

REPORT AL RIENTRO DELL'ESPERIENZA DI SCAMBIO - A.A.
2014-2015

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I spent the Spring semester 2015 in Dublin, Ireland, where I was on the Erasmus+ exchange program at NCAD, National College of Art and Design.
I spent five months in Ireland and I didn't want to come back!

During my stay in Ireland I had the opportunity to study Product Design, to familiarize with the Irish culture, history, politics and society. I also had the opportunity to travel a lot throughout Ireland and meet new people, both Irish and international.

Studying abroad is a great opportunity to enhance one's language skills and get to know an other culture.

NCAD

The Erasmus+ application form for NCAD Dublin had to be in by January 2014. In mid-December I got an email from the College saying I got accepted.

Irish university academic year is divided in two semesters but it starts earlier than the Italian one. I struggled because I had to leave in mid-January to start the semester abroad, when my classes in Italy weren't over yet then I had to return to Italy in February to take my first semester exams.

The Spring semester 2015 in Dublin started the 26th of January with an introduction day for all new Erasmus students. We were introduced to the school system and to the school building itself.
I couldn't choose the courses because it is a pre-organized set up.

Teaching

The level of teaching at NCAD is good, but compared to the Italian level of teaching is much less demanding. However, the teachers do have a steady personal contact with their students. The teachers are there to help and advice their students during the courses even offering time outside the classroom. Many teachers also offer their students extra material if interested.

During class teachers and students often have open discussion and students do not fear to ask questions. Most of the projects I've done were collaborations with real companies, who were asking us to design products they could really use on the market. I find this very interesting as a part of teaching; this enhances students' ability to not only think theoretically but also to apply their knowledge in practical projects. It's the best way to get a real feeling for the Design work environment.

ID cards

At NCAD every student has a student ID card that is used for almost everything. With this ID card students are allowed to borrow books at the library, copy and print and have special discounts in town.

Library

NCAD library is quite small but it is possible for students to study in quiet rooms, borrow books and magazines. Students are allowed to borrow books that are required for courses, and this is very much appreciated by Erasmus students.

NCAD only has computers in the library, but they are few compared to Politecnico di Milano. Moreover, they lack useful softwares such as Autocad, Photoshop and Indesign.

LIVING IN DUBLIN

Dublin is said to be one of the most expensive cities to live in in Europe. Rents are very high, most rents today in the center of Dublin are over 500 euros a month for a single room, and many of the apartments may not be in good shape.

I found the standard for apartments lower than what we are used to in Italy. The house I lived in was a fifteen-minute walk from the city center. It was located in Portobello, very close to the South Canal.

I shared this house with twenty people! This is also unusual for Dublin. It was run like a hostel but only for long stays. Everything was in common: kitchen, living room, washing machine, dryers, rooms..I was sharing one bathroom with other ten girls. There were people from all over the world, including Irish. This was quite an experience for me. It was very hard at the start but it ended up to be the best choice I've ever made. When you get to know the people you are sharing the house with it's like living in a little community.

My college was only a twenty-minute walk from my place. I was lucky to live in a location situated so close to the city center and to my college.

NCAD does not provide accommodation for their students.

Local life

In Ireland, and especially in the capital of Ireland, you can find pubs and bars in every corner of the street. The pub culture is very strong in Ireland and seems to hold the Irish people together in both happy and rough times. Irish pubs attract tourists and many pubs in Dublin keep up the traditional 'Irish pub' concept with live Irish music and dancing every day. However, pubs are not just for live music, dancing and partying; pubs are places where Irish people meet after work on regular weekdays for a chat before going home for dinner. Pubs in Dublin open before noon and are full more or less all day long.

Language

Ireland is an English speaking country but the Irish accent is not always so easy to understand.

Depending on their origin in Ireland, Irish people have very different accents.

It took me a couple of weeks to get used to the strong Irish accent. The teachers spoke very clearly and almost without the strong 'rr's and the hard 'oo's, but the students were harder to understand at the beginning. I find the Irish accent very pretty and I enjoy listening to Irish people talking.

SPARE TIME

Sights

During my five month stay in Ireland I got the chance to travel quite a lot, I am very happy about that. Ireland has a lot of tourist attractions to offer, the Irish nature is stunningly beautiful and quite different from the Italian one.

Dublin

Dublin is a beautiful city, and quite small for a capital.

Ireland is known for its famous writers and poets such as James Joyce, William Butler Yeats, Jonathan Swift, Oscar Wilde etc and tourists find statues, monuments and museums of these writers all over Dublin. The famous Molly Malone can be found near Grafton Street and her statue is a huge tourist attraction. Trinity College, The Irish Bank, Christchurch, St. Patrick's Church and Temple Bar are also very famous tourist attractions. However, the most visited tourist attraction is the world famous Guinness Brewery.

Temple Bar is an area in the city center full of pubs, bars and restaurants. Temple Bar is the right place if you are looking for traditional Irish music and dancing, Fish and Chips or a pint of Guinness.

In Dublin county there are also a lot of beautiful landscapes to see. I visited Howth twice, a peninsula situated north of Dublin famous for fishing and its steep cliffs.

I travelled also out of Dublin, I've been to Galway and the Cliffs of Moher. Galway is a county situated on the west side of Ireland, on the Atlantic coast. The 'capital' of county Galway is also called Galway and it's a small town with a lively nightlife and cute different-coloured houses. Too bad when I visited the Cliffs of Moher it was raining and very foggy so I couldn't enjoy the breathtaking view it is world famous for.

Sports

Sport is very important for the Irish, even if it only includes watching football on big screen in a pub. Ireland is known for its Gaelic football and hurling, national sports that are mostly played in Ireland. These sports are often played in schools where teams compete in tournaments.

OBSERVATIONS

Positive and negative surprises

When thinking about Ireland, the first things that pop up in most people's mind are the rainy weather, the humidity and the wind. To my positive surprise, the Irish weather is not as rainy as I imagined it to be.

Ireland is a fascinating country full of history and legends. Although Ireland is such a small country it has brought many things to the world, everything from writers and poets, world famous beer, the mystery leprechauns, Irish music, Riverdance and the Celtic history, just to mention a few. In my opinion, Ireland is a beautiful country and I am very happy with my exchange in Dublin.

I especially enjoyed my living experience, sharing a traditional victorian-style house with twenty other young guests.

Skills obtained abroad

I believe that my stay in Ireland during these five months will give me a lot of advantages in the future. Understanding different accents in a language that is not one's native language is not always easy, but I can now say that I am able to understand even the most difficult Irish accents, which will also help me to understand different British and Scottish accents. My English has improved, thanks to the fact that I was studying in English and did all my projects and exams in English. My vocabulary in different subjects has improved and I am now a faster reader in English than before. It was very interesting to see how the Irish school system works, and I believe that I did learn something out of their system too. I have learnt much about the Irish society, history and lifestyle, and this experience has helped me to understand and accept the way Irish people look at the world.

CONCLUSION

In today's global world traveling, understanding other cultures and being confident in other languages is essential for success. I believe that international exchanges can prepare students for this challenge.

I've always been active in social issues: volunteering, scouting, international exchange and sport activities. Nevertheless, I've never neglected my studies. I am convinced that this experience abroad helped my personal and cultural growth. Thanks to my meditative and merry attitude, my knowledge of English, my Erasmus experience in Dublin, my volunteering experience in Kenya and my steady effort in learning, I feel I am ready to face a working experience abroad.

During my Erasmus experience in Dublin I was chosen by GreenEgg Technologies for a project and offered an Internship as Interface Designer.