

My work experience in Ireland

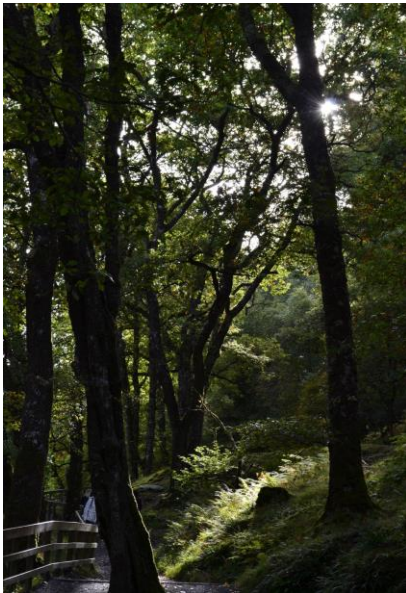
08.10.2022

Yesterday I went to Howth Island and hiked the cliff walk with my friend Berta from work. She is such an inspiring person, almost as inspiring as the view we had the privilege to see. The blue water splashing into the rocks, waves spreading like fireworks and seagulls plunging headfirst into the water to catch fish. Such raw nature and untouched beauty is rare to see in Europe nowadays. We had to take a slippery path to go down to the beach and I almost died twice because my shoes were really inappropriate for the occasion but I managed to hold on to some thorny bushes and so I was only left with a few bloody scratches on my hand. Then we went into the city to experience some Irish pubs and I was asked to show my ID. As if I don't look 18!!! Anyway, I'm sure I'll miss Guinness very much and somehow it managed to calm down my heart burn.



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I went hiking with Berta and Meike at the Wicklow National Park. The weather was lovely and the views were just delightful. We saw a noisy waterfall, majestic trees and a lake so pure that you could count the pebbles in it. And mushrooms! Beautiful mushrooms and ducks. It was my first experience of hiking with Germans and they were really Germanly prepared which I very much appreciated.



09.10.2022

Today was absolute chaos. We went to the Cliffs of Moher but the weather was awful. Like fully awful. Awfully and painfully awful. The rain was so bad that you couldn't really

see the cliffs, the wind blasted so hard that I almost flew away in the sea while holding my umbrella. I am not even exaggerating! Everyone was so wet that we needed to go buy new shoes and trousers! At least I learnt from the tour guide that the word that is pronounced "wet" in Irish means happy. I guess that makes sense ;D. And I learnt so many cool things. Here is a little summary that I'd like to never forget.





1. A fairy tree is a tree that stands alone in the middle of the field. It usually is old and untouched. The Irish say that if one is to destroy the tree, he will be cursed with bad luck. After that the tour guide asked if we believed in fairies and proceeded to demonstrate their existence by saying that once there was a car factory that cut such a tree to build their headquarters. He gave an unknown name and asked if we knew such a car company. We said no, then he added, exactly, they never got to be successful so yes, fairies do exist. We also saw a miniature castle that was built a very long time ago, so this kind of makes me really believe in them.

2. The Barren, a special place in Ireland that has long and extraordinary formations of rocks on land, is said to be built by giants that threw rocks on land in competitions of power. The scientific explanation has

something to do with tectonic plates of the sea that came to the surface but who cares about that. Also the legends tell us that if you happen to be at the barren at night and hear fox screams, someone close to you will die. I doubt that I'll ever be at the barren in the middle of nowhere at night.



3. In Irish mythology butterflies symbolize news. So if you see bright colored butterflies, like red, blue or yellow, that means you'll hear good news soon. But if the butterflies are dark colored, that means something bad is going to come to your ears.



4. The Irish culture is a mixture of celtic, christian (St. Patrick), viking and English culture. They all had lived or "conquered" Ireland at some point of time.

5. There is a large famous golf course near Galway that belongs to Trump. Due to movements of the rocks and all stuff that doesn't matter, the golf course deteriorated and Trump wanted to build a wall around it to stop the ground from moving. Ironic, isn't it?

6. Another legend states that there were two families that were trying to take control of the southern part of Ireland, O'Neil and McDonald, so they decided to have a competition: The two chiefs of the clans had to swim in a lake with an island in the middle of it. The first one to have their right hand touch the ground of the island was going to be the winner and have the power in that part of Ireland. So, McDonald. was swimming and almost touched the ground of the island but O'Neill took the knife

from his shoe, cut his hand and threw it on the island, and so he won the competition. Till now, the symbol of the bloody hand can be seen on different flags and traditional pieces.

7. In Balway we saw a house of a once very influential family with a little statue that looks like a monkey eating a baby. Well actually the legends say that the monkey of the family saved the baby from a house fire.

So yes, these are my favorite stories that I heard today. I'm really looking forward to reading my book about Irish folklore and mythology. I love this country.

10.10.2022

I thought it would be horrible to drive one hour from the house to work, but it is actually quite nice. I wake up with the sunrise and the fresh sleepy morning air. I walk to the station and wait for the bus that is of course always late. Then together with people watching TikTok without earphones and that weird man that speaks on the phone with an Irish accent that doesn't even sound like a human language we stay stuck in traffic. On the second floor of the bus the sun is blinding us to remind everyone that the whole world actually rotates around him and this is why he is not stuck in traffic like us. When I get to Bachelor's Walk (my station) I get out and meet Jason, who is always kind to buy me water and to amaze me with his shorts at 10 degrees Celsius. Gary always takes a look at us and sends the ones who look sick home right after we arrive. I like Gary. He always talks, smirking from one side of his mouth. But because he's holding that part of mouth together I don't always understand what he's saying. That's ok though. We're exchange experience workers, so he assumes we don't really have a clue about anything. I find that assumption very useful. Then I laminate, organize cards and menus, make buttons or cut posters. Good stuff.



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I went with Lea, Berta and Meike to the theater. We watched "Joyce's Women" and I am absolutely in love with everything about the piece. The actors - utmost talented, the production - super professional, the play of lights, sound and types of visual arts - immaculate. I learned so much about James Joyce, the famous Irish writer, and his relationship to his daughter, his wife and his numerous lovers. His daughter was mentally ill and her representation in the play gave me goosebumps. James Joyce died while being mentally ill as well. He loved his daughter very much. I guess both hearts and brains burn a lot faster when passionate. Also most of Ulysses was written in Zurich, where Joyce had another main lover of his life, who sold his letters to make money during the war. I'd do the same. Or I'd write a book about the whole thing. That was all the power women had at that time.

11.10.2022

Today we came in at work, Gary took a glance at us and said proudly: " You can go for a walk for a couple of hours". We didn't question why or until when exactly and just left. Lilly, another exchange experience worker from Hannover, Nathalie from the Chech Republic, and I went for cake and coffee

at a very cute place called "The cake cafe". In order to get to the cafe you need to go through a second hand book store and exit it from the back. Then you start seeing cute little tables and cute girls serving those tables and you know you have arrived. The cakes we've tried were homemade and so so so delicious. I've had such an exquisite Earl Gray. Lilly lived in the US as an Au Pair student and traveled almost the whole of America and Mexico, so we started talking about her experience abroad and how it changed her. Then I remembered that I have to write an interview with a workmate or buddy for my report, so the stars aligned perfectly and Lilly was more than glad to answer my questions.

- What motivated you to come to Dublin?

How could I not take the chance, when it was offered. I have already lived abroad and the stuff you experience and learn while being abroad is worth more than one can imagine.

- What do you enjoy about living abroad?

I love meeting new people, trying new food and just noticing the differences between different cultures. For example, name a person from Germany that would say "Thank you!" when getting off the bus? Still the Irish do it in such a natural manner.



- What is the biggest challenge about living abroad in your opinion?

Hmmm well, I'd say host family related problems or them not giving you the warm feeling that one needs while being away from home. It can be difficult to approach problems with your host family, as you wouldn't want them to get hurt, or to think you're ungrateful or disrespectful, but at the same time, you are here for a limited time and trying to make the best of it should be your highest priority.



- What is a piece of advice you'd like to share with other future exchange students?

Be realistic about your expectations and open to different people and their way of living. If you are there to do an internship, then really work. I promise you'll have enough time for fun.

- What is your favorite thing about living abroad?

That you get to be who you really are. Nobody knows you here and you don't have to fulfill any expectations of anyone because you're here for a short amount of time, so it doesn't really matter how the others see you. This way you can learn so so much about yourself.

- As a final statement, what is your favorite experience or memory from Dublin?

I don't have a single favorite memory yet, but my favorite part is to interact with strangers on the streets or in cafes and talking to random people. That wouldn't necessarily happen in Germany. For example last week I helped a couple to find the direction and the building they were looking for and a group of German men that were lost.

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I went out with Niklas yesterday to a pub and experienced him from a whole nother side. He's such an affectionate, friendly and nice person. We talked and talked and talked and I wish him the best that there is in the world for him. He really deserves it.



12.10.2022

Berta came up with the idea to make a tour in the docklands following her little booklet guide. That booklet is the definition of the German folk if there was one and I love every page of it. It is literally all you need to know about Ireland in a little book

categorized in budget groups and types of activity. Genius. So we saw the docklands and what struck me were the number of modern buildings of big companies like "Indeed" or "J.P. Morgan". An absolutely different side of Dublin unfolds on the waterside, with large restaurants and theaters and administration houses. The windows of the apartments uncover with their size the lives of people inside who drink coffee, have Zoom meetings or watch Netflix. I didn't feel like I was in Europe anymore. It reminded me of Atlanta.



13.10.2022

I had such a full day. First we got to leave work earlier, so Maike, Berta Lily and I all went to the botanical garden. Oh, what a Snowwhite experience I had !!! First of all, the garden is huge and I haven't even managed to see all the greenhouses. The entrance is free but the green spaces radiate cleanliness and tidiness. It surprises me how grass and trees in Ireland are still green. There were a couple of yellow and orange trees in the botanical garden and even those were brought from other countries. My favorite part was the squirrels and ducks and crows that noticed my package of nuts and were running after me to feed them. The squirrels came so close to me, that I touched the tail of one of

them while it ran away with its mouth full of hazelnuts.

Later I visited the van Gogh exhibition in Dublin and got yelled at by a bus driver for standing too close to the street (better said in the street). If an Irish person yells at you, then you really must have messed up. I recalled all my Van Gogh knowledge and fell in love with him even more and then I went to a comedy show with Lea and Niklas. Those gin and tonics were really really good, but not as good as most of the performers. 2 of the 7 performers (my gin and tonics and I are not so sure how many they were in total) were terrible. Poor Paul, he was so bad. I hope he doesn't do comedy for the rest of his life. The Irish accent of the comedians made the jokes 5 times "fonnier".

15.10.2022

Sitting on the plane I reflected upon the last 2 weeks. I gathered some thoughts about the experience that I'd like to share with you and my future self.

Host family: My host family was really nice, but one could feel that they aren't willing to build connections with their students. This is totally fine for me, but it might be harmful for students that want to stay longer than two weeks. Still, I made conversation with them and learned a lot about Irish history and traditions.

Work placement: I am more than certain that my work placement was the best from my group. We had a lot of free time to explore the city, we were treated nicely and respected and we got paid in the end! Not to mention the cute dog that was always in the office!



Leisure activities: I am really content with everything I managed to see and do in Dublin. I didn't have a "To Do" list coming there, and still I was out most nights of the week. A felt young and free.

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In conclusion I can certainly state that I enjoyed the experience to its core. Everything about it felt surreal and I tried to make the best of these two last weeks. I'm so grateful that such programmes exist to provide young people the opportunity to experience other parts of the world, open their minds and acquire life skills.