



Univerzita Hradec Králové
Filozofická fakulta



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Erasmus Experience

It's hard to sum up the whole experience of living in a foreign country in some paragraphs, or even some pages, and only noting that should give a clue to the person reading this about the richness and diversity of this experience.

From the beginning everything was completely different from home. The first few days were really cold, there was always snow, wind or rain, or the three together, ready to freeze the fingers and toes of any unwary that was incautious enough to go out without proper protection.



Those days were kind of quiet and turned out to be perfect for settling in the new life that Hradec Králové offered; in that time I used to think that even if nothing else happened during the time of the exchange, only the view of the forest covered in snow, of the frozen lakes, and the sound of the petrified leaves under my feet were already enough for me to constitute a strong and significant experience. Of course, it wasn't the only thing, but I can surely say that the landscapes of Hradec

will be forever imprinted on my mind: its buildings and center, and, more specially, its forests, trees and lakes, and their changes with the arrival of the flourishing spring. I don't know how many hours I spent walking in the forests of this city, sometimes by myself, sometimes with warm and friendly company, and other fortunate occasions with the fleeting encounter of a deer, a hare, a crow, or a porcupine.

Life in a foreign country, even for a few months, is a life of new discoveries. Surely for big and astounding discoveries: new cities with big streets and bigger buildings or with hidden

alleys to wander in; roads traveled in some bus going anywhere; giant churches of magnificent beauty; museums with objects magnetic for the eyes avid for beauty and mystery; meals and food combinations that only existed in movies; trains fast enough to take you to your destination but somehow slow enough to let you appreciate the view of the lands it went through.

Every day in the Czech Republic was a day for wonder and curiosity, getting to know its history, manners and culture led to many surprises and questions. The language, the hissing mix of unpronounceable ř's and of the many consonants glued together, was completely alien for me, and I don't know if I could ever get past the usual phrases of everyday life: "*dobrý den*", "*prosím*", "*kartu*", and more important: "*nemluvím česky*"; I'll always be amazed with my classmates and friends that got to learn at least a bit of something that I found so hard to understand. The language, the languages! Living in Palachova with people from so many different parts of the world was an idiomatic symphony, sometimes chaotic but always amazing, that only a fully distracted or uninterested mind could be insensitive to. From this musical composition of words, learning new expressions from all over the world was not only a delight but also the door to witness and experience cultural diversity embodied in different traditions, ideas, stories, and behaviors that I was eager to learn.

Everyday life: taking the bus, hearing that someone took the wrong one and ended up arriving late to class due to an unexpected trip to a different town, walking to the faculty, riding the bike, trying new beers, spending whole afternoons in the library, reading in the park, making picnics with the warmest company, leaving thoughtful some class that made us think, waking up early to share breakfast recipes, playing the guitar with some coffee or mate in the quiet afternoons, using the free time to check the prices of planes from my city to my new friend's cities, exchanging playlists with music from our countries, reading stories and poems to each other, watching movies in the social room with some late night chocolate and quickly made dinner, gossiping with my roommates before going to sleep, dressing up to stay in the flat and having long conversations... Along with the memories and experiences of the big things, the traveling, the amazing discoveries, I take with me the things from everyday life, the things that became habits or rituals, and the things that were unusual, rare or expected, the running of time without noticing. I'm grateful to Hradec for these past few months and to the people and places I found here that made me feel at home.