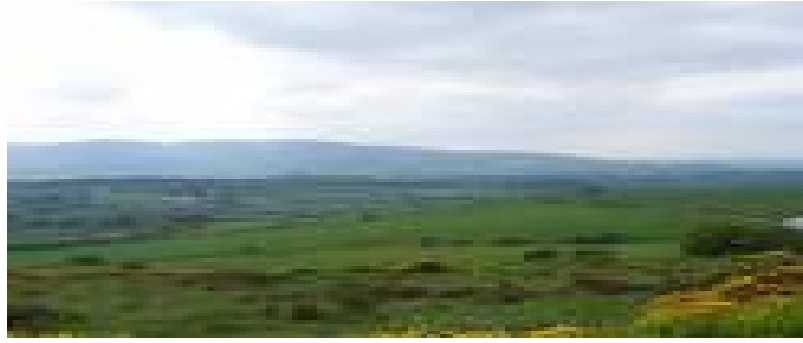




Secondary School Programme To Ireland

Student
Programmes Ireland



Study English the Natural Way

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Secondary School Programme To Ireland

Dear Students,

Welcome to your Secondary School in Ireland programme. There is a very exciting and enjoyable time for you over the coming months as you get used to a new family, a new school and a new country. By the time you reach the end of your programme we hope that you will feel part Irish and that you will look back on your time in our country with fondness.

Of course there may be some challenges and frustrations while you get used to the “Irish way”. But we will do our best to help and support you during the transition. This handbook outlines the programme regulations and will help answer many of your questions. We also have a local support network in place, this person is your coordinator and your friend and will be available to you at all times should you have any problems and concerns.

Student Programmes Ireland LTD local coordinator will be your most important support on a day to day basis. They live nearby and you should call them if you have any difficulties or problems. All are very friendly and helpful. However, please realize that most of them are mothers with families and getting in touch with them in late evenings or at weekends should only be in emergencies. Of course you can contact your local representative or Student Programmes Ireland LTD at any time in an emergency.

Please take the time to read this handbook carefully. Keep it close by during your time in Ireland and refer to it if you have any questions.

Have a wonderful time in Ireland – take the opportunity to learn as much as possible about the country. Irish people can be a little shy or distant at first, take the time and make the effort to get to know us and you will find friends for life.

Cead Mile Failte,

Bernie Carroll
Managing Director

Ciara Behan
Student Officer



Who Are Student Programmes Ireland LTD?

Student Programmes Ireland LTD was first set up back in 2009 to cater for the increased demand of foreign students coming to Ireland to learn English. The Directors of Spil have many years experience in the successful placement of students on different Programmes in Ireland. Previously this company was known as Ballyhoura country holidays.

We have been placing students on secondary school Programmes for the past 20 years and in that time we have built up a good relationship with schools all over Ireland

Due to the increase in numbers of foreign Students coming into Ireland to study we had to source new schools to participate in this Programme, so you may be the first foreign student to attend this school and we would strongly advise you to be a good ambassador for your country while attending the school.

Your coordinator will be available to talk to you at all times during your stay in Ireland and will assist you in everyway possible while you are settling in to your new host family and school.

The Programme – What it consists of!



- Meet and greet at airport by a Student Programmes representative or your Host family
- Transfer to and from your Host family
- Two weeks after your arrival you will have an orientation meeting along with other students in your area, covering Programme issues, cultural introduction to Irish life, living in a host family, culture shock and problem solving.
- Full board and lodging with a host family for the duration Stay. All host families will be interviewed and selected on their ability to provide a positive home environment. Host families in Ireland receive a non-commercial hospitality allowance;
- Supervision by the local Spil Coordinator and Student Officer
- Administrative and guidance services
- Programme also covers cost of school uniform, school books, school transport tickets, enrolment fees and other costs relating to your school year,



Ireland – Did you know?

Teenagers!

- ❖ Many teenagers work after school or weekends at part-time jobs.
- ❖ Most teenagers have chores that they are responsible for at home.
- ❖ Most teenagers have curfew
- ❖ Most teenagers have mobile phones
- ❖ Smoking is not allowed in most family homes and is illegal in all enclosed public places (restaurants, pubs etc)

Families:

- ❖ Host families are paid a modest hospitality allowance; this is a lot less than proprietors of a guest house would receive.
- ❖ Many mothers work either part-time or full-time outside the home.
- ❖ Most host families are conservative in their lifestyles, especially concerning sex, drugs and alcohol.
- ❖ Both parents participate in household chores and expect their family to share in daily chores.
- ❖ Parents expect their children to ask permission before going out.
- ❖ Parents expect to know where their children are going, who they are with. How they will get there, and what time they will return. Parents expect their children to call or leave a note if their plans change
- ❖ In some families meals are not eaten together because of busy schedules. Most families are very busy with work, sports and lessons of various kinds
- ❖ Families are often very protective of their students
- ❖ Families sometimes have arguments
- ❖ Not all families have access to the internet and may prefer students use facilities in the local town such as the local library
- ❖ Not all families are two-parent families
- ❖ **No student on this Programme is allowed to consume alcohol.**



Ask for Help



It is very important to be open and honest with your new family, your local coordinator and others that you come in contact with during your stay in your host country. You'll find that people are very willing to help you if you have a question, **but you need to ask for help.** If you don't ask, people will assume that you are ok and this can lead to problems.

If you are lost, afraid, and don't understand something, or have a question about anything, ask your host family or your local coordinator.

Do not talk to your friends or family in your home country because they do not know the customs in your host family any better than you do. The suggestions that they give you may make the matter worse rather than better.

It is your responsibility to adjust to the differences that you are exposed to, but first you have to understand them. Always ask a responsible person if you have a question. This is true especially in your classes.

Why not keep part of you experience: you'll relive the good and the not so good, and can see how different things and people helped you! A journal or diary is a good idea too



Rules and Responsibilities

The Law in Ireland

Local communities:

- ❖ Most towns in Ireland would have a basic transport service, but not all host families live in towns. It may not always be suitable to give a lift into town.
- ❖ Local youth, drama and sports clubs are the best way to meet people
- ❖ Local communities are very interested in learning about other cultures.

❑ DRUGS

The possession, sale or use of illegal drugs is considered a serious crime in Ireland. Persons violating drug laws will be tried and in most cases jailed.

❑ SHOPLIFTING

Stealing something from a shop, host family or school is a serious violation of the law in Ireland. Offenders are arrested, fined and punished. Students in SPil Programme who are caught stealing are sent home immediately and required to pay back all costs relating to theft.

❑ DRIVING

The purchase or driving of a car, motorbike or any motor vehicle while participating in the programme is strictly prohibited. It is illegal to drive without a valid driver's license and valid insurance. Students who drive a motor vehicle while on spil Programme will be returned home.

❑ SEATBELTS

Everyone in a car is required to wear seatbelts. Failure to wear seatbelts can cause serious injury or death in the event of an accident and can incur penalty points for the driver.

❑ STATUTORY RAPE

People aged 18 or older who have sexual relations with minors (16 or under) may be guilty of statutory rape even if both parties were willing participants. If the legal authorities press charges, a person convicted of statutory rape will go to prison.

A student on the SPIL Programme who is arrested for violation of any law will be sent home immediately. This can also affect your status with immigration officials and have an effect on your ability to visit the country in the future

Student Programme Rules

1. The possession or use of illegal drugs is prohibited
2. Students must abide by the laws of the host country
3. Alcoholic is prohibited on the SPOL Programme
4. Driving any motor vehicle while participating in the SPIL Programme is not permitted
5. Students may not participate in any sexual contact or sexual activity
6. Students are not permitted to participate in skydiving, hang-gliding, bungee-jumping, parachute jumping or any dangerous or inappropriate behavior which puts their own safety or the safety of others at risk;
7. Students must abide by the SPIL travel rule

Any infraction on the above 7 rules may result in immediate dismissal from the SPIL Programme.

8. Students are not allowed to smoke in the host family home or the School
9. Students must follow school rules, attend school daily, complete all school assignments and attempt to maintain at least a Level “3” average in all subjects and must obey the schools dress code.
10. Students should limit making international phone-calls to their parents and friends and will be financially responsible for those calls. The internet may not be available for use in the host family.
11. Students must show respect for their host families and act as a member of the family by following family rules and voluntarily helping with family chores.
12. Students should not discuss their host families’ private affairs with their peers.
13. Students cannot change host families at will.
14. Students must show respect for all SPIL representatives and follow their instructions
15. Parental or friends from home country visits disrupt the integration process and are not permitted without authorization from SPIL Coordinator
16. Students must have credit on their Irish Mobile Phones at all times
17. Students on this Programme cannot receive any body art(tattoos)/ body piercing or change their Hair colouring during their stay in Ireland

Infraction of any of the above rules will be considered on a case by case basis and may result in dismissal from the programme.

Travel Rule

The safety of the student during their stay in Ireland is our top priority.

- ♣ We are also obligated to work within specific laws and guidelines set down by the Irish Government in relation to the safety of young people on School Programmes.
- ♣ This becomes especially complicated when the student wants to travel and spend overnights away from their host family within Ireland.
- ♣ It is not possible for us to accept responsibility for the safety and welfare of students when they spend overnights in accommodations or locations which have not been visited and vetted by our staff. This also includes overnights with friends from school or from home.
- ♣ However, SPIL wants to give students the opportunity to visit regions in Ireland other than their host communities to learn more about the country and in doing so have a greater cultural experience. We know this is important to many students and we want to facilitate this as much as is possible and practicable.
- ♣ To make this possible we need your co-operation and support. To ensure the students safety and welfare as well as the integrity of the programme values, it is required that you read and agree to the conditions below.

The “flexibility” to travel independently is a privilege and not a right. SPIL Ireland reserves the right to withdraw this privilege if they feel it is being abused by the student.

- ♣ As a School Programme the hope is that the student will discover Ireland and its culture in a more meaningful way than a visiting as a tourist. The best way to do this is by integrating into and becoming part of your host community. To protect against becoming a tourist programme the maximum number of independent trips that will be authorized is 1 per school term. There are 3 school terms in the academic year.
- ♣ Independent travel will require that your natural parents sign a document which states that for the period of the trip, the student will be considered “off” the programme and that for this period the host family, local coordinator and SPIL will have no responsibility, or liability for the welfare of the student.
- ♣ Any student who spends a night away from their host family without first getting authorization from SPIL will be considered to have broken one of the most serious Programme rules.
- ♣ Independent travel **will not** be permitted if it involves the following:
 - * Any trip that involves returning to home country*
 - *Any trip that involves missing a school day or part of a school day*
- ♣ Requests to travel must be made by the student to the local coordinator as soon as possible before the intended travel date. Any requests coming directly from the natural parents will not be accepted. How the student can make this request will be explained during their arrival orientation.
- ♣ **The signed “parental release form” must be with SPIL at least 7 days before the intended travel date.**
- ♣ Please speak to SPIL before booking any flights. Flights must not be booked before travel authorization is granted.
- ♣ If a trip breaks any of the above rules it will be refused regardless of the amount of money a participant might potentially lose because of a missed flight.
- ♣ A student may only proceed with a trip when the local coordinator confirms that the SPIL office has approved the request. Permission to allow / disallow a trip is not the responsibility of the host family.

Unawareness of the above rules and regulations about independent travel will not be accepted as a defence.

return visits to home country will be considered in the event of a family emergency.

We may ask you to provide documentary proof to support any request such as a letter from a doctor etc.

I have read, understood and agree to abide by the above regulations in relation to Independent Travel on the SPIL Programme.

Student signature: _____.

What do the rules mean to you?

It is important for you to read and thoroughly understand the SPIL rules. A copy of these rules is given to your host family, and they rely on the fact that they can expect you understand and agree to abide by them. These rules were devised to give everyone the foundation for a successful, safe and satisfying homestay experience.

A failure to abide by these rules will mean that the students will be placed on probationary status in order to correct his/ her behavior. Continuing disregard of these rules can result in expulsion from the programme.

I have read the above rules and I agree to be bound by them.

*Signature of student:*_____ *.Date*_____.

*Signature of Parent/ Guardian:*_____ *.Date*_____.

Early Termination of the Programme

SPIL reserves the right to send home any student who engages in dangerous or inappropriate behavior which puts their own safety or the safety of others at risk, whose health requires this action, or whose conduct includes drug use, unacceptable sexual behavior, drinking and violation of laws. In this event the student is returned home either alone or accompanied. Parents or guardians are responsible for all expense above those covered by the fee. Refunds are not available for participants whose Programme is terminated prematurely.



Health

Students must be aware that differences in climate and living conditions as well as the stress which is natural in any major lifestyle change can lead to illness. It is important to eat a healthy diet, get regular exercise, and get sufficient sleep while you are in your new country. This is extremely important in contributing to a successful homestay.

Please be aware that good eating habits are vital to good health. Some students develop a fondness for “junk food” while on the homestay Programme. This contributes to weight gain and to lack of energy and vitality. Eating a variety of food will keep you fit.

Another serious subject having to do with health is sexually transmitted disease (STD). It is often called the “hidden epidemic” and is a major health concern, especially in the teen population.

There are 25 diseases which are spread through sexual intercourse. STD’s can lead to death, to infertility, can affect health of future babies, and can be the cause of major medical, physical and emotional expense. Some STD’s are spread by having sexual relations with an infected person and some through contact with body fluids via direct contact with infected skin, STD’s may cause few or no symptoms or the symptoms may appear or disappear while the disease remains. The only certain way to avoid these diseases is to avoid the type of contact which can spread them. Do not engage in sexual intercourse or any sexual behaviour responsible for the spread of STD’s, as this will justify your being expelled from the Programme.



Insurance / Medical Cover

All students must be covered by illness and accident insurance for the duration of the Programme.

The host family should not pay for any medical care. The cost should be borne by the student. Students pay their own cost of preventative care, routine dental and vision care. Usually only illness and accident costs are covered by the insurance policy. Pre – existing conditions are not covered.

If medical cost is covered by the insurance provider:

- ❖ The student should send the medical facility bill to the insurance carrier directly;

All students should have their own European health card - E111 with them.

This will entitle them to medical attention on a public basis in Ireland in certain situations.

As a public patient EU citizens are entitled to the following services free of charge:

- ❖ Visits to a general practitioner (GP) who is registered under this scheme;
- ❖ Treatment by a specialist consultant if it is deemed necessary by a GP;
- ❖ Emergency dental treatment;
- ❖ Prescription medicines;
- ❖ Necessary hospital treatment.

For further details contact your nearest health board, or ask your coordinator or host family.

Keep your E111 card with you at all times. Students must attend Doctor of Host Family in all cases.



General Responsibilities of Students

Students do have responsibilities when joining a homestay and academic programme. It is important that you realize this and that you will be willing to accept these responsibilities. In particular you need to consider the following;

Responsibility to your home country;

You are an ambassador of your home country. You may be the only person from your home country that your host family, their friends, your school staff and classmates and the people of your community have ever been in contact with. It is important that you be an excellent representative of your country. Your actions and manners need to bring favorable reactions from those you meet in your host country.

Responsibility to your host family:

- Your host family is taking a risk by inviting you to live with them for an extended period of time.
- Just as you are brave for coming into a totally new and different situation, they are brave for their willingness to host a teenager with a different background, culture and different customs. This may be the first time they have lived with a teenager.
- It is your responsibility to fit into the lifestyle of your host family.
- Do not expect them to change their ways of doing things in order to have it be more like what you have at home. If there are changes to be made, you are the one who needs to make them.
- Families also host for a learning experience.
- It is important for you to come prepared to share your country and culture with your family and friends. Please bring pictures, examples of arts / crafts from your home country, recipes that you can share with your family. Music that is popular with teens in your country.
- Plan on spending some time each day in activities with your family. If this does not happen, your family will soon begin to feel that they are a hotel. It is your responsibility to make sure that this does not happen.
- Do your chores willingly, occasionally offer to do something extra without being asked.
- Make it a point to learn how your family celebrates special occasions and holidays and join in the celebration.
- Make a calendar of your host family members' birthdays, anniversaries and other special occasions and recognize them with a small gift or card. It is expected to give a small gift to each family member at Christmas.
- Show appreciation for all your family is doing for you by saying "thank you" often and by occasionally doing something unexpected such as renting a movie, buying a cake or treating your family to ice-cream etc. offering to wash the car, weed the garden etc. are ways to express your thanks without spending money. A home-made card that just expresses your gratitude is a thoughtful gesture.

Keep host family matters private. You should never discuss your host family with friends or acquaintances. If you have concern, talk to your local coordinator.

If you do not understand something that your host family are saying to you please ask them to repeat or explain what they mean as you do not understand them, this can avoid any misunderstanding between students and their host families.

Responsibility to your School and Community

Schools are not required to accept students. They do so as they see international students bringing a new cultural dimension to the school. It is vital that you come prepared to “give back” to your school and community by being willing to share your country in history or current events classes, or by doing demonstrations in school, by speaking at community clubs. Offer to do this; do not wait to be asked.

It is also important that you spend your time during your programme joining in activities in your host school and community. There is a real temptation to find other students from your home country and do everything with them. When you do this, the normal inclination is to speak your native language. This excludes everyone else and soon other students will give up trying to make friends with you.

The main purpose of this Programme is for you to improve their English. The way to improve is to practice. No one will fault you if you make a mistake in English; they will think you’re very brave to be able to do it as well as you do.

You are only there for a limited time. Use this time to gain and share as much as you can.

Budget

Please budget you money wisely so that you have enough to cover your expenses. Remember that the first and last month will be the most expensive. December (Christmas holidays) can also be an expensive month, please budget for this. A reasonable estimate of monthly expenses might be 160-200 euro. You must keep track of your own money. Make a list of your expenses, and contact your family as needed to make sure that you have enough money all the time. Your host family should NOT be expected to lend you money and they will notify your local coordinator in you ask them. Please make your own arrangements about finances. As a student you should be able to open a bank account. Your host family or coordinator can help you, but no one should be on your bank account except you and your natural parents. If you need to buy something, your host family may take you to the shop. Please try to give some notice in advance. It is not always convenient to go to the shop right away. If you want to sign up for activities after school, please do not assume that your host family can drive you and pick you up several times a week. Always ask, and make alternate arrangements if it doesn’t suit. You are responsible for your school expenses, lunches bought at school, snacks, entertainment expenses, stamps and toiletries. If you make long distance telephone calls, please make them collect or use a pre-paid phone card. Some insurance policies state that you must pay your bills up to a certain amount and then get reimbursed. Be familiar with your insurance and keep an emergency fund available in case you need money quickly. Make arrangements with your parents for money before you start spending your emergency money. Under no circumstances should you lend or borrow money from you host family members. Be prepared to pay your own expenses.

Financial Responsibility

You are responsible for the following expenses:

- ❖ Lunches bought at school (you can make a packed lunch at home if you don’t want to buy lunch at school)
- ❖ All entertainment expenses, movies, snacks, sports events, restaurant meals (even if you are with your host family), school events etc;
- ❖ Excursions and day trips
- ❖ Personal items such as toothpaste, shampoo, makeup, deodorant and personal items
- ❖ Clothing and your school footwear and outer garments such as coats.
- ❖ All school expenses including dances and special events, workbooks and pens
- ❖ Stamps, film and processing
- ❖ Telephone calls and internet use. Your host family is not responsible for your phone calls. You have been supplied with an Irish Sim Card, you are responsible for all costs relating to your mobile phone and you must keep credit in this at all times as your coordinator may need to contact you.

Host family

Living with a family will give you a unique opportunity to discover Ireland and its people in a way that no other travel programme can offer. It is a special privilege to be invited to live with an Irish family and we are sure that you will find it to be the most interesting and enjoyable part of your visit to our country.

Irish families differ as widely as those in your own country. Your new Irish “parents” may be young or old, have young children, teenagers or grown children who live away from home. Most likely they will have lots of contact with relatives as the extended family is still very important in the Irish society. A lot of Irish families live in rural locations and you must be prepared to adapt to the challenges this might present.

For a homestay to be a success it takes a little work from both you and your host family. All of the families who host for this programme do so because of their interest in people and their willingness to open their homes and way of life to you. Families are paid a hospitality allowance in Ireland.



Religion

Religious activities play an important role in the family life of many Irish people. Host families like to share all aspects of their lives with you. While you are not obliged to attend church activities with you family, it is often a good way to make friends and practice the language. If you chose not to participate, please respect and be tolerant of your family’s beliefs just as they are of yours.



What is expected of your host family?

To invite you into their house and to treat you as a member of their family and not as a paying guest.



To involve you in their normal everyday family life. To be open, friendly and have a good sense of humor. Host families are not obliged to organize excursions for you although, some families may do so. In these cases we suggest they do it as much for their own enjoyment as for yours. You should always offer to pay for your own entrance fees during family excursions.

The following is a typical example of what your host family may expect from you. Many families have unwritten expectations of their own children, these will apply to you also. Sit down with your host family and ask them what they expect from you during your stay. Ask questions if something is not clear.

Expectations of a host family:

- Learn the names, address and phone number of your family immediately. Write it down and put it in your wallet.

Household Rules:

-  You are part of the family, and will be treated as part of the family.
-  Your host parents are your “parents” during your stay, treat them the way you would like to be treated.
-  Your host families are not your servants. Everyone does their share to keep the house clean and tidy. Take care of your possessions and help others as needed.
-  Good manners are important/ “please”, “thank you” and “I’m sorry”, “may I help you” are all very important phrases to be used.
-  If you have a concern or question, or you feel lonely or sad please talk to your host family.
-  They are your family for the time ahead, they want to be part of your life, and share both the happy and the sad time with you.

Typical host family rules.

Rules for everyday:

- Keep your room and bathroom clean.
- Make your bed; pick up your things each day.
- Empty your rubbish bin in your bedroom as needed.
- Change your sheets, vacuum and dust your bedroom in accordance with the family norms.
- Most families do not allow food in the bedrooms. If you are allowed you must clean up straight away, do not leave it in the room.
- Make your own breakfast and lunch on school days. Offer to do it for others. When you are finished putting the food away, washing the dishes, cleaning the counters and cleaning up any other spills.
- Whenever you do cook, do a project or take things out, clean up after yourself.
- Everyone takes turns doing chores. Please check to see what yours are and do them without having to be reminded. If you are asked to do something extra to help around the house, realize that everyone is helping out. You will be treated like a member of the family, not like a guest.
- To conserve electricity, please turn off lights that are not in use. Doors are often closed to conserve heat in the wintertime. Irish houses might not be as warm inside as you are used to. It is not unusual that you might have to wear a jumper inside the house.
- You may be responsible for your own laundry, please discuss this with your host family.
- If you see food from last night's dinner in the fridge, ask your host parent before you eat it there may be a plan to use it for another meal.

Confirmation of Understanding family Rules

When I make plans to go out:

My curfew for school nights will be _____ pm. My curfew for non-school nights will be _____ pm. (work these out with your host family). If I am going to be late I am expected to call. This does not mean that I can be late all the time. It means that if there is an emergency my family needs to know where I am and when to expect me home.

My family will expect to know where I am going, how I am getting there, who I am going with and what time I expect to be home. They are responsible for me and want to know that I am safe. If I will be later than planned I will call so that they won't worry.

I respect the fact that some host family members may go to bed early. If I stay up late, I need to be quiet. I will not shower after _____ pm. (work this out with your family).

I have read through the rules of the Programme with my host family and fully understand what they mean.

Signed: _____
Student

Signed: _____
Host Parent

The Irish watch lots of TV – often on in background during meals. They follow a lot of the American and Australian soaps on a regular basis. There are 4 national TV's channels – RTE1, RTE2, and TV3 & TG4 (Irish language channel).

British channels are also freely available in Ireland, for example BBC, ITV and SKY news / Sport. Most families have only one car. Irish people walk much more than in other countries and also use public transport frequently to get to work / school.

Ireland has a very high rate of regular church attendance. Your family may invite you to join them at mass or other church services and even if you are not a Catholic this should not stop you going to church with your family – it will be an experience. However they will not be offended should you decide not to go with them.

Try to involve yourself in the everyday life of the family and do not expect hotel type treatment. Always keep your room tidy and do offer to help with the dishes.

Food

When you arrive with the host family discuss exactly what you like / don't like to eat. This will avoid any later misunderstandings. If you require a special diet please ask your family where to purchase this food. While you are in Ireland it would be nice to prepare a typical meal from your native country one day for your family.

As well as the potato (often fondly called “the spud” in Ireland) it is quite common for families to eat rice and pasta. Common main courses include, chicken, pork, beef or bacon. However most Irish people feel a little insecure unless some sort of potato turns up on their dinner plate every day!!!

The Irish also drink lots of tea....on a per capita basis we drink more tea than the British. It is always customary to be offered a cup of tea when you visit somebody's house and “No thanks” is never accepted the first (or second) time...expect to be asked again.

Most families will have a jar of instant coffee...freshly ground coffee is unusual.



Family Visits

Sometimes student's parents want to visit them in the host country. Please make such plans **for Mid term Breaks or Easter.** Students tend to suffer homesickness after a visit from their relatives. Parental visits are not permitted in the first six months and thereafter only with prior approval by SPIL. Host families should not be placed in the position of having to arrange accommodations for the student's family.

SPIL reserves the right to prohibit travel at any time. Travel which interferes with school attendance will only be allowed in exceptional circumstances and with written permission from your natural parents and your school principal. The gathering of written permissions is always the responsibility of the students.



Cultural shock / homesickness

In advance of the SPIL Programme participants often have many pre-conceived ideas about what their experience, new culture and host family . In some cases people are on the right track, but in most cases people find that things can be “different from what I expected”. It is important to realize what is happening to you and that it isn’t uncommon for people in new surroundings to have some of these feelings. More important is to do something to help relieve these feelings.

It is not a case of the reality not living up to the expectation, more simply that the experience is different to what you anticipated.

All participants anxious to engage in new culture will experience some kind of culture shock, no matter how short their programme. One of the main ways that culture shock expresses itself is through homesickness. This may start at the airport, or whilst on the flight, or during your first few days/ weeks. Whenever the feelings of homesickness strike you it is important to remember that you are not alone/

🌸 Culture shock

You can adjust to any new culture through your sensitivity to what is and isn’t acceptable. It is generally agreed that there are 4-5 stages to integrating into new culture:

- ❖ Initial euphoria.
- ❖ Irritability and hostility.
- ❖ Gradual adjustment.
- ❖ Adaptation.
- ❖ Departure concern.

Culture shock occurs when you impose your values and expectations onto your new culture, and consequently have difficulty adjusting. Culture shock can manifest itself in many ways.

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|
| ❖ Homesickness | frustration |
| ❖ Stereotyping | illness |
| ❖ Re-emergence of emotional issues | concern for safety |
| ❖ Negative statements & thoughts | irritability |
| ❖ Changes in eating / sleeping habits | social withdrawal |
| ❖ Crying | boredom |

Cultural shock / homesickness

If you are suffering from culture shock, it may not be something that you will be aware of yourself. You will not wake up some morning and say “I feel homesick today” you will wake up and feel tired, unmotivated, perhaps thinking about home a lot and frustrated at your new surroundings. Some people have the classic symptoms of homesickness like crying or difficulty sleeping. Others may have more subtle changes in their behavior, which over time can make them difficult to be around.

There will be people and events at home that will trigger homesickness; missing birthdays etc. everyone suffers from homesickness, no matter their age or previous travel.

There are some simple strategies for dealing with culture shock and these include:

- ❖ Be prepared that you are likely to encounter culture shock and most likely feel homesick.
- ❖ Avoid telephoning home – you will feel wretched afterwards
- ❖ Keep busy and try to get involved in your new community
- ❖ Be flexible and open to new ways of doing things
- ❖ Allow yourself time to settle in – tell people (or your local coordinator) how you are feeling
- ❖ Do not spend too much time by yourself
- ❖ Do not judge your situation or people too quickly
- ❖ Take things step by step

Some other symptoms of culture shock which you should be aware of are:

- ❖ Becoming more shy and quite than you usually are
- ❖ Becoming more rowdy or doing things that you normally don't do
- ❖ Withdrawing and feeling sad
- ❖ Feeling frustrated often, even in situations which are not new to you
- ❖ Becoming very critical of your host country; everything is better at home
- ❖ Clinging to a host family member or friend instead of reaching out to others
- ❖ Feeling tired or ill all the time; stomach aches or headaches are common

The role of your local coordinator

During your homestay you will be assigned a local coordinator. This is the person who found your host family and who will be your advisor during your homestay. Local Coordinators are there to help you when you have concerns or don't know how to handle something. They will be your link to home, your organization and to SPIL.

You will have more contact with the local coordinator in the first two weeks – at the orientation, in buying the uniforms and books, in settling into the programme.

If you are getting on fine with your family and school the local coordinator will step back to allow you to get on with your experience. You should not expect that the local coordinator will be meeting you every week or month.

If you have a problem that you need help with it is your responsibility to contact the local coordinator and they will be available to help you with any problems that you might have.

Each local coordinator is there to help you, but only you can make your homestay successful and happy. The local coordinator will check in with you from time to time, **but if there is a problem you must contact them.**

If you are honest with your local coordinator when you have a problem, she can counsel you and help you to get the problem resolved. Your local coordinator will contact you and your family from time to time; she will also be in touch to check on your progress. Your local coordinator can help you; discussing matters with your friends or your relatives cannot solve most problems. Most often when students talk to people who are not involved in the programme, everything becomes more confused.

Please talk to your host family first if you have a problem. They want to try and work things out. Your local coordinator is there to help you with potential problems, but you need to take responsibility to help find a solution also.



Adjustment Cycle

Cycle 1 – I’m really here!!! (1st month)

You’ve been getting ready for months and now you have arrived. Everything is new and exciting. Everything is an adventure; you are the centre of attention in your new family.

Cycle 2 – Settling in (2nd month)

Things have settled down to normal routine. You are no longer going to new places. You are treated like one of the family; you may have responsibilities that you never had at home. School may be more difficult than you imagined it to be. Your family rules, curfews etc. and you wonder why you ever wanted to come to Ireland. Allow lots of time to adjust, and ask any questions, no matter how silly they seem.

Misunderstandings can make mountains out of molehills – **and it’s good to talk!**

Cycle 3 – What am I doing here? (2nd and 3rd month)

You may feel somewhat lonely, isolated, or homesick and depressed. You miss your friends and family and everything familiar. When these feelings are very strong, you can develop culture shock and feel tired, sad, eat too much or too little, cry and you can feel that there is no end. People feel these symptoms to different degrees. It is vital that you keep busy and not to call home – this will make it extra hard. How you manage these feelings will determine your experience. Contact your local coordinator. Most people settle after the 2nd month.

Cycle 4 – I’ll be leaving my new country soon! (7th month)

Things are going much better. Your English has improved so that now you are thinking in English. You are getting involved in activities and making friends. You have many things left to do before you go home, and time is getting short. You’ll begin to feel sad about leaving Ireland.

Cycle 5 – its time to leave “home”! (9th month)

You are now very comfortable physically and emotionally in your “home” and leaving will be difficult. You have many great memories and the idea of going back to your family and friends and if things will be the same as they were. Returning home can often be more difficult than settling in. please be patient with yourself – give yourself time to re-adjust.

Public Holidays



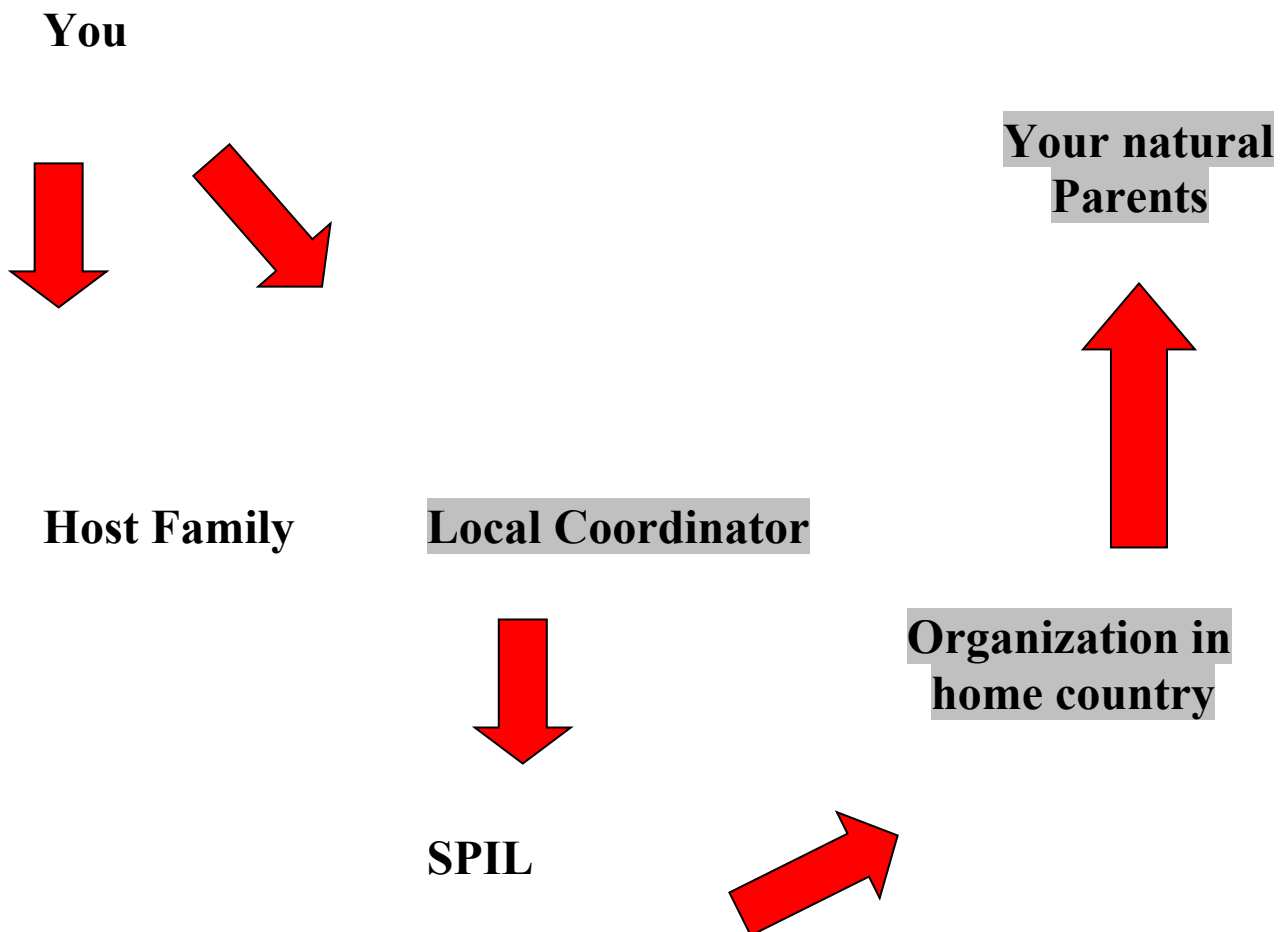
The following are the public holidays in the Republic of Ireland. Schools, most companies and shops are closed on these days.

January 1st	New Year's Day
March 17th	St. Patrick's Day
Friday before Easter	Good Friday
Monday after Easter	Easter Monday
First Monday in May	May day Bank Holiday
First Monday in June	June Holiday
First Monday in August	August Holiday
Last Monday in October	October Holiday
December 25th	Christmas Day
December 26th	St. Stephen's Day

Lines of communication



The Right Way

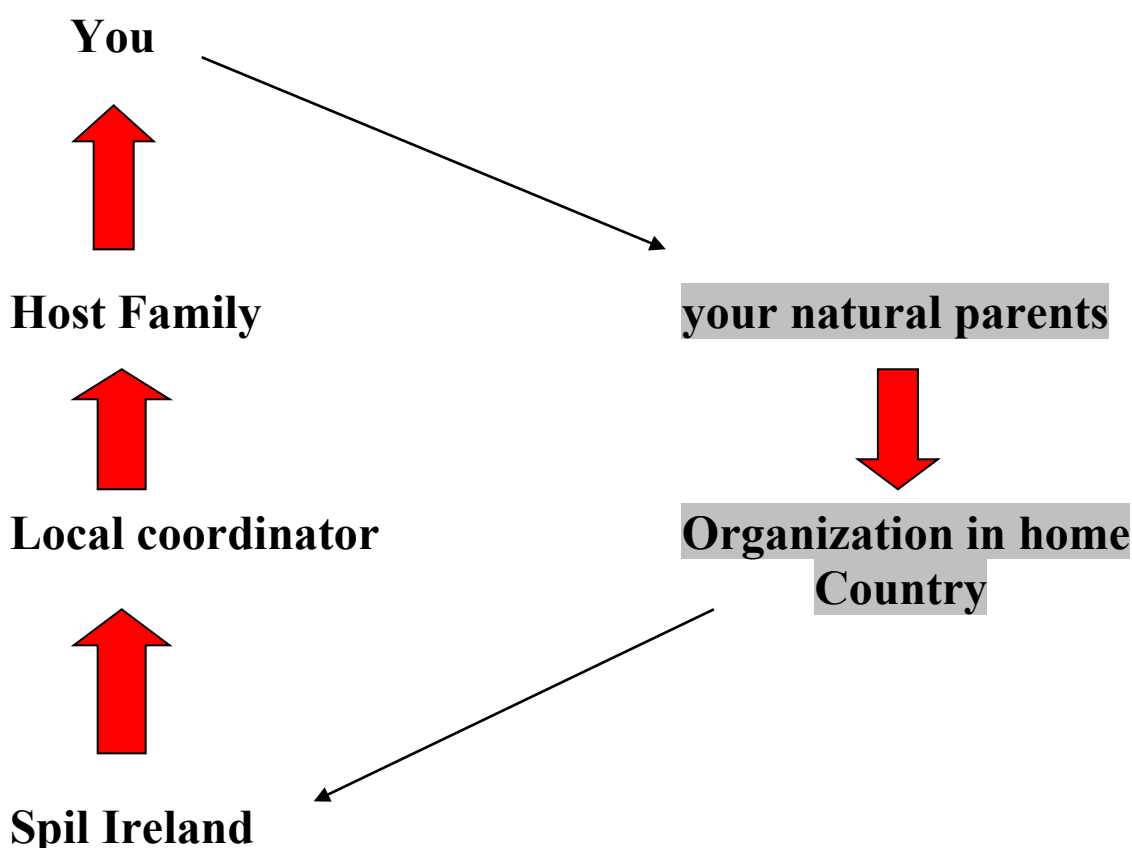


Any questions or issues should be discussed with your host family first. If the question or issue is very significant, then your local coordinator should be contacted. He / she in turn will contact the SPIL office. SPIL is the organization responsible for support and supervision while in Ireland. SPIL will notify its partner organization in your home country, which will then contact your natural family and explain the situation.

The correct lines of communication allow all parties to be aware of the situation and work together towards finding a solution in the most effective and efficient manner.

Incorrect Lines of communication

The Wrong Way



The lines of communication will aggravate the issue in question. When the appropriate measures are not taken, frustration between all parties increases. Many questions are left unanswered and cause more confusion. While we realize it is natural to call your family first, this type of communication is discouraged. It is a method of dealing with an issue which will likely result in further problems. We encourage you to use the suggested manner of communicating problems, issues or concerns as outlined on the previous page.



Manners and Courteous behaviour



It is extremely important for you to present yourself in a positive manner from the beginning of your homestay. What is considered good manners in your home country may not be true in Ireland.

- ❖ Smile often, even when you may not feel like smiling.
- ❖ Remember to say “please and thank you” and “may I” often
- ❖ Join in family activities instead of staying in your room.
- ❖ Anytime you write a letter, so do in a common room, not up in your bedroom.
- ❖ If you are upset or angry about something, take a few minutes to calm down before talking. Use a pleasant tone and a quite voice. Do not yell, stamp your feet, slam doors or make rude gestures, these behaviours are not acceptable.
- ❖ When you are out with the family and there are packages to carry, help them without being asked.

Table manners are very important to many Irish people.

- ❖ Chew food with your mouth closed, take small bites.
- ❖ Keep your elbows off the table
- ❖ Eat quietly, don’t slurp
- ❖ Belching is considered impolite in Ireland

Some tips to make your stay a success!

☺ **WHAT TO DO:**

- ❖ When you arrive, be interested in your new family; talk to them and ask them questions about their town and their way of life;
- ❖ Tell them about your family, your school, your friends and how life in your country is different. Bring some photographs of your family and friends. Bring some tourist brochures of your town or country
- ❖ Keep your room tidy. Offer to help with the dishes or any household chores Just exactly as you would do in your own home
- ❖ Respect the families property and any rules they may have within their home
- ❖ Talk over any problems you may have with your family
- ❖

☹ **WHAT NOT TO DO:**

- ❖ Ignore your family or avoid having to talk to them
- ❖ Spend long periods of time in your bedroom and only appearing for your meals
- ❖ Be late for meals or other arrangements without telephoning or apologizing
- ❖ Expect your family to continuously wait on you
- ❖ Drink or smoke
- ❖ Stay out at night later than permitted by the Programme

Making Friends



“In order to make a friend you have to be a friend”

Students come on a homestay with the idea of making many life long friends in their host country. The students who accomplish that goal have several things in common. They are the ones who each and every day, talk to people, smile at their classmates, ask questions, join in activities or sports teams, are interested in others, and are interesting to others. They are willing to risk being the one to smile and talk first. They do not worry too much about their language skills; they talk to everyone (their skills improve rapidly because of this)

HELLO!

A few things to remember about making friends:

- ✿ You are going into a situation where the people who are already there are established in their friendships. You want to join in the group;
- ✿ If you spend your time speaking in your language to exchange students from your country, other students will feel left out and will leave you alone;
- ✿ Taking classes or extra curricular activities such as art, drama and any others where you often work in teams is a good way to meet people.
- ✿ “Hello, how are you?” is a common greeting in Ireland but it does not necessarily lead to further conversation. People are not considered rude when they say “fine” and keep on walking.
- ✿ When you start school all the other students in the school will know you are from another country and will possibly know your first name so don’t be surprised when they say hello and call you by your first name.



The school system in Ireland



Students enter the Irish Secondary School system at the age of 12 or 13. They commence in 1st year and continue to 6th year as follows:

1 st year:	12-13yrs.
2 nd year:	13-14 yrs.
3 rd year:	14-15 yrs. (Junior Certificate Examination)
4 th year:	15-16 yrs. (Transition Year)
5 th year:	16-17 yrs.
6 th year:	17-18 yrs. (Leaving Certificate)

In general students participating in the SPIL Secondary School Programme will join Fifth year. Only very advanced students with an excellent level of English will be placed in 6th year. Students under the age of 14 will be placed in 2nd Year. If possible schools will Endeavour to supply extra English Lessons for all Foreign Students.

The school reserves the right to finally decide which year each participant should join and to make any changes depending on the progress the student makes during the course of the year. Each year is also sub-divided in to Honours (advanced) or Ordinary (standard) levels. Students may take one subject at Honours level and another at Ordinary level



School Subjects



 **Subjects – 5th & 6th years** Students are required to take classes in a minimum of 5 subjects. The following subjects are recognized by the Irish Department of Education:

Irish	Physics & chemistry
English	Agricultural Science
Latin	Biology
Greek	Agricultural Economics
Classical Studies	Engineering
Hebrew Studies	Technical Drawing
French	Construction Studies
German	Home Economics (general)
Italian	Home Economics (scientific & Social)
Spanish	Accounting
History	Business Organization
Geography	Economics
Mathematics	Economy History
Applied Math's	Art (including craft)

Please note that not all schools offer all of these subjects. Participants should select up to 8 subjects (in order of priority) which they would like to study during their stay in Ireland. They will be required to take classes in just five of these subjects. Only subjects which the applicant is currently studying in his / her home school should be selected. Every effort will be made to find a school where 5 of the 8 listed subjects can be studied. We can never guarantee placement in school in a school where applicants can be assured of classes in their first choice of five subjects. English is the only compulsory subject and you do not have to study Irish.



Exams



State examinations

State examinations organized by the minister for education take place as follows:

- ❖ Junior Certificate – end of 3rd year
- ❖ Leaving Certificate – end of 6th year

Examinations in languages include oral tests. All other examinations are written. There is no scheme of continuous assessment. The leaving certificate examination covers subjects learned during 5th & 6th year. We do not recommend foreign students to take the leaving certificate examination after just one year of study In Ireland.

Social Examination

All schools have in house examinations prior to Christmas holidays. The results of these examinations form part of a report on each student which will be issued by the school to their parent or guardian. 1st, 2nd and 5th year students also have similar in house examinations at the end of May each year. Junior Certificate (3rd year) and leaving certificate (6th year) examination students all have “mock” in house examinations each year in April. This is in preparation for state examinations.



You're Programme Dates:

- school year commences: _____
- October Mid Term break: _____
- December: 2-3 weeks holiday: _____
- re-open January: _____
- February Mid Term break: _____
- Easter Holidays: _____
- End of school year: _____

More School Information

Typical school day

- 9:15 am: classes commence
- 10:30 am: break (usually 15-30 mins)
- 12:30 pm: Lunch (usually packed lunch)
- 1:45 pm: classes commence
- 3:45 pm: classes end

- ☺ **Homework:** Most classes will have homework which must be completed and turned in on time.
- ☺ **Extra Curricular Activities:** Almost all schools organize a programme of sporting, social and cultural activities during / after school periods or at weekends. These are generally free of charge or at a small extra cost. Typical sport activities: basketball, football, hurling, hockey, tennis, gymnastics, swimming, etc... Most schools organize physical education classes as part of the school curriculum and it is generally compulsory for students to participate. Typical social & cultural Activities: Drama, debates, quizzes, exhibitions, films, discos and excursions. We encourage foreign students to participate fully in the programme of extra curricular activities.
- ☺ **Selected school:** All the schools participating in this programme are public schools managed by local education authorities or religious bodies. The majority of teachers in these schools are lay people. Foreign students who wish to be exempted from religious education (there are usually one or two classes per week) should advise SPIL at the time of their application. Religious education and any costs (including text books) associated with it are regarded as an optional extra. Some schools replace religious education with “Civics Classes”. Items covered during civics classes may cover a range of issues such as health education, drug abuse, relationships and so on. Students who cannot participate in Physical Education must have a letter from their parents or doctor to confirm reason why they cannot participate. Each school has its own code of discipline and participants are expected to respect and adhere to this code of discipline.

School Uniform



☺ School uniforms

The wearing of school uniforms is compulsory in the vast majority of schools. Students should bring their own sports equipment and clothing.

☺ School – what to bring?

You will need to purchase a school uniform on arrival, Host Families will accompany you to shop that supplies school uniforms and get you the required uniform for your new school..

Items needed for school:

- ❖ A pair of black school shoes
- ❖ School bag – rucksack
- ❖ Jacket (denim jackets are not allowed in most schools)
- ❖ Stationary, pens, pencils etc...

Sports Gear:

- ❖ Gear bag
- ❖ Runners – white soled
- ❖ T-Shirt & Shorts
- ❖ Socks
- ❖ Tracksuit
- ❖ Swimming costume & towel

Note: this document gives general guidelines about secondary schools in Ireland – please be aware that regulations and procedures may vary from school to school. Please ask the school if unsure.



IRELAND:

Facts about the Republic of Ireland

The total area of Ireland is 84,421 square kilometers. Ireland (republic) comprises 70,282 square kilometers and Northern Ireland 14,139 kilometers. The Republic of Ireland takes up 5/6 of the island, while Northern Ireland is located in the upper 1/6. Northern Ireland is politically part of the United Kingdom (of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) although the issue of uniting the island has been actively discussed for many years. The population of the Republic of Ireland is just over 4.2 million and the population of Northern Ireland is approximately 1.5 million.

The capital of the Republic of Ireland is Dublin and nearly one in 4 people live in the metropolitan Dublin area. Other main population areas include Cork, Limerick, Galway, Waterford, Kilkenny and Co. Wicklow.

About 94% of the population is Roman Catholic. 4% belongs to the Anglican Church and the remaining 2% holds various other beliefs, Northern Ireland has a Protestant majority, Ireland has a growing multi-cultural population.

Ireland enjoys a temperature maritime climate. The coldest months are January and February which have mean daily air temperatures of between 4° C and 7° C while July and August are the warmest, with mean temperatures of between 14° C and 16° C.

Everyone in Ireland speaks English, but Irish (called Gaelic) is the first officially recognised language. Irish is only spoken in small Gaeltacht areas on the west coast. Government documents and road signs are in both languages.

Student card – this international student card can be purchased from USIT (student Travel Company) offices around Ireland. You can obtain a student travel card to get reductions rail and bus travel, www.studenttravelcard.ie

Petrol and heating oil are expensive in Ireland so do not expect the house to be heated 24 hours a day even in winter or to have use of family car to take you places each day.

Life in Ireland



If you telephone from family home you must pay for all calls even local ones. Local calls vary depending on the network being used.. You have been supplied with a Sim card that you can use on your own mobile phone.

Please save your host family, coordinator and school telephone numbers on your Irish Sim card. Your local coordinator is an important person in the community and you should contact her if you have any questions, problems or otherwise.

Social

Irish people do not entertain at home very much or drink alcohol at home except for special occasions.

Social life for a lot of Irish people revolves around pubs...there are lots of them. **You are not allowed to drink alcohol while on this Programme even if you are over 18 years of age.** Under 18's must leave a bar before 9pm regardless of whether they are supervised.

Gaelic Football and Hurling are the national sports. Some of the families may take part in these sports or attend games on a regular basis.

Other popular social outlets for young people are: cinemas, bowling and coffee shops, internet cafes or local library where you can use the internet once you become a member of the library (usually costs approx €2 for the year) and internet access is then free of charge but you have to pre book it with the library staff.



Practical Advice

Opening a Bank Account

Most Banks will request two forms of identification to open a Bank Account. One of these forms of identification should have your photograph and the other can be a letter with your name on it (e.g.: letter from SPIL confirming your placement details). You will be able to make a lodgment immediately but it will take 3/5 days before you

receive your cash card (to withdraw cash from ATM machines). Please contact us if you have any difficulties.

Currency

Ireland has a decimal currency based on the Euro, the single currency of the EU. Each euro (€1) is divided into one hundred cent (100 cent). Bank notes come in values of €100, €50, €20, €10, and €5. Coins in circulation are €2, €1, 50 cent, 20 cent, 10 cent, 5 cent, 2 cent and 1 cent.

Cash

It is a good idea to obtain a small amount of Euro before departure for any immediate needs. We suggest €40 - €60. should you have any difficulty in obtaining euros from your local bank you will be able to convert money at the airport prior to departure or at the airport on arrival in Ireland.

Ireland is now one of the most expensive countries in Europe and this is reflected in the cost of living. It is important that you have a certain amount of pocket money so that you will be able to participate in activities with your Irish friends and not become isolated. The spending patterns of each person are a personal matter but our advice is to budget for between €160 - €200 per month. Remember you will be responsible for buying things like toothpaste, shampoo, bus tickets, etc. that your parents might normally have paid for so you will likely need more pocket money than you would normally have in your home country.

Automatic Teller Machines

Many ATM's at banks and building societies in Ireland accept some or all of the following debit / credit cards: Cirrus, plus system, MasterCard, visa and American express. You will need your PIN (personal Identity Number) but this is a convenient and economic way of obtaining cash both in and out of banking hours.

How to Exchange Money

You may exchange money at banks, American Express offices, airports, post offices, large hotels, some tourist information centers and travel agencies. Banks, airports and post offices offer the best rates. Avoid changing money at tourist shops; you will get a poor exchange rate. It is not possible to exchange coins. Remember you will need your passport as identification every time you exchange money.

Banks and Banking

Banks normally open 10.00 am to 4.00 pm (weekdays). They are closed Saturdays and Sundays. The largest banks are Allied Irish Bank (AIB), Bank of Ireland, Permanent TSB and National Irish Bank.

Shops and shopping

Most shops are open 9.00am to 5.30pm Monday to Saturday, late night shopping on Friday nights. Small selections of shops are open on Sunday.

Telephones

Eircom is the largest phone company in Ireland. As well as payphones taking coins, there are card phones that accept prepaid phone cards, available from many shops in a variety of values.

There are now a broad range of prepaid call – cards available, these can be very good alternative especially for international calls. They can be used from any touchtone phone. Examples of these are: Swift-card, Esat Phone Card. We recommend that you purchase one of these.

Cheap rates on direct dial are 6:00 pm to 8:00 am and all day Saturday, Sunday and Bank holidays.

If you want to leave contact numbers with friends and relatives they will need to dial:

- ❖ From Ireland (063) 30939
- ❖ If dialing abroad this becomes +353 63 30939. Access code + country code + local code + number.

For assistance:

- ❖ Directory enquiries (to find a number within Ireland), dial 11890 or 11811

Mail

Post offices open 9:00am to 5:30pm weekdays, most are closed weekends. Stamps may be bought at some newsagents. Mail boxes are green.

TV and Radio

These are two main TV channels in Ireland: RTE1 and RTE2, the other less popular ones are TV3 and TG4 (mostly Gaelic). The national radio and television station is RTE (Radio Telefis Eireann). Most local areas now have their own local radio stations. News is broadcast on the RTE1 at 6:00pm and 9:00pm. British channels are also freely available in Ireland, for example BBC, ITV and SKY news / sport.

Emergencies:

Dial 999 from any telephone. No coins needed in pay phones. The operator will ask you which service you require: fire, police or ambulance.

Electrical Items:

In Ireland the electric current is 240 volt. If your country's current is below this unless your appliance has a built in selector or you bring a voltage transformer it will burn out. The plugs have three square pins and so you may also need a plug adaptor. Most bathrooms have separate two pin sockets for electric razors but check that your appliance can be switched to the correct voltage.

Information Sheet

Please complete the following form:

MY HOST FAMILY

Parents Name: _____

Other family members: _____

Address: _____

Phone number: _____

Mobile: _____

Birthdays: _____

Other occasions: _____

MY SCHOOL

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Principals name: _____

MY LOCAL COORDINATOR

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone number: _____

Email address: _____

Student Programmes Ireland LTD OFFICE

Contact name: Student Programmes Ireland, _____

Address: 154 Main Street, Charleville, Co Cork _____

Phone: 00 353 63 30939 Mobile: 00 353 87 2873916 (emergency number) _____

Enjoy your stay in Ireland

Let it be a memorable experience

***Always remember you have been given a
chance of a lifetime to study in another
country.***

***You are an ambassador for your country and
please bear that in mind at all times.***

***Respect your host family, your school, your
coordinator and Student Programmes
Ireland LTD***

