

ERASMUS MEMORIES 2017/2018

UVMP in Košice

Carlos García, UAH

I first heard of the Erasmus programme when I was about fifteen years old. My Spanish History teacher was using a free – study hour to tell us about her own learning experiences, and how our possibilities in the 21st century were broader and, in some aspects, even better than they had. She happened to mention the Erasmus, the one great experience she never had the opportunity to try. I just knew I had to do it, but deep down, I never really thought I would have the chance to study abroad, which had been one of my biggest dreams since I started to know about the world outside of my own country.

A few years later (eight, to be precise), I found myself in Kosice, a little bit lost, different country, different language... But that changed quickly.

First of all, the people. Yes, I know you know that the Erasmus experience is all about meeting new people from almost everywhere, but I don't really think we truly understand the meaning until we are in a group of 10 people, each of us from a different country. That is something (I was scared to death the first time I found myself in a group without another Spanish person, but I can laugh about it now, knowing that fear was just childish nonsense).

I was lucky to meet another Spanish girl at my residence the very first night I arrived in Kosice. It may sound silly, but being both of us from the same country took a huge weight off me. I no longer had to face everything on my own, and at the time that was a lot (I think I would have survived anyway, but hey, who knows). The other Spanish girl, the two Portugese and the Bosnian, they all became my family for those five months.

But I was really overreacting. Mario (the Erasmus coordinator) and Vlado (my thesis tutor) treated me great. They were patient and motivated to help me in anything I ever needed. Mario took care of letting me know about every step of the burocracy (insurances, payment of the residence...) but also gave me tips about the city and Slovakia in general, where to eat, what to visit, hikings, cheap stores to buy good winter clothes (believe me, you WILL NEED THEM). He isn't only interested in our academic improvements, but also in how we are spending our time outside, if we are fully enjoying our Erasmus months.

On the other hand, Vlado knew from the first moment that we didn't share the same mother tongue, and that, 'though we both spoke English fluently, there would obviously be moments when we wouldn't understand each other, or when we would need to repeat our phrases two, three times (there were, but I will never admit how many). He never treated me any different after any of those moments. I learnt a lot from him, but I also got to know the person behind the teacher, and that was great, it was something I never had the chance to experience back home.

I know this “short” text doesn’t really get my whole Erasmus experience. If I want to be honest with you... I doesn’t even come close. But it’s impossible to fit 5 months of my life in just a few lines. I just want you to know, future Erasmus students (haha, joking, I feel very old now), that yes, this is THE EXPERIENCE. Enjoy it, squeeze it to the fullest. Go to crazy weekend trips to another country that you just planned five minutes before the train leaves. Go partying even if you have laboratory at 7am the next morning. Speak a mix between English and your mother tongue that only you can understand. Have lunch at 5 and dinner at 6.30, or at 2am. Laugh in the great moments (there will be a lot of them), but also cry those five minutes before the first of your new family goes back home, because they will become your family, wether you like it or not. Jump in the snow, get lost in Kosice, do activities with the ESN, try the very very few options at McDonald’s.

Live your experience, because sooner than you expect it, it will be ending. But it also would have become one of the greatest of your life.

(Btw, Kaufland > Lidl > Tesco > Billa > Klass. You will understand it there).

Košice 15.02.2018

