

MY STUDENT EXCHANGE EXPERIENCE

MARIANA ÁLVAREZ VÁSQUEZ

COLOMBIA

SUMMER SEMESTER 2020/2021 AND WINTER
SEMESTER 2021/2022.

My name is Mariana Alvarez Vasquez and I am from Colombia. My home university is Javeriana Cali, where I'm studying Political Science... Since I started my bachelor's, I was planning on having an international experience to make my degree more valuable. Thus, I prepared myself to get it. How? By learning English, being interested in other cultures and countries, approaching international students in my university, and so on. After I got accepted into Hradec Králové University thanks to the Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility project, I knew that step would change my life forever.



When I arrived in the Czech Republic I felt that one of my biggest dreams was becoming true. It was the 2nd of February 2021. It was winter and, since I'm coming from a tropical country, I wasn't ready for such an experience. I wasn't ready for many things that were supposed to happen afterward. Fortunately, the International Office of the Philosophical Faculty at the UHK, the ESN group, and my buddy, Luciana -from Bolivia-, helped me with all the big and small things that I would need for the rest of my stay. To be honest, I didn't expect that living alone in a completely different country would be that hard but I was amazingly happy.

I arrived when the COVID-19 situation was tough. At that moment, vaccines were just for medical staff and old people. All European countries had their borders closed. All stores, bars, pubs, restaurants, even the university, were closed. All my courses were online and I was regretting going abroad for staying in a small flat without going to face-to-face classes. I even remember that when I was telling my relatives and friends about the situation in the Czech Republic, they told me: "Ugh, what a bad time for doing your Erasmus". However, nowadays, I can say that it has been the best thing I could have ever done. The only option we had was meeting with all students in Palachova dormitories. I met so many people that later on would become my real best friends. I got to know so many languages, food, expressions, and cultures that in Colombia I would never have known. That is why when the university offered us the prolongation of our stay, with some doubts but knowing that I wouldn't regret it, I said yes.



Summer in the Czech Republic was amazing. I worked, I swam and started to travel a lot.



I could say that my first term in Hradec Králové was for meeting people and the second one was for meeting countries (and the university, of course). Both were the principal reasons why I stayed.

In October 2021, face-to-face classes started and this was my first time going to a faculty after two years. I met my professors, my colleagues, and all the activities ESN had for us. Likewise, I had the amazing opportunity of traveling to 12 different countries in one year. All the experiences and learnings that my Erasmus left me will be indelible. It has been one of the most incredible things that ever happened in my life, and I am completely grateful to the University of Hradec Králové for making my dream become true.

