



Department of state

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Danesfort Dispatches

January 2015

Greetings from the Consul General

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How to Contact the consulate

- Email: consularbelfast@state.gov
- Website: <http://belfast.usconsulate.gov>
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/US-Consulate-Belfast/189796969657>
- Twitter: <https://mobile.twitter.com/USAinNI>
- Telephone: 02890-386104

Dear American Community,

January always sneaks up on me. So much emphasis is placed on the holidays themselves and then suddenly I find the date is January 2. The need for the New Year's resolution is too obvious as I have to loosen my belt. But seriously, the beginning of the year presents a good opportunity to survey the road ahead. In the case of Northern Ireland, December 23 saw the conclusion of eleven weeks of talks in what is being called the Stormont House Agreement. The agreement has yet to be fully endorsed but comprises: budgetary and finance issues (including welfare reform and new financial commitments from London); the legacy issues (the past, parades, and flags and symbols); institutional reform; and outstanding commitments (from previous agreements). As is always the case in such agreements, no one got everything they wanted. The agreement provides significant help on budgetary issues, but does not eliminate the need for cuts that had been projected last autumn. President Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry welcomed the news of the agreement. Former Senator Gary Hart is Secretary Kerry's Personal Representative, and he kept in close touch with party leaders and the British and Irish Governments to support the process. The U.S. Government is pleased that the parties demonstrated the ability to find compromise on a very difficult set of issues.

That said, the coming weeks and months will require much heavy lifting by the parties in the Northern Ireland Assembly to implement the many elements of the agreement. The United States will continue to seek ways to support political, economic, and social progress here in Northern Ireland. Turning to other events that lie ahead, I am looking forward to what promises to be a wonderful evening on January 31. The Princeton University Orchestra with soloist Iarla Ó Lionáird (of the band the Gloaming) will perform at the Ulster Hall in support of Concern Worldwide's Ebola Crisis Appeal (see page 4). Tickets are available at the Ulster Hall Box Office.

I hope and trust that the New Year will be a good one for you. Please take a moment to review the newsletter, which as usual, is chock-a-block full of good information.

Gregory Burton,
Consul General

Travel Tips for the Year Ahead

Another year has whizzed by and 2015 stretches out before us. Where to this year? Adventures in China or the Far East? Breathtaking New Zealand, or exotic Burma? No matter which destination you prefer, the following tips will help make your travels safe, smooth and stress-free.

Have a valid passport with minimum 6 months validity.

Check your passport expiration date. Many countries require travelers to have at least 6 months validity on their passports beyond their planned duration of stay. Don't wait until the last minute; some applicants may need to book an appointment for younger family members. It takes 7-10 working days to process a passport application. For complete information on how to renew a passport please visit our [Passport](#) webpage. It's also a good idea to keep a copy of your passport data page with you while traveling.

Make sure your passport has sufficient visa pages.

Check your passport to make sure you have plenty of pages for visas and entry/exit stamps. Please note the last passport pages are not for stamps. If your passport is in excellent condition and has at least one year validity, then you can apply for extra visa pages to be added. However, there is a limit; we can only add a maximum of 2 visa page inserts to a passport. For further information visit our [Add Extra Visa Pages](#) webpage.

Confirm if you need a visa.

Not sure if you need a visa or if there are other entry requirements? Check [Country Specific Information](#).

Familiarize yourself with local conditions and laws.

Remember, while in a foreign country you are subject to its laws, and these are not necessarily the same rights and laws as those exercised in the United States.

The [Department of State website](#) is one resource in preparing for your travels. [Country Specific Information](#) provides information on customs regulations, safety issues, criminal penalties,

and entry/exit requirements for U.S. citizens. You can also find the most up-to-date [Travel Warnings](#) and [Travel Alerts](#). If you travel frequently, take a look at the [Department of State's Smart Traveler app](#), available for iOS and Android.

Stay connected.

Make it easier for the U.S. embassies or consulates to contact you. Enroll in the Department of State [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program](#). It's easy and free!

Obtain overseas medical insurance.

Ask your medical insurance company if your policy applies overseas and covers emergency expenses such as medical evacuation. If not, consider supplemental insurance.

Notify friends or relatives of your travel plans.

Leave copies of your itinerary, passport bio page, and visas with family or friends. It's a good idea to leave a copy of your credit card as well; in an emergency, the credit card company can help your family locate you.

Locate the Nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

Take a moment to locate the nearest [U.S. embassy or consulate](#) in your destination country. This can come in handy if you need consular assistance. For more tips, check out the Department of State's [Tips for Travelling Abroad](#).

REMINDER:

Travel by non-U.S. citizen Family/Friends?

If traveling for tourism or business, non U.S. citizen family or friends are likely eligible to travel visa-free under the [Visa Waiver Program](#) (VWP).

Check for visa-free travel eligibility at [Visa Waiver Wizard](#).



(Continued on page 3)

Travel tips, cont'd

(Continued from page 2)

If eligible to travel visa-free, an application for ESTA travel authorization at [Electronic System for Travel Authorization](#) must be made prior to travel. Further information regarding visa-free travel can be found here: [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

For those who are **not** eligible to travel visa-free, information about visa categories and the visa application process can be found on our [website](#).

U.S. State Department: Worldwide Caution

The Department of State is updating the Worldwide Caution to provide information on the continuing threat of terrorist actions and violence against U.S. citizens and interests throughout the world. Recent terrorist attacks, whether by those affiliated with terrorist entities, copycats, or individual perpetrators, serve as a reminder that U.S. citizens need to maintain a high level of vigilance and take appropriate steps to increase their security awareness. This replaces the Worldwide Caution dated October 10, 2014.

The Department of State remains concerned about the continued threat of terrorist attacks, demonstrations, and other violent actions against U.S. citizens and interests overseas. On September 22, 2014, the United States and regional partners commenced military action against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), a designated terrorist organization in Syria and Iraq. In response to the airstrikes, ISIL called on supporters to attack foreigners wherever they are. Authorities believe there is an increased likelihood of reprisal attacks against U.S., Western, and coalition partner interests throughout the world, especially in the Middle East, North Africa, Europe, and Asia. For full details visit [Worldwide Caution](#).

Ulster American Women's Club

An Announcement from the Ulster American Women's Club: The UAWC is a collection of women who find themselves living in Ulster, with over 60 percent living in County Antrim. The rest of our members represent Counties Armagh, Down, and Londonderry. Most ladies have lived here between 4-10 years, but almost 20 percent have been here at least 15 years!

In addition to regular meet-ups in Belfast, 2015 offers local coffee mornings, adult nights out, and family days. Following a survey last quarter, the most popular events were traditional holiday gatherings (Thanksgiving and 4th of July), Weekend Family Events, and Grown Up Weeknight Dinners.

For full survey results, please see the private group Facebook page (<http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=http://www.facebook.com/groups/UAWClub/>).

As the schedule for 2015 starts to roll out, look for something near you! If you haven't already, sign up to the monthly newsletter to make sure you don't miss any event announcements (email to MemphisQueen@Hotmail.com to join). Happy New Year!



SPOTLIGHT:
The Princeton University Orchestra

The Princeton University Orchestra, featuring soloist Iarla Ó Lionáird, will be performing on January 31st at the Ulster Hall in Belfast. Iarla Ó Lionáird will perform the Belfast premiere of "sean-nos" arrangements by the Princeton-based composer Dan Trueman. This concert offers a unique opportunity to support Concern Worldwide in rebuilding communities that have been devastated by the Ebola Crisis.

Princeton University Orchestra – see <http://orchestra.princeton.edu/>.

The Princeton University Orchestra is made up of undergraduate and graduate student musicians. Conducted by Michael Pratt, the orchestra plays a wide range of works by composers from the Classical period to newly created works by Princeton composers. During the 2013-2014 season, the Princeton University Orchestra celebrated 37 years of leadership by its conductor Michael Pratt — a relationship that has resulted in the ensemble's reputation as one of the finest university orchestras in the United States. Under Pratt, PUO has played an enormous range of repertory, from the Baroque to symphonies of Mahler and tone-poems of Strauss, to the early Stravinsky ballets and numerous works by Princeton composers. He has led the orchestra on ten European tours, leading performances in London, Prague, Vienna, Madrid, Frankfurt, The Hague, and Amsterdam. As Director of the Princeton University Opera Theatre, Pratt has conducted operas from Mozart to Ravel, and in the past decade has focused on the early Baroque operas of Monteverdi and Cavalli. Pratt was educated at the Eastman School of Music and Tanglewood, and his teachers have included Gunther Schuller, Gustav Meier, Leonard Bernstein, and Otto Werner Mueller. He also holds the posts of Music Director of the Delaware Valley Philharmonic and Principal Conductor of American Repertory Ballet. He has also conducted the orchestras of Boston, Atlanta, Buffalo, Detroit, Indianapolis, and Odessa, Ukraine.

About Concern Worldwide – see <https://www.concern.net>.

Concern Worldwide has offices in Dublin, London, Belfast, Glasgow, and New York. The proceeds from the concert will support Concern's Ebola Crisis Appeal. As of November 2014, 5,000 people have died from Ebola and 10,000 people have become infected. The Ebola appeal aims to stop the spread and support healthcare systems in West Africa that have been overwhelmed in the battle against Ebola. Concern is working in communities which have been devastated following the outbreak, primarily in Sierra Leone and Liberia. Some of the ways in which Concern is helping to support these communities include community awareness campaigns, training health workers on Ebola identification, infection prevention and control, providing hygiene materials, and managing burial teams in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

Many of the countries where Concern Worldwide works are highly vulnerable to emergencies as a result of conflict and natural disasters. They are prone to floods, storms, earthquakes, and droughts. In 2013, Concern responded to 38 emergencies in 22 countries, assisting over 9 million people, both directly and indirectly, in countries such as in South Sudan, Syria, and the Philippines.

For further information contact Peter Anderson, Concern Worldwide
Email: peter.anderson@concern.net Tel: 028 9026 8017 Mobile: 079 2018 7040

***“Concern
Worldwide’s Ebola
campaign aims to
stop the spread
and support
healthcare
systems in West
Africa”***

Internal Revenue Service, Embassy London

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) at Embassy London provide over-the-counter assistance on a first-come, first-served basis.

They can assist with notices, forms, and ITIN applications and answer questions to facilitate return preparation. All payments must be made by check, in U.S. dollars. U.S.

citizens, resident aliens, and green card holders are required to report *worldwide income*, regardless of where they live. If you believe yourself to be non-compliant, information on the current streamlining program can be [found here](#).

Contact info Embassy London:
Walk-In Hours - Tues-Thur 9:00am-1:00pm.

Mon/Fri - closed to the public

Phone Hours –Telephone: 0207 894

-0477 - Monday - 9:00am-1:00pm; 2:00pm-4:00pm;
Tues-Thur - 9:00am-12:00pm;
Friday - no calls from the public.

Diversity Visa (DV) Program - Be Aware of Scams

What is the DV Program? An annual Diversity Immigration Program, commonly known as the visa lottery, makes available each year by random selection 55,000 immigrant visas to people from countries with low rates of immigration to the United States.

How can I register for a DV immigrant visa? The registration period takes place each October and is completed online at <http://www.dvlottery.state.gov>. Entry requirements are at: <http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/immigrate/diversity-visa/entry.html>. Registrants receive a confirmation number. If lost, the registrant will not be able to check their entry status. A confirmation number cannot be resent.

How do I find out if my registration was successful? In May of the year following registration, registrants can use their confirmation number to check whether they were selected using the Entrant Status Check at <http://www.dvlottery.state.gov>. Entrant Status Check is the ONLY means by which selectees are notified of their selection. The Department of State does not mail

out notification letters or notify selectees by email, and U.S. embassies and consulates will not provide a list of selectees.

DV 2016 Program: Online registration for the DV 2016 Program was during October 2014. Registration is now closed. Entrant Status Check for DV-2016 will be available at <http://www.dvlottery.state.gov> from approximately May 6, 2015. DV 2016 immigrant visas will be issued between October 1, 2015 and September 30, 2016.

Be Aware of Scams - The Department of State, Office of Visa Services, advises of a notable increase in fraudulent emails and letters sent to Diversity Visa (DV) program (Visa Lottery) applicants. The scammers behind these fraudulent emails and letters are posing as the U.S. government in an attempt to extract payment from DV applicants. It might be helpful to refer to [information about DV scams provided by the Federal Trade Commission](#).

Applicants are encouraged to review the [rules and procedures for the DV](#) program so that you know

what to expect, when to expect it, and from whom. While DV applicants may receive an email from the U.S. government reminding them to check their status online through DV Entrant Status Check, they will not receive a notification letter or email informing them that they are a successful DV entrant. Also the U.S. government will never ask a DV applicant to send payment in advance by check, money order, or wire transfer.

How do I know if a website or email is from the U.S. government? Internet sites ending in the ".gov" top-level domain suffix are official government websites. To locate more than 200 U.S. embassy and consulate websites, visit www.usembassy.gov. Any visa-related correspondence coming from an address that does not end with ".gov" should be considered suspect.

The main U.S. government websites containing official visa and immigration information are: Department of State, Consular Affairs travel website: <http://travel.state.gov>; Department of State, Diversity Visa Lottery website: <http://www.dvlottery.state.gov>; Department of Homeland Security (DHS): <http://www.dhs.gov>; DHS, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services: <http://www.uscis.gov>. DHS, U.S. Customs and Border Protection: <http://www.cbp.gov>.

Important Information



U.S. Consulate General Belfast

Danesfort House
223 Stranmillis Road
Belfast
BT9 5GR

Phone: 02890 386104

Fax: 02890 681301

E-mail: consularbelfast@state.gov



FACEBOOK



TWITTER



TUMBLR



FLICKER



The Culture Spotlight

The U.S. Consulate General often provides partial grants for cultural events which have an American element. Some of the events are free, for others there is a charge. This quarter, we encourage you to check out:

Princeton University Orchestra - January 31, 2015 -Ulster Hall, Belfast. See full details on page 4 of newsletter.

11th Annual United Airlines Belfast Nashville Songwriter's Festival - March 4-8th, 2015. One of the best events on the music calendar. This year's event includes James House (USA), Foy Vance, Ken Haddock and many more. Get more details at www.belfastnashville.com.

Feile an Earragh - March 10-17, 2015 - Various venues - A load of music, readings, artist exhibits and more on offer at this annual festival. For details—<http://visit-belfast.com/whats-on/event/file-an-earraigh>.

Easter Creative Arts & Crafts - March 21-22, 2015 - Ulster Folk Museum. This year, enroll the whole family in a creative arts

class. For details visit the museum website at www.nmni.com.

Belfast City Spring Fair 2015 - April 18-19th, 2015—Barett Demesne. A weekend of events for all ages. See Belfast City Council for more information at <http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/events/Event-45453.aspx>.

Disclaimer: Listing of events and performances is for information purposes only and does not constitute an endorsement by the U.S. Consulate Belfast. All opinions expressed by the artists, writers, and performers participating or contributing to the events listed are those solely of the participants and contributors and not the U.S. government or its designated representatives. Information is believed to be correct at the time of listing. The U.S. Consulate accepts no liability for subsequent changes to these details and no reliance should be placed upon them.

In the event of a genuine emergency involving a U.S. Citizen in Northern Ireland, our after-hours phone number is 01253 501106.

Holiday Calendar~ Consulate Closure Dates

The U.S. Consulate will be closed on the following dates:

Monday, February 16, 2015 - George Washington's Birthday

Tuesday, March 17, 2015 - St. Patrick's Day

Friday, April 3, 2015 - Good Friday

Monday, April 6, 2015 - Easter Monday

Tuesday, April 7, 2015 - Easter Tuesday

Website : <http://london.usembassy.gov/ukpubhol2015.html>.

Kids Corner



Washington 1789-1797

PRESIDENTS DAY

Until the mid-1970s, the February 22 birthday of George Washington, hero of the Revolutionary War and first president of the United States, was a national holiday. In addition, the February 12 birthday of Abraham Lincoln, the president during the Civil War (1861-1865), was a holiday in most states.

In the 1970s, Congress declared that in order to honor all past presidents of the United States a single holiday, to be called Presidents' Day, would be observed on the third Monday in February.

MARDI GRAS

The term Mardi Gras is a French expression meaning "Fat Tuesday" and possibly refers to the last chance people can indulge before Lent. The official colors for Mardi Gras are purple, green, and gold. These colors were chosen in 1872 by the King of Carnival, Rex. The colors represent the following:

- purple – justice
- green – faith
- gold -- power



On March 17, 1737, Boston became the first U.S. city to celebrate the feast day of St. Patrick, Ireland's patron saint.

PUZZLE FUN

Put the 10 Abraham Lincoln-related words in alphabetical order .

honest	1.
president	2.
Abe	3.
Mary	4.
Kentucky	5.
Illinois	6.
log cabin	7.
slavery	8.
Civil War	9.
	10.



Students:

Where will the year 2015 find you? Are you making plans for Spring Break? What does Easter vacation have in store?

Thinking of travel during your school holidays? Here is sensible information for students heading abroad during Spring Break. Lots of helpful tips and suggestions from the Department of State to make your break a happy and memorable trip. Link - [Spring Break](#)

