

## My three months in Ireland

Hey everyone, I am Paula and I am 16 years old.

I have been living in Ireland from January 2017 to April 2017 and went into Kinsale Community School in the little town Kinsale.

These three months have been the time of my life and I recommend this journey to everyone. You will meet lots of new people, learn about a different culture and the most important thing: You will improve your English in a way that you would never be able to in your home country.

The beginning was quite hard for me, especially the first four days. I used to stay in my room, wishing to go back and only talked to my host family when we had dinner. It's so unusual to be without your family or friends; it almost feels like you're thrown into a new life without any help. But there was more help than I could ever imagine. Not only from my host family whom I talked to about me feeling homesick but also from the organization and the other international students. After the second week I had lots of friends from Spain, Italy and also Germany who made every day great. I can promise you that most will feel homesick in the time abroad, some more than others. If that's the case, let me give you some tips that helped me:

1. Go outside, talk to the people in your town and ask them if they want to meet after schools. In most cases you are not the only exchange student and they as well as the people who live in the new country will understand you and help making this journey amazing.
2. Talk to your host family! They all know what it is like to be alone somewhere and will understand that you might need some time to get used to the new situation.
3. Try to be as open and positive as possible. Always remember that this is supposed to be the time of your life and it's not an option to waste it in your room, wishing to be back home.

Another important tip is to not compare everything with the things at home. The new country will be different, the people, the culture and the manners. If you compare everything you will, especially in the beginning only see the bad things and that's the biggest trigger for feeling homesick. Instead be open for new things and try to see the positive in it

I personally recommend (if you are going to Ireland) to go to a smaller city. Kinsale only has around 5.000 citizens and at first I thought it was going to be very boring but it's better than going to Cork or Dublin, in my opinion. Here in Kinsale you will get to know everyone way faster and when you go to town you will always meet someone that you know. A friend of mine is in Cork and she said that she doesn't meet friends a lot, because Cork is so big and crowded.

I was in a group with around 15 people, almost all exchange students and we went out every weekend, to play Laser tag, go to the Beach, go shopping or just relax together. Through all being internationals we directly had a theme to talk about while it was harder for me to talk to the Irish. Not because they don't like you but because they all have their friends as well. Still, try to interact with them, ask if they would like to meet some time and I am sure they will. Now that my time here is already over I also have Irish friends and I think if I would stay for a year we'd get a lot closer than we are now. So don't get frustrated when they don't talk to you, because it's your turn to make friends and when you are yourself they will enjoy being around you. Irish in particular are unbelievably nice people that love having fun and going out. After the first few months it will be very easy to hang out with them.

School in Ireland will be different to schools in other countries. I have been in Transition Year where they mainly focus on giving the students an idea of different jobs and help them find their interests. They have subjects like care, where you talk about your feelings, metal and wood work, self-defense, Career and a lot of "workshops" like mini company, where you built up your own business. There is a lot to do in TY and I enjoyed it a lot, because we were doing so many excursions and it's a great year for internationals to make friends and learn the new language. Still you don't really do anything, I almost had no homework and you will do three weeks of work experience, which is very good. I would probably say go into fifth year if you want to stay for the year because you will learn more but for half a year/3 months TY is great.

The teachers are all really nice and spread a lot of positivity. The whole school, to be honest is very open and friendly. In the first month I always got lost because it was so big but now I could probably walk through it with eyes closed.

Tomorrow I will have a school show. That's also something I love about this school. In TY you do a school show and they put so much effort in it and it is really awesome to be a part of it! You do a lot of dances, if you can sing you can get a main part and also act but even if you're just dancing you will definitely have so much fun while rehearsing.

My time here is over soon and I am very sad about it. This time has been the time of my life, I grew so much, I became independent and I now have more self-confidence. Rachelle, who helped us when we had problems, was such a big part in making this time great because I always had somebody to talk to and she also did various things with us like a speed boat tour. So: Thank you so much, Rachelle!

And please always remember: If you go abroad, enjoy every minute of it and make it the time of your life!