GALWAY, IRELAND

KRISTEN ROMES

Program: National University of Ireland, Galway, Year

Kristen’s Majors: English, History

Academic Life: Irish academics are extremely independent: no one is checking to see if you go to lectures, and no one holds you responsible if you miss class. Skipping class is an epidemic, so be prepared to hold full responsibility for your own choices once exams come around. That said, the range of courses offered at NUI Galway is extensive, and further specialized courses are offered for visiting students.

Shaping a Life Abroad: Studying abroad is enlightening in every possible way. I learned far more on my travels than I could in any classroom, because experiences and observations cannot be taught. Whether those experiences were playing a rugby match with my Irish team, or walking through Auschwitz on a weekend trip, they helped to shape my mind and body during my time abroad. I have become far more confident, open-minded, observant, and competent. I have developed problem-solving skills, gained knowledge both in and out of the classroom, and gotten to know myself inside and out.

Cultural Differences: There is no such thing as political correctness in Ireland. Americans are trained to consider everything they say and do and curb it if it may offend some person or another. The Irish say things like they are. “Brutal honesty” doesn’t exist. There’s just honesty. If you have delicate sensibilities, be prepared. After a year abroad, I gained a healthy appreciation for the bluntness of the Irish, and that has actually been the most difficult part of transitioning back.

Looking to the Future: My future career aspirations involve editorial publishing and writing. Aside from the contacts that I’ve made internationally and the obvious networking benefits therein, studying abroad helped me understand different methods of writing and grammar worldwide, and it has also bolstered my content knowledge and thereby increased my efficiency while editing.

A soft day (which means the rain was misty) made the Slieve League in Co. Donegal all the more beautiful.

“Studying abroad rips you from your comfort zone; it helps you better understand yourself and the world around you.”