
My Erasmus Experience

New ways of thinking and new friends

By Molly Fergus
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What led me to Charles University as an Erasmus student was geography. But not only as my discipline of study, but the characteristics of the city it was located within.

Nestled in the centre of Europe, Prague encapsulates the concept of what the Erasmus programme is about. Being a central node in this European network of cities, routes and ideas, I knew that studying in Prague would expose me to a unique diversity of people and culture and provide me with the ability to travel easily around the area that provided me with this opportunity in the first place.



And coming from Ireland, an island on the other side of Europe, the knowledge that I could take a brief train ride to a range of neighbouring countries in Europe for the same price it would take to get to the other side of my own, was too much of a novelty for me to pass up.

Another selling point of Prague to me was the weather; while this may sound surprising, as someone who has grown up in a place where the weather often varies between "it's raining" or "it's about to rain", I took a lot of satisfaction from seeing the umbrella I bought upon arrival to Prague in September sitting on the shelf with the tags on for the majority of the year.

Leading to another thing my time on Erasmus has provided: through my interactions with people from all around the world in class or out socially, not only did I learn about their culture and their experiences, I learnt a lot about my own. Just as I realised the Irish have a slight obsession with the weather and that others - shockingly- did not tend to discuss it as much, I learnt of other similarities and differences with other cultures and realised the unique and shared features of my own country.



Yet my time on Erasmus in Prague was made of slightly more than its average precipitation levels and geographical location in Europe. Through the extensive Erasmus networks in Prague; events, trips and societies such as ESN CU, I was exposed to new experiences, new people and new lines of thinking. I was surrounded by an infectious environment of people wanting to make the most of their time out from Erasmus, and for me it was a unique chance to remove myself from the responsibilities and old habits of back home and adapt to a lifestyle that offered a large degree of freedom with new friends.

And this diversity was not restricted to the social realm of Erasmus; it was also present in an academic aspect too. As a double major in two different faculties, Science and Arts, I was exposed to many ways of teaching and assessment. I was permitted to enrol in courses outside my core disciplines of study; and in the process expose myself to new lines of thinking.



Accustomed to large lecture halls and essay based exams in my home university, the variance in teaching and assessment posed a learning curve for me. Yet aside from the constant battle I faced with the Czech keyboard in computers classes, I gained a lot from the diversified teaching methods of group projects, presentations, verbal examinations and assessment trips.



What the Erasmus programme aims to provide is a common European identity; and while I initially selected Prague for Erasmus due to its geographical centrality in Europe, I left with a heightened sense of closeness to my European citizenship.

During her Erasmus stay, Molly covered a number stories for iForum including the student perspective on Brexit and Manifesto Market.