

University of Limerick

WiSe 2012/2013

Preparation

When I first received word from my coordinator at FUB that I had been selected to take part in the Erasmus program for the fall semester at the University of Limerick, I was unsure because Limerick was actually my third choice. Although I felt excited about the fact that I received a position to do the Erasmus program, I felt insecure because up until that time I had never been to Ireland before and I had no idea what it would be like. I finally made up my mind and decided it would be an extraordinary opportunity and a unique life experience, as well as a wonderful chance to improve my English.

I began my preparation for the program by extensively reading the booklet for international students which was available on the website of the University of Limerick. There I found the most useful information about how I could prepare for my stay. I also discovered a list of all the student accommodation possibilities. So I checked all the websites of the accommodations and choose three, which seemed to me the best. I wrote some emails to the coordinator of the accommodations, asking if they would have a room during the time I would stay in Limerick. Within the following days I received a response that there were a lot of rooms available, so I decided to take one in the Parkview Hall student accommodation, which was not directly on the campus but had a very good price. So I transferred the deposit of 200 Euros to the account and got the confirmation of the reservation. Looking for a room went very fast and easy. The only thing I did not know is with whom I would share flat, but this was not a problem for me. The next day I booked a flight. It was approximately one month before I left and I decided to be in Limerick 3 days before the start of the introduction days so I would have time to get to know the city and get used to the place.

As I went on with my preparations for the stay I also had to choose the courses for the semester at the UL. On the website there was the module booklet for 2012/13

with all the courses and the description of the course contents. I chose the courses I considered most important which could match content in my area of study. Before I could inscribe the courses in the document *Learning Agreement*, I had a talk with my Erasmus Coordinator, to confirm that the courses would be compatible with my studies. So when I got it all confirmed I received all the important documents from the FUB, I booked my flight and I prepared everything for my journey.

One week prior to the start of my semester, which was the 10th of September at the University of Limerick, I took a plane from Berlin to Dublin. When I arrived on a Friday morning at the airport of Dublin, it was very cold and rainy, which totally measured up to my expectations of the Irish weather. On my way to Limerick, I met a lot of friendly people who helped me find the right bus and find my student accommodation in Limerick. The friendly, helpful and hospital manners of the Irish people I experienced in the first days of my stay in Ireland have become part of my every-day life and it is one of the best experiences I had so far.

As my student accommodation was 30 minutes away from the university, and I soon realized that buses do not run by a very reliable and structured timetable, compared to what I am used to in Germany, so on the second day, I bought a bike at a shop in the city center. The flat I lived in had three rooms and in the beginning I shared it with a nineteen-year-old girl from Spain, named Macarena. Later on an Italian girl, Ludovica moved in. We all were part of the Erasmus program. I had to pay the rent for the whole semester in advance and it was 1000 Euro for 4 months, and was one of the cheapest. The rent of the other accommodations ranged between 250 Euro and 450 Euro per month. I decided to take the cheapest option, because I knew I would not have much money and life in Ireland as I realized, like food, transport and other issues is basically more expensive than life in Berlin.

The first week everything was an adventure for me, even a trip to a supermarket or getting to know the pubs and the shops in the city center, as well as doing everything in English. After the first week I was already convinced that it was the right choice to come and that I would not regret it.

Studies

For the Erasmus students, university started with the orientation days. These two days were filled with a welcome program and detailed introductions to the Irish university system. During this time I got to know a lot of other Erasmus students from many different European countries; for example from France, Spain or Poland. Every one of us came to the University of Limerick for the same reason, so everyone felt connected on this topic and this feeling kept us together, creating a lively and warm atmosphere in these first few days. For the first two weeks, when courses officially started at the university, everything seemed easy. The rooms were easy to find, as the campus is much smaller than in Berlin. I felt relieved when I went to my first class and I realized that I could understand everything, as I was afraid that I would not understand English with an Irish accent. The only thing that did not work out was that the journalism courses that I was supposed to do as my major modules were all limited in terms of places. I felt disappointed when I went to different modules and the teachers told me that Erasmus students did not have priority to take the course. I talked to my coordinator at the University of Limerick and after a few days; fortunately, I received an email that let me know that I finally could register on the modules I originally signed up for.

Living

I noticed some real differences to the student life compared to Berlin. In Germany, it is common that we have most assignments and exams in the last three weeks of every semester. In Limerick, every week there is an assignment or an essay to do, which keeps me more involved in the courses and much more busy. So I had to work out a new form of time management concerning my habits of working. One of the greatest challenges was reading all the sources in English, which takes much more time than usual. Still, this experience has improved my English a lot and has given me more confidence. In addition, whenever I had a problem to understand something, Irish students and also my teachers were very friendly and tried to help me.

In comparison to Berlin, Limerick is a small and peaceful village. Still, I had a great time, meeting new people from all over the world, traveling around Limerick, and

having the chance to go to the coast every weekend for surfing. These are all things that make the time as an Erasmus student unforgettable and it is, for sure, one of the best experiences during the whole of my studies.