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Spring 4-5-2017

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#### Recommended Citation

Reynolds, Eiryn, "Student Shares Her Spring Break Experiences In Ireland" (2017). *GWU-Today*. 455.  
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# Student Shares Her Spring Break Experiences in Ireland



## Blog by Eiyryn Reynolds

During Spring Break, I had the incredible opportunity to road trip Southern Ireland with my mother. Starting in Dublin, I traveled to Kilkenny, Killarney, Galway, Leitrim, and then back to Dublin to celebrate St. Patrick's Day.



The first day, we arrived at an adorable Bed and Breakfast called *Mena House*. The *Mena House* was run by an older lady named Kathy; she had an incredibly strong accent and she found our southern mannerisms ("yes ma'am/no ma'am) hilarious. After taking a quick nap to get over the jet lag, we set off to explore the town. There was a walkway beside the river leading to town and in the very middle there was an enormous castle. Castles were *everywhere* in Ireland. For them it was just a normal part of life, but I was amazed to see how a modern town was so casually wrapped around such a historical structure. After exploring the town, we had dinner at a pub that had live

traditional music playing. Everyone was talking and laughing, and listening to the talented musicians. The environment was incredibly friendly and laid-back, so it made a great start to the trip.

The next day, after doing some shopping, we drove two hours to Killarney, which was probably my favorite town of the trip. The city was filled with cyclists and horse drawn carriages, and was surrounded by beautiful mountains. We spent two days in Killarney, and the next morning, we rented bicycles and road the streets to a castle, and then to Killarney National Park. The national park was surrounded by lakes and had a Manor, an old cemetery, and many other attractions to explore. We rode around and did some mountain biking in the park, and around four hours later, we road back to the city to visit a local cafe. (Side note: If you are a coffee junkie, Ireland is a must. The espresso is extraordinary. I genuinely could have spent the entire trip going to cafes and sampling coffee. It was that good.) After grabbing espresso, we visited the local shops to grab souvenirs for family and then grabbed dinner at another pub.

Wednesday we experienced our first bump in the road. If you have ever traveled abroad, you know that inevitably something is going to go wrong, but honestly these small inconveniences make for the best stories. We were headed to Galway, but took a detour to the coast to visit the Cliffs of Moher. The Cliffs of Moher are a must-see if you travel to Ireland. Although it may be out of the way, make the trip! You won't regret it. The sights are incredible; the initial park is surrounded by protective barriers, but visitors are able to hike out to the edges of the cliffs to experience all of it. Not only are you able to experience the mountains, but you are able to see the waves crashing against the mountains below. Afterward, we were headed to our next B&B in Galway, which was when we found out that they weren't expecting us and that the travel agency had changed our destination without notifying us. We then drove three hours out of the way, down one-lane dirt roads (it was incredibly sketchy), when we finally got to our destination. We were staying in an old, refurbished castle.



The next day was incredible. We were able to explore the castle and the castle grounds. There was moderate walking path that wrapped around the river next to the castle. There were farm animals along the grounds; it was a secluded haven. After exploration, we traveled to Leitrim. Town wise, this was probably the worst stop of the trip. This was the only place we experienced that wasn't necessarily "tourist friendly". The locals weren't very friendly, and we honestly, I didn't feel particularly safe in the area. However, there was park nearby that allowed us to escape the town and be out in nature (we like to hike). The thing about Ireland is that everything is green... like *really* green. With the amount of rain they get, there is a reason it is referred to as the Emerald Isle.

Our final full day was Saint Patrick's Day. We didn't plan this, but it was a happy coincidence that we were able to experience this because the Irish take this day seriously. We woke up early and made the trek to Dublin to catch on of the biggest St. Paddy's Day parades in the world. According to the radio, there were more than half a million people in Dublin that day. When we got there, there were so many roads blocked off and it was so packed, we weren't even able to make it to our hotel. We eventually decided to just park on a random street and follow the crowd of green to the parade. I genuinely don't think I've seen that many people packed into one place before. There were so many people, it was hard to see the parade but the experience was really awesome.

Watching everyone come together to celebrate this day was really interesting. People acted like they had never met a stranger before and they were having a great time.

Ireland was one of the most incredible places I've ever been to. The food, the scenery and the people were all new and exciting. If you love the outdoors, this is definitely a place you need to visit. It is beautiful, and you will without-a-doubt learn a ton about yourself when explore places and things that you've never experienced. My advice: try to travel abroad at least once in your life – you won't regret it.