

MY STUDENT EXCHANGE EXPERIENCE

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FRANCE

SUMMER TERM 2021-2022

My name is Judith, I'm a French student of Political Science studies. I experienced an Erasmus exchange in Hradec Kralové from September 2021 to June 2022. I was studying at this university and staying at the Palachova dormitory. This way of living was great because I like small towns where nature is extremely nearby and from where you can also move and travel easily. Hradec Kralové is a peaceful and calm place to live but the Erasmus community and ESN (Erasmus student network) allow students to enjoy themselves a lot. We can have each other's back and create amazing new groups of friends, as well as exchange our cultures and languages. We meet people from all around the world and we can learn from others as well as improve foreign languages, not only English. When I arrived in September, we quickly could attend numerous ESN events and it was very useful to meet the international exchange community. The scavenger hunt and the welcome party are the two events that I remember the most because we were able to explore Hradec in a fun way. The welcome party was also amazing because this was the start of an amazing year.

Courses started in late September and it was perfect because we had time to enjoy meeting international people, and get used to our environment before to start the semester.



For me, the studies are really important because as a French, with our study system, the Erasmus is not a break year. It is rather just a year where I study abroad. So I had to be serious about my work at the university. I was fortunate, according to my judgment, because I took courses that I really liked in both semesters and I could even be introduced to academic research. That made me realize that I really want to be a scholar and this was an important decision and turn for my future. Indeed, it helped me to determine which master's I applied for in May. Courses in English were not too difficult for me to follow because I was already bilingual before coming here but attending English lectures was useful to extend my vocabulary in political science,

philosophy and social sciences in English. Also, in the first semester, I took a Czech language class for international students. It was very interesting and difficult but this was the best way to learn the little Czech we needed in daily life. I could learn how to say basic phrases such as "good morning and good night", order food in a restaurant, or even buy a bus or train ticket. According to my experience during the whole year, even if the philosophical faculty is really small and far from the dormitory, it is worth it because the teaching quality is great. In the second semester, most of my courses were lectured by visiting teachers known in their field of research so we were lucky to be able to take these courses.



Apart from studying, traveling was the other most important part of my Erasmus. After less than a month in Hradec, I was already traveling with French friends. First, we went to Bratislava and Vienna. In October we went to Budapest and in November I went to Munich. After the Christmas break that I spent in France, I came back to the Czech Republic to celebrate New Year's Eve in Janské Lázně in the northern Czech mountains. The transition between the two semesters was tough because I had to see a lot of friends leaving and I had Covid. But after some time and when the students from the second semester arrived, international parties, and travels came along with them.

I went for the second time to Budapest, Krakow, and Berlin between February and May, and just before going back to France I went to Spain with my roommates. For me, the biggest advantage of the Czech Republic is its geographical placement in Europe and the price of the train. Indeed, it is really easy to travel to Central and Eastern Europe from there because numerous capitals are nearby and the train is not expensive. Finally, I could travel within the Czech Republic a lot, I visited a few cities: Prague, Olomouc, Brno, Karlovy Vary, Český Krumlov, Plzen, Pardubice... And I also went hiking because this is one of my hobbies, I went to Adršpach but my favorite place was in the natural park "Czech Paradise" near Trutnov.

Erasmus was for me one of the best experiences of my life. I lived abroad before but this year allowed me to meet even more people and exchange in numerous ways. I have probably made friends for life here and it made me realize that there is much more to discover all around the world.