

STAP Experience Report

Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic

Academic Year 2024/25 Fall Term, 23.09.2024 – 14.02.2025



■■■■■■■■■■, Bachelor of Sciences in Social Sciences, University of Cologne

Completed courses:

Contemporary Czech society in sociological perspective

Children, Youth and Media

Sociological Theory

Global Media

Audiovisual Interpreting of Reality

My semester at Charles University in Prague was a truly enriching experience, both academically and personally, it gave me the chance to develop and immerse myself in a beautiful and exciting European capital. - ■■■■■ Social Sciences, Charles University

Description of the university and courses

Charles University is a renowned university in Europe and offers an international community. I studied at the Faculty of Social Sciences and took courses such as: “Contemporary Czech society in sociological perspective”, “Children, Youth and Media”, “Sociological Theory” etc. The courses were very enriching, and I enjoyed them. I especially appreciated the interactive seminars, which were not only for academic learning, but also allowed room for critical thinking. During my semester in Prague, I was able to improve my English skills by actively participating in discussions and writing essays. The “Sociological Theory” course required prior knowledge from another course at Prague University. However, I was able to participate in the course by proving that I had already passed a similar course in Cologne. I found the flexibility and consideration for Erasmus students at Charles University very good. The online systems and platforms for course registrations, course materials, exam registrations etc. were very clear. All organizational aspects during the stay abroad were made very easy for us by emails with corresponding instructions or video tutorials from Charles University. In addition, the university libraries are excellently equipped and the older libraries in particular offer beautiful, old-fashioned and large study rooms. I really enjoyed trying out the university libraries with other students.

Preparation for the semester abroad

Planning and arrival:

The planning started about six months in advance, and I submitted all the necessary documents, such as the Learning Agreement, well in advance. I benefited greatly from the support of the teams in Cologne and Prague. I am very happy that it was in the interest of both universities to make the planning and preparation as easy as possible for me. The International Office Team at Prague University prepared online Zoom calls in which we were provided with all the necessary information. There was also a meeting where a psychologist from Charles University gave us tips on how to deal with possible feelings of homesickness during the semester abroad. Fortunately, I didn't have to use any of her tips, but I was still happy to be so well looked after by Charles University even before I started my semester abroad. My arrival was quick and easy, as I flew here by plane. However, here in Prague I quickly realized that there are great train connections both within Prague and to Germany. That's why I decided to take the train home for Christmas.

Accommodation:

I lived in accommodation run by the “Erasmus in Prague” organization. It was super central and very nice, but also very expensive, so I would say that the accommodation situation was not ideal. Nevertheless, I really benefited from the fact that everything went smoothly, and I didn't have to worry about being disappointed with my accommodation when I arrived. As a tip for future Erasmus students, I can say that the earlier you start looking for accommodation, the better. There are many Facebook groups in Prague offering accommodation for Erasmus students. It is also helpful to join the “Erasmus in Prague” WhatsApp group. You can usually find a link to join on their Instagram page.

Life in Prague

Prague is a fascinating, beautiful and lively city. In my free time, I enjoyed exploring the old town, visiting museums and galleries and enjoying Czech cuisine. In addition to the beautiful city center, there are also many quiet and green parks that serve as retreats. Prague Castle is worth a visit and the view of the city from up there, whether day or night, is also very beautiful. The advantage of spending the winter semester in Prague is that you can immerse yourself in a dreamlike Christmas world from December onwards. When I was there, I visited countless Christmas markets, which contributed to unforgettable evenings with fantastic decorations and fun ice-skating rinks. Public transport is extremely well organized, always punctual and inexpensive. I bought monthly tickets, which were heavily discounted, especially for students. I occasionally used the weekend to go on trips. I traveled to Budapest, Bratislava and Vienna by train and bus (I can only recommend this).

Conclusion

My semester abroad at Charles University was an unforgettable time. The combination of academic and personal development, the new friendships and the many things the city had to offer exceeded my expectations! I can say one thing for sure - I had unforgettable evenings with my friends in Prague, which I will remember fondly for a very long time. I recommend future Erasmus students to be open to new experiences and people and to take the opportunity to develop not only academically but also personally.