

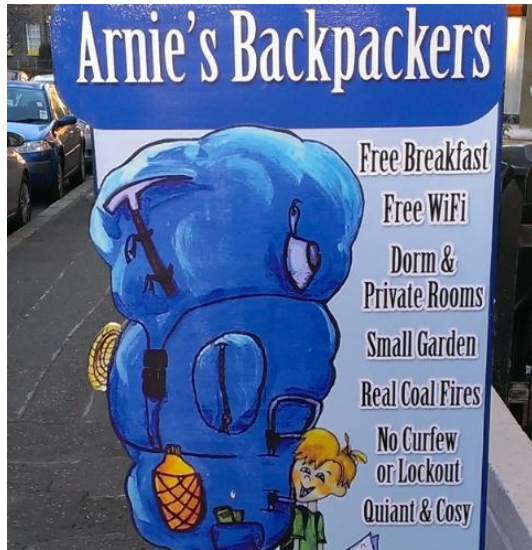


## Arnie's Backpackers, Belfast, Northern Ireland

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## Arnie's Backpackers

Arnie's Backpackers is a small, friendly and independent hostel in the heart of Belfast. It attracts a lot of travellers from all over the world as they face their way through the British Isles as backpackers.

Arnie's gives them not only a warm place to rest, but also the opportunity to meet new people from different nations and every guest with its own interesting stories and experiences.

## Belfast, Northern Ireland

Belfast is the capital of Northern Ireland and belongs to the region Ulster. Belfast has more than 250.000 inhabitants and is therefore the biggest city of the Irish Isles besides Dublin. Many people from all over the mostly rural country came to Belfast during the industrial revolution and made Belfast the big city it is today. As it is settled at the east coast of Northern Ireland it's importance in shipping is significant. The most famous ship built in Belfast was the Titanic. Despite its fate, the people in Belfast are still very proud and dedicated it a whole museum. During the troubles in the late 1960's Belfast was the centre of the bombings and still wears those scars, which you can see when visiting the different peace-wall segments and murals depicting the terrible events. Aware of the troubles, the inhabitants of Belfast now show a different side as I got to know its colourful varieties.



## Aufgaben während des Praktikums

The most important task with which I had to deal with in my internship was to make the guests of the hostel feel comfortable. Apart from preparing breakfast in the morning, lighting the fire and cleaning the rooms and facilities, I was able to talk to all the different people, practising my English skills and listening to interesting personalities and their lifestories.

Furthermore, I had a lot of computer work to do such as answering e-mails, contacting people and organising the hostel bookings.



- Apart from improving my cooking and mechanical skills, I also improved my written and oral skills regarding the fact that I feel more confident while speaking and describing situations instead of desperately looking for a specific vocabulary.
- In addition my social skills in relation to assessing a guest's character increased, as the first impression plays an important role in the hostel department.



## Eindrücke

My stay in Belfast changed my life in some points as I no longer take everything for granted, especially when I was not able to be home for Christmas and my family decided to visit me after the holidays. Although I liked the way we celebrated Christmas in the hostel, I appreciated my family's visit even more.

Furthermore, I will always remember the last night of three of my friends who had stayed at the hostel for the shooting of the fifth season of the TV-series „Game of Thrones“. On their last day, they invited me to go to a party with them, where I met main actor Kit Harington portraying „Jon Snow“ in the series. As a huge fan, I never thought of something this amazing would happen to me in Belfast.

## Kultur

It was interesting to see how Belfast's history affected everyday life in the city. Everywhere you went, you could see either the Union Jack or the Northern Ireland flag hung on a pole, which indicated the political position in the quarter. Besides, I never met people as friendly as the people in Northern Ireland. Everybody was very supportive and helpful. When you are lost in the streets of Belfast and ask someone for direction they just take your hand and lead you to your destination. Something I have never experienced in Germany as the people in Northern Ireland seemed more outgoing and broad-minded. Furthermore it was extraordinary to see what role pubs and bars play in the Irish culture as people go to pubs regularly right after work to meet their friends while drinking a pint of Guinness.



After arriving in Belfast I had my first and only culture shock when it was time to explore the Irish cuisine. You can't survive in Northern Ireland without a microwave, as supermarkets sell mostly deepfried goods or canned food. Also some of our hostel guests admitted that they never used a cooker as there is a more convenient and faster way to eat. That's why I always tried to cook fresh food or learn some tricks of french and chilean cooks who lived in the hostel for almost 3 month as long as they had an internship in a Belfast restaurant.

## Tipps & Vorschläge für zukünftige Praktikant/-innen

- Don't be afraid of speaking to natives... They will understand you and know how hard it is to speak a second language. They will always appreciate your effort!
- You need to speak to improve your skills? Work in a hostel! You have to answer phone calls and deal with a lot of people and eventually make amazing friends!
- Choose your destination wisely! Try an unusual place you never thought of travelling in your life! First I never considered myself going to Belfast, but London instead, now I've fallen in love with this wonderful city and you will have new things to tell!
- When homesick: Never bring a calendar on which you scrape off the days. It will make you wanting to go home even more...

Grow a beard instead!

You will wonder how time flies -> positive effect: you look awesome! ;)



## Das Leben danach...

I think my stay in Belfast helped me a lot for my next semesters as my english skills improved massively, especially my oral communication. I definitely consider working there as I never met so many wonderful people before who made me feel home and actually never made me miss Germany. But I fear the stay has awakened my wanderlust to see and meet as many places and people as possible. However, I will come back to Belfast and Arnie's Backpackers as it was the best experience of my life so far.



## Music & Sports

I was very impressed by Irish music when I first heard it in a pub as I thought it would be old-fashioned. But there was a big variety from old Irish folk to modern popsongs, from covers of famous songs to original tracks. During my time in the hostel, I had the pleasure to welcome some amazing artists as our guests, who held a private acoustic session in the living-room for everybody to join. However, the most surprising artists were the many street-musicians you can find in the centre of Belfast. They blew my mind when they started performing as I could not see why they had not been discovered yet.

Another big thing in Belfast are the several sports events which take place. Coming to Belfast as a huge football fan, I was confused to witness that football wasn't as popular as it is in Germany. As the northern Irish football is figuratively non-existent, few are interested in English football, but most of the people watch rugby or ice-hockey instead. The Belfast Giants for example are the most successful ice-hockey team at the moment and attract more than 10.000 people everytime they play a match in their arena. I once had the opportunity to watch a brilliant game with an amazing atmosphere. But the highlight of my stay was the chance to watch a rugby match of team Ulster Rugby in the European cup. The electrifying atmosphere against the English side Leicester Tigers made me leave Belfast as a rugby fan.

