

**Exchange university**

Trinity College Dublin

Degree programme

Sustainable Technology

Trinity College Dublin exchange semester

Before departure

I decided to apply for an exchange semester in order to experience a change of environment, explore Ireland as I loved the country from previous visits, grow personally and academically, and gain a deeper understanding of a different culture. Initially, I was uncertain about which country to choose, so I extensively researched the available exchange universities that offered relevant courses for my program, and as divided between Portugal, Australia and Ireland. Eventually, I selected Trinity College Dublin (TCD) in Ireland as my top preference for academic reasons. I found it appealing that Ireland is located within Europe, which would provide me with the advantage of Erasmus grants and reduce the effort compared to a country as Australia. Additionally, I was intrigued by Ireland's captivating culture, favourable geographical location, and the fact that English is widely spoken there.

Upon arrival

I arrived in Ireland about a month before school started. This was because we were given the wrong start date by TCD, but in retrospect I think it was nice to have plenty of time beforehand to explore the country and the city. I then met my partner who was also studying at TCD and we moved into our apartment. We started with a road trip to Cork and were able to make ourselves at home in our apartment before the course started.

Unfortunately, I am somewhat disappointed with TCD's reception as they hardly organised any events for us exchange students which made it more difficult for us to get to know others. On the positive side, they had many student affiliated groups to engage in which other students, including everything from hikes to book clubs and to fashion clubs. Also, there is a huge focus on sports and easy to join if you are interested in it. Here, I joined the TCD football team for a couple months but then later on dropped out as I did not have enough time for it with studies and travelling going on.

Financials

Apparently, Dublin is one of the most expensive cities in Europe and the Erasmus support should be adjusted accordingly. Other Erasmus students who lived in shared corridors with 14 other people paid at least between 1100 to 1300 € monthly, which compared to other European countries is quite insane. The different Erasmus categories do not really reflect those differences as the Dublin category only receives about 100€ more than the less expensive destinations. Therefore, accommodation costs are extremely high, even compared to Sweden. Eating in a restaurant and alcohol out is like Sweden prices, even a bit more expensive. A pint of Guinness is between 6 and 9 €, while a decent dinner out for two people ends at around 60€. Grocery stores are slightly cheaper than Sweden but not much, even though Lidl and Aldi allow for a lot of savings. However, public transport was significantly cheaper than in Stockholm. Thus, I spent much more money in Dublin than I do in Sweden.

Accommodation

My partner and I searched for an apartment for a long time before we found one. We used the website daft.ie which is the most used website for finding apartments in Ireland. We stayed in Dublin 1 which is on the north side of the river, very central and a 20 minute walk to Trinity, though a bit of a dodgy area, which I wouldn't recommend walking around alone late at night. We paid around 2000 Euro for

our apartment which was about 40 square metres and still relatively good standard, equipped with all necessities. More common among the students we got to know was living in a corridor and sharing a kitchen and bathroom with others, but this was not much cheaper. Renting a corridor by yourself turned out to be much more expensive actually. Dublin and Ireland apparently has a critical housing crisis at the moment as prices keep rising and rising.

University and studies

Trinity has about 20,000 students, so the university is very large and so is the campus. However, something that was missing was good study places on campus, as for the 20,000 students there were about 10 group study rooms. Since Ireland is an English-speaking country, all teaching was done in English which was very nice. Trinity offers courses in many different subjects and also many language courses. The downside was that you had to take 50% of your courses in the host department you are admitted to, which was in my case Civil, Structural and Environmental Engineering. In order to apply for courses outside your host department, you have to be admitted to the department the course is part of. This was terribly complicated and many emails needed to be sent around. Initially our TCD exchange coordinator told us it was not even possible to take courses outside our host department, which was far from true. Unfortunately, here the help from the TCD exchange coordinator was very uninformed and sadly rather inexistent. Luckily, us exchange students then spoke directly to the department heads and were admitted to several other courses which was a relief as the host department courses were heavily based on Engineering and not too much related to our programme at KTH. I studied six courses where all were 5 ECTS each. I also had compulsory courses at KTH during this period that I had to find similar courses to be able to transfer credits. This was a bit difficult but my teachers at KTH were very understanding and supportive with this.

The teaching at TCD was very different to KTH as each course is filled with plenty of students (300 and upwards) and the teaching is more like a monologue from the teacher, based on repetition. In one course I had a chemistry laboratory but usually I am used to many seminars which did not seem to be common at TCD. Most courses have an exam at the end of the term and then some assignment in the middle. When I chose my courses, I looked a lot at how the course is examined in order not to have six exams at the same time. I had three courses that were examined with assignments throughout the semester and three courses that had exams, which was a good and reasonable arrangement for me. The majority of the lessons were one hour long, some were two, while some days were very long and intense with many classes in the same day.

Courses

As mentioned, I studied six courses where each course was 5 ECTS and my host department was Civil, Structural and Environmental Engineering which I had to take at least three of my courses in, here I chose Energy Policy and Energy Storage, Engineering and the Environment, and Management for Engineers. I also studied Introduction to Early Irish Sagas which was examined with an essay. Finally, I took Sustainable Production: Food, Drink, and Drugs which was my favourite course, the teacher was so good and committed and the content was very relevant and interesting. This course was examined with three assignments and an exam at the end. Furthermore, I studied Exploring the Sustainable City which turned out to be a rather philosophical course, which however was a nice contrast to the other courses. The courses Energy Policy and Energy Storage and Sustainable Production: Food, Drink, and Drugs could together be credited as a compulsory course at KTH, the other courses I could use as elective courses, however, all are in the same subject as what I study at KTH except Early Irish Sagas which I chose to get some Irish culture and get to know the country better which I recommend. TCD has several courses in Irish history and the Irish language, with an amazing lecturer/professor.

City and country

Ireland is a beautiful country, people are so helpful and friendly, the pub culture is wonderful, old and young gather together over a beer and live music is played, the nature is incredible, and it never gets boring. There is a very big difference between the countryside and Dublin, where Dublin is a bit

tougher, dirty and stressful and actually feels like a different country compared to the countryside. That doesn't mean that Dublin is not great. Dublin is a super fun, vibrant city, with plenty of history and it never gets boring there. In Dublin or outside, Irish people are very open and welcoming and I quickly felt at home with everyone being very helpful and kind.

Leisure and social activities

Dublin is a fun city and there is a lot to do, lots of great museums, lots of fun vintage shops, nice restaurants and lots of fun pubs for the occasional pint of Guinness. Me and my partner also did several road trips, one to County Cork, Galway and to Northern Ireland and Northern Ireland which offers good (but cold) surf if you are interested in it, which I did a couple of times there. As I mentioned before, Trinity unfortunately didn't offer many activities but there are many Facebook groups you can join and Erasmus events organised outside the university and there was a big fair organised by students at the beginning of the semester. Here, I signed up for the football team of TCD which offers different levels and is actually rather competitive if you want to..

Sustainability

Public transport is the most convenient way to get around Dublin or to walk even though there is no metro in Dublin. Here you get a student discount for bus passes where each journey costs 1 Euro for 75 minutes. In general, I would say that Ireland is a bit behind in sustainability, their recycling system is not the most developed for example. When it comes to course literature at Trinity, it was mainly articles that were used that could be found online, which was convenient. When it comes to the Irish diet, it is very focused on meat and a lot of fried food, but there were always alternatives even for vegetarians, which required maybe a bit more of effort to find.

Other recommendations and observations

If I had the opportunity to go back to Dublin and do this exchange semester again, I would definitely do it again, yet would like to have started with some better information and support from TCD. Ireland is an amazing country and I highly recommend going here if you have the opportunity, as there is always a lot to do and see, the people are so nice and the pub culture is something I will really miss. Nature is another thing that weighs heavily in favour of this destination, with the greenery, the sea and hills. Overall, it was quite a different kind of life compared to Stockholm, but for four months it was a great experience.