

Exchange at Tomas Bata University in Zlín, Czech Republic, 1. Sep 2022 - 31. Jan 2023

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Introduction

Since I wanted to go on exchange and study abroad, I looked at my different options. What was most important to me, was that I wanted to find a creative institution where I could develop my design skills within Multimedia Design, and not coding.

Our international coordinator, Anne, suggested this place as the most creative one. I did have to take a class of multimedia 2 with some coding as well though. I picked this over the warm places in hope to get more creative input from it, and also because it's a cheaper country to live in.

In general they do have a way more creative and open-minded down-to-earth approach to everything here than at home, which has been the greatest part about these studies and really helped me develop and explore my creative side. Also the way the dormitories are set up was great and really added to the experience.

Academic experience

At first I picked the subjects:

Drawing 1
Multimedia 2 (required)
Graphic Design
Cad Rhino 1
Cross-cultural marketing and advertising

I ended up exchanging Cad Rhino 1 and Cross-cultural marketing for:

Visual Communication
Motion Graphics

Since Cad Rhino 1 (3D) wasn't what I'd expected and couldn't see what I would be using it for, and it seemed to be mostly for microsoft users and not macbook which I have. Cross-cultural marketing I already studied at an earlier education and would rather have something more design related.

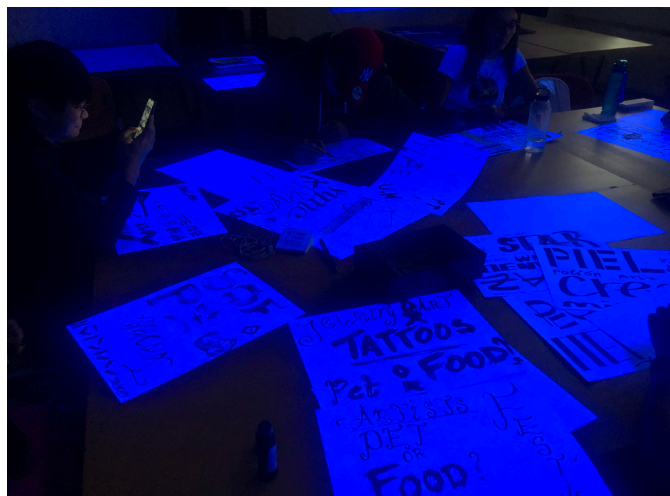
This was no problem at all and the school (Eva and Pavel) helped me change and get settled in properly. They also helped and listened with whatever problems I had, and made sure everything was alright.

I also managed to land my dream internship, as a UI Designer in Copenhagen, from here through an online interview.

Drawing was probably my favorite class from this semester, it was a very professional approach to drawing, anatomy and perspective. At first I felt a bit intimidated since I haven't been drawing since I was kid, but there was room for everyone and I found it very exciting and challenging and learned a lot.



Graphic design was at first not exactly what I had expected, since we didn't do it digitally, but I was then informed that Visual communication was more digital, so I added that course as well. I liked the graphic design and visual communication classes and the creative way they were set up, and felt that I got to explore and develop creatively in a way that I haven't experienced before.



In Multimedia 2 we learned about php, mysql etc, and the teacher, Pavel Krutil, was very good at explaining and making everyone understand and follow along, even though this was obviously not something I really wanted to study in the first case, but turned out fine.

In Motion Graphics we worked in After effects and learned how to make animations, edit videos etc. Even though I started this class quite late because of changes of subjects, I really enjoyed this course and the teacher, Vava, was very nice.

All in all, I feel that I really got to explore my creative side without too much stress or pressure (like at home) which made it more possible to actually tune into it. I can feel that this was exactly what I needed at this time and I'm very grateful for it, but I'm not sure everyone would've felt the same and maybe would've wanted something more out of it.

Social & Cultural experience

Something that was really special about this stay, was that all exchange students are together in one big dormitory, U12 (unless they had something else of course, but almost all). This is organized by the university and a very simple procedure, and located very central.

These are small apartments with 4 people, 2 in each room. When I first heard about this concept I was a bit worried about having to share a room with a stranger, but decided it would be a useful experience, and also quite cheap.

I was lucky to get a roommate who I got along with really well, who's a long-term ph.d student from India here. I know everyone weren't as lucky and some roommates had issues, but of course that's bound to happen, it seems that it worked out pretty well for everyone though. Almost everyone else shared rooms with other erasmus students.



There was lots of great erasmus events and ways to get to know the other exchange students, and we had a lot of fun. I met a lot of great people and got some really good friends from all over the world, and it was so much fun to all live in the same place and hang out whenever we wanted and do fun things together all the time, a very social experience.

We traveled a lot, Zlín is a great location in that manner since it is close to many special places in Europe. We were in Prague, Budapest, Bratislava, Krakow, Vienna and many smaller towns and cities in Czech Republic like Luhacovice, Brno, Lednice, Olomouc, among others. I would recommend to go on as many trips as possible.

I also enjoyed the nature a lot, my roommate knew a czech guy who took us on different hikes and experiences, and right behind the dorm you can easily go to the forest and enjoy the nature.

There were also several nice events by the faculty, where we could see student projects and/or try the local, cultural foods and drinks, and socialize.

I didn't really get to socialize with a lot of czech people though, but I think that's quite normal when they're in their daily lives and routines.

Practical Experience

Zlín is just a small town, but it has everything you need and is a good place for studying.

In general the people really don't speak English though, so Google Translate is your best friend. This wasn't a problem at the school or dormitory though.

Compared to Denmark it's quite cheap as well, which was really nice.

The dormitory was less than 1300 DKK a month.

Doing laundry was a bit expensive though, at 30 DKK per wash, but worked well and had a large room for hanging the clothes.

I'm vegan and had no problem, the traditional cuisine is pretty much only meat though, but it's been quite easy for me to find food. Also I eat mostly fruits and vegetables and they're quite cheap, especially when you go for items on sale, you can live really cheaply. My grocery shopping was never more than 200 DKK and usually around 70 DKK, including drinks. I'd recommend going to Kaufland more than Billa, it's huge and has absolutely everything, cheaper and lots of discounts.

Going to a bar, a pint is usually less than 15 DKK.

I did end up spending quite a lot of money though, because of all the traveling (trains, hostels, going out, eating out) but at least it was possible because of the lower prices. I am usually never able to afford this.

I signed up for the university gym in U5 which had different classes as well, they were all in Czech though so I didn't go to a lot of them, but it had a tiny gym in U5 which I really enjoyed using.

There's also quite a few options of how to go to Zlín since the airports Vienna, Budapest, Krakow and Prague aren't too far away, just some hours trainride and usually quite cheap (depending on the time). Apps you'll need for tickets and traveling around is Muj Vlak and IDOS.

When you get the ESN (ISIC) card you'll also get discounts on Ryanair tickets and a 20kg suitcase free of charge. I used this to go home for Christmas and New Years, and my final trip home (from Vienna).

Going to Zlín, I used FlixBus since it was cheap, I had the time and I could add extra luggage cheaply. It was almost 24hrs though, so nothing I'd really recommend but I found it to be a nice trip.

I also chose to sign up for the Erasmus buddy before the arrival, and got a nice guy from Turkey called Hasan. I'd recommend doing this as it's a really good way to get settled in, introduced to everything, meet people and see places.

Also Patrik Foltyn, who was the head of the international office was very nice and helped with all the practical and confusing stuff there is when you arrive in a new place like this.

One thing I wish I would've known when choosing though, is that pretty much no one chooses this as their first option - it's usually where people go because they didn't get into the place they actually wanted to go to.

I'd recommend you to go to Terasa 1 (good sangria and drinks), Infinity (you won't miss it, chupitos!), Pstros (cozy bar, has the best cider but only seasonally), and the top of the highest building (forgot the name).



Conclusion

All in all, I've had a really good experience and really enjoyed my stay here. For me, I think that this was what was supposed to happen at this time of my life, and what I needed to get to where I want to be in life and learn more about myself and my desires and wishes.

I'd definitely recommend it if you think what I've written here resonates with you. At times, I kinda wished I would've chosen a warm place, but it would've never been the same experience and I'm happy I chose this.



