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My name is Romy and I have been truly lucky to participate in the Transition Year at Kinsale Community School in Ireland for a year. From my very first moment in Ireland, I must say that this has been the most incredible experience and one that has changed my life in ways I never expected. I really wish everyone would get the chance to have such a life-changing experience! It has been a journey full of amazing discoveries, new and lasting friendships as well as a new relationship with nature. Everything that has touched my life in Kinsale has made me feel more excited and curious about the world.

I have been in Kinsale, a beautiful and picturesque town in County Cork, for a full academic year. It's just a half an hour away from the major city of Cork. What I love about Kinsale is that it is the perfect size --it is not too big and it has stunning views and a peaceful vibe.

I have been truly blessed to live with a wonderful host family on a farm, just a quick 15-minute drive from town. While it is possible to walk into Kinsale, which is fun to do, it takes about an hour. In my host family, I have two younger brothers, one younger sister, and one older brother. The oldest child left for university upon my arrival and was kind to give me her bedroom, which has the most amazing views to the big, wide Atlantic Ocean. Spending time with my host family has been truly rewarding maybe also because I have only one older brother who has already move out and is studying at the local university.

Most of all I enjoy playing and bonding with my two little brothers who have brought me so much happiness. In such a short period, they became like a second family to me -- always there for me and caring for me. On their farm, I have had such a splendid time with all the cows, dogs, horses, cats, and chickens. There are too few words to capture what an enriching experience I have had. Being a city girl, this opportunity to get to know and interact with animals has been a blessing that has changed my own personal vision for how I want to live as I grow up.

Kinsale Community School's Transition Year (4th year) has been challenging but also great fun because we do many activities, including the opportunity to get involved in countless extracurricular activities. For me, the highlight was joining the TY drama club, proving to be the best experience that I ever had. We

spent months practicing for the show, “The Jersey Boys”, which required learning choreography and hours upon hours of practicing our dance routines. Everyone involved in the show got to know each other in meaningful ways. So much so that when the show closed, many of us were in tears. I could not have anticipated how sad I would be to say good-bye to the rigorous practicing but it was indeed a very emotional moment.

Most of the teachers I had are very warm-hearted and sincerely care about each of their students. They take extra consideration for the international students and help us out simply because they know how hard it is, especially in the beginning. The first weeks were quite a challenge trying to figure everything out, acclimating to the Irish accent and generally just making our way around such a big school building with many facilities. I remember how daunting it felt, but I also remember how pro-actively helpful the teachers were.

My school day concludes at 3:40pm. After school, there's an array of activities to explore, from basketball, rugby to drama club, to name just a few. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, I always go riding at the nearby equestrian center, which means I get home late in the evening. My host family is very flexible in making sure I can go horse riding. We eat dinner at different times depending on my host mother's work schedule as well all the activities that the four schoolchildren are involved in.

As the school year comes to an end, I feel very sad about leaving and returning to the school life in Germany. Kinsale has become like home to me, so saying goodbye will be painfully difficult.

I really hope other students consider coming to Ireland—it is a great place for fun, improving your language skills and simply becoming a better person in an environment that is stunningly beautiful. You can find new friends and discover a new part of the world with your own eyes. You can experience this whole adventure at your own tempo. Even though leaving your family and school friends and all that you have come to know is hard to imagine, the adventures that happen when you are an international student are awesome.

Once you experience Ireland's beautiful charm, especially the Kinsale way of life, many fantastic moments will unfold. I know deep in my heart that this year will always stay with me. Thank you dear host family and thank you Ireland! **Go raibh maith agat!**

Romy Dolfen
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