



For one semester I studied at the Czech Technical University in Prague. Overall I had a great semester in a really beautiful city, that inspired me personally and architecturally. I choose Prague because I wanted to experience a region I had never been to, a new language and a culture that is different from mine, jet historically intertwined with my own. While I focused on exploring the Czech republic during the semester, I decided to discover more of east Europe after finishing all my classes.

Living in Prague

After the application process I was notified that another student from the architecture department was also going to spent her Erasmus in Prague. Interestingly enough, because we are such a small master program, I did not know her before. Therefore we decided to search for a shared flat together. Since the housing market is quiet overrun at the moment we were lucky that we started to look for a flat immediately after knowing that we would go to Prague. The student flats are quiet overpriced but it is impossible to get access to the normal Czech housing market. It is also possible to live in one of the dormitories provided on campus, which is ca. 2/3 cheaper than a flat. In the end we found a shared flat through a Facebook post on one of the housing threats. We shared a flat with a total of five people, in the district 2, Vinohrady. The location was perfect. Vinohrady is one of the many districts of Prague, which each have a distinguished character. The area was in walking distance to the city centre, but is not overrun by tourists. It is a housing district for the locals, with a lot of small cafés and shops as well as a lot of parks, since it used to be a vineyard in front of the city fortification. Due to the incredible public transport net it was also easy to reach the university district within 20 min by metro. The public transport is not only efficient and easy, it is further extremely cheap. Students under 26 get a discount of 75%. It is possible to get different passes at check desks in a lot of metro stations or to comfortably register online and pair the ticket with your credit card. Before arriving in Prague I registered for a Buddy. Unlike

in Liechtenstein it is not possible that everyone gets a buddy, so you have to sign up in a database and might be chosen by someone. I got lucky and had an incredible buddy that not only helped me with getting the best ticket for the public transport and registering but further took me on trips and helped out with translations when I got in trouble. Also he is the only local friend I made during the exchange, since we were unfortunately completely segregated from the Czech students at the university.

Regarding the language it is really helpful to know at least the basics in Czech, saying hallo and thank you. Even though you can get quiet far with English people were automatically reacting nicer when they saw that you were making an effort. I took one of the many Czech language courses that are offered at the university, but sadly had to give it up after a couple of weeks, due to time schedule problems. Nevertheless it would have not been enough to enable me to successfully navigate all the places were they only speak Czech, like registration offices, the foreign police, the post, the copy shop or even some departments at the university. You had to use all your communication skills, hand and feet and rely on other customer or students to help you out. I experienced even though a Czech stereo type is, that they are really distant, the general population was extremely forthcoming and kind. A fun fact is that Czech people don't talk to each other in the metro. After mastering the language barrier you can finally enjoy the city life. Prices in the touristic city centre are in general really high, for food and entrance fees to visit one of the many museums, galleries and historic attractions. But you can already indulge in the narrow streets or go to one of the many parks and beer-gardens alongside the Vltava River, enjoying a cheap and cold beer. The life cost are pretty similar to central Europe only food is a bit cheaper in the supermarket and if you eat out in a restaurants off centre. There are a lot of student parties as well as trips to visit destinations out side of Prague, organised through the university or Facebook organisations. During the winter semester the campus life was a bit slow, but I think in the summer semester it is a more vibrant area.

Student at CTU

Before I came to the Czech Technical University I didn't really have the biggest expectations regarding the academic content of the studies. The last report I read from exchange students going from Liechtenstein to the CTU were from a couple of years back, so I couldn't rely on them. The registration process and application for the Erasmus went great and I was looking forward for my time in Prague.

We got plenty of information before the arrival and the CTU has a very active group of people that take care of the Erasmus students. The architecture department on the other hand was pure chaos. Therefore, the first days of registration got a bit complicated. In comparison to the University of Liechtenstein you can choose from a huge selection of design studios. Around 15-20 Studios are opened for exchange students. They got presented to us on the first morning at the university. Further we had the opportunity to speak to the professors or assistants afterwards and had to immediately apply. This process was quite chaotic cause all the studio visiting hours overlapped, so that it was impossible to visit all the studios one might have been interested in. Further a lot of studios only accepted applications with a printed portfolio, but we weren't informed that we would choose the studios that day, nor that we needed multiple print outs off the portfolio. It was also possible to contact the professors via e-mail, but non of them replied. The Studio I choose was about conservation and heritage protection by Professor Girsá. Studying in the Czech republic I wanted to learn more about the local building culture. What I didn't knew when I choose the studio that professor Girsá himself doesn't speak any English. That is the case with a lot of studios, therefore the international students are mostly in contact with the assistants. Usually the Studios are a mix of international and Czech students. Because we were a lot of international students in studio Girsá they decided to split us up, and create two specially separated studios. This separation of the Czech students is also in all the regular courses. All the courses in English are only for inter-

national students and rarely chosen by Czech students. Therefore there was no real contact between the Czech and the international students throughout the semester. The fact that the courses were only for international students also impacted the content of the courses, in a way that the content was not that specific. By far the best course was social ecology, with the American professor Hanson, where we had to develop our own environmental manifest. Another interesting course was History of Architecture; Modernism with Prof. Vladimír Šlapeta, this course is not only about modernism, it is rather about discovering all episodes of Prague through weekly excursions. The Architecture department itself is located on the campus in Dejvice, Prague 6. Here all the students come together, the Masarykova dormitory is integrated and some Cafeterias and cafés. The Library is directly opposite of the architecture department and also offers a copy shop and working areas. Also a variety of sports courses, you can sign up for online, are taking place in this area. The university is well equipped with computer rooms and a model workshops as well as working rooms for each studio. Sadly the university has opening hours till 8:00 o'clock and is closed on weekends. Further all the rooms are only accessible over the electronic ID card, and the university was not able to give the international students the access rights so it was impossible to work at the university.

Conclusion

I think the CTU has a lot to offer, great Professor and a good work atmosphere, but only for Czech students. The program for the international students is not that well implemented yet. During my exchange I again got to appreciate the organisational level and structure of the University Liechtenstein. The city on the other hand makes up for the University part and due to its position in the Czech republic is an ideal position for further traveling. It was possible to make small trips every weekend as well as time to go on a long trip at the end, since the semester ended earlier.

