

National University of Ireland, Maynooth

Experiences

My name is Lea Gehlhaar, and I spent eight months at Maynooth University in County Kildare, Ireland. Maynooth is a small town of approximately thirty thousand inhabitants and is located about an hour away from Dublin and the airport. The university is very close to the town centre, so you are in walking distance to everything you need – supermarkets, restaurants, the train station and the bus stops.

The University

The campus is divided in two parts: North Campus, where you will spend most of your time, as it includes the majority of the class halls, many of them are new, all the sports halls and pitches, and the Student's Union. The latter is comparable to our Asta, but way cooler. They regularly organise parties, and run a bar on campus. South Campus on the other hand, contains the library and St. Patrick's College, an old priest school whose buildings look like Hogwarts, as well as a big park.

Where to Live

For living in or around Maynooth, there are three general choices: staying with a host family, sharing a private house with other students, or living in the dorms on campus. Everywhere the rent is at least 450 Euro for four weeks. When living with a host family, you might have to share a room and have to follow the family's rules. Personally, I made very good experiences when I stayed with a host family in my second term. The family was very nice, the room was big and the rent was at 460 Euro very good for the area. However, the house was located twenty minutes by foot outside Kilcock, a neighbour village to Maynooth.

In my first term I stayed in the River Apartments, one of the dormitory villages on campus. I enjoyed it very much, as I was fortunate to have quiet roommates, which is not the norm. Living on campus also meant being close everything happening in and around town. The catch, however, is that the fees that you have to pay for the room are quite high and are on top of the rent, one semester costs in total about 2000 Euro for the River Apartments, a little more for the newer dormitory that is also on campus, and a little less for the old dorms. You may find further information on the university website, as well as a virtual tour through the dorms.

I do not have any experience with the third option, living in a house off campus with other students, but the reviews that I heard from other students were generally good; There is no family whose rules you need to follow, and it is not as expensive as living on campus.

What to Study

Prior to your stay in Ireland, the university will ask you to choose your classes from a list available in the International section of the university's website. You will need to choose for both semester, but you may change them during the first two weeks of each term. The list includes a handful of lectures and seminars from each faculty. In addition to that, there are Internationals only classes about Irish culture, literature and language. If you take a few of them, you may get the Irish Cultural Heritage Certificate. These classes are quite interesting and, what is particularly cool, they organise trips to the Heritage sites around the country, like the Hill of Tara.

In general, you will probably take three to six classes each term. Keep in mind that some, especially lectures, may come with an additional tutorial for which you will have to sign up during your first week there.

As for the exams, you will either have to write one, two or maybe even three essays, or take a written exam. The grades are very different from the German ones, and you will probably not get as good grades as here, because while the classes themselves are not that challenging, getting a good or very good grade can be.

What to Do Outside of Classes

Outside of classes the university offers so called clubs and societies. In the clubs you may choose from various sports to do – personally I recommend Kenpo Karate, Fitness and Swimming. The clubs all either take place directly on campus or the university offers a shuttle bus to e.g. the pool. For most of the clubs, you will only need to pay an entry fee of two Euro and may attend as often as you want. Some of them, like Swimming, also participate in competitions, where you travel to another town, stay there for the weekend, and take part in a contest between Irish universities. I went to Belfast with the Aquatics Club, which was an amazing trip.

The societies are for every hobby or interest that comes to mind – from the Harry Potter Society, over the DJ Society to the Disney Society, there is something for everybody. They too organise trips – I went to Disneyland Paris with the Disney Society. Apart from trips, the societies meet regularly, about once or twice a week, and host activities like watching movies or playing games.

The clubs and societies are where you not only meet Irish students, but also Internationals. It is the easiest way to make new friends and to truly enjoy your stay – I strongly recommend it.

Next to the activities on Campus, Ireland has many great places you may visit. Closest to Maynooth are Dublin, with its pubs (like The Celtic on Talbot Street) and free museums, and coastal cities like Bray and Howth. From Dublin you may also book bus tours to sights like the Giant's Causeway in Northern Ireland, or take a Bus down to Cork, Galway or Limerick. Whatever you do, bring a raincoat.

What to Keep In Mind and Other Things

In Ireland, it is generally colder than in Germany. That includes inside the buildings, no matter where you choose to live. Also, the food is more expensive, in the supermarkets and when dining out. And if somebody asks you 'How are you?' the answers are 'Good, how about you?' and 'Not too bad, how about you?'. That can be really confusing and took me weeks to figure out. In addition to that, should be travelling with public transportation a lot, get the Student Leap Card, that will save you some money and works like a ticket. Otherwise, you will need cash for every bus ride.

The Irish in general are very kind, open and helpful, so do not hesitate to ask if you have a question. If there is any problem, the International Office in Maynooth and the Student's Union will help you. And, finally, Maynooth and Ireland are great choices for your Study Abroad – be it the Clubs and Societies or the country itself, an amazing experience is guaranteed.

Should you have any questions at all, please feel free to e-mail me: lea.gehlhaar@uni-wuppertal.de .

Pictures



Cork



Kenpo Karate Club



Cider at the pub in Maynooth



Maynooth University Library