

MY STUDENT EXCHANGE EXPERIENCE

FERNANADA PUGIN, CHILE



"My UHK experience".

I have lived abroad many times, and each time it's very different from the previous one. I think my semester here was more about growing as a person and learning about being alone with me.

I did my first solo travel during this period. I went to Germany alone. For a girl who would be scared to go alone at night in her home city, trust me, this was a huge step for me. I went to Munich -which I had visited like 4 years ago- because one of my favorite bands was doing a concert there. It would

take me about three hours to get there, so I thought it was a great excuse for a weekend escape trip. I stayed in a hostel, I traveled by bus and I only carried a backpacker's bag. I was living the dream, seriously. I left my stuff in the hostel, took the metro and got to Olympiapark. There was already a line, so I joined. There, I had the chance to talk to some girls that were actually from Germany and we talked about the band. I felt like I was back in Chile, with my friends doing the line. I had so much fun.

They opened the door, we got in and I was actually impressed by how close I was and how well people behaved. In Chile, they push, and they scream, and in Munich, I saw how calm the Germans actually were. I had a great time. The days after, I just visited the city, went to some museums, did some shopping, and talk with my friends and family from Chile, while sending pictures and videos about my trip.

My second solo travel was to Berlin, just one week after my trip to Munich. Also, I found that one of my favorite singers was doing a concert there. It was the perfect excuse to actually visit Berlin for the first time. I'm also very passionate about history, and one of my favorite parts of history is Berlin during the Cold War, so I was very excited to see in real life everything that I have read before. I got there and at that moment I fell in love with the city. I wanted to stay there longer than I had planned, but I had classes so I couldn't add more days to my trip. But trust me, if I could, I would have done it. I did this trip by train, so it was much more comfortable than the previous one to Munich. I also stayed in a hostel, but this one was way prettier. I shared my room with a girl from the US, and since I had lived there for a while, we actually talked a lot about her country. The concert was the day after my arrival, so I decided to see the city, do some shopping, etc. I actually got pretty happy when I saw a Five Guys. This is a hamburger/fast food restaurant that's very popular in the United States so when I got there, it took me back to 2016 when I used to live in Alabama. I FaceTime with my family and friends and it was so cool to show them around the city while they were making me company, even if we were miles and miles away. It's pretty good to know, that friends and family are always there, no matter how far one is. So, I went to this other concert the day after very early and I got to be -like- number 33 in the line. I met some groups of friends and they actually were super nice. I left with such a good impression of German young adults and teenagers.



I had a great time in general, I visited all the places I always read in history books and I felt so connected with history and the places, but mostly with me. It was the experience of traveling alone that taught me that even when I travel by myself, I'm my own company.

I did some other trips that made me feel close to home again, and not alone. I went to the Netherlands to see some family friends and I felt really loved! I had a great time there and it felt like they were a second home for me at that moment. I feel so blessed that this experience also brought me closer to them as well!

In general, my UHK experience was more about being with myself than the typical idea of partying and meeting lots of new people. I don't regret it; I have done the things of a stereotypical exchange before. I did meet amazing people on the way, but I don't think that was the most powerful aspect of this exchange for me.

