

## **Erasmus in Krakow: a highlight of my academic journey**

By Anastasiya Manko

Choosing my Erasmus destination was a bit stressful: even with all the information on them out there, you still don't quite know what kind of place exactly you are going to end up coming to. Krakow, however, proved all my fears wrong and unreasonable – a beautiful city, a historical university and a very welcoming support net immediately made me feel comfortable and at home. One little thing to mind, though – all stores are closed on Sundays, so if you'd like to stock up on some food right away, make sure you arrive on any other day of the week.

Because I had heavy luggage, I had to order a transfer from the airport, but in reality it is in immediate proximity to the city and can be easily reached with the help of buses. To track public transportation there's also a handy application called "jakdojade". So, moving about the city did not cause me any problems whatsoever and was easy from the very beginning.

The first week of the semester was full of interesting activities, which helped a lot to get to know the Polish culture, the city and also meet some of my fellow exchange students. When classes started, I was pleasantly surprised as well: everything I had registered for turned out to be interesting and taught by amazing professors. I did have some mishaps with certain classes, like them turning out to actually be in Polish, but it was not a problem and I was able to easily choose other subjects.

There was an amazing feel of equality in the classroom, discussions and opinions of students truly mattered. One skill that I feel like I really strengthened during my stay was critical thinking. In general, a semester in Krakow made a huge difference in my knowledge, it deepened my understanding of the world and stimulated my creativity a lot.

I generally found the university staff helpful and, most importantly, eager to help. All my questions were always answered, any problems solved and I felt like I could address the university staff at any time and receive assistance.

I commuted between different buildings during the week, but everything was located around the central part of the city, so it only took a short walk to get from one building to another. My dormitory provided all the services that I needed, like bedsheets and laundry, there were shared kitchens on the floors. The room was quite small, but very cozy and with all necessary things. I also lived with very sweet Polish and Ukrainian neighbors, so my stay was overall very pleasant.

One of the most important things for me was to be able to live off of the money provided in Erasmus funds. Luckily, Poland is one of those destinations, where the scholarship is truly enough to live. I could pay for my accommodation, food and any other needs with no problem, and didn't need to add any more money to support myself.

One of the most amazing things for me in Krakow were big green parks everywhere in the city. My route from home to the university passed through a beautiful park, and I never missed an opportunity to walk there, spotting squirrels and birds everywhere around me. Because of these beautiful green areas, a touristic, active and fast Krakow also offers peace and quiet when you need it.

The city is full of life, with many opportunities to meet people of all kinds. For party lovers it offers a great variety of options, anyone more interested in academic and work activities will also be able to engage in many of those. I got a chance to participate in an international COIMBRA Group conference at the beginning of June. I volunteered there with other international and local students, had a lot of fun and at the same time saw how the organization of such an event happens. It was a very valuable experience.

For art lovers, Krakow provides many opportunities to visit museums and galleries. On some days, they are completely free to enter, which is amazing. At the beginning of the mobility, ESN also gives a chance to visit some of them for free.

Overall, I truly enjoyed my time in Krakow and at the Jagiellonian University. I will never forget this amazing experience, and I would definitely recommend going on Erasmus, and specifically to Krakow, to anyone. It has full potential to become a truly unforgettable time in one's life.



