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## Welcome to Ireland!

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# Journals from Ireland

## 2011-01-17 Welcome to Ireland!

It has been just over two weeks now since we arrived in Ireland and I must admit it has been incredible. After a long and restless journey to get here, we had the best welcome with a hint of sunshine and a full rainbow as we drove into the city of Galway. Oh the luck o' the Irish!

Since we arrived in the morning, we spent the rest of the day getting set up in our flats and sleeping! The living arrangement is really nice. We each get our own bedrooms and share a common living area and kitchen. Some of the Linfield students even have their own bathrooms, which was a pleasant surprise. Later that night we went out to dinner at this place that Cate had scoped out earlier in day called McSwiggin's. It was a nice evening out with good eats and toasts to our professor Joel who helped prepare us for the trip.

The next few days in Ireland were a whirlwind with orientation, class selection, and getting set up in our flats. And now that we have completed our first week of school, we are starting to settle into some routines. Time seems to be moving way too quickly as we are already approaching the third week.

The Irish lifestyle is very different from that in America – both academically and socially – even more so than I was expecting. At the NUIG (National University of Ireland, Galway) they have a “shopping” period, where students can attend multiple classes to try them out before officially registering. Classes started this last week for us, but we will not officially register until next week. It is a rather ingenious system because it gives students the freedom to find the classes that they enjoy without pressure. I sat in on at least eight different lectures this week and have narrowed down what I plan to take for this semester. Another aspect of academia that is new for American students is the grading system. In most classes there is one exam or paper at the end of the term and that is it for grades. For example in my classes I will only have one paper that is due at the end of the term. Some will require that I write a midterm paper as well, but most just require one paper at the end. I am slightly intimidated by this system, but it allows for more freedom during the semester. And somehow we seem to be filling that extra time quite well!

Pub life is a large part of the social experience here. The first weekend the Linfield group decided to find a pub that played live traditional music. We ended up finding this great little place called the Crane that had a lounge feel and friendly atmosphere. The best part of the experience was that Christy was able to play the fiddle with the band. We were so proud and excited for her.

It has been a very exciting and overwhelming two weeks, but I'm looking forward to the next five months. Now that I have settled into a better routine, I'll try to post of our weekly adventures in Galway.

Cheers!

Elizabeth Bond

P.S. Here are a few new phrases I picked up...

Higgilty Piggilty: a little hectic and out of sorts

- "Sorry about the construction, it is a bit higgilty piggilty on campus right now."

Havin' the craic: having the best possible Irish fun that can only occur in Ireland