

GLENDALOUGH TRIP by Malavika Manoj and Finna Donoghue -20th/21st of September-

Last week the wonderful TYs of Loreto went on an overnight trip to Glendalough, Wicklow to complete their recreational hike for their Gaisce awards. Through aching bones and blistered feet, each student completed the 6-hour hike, which looped around the scenic area encapsulated by the mountains.

Glendalough has always been an important and beautiful sight of Ireland, where many tourists visit for a fantastic view of all Ireland has to offer! Glendalough or, in Irish, 'Gleann Dá Loch,' meaning 'valley of two lakes,' is a glacial valley located in Wicklow, with many attractions such as the lovely lakes and monastic buildings located near the mountains. These attractions made for the trip to be a remarkably scenic adventure!

At 9.30 on Tuesday morning everyone boarded the bus and we readied ourselves for an hour and a half long bus ride to Wicklow. During the ride we witnessed the natural beauty of Ireland through the abundance of trees which surrounded us, it was truly a sight to behold as we passed the clustered treetops and beautiful lakes!

After arriving at the Glendalough hostel everybody put their bags away and placed their food in the freezers so that we could all leave. Before the trip, we were greeted by friendly faces who would guide us on our trip and make sure we didn't get into trouble! Our two tour guides were amazing and so helpful and we were very lucky to have them, as well as the teachers on the trip, to make sure we didn't hurt ourselves!

At 11.30 we began our painfully long hike that spanned approximately six hours. This hike included several breaks for the students so that we could all recharge before the next part of the hike began! At the start of the hike, we were faced with rows upon rows of rough and coarse rocks that were shaped by the years of erosion inflicted on them through processes of weathering and human activities, with occasional water flowing through certain parts of the rocks by way of small waterfalls. The first break we had was at the end of the of climbable rocks, where we took a 15-minute break to rest our legs. Many students witnessed Deers and goats throughout this break as they went to go explore the premises and everyone had a lovely time enjoying the beautiful animals and scenery! As we continued forward, we reached a part of the mountain with steps, to make it

easier for hikers to climb up. These ladder steps lasted quite a while as we went further and further up the mountain, until eventually we were so far up that our previous break area became miniscule to our eyes! After some more walking and sweating, we finally reached the end of the hike as we looped back around to our hostel. Our hike was completed in record time, so much so that we were early for booking into our hostel! At that point, we went on a shorter walk to fill the time where we witnessed a lovely lake glistening in the sunshine! Safe to say, many pictures were taken here! While this hike was painfully difficult, it served as a life lesson for the students! Through hard work and perseverance, you can climb to the top, and no matter how hard it gets you should never give up, because the view from the top is always worth it. While begrudgingly hiking up, my mind kept returning to this same proverb that really reminded me of the situation I was in. 'If you're going through hell, why stop in it?' It's one of my favorite quotes and the message it delivers really accentuated to me while I was hiking, where I was quite literally going through 'hell' (or some form of it, anyway!) However, after all is said and done, the hike was one of the most fun parts of the trip. It strengthened the bond of our year group and we got to talk to people we would've never otherwise have known before! I felt far closer to my fellow fourth years after it and it made me realize the importance of these bonding trips, especially in transition year! The hike also provided us with wonderful scenic views and was absolutely stunning to witness firsthand!

As we settled into our new rooms that had been prepared the week before, everyone started to regain their energy and we all had a lovely time visiting each other, playing games and unapologetically annoying one another until we could barely keep our eyes open! That night was a warm and dreamy one, as the effects of being surrounded by our closest friends shone brighter than any star that night.





The next morning, we all woke up bright and early in the hostel. We all made our breakfast in the kitchen and packed all our things to move out of our rooms. At 10, the teachers brought us down to St Kevin's Cemetery where there was a round tower from early Christian Ireland!

We were sent on a hunt to find the oldest grave in the cemetery which we discovered was from 1697! There was also a deer wandering around which everyone was excited to see.

After the cemetery we went on a short walk around Glendalough and we took a huge group photo at the lake to remember our amazing gaisce trip. After our photo we walked to the hostel to get the bus back to Loreto.

Thank you to all the teachers who organized this trip for us, we all had an incredible time!

