

WATERFORD 2024

By Ditte Marie Kjærsgaard-Rasmussen

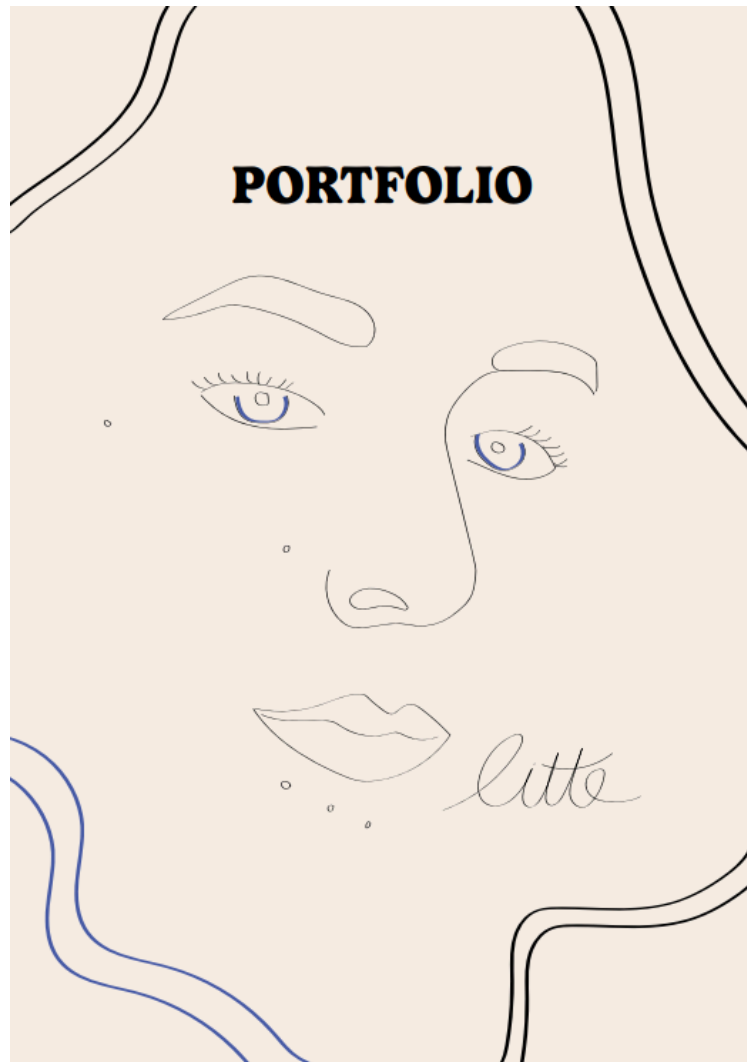
I went to Waterford, Ireland in the beginning of January 2024.

I was studying computer science at KEA, but had realised that I wasn't gonna go out and become a developer or have a job where I had to write code or in general work with the more traditional computer science subjects. And really none of the electives at KEA interested me and I was already really struggling to keep my motivation to finish the education. So I started looking at the options for going abroad and found SETU in Waterford, Ireland, which had a programme with creative computing and some modules that actually really interested me.

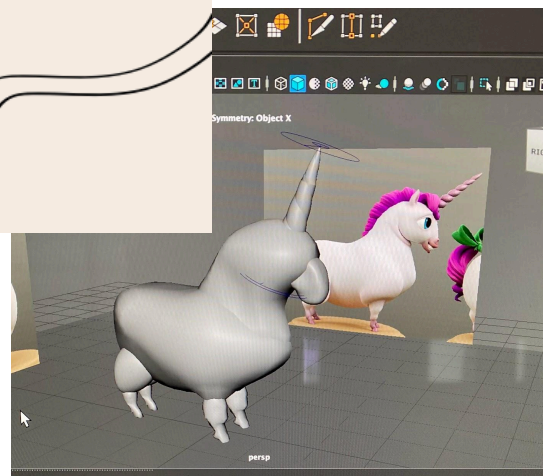
The modules that lured me in and that I ended up following were web app development, software engineering, web design, digital graphic design, 3D assets and 3D game development. This gave me the opportunity to work with tools like Adobe Illustrator, Figma, Glitch and learn Javascript and much more.



Tork Waterfall in Killarney and a lovely all day breakfast at The Gingerman Pub



Cover of a project in Digital Graphic Design and my first attempt at a 3D model. Don't laugh!



Arriving in Waterford

In terms of arriving and having to put together my own schedule - which we had to - I felt kind of on my own especially when it came to figuring out the modules and the whole structure of the schedules etc. It is so different compared to Denmark and also very old school with just an endless list of modules with different course codes and you just have to kind of put your own schedule together and hope that nothing clashes too much. It was especially difficult for me and the other Danish student, as we had to follow six modules and make all of these fit together in a schedule.

I would have also loved for the school to give us more opportunities to be social with the Irish students instead of just putting us on exchange together for one day in the beginning. It was quite difficult to get a chance to socialise with Irish people in a way that felt natural, especially because most of my classes were mostly working on your own and no group work fx - which I honestly always prefer, but that's why it would have been really cool to have the school help us make some Irish connections.

Best modules

The modules that made the biggest impression on me were Digital Graphic Design and 3D Game Development.

My professor in digital design was very passionate about her module and the assignments we had were something to actually put in my portfolio afterwards. Also looking at job descriptions a lot of the skills listed are skills that were actually taught on this module - also because the professor was up to date on how the business looks today.

The same with 3D design. All of the material was so put together and well planned out so all of us beginners had our skills developed at a manageable and natural speed. And ending the module by making an actual playable 3D game myself, made me feel so proud!

Least relevant modules

The software engineering class was very much a repetition of what I was taught at KEA. That was hard to know in advance, as only a small description of the module was available. But when I got there it turned out that it was more of an intro to software engineering and this was the other students first semester with software engineering. It was okay because I could then take on the role in my group as the one who could help the others understand things like user stories and different UML diagrams, which is always a good way to understand material better yourself.

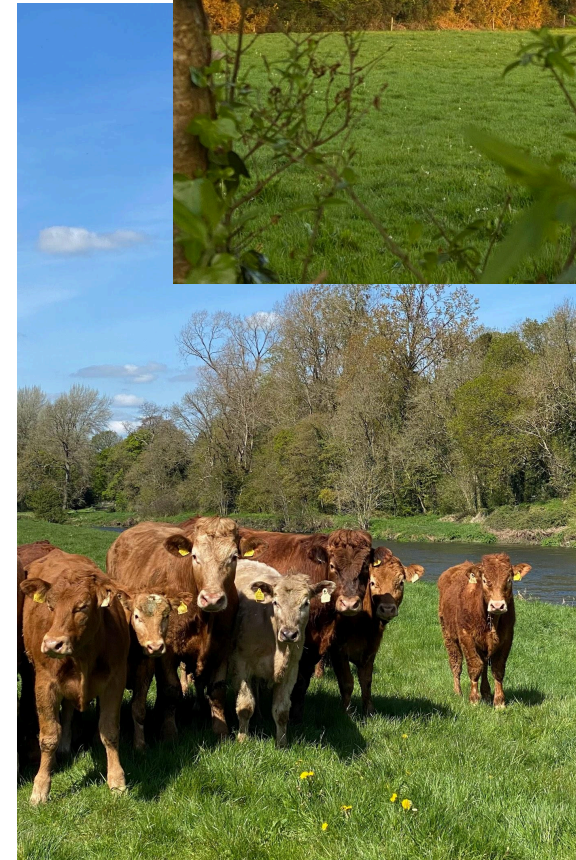
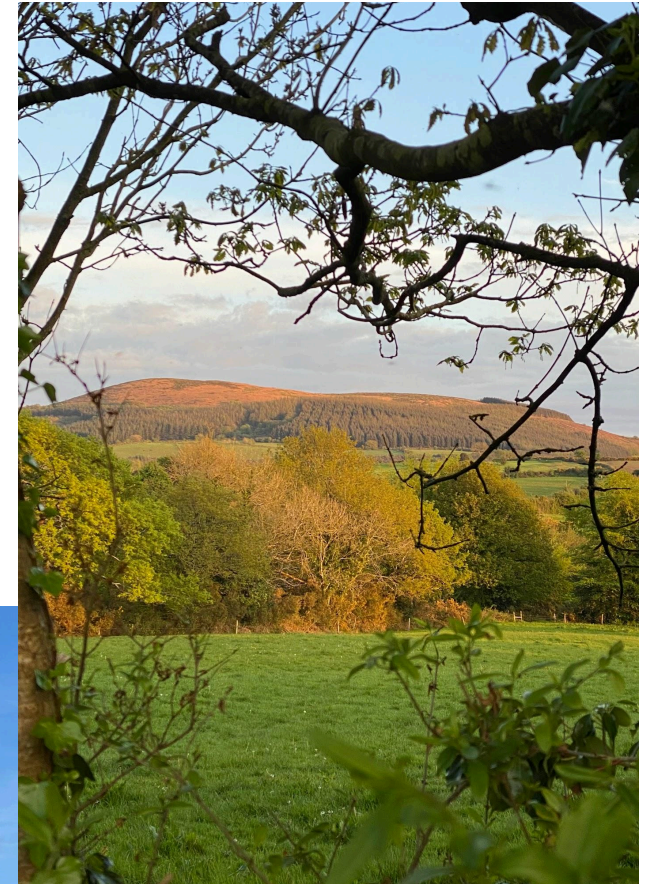
Choosing your modules

I think that going abroad can be a chance to try and target your education in a specific direction. I've been studying computer science back home and found out along the way that I was more interested in the front end and ux part. Going abroad gave me an opportunity to explore this interest more and actually make my resume more interesting for companies looking for ux designers etc

So I recommend trying modules that interest you and use the opportunity to explore.

The application process

As a lot of other bureaucratic processes but this one did feel a bit outdated though. The deadlines were not always clear and a lot of the time I was basically just waiting on other people to approve stuff or get back to me with questions.



*View in New Ross
+
The baddest crew
from Thomastown*



Waving goodbye to the house and my roommate cozying up with our neighbourhood cat



KEA was helpful in terms of talking about the different locations and their way of teaching. Knowing that in Germany, you would have to do a lot of math and write code by hand was very helpful information for example.

Coming to Waterford I feel like everyone was very warm and welcoming but in terms of getting actual practical help, this consisted mostly of a 6 euro giftcard to Centra and a condom in a goodie bag. But to be fair I haven't really needed more help than that so the fact that they just made me feel welcome was really all I needed at that point.

Living situation

I found a house in an estate close to the school so I only had a 15 minute walk everyday which was nice

I found it by joining a lot of Facebook groups in the area and one day I saw a post from a young woman saying that she was coming to the area in the same time period as me and that she was looking for a place to stay with other women. So I commented on that saying that if she found a place that had room for more women, that I would love to join. And I think the next day my landlord sent me a message saying that he was renting out a room to her and that there was an extra room in the house. This was great because I then also had contact with my new roommate so she and I could help and support each other with questions and worries.

The hardest thing about it was not being able to be sure if it was a scam or a safe place to go. So meeting my landlord in person was a big relief.

In terms of the cost of living and price point of the rent, it is relative to how your personal finances look and where you're

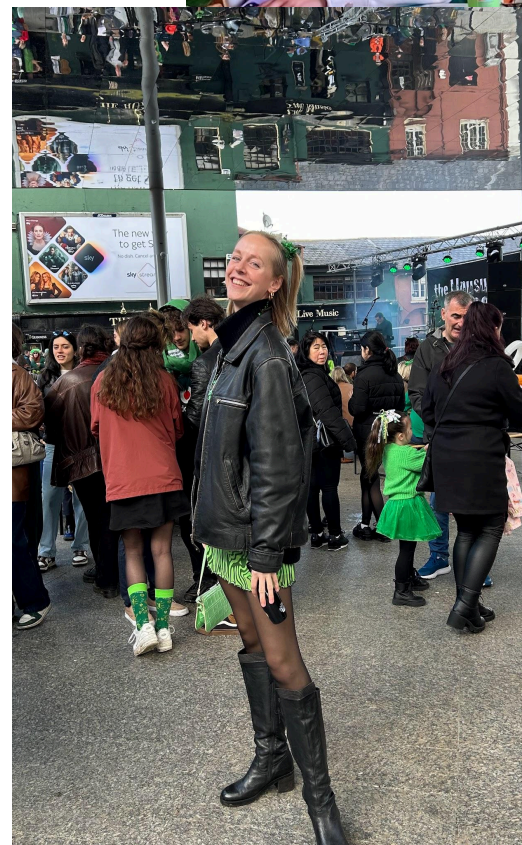
from in Denmark. I also had a salary coming in, next to my SU and the Erasmus grant. Also, coming from Copenhagen, where I live with my boyfriend and share my rent with him in an apartment that he owns, the price in Ireland was pretty much the same. But had I come from my old apartment in Copenhagen that was a sublet, the rent in Ireland would have been much cheaper compared to that. I paid 450 euro per month and a 350 deposit and half of the deposit was used to pay utilities.

In terms of general expenses it was pretty much the same as at home, apart from the fact that I probably spent more money on public transportation than I do at home where I ride my bike. I did have a bike over here but the weather was horrible a lot of the time and it did also feel a bit stressful to be biking on the opposite side of the road along with cars that were not used to paying attention to bikes on the road.

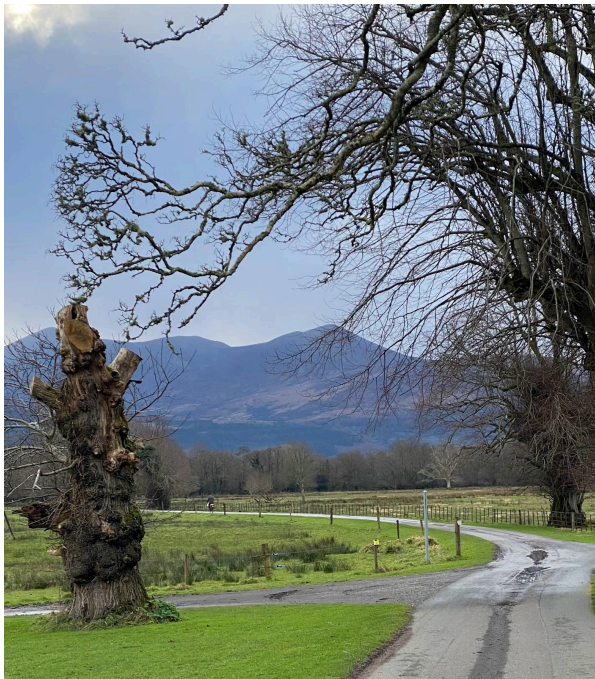
Cultural experiences

The Irish are the warmest, nicest and most generous people. I have never had so many conversations with strangers on the street, the bus driver, the woman behind the till in Aldi or the guy at my local coffee place. Having said that, they can also be wildly inconsiderate and irresponsible, coming from a Danish point of view. They will throw trash everywhere on the street; they even throw full bags of trash wherever they want. I am not a very confrontational person, but living in Ireland made me not afraid of confrontation as they are so straight forward all the time. This also resulted in me yelling "F**KING A*****S" and throwing the middle finger at two men, throwing trash in the street, before picking up the trash with a stranger who was walking by. Charming experience.

There are also a lot of animals that have owners but aren't properly cared for but instead running around eating from the bins and running on the roads. Also horses just tied to a pole with a short leash or horses just walking around on the pavement and sometimes even the road.



St Patricks Day brunch at my house



Best experience

Within the first month I went on a trip with three other Erasmus students. My roommate and two other students that I hadn't spent a lot of time with. So it was kind of a gamble to go on a trip with these women, not knowing how our dynamic would be and if we would even get along. We went to Killarney in County Kerry which was four hours away from where we were based and we had to share a hostel room for four nights. This ended up being a trip that will forever warm my heart. First of all, County Kerry was breathtakingly beautiful, the people were so wonderful and every single pub had live music every night. But second of all, the way that the four of us strangers with a ten year age gap found each other and bonded on this trip, was more than I could have dreamed of. Going on this trip really set the tone for the rest of my stay, because the four of us sort of became the core of a bigger group of young women that ended up being the people that I had my last dinner with before hugging them all goodbye.

My advice

When you get there, don't postpone things. If there's something you want to do, do it as soon as possible. I know it is the biggest and oldest cliché in the book, but the time will go by so fast that you won't believe it. So go on the trip, visit the restaurant, rent the car whatever it is, get it done.

Another thing is to be curious about finding authentic places wherever you're going. In Ireland there's a franchise called Wetherspoon that is always almost empty, makes dry food and watered out drinks - and if that isn't enough, it's also an English franchise which is the biggest crime, if you ask the Irish. But a lot of the exchange students wanted to go there every night just because of the cheap (and bad) drinks and because there was always room (because no one else wanted to go there). I don't wanna be the type of person to tell others what to do, but that always bummed me out, cause the city was absolutely *filled* with the cutest, warmest bars and pubs owned by the locals and also filled with the locals. And personally I will always prefer that experience over getting cheap drinks - so if you're like me, then talk to the locals, look on Google maps and just walk around the city and write down places you pass that look cute and then take your friends :-)



*The Killarney crew:
Alicia from Canada, Lindsey from France, Mariah from Brazil
and me from Denmark*

