

EXCHANGE REPORT

KEA STUDENT
SPRING SEMESTER 2021
VILNIUS COLLAGE OF DESIGN

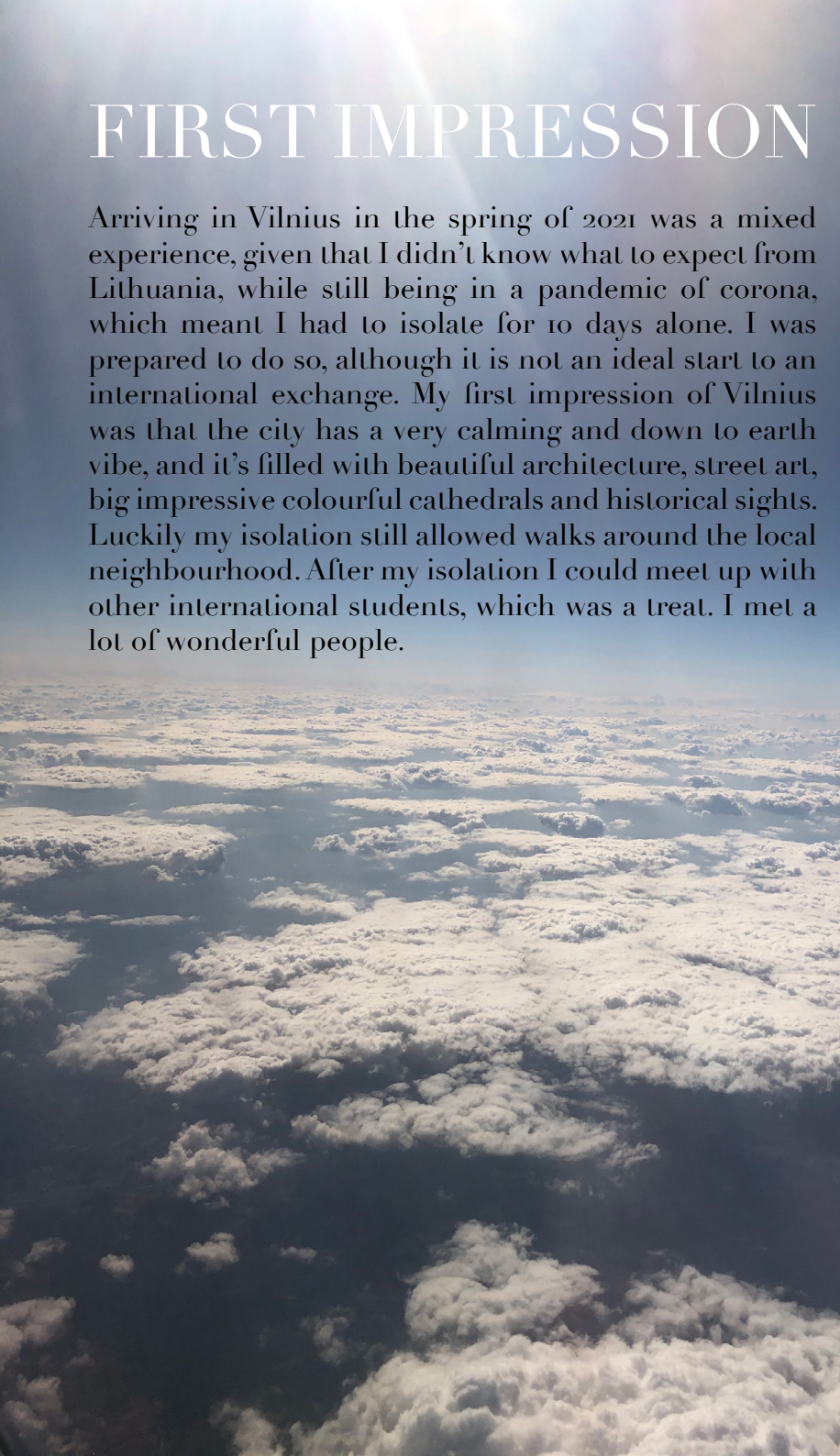
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FIRST IMPRESSION

Arriving in Vilnius in the spring of 2021 was a mixed experience, given that I didn't know what to expect from Lithuania, while still being in a pandemic of corona, which meant I had to isolate for 10 days alone. I was prepared to do so, although it is not an ideal start to an international exchange. My first impression of Vilnius was that the city has a very calming and down to earth vibe, and it's filled with beautiful architecture, street art, big impressive colourful cathedrals and historical sights. Luckily my isolation still allowed walks around the local neighbourhood. After my isolation I could meet up with other international students, which was a treat. I met a lot of wonderful people.

Vilnius is a very safe city, and it's no problem to walk around alone at any hour. Vilnius is also the greenest capital of Europe, and offers many beautiful parks and forests, as well as hills with beautiful viewpoints over the city.



ACADEMICS

My entire semester in Vilnius Collage of Design took place online, due to the corona pandemic. The school was closed and having all classes be online was of course a different exchange experience. But some of our classes included buildings in the city of Vilnius and architectural history and details that were used in our drawings, illustrations or graphic design assignments, which still made it relevant to be in the city of Vilnius. Later in the semester it was also possible to physically go and visit the school, which was a great experience.

Vilnius Collage of Design (VDK) Downsides

VDK is a small school, and sometimes there were a few challenges in regards of communication and necessary practical information from the administration. The website does not have a lot of information in english, there are no official course descriptions in english, and there were a lot of things I had to contact the school about myself. Some of the important information was not sent to me before later in the semester, which at times was stressful and frustrating. For instance, I had a big workload of 8 courses and was the student at their school with most classes ever. This could have been avoided if I had been informed of my options before a month into the semester, where it was too late to change the stressful situation. However, some of the mistakes from VDK could be due to the corona situation.

Upsides

The international coordinator and lecturers of VDK are very helpful with whatever questions you may have, and the graphic design program has such talented lectures with very creative assignments. I'm happy that I chose this program and got the opportunity to experience a more independent and artistic environment, outside of KEA.



CITY CULTURE & WEATHER

Vilnius has a very low key vibe and the local citizens are very down to earth, not making a big fuss about anything. The city is contaminated by fascinating and beautiful architecture. Taking a stroll down any street is always an inspiring experience. In the same time, the weather in Lithuania can vary a lot, and for instance the month of May can offer anything from snow to 30 degrees beach weather, so I highly recommend bringing clothing for any occasion.





PRICES AND OVERALL LIVING CONDITIONS

Compared to living in Denmark, Lithuania is a very **cheap** country to be in, whether it comes to rent, public transportation or eating out. Depending on flight-ticket prices, school related expenses, and the general way of living, the SU could possibly be enough to cover all monthly expenses, especially including the Erasmus scholarship.

My monthly **rent** was 400€, including all utilities and wifi, and this is even considered a little expensive for Vilnius. I had my own apartment in a central location, and if you choose to live in a shared apartment the rent is usually around 300€, utilities included. If you choose to live at the **student dorms**, the rent is significantly lower and you quickly meet a lot of other students, but the living conditions are less "luxurious" and the dorms are usually located further outside of the city, so it depends on your priorities. I personally enjoyed living in the **city**, within walking distance of everything. Food and drinks are cheap and some places you can even get a meal and a drink for less than 10€.

Public transportation has a 50% student discount, and I recommend getting an ISIC card. "Bolt" (Lithuanian Uber) is cheap too.





ART

Vilnius is filled with street art and amazing museums, I especially recommend visiting the city area of Uzupis, which has a special history and atmosphere. The Kazys Varnelis art museum is highly recommended as well.

SOCIALIZING

It can be challenging being on exchange, during a pandemic. Future exchange students will hopefully be in a better situation, regarding corona. Meeting other international students in Vilnius is relatively easy, if you keep an open mind and are proactive in groups on facebook and whatsapp, whether you meet them through your receiving school or through other connections. Everyone is in the same situation as you, in regards of meeting new people. Local Lithuanians will usually have a tendency to be a bit more reserved.



OUTSIDE VILNIUS

Vilnius lives up to its reputation of being the greenest capital in Europe. It is filled with trees and beautiful parks, and is surrounded by big areas of forest and lakes. Some parks I can recommend in Vilnius are Kudru Park, Bernadine Garden and Vingis Park. As a bonus, the city is filled with cute dogs as well.

Outside of Vilnius there is plenty of things to see. Many exchange students went on trips to travel around the Baltics etc., but you can also go on day trips from Vilnius to visit nearby cities or areas. I went on smaller trips to the following locations, which are all recommendable: Green Lakes, Trakai Castle, Botanical Garden and Kaunas. It is good to get out of the city once in a while, and fairly easy. The transportation is very cheap, and the student discount is eligible outside the city as well.



CONCLUSION

Being on exchange in Lithuania was not without its complications, but overall it was a great experience and I can highly recommend it. Some of the complications were of course caused by the pandemic. Vilnius Collage of Design (VDK) is a great school, if you like working independently on creative projects, with a high focus on developing skills and tools in the craftsmanship of graphic design, rather than writing academic reports or having a big curriculum to read. I've learned so much, both in a personal and a creative manner, and I wouldn't be without this experience. That said, VDK still have some things to learn when it comes to proper communication and information to their exchange students. But I've been very inspired and I have developed unique tools, which would not have been possible in the same way at my home school of KEA.

