

MY ERASMUS STORY

My name is Marina, I come from the University of Salamanca in Spain, I study Global Studies and this year I have had the opportunity to do my exchange for the whole year at the University of Hradec Králové in the Czech Republic.

Going on Erasmus was my dream and Prague is literally the city of dreams, so when I was given the opportunity to apply for Erasmus to a city very close, I didn't think twice and threw myself headfirst into this experience. The reality is that I went with quite a few expectations and far from meeting all of them, I ended up exceeding them and becoming a part of me that still has little left and I don't want to let go.

I knew the classes were something that I was not going to worry about, especially because of the language, since in Spain I also study in English and not in Spanish. What happens is that, as soon as I arrived, I had to change my entire schedule because there were classes that overlapped with each other, and I can't be in two places at the same time. However, it turned out to be something very beneficial for me because it gave me the opportunity not to set a schedule from the beginning and to try the different classes offered in the two semesters by the Faculty of Philosophy. I have been able to try classes not only in the field of Politics and International Relations, which is more or less what I usually have at home, but I have also taken courses in economics, philosophy, anthropology, and I was even lucky enough to be able to take an introductory class to the language of the country, Czech. Many people on my Erasmus will tell you that there is no point in learning a Slavic language because you will never use it again, but I loved being able to learn to defend myself at least in everyday situations such as the supermarket. In addition, the teachers are very pleasant and understandable with the situation in which we find ourselves, and although they require us to do our homework and to do many readings, they always encourage us to go out, go to events, travel, meet and share our experiences with them. They know what Erasmus is and they want us to make the most of it, so sometimes they are even the ones who adapt to us in schedules, exam formats and exhibitions.

As for my experience living here, it was very complicated at first. I had already lived alone in Spain and in a nursing home, but I had never had to share so much space with so many people at the same time, three people slept in one room and the common spaces, the bathroom and the kitchen, were shared with three other people. Living together can be complicated at first, but usually people go with a good disposition and if you are lucky, your roommates may even become your best friends, or better, your family away from home.

Making friends in this residence has been a little more difficult than I thought because there are not many leisure and meeting spaces and we depend on the ESN for activities. However, if I have one piece of advice it is: go all out at the beginning, everyone is just like you, we all want to make friends and have a good time. Initially I failed a bit at that, but I managed to make friends and be able to do many trips with them such as Budapest, Copenhagen, Vienna and Bratislava.

The most common plan was to go to Prague on weekends. It's about an hour and forty minutes away and the ticket isn't too expensive. Prague is everything. It's the city I've always wanted to live in. Its streets, its monuments, its people, its traditions and its

festivals, is everything a university student wants. It is a city that can really be visited in one day and on foot. The astronomical clock, Charles Bridge, Kafka's Head, and the Castle are all places of dreams. And then if you do a little more research, you can make plans that are very alternative, such as going to Christmas and Easter markets, going to the movies, going to hockey games or even concerts. The food is spectacular and Porks became my favorite place to eat knuckle and not forget the fireplaces with ice cream, a sweet treat to finish off the day.

In the second semester I came back stronger than ever, with a lot of desire to make friends, to go to parties and to travel much more than in the first semester. Thanks to life I was able to meet the group of friends who became my sisters, and although each one of us is from a country and even I am not from the same continent as them, we have already talked about seeing each other again, and I am sure that they will be in all the important moments of my life. They have shown me the value of true friendship, healthy relationships and that living in this bubble is a privilege and if fate has put us together, it is because it had to happen. Not only have we traveled to Berlin, Poland, Istanbul, Athens, Venice, Milan, Switzerland together, but we have done crazy things like going on a Party Train through Slovakia, staying until the sunrise talking about everything and nothing at the same time, cooking absolute dinners, going to the lake to bathe, touring a thousand cities within the Czech Republic and above all, support each other in the good and the bad, because that is what friends are and will continue to be for. Here I have found my place, next to all of them and thanks to this magical place.

I believe that Erasmus has not changed me but rather has made me evolve and mature as a person. Being so far from home has made me realise what is really important, that you have to stay with those people who add up, who make you laugh, because that's what you're really going to remember, all the good moments. Here I have learned that this life is to be lived, that you not only have to talk, but also listen, that having is useless if you do not share it and that we are not here only to exist but to be. Hradec has been home, learning, experiences, opportunities, love and above all seeing the world with your eyes wide open. There is much left for me to see.

