Psst... Want Some Craic? To Northern Ireland, We Go!

By: Stephanie Alde
Welcome!

- Hey there! As you’re shifting through and searching for different study abroad programs, you’re probably wondering to each one:
  - Will this trip be fun?
  - What will I learn?
  - What’s the teacher’s style for class leadership?
  - But most importantly... Will I get along with the people here?

These are certainly all valid concerns that everyone has. But don’t worry! Each one will be addressed the further down we go, so sit back and hang on tight!
Is This FLP Right for Me?

- Anyone who’s thinking about joining this FLP should be ready for all sorts of crazy activities on the itinerary. Though you will be physically and mentally exhausted by the end of nearly each day, it’s absolutely guaranteed that there will be no shortage of fun packed into every hour of it. So what kind of people is this trip to Northern Ireland most suited for? Well, are you...
  - Open to new experiences?
  - Enjoy physical activity?
  - Love nature?
Is This FLP Right for Me?

- Obsessed with Game of Thrones?
- A history enthusiast?
- Have an interest in Irish and/or Gaelic culture?
- And the most important question of all... are you a food lover?!
Then look no further! 😊
But Wait! There Are Assignments?!

- **Disclaimer!** Since this is a class, there will be assignments given to students throughout the duration of the trip to get more information about what to expect, as well as to assess what you’ve learned from the entire two weeks in Ireland.

- **However**, of them all, I would have to say my favorite would be the **daily journals**. The daily journals are pretty self-explanatory: every day until the end of the program, you are expected to write one or two brief paragraphs describing the events of that day and what you thought/felt about them. This was special to me for many reasons. Mainly because…
  - I was able to organize how I felt about certain experiences at the end of the day without being too overwhelmed
  - To keep track of what was going on in my day
  - To easily look back and remember everything we did after the trip came to an end

Flipping through the pages of my journal after being home for a few weeks, I’ve really come to appreciate just how much detail I’ve put into them. Because now, it only takes a single glance at what I’ve written, and I’m practically able to relive those memories all over again.
Hm... But How About the Instructor?

- Have you ever had Dr. Siebert as a professor before? If you have, then you know how crazy, funny and caring she is. Seriously, she’s like that doting Italian aunt with a hilarious sense of humor.

- Having her lead the first Northern Ireland FLP trip couldn’t have been better. During our time there, she:
  - Allowed us to explore downtown Belfast by ourselves
  - Facilitated meaningful discussion without adding too much/leaving us with too little
  - Made sure we went in pairs or more to ensure safety at all times
  - Alleviated tension in certain situations through humor

I honestly couldn’t have asked for a better teacher for this trip.
So What’s This FLP All About?

- The main purposes of this program are:
  - To see the effects of Irish culture on its youth by helping out in the youth centers
    - We were assigned to one of three youth centers in Belfast to interact with kids ranging from 5 – 18 years old
    - Educated them how life in America differs from Ireland
  - Exploring the rich history of the Emerald Isle
    - We learned about the period of the Troubles, why it happened, and the complex conflict between the Catholics and Protestants
  - As well as seeing the beautiful scenery Ireland has to offer
    - We visited Belfast Castle and Dunluce Castle
    - Well-known locations such as Giant’s Causeway, Ballintoy Harbor, Sheep’s Island, and a number of beaches were also explored
Are You Glad You Went On This Trip?

- I would have stayed longer if I could. Of everything in the two weeks we had gone to Northern Ireland, I loved…
  - The people we met and worked with
  - The children at the youth centers
  - The (enormous amount of) food
  - The abundant amount of Game of Thrones tributes
  - Ireland’s breathtaking scenery
  - And especially the friendships made throughout the unforgettable adventure
What Did You Wish You Knew Before Going On The Trip?

- **How busy we were going to be.** While the first two days of landing were dedicated to getting physically accustomed to the time difference, the hectic-ness of our itinerary was something I wasn’t completely prepared for until a couple days later.

- **The temperamental Irish weather.** I’ll admit it. I mistakenly brought a pair of shorts and a skirt on the trip that I ended up leaving in my luggage for the whole two weeks because it was always cold and windy. There are moments throughout the day where random spurts of rainfall would occur for 5 minutes before disappearing entirely, only to reappear another 5 minutes later. It was like California on steroids.

- **How much fun I was going to have.** No seriously. Coming in, I was a bit nervous on how I was going to get along with everyone else since we were literally stuck with one another for two weeks straight. I wasn’t expecting to laugh as much as I did, to the point where I was in tears three times in a small span of 20 minutes. These Irish have such an amazing sense of humor that there wasn’t a day I didn’t go without busting out in laughter.
No matter how much I try to explain how incredible my trip to Northern Ireland went, you’ll honestly have to experience it yourself to truly understand just how special it is. I hope I gave enough of a taste of what this FLP is all about, and I wish you the best in your hunt for your study abroad program!

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