
Dreaming Big - My Erasmus Experience

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I remember being a student in Belarus I dreamed of going somewhere within the Erasmus program. I was thinking of the opportunities it could provide in social and academic life; but the most attractive was the possibility of being a part of the European community. The EU seemed to be an ideal place with its principles based on human rights, the rule of law and democracy. Immigration to Poland made a huge impression on me. This is because it is a neighboring country to Belarus but of a completely different life, atmosphere, and mindset.



While studying there I intended to submit documents and take part in the Erasmus program. I have been thinking for a while and after some time I have made a decision to go to the Czech Republic. This is because of my sister who had studied there – a period was very exciting for her - which raised my interest. Moreover, I knew that it is a nice, calm

and beautiful country. As I like aesthetics, a friend convinced me that I would definitely love Prague with its picturesque views. As the deadline for submitting the documents approached, I grew worried about the administrative procedure; but everything went well and I discovered I had worried needlessly. I was also lucky that my sister's friend lives in Prague and she helped me a lot.

I decided that my priority would be studying – rather than partying. Socializing is great and meeting new people and fellow students is an important part of Erasmus, but I did not want it to dominate my experience. As I am a calm person, living in a dorm where people sometimes party can be challenging. With this question in mind, I bet I had more money to rent a room and, thus, sleep at nights and study, but also have fun and so on during the day. In general, the atmosphere in the dormitory was warm and friendly. Most of the people like partying, but some of them do not, and that is OK.

I was waiting until the semester started, and I was more than satisfied with the classes. I found the classes engaging and the teaching staff motivational. I study International Relations in Poland, but here, in Prague, I signed up for classes at the Institute of Communication Studies and Journalism. For now, I am a hundred percent certain what I want to do in the future: to become a journalist.

This is the most important thing Erasmus gave me: a clear understanding of my goals and actions towards my life.

I consider myself to have been very lucky to have studied and spent as much time as I did in Prague: arguably, my most prominent day in the Czech Republic was 17 November, which is a celebration of the Velvet Revolution. I knew about this historical event, but I did not expect it to be so bright. Czech people honour their history, and, in my view, it deserves respect.

If I compare Prague and Warsaw, I would say they are completely different from each other. The architecture in Prague is of a classical style, and it looks like a city from a fairytale. I like the red roofing that is on so many of the buildings in the historic center - it makes the city peaceful and pleasant. Life in Prague is quieter, you barely hear noise after 10 p.m. Warsaw has more lively architecture due to its variety, and it is more chaotic.

Overall, being an Erasmus student was a very good experience, especially if you know a little in advance your reason for wanting to go and have an idea of what goals you would like to meet.

Valerie Stupnikova studied at Charles University under the Erasmus program in the fall of 2019. She was a contributor to Forum magazine and reported from Albertov and other parts of Prague on November 17 when Czechs marked the 30th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution. You can read some of her contributions [here](#) and [here](#) .

Edited by Jan Velinger