

# exchange semester in prague

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a report about my exchange semester in the czech republic

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## INTRODUCTION

The time in Prague was the first time for me living in another country for a longer term. As I am coming from Austria the Czech Republic was not that far away but still unknown and new. Therefore I decided to undergo the experience of making an exchange semester at the technical University CVUT.

## THE PREPERATION OF THE EXCHANGE SEMESTER

The whole preparation process and application for the exchange semester was really well organized from my home University in Liechtenstein as well as from my receiving University in Prague. By handing in all the required documents everything was going well and before I started my studies there I received already some information about the welcoming week and the procedure of starting the semester there. Further than that we had the chance to apply for getting a buddy who was helping and supporting you with your arrival.

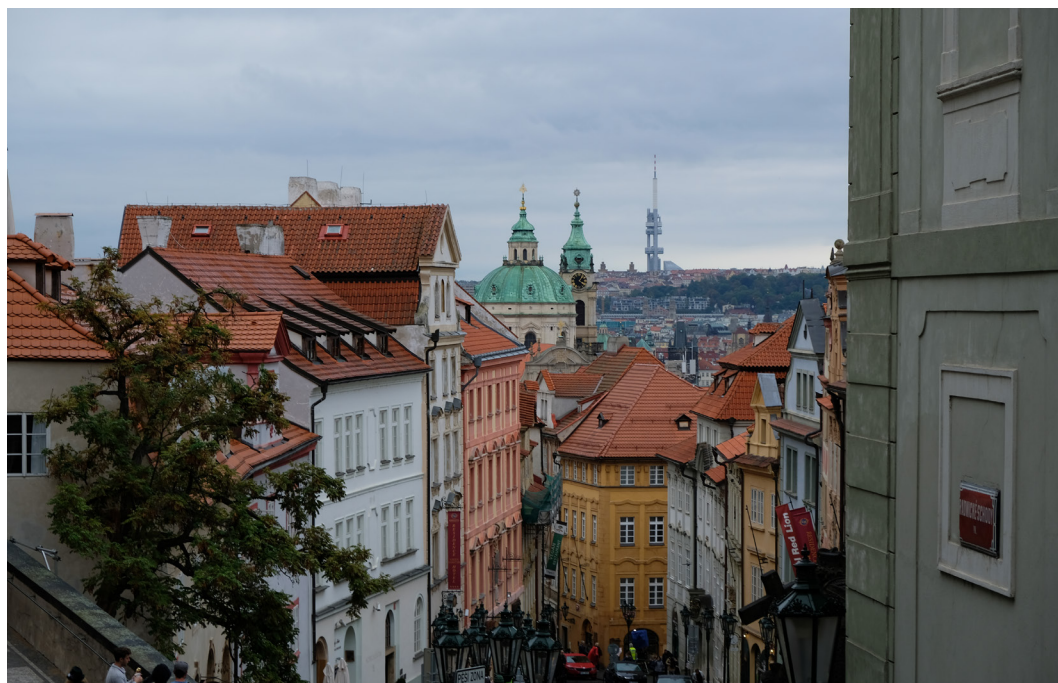
## THE CITY PRAG

When I arrived in Prague I was really overwhelmed by the city. I had never been here before and it surpassed my expectations. The city, the architecture, the atmosphere and the location in general was impressing. The different dis-

tricts with its different histories and the topography within the city centre were astonishing for me. With the offer of hundred different really good restaurants, pubs and cafés everyone is finding something, which fits his flavour. In the middle of September, when I arrived in Prague, the weather was really good and the temperature still very pleasant and it stayed that way till the end of November. By then having the chance to visit all the parks and the open-air events the autumn was really nice. Then at the end of November the climate was getting colder but this was perfectly fitting for the launching Christmas markets in the whole city. And then at the beginning of January, during our exam and studio presentation period, we even had some snow in the city.

## BEING A STUDENT AT THE CVUT IN PRAG

In the moment when I arrived at the CVUT, with about 20.000 students, I was really overwhelmed by the location and by the size of the campus. Also the wide variety of different faculties within one campus at the technical University was really impressing. The architectural faculty, the library next to it and the different canteens and cafés were really nice to spend time. They were upgrading the everyday life of the student. Next to that, also the interiors and the equipment of the buildings were really good and



up to date. With this modern surrounding and all the possibilities you have as a student, the CVUT is comparable to all the other universities I have visited so far. Also the large number of different studios in the faculty of architecture was a big pleasure to see. In fact that was only pleasing till I found out that only a small amount of studios are held completely in English. Nevertheless I was appreciating a lot that even when a tutor was not speaking English, the assistant of the respective tutor was trying to translate everything for the Erasmus students. Regrettably within this process of translation a lot of knowledge and important facts got lost. Beside the language difficulties there was also the difficulty of the organizational part. Already at my arrival day at the University I had problems to sign-in for different courses. Next to that the courses were not cooperating with each other relating the set timetable and the compulsory attendance. This was leading to a really stressful organizational part for the individual Erasmus student in the beginning. By having different chats with Czech students, they explained me that the organizational part of the university is generally challenging, also for them.

### BEING A MEMBER OF THE CZECH CULTURE

To understand my personal experiences here in the Czech republic it has to be said, that I was not staying in one of the dorms. I was renting a room in a shared apartment during my stay. Within this apartment I was living with four other people. Our flat was located in the second district, in Vinohrady, and that means that I was in the lucky position of not having to deal with the masses of tourists that are occupying Prague during the day. As I was living in Vinohrady, which is not the old Town, not every one of the residents were speaking English. Further than that they were not really trying to understand another language

than Czech. For this reason I tried to learn all the necessary phrases to handle the situations in the supermarket, in shopping malls or in restaurants, in Czech. I was also really surprised about the fact that also in the university lots of people are not really willing to talk in English. I thought that at least the Czech students, who are approximately 22 years old, are up for having some chats in English. But surprisingly this did not happen that often. What was really nice to experience was the public transport system in general. First of all I was really surprised about how polite people are in public transports. If one of the passengers sees that an elderly person is entering the metro and there is no seat left, one of the young persons is always standing up and is leaving the seat for them. Next to that I was also really overwhelmed by the offer and the price of this institution.

### CONCLUSION

Generally it can be said that going on exchange was really a great chance for me personally but also for the professional development in architecture. There were a lot of positive experiences that I would have never made by not going abroad for about 5 months. Despite the fact that I was shocked about the English skills of the students, the tutors, as well as the inhabitants of Prague and the organizational part of the University, I really enjoyed the stay in Czech republic. Also these 'negative' experiences turned into positive ones because of the fact that I got more open minded and more relaxed in occasions like that. So summing up, I would suggest this experience of making a semester abroad, as well as this country and the city of Prague, to everyone. It was an intense semester in a very marvellous city and an experience that helped me a lot in broadening my horizon and prepare myself for the upcoming master thesis.

