

MY STUDENT EXCHANGE EXPERIENCE

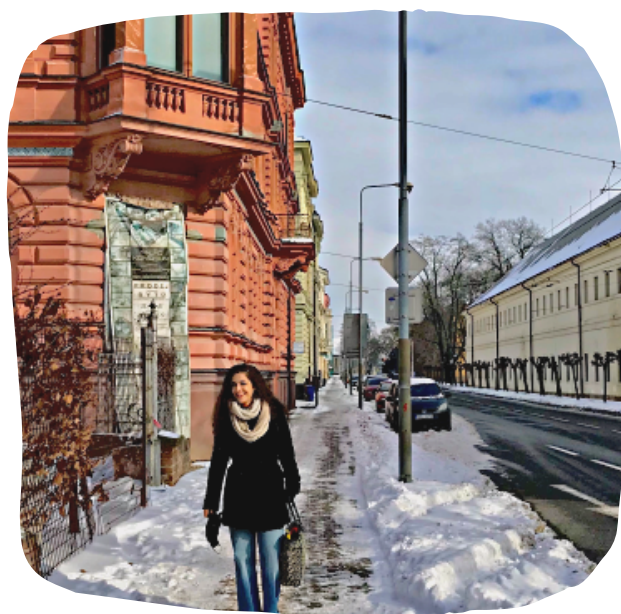
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BRAZIL

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Ahoj! My name is Ana Beatriz. I come from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where I study International Relations at PUC-Rio. Here in Hradec Králové, I study Political Science, at the Philosophical Faculty of the University of Hradec Králové within Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility project.

To compile in a few words the immensity of the experience of this exchange is, undoubtedly, an arduous task. However, I believe that as a person who has lived through it, the least I can do is to try to transmit to others, who will have the same opportunity, what I experienced here.



I will start with the University... There were excellent lecturers, very open both inside and outside the classroom, which enabled us to have incredible professional connections, including glimpses of research integrating different countries, with different perspectives. The coordinators can't be described as anything but sensational. They carefully helped us through every process, from the visa application to your last day at the university. They are very kind, very efficient people, who really care not only about the bureaucratic part, which is already very important, but also about the student's well-being in general. I have always felt huge support from the university and the professors.

However, even though it may sound cliché, we know that the exchange goes far beyond the academic/professional exchange... The possibility to meet people from all over the world, to live with different cultures, to learn about yourself and your country by getting in contact with the new may sound great, but believe me, it is much more than that; I had the opportunity to immerse myself in so many new perspectives, meet people from the other side of the world, and at the same time recheck and rethink a lot about myself, my culture, and my personal way of experiencing it. I shared tears and laughter with people very different from me. I found the similarity in the difference. I shared stories (living them or hearing about them), learned words in languages I never thought I would even know how to say "hello"(Czech is one of them, of course). I met strange people who became part of my family and my story.




Part of me will always remain in the Czech Republic as well... A beautiful country with a rich history, both politically and culturally. And Hradec is a wonderful city to live in! I confess that coming from Rio de Janeiro, where there are many culture clashes (not only South America-Europe but also big city-small towns), Hradec seemed small to me.



But there are numerous exchange students in the city, and although it is really small, the infrastructure is wonderful, as is the quality of life. I didn't know what it was like to be able to live a peaceful and more calm day-to-day life... So Hradec subtly and gently took my heart; a delightful city to live in.

Living abroad is not always about flowers and, obviously, there are difficulties. Initially the language: I believe that learning the basics of Czech is not only a sign of respect to the place you are going to spend 6 months or a year in but also an excellent tool in your daily life. Knowing the basics already changes the whole experience. On the other hand, homesickness is a common thing, but I was lucky to meet wonderful people not only from other nationalities but also of my own. There was a mini Brazil in Hradec too!

The dormitory experience is not always simple, but it is very enriching. You have to learn to ponder, how to talk, and how to establish limits and rules. In short, finding a way (which is always very particular to each group of people living together) to function in that environment in a calm and harmonious way.



Of course, the best of all is to be able to find in your roommate a friend – which was my case, luckily – and share more than just the house chores, but the experience as a whole. (Ah, a great tip is to have days when each person from a different nationality cooks, or when everybody cooks together too: they are always great experiences – forgive me because of having a Taurus ascendant and always thinking about food).

The Czech Republic is in the center of Europe, and as students, the prices for travel (especially by train) to neighboring countries and within the Czech Republic itself are incredible. Plan ahead, check prices in advance, and enjoy getting to know more of Europe too! There are options for different budgets, and with planning, travel can be very affordable. In this sense, there are places that are a must-visit within the country, such as Prague (obviously), one of the most beautiful cities (if not the most beautiful) I've ever visited; Karlovy Vary; Brno; Český Krumlov; Olomouc, and much more.

Overall, I was many “selves” during this period. I was able to learn different perspectives about academic and professional subjects, different languages (besides improving my English), and also about life. About food. About love. About war, about peace. I could see how much I have to learn from differences, but, I'm sorry for the informal word, damn, how alike we are at the same time. Finally, there is no doubt that the nostalgia and love for all that I experienced in this time will always be with me... The best year of my life.

Děkuju moc, Czech Republic and UHK.