

MY STUDENT EXCHANGE EXPERIENCE

LISE MARGOT BERTHE PRUVOST

FRANCE

SUMMER TERM 2021-2022

I arrived in Hradec Králové with few expectations. I knew nothing about this city, this country, or Erasmus. But finally, I spent one of the most beautiful years of my life in this city. However, in the beginning, I found the place too quiet, in some way boring, far from the noisy and urban life I knew and enjoyed for a few years. Even if I was warned during the first ESN meeting, the "Czech smile" also surprised me since I am not used to seeing so little expression on a face. Yet this smile did not prevent them from being welcoming. At first sight, Czechs are not the warmest people you could meet. However, when you get to know them, you quickly realize how big their hearts are, as many of my experiences testify. For example, one of my first memories of Erasmus is me completely panicking in front of a cashier before an old lady behind me decided to help me after she had seen my distress.

Nevertheless, as I said, at the beginning I was quite bored when I stayed in Hradec Králové. So I quickly started to travel within and outside the Czech Republic. In the first month, I planned to visit two countries, Slovakia and Austria, and I didn't stop there. In 8 months here, I have visited 8 different countries and about 20 cities. I had never traveled so much in my life, but thanks to the unique experience of Erasmus and the convenient and cheap transport in the Czech Republic, I was able



to go on a trip almost every month. Another advantage of the Czech Republic is that it is in the center of Europe, which means that you can be close to a lot of different countries and discover different landscapes and cultures. However, even when the trips outside the Czech Republic were outstanding, the most beautiful moments of my Erasmus will remain in the Czech Republic.

I remember a few outstanding days that made me realize how lucky I was to be on Erasmus. One of them will stay in my memory for a long time: the day when we went to visit caves near Blansko with about twenty people of ten different nationalities.

This day was not exceptional in itself: the visit to the cave was pleasant but banal, we had a lot of organization problems, long delays in terms of transport, etc. However, it was this day that made me realize for the first time how exceptional something that had become normality was. Traveling with people from all over the world, seeing them every day for all sorts of activities, building relationships with people from such different cultures, getting to know and understand them, etc. During this Erasmus, I met extraordinary people, who taught me a lot and who will remain in my memory forever. I learned about others but also about myself. I gained self-confidence and I really opened up during this year thanks to all the people I met.



But beyond the chance to go on Erasmus, I had the chance to do it in the Czech Republic. The Czech Republic was not my first choice, nevertheless, it was a motivating second choice. I had been to Prague a few years ago with my parents and the architecture, the atmosphere, and the Czech culture had convinced me to come back. I didn't think I would do it as an Erasmus student but I loved discovering new aspects of Czech culture, new cities, and new landscapes. Hradec Králové is not Prague, but it is a charming city with rich nature (forests, lakes, parks) and some beautiful monuments.



Nevertheless, I won't lie to you, it is not the city that made me realize that I appreciate the Czech Republic, it is the culture. In 8 months here, I have had time to discover many aspects of Czech culture, not only its landscapes and monuments. For me, the food is not the strongest point of the Czech culture but I still appreciate one of the typical dishes, the Goulash, and the beers. These two specialties will be on my top list and honestly the only ones I really enjoyed here. But what I really loved about the culture was the music. One of my favorite moments in the Czech Republic was a music festival that mixed folk music, rap, and rock. After this festival, I became obsessed with Czech rap. I also really enjoyed the different nightclubs in Prague, with very different atmospheres. In particular, I learned to really appreciate techno (and I hope to find techno as good as here back in France). As I am also a sports fan, I had the chance to discover hockey in a country that specializes in it. I was able to attend matches of the local team and discover the atmosphere of the stadiums. I am really happy with my 8 months here because I could really discover all the aspects of the Czech Republic even if the language remains impossible to speak for me and I could never get rid of my "French accent" (according to my Czech teacher).