



Old Town Square in Prague, Czech Republic

I spent the Spring 2013 semester at the University of Economics, Prague in the Czech Republic. At the time of my exchange I was in my third year of university, studying Business Administration. I am concentrating in Human Resource Management and Management Information Systems. I spent the most amazing five months in Prague from February to May (and then travelled Europe for an additional two months!).

Preparation

The biggest piece of advice I can give you is to start your visa application as soon as you get your acceptance letter, or even better, start it before. I spent a lot of time stressing over my visa, and ended up having to buy a last-minute flight because I wasn't sure when my visa would arrive. I arrived pretty late, compared to most of the other students, and I really wished I had been more organized so I could have arrived earlier.

If you can, it is much easier to get a Youth Mobility Visa than a regular Student Visa. The application requires much fewer documents, and the documents that are required are much easier to get. You can still study on a Youth Mobility Visa (you can actually work too). The only thing is, there are only a limited number given per year (although this wasn't a problem for me). It can still take up to two months, so I would still recommend applying as early as possible.

In terms of packing, bring a very warm jacket. The spring of 2013 was apparently the coldest spring in Prague for over 500 years (or so I heard when I was there), but even during a “normal” spring I would advise a warm coat! February until mid April was very cold, and there was quite a bit of snow. I wore my winter jacket, a scarf, and winter boots basically every day. Bring shoes that are resistant to snow, otherwise they will be ruined. Also, don’t bother bringing heels. The streets are largely cobblestone, making it very difficult to walk in heels, and Prague is

During Exchange

Prague is the most beautiful city. When I first arrived I was worried that I would be very unhappy there. It was freezing, and I was extremely jetlagged. But two weeks in, I had already fallen in love with the city.

Czech people can be rude (many guidebooks and websites warned me of this prior to my trip), but you get used to it. Just remember not to take anything personally. It can be challenging to communicate, as many Czech people don't speak any English (or very little). The younger generation is much stronger in English than the older generation. Don't worry, you can still get by without too much trouble. It can be hard in restaurants, because some of them will only have a Czech menu and the servers may not speak English well. It helps if you are able to recognize some of the basic Czech words (chicken, beef, vegetables, etc.), then at least you will have an idea of what you're ordering. Beware – Czech food is very meat-oriented.

While in Prague, I lived in Jarov III F, and I would recommend it to anyone. The facilities are horrible and the rooms are small, but it is so much fun because almost all of the exchange students live together there. Sharing a bedroom with another student was a very new experience for me. There was virtually no privacy. However, my roommate became my best friend in Prague, so I didn't mind! The kitchen consists of a two-burner hot plate (which broke twice during the semester) and a mini fridge. Fitting food for four people in a mini fridge is not easy. The dorms are a 10-15 minute tram ride from the university, and about 20-25 minutes from the city centre. There is a large supermarket only a couple stops away.

