

## **Introduction**

### **(Extracts from Thomas's report 2008)**

## **What is it really like being a student in Dublin?**

For this third year placement (which has to be in an English speaker country) I did it in one of the first European Union capitals, Dublin. From January to April 2008 I worked for STAR TS Ireland, member of the STAR Group, one of the world's leading translation services companies.

What about the city?

I admit that I knew almost nothing about Ireland before coming, just what my friends told me like "It is always raining", "It is green everywhere", this kind of prejudice.

So I had to form my own opinion in visiting the most of place and sharing as many pints as possible.

# The company

It is in STAR Technology Solutions, one of the independents STAR Group's offices, that my placement took place.

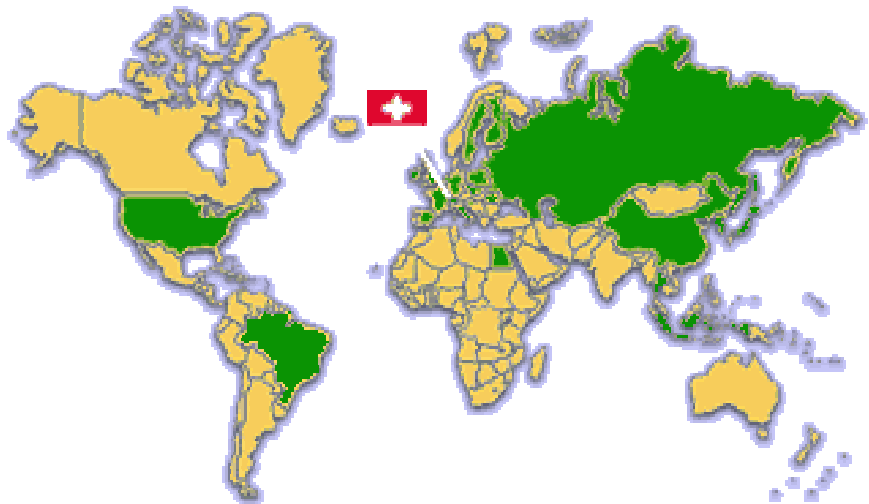
## 1. STAR Group

- Who they are and what they do

Including a global network of 47 offices with over 930 permanently employed specialists, the STAR Group is recognized as the 3rd largest translation services and technology group worldwide. The company has more than 20 years of experience in this area and is supported by many long-standing partners and suppliers. Translating into more than 160 languages they also develop computer translating tools in their software development centres in Málaga (Spain), Böblingen (Germany) and Ramsen (Switzerland).

- All over the world ... well, almost.

The Star Group's headquarter is based in Switzerland and the most part of the offices are in Europe but STAR is also present in Asia as well as in America. In this way they can be the most adapted for the different markets.



## 2. STAR-TS

STAR Technology Solutions (STAR-TS) provides translation services from the Dublin office into 35 global languages. Established in 2002 by its two present directors: Paul Quigley and Damian Scattergood, STAR-TS is the UK/Ireland office for the STAR Group. Their job is to provide, mainly in Ireland and Great Britain, translations and voices-over in several languages.

## Life in Dublin

I had never been in a foreign country, or at least not alone and not as long as that. So, maybe I am going to talk about things not characteristic of Dublin but for me it was a new experience. What about can I start? Maybe by the few bad points.

- The weather

If there is something really awful in Ireland, it is the weather. There is such a strong wind that the weather is always changing. That means that you cannot plan something for the weekend without your umbrella even if the sun is shining and the sky is blue. I remember that, I saw the four seasons in one afternoon, fortunately I was working. I saw a snow storm during twenty minutes then a blue sky for a half hour, after that a new snow storm and finally the rain. To conclude, I advise you to bring good shoes and a waterproof coat. But do not depress, as I said the weather is changing very fast and a day I almost went out without my coat. Something else, very amazing, it seems that the Irish guys are not disturbed by the cold weather, going out just with a sweater and even sometime stripped to the waist.

- The life cost

The life cost is very high or at least higher than in France. I paid almost €4 for a sandwich and the price for a shared room (2 people) close to the city centre in a 4-people-flat is usually about €450 per month without bills. A good thing in Ireland is that they do not pay water (according to one of my friend). Perhaps they have water enough with the surplus of rain. On the other hand, when I was in Dublin, it was the sales and I saw a lot of clothes at 50% and I bought a mp3 player at €20 instead of €45. Do not worry about the pints, it is almost the same price than in France, it is about €4.40 (a pint is 0.5 litres).

- The salaries

Well, the life is expensive but the salaries are consistent. To give you an example, one of my housemates, a hairdresser, earned almost €2000 per month and I met a man working in the building trade, who earned €1000 per week. To work in Ireland, you need a PPS number, it is like our "*numéro de sécurité sociale*" and the government will take 40% of your salary. However you can get it back before leaving the country at the taxes office. I did not need to do it because I was an intern but one of my housemate did it.

- Some traps in the streets

Shame on me, a man ripped me off. He told me that he was in big trouble, that his wife was pregnant and she had had an accident. He needed €15 to take a taxi. I was not sure that he was not lying but doubtful, I gave him the money. Perhaps it was true, but I doubt it.

- The pubs

How it is great to share a pint (or a couple) with a friend after a long day of work. It is not the same atmosphere than in France, not at all. It is so much warm and welcoming. In some places you can see some bands, I remember, one time I saw four granddads playing rock like virtuosos.

There is a place called Temple Bar, referring to the older pub in Dublin, where you can find the most expensive pubs. Every weekend it is full of tourists and young people who have parties. Stag parties and limousines are common as well but I noticed that it was more often the girls who did them.

In the pubs, you can drink, of course, but you can eat too. I tasted the Irish stew which is a simple stew, like in France (or at least, I did not notice the difference, sorry). I also tasted the Fish & Chips, well it is not Irish but it is really delicious. It is so much better than our “*steak frites*”.

About the drinks, you have a lot of beers like Smithwick’s, Carlsberg or Budweiser but the “Irish beer”, the more famous, is the Guinness. I heard that it was in Dublin that the Guinness was the best because it has trouble to exporting. So seeing that the factory is close to the city centre I guess that it is true. Sometimes you can see a shamrock drawn on the top. You have the whisky Jameson which comes from Ireland as well but I do not know a lot about it. I am not sure but I think that one of my colleagues wanted me to taste an Irish drink, with a gold sheet in the glass, stronger than absinthe for my last drink in Ireland but I do not remember the name.

What is better than seeing a match in a pub and especially when it is France-Ireland? I was in pub during the 6 nations tournament match France-Ireland, watching it on a huge screen. The atmosphere was so joyous, and it was so funny to see the Irish faces, they were really living the match. Even if they lost they were fair and kept smiling.

- Saint-Patrick

The principal attraction of this national day was the parade. There was also a funfair but it was a small one. After that there were some activities in the night clubs but it was at least €25. So I will talk about the parade and that is all. I can easily say that almost everybody was in the streets or for the luckiest at the windows. It was amazing to see so much people and practically impossible to see the parade. There were a lot of tourist and a seller at each corner of street, trying to sell hats or scarves. The parade was made up of every colleges of Dublin as well as several floats and a lot of suited people. We could also see some huge balloons representing dragons or flies for example.

- In the street

You can see a lot of bands, musicians and singers during the weekend and especially in Henry Street, Temple Bar and Grafton Street. You can also see a couple of mimes or charity workers.

Another strange thing that you can meet in the streets of Dublin, strange but not stupid, not at all, is pedestrian crossings with a countdown and a beeper (perhaps for the blind people).

- Out of Dublin

Unfortunately I did not often go out of Dublin because I could not rent a car (you have to be older than 23). But I went to Malahide to visit the castle and to see the coast. It should have been a great weekend but unluckily the weather changed and we were in the rain. The castle was not amazing but the several huge parks were awesome. In trying to border on the sea, we were almost trapped by the high tide. I heard about other interesting places but I cannot judge. It was Cork, Galway, Belfast and Howth.

- Bus, Luas and Dart.

If you do not want to walk the best way to travel in or close to the city is to use the bus, the Luas or the Dart. They work, for the most part, until more or less than midnight.

The Dublin Bus (the main company of buses in Dublin) follows an "exact fare - no change" policy on almost all buses. So if you do not have the exact fare in coins (notes are not accepted) you will have a "change ticket" that you can change for cash at the company's head office on O'Connell Street. Like in England you can find double-deckers but those one are yellow.

The Luas (which means "speed" in Irish) is a kind of streetcar. For the moment there are only two lanes.

The Dublin Area Rapid Transit (DART) is a train connecting Dublin to the closest towns. The two principal stations are Connolly and Heuston. Like the Luas, the tickets price is a function of the number of area that you want to cross. To buy a ticket, there are several ticket machines in every station and you can pay by cash or by note.

Another way, you can buy a second-hand bike for about €80.

- To go shopping

There are several shopping centres in Dublin, especially in Grafton Street, Henry Street, O'Connell Street and Stephen's Green Shopping Centre. There is also a big shopping centre outside of Dublin, in Dundrum but you need to take the Luas to go there.

- Some places to visit

I visited Dublin castle, it was, according to me, too expensive for what I saw (about €8) but if you like to see furniture and carpets it is a good place. I also see the jail of Dublin, it was so much interesting even if there were some things that I did not understand and the price was about €3.

We went to Trinity College, one of the greatest schools in Dublin. It was really huge and we also visited the old library (not for free). There are a lot of manuscripts principally about religion.

I advise you to go in Temple bar even if you do not get a beer, you can listen some Irish music.

A guy told me that the National Botanic Gardens are interesting to see but I did not do it.

If you want to see some greens you can go to Saint Stephen's Green Park, a little park with a pond. There is also Phoenix Park, the largest urban enclosed park in Europe. There is a zoo and you can see wild deer.

- Croke Park

In spite of that I did not see a match in Croke Park, at least, I visited Croke Park and its museum. I admit that I was not sold on the idea to visit it but I was wrong. The guide was very funny but the best part was the museum. You can learn a lot about the three national sports (rugby, hurling and Gaelic football) and at the end you can practice hurling and Gaelic football as well as other little games.

With a capacity of 83,700, Croke Park is the largest sports stadium in Ireland (and the third of Europe but I am not sure). It is also the headquarters of the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), the biggest sporting organisation of Ireland. There is a memorable day linked to this place, Bloody Sunday, when thirteen spectators and Tipperary's captain, Michael Hogan were killed by British soldiers (Tipperary is the name of a Gaelic football team).

The Gaelic football is a mix between soccer, basketball and rugby. I do not really understand what the rules are, I just know that there are two different scores (I saw a match on TV but I quickly switch the TV off).

The hurling is more interesting, it is a mix between hockey and baseball. It is really dangerous because they use their hurling stick just beside the other players' head. It is such a fast game and the players seem really powerful and skilled. For me it is the most imposing game. It is only for men but there is a similar game for women called camogie.

About the Rugby, it was the Six Nations Championship but, unfortunately, it was impossible to have a ticket because they were sold to the fans clubs.

### 3. Advices and tricks

- First step out of the airport

If you want to go to the city centre, there are, to my knowledge, three ways to do it. The first one, the simplest as well as the most expensive, is to take a cab. The second one, the cheapest, is to take a city bus, it costs about €2.50. The problem is that if it is your first time in Dublin you do not know where you have to get off. The last one, what I did, is to take an Airlink bus for €6 or an Aircoach bus for €5 linking directly the airport to the city centre. You just have to pay, get in the bus and to wait that the driver yells “oooOO’Connell Streeet” (understand O’Connell Street, the main Dublin’s street).

- The youth hostel

During the first month of my trip in Dublin I lived in a hostel. I think that any placement should start by a stay in a hostel. It is one of the best places to meet a lot of people from everywhere. As for me, I lived in the Isaacs Hostel. It is close to the city centre and the price of a shared room (between 4 and 8 people) is about €10 per night if you book it via internet or €18 per night if you book it at the reception. You can have a free breakfast before 9am but do not expect to have bacon and eggs or something like that. It is just bread and marmalade. It is located in Frenchmans Lane, Dublin 1 and the website is <http://www.isaacs.ie>.

- How to find an accommodation?

According to me, I think that the best way to find an accommodation is to look for on <http://www.daft.ie>. This website, gathering a lot of advertisements, is the fastest way to find a place but, seeing the huge number of requests, you have to hurry up to reply. Do not send an email, almost nobody will reply you, call the landlord directly, it is better. Oh and do not be surprised by the prices, it is like this in Ireland.

- Some places to get food

You can find foods at anytime in the little supermarkets like Centra or Londis but it is a little expensive. So what I advise you is to go, during the weekend for example, to the Jervis Shopping Centre, there is a Tesco or you can go to Lidl in Parnell Street.

To finish if I can advise you to buy a book, it is “Overheard in Dublin again”. It is a lot of funny quotes heard in Dublin. It is really comic and you can learn a lot of words.

## Conclusion

I really enjoyed my stay in Dublin. I met a lot of interesting people and I admit that it was a real good breath of fresh air in my student world. Except the weather it is a beautiful country and it is a shame that I did not be able to go outside of Dublin more often.

About my job, lapse of time, I still have some things to do but the main part is done. It allowed me to improve my knowledge in the different web technologies. It is really different to work being in charge and knowing that if you make a mistake it could be prejudicial to the company and to your colleagues even if you are not going to see them anymore. I think that I improved my English as well, even if I expected more.

I am really enjoyed to go back in Ireland for the summer holidays and I also think that I will go back in a foreign country for my last year placement. Maybe I will try to apply for a placement in the STAR Group's headquarters in Ramsen (Switzerland).

It was such a good experience and my only regret is that it was too short. I think that three months are not enough. We should have had almost one year to really live like an Irish and not a traveller. In this way we could know the culture in deep, practise national sport or play an instrument and not feel that we do not need to unmake our luggage.

## Cheers!



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