
2017-18 Field Notes

Field Notes from Abroad: Person to Person

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Life in Galway

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Megan Ditore

Galway, Ireland

March 22nd, 2018

Life in Galway

It is crazy to think that I am halfway done with my study abroad experience. I have learned so much in this short amount of time. While I do learn a lot in the classroom, I find myself learning more throughout my travels and talking with the locals. I was lucky enough to be assigned to live with an Irish roommate. His name is Ray, he is from Tipperary, Ireland. Sometimes I feel bad for him since he was assigned to live with three American girls, but he doesn't seem to mind. Daily we have interesting small conversations about different norms in each of our countries, so I thought he would be the most fit to interview for this assignment.

When we first moved in, we had a whole bunch of questions for him. It has been fun getting to know him and his way of life. He has had other Irish friends over, too, and it is just fascinating to sit and talk with them about the differences between the States and Ireland. The best parts of our conversations are when one of us says something that is different without knowing that it is different and then there is an argument of who is "right." In reality, nobody is right or wrong, it is just different. Since we do have daily conversations I thought that for this interview I would bring up some examples that we had talked about before. Ray is very sarcastic and loves to joke, like many Irish do. He explained to me that when Irish people are friends then it is basically free range to joke with them. They call each other names that in the States are very derogatory. I asked him why it is this way, which in retrospect was probably not the best question... his answer was, "I don't know, that is just how we do it." It is fun, and nobody takes

offense to it. I also asked him if he knew how to speak Gaelic, to which he responded that it was “endearing” that I call it Gaelic, to people here it is just Irish. But then he went on to answer my question and said that they are taught the basics in primary school, but he doesn’t remember a whole lot of it. One of the most surprising things to learn was how much less expensive it is to go to school in Ireland. Of course, Ray thought that our costs were surprising, too. Another surprising thing that we talked about was driving. People our age here generally don’t drive, and not a lot of them own cars. They just don’t need to; the transportation system is very good here.

One of my new favorite differences that I have found came about in a casual conversation with Ray. We were talking about my hometown and how small it was. I explained to him that it is so small that we only have one drive-through because the city won’t allow them. I told him that the only drive-through that we have is at Starbucks. He wasn’t so much surprised that we only had one drive-through and that it was a coffee drive-through. My American roommates and I looked at each other dumbfounded and realized that there are no coffee drive-throughs here. When I brought this up in my interview with Ray, he explained how the cafes are a place to go and socialize with friends and family here. This made me think of how much more relaxed people are in Ireland. Not everything is as “go, go, go” here as it is back home. At home, time is money; here experiences are important. Coffee isn’t so much to stay awake as it is to go and enjoy someone’s company. This interview experience reminded me that people in Ireland are more relaxed here than they are in the States. They are more easy-going and more willing to spend quality time with each other. It also showed me that while Ireland is different than home it does have a lot of similarities. I am glad that I get to live with someone from this country. I get to learn new things each day about this beautiful country.