

Erasmus Erfahrungsbericht:

| Persönliche Angaben | | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|----------|------------|
| Name: | | Vorname: | |
| E-Mail-Adresse: | | | |
| Gastland: | Nordirland | | |
| Gasthochschule: | Ulster University | | |
| Aufenthalt von: | 04.10.2017 | bis: | 26.02.2018 |

Following an administrative delay due to visa issues, I finally travelled on October 4th from Berlin to Luton Airport near London, and from there to Belfast International Airport by EasyJet. I changed some currency there and made my way by bus to nearby Antrim, where I was able to board a Derry/Londonderry train that stops in Coleraine, the location of one of Ulster University's campuses. The ticket was reasonably priced - £9 for a journey of about an hour. Looking out the window of the train, my first impressions of the Northern Irish landscape were of fields of sheep, winding rivers and rainy hills – all of which was lovely to see from the train. What I also quickly noticed was the people, with their friendly, talkative, helpful and cheerful attitudes and behaviours. Whilst many individuals speak with what was initially an unfamiliar accent and intonation for me, I have only had very positive interactions and have grown more accustomed to it. Indeed I can say that personally, I like it very much – I had to concentrate at first, but soon the simple enjoyment of friendly communication helped me adapt my ears to local ways of speaking. Once arrived in Coleraine, I had to organise affordable accommodation for myself in the coastal village of Portstewart, a bus journey of about 8km from Coleraine where the university campus is on the edge of the town. University- provided accommodation is rather expensive, and public transport is quite limited in its frequency (twice an hour at peak, less than that otherwise). My daily transport costs from my accommodation to the campus and back again are £2.70. Translink is the name of the train and bus company which provides most of the public transport in N.Ireland.

In general, students need to apply for accommodation either in halls, i.e. the university dormitories where most students have their own room on campus, but it is very expensive compared to the private market, with rooms in houses in Portstewart, Portrush, or elsewhere in Coleraine significantly cheaper if also less convenient for the campus. Students living in Portstewart or Portrush can enjoy the beautiful north coast of Ireland landscape: pure sandy beaches, gigantic ocean, rugged coves and bays, the restaurants, cafés, pubs, and club nights of Portrush, Portstewart, and Coleraine amount to a generally student-friendly environment, good for both study and extra-curricular activities and these links are useful for renting rooms in private houses sharing with other students:

<http://www.northcoastpropertymanagement.co.uk/student-lets>

<http://www.lemontreelettings.com/student-lettings/coleraine-area>

<http://www.pmcrentals.co.uk/>

I would recommend students to register for English Language and related support courses in addition to taking academic subject modules. For instance, I'm studying Cultural Awareness, Accuracy in Writing, Introduction to Vocabulary Development and Academic Writing Skills offered by the International Department inside the university. These four courses are really useful for my English language skills and I enjoy the excellent methods and content from the teacher, Mr. Francis Kane. Furthermore, there are some events for international students such as: icafe, International Students Ulster University Coleraine, UUSU Coleraine Campus (Ulster University Student's Union) , all of which help you in various ways to make the most of your time and opportunities here. There are some interesting student societies, for example English and poetry, Debating, Pharmacy, History, Psychology, Television and Media, even Irish dancing. The sports facilities are great (social, club, performance) and by participating in these kinds of activities I naturally come in contact with the language and cultures of different people here.

<http://uusu.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/906146986131642/>

<https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=uusu%20cu%20icafe>

I registered with the International Friends website and was introduced to some Irish friends and invited to a meal in a local home – this is well worth experiencing for the insights and assurances it gives about local everyday life. Facebook is, unsurprisingly, a major medium for many such contacts. <http://www.international-friends.co.uk>

The accent spoken in Coleraine was hard to understand at the beginning since native speakers talk rather quickly and connect words in their speech – some use an Ulster Scots dialect which is a form of English similar to that spoken in many parts of Scotland. After a while, however, it became familiar. It has been no problem at all to follow lectures and seminars, as the members of staff really made an effort to help students and speak Standard English clearly. Local students, as indicated early, have been very nice and sociable.

Many facilities can be found on campus. In the main building, there is a Spar shop that is basically a small supermarket. 'The cafeteria' provides students with coffee, tea, sandwiches and drinks as well games, for instance, a Pool table and a Soccer table. The canteen usually offers at least one typical Irish dish on the menu, but prices can be a little high compared to preparing your own food. The Student's Union's shop sells branded clothes of the university and practical university materials such as folders, memory sticks, chargers, pens, writing pads and the like. The book shop next door stocks many books essential for certain courses. There is a Bank of Ireland if you want to open an account or withdraw money.

Naturally, I have discovered much more regarding the cultural and political diversity of Northern Ireland, with the two big traditions of Protestant and Catholic (labels corresponding to British and Irish identities, often). The history of Northern Ireland and its divisions, not just land but even systems of education, names of places (Derry/Londonderry a good example, with two names for the one place) is illuminating. Understanding the historical reasons for conflict, and the current polarisation trends in Northern Irish society, help the student develop a deeper awareness of such issues and their effects in different societies.