

“Wish I’d Known” Survey Galway, Ireland

PACKING AND TRAVELING

Specifically, what kind of LINENS did you need to bring?

- Nothing, they had sheets and towels. They didn’t have washcloths, so if you like to scrub yourself clean, bring your own. The sheets were extremely rough/hard, so sleep in pants so you don’t have to feel the roughness of them.
- None, they were provided for us by Corrib Village

What are you glad you packed from home?

- I am glad I packed zip-up sweatshirts; they are easy to take off and tie around the waist. Comfortable shoes are helpful, too. Tennis shoes that are NOT white are more the type for the Ireland culture. I’m glad I packed some food and water; it saved me money while over there. I am also I packed my Discman and CDs; I would’ve died without them! And some good books, time goes by quicker in airports with a good book to read.
- Tennis shoes, you do a lot of walking.

What do you wish you had left at home?

- Half of my clothes!! I had TOO much stuff and didn’t wear half of it! When they say only bring two or three pairs of jeans, they are NOT lying!!
- Nothing

Do you have any travel tips to pass on (planning advice, safety considerations, guidebooks, train vs. bus, etc.)?

- The buses over there are not the same as here. The people that ride the buses in Ireland are everyday people, not the stereotypical freaky ones that ride the greyhound here in America. And the buses go almost EVERYWHERE, and they’re cheap. I never took a train but some of the other girls did, they didn’t really comment on it. Buy a guidebook!!! If it was not for Bobbie Jo’s guidebook, we would’ve been so completely lost!! If you’re on the first floor, keep your windows closed and locked when you are not in the room.
- Bring at least one nice outfit, i.e. black pants to wear with a couple different shirts.

What places would you advise future students to see and why?

- Sligo!! It was fun and totally of the beaten tourist track. We really met some nice locals and had a great time. I’ve also heard Dingle is the best place in Ireland to go to, I wish I would’ve went there.

MONEY AND COMMUNICATIONS

How much money in U.S. currency would you recommend students have at their disposal for their whole time abroad?

- It depends on if they travel to other countries while over there. If this is the case, I'd suggest \$2,000 to \$3,000. You don't want to limit yourself on anything while over there. If they were not traveling to other countries, I'd say about \$800 to \$1,000.
- None, you cannot use it anywhere except in the airport.

How much money did you have in foreign currency when you left for your program? Was it enough?

- None, they have change places right in the airport when you get over there. Only convert a small amount at the airport, I'd say \$50 because the airport charges a hefty fee for converting the money. I would suggest using an ATM card, only bring over \$200 in cash/travelers checks and have the rest in the ATM. That way you get THE best exchange rate and, sometimes, for no fee at all. Use an ATM card or charge card for every transaction you can
- I changed in \$50 at the Philadelphia airport to only receive about 42 euro. I would wait until you get to the country and take it out of a cash machine.

How did you manage your money (credit cards, traveler's checks, bank accounts etc.)? How and where did you access your money?

- I didn't manage my money. I had a credit card and spent my little brains out. I didn't want to limit myself as to what I could/couldn't do because I didn't have enough money. I brought over \$500 in traveler's checks and converted at banks because you get a good exchange rate and they don't charge as much as anywhere else. (We knew this from the trusty guidebook!) There are ATM machines everywhere, too.
- I used my ATM card and got money out of the bank everyday or as I needed it. I also put some on my credit card. The nice thing about the credit card is that it is charged in US currency. You have to keep in mind the exchange rate, when you take money out of the ATM it is usually more in US dollars depending on the exchange rate that day, so if you have a set amount of spending money you need to remember that fact.

How much money did you spend on books?

- None
- None, we took our books from UW-L.

How did you communicate with the U.S.? What would you recommend to future students (e.g. calling card, set up e-mail account and where, etc.)?

- BUY A SAM'S CLUB CALLING CARD!!! They do work in Ireland to call to America. We would go to an e-mail cafe everyday and e-mailed home. Also, set up a time for parents/friends to call with a calling card. Then you don't have to pay the \$25 deposit if people are just calling you over there. Postcards, lots of postcards were sent.
- I used both calling cards and email. Email was kind of a pain because you could only use it in town at an Internet café and then you had to pay to use it, there was a cost of 70 cents for up to 10 minutes and then they had a certain amount for blocks of time. I used a calling card from my room in Corrib Village, however it is a big rip off. You have to pay \$25 to have your phone hooked up and then when you make a

phone call even if it is on a calling card they charge you 33 cents a minute or something ridiculous, but if someone calls you, you are not charged. However, if you use a phone booth with a calling card it takes off 10 minutes for every minute you talk.

SCHOOL WORK

How did your academic experience abroad differ from your U.S. experiences concerning:

Relations with professors/Classroom Instruction?

- My relationship with Ronda (Knox) is way different than it could've been in the U.S. I look at her not only as a role model professor, but also as a friend that I enjoy hanging out with.
- It was a very close relationship with our professor because we were all living together in the same complex. The professor was from UW-L so it was easy to communicate.

Grading?

- The same as in the States.
- It was done the same as at UW-L.

Study habits?

- Harder, it is hard to study over there because you want to go out all of the time to either sight see or drink!
- The studying was a little hard because you had to make time to do it and not be distracted with all of the other things you wanted to do in the town you were staying in.

Library?

- What library???
- Didn't use it.

Computer Access?

- Yes, that would've been VERY nice to have. I was quite disappointed/not happy when we found out that we could've had computer access but the communication between Ireland and UW-L was not effective enough to let us know that the computers were up and running the whole time we were there.
- We had to pay to use computers for Internet in town and if we wanted access to the lab on campus we had to pay 26 euro.

Other

- It SUCKED having to write everything out. I haven't done that since grade school!

What enabled/hindered your successful academic experience?

- For sure one on one question/answering helped my successful experience. I liked being able to run over to Ronda's apartment if I had a question and she was always more than happy to help me out.

SOCIAL LIFE

How did you meet students from your host country?

- We didn't. Galway is VERY touristy and we mostly met other Americans, which was a huge disappointment. Especially our living arrangements, we were surrounded ONLY by Americans. Next time we should have a host family instead, that would do wonders more in helping students fully experience the culture and the country's people.
- I met people by going out at night and talking to them.

How did you like to spend your free time and why? Is there anything you regret not doing more of in your free time?

- We went and saw the local tourist stuff. We'd walk around town; hang out at the apartments, chill. I do wish I would've went and saw some of the sites a little more. It is hard to do that though because of having to walk around in the rain, that is not fun.
- My free time was spent exploring the city of Galway, going out to dinner, spending time at the pubs. It was also nice to have weekends free because one weekend we took a trip to Cork in Southern Ireland. I wish I would have budgeted more money to fly places (i.e. London, Spain or other countries I was interested to visit).

What opportunities for social, recreational, and cultural events that the host university or program offered did you like the best? Why?

- There weren't really any events planned or offered, which was another disappointment. It is a little harder going in the summer because actual school is not in session so there are very few students on campus.
- They offered nothing we had to search it out or ask locals what there was cultural to do. Our bus driver actually gave us a lot of tips of where to go for the best fish and chips and where to see traditional Irish dancing, otherwise we had to figure it out on our own. I did enjoy a play some of us went to while we were in Dublin. It was something different to do instead of going to the pub.

What piece of advice would you give future students regarding their non-academic life while abroad?

- Go out and have fun. Don't go out in huge groups either because that will make you more unapproachable to the locals. No one feels comfortable going up to a group of 5 or more girls and starting a conversation. Get your homework done right away and go into town and hang out. You can watch TV in the states (and it is better in the states, too) so go into town and have a good time.
- Live it up while you are there, do not second guess yourself, if you want to do something on a long weekend just go for it.

CULTURAL ISSUES

Are women treated differently in your host country than in the U.S.? If so, what advice would you pass on to women who are thinking of studying in your host country?

- No, not really.
- In a way, I think American women are viewed as a little more aggressive, I don't think the Irish men are used to women coming up to them and starting conversations.

Are minorities—racial, religious, sexual identity—treated differently in your host country than in the U.S.? If so, what advice would you pass on to members of any minority group that are thinking of studying in your host country?

- I'm white so I have no real experience in that one. And I really didn't see too much diversity over there.
- No, I didn't witness it.

OTHER COMMENTS

- **DON'T STAY AT CORRIB VILLAGE!!** It is NOT clean and the staff does not know how to communicate complaints/requests from one person to another. Plan a weekend trip to a small city, not Dublin. Dublin is another large city and the Guinness tour was somewhat scary...it reminded me of Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory! If you don't know anyone going over there, don't worry about it! I met some of the nicest people from UWL that I would never have met otherwise. We are all good friends now, too. Be brave and branch out. There are too many great people out there to get to know!
- Be prepared when you go to Corrib Village to be robbed, given wrong information, ripped off for the ridiculous amount you pay to use your phone. Furthermore, they do not clean your room unless you ask them to, so it is rather filthy especially the bathroom. I was expecting something much different when I arrived and they were not accommodating to us. Especially since we had to move out of our apartments for one weekend and then move everything back in for five days, it was a huge hassle. Further, I would advise and future students to not form an opinion about your trip in the first couple of days that you are there because it takes a few to adjust and get past the culture shock.