- 4 Cwmain Cottage



- 3 Tynedale Inn
- 4 Cwmain Cottage

CWMAIN COTTAGE,
BALA, NORTH WALES

LONG WEEKEND
Emma Haslett on a scenic beauty spot far from the madding crowd

THIS WEEKEND It's your choice whether you prefer a dreamy wander around North Wales' romantic countryside, or a more challenging mountain.

TOP TIP

Order some meat from TJ Roberts & Son, one of Wales' top-rated butchers

While its usual prices are pretty standard for Michelin fare, it also offers a set menu on Sunday lunches. The only challenge is choosing between the 200 wines on its menu...

ASK ABOUT Bala is best known for the four-mile-long Llyn Tegid lake, once Wales' largest lake, and Bala Watersports, based on the northern shore of the cigar-shaped lake, offers kayaking, rowing and windsurfing. If you're feeling adventurous, ask about climbing, abseiling and mountain bike excursions.

TOP TIP Order some meat from TJ Roberts & Son, one of Wales' top-rated butchers

Aberconwy, an hour and a half away by car, has become a distinctly upmarket enclave in recent years, with high-end restaurants and boutique hotels. Although Peak Aberconwy may already have arrived: one batch of the town's sold for more than £100,000 this summer.

TOP TIP Cwmain sleeps 10 (including bunk beds for two kids), although Dioni offers self-catering accommodation around North Wales for every sized group, from ultra-chic yurts for two, to enormous barn conversions, which come complete with hot tubs.

TOP TIP Cwmain is available to rent from £500 – book at dioni.co.uk. Sunday lunch at Tynedale Inn costs £25 for two courses, or £30 for three (not including wine). Make a reservation at tynedaleinn.co.uk or call 01490 440264. Bala Adventure and Watersports offers a full day of kayaking from £40. Visit balawatersports.co.uk or call 01678 521059.