

# Reflective Journal

St.Mary's University Collage Belfast

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Erasmus 2013

12.12.2013

## **Section A - Academic Studies**

I attended the following lectures and seminars at the college:

### **The Evolution of Irish Cultural Landscape:**

Tracey McKay explained to us some fascinating geographical phenomena like the bog of Ceide Fields, for example. We learned about prehistoric and historic periods and landscapes all across Ireland. We talked about Mesolithic hunters and gatherers, the imprint of Neolithic people. This course was one of my favorite I'd loved to listen to her and she was always with so much energy. I liked it.

### **Unity in Diversity:**

Angela Vaupel was awesome and for me it was one of the best classes I attended here. We learned about so many topics and we had also the possibility to discuss different themes in the seminars. Every week we had two lectures, where Angela told us about some backgrounds and every second week we had the seminars. Friday was the film-day where we watched films in connection to the lecture/seminar topic. We also had to read some short stories to get some important impressions about some core themes. I love to discuss the acting of human beings and the impact of all surroundings.

### **Irish History:**

It was very helpful to get an idea what was/is going on here in Northern Ireland and especially in Belfast. It helped me a lot to understand some things which I saw when I walked around in the city. All the murals and walls, the Shankill Road..I wouldn't have known why and especially with which background everything happened here.

### **PE Studies:**

It was very interesting because it was different as well. By the way, if I say different, I do not mean better or worse. In the gymnastics classes, we had to practice headstands, handstands, forward rolls, back rolls, and so on, which was basically the same I had to do in Austria last year. Swimming was so much different to our home university. Some things they had to do I didn't even know or I saw them the first time. I'll definitely keep some of the methods and experiences in my mind.

## **Reflective Journal:**

This self study course gave students the chance to reflect their Erasmus experiences and to order their thoughts. It reminds me of the time when I arrived and what I have done all the time since I have been in Ireland.

## **Supervised Project:**

For Supervised Project I decided to create a personal traveler guide. I saw a lot of amazing places here in Ireland and I had the feeling to share my experiences with others and maybe its useful for the University to give it to other Incomings. It was also a self study course and I enjoyed creating it.

## **Section B- Cultural Programme**

Some of the cultural program trips were organized by the university but me and my housemates love to travel so we planed many trips we did by ourself.

### **Giant's Causeway**



A really impressive sight. Definitely worth a visit. The view of the surrounding areas is overwhelming and the sea was beautiful. The steps made for giants are incredible. You feel tiny in comparison to the huge boulders.

The sea water crashing against the rocks and splashing against your feet will be a picture you will never forget.

## Cavehill Mountain & Black Mountain



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When we wanted to be a little bit and go for a walk we went to Cavehill Mountain or on the Black Mountain which was right behind our house. I liked Cavehill more because the path up there is nicer. But Black Mountain was also great especially the cows on our way and the slide on that tree. Both Mountains have an amazing view over the city.

## Mourne Mountains- Newcastle



It was one of the toughest walks we had here in Northern Ireland. If you stay in Belfast you have to go there with the bus, which is one hour drive and then you can walk up the mountain. It was so much wind when we were there. Sometimes we couldn't even walk

because it was so strong and the rain was crashing into our faces. It was a six hours walk (with return and little breaks) but it was definitely worth seeing. On the top there is a wall which reminds me a little bit of the Chinese-wall.

### ***A trip to the West:***

#### **Cliffs of Moher**



Cliffs of Moher is a world wide known representation of Ireland. This cliffs are huge and the biggest I've ever seen. Cliffs of Moher is a very touristic place. I think it's a pity that such beautiful landscape was 'destroyed' only to make money. I think so many people at one place take its beauty. I went there with my boyfriend. We decided not to pay for the entrance -parked the car somewhere else and went through some fields to join the path as well. Some landholders over there told us that its okay for them, so it wasn't something illegal. :)

#### **Connemara National Park**



It looked like if I would be in a dinosaur movie the only thing which was missing were the dinosaurs. We went through a lot of parts with the car between the 12 Bens. There is a hill called Diamond Hill where we went up to. It was such a nice trail to go and the landscape was amazing.

## **Section C- Social Programme**

During my stay in Belfast I could not complain about the lack of social events. Together with my roommates and other Erasmus students we always found ways to entertain ourselves.



### **Erasmus Partys in Cavindisch House**

Rahel, Michelle, Klara, Maria and Soundrej were such nice hosts for so many times. It was so nice that we had a place where we had enough space to meet us all to have good times. On Friday is our last one -looking forward to it!!! :)

### **Traveling around together**

I was so lucky with my housemates because we all love to travel around and discover new places. Almost every weekend we went somewhere, either to the North Coast or we rented a car and went

further. Those times I will never forget it was totally overwhelming for me. I'm looking forward to visit some Erasmus friends and discover there home country with them.



Traveling was the best thing here in Ireland - culturally and socially.

## Birthday Parties



We had 3 birthdays to celebrate while we were here, Olo's Ola's (who were my housemates) and Patrick's. The best thing was that all Erasmus students organised it in secret and they didn't expect anything. Those parties were awesome.

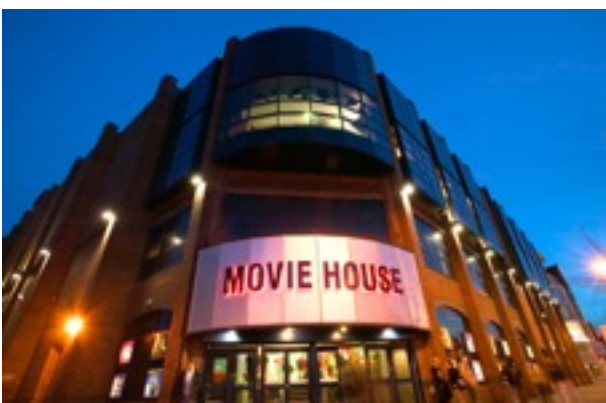
## Halloween



On Halloween we went out to a party organised by the Students Union of St.Mary's. It was a lot of fun and a lot of dancing as well. :) Everybody looked amazing and especially the Irish people were very creative with their choice of costumes.

## Cinema

On Tuesdays we went a few times to the cinema, because on Tuesday it is only 3 pounds. After that we often went for a beer somewhere together to have a good end of the day.



## Pubs & Bar Visits



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I didn't went out that often because we were a lot on trips and sometimes too tired to go somewhere.

But those pups/bars I saw were totally entertaining. In all we met a lot of Irish people and they were so friendly and outgoing that we always had a good night. One thing I really enjoyed was the live music in some pubs. It always seemed to be so familiar when people where sitting together on a table, having a beer together and playing/sining Irish songs. Those pubs/bars which you can see on the pictures were the best for me, especially the Filthy McNastys and Kelly's Cellars.

## Section D- Guidelines for further students

If the University will offer some tours or trips you should join them. Most of them are for free or only a small amount of charge and the places are all worth seeing.



### Do's:

- ◆ Recognize that you are not at home anymore and things are going to be different, so make sure you consider that and try to adapt to new conditions and situations accordingly
- ◆ Bring a warm coat with you for the colder days here
- ◆ Go to the North Coast
- ◆ Get a prepaid phone here - O2
- ◆ Try at least once a Guinness
- ◆ Bring warm cosy clothes for at home - the houses are bad isolated
- ◆ Go shopping at LIDL or ASDA
- ◆ Go to the cinema on Tuesdays - it's only 3 pounds

### Dont's:

- ◆ Do not talk about politics and religion with locals because this have been and still are controversial issues
- ◆ Do not wear England or Scotland football shirts unless you are sure of the clientele of the pub you are in
- ◆ Do not expect internet (Wifi) at home
- ◆ Do not walk along the streets without watching out for dog faces
- ◆ Do not walk home alone at nights, especially if you're a girl
- ◆ Do not dry your clothes outside they probably will be wetter than before

I think all students should take advantage of every opportunity they have and try as many things as possible. Erasmus is an experience nobody could ever take away from you.

### **Section E- Overall Refelction on the experience**

It's Thursday the 12th of december 2013 - and I'm going home in 3 days. The last three month were passing by so quickly especially the last 2 weeks. When I decided to spend a semester abroad in Belfast last year I had no idea what to expect. I just knew that I wanted to see more than my own country. I wanted to experience a new culture, improve my English and meet people from different countries. Now I made so many new friends seen so many great places and experienced so many nice things here. I love to travel and I saw

a lot of beautiful places all over the world but Irelands landscape is one of the most beautiful I've ever seen.

While visiting the city with its peace walls and divided quarters I got an idea of the complexity of the conflict. The problematic past and the so-called troubles are still in people's minds. I lived in West Belfast, Beechmontstreet, with two polish girls, a girl from Switzerland and a friend of mine from Austria. It was a very interesting area to live in but also sometimes a bit intimidating. One of the most terrifying things for me were the kids on the streets at night. It seemed to be that nobody cares about them and they could do what ever the want to, they were rude, drunk and without respect at all. I saw a 7 year old girl with her little 5 year old sister on her hand walking around at 10pm that was unbelievable for me.

I lived very close to my host University, St.Mary's College, it was just one minute walk. I had classes only on Monday and Tuesday so I wasn't there so often but everything was well organized and whenever we had a problem or any questions we could go to Brieger or to some members of the Student's Union. One of the best things was the breakfast with the principal. Everything was so relaxed and the whole atmosphere seemed to be so familiar and friendly. I think the Irish mentality is one of the friendliest I've ever joined.

Belfast was an unforgettable experience for me. I would love to come back in spring or in summer to see all the places which I haven't seen. I'm going home in 3 days, the only thing I want to do now is to relax, go to the city for a tea, buy some christmas presents for my family and friends and enjoy the last days with all the people here.

Belfast 2013 - it was a blast!

See you soon

# Bye Bye!