

## Halloween is not the same elsewhere in the World.



*International students painting pumpkins, a famous American tradition during Halloween time*

*Picture: Kevin Davy*

For international students, American Halloween can be a culture shock. "My first impression was that Americans take Halloween too seriously, the costumes, the display of houses, but I was amazed by the effort everyone puts in Halloween here," says Emilio Mejia, an international student from Ecuador majoring in Business.

For the benefit of international students who may not know about Halloween, Halloween is a famous American holiday that takes place annually on October 31. Halloween celebration is rooted in cultural traditions like Celts, Christianity, and European costumes. It originated in Ireland with the festival of Samhain. Initially, Celtic pagans would carve turnips to scare away the ghosts. It is a holiday that bridges the past and the present, connecting generations through the traditions of costumes, candy, decorating houses, and community.

There are many Halloween celebrations and traditions in America, such as the use of costumes, decorated houses, themed parties, pumpkins carved into spooky lanterns, and the famous "trick or treats," where, on Halloween night, children go to the doors of houses asking for sweets. Other countries celebrate Halloween more straightforwardly, and others may not even celebrate it. "In Ecuador, it is not that common to see people celebrate Halloween. We celebrate another national holiday on the 31, the Day of the Shield, so Halloween is not big. You can sometimes see people celebrating Halloween in specific locations", Emilio says.

Experiencing the real Halloween in America can be a unique experience. It offers the opportunity to learn more about and immerse yourself in the country's culture and festive atmosphere and create special memories. For Abigail Rojas, an international student from Peru majoring in digital media marketing, being an international student in the US during Halloween feels like stepping into a new world of celebrations and excitement. "It is like I'm inside the American Halloween movies I've always watched. It is cool to be able to experience this unique time in America. It is one of the cultures I like most. It is amusing but very cool that people take Halloween so seriously here", says Abigail.

Halloween in the United States is one of the most anticipated of the year. It is marked by festive and elaborate celebrations throughout October, creating a unique atmosphere of fun and immersion. American student Brandon Sowers, majoring in Business Management, fondly remembers Halloween as his favorite holiday growing up. "I was always excited to pick up my costumes, do activities in school, and hang out with my friends to go trick-or-treating. As I got older, I enjoyed watching scary movies and going to haunted houses", says Brandon. Even though international students are too old to experience and feel the magic of trick-or-treating, they can still experience some parts of the culture. "I hope that international students can at least get a taste of how much fun this holiday has been for me and countless other American youths," Brandon finishes.

Because American Halloween is such a strong, meaningful, and present culture, it often inspires people from other countries, even though they do not celebrate it similarly. David Smyth, an international student from Ireland, shares that his experience during Halloween in America was quite like in his home country. However, one difference he noticed was the display of decorations outside houses. "Since Halloween originated in Ireland, there are many similarities between American and Irish celebrations. Back home, we have an abundance of pumpkins on sale, decorations, and costumes. One thing that impressed me was the Americans' effort to show a great display. We do not have this in Ireland", says David.

Halloween is not the same elsewhere in the World. The roots came from Europe; the American celebrations are the most famous, and there are countries that, for their reasons, do not even celebrate the date. Each country adds its unique cultural touch to the Halloween celebration, decorations, and festivities. For all international students who always saw Halloween celebrations only in movies, experiencing this date in the United States is undoubtedly a unique and memorable experience.

