

Notes from a Student Abroad.

Hello All,

I am past the half-way point of the semester here at Cork Institute of Technology in Cork, Ireland. It has been a wild ride since I've arrived, but I have had many unforgettable opportunities and experiences. After my initial nervousness and anticipation, and then excitement and glow of everything new, I am finally beginning to feel comfortable and confident in my environment here – just as my time in Ireland is coming to a rapidly approaching end!

When I arrived, I was very lucky in terms of weather – this September was one of the driest Septembers Ireland has had in 30 years – so I was able to bask in the sun while touring Dublin's city, castles, and historical sites! I was also able to take in the amazing Irish street music in Dublin, which reminded me a lot of summer music festivals in Portland or Old Orchard Beach. One of my first impressions of Ireland was how friendly the people were, all replying "You're grand" every time I said thank you!

Upon my arrival in Cork, I spent the first few days getting to know my roommates (one of whom is the other George Mitchell Scholar). I was also able to learn the area, figure out the bus schedules in Cork, and get settled into my apartment. We each have our own room and our own bathroom, as well as a shared kitchen and living room! I also have two other roommates, one from Germany and one from France, making four of us altogether. My first Monday at Cork Institute of Technology (CIT) was spent figuring out my class schedule and filling out tedious but necessary paperwork. My coordinator was very gracious and allowed me to pick and choose my courses, so I was able to enroll in community development courses, which will help me with my future career path. I am also taking a pottery class, which has always been a personal hobby, and now I can further pursue that interest!

CIT's campus is approximately the same size as SMCC's campus, but it feels more like a small city rather than a college campus! The buildings are all 2- or 3-stories tall, and very close together. My first week of classes proved to be a little hectic, but once I finally got settled, it was no problem! The classes at CIT are run much differently than at SMCC, and it has been a challenge trying to figure out the grading system, but overall my classes are very beneficial and my professors are more than willing to help me if I need it.

On top of classes, I have been very involved with the International Society, through whom I have done plenty of traveling through Ireland – especially south and west Ireland! The first few months here we took a different trip almost every weekend. A few places we have traveled include West Cork, Galway, the Cliffs of Moher, Killarney, the Ring of Kerry, Youghal, and several other beautiful locations! I have been very fortunate with my participation in the International Society, including the ability to meet new friends from all over the world!

Ireland is pretty different from Maine – nothing really compares to it! I have become very practiced at adapting to new environments and the different cultural "norms." I am still learning about other cultures and living in another country, but my initial apprehension is past, and I have new confidence in myself about living in new situations. I am having an unforgettable time in Ireland, and I am so glad I took the chance and applied for the George Mitchell Peace Scholarship. I encourage any community college student to apply, because it is truly a life-changing experience!

That's all the news from Ireland for now – Cheers!