

My name is Alea, and I am an international student from Switzerland who was living in Ireland for one year.

When I first arrived in Cork, I was really nervous. It was my first time flying alone and I didn't know anyone. I got collected by the airport by my host mother, who was really nice and made me feel like at home from the start. My host family is really nice and always made a point to include me. When there was a family event like a communion I was always asked if I wanted to come to. For Christmas they organised a traditional Irish Christmas dinner with their family for us so we could enjoy an Irish Christmas. My host grandmother (also the mother of my host mother) even got me a Christmas present what was really sweet. I am convinced that I got the best host family. In my host family were the two host parents, two dogs and I had a host sister for the first semester.



At my first day of school, I was really nervous, but I met nice people, who were later my friends. The school subjects aren't difficult, but at first, I had a little difficulty in understanding the teachers and finding my way to the classrooms. I really liked that I could choose the subjects we wanted to do because I could choose subjects, I really liked. I was a little bit shy at the start, but I realised soon that I needed to talk to the other students even when my English wasn't that good. On Wednesday we only have a half day and there's a market in Kinsale, so I usually went there with my friends. When it was warm enough, we sometimes went to the beach, what I really enjoyed, especially because I never lived near the sea.

On the weekend I mostly went to cork with friends. The city is really beautiful, and you have good opportunities for shopping. One of my favourite shops was the golden disk, what is a giant vinyl store. I've never seen a store before who sold new vinyl, and I really like the vibe of the store. My best tip for food would be the marina market. That is a hall a little bit outside of cork, maybe a 20 minute walk from the city centre. In the hall are different foods stands that sell many different foods, so you have a big choice of what you want to eat.

I also travelled around Ireland. I was for St. Patricks Day in Dublin and in Galway. I really liked Galway because there were so many vintage and thrift stores and also, they have much street art.

Rachelle (our agent in Ireland) was great. She was always there for us and did many trips. We went go karting, doing paint ball, going onto a boat tour and went for a road trip.

Overall, I really enjoyed my time in Ireland. I made great friends and had so much fun! I only can recommend doing an exchange. I had such a good host family, and my agent Rachelle was also really great. I had so many adventures and I will never forget my time here.

Alea Melone

14th May 2025