

MY STUDENT EXCHANGE EXPERIENCE

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To be completely honest, before coming to the Czech Republic, I didn't know much about the country. I decided to do my Erasmus here because I knew some friends did it as well. However, five months have passed since I first arrived at Hradec Králové, and I could not be happier about making that choice.

My name is Santiago Rubio, a Political Science student from the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana Cali, Colombia, and this is the story of my experience in one of the most interesting countries in Central Europe.

My path to get into the Czech Republic was hampered from the beginning by one of the main contemporary issues: covid. The day I was supposed to take my plane to Prague, I received the unpleasant news that I was positive on my PCR test. This, of course, made me feel that my aspirations to make this exchange were crushed by a situation that was out of my hands. And to make it even worse, I had this big frustration once again after a week of isolation when the PCR was positive again. All of this was overwhelming because it made me think that the adaptation process would be worse than expected since I was arriving later than the other students and classes had already begun.



However, against all odds, I finally arrived at Václav Havel Airport on February 12 at 21:30. There, the adventure started. Although I was completely tired of the flight, my first interaction was with my buddy, Olga, who made me feel welcome.

My first shock was the weather. We were in the middle of winter, and even though it was not the coldest winter, I'm used to tropical weather, which made me feel like I was literally freezing. Nevertheless, it made a huge contrast with the warmth of the people I met at Hradec Králové.

As a fun fact, here I had the opportunity of meeting more Latin American people than when I was in Colombia, which, of course, in an environment where you feel like an outsider, made me reaffirm and embrace my roots. Nonetheless, it doesn't mean that I didn't have the chance of meeting some outstanding people from other continents, including local people.



This exchange implied an opportunity for personal and academic growth. From the classes that approached interesting topics related to my field of study to the chance of meeting different places with a lot of history to learn about. Also, being in a completely new academic environment in terms of the methodology and the topics approached helped me to have fresh tools to assess social and political phenomena. I learned to see the world from a different perspective, not only in the classrooms but also in the intercultural and intellectual exchange that this type of experience implies.



I leave this country with several learnings I hope more people could acquire and with a deep admiration for the Czech, and in a broader way, for the European way of life. Even though one of the most common things one hears about Czech people is their coldness, you cannot help feeling more and more into their life dynamics and the beauty of their country. Thus, if anybody is thinking about studying at the University of Hradec Králové, I can tell this is one of the best experiences ever, so don't have second thoughts about it.

