

MY STUDENT EXCHANGE EXPERIENCE

LUNA SACBE VALENCIA RODRÍGUEZ

COLOMBIA


SUMMER TERM 2021-2022

First of all, I want to say thank you to the UHK for accepting me into this beautiful and great university. To be honest, I had thought about this exchange but I didn't think I was able to make it real, and I want to say from the deepest of my heart: thank you! You made possible one of my dreams.

So, my story of this exchange started in the airport of Bogotá, Colombia, when I said bye to my friends, family, dog, and city. I cried all the weeks before the trip. I was both afraid and excited to come alone to a new country, meet new people, and meet a new culture; it can be frightening and delightful at the same time. Then, I got on that plane that had a connection to the USA, I bought the most expensive hamburger that I have ever tried, and I was afraid to spend money on food and then be broke to get the bus and the train. It is normal to be afraid when you are full of emotions and with an unknown future in front of you.

When I arrived, I met other people from my country, who are my friends today. (They have heard me laugh, complain, and almost cry, and I have seen them enjoying this experience with all the possible emotions). That day, I thought we had to be alone taking the bus and the trains. I was full of fear, but two people from ESN helped us. They picked us up and showed us Prague, the trains, and everything we needed to get to the dorms. Next, I received the keys to my new life, and I met Ari, one of my roomies, who has been like a sister to me. Some weeks later, Ale came, and then we became a family. We cried, laughed, and enjoyed ourselves together. I can tell you with all my heart that they are the best roommates and friends that this experience has given me. Besides, when I started to know people, I realized that we were more than 30 Latin Americans, so the family grew, and we became a little yet strong community where love, understanding, laughing, hugs, dance, music, and food were present in every meeting. I can assure you that I will never forget any single person that I met here, especially my brothers and sisters from LATAM.

Moreover, every day here is a new experience that brings new people, new cultures, knowledge, landscapes, food, and history. That is what I love the most. Being in the center of Europe has opened my eyes, mindset, heart, and spirit. However, this involvement has changed and destabilized my ideas about my future which is good, and at the same time scary. Nevertheless, that's life, a continuous change, reflection, and growing.



I have to confess that I fell in love with Czech culture, the beer, the landscapes, the peace, and Prague. Prague took my heart every time in the streets, and Hradec Králové took my spirit in the forest. I have never felt so calm walking alone in the streets or some forest. I could be there on my own without being afraid. I am sure that I will miss that feeling.

Of course, not every day was bright or nice; you miss your family, friends, food, people, weather, and your room. You miss every single piece of your life back in your country. It is not easy, and that is why I admire all my partners and my friends because I know that all of us were living through emotional difficulties, but we were there to support each other and to receive support from others.

To finalize, I want to say thank you, UHK, again, this has been the best experience of my entire life. And, to be honest, I do not want to leave yet. I think that your country has plenty of things to offer, in all possible aspects, and it is a shame that my time here was that short and fast.

You gave me the best memories of Europe and I want to come back.