

Day 1

We left Budapest early in the morning by plane. Everyone was half asleep but we were also excited about the trip to Ireland.

We landed in Dublin, then we travelled by bus to Glendalough, located in the Wicklow Mountains National Park, surrounded by mountains, two lakes and woodlands. There we visited a small museum and watched a short film about facts of the place. In the 6th century, St. Kevin came to Glendalough in order to find God in solitude and prayer, he did so by living the life of a hermit. St. Kevin brought Christianity to Glendalough developing the monastic site into one of the greatest monasteries in Ireland throughout the 6th century. It included churches, monastic cells, workshops, guesthouses, and farm buildings. After that, we had some free time to explore the environment. We entered through a gateway, which isn't held together by mortar, but by the angle of the bricks themselves. There was a church and a round tower, too. The weather wasn't always nice because it rained a lot, but afterwards the sun always shined.

Later, we also visited the famous Powerscourt Gardens with fountains, Japanese, French and Italian gardens and beautiful flowers. We also had enough time to see the biggest waterfall in Ireland, where we saw people bathing. It was an interesting experience, because the temperature of the water surely wasn't over 15 degrees.

At the end of the day, everyone arrived at their accommodation in villages around Monaghan, a town near the Northern-Irish border. The four of us stayed at an elderly married couple, our host family, who were nice to us. We had dinner together and everyone finished the first adventurous day feeling tired but also excited.

Blanka Bakai, Olívia Orbán-Fogarassy, Ráhel Nagy-Tusa, Nóra Buliczka

Day 2

On the second day, we met at 8 o'clock at the meeting point and started our journey to Dublin.

Our first destination was the EPIC Museum, an interactive museum about Irish emigration located in the city centre. The museum was very interesting and enjoyable for everybody because we could learn a lot about Irish history, culture and famous Irish people, including musicians, football players and scientists. One of the most interesting parts was that we could collect stamps in our passports while visiting the exhibitions, which made the experience even more exciting and interactive.

After visiting the museum, we had some free time in Dublin. We bought souvenirs, drank coffee in a bakery and explored the city in smaller groups. Some of us went for a long walk along the River Liffey,

where we also saw the famous Jeanie Johnston ship and an interesting modern bridge with a unique design. Others visited Talbot Street and some shops nearby.

Later, we continued our trip to Malahide Castle, where we took part in a guided tour. The tour lasted about an hour, and we learned many interesting facts about the Talbot family and the history of the castle. The guide also told us spooky stories about the ghosts that are said to haunt the castle, which made the visit even more memorable. We also learned some new English expressions during the tour, such as “to lose face”.

After the guided tour, we had some free time so we visited the butterfly house and took great pictures and videos there. The colourful butterflies and tropical plants created a beautiful atmosphere.

At the end of the day, we travelled back to our host families’ houses by bus and had dinner together. Our host families were very kind and welcoming and we enjoyed talking to them about Irish culture and everyday life. It was a long but unforgettable day full of new experiences.

Noémi Fükő, Kira Gerstenbrein, Judit Klein, Dóra Szőnyeghy

Day 3

So, we started our 3rd day at St. Patrick’s Cathedral, one of the most famous landmarks in Dublin, located in the city centre. We bought some tickets and went inside to see how beautiful it was. The cathedral was very different from most churches in Hungary because it was much larger and had beautiful stained-glass windows and Gothic architecture. We also saw the grave of Jonathan Swift, the author of *Gulliver’s Travels*, who was buried inside the cathedral. It was interesting to learn about the history of the cathedral and its connection to Saint Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland.

After that, we had free time. We could go to a café, do some sightseeing, or go shopping. Then we met the group again and went to the Teeling Whiskey Distillery. We had a guided tour and learned how whiskey is made, from the ingredients to the distillation process. We also learned about the history of the Teeling family and how they helped revive whiskey production in Dublin. It was interesting to see the equipment and the production area. After the tour, we received a mocktail made of raspberry- and lemon juice as well as other exciting ingredients. It was really refreshing after the walking tour.

Then, we got back on the bus and went to Trinity College, one of the oldest and most famous universities in Ireland. Inside Trinity College, we visited an exhibition and learned about the Book of Kells. The Book of Kells is a beautifully decorated manuscript created by Celtic monks around the year 800. It is famous for its detailed illustrations and is considered one of Ireland’s greatest cultural

treasures. The exhibition was held in a beautiful part of the college, and it was very interesting to see such an important historical work.

After that, we got back on the bus and returned to the families. During the whole stay, they were very kind and helpful and always made us feel welcome. Every day we talked to them about their lives in Ireland, their backgrounds, and local traditions. They were also interested in Hungary and asked us many questions about our country. These conversations helped us improve our English and we could learn more about Irish culture.

Mátyás Szócs, Bence Kocsi, András Fajta, Andor Gulácsy-Tóth, Vilmos Szabó

Day 4

We started the fourth day early in the morning because we were travelling to Northern Ireland, which is part of the United Kingdom.

Our first stop was Dunluce Castle, a historic ruin standing dramatically on the coastal cliffs. Although we got completely soaked by a sudden rain shower, we still had a fantastic time exploring the area and taking photos of the breathtaking scenery. Built around 1500, the castle later fell into ruin during the 16th and 17th centuries. Today, it is considered one of the most romantic castles in Ireland thanks to its spectacular ocean views and unique atmosphere.

After that, we visited the Giant's Causeway, one of Northern Ireland's most famous natural attractions. We enjoyed a walk along the stunning Atlantic coastline and took lots of photos of the remarkable landscape. The Giant's Causeway consists of around 40,000 basalt columns, most of them hexagonal in shape, which were formed millions of years ago when volcanic lava cooled and cracked. The site looks like a giant stone pathway leading into the sea. Thanks to the audio guide, we learned many interesting facts about its geological formation as well as the famous legend of the giant Finn McCool, who, according to local folklore, built the causeway to reach Scotland.

Our next destination was Belfast. Unfortunately, due to a hailstorm, our planned group sightseeing tour had to be cancelled. Instead, we visited the Town Hall, where we explored a wonderful exhibition. Afterwards, we had about two hours of free time to discover the city and buy souvenirs. From our bus, we also saw the Peace Wall, which was built to separate Protestant and Catholic communities during the conflict known as the *Troubles*. Even today, it remains a powerful symbol of Belfast's divided past and the long process of reconciliation. The wall reminds visitors of the violence and mistrust that affected Northern Ireland for decades, while also highlighting the importance of dialogue and peace.

After our free time, we began the two-hour journey back to our host families, bringing an eventful and memorable day to an end.

As an extra highlight of our stay, we were hosted by a very kind and welcoming lady who made us feel at home from the very beginning. Our accommodation was in the countryside near Monaghan, and our host was always ready to help us with anything we needed. We enjoyed many conversations with her in English, which helped us improve our language skills and learn more about everyday life near Northern Ireland. One evening, we even taught her two traditional Hungarian card games, which was great fun for everyone. For breakfast, we usually had cereal or toast. Every day, we were given a packed lunch that included a sandwich, crisps, fruit, some small snacks, and a bottle of water. For dinner, we had hamburgers, pasta, and tortillas on the different days. The beds were very comfortable, so we could always rest well after our busy days of sightseeing. It was a bit cold, but that's normal for Irish people, as they are used to the colder weather. Overall, we really enjoyed our stay and were very grateful for the warm hospitality we received.

Bettina Ócsai-Biró, Leona Kirsching, Jázmin Sinka, Lili Sipos

Day 5

On the last day we woke up earlier as usual, so we could check our luggage to see if we had everything. After that we ate the typical Irish breakfast: cereal and toast. Then we said goodbye to the family. We lived only a few minutes away from the parking lot, where we met with the group.

Then we went a for little shopping before heading to the Trim Castle. There we learned, that the Norman fortress is over 800 years old, which makes it the oldest castle in Ireland. It is also the largest in this Country. The design of the central three-storey building is unique for a Norman fort being of cruciform shape, with twenty corners. The surviving curtain walls are predominantly of three phases. We heard a lot of new things about how the nobles in the medieval times lived in this castle. It was really interesting.

After the guided tour we had a chance to explore the city, so we went to see the oldest bridge of Ireland, which is over the River Boyne. Then we walked to the St. Patrik's Cathedral, and also saw the Statue of Duke Wellington, who defeated Napoleon. The city also had great souvenir shops and restaurants, so we had a chance to shop around a little bit, eat and relax.

After that we went to the airport and said goodbye to Ireland. The flight was nearly 3 hours long. From the plane we could see the sunset over the cities of Ireland. The time we got back home it was dark, and we were really tired after the long but exciting day.

Angéla Molnár, Letícia Balogh