

Can Orange parades become tourist lure?

by UPI

BELFAST, Northern Ireland -- The Orange Order in Northern Ireland, long known for its militant anti-Catholicism, now hopes to turn its traditions into a tourist attraction. The change echoes the shift in Northern Ireland, where Ian Paisley, the Protestant leader, and Gerry Adams, head of the nationalist Sinn Fein Party, agreed to a political accord this year. In past years, tourists were warned to stay away from Northern Ireland during the "marching season" around the July 12 anniversary of the Battle of the Boyne, when the King William III, the Prince of Orange, defeated the Catholic James II. Now, Tourism Ireland and the Orange Order plan to promote the marches, The Independent reported. The tourist agency plans to promote Northern Ireland among U.S. and Canadian residents of Scotch-Irish descent. "One of the primary appeals for Americans visiting the island of Ireland is culture and history," said David Hume, director of services for the Orange Order. There is a terrific opportunity to build up a tourist package which would include the Twelfth. "Paisley and Bertie Ahern, prime minister of the Irish Republic, visited the Boyne battlefield site together, signaling that both sides believe that their common history no longer divides them.

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