

Emigrating to Ireland? What to Consider

On 1st January eleven years ago I emigrated to Ireland. When people ask me if I would do it again, the answer is yes. I have no regrets whatsoever and consider myself lucky calling Ireland my home and that of my family. Whilst my intuition played a big part in my decision making, I considered a lot of practical things too. Here is what I would advise people to take into account when emigrating to Ireland.



No Vacation can prepare you for that!

We have all had that magical summer vacation that makes you want to pack everything up and move to the place of your dreams. Until the rose-coloured glasses come off and you get a more realistic picture. When I came to Ireland first for a 6-months internship in 2008, I knew very little about the country. Finding an affordable place to live and getting screwed over by one of the first Irish people I encountered in the process, was an eye opener. Especially after I had just

read on the plane how welcoming and



Five years later I made the decision to emigrate to Ireland for good. Despite my initial struggles and disappointments I had fallen in love with the island after all. But I had already seen it from its ugly side. During the long, damp winter with its short days. Living in a cold and shabby apartment with an obnoxious Irish flat mate. Commuting for hours on the bus into Dublin City Centre. Stretching my student budget to barely get by.

No vacation could have prepared me for emigrating to Ireland. Making acquaintance with the bureaucracy and the health system, or being stood up by tradesmen repeatedly, put my love for Ireland to the test. There is no harm in reading up on culture, people and economy. But be aware that guide books often play with stereotypes and not all of them are as romantic as portrayed. And whilst you will never be short of a friendly chat in the pub, the “Let’s keep in touch” is not always a genuine one.



Less dreaming, more preparing!

To many Germans Ireland is the symbol of unspoiled nature, traditional music and hospitality. During my career in the Irish travel trade I was often asked to include a “Traditional Irish Night”, a “Sheep Dog Demonstration” or a “Rural Farm Visit” into the travel itinerary. And whilst those are somewhat part of the Irish culture, they are also very romanticised and one-sided. Great for a 2-weeks holiday, not so much part of the day-to-day when emigrating to Ireland.

When I finalised my plans for emigrating to Ireland, I was well aware of my limitations which were mostly of a financial nature. I had secured a job in Dublin, pursuing my career in Irish tourism. I knew about the risk I was taking, too. Turning my back on a good job and my modern apartment in Hamburg. However, emigrating to Ireland had been on the back of my mind since I had left as a student. I was determined to make it work.

There were a few variables I couldn't plan for. But I was glad I had prepped for those I could. Time, money, language skills. I allowed myself two weeks to find a place to stay before my work contract started. From experience I knew that I would have to be on site to enter the rapid rental game of the tough housing market. Whilst I was under no time pressure and with enough offers available, I had to increase my budget in order

to find an acceptable one-bedroom apartment. (By no means German standard!)

Even though my salary was higher than in Hamburg, I dug into my savings on a monthly basis. Thanks to my German (and English) skills, an unexpected step up the career ladder allowed me to continue my dream, rather than boarding a plane back to Germany.

Know yourself – Adaption & Acceptance



A friend of mine who I used to travel with a lot told me once that she was “too German” to emigrate. She had always been the organised one when we were backpacking together – planning our trips and reading the guide books. She was never fussy about foreign food or basic accommodation. We perfectly complemented each other and were on the same page as globetrotters. But when I emigrated to Ireland, she confessed that she preferred German reliability and standards over living abroad.

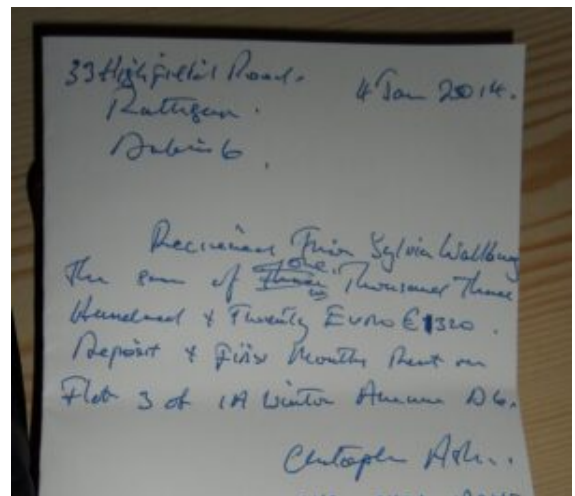
I also lived in Spain for some time. And whilst I am a big fan of the country, language and culture, I learned that there were certain traits and customs I wouldn't want to get used to. If I had only been vacationing in Santiago de Compostela or Salamanca, I would have returned in a heartbeat. No matter how much you feel at home travelling, ask yourself how well you are able and willing to adapt to different circumstances for the rest of your life.

When I first came to Ireland I often caught myself saying:

“This wouldn’t have happened in Germany.”, or “Everything is much more expensive here”. It took me a while to get used to things being different. Over the years I stopped comparing Ireland and Germany altogether. To me an important step of my integration process. Accepting Ireland for what it is with all its ups and downs, and appreciating both.

Practicalities to Consider

Job & Accommodation



Receipt for Apartment Deposit

Foreign natives usually have an advantage on the job market due to their language skills. Ireland is home to many multinational companies, constantly seeking for employees. An up-to-date [LinkedIn Profile](#) helps to create a network and for headhunters to send relevant job offers. Otherwise there are [job search engines](#) to filter by qualifications and region.

Whenever I was looking for accommodation in Ireland (2008, 2014 & 2016), it was difficult. The market is fast-paced and overpriced*, especially in the major cities such as Dublin, Cork and Galway. The standards are catastrophic and rental procedures often unprofessional. You have to be quick once an offer goes [online](#) and ideally bring a cash deposit to the viewing for the landlord to consider you. [Buying a property](#)

might be worth looking into, but is not any easier or cheaper.

Health Insurance

Ireland has no compulsory health insurance like Germany for example. Private providers like VHI or Laya offer health plans to pay privately every month. Some big companies offer health insurance, but this is not a standard. Costs for health insurance depend on the cover, age entered and pre-conditions. I lived without a private health insurance in Ireland for about 4 years and paid for GP and dental visits myself (usually €60 – 80 per visit, consultants are €120 – €150).

Children up to 8 years of age have free [health care](#), but can also be added to a family plan in order to avoid waiting times for public treatments etc. I availed of the public maternity scheme despite longer waiting hours to see the consultant and sharing a room with up to seven women plus babies. Nevertheless, my experience after three deliveries and aftercare in the Coombe Hospital are throughout positive.

Early Childcare & Irish School System

Another hot topic when it comes to emigrating to Ireland (especially from Germany) is childcare. As opposed to Germany, all pre-school childcare in Ireland is private and hence, expensive. Despite the enormous fees of up to €1500 per month for a full-day crèche, spaces are limited. Parents already need to apply during pregnancy and are still not guaranteed a space. Alternatives are childminders or nannies which might be slightly easier to find, but at no lower cost.

The Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme (ECCE) is a free (or subsidised) programme that children can avail of from the age of three. We received three hours per day of state-paid childcare for our children from the age of three to five in an outdoor Montessori (usually 9 to 12 in the morning). From there they transitioned into Primary School which is free of charge and goes up to the age of twelve or thirteen

respectively. Secondary School finishes with the Leaving Certificate at the age of 18 .

Quite a few people come to Ireland to practise homeschooling. I personally like the [Irish education system](#). Easing children into out-of-home childcare from the age of three suits us. So does the school start with Junior and Senior Infants which focuses on the learning of basic and social skills in a flexible and interactive environment. We chose a school with a Catholic ethos and a uniform over the non-denominational Educate Together.



Kitchen in my
Apt. 2014

Emigrating to Ireland – yes or no?

Would I encourage people to emigrate to Ireland today? Yes and no. No one could have stopped me from following my dream. And I appreciated every encouragement I could get. If it is meant to happen, there will be a way.

There is also no denying the challenging circumstances, especially when it comes to affordable living. Thoroughly evaluating your possibilities and resources rather than acting on a gut feeling is what I would have said then and is even more valid now.

***At the moment the average rent per month in Dublin is almost**

40% higher than in [Munich](#) and 70% higher than in [Berlin](#).

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