

# MY STUDENT EXCHANGE EXPERIENCE

SANTIAGO MUÑOZ SEPÚLVEDA


COLOMBIA

SUMMER TERM 2021-2022

The beginning of my story in the Czech Republic was quite complicated. Initially, I was supposed to have this experience in 2020 but as you can imagine, it was impossible because of the pandemic, then I had to wait for more than a year to come to the University of Hradec Králové. Despite the problematic beginning, on February 3rd, 2022 I was arriving in Hradec in the middle of a soft winter and was very excited about what this experience would bring to me. After my time here, there are many things fixed on my mind that inspire my imagination, my actions, and my perspectives on life. Being at the UHK has been a big moment in my life. Europe had been such a source of references for me as a consequence of many daily and historical situations, I have heard, read, and learned things about Europe for years, and having the opportunity to contrast all that previous knowledge with the experience was fruitful and enriching. I had multiple cultural shifts. It was amazing to notice the subtle differences in the way people relate with others, and how they express emotions and behave. I leave here some good friends, people who I shared good talks with, long walks, and good beer. I also made wonderful friends from all over the world, we exchanged costumes, food, and ideas and we are even expecting to have each other in our home countries. It is amazing to count on friends worldwide.



The thing that impressed me the most around Hradec and that I will miss a lot are the forests, rivers, and lakes. I spent lots of hours walking in the Czech Republic's forests, losing myself without a sense of time, listening to the ambiance, the birds, and the wind. It is wonderful to walk across the land without any specific aim, observing the movement of the trees, the sunset, and the novelties that the exploration would bring. I loved the huge extent of forests that are there, just ready for people to experience... As well as those beautiful lakes to sit beside and swim, and astonishing rivers to contemplate.



These months allowed me to walk through many cities, exploring their streets and listening to other people tell stories about their history and daily life, I could understand a lot more about European history and its economic, political, and cultural reality, as well as its relation to my own context. It is delightful to notice the power of the heritage of past lives and events, and how they influence our current experience in the territory.

I am pleased to say that I walked without rest for months, going into the cities, trying to fetch some of their life, to get any Idea of their behavior and feeling the spirit of every place following impressions, conversations, and readings. I have traveled around the Czech Republic and surrounding countries and it always amazed me the musicality of the Czech language. It is the first time I dealt with and tried to learn a Slavic language, nevertheless, every time I traveled back to the Czech land, the rhythm of the Czech language comforted me. That playful musical accent when saying "*Dobrý den, děkuju, na shledanou*" transport my mind to the good time I have had.

I am convinced of the importance of these months as a way to allow me to be more sympathetic because in some way I am more conscient of human diversity. I can see how the cultural structures of society have a strong weight on current events and I get more clearly the relevance of historical events, the cycling process of social life, the problematic tendencies of our behavior, and the relevance of these encounters to increase the possibilities to build a better society.