

My exchange to Ireland (September to December 2021)

Why I wanted to do an exchange year

My first reason for going on an exchange to Ireland obviously was to improve my English. and let me tell you I certainly did!

Secondly I had the desire to discover a new country, its culture, its people, its landscape etc.

Finally I wanted to challenge myself by living abroad on my own in a country whose language is not my mother tongue. Looking back, I would say I managed it quite well. At times it was challenging (sometimes even frustrating) and I can I say it was certainly not like I expected it to be. You are obliged to outgrow yourself and get out of your comfort zone. But in the end you will return home with lots of new friends (It certainly takes some effort to get in touch with the natives, but normally you will have less difficulties to become friends with other foreign students.), unique experiences and abilities you didn't know about before. Trust me a new side of yourself will be laid out to you!



How I organised my year abroad

The organisation *travel works* took care of everything concerning my exchange. I had the choice between a large number of boarding schools or community schools. The



difference between the two is that at a boarding school you live on campus with all of the other students and at a community school you are housed in a host family. On the one hand living in a boarding school makes it easy to bond with the other students but on the other hand a host family offers you the unique experience to get a peek into the culture, the customs and the rituals for example at Christmas ;). I decided to attend a community school. I had to give my organisation

three preferences and a short description of myself. Finally they found a suitable host mom near my second choice: *Cabinteely Community School*, which was only a half hour bus ride away from Dublin.

What I experienced

My school suggested the *Transition Year Program* (short TY), which offers you a vast choice of subjects and activities in order to help you find out what you are best in and what you would like to specialise in the next year (like in Germany you get to choose a certain number of subjects in 11th grade). The subjects were rotating during the whole year. Although I only stayed for one and a half term (which is three and a half month) I could experience a large range of subjects such as *horticulture, wood work, business, gender studies, relationship studies, home economics* (which essentially means cooking) *design, IT, Italian, Spanish*, apart from the other usual subjects such as *Maths, English and RE*. At school it was compulsory to wear a school uniform, which I personally enjoyed because you don't have to think of what you are going to wear every morning and there is no rivalry or judgement on what kind of clothes or style you wear. Some of the activities we did as a class were team building activities such as paddling, rope-sliding, or a high ropes course in the middle of Ireland's great countryside. Furthermore we were visiting botanic gardens, I had to give a talk on the assassination of John F. Kennedy (whose ancestors emigrated from Ireland to the U.S.A.). I took part in a breast cancer awareness project, a barista workshop, gastronomy workshop and even an advent wreath workshop. And this was only a bunch of activities we did.



What I would do differently

If I look back on my exchange, I wouldn't change a thing. I gained a lot of true friends from around the world as well as some Irish friends. I experienced an extraordinary adventure in Ireland and I returned home with my suitcase full of good experiences (and also some challenging ones, which did not spoil my trip, though, but only made me wiser and actually more self-confident.): Coming back, my suitcase weighed more than 30 kilograms (Not just experiences, rather lots of shopping.)! The person who carried the suitcase had also changed somewhat. I would say that overcoming the challenges that such an exchange brings with it made me a more confident and certainly a more open-minded person

If you plan to do a similar exchange and have any further questions, please feel free to contact me via our school app 'Talk'. You will find me under my name:

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