

**Institute of Technology Tralee**  
Ireland



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## 1 Introduction

The last semester I have spent in Ireland. To be honest I have never thought about an exchange before I got the information that Savonia UAS has a partnership with Tralee. In my opinion Ireland is one of the best place for an exchange, because it has English as a state language, so an exchange student has a really wide spectre of subjects and it is also possible to improve English in a native speakers surrounding, in addition it is a very beautiful place with many unique landscapes.

## 2 Life

I want to start my report with an information about the semester in Ireland from a story about my way to Tralee, tips about life in the town and my way home.

### 2.1 Arriving

I have decided to go from Kuopio to Helsinki by Onnibus, because they are cheap and the night trip was also very comfortable for me. In Helsinki I received my Irish Visa, slept night in Hostel and in the morning I caught a plane to Dublin. I choose SAS's plane, because they have significant discount for young travellers. There is no direct planes, so I changed it on Copenhagen.

In Dublin, I got a bus from Airport to Houston Station(Railway station) and caught the first train to Tralee. Ireland has very developed intercity transport system and usually they has trains or buses every one or two hours during the day.

I arrived in Tralee late and decided to stay at hostel, there are plenty of them in the down-town. The price is from €15-20 for a bed with a breakfast. In the morning I went to my flat.

### 2.2 Accommodation

Before, starting to look for an accommodation in Tralee person have to realise in which part of the town you are going to live.

Actually, IT Tralee has two campuses the north one is situated in more than 3 km away from the city center, but there are a lot of housing around it. You should understand that all the big stores, pubs and clubs are far away form this place, that's why the most part of exchange students live near the center, so there is much more fun there, but in my opinion it is more comfortable to live near the north campus if you would study there.

The south campus is somewhere near the center of city, in this case there is only one option.

You can find detailed information about housing companies on the institute's webpage. Usually, they have pretty same prices and quality. You should also take in account the fact that electricity is not included in a rent, there is a pre-paid system for an electricity, it costs €30-60 more. The heating is powered by an electricity, that's why it is often quite cold in a student's apartment.

An Irish power socket is different from European one, but you can find an adapter in Heatons near Penneys.

### 2.3 Shopping

There are a lot of different shops in the city center and you can also find a quite big outlet center in 1.5 km from the down-town. The prices in Ireland is a little bit lower than in Finland, but quality is not always very high.

According to my observations you can buy a cheap pillow and blanket in Dunnes store near South Campus. Penneys has the cheapest duvet covers and sheets.

## 2.4 Food

I bought food in an ALDI store near the Bus and Railway stations, in my opinion it has very good prices and it was the closest big shop to my apartment.

Ireland is surrounded by water, that's why I was able get fresh seafood there easily. The store with it is situated near the outlet center. Irish people like meat more than fish, so Ireland has very a big population of a lamb, that's why it is also quite easy to get this unusual for Finland kind of meat here.

Irish kitchen is famous for stews. They really like frying and baking in the oven. Bacon is also very popular here. In addition they really like "fish and chips".

The north campus' canteen is expensive about €8 for a lunch. There are also cafeteria, which is a little bit cheaper.

There are many restaurants, pubs and cafes in down-town.

## 2.5 Leisure Time

There are many different ways to spend spear time in Ireland. IT Tralee has many different sport activities which are free to charge. It is possible to get an information about them in sport office.



For example we had a bus to a rock climbing center every Wednesday, I have never had any experience with a rock climbing before and Ireland opened the world of the rock climbing for me.

Moreover, they have hillwalker's and surfing clubs. They are not regular, because of the weather. Hillwalking is quite long and difficult, but it also was very nice, I took a many beautiful pictures during hillwalking. The surfing was also great, it was my first time. Water was cold, but water-suites were helpful. Unfortunately, we did not have hoods, that's why it was very cold for a head.

Tralee has a night club, but it is full only during a RAG Week<sup>1</sup> and other big parties, usually pubs are centres of

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<sup>1</sup>the week without studying and with parties every days

night live. How I already said they are in the down-town. Pubs are popular not only between young guys, there are also a lot of grown-up people there. Pubs often have live music shows.



## 2.6 Returning

My way back home started from a bus to Dublin, in Dublin I slept night in a hostel, it is possible to get an information how to reach airport on the reception.

I again used SAS' planes to reach Helsinki airport. I arrived to the center of Helsinki by bus and at Kamppi station I caught the night Onnibus to Kuopio.

# 3 Studying

## 3.1 Studying process

In Ireland subjects are called modules, every module gives 5 credits. There is list of recommended modules for every studying field, but it is also possible to choose any other subject.

Usually, there are two types of lessons: lectures and labs. During the lectures a teacher provides students with theory. The practical tasks at labs are not always directly related to the theory from lectures. Labs in Ireland is very different from the labs we have in Savonia UAS. It is not independent of group tasks, usually teacher shows the things on a projector and students tries to repeat it at their own machines.

Attendance is compulsory, students have to check-in at the lesson via student cards<sup>2</sup>. At most part of modules student needs to be at least at 80% of lessons.

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<sup>2</sup>T-Card

## 3.2 Examination process

The final grade in Ireland is depended from an examination and CAs<sup>3</sup>. CAs are very different. It can be an independent task in a class, group or a personal project, a report, a presentation, a quiz or any other way which allows teacher checks students knowledge.

Exams in Ireland are very strict. All the exams are united into an examination session in the end of a semester. All classes are over a week before the session. An Examination is tests in a huge rooms with 6-8 mentors. Student have to show the T-Card at the entrance to identify themselves. The test is written on a special copybook provided by an institute. Usually, student can bring only pens, calculator and dictionary<sup>4</sup>.

## 3.3 Overview of courses

### 3.3.1 Computer service management

The course is focused on a management of IT projects, the main topic of the module is MS Project<sup>5</sup> and an explanation of project management process, a vocabulary. There is theoretical lectures about a project management and practical labs when students had to apply the knowledge to artificial cases in MS Project. The labs does not have any influence to the final grade. But there is one CA at the end of the course. Students has to come-up with an idea of her or his own project and create all documentation for it, after that the student also has to write report and present the project in a class. There is a theoretical exam at the end of the module.

### 3.3.2 Game Mechanics

The module is about game development on Unity3D. During the module student will get an experience with the most part of Unity3D tools, would be able to write C# scripts for Unity and create simple games by themselves. The subject also contains brief overview of Team Foundation version control system. The teacher is Ed Sheldon, he is one of the best teachers which I have ever met in my lifetime. Unfortunately, the module is compulsory for the first year game development student which slow down the educational process. There is four CAs during and course, three of them are in a class and the last on it personal project, but there is no final examination.

### 3.3.3 Big Data

The module is an introduction to the world of data analysing and big data. The main focus is on theory about statistic which allows student to understand how the stats makes sense from numbers, R<sup>6</sup>, Hadoop<sup>7</sup>. In description the module also had noSQL databases, but unfortunately we didn't have time for it because it was the first time when the module was though, so in there were several small problems, but in general it was very useful course and I am very thankful to Andrew Shield, he is a great lecturer. The module contained two CAs, the first one was a class test for R and the second one is data analysing project with Hadoop and R together. The module also has final examination.

### 3.3.4 System Architecture

It is also Andrew's module. The module is about design of distributed computer systems and a middle-ware. Right now we are in the middle of revolution on the field that's why Andrew made very wise decision and changed entire content of the subject from old-fashion TomCat and jBoss to the Bluemix, Node-Red and other modern technologies during the course time. As any other Andrew's module there were a lot of interesting theoretical lectures. Also we have made a project during the module. The project was related with an IoT<sup>8</sup>and fits well to the modules topic. At the end of the module we have had an exam.

<sup>3</sup>continuous assessments

<sup>4</sup>allowed for exchange students

<sup>5</sup>Microsoft tool for a project management

<sup>6</sup>language for a statistical analysing

<sup>7</sup>a tool for big data processing over computer clusters

<sup>8</sup>Internet of things

### 3.3.5 Visual communication

To be honest the module was not recommended for me and moreover it was from other department, but I always was interested in the field of graphical design and the subject was pre-requirements to the UX/UI design. The module contains the theoretical information about visual communication, composition, design process, practical work on paper and in Adobe Illustrator. During the course we have had several CAs called briefs. They were different design tasks, like design of a poster for a certain topic or a logo. The designing process was broken down into preparation on a sketchbook and an actual design on Illustrator, the grade was evaluated based on sketchbook and result. There is no exam.

## 4 Travels

There are five cities in Ireland. I really liked Cork and Galway. Limerick is not a very popular place among tourists, but I liked the big old castle there. Waterford was not interesting for me. Of course I can not forgot about Dublin, it is the capital of Ireland, but for me it is not a very interesting place, but I think that all the best pubs and clubs are here, so person who is interested in it would like the city. Anyway in my opinion the main sights in Ireland are outside of cities.

### 4.1 Transport

Usually<sup>9</sup>, a bus and railway stations are at the same place. The cheapest way to travel around Ireland is buses, but trains have advantages: power sockets, better internet, quicker. The difference in price is about 30%. It is possible to get significant discount for students in both ways. Return ticket has half price if it is bought together. In Ireland tickets are not related with a certain journey(time), they allow a travel at the route once any-time during entire month. It means that if you are late you can get a next bus or train in this direction. The interval between buses and trains is from 1 to 2 hours during daytime. It is possible to buy 3 day ticket for €55, which allows unlimited usage of buses for three days. In general price is much lower than in Finland<sup>10</sup>.

### 4.2 Accommodation

I prefer to travel alone and I don't like to spend time indoor, so I don't care much about quality of an accommodation, I am trying to find the cheapest one. Usually it is hostels, normal price for hostel in Ireland is €15-20 for a bed with breakfast. There are many hostels in Dublin, Galway, Cork and Tralee, but be careful it is very difficult to find an accommodation in Limerick.

### 4.3 Main points of interest

I want briefly introduce you my favourite sights in Ireland, but there are much more.

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<sup>9</sup>Dublin is an exception

<sup>10</sup>except Onnibus

#### 4.3.1 Ring of Kerry



It is a road around Kerry and Dingle peninsula, the place is very famous for mountains which are very close to the ocean. The place is very beautiful, but in my opinion it is not unique, there are many places with quite same landscape around world for example the north part of Norway.

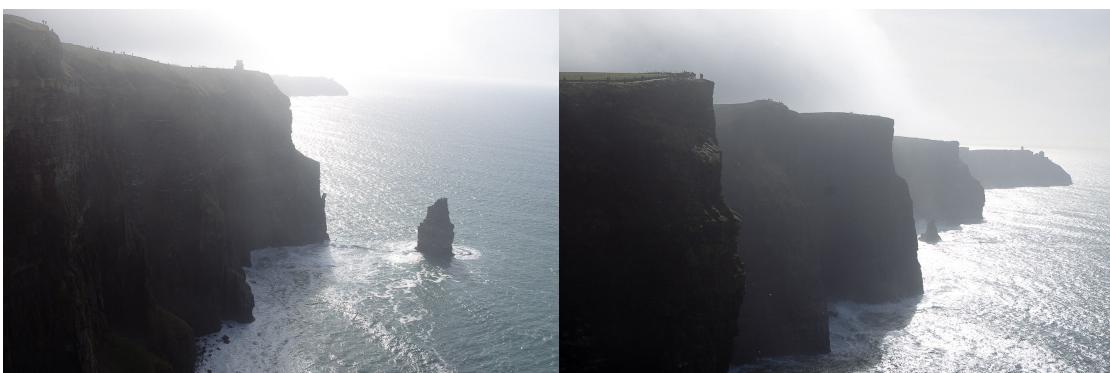
#### 4.3.2 Killarney National Park

The first national park in Ireland. The national park contains: the biggest in Ireland mountain, forests, lakes, a waterfall and an old castle.



#### 4.3.3 Cliffs of Moher

It is the biggest cliffs in Ireland, they are over 8 km long and 220m at the highest point. One of the most attractive place for tourists in Ireland. Part of Harry Potter was shot on the ocean near the cliffs.



#### 4.3.4 Aaron island

It is amazing place. To be honest I was not able to even imagine this kind of landscape before. The island has ancient buildings and quite high cliffs at the one side. The best way to explore the island is to rent a bike, because it is hardly possible to visit all the sight during single day by foots.

It also has a very unusual seashore, with a rectangular natural hole in the rocks called the Worm Hole. The Worm Hole is not very popular between tourists because it is not easy to find it.



#### 4.4 Tours

As I already noticed the main sights in Ireland are outside of cities, so the best way to visit them are tours. There are many cheap and cool two or three days trips at Irish Experience. It is possible to book the tours on the webpage<sup>11</sup> of the company. My favourite tour was West-coast cruiser<sup>12</sup>. It is also possible to get one day trip to local sights from any hostels. I used the tours to get a general view to the area and after that visited the place again by myself more detailed.

### 5 Conclusion

I am very thankful to Savonia UAS for an opportunity to explore Ireland. The experience made me much more confident, allowed me to improve my English and professional skills. This semester brought me a lot of new friends, ideas and impressions. I am very happy to make myself familiar with Irish educational system, culture and habits. During the time I visited many beautiful places and took hundreds of photos.

Thank you, Savonia UAS!

<sup>11</sup>[irishexperiencetours.com](http://irishexperiencetours.com)

<sup>12</sup>two nights at Galway, with visits to the Cliff of Moher and Aaran island