

Get behind Northern Ireland's 'Summer of Sport'



Stars of Northern Ireland's 'Summer of Sport' pictured with Tourism NI Chief Executive John McGrillen (centre): Ireland Women's Rugby World Cup hopeful Claire McLaughlin, NI Open golfer Dermot McElroy, Gran Fondo cyclist Philip Corr, Ulster Grand Prix rider Glenn Irwin and Northern Ireland U19 footballer Louise McDaniel.

SUMMER 2017 is set to be an epic year for sport in Northern Ireland.

We are playing host to a stellar line-up of international events, from the Women's Rugby World Cup to the Dubai Duty Free Irish Open and UEFA European Women's Under-19 Championship - among many more local events and tournaments.

Thousands of cyclists kicked off the "Summer of Sport" at the Gran Fondo Giro d'Italia, riding through the stunning County Down landscape via the 58km Strangford race overlooking the island-dotted lough, and the more gruelling 175km Mourne route – ascending some of Northern Ireland's highest mountain peaks.

And whether you're a football, rugby or cycling fan, you'll find plenty to get behind this year.

John McGrillen, Tourism Northern Ireland Chief Executive, said: *"This summer is packed full of sporting events that will make a real impact to the visitor economy across Northern Ireland.*

"People from Northern Ireland have shown themselves to be hugely enthusiastic and supportive of local, national and international events. Local crowd support will be an important element in making these events a real success and helping us to attract more large-scale events to Northern Ireland in the future.

"From the Women's Rugby World Cup to the Dubai Duty Free Irish Open and UEFA European Women's Under-19 Championship – there's a huge variety of sporting events to choose from and at the same time experience some of our fantastic local festivals, restaurants, pubs and attractions."

Tourism Northern Ireland has put together a list of some top sporting events taking place this year in Northern Ireland that you can be a part of, be that as a spectator or participant.

So why not get on your bike, tee off at a world-renowned golf course, or simply book your tickets to be a part of something amazing in this epic sporting year.

Causeway Coast Amateur Golf Tournament

5 - 9 June

The Causeway Coast Amateur Golf Tournament is in its 50th year and is the largest amateur golf tournament in Europe, held every summer on the glorious north coast. Played over the Valley; Royal Portrush, Ballycastle, Castlerock and Ballyliffin links, the tournament offers a unique challenge to amateurs with an official club handicap of 20 or less.

Belfast Parkland International Golf Tournament

3 - 5 July

A unique parkland tournament, Belfast Parkland brings together some of the most prestigious golf courses in the Belfast area. Take the opportunity to be part of history and play the inaugural tournament this summer featuring Malone Golf Club, Royal Belfast and Shandon Park. Registration is open until 30 June.

Dubai Duty Free Irish Open

6 - 9 July

The Dubai Duty Free Irish Open, hosted by the Rory Foundation, is returning once again to Northern Ireland this summer, with the Causeway Coastal Route providing a picturesque canvas for the July tournament at Portstewart Golf Club. Past winners Padraig Harrington and Shane Lowry will be joining host Rory McIlroy, and with more player announcements imminent, this year's tournament is shaping up to be one of the best yet. Don't miss out on seeing golfing's elite this summer in Northern Ireland.

Foyle Cup

17 July – 22 July

The Foyle Cup is one of Ireland and indeed Europe's premier youth tournaments and is widely recognised as a tournament that launches the careers of young players aspiring to sign professional contracts. It has grown into a six-day festival of football, catering for all ages, and allows spectators to watch up to three games every day.

Super Cup NI

23 - 28 July

This summer Super Cup NI celebrates its 35th anniversary as one of the world's best youth football

tournaments, with teams from across the world descending on Northern Ireland. Manchester United, six times Premier title winners, will contest the Junior competition, one of six English clubs involved. Past competitors in the tournament, formerly known as The Milk Cup, have included David Beckham, Gary Neville and Peter Crouch. Matches are played at various venues across the Causeway Coast area with the finals taking place at the Ballymena Showgrounds on Friday 28th July.

Ulster Grand Prix

6 - 12 August

Another exciting returning highlight in Northern Ireland's road racing calendar is the MCE Ulster Grand Prix - the fastest road race in the world. The 2016 meeting was hailed as one of the most thrilling the sport has seen in recent years, with close racing between the world's top road racers culminating in four wins for Tyco BMW racer Ian Hutchinson, who also broke the record for the fastest lap with a whopping 134.087mph on the final lap of the second superbike race. The 2017 MCE Ulster Grand Prix is expected to exhibit the best and brightest talent.

2017 UEFA European Women's Under-19 Championship

8 – 20 August

For the first time ever, the Irish Football Association is hosting the Women's Under-19 Championship in Northern Ireland. Eight national teams, including host Northern Ireland, will participate in the prestigious 16-day tournament showcasing Northern Ireland at its best, including our football, our facilities, our culture, our history, our fans and our unconditional love of the game on a national scale. Get your tickets now and cheer on the girls in the first of two major women's events taking place this year.

Women's Rugby World Cup 2017

9 – 26 August

The 2017 Women's Rugby World Cup will be the biggest ever – and it's happening right here. Following pool stage matches in Dublin, the tournament will make its way to Belfast for play-off rounds at Kingspan Stadium and Queen's University, before culminating in a grand finale on Saturday 26 August at the home of Ulster Rugby. WRWC 2017 promises to be a highlight of the sporting calendar in Ireland and is sure to inspire a new generation of female players across the island. Tickets cost from as little as £10 for children and £15 for adults. Can Ireland bring the trophy home?

Northern Ireland Open

10 – 13 August

Northern Ireland's annual national professional tournament returns to Galgorm Castle, Ballymena as part of the European Challenge Tour's international schedule. The tournament regularly attracts strong players such as Michael Hoey, Peter Lawrie and Gareth Maybin to the course's stunning fairways. But this is a golf tournament for all the family – it also features a kids' fun area, food festival and live music. The tournament is free for spectators and tickets can be secured by registering online.

Ulster Rally

18 – 19 August

Running for over 40 years, the Ulster Rally is one of a select number of events included in the prestigious MSA British Rally and TROA Tarmac Rally Championships as well as the European Celtic Cup and the Northern Ireland Championship. This prestigious sporting event is returning once again to the Walled City of Derry~Londonderry and this year will feature an exciting set of revised stages including the introduction of the Re-Grouping halts in Strabane town centre, giving spectators the opportunity to get up close to the competitors.

Giant's Causeway Coast Sportive, Co. Antrim

9 September

The Giant's Causeway Coast Sportive is a unique road cycling event along the iconic Causeway Coast, offering an unforgettable cycling experience through some of the most breathtaking landscapes on the island. Starting and finishing in Ballycastle, it attracts over 1,000 participants, winding through the magical Glens of Antrim with three routes to choose from. Entries are now open online.

For more information on any of these upcoming sporting events in Northern Ireland, visit www.discovernorthernireland.com

**Information correct at time of print and subject to change.*

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MEDIA ENQUIRIES: For further information, please contact Claire Cromie at Tourism NI on 028 90 441 652 or c.cromie@tourismni.com.