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# Homesick

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When we are born, we believe we are invincible. There is no evidence to the contrary. As we grow, we look at others who are sick, homeless, disabled, and we believe that surely, that could never happen to *us*. Of course, that is the greatest fallacy. As we grow older, we experience things which teach us that in thousands of little ways, we are all the same. We are all remarkably vulnerable creatures. We believe we will never catch a cold until we first get one; we listen to medical statistics every day, for example, that 1 in every 3 people will be diagnosed with skin cancer, and nonetheless refuse to believe it will happen to ourselves or a member of our family; until it does. And when it does, we fall a little bit further from our blissful ignorance towards the dark, beautiful reality of the human experience.



I have experienced many things that I had previously thought I was immune to. Before I moved to Prague, the thought of homesickness never so much as crossed my mind. In my head, I was completely prepared for the move. Logically, I knew that I could be home in two and a half hours on any given day. I *knew* that I could talk to any member of my family at any given moment, through text, through Skype or through any number of technological advancements that

our forbearers did not have the luxury of when they moved away from home. But the mind is an emotional beast. Cold logic is all well and good, but in the depths of our immeasurably complex minds, reason falls prey to emotion more often than not. And so it was when I moved.

I had everything all set; I was remarkably well prepared. The apartment was ready and waiting in the city. I said my goodbyes, shed the few customary tears, and walked through the departure gate. I landed in Prague, caught a taxi to our new apartment, moved in my belongings and all the while, I was totally relaxed, completely logical. It was a few days later when the homesickness first hit, and it hit hard. I climbed into my unfamiliar bed in my unfamiliar room and immediately I dreamt of home. I dreamt that I was in my own bed. I could hear my dogs barking in the garden, and it was the most beautiful sound in the world. And then I woke up. I was alone in an unfamiliar world, separated by hundreds of miles from the safety net of my family and my friends, and it all hit me at once. I cried; I didn't want to get out of that bed, I didn't want to face the world, I wanted to go home. I missed everything and everyone all at once.

A few days later I realized that homesickness is a universal experience on moving away from home. I talked to others, many from Ireland and England and even many European countries, and discovered quite quickly that everyone was feeling the same thing. Somehow, that made it hurt less. Suddenly, being in a new country seemed like a fantastic opportunity. I opened a bank account, I bought a Czech sim card, and as the days went by this alien world became a little more familiar. I met new people, made new friends, and I felt better. The homesickness faded. Sure, I feel it from time to time, but never as bad as at the start. It's completely natural to feel homesick, but you're failing yourself if you let it beat you.

In this world of global connectivity, we are never far from home, wherever we are. If you are homesick, talk to a friend; I guarantee you are *not* alone in what you're feeling. It will pass, as it does for everyone. It will pass, as it has done for every generation before you, who did not have the luxury of the Internet, or mobile phones, or commercial aircraft. It will pass, and soon enough you'll be home again. At the risk of ending on a cliché, don't give up. Don't go home too early. In the years to come, it might just be one of the great regrets of your life. The opportunity we have as Erasmus students is one that we may never have again; to travel, to experience new things, to see more of the world than most people ever do in their entire lives! Don't waste it by letting your mind get the better of you. Enjoy every minute of it.



**Luke Bartlett** is studying in Charles University Faculty of Law for his entire Erasmus year. His home university is University College Cork, in Ireland. After graduating, Luke hopes to pursue a Masters degree in Trinity College and, down the line, work for the United Nations. On the side he has a large interest in literature of all kinds as well as music, cinema and fitness. He hopes to some day write articles for a national newspaper or even, perhaps, a novel.