

# MY STUDENT EXCHANGE EXPERIENCE

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I still remember the first day I entered Palachova dormitory. I will not lie to you, at first, when you get to Hradec Králové, you will think that you just arrived in the 1950s Communist Eastern Europe, where the Internet connection is slow and the people are frightened, where there are no places to see and no friends to make. This is how I felt: like I made a huge mistake deciding to go for an Erasmus semester in the windy Czech Republic rather than in the beautiful and hot Spain. One can superficially argue that there are not many interesting things to do in Hradec Králové, but, believe me, with the right people, you will have lots of fun even when the weather does not help you at all. The geographic position of this small

city near Prague, which was also the former capital of an Empire, and the city from where Vaclav Havel used to govern the Republic is an advantage for all of the students that want to travel. Hradec Králové is in the heart of Europe, which means that you can easily take trains to go to Berlin, Vienna, or Budapest, and in a few hours, you can be in another place and have a nice quality time with your friends.

The study experience in the UHK was interesting and necessary for my academic process. I decided to sign up for some classes that are not in my usual program, like subjects related to Political Science and Digital health. Now, after the experience came to an end, I must say that I will truly miss my teachers because they were inquisitive and all very passionate about the subjects they teach. The afternoons I spent in the UHK Library will remain forever in my heart. The UHK gave me everything I needed by allowing me to attend its courses and seminars in person, so it was my first experience taking face-to-face classes ever!

But Erasmus is not always about the courses you take or about the buildings you visit in different countries. Not even about learning a new language, which I did, and I am very grateful for it. The reason I believe my semester here was so great is the company of my international friends. Mariana, Marta, Zion are all coming from different countries, speak different languages, and have different views of the world.



Together, we traveled from Vienna to Budapest and from Brno to Berlin, we gathered together for Christmas in a German hostel, played cards with travelers from Egypt, and got to know Hradec Králové by heart in all the days and nights we spent together. „My girls“, because this is how I called them when I first introduced them to my parents while talking on a Whatsapp videocall and I have been calling them like that ever since, are all wonderful human beings. I believe that it was fate that we met, randomly, on the football court and decided to be friends forever. They hold my back and gave me a shoulder to cry on. They asked me deep questions and urged me to always think that the truth is not universal. Even though we do not speak the same language nor do we share the same opinions regarding politics, we all share a great deal of love for life and its small pleasures like drinking a good tea or catching the bus in the last minute.



Palachova became the most authentic center of friendship in the whole Europe. Here, we threw parties, tasted international cuisines, argued for cleaning schedules, and studied before our exams. In Palachova we learned valuable lessons regarding friendship, trust, tolerance, and solidarity. In Palachova we planned our trips and made important life choices. We talked a lot about our future, our fears, our wishes, and our dreams. In this family, I found wise advisors that would guide me through this amazing journey that is life. One would falsely believe that we only talked about boys and parties but, in fact, most of our conversations were so meaningful, and this is why I believe that Palachova and my friends from the C4 apartment will forever remain in my heart. *Na shledanou*, my Palachova family!