

Studying on Erasmus in Poland

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One of the oldest universities

Surprisingly (or not), the Jagiellonian University (JU) was founded only 16 years after the foundation of The Charles University in the Czech Republic. This makes JU the second oldest university in Central Europe. The JU belongs to the group of innovative and expanding educational institutions. Thousands of students come every year to study there. The university has 16 faculties and many different institutes. It is not only a traditional seat of learning but also a progressive university. Recently there were a whole new campus and a modern university hospital built in Cracow. However, you can also admire the old university's buildings which are spread across the city centre, for example the oldest part – Collegium Maius, or you can borrow books from the big university library and use lots of its online resources.



Polish flag, Creative Commons



Jagiellonian University, Institute of English Studies, photo by Dominika Jozová

My decision

Going on the Erasmus+ programme was my first great experience abroad. I knew that I could choose one of the universities located in Western Europe, thanks to the agreements that our faculty (and mainly our Department of English Studies) maintains with foreign universities, but the Jagiellonian University has indeed lots to offer. [The Instytut Filologii Angielskiej](#), where my studies took place during the winter semester, delivers numerous courses that were both interesting and relevant in terms of my current focus and future plans. You can choose from the linguistic to interesting literary courses. You can also view all courses on the respective USOS web (see the [link](#)).

Erasmus students thus have the opportunity of studying various subjects not only from their institute. You can also take an intensive language course of Polish, but you have to pay for it because it is provided by the ESN organisation. I personally do not think that it is necessary to take this course, as

the Polish language is not so hard to understand as it similarly to Czech is a member of the family of Slavic languages.

And what else led me to my choice? It was the location of the JU in Cracow because during my stay I could also go home, and also my friends and family came to Cracow to visit me, which they all claimed to have enjoyed tremendously. I should not forget to mention that I went to Cracow also because of my friend from our faculty, who had been in Cracow a year before me. She talked so much about Poland and her enriching experience that I finally decided to go too. And I do not regret a minute of it.



Jagiellonian University, Collegium Maius, photo by Dominika Jozová

New friendships, classmates, and memories

I think that the most important thing for me was the actual experience. You are alone in a new city, you meet totally different people, who can become your new friends. Most of the time you are exploring the place, enjoying the atmosphere, and of course studying and reading new books. Nevertheless, Erasmus is also about getting to know yourself and about personal growth. Sometimes it is demanding because you have to get used to totally different things, from different culture or cuisine, even though Poland is our neighbour, to different style of teaching or to something that can be surprising for you... It depends on the character that you have. For example, I am not a party-type of person, so I did not go to the parties so much, I rather stayed at the university or visited different places and parks and met with my new classmates and discussed our subjects over a cup of coffee or tea. I met lots of different people – a guy from Mexico, an Englishman (who is partly Welsh), my Austrian-Polish room-mate, and my Polish friends. I am still in contact with most of my friends.

And as for studying, I had chosen mostly literary subjects. I took 8 courses. So, I was reading and exploring new books or classical pieces and new ideas throughout my whole stay. I really appreciated that our tutors connected lots of the fields of studies: gender studies in my course of The Gay and Lesbian literature, film studies and cultural studies in my course of House and Home in Literature and Culture, etc. Though we also listened to some music when it came to my subject which was about the Beat Generation, or we had a tour on the castle of Wawel during my Polish literature course. I studied the work of Jane Austen and T. S. Eliot or explored Transgressive Literature. I took a course in Leadership too, which was definitely an interesting experience.



Jagiellonian University, Library, photo by Dominika Jozová

What to be prepared for?

Since there are a lot of things to mention, I will write only a few of them...

Paperwork

- Firstly, you will have to fill in all the Erasmus+ paperwork. This could be a tiring job, but trust me, it is worth doing it right, because you will not have any problems later. As soon as you are done with it, you will get your Erasmus+ study allowance, and the foreign university will receive you. You can get to Cracow by bus, train or by plane (sometimes the plane tickets are cheap). I went there with my parents by car because I wanted to show them around the city and they helped me with my luggage too... They enjoyed the atmosphere of the city and thanks to them my first days of stay were easier.

Accommodation

- Regarding accommodation, all depends on your choice. I wanted to stay at the dormitory, not only because dormitories are a cheaper option for living, but also because they are close to the university's buildings and the city centre and being of good quality and furnished with new furniture, they are also really comfortable. Nevertheless, it is hard to get a dormitory room as there are many students coming to study at the Jagiellonian University every year. Fortunately, I got my place there. What was surprising for me, was the fact that the Nawojka dormitory, where I was accommodated, was also quiet and a friendly place. Still, you can get a shared apartment/room, but it takes a lot of effort to find something nice and not so expensive in Cracow... Cracow is a large tourist city, so do not expect that living there is as cheap as it might seem for Czechs from "our favourite shopping venues on the Polish borders". I think that it is always good to have your own money saved for your Erasmus, then you can enjoy more of the tasty Polish cuisine or go on a trip outside Cracow...

Education

- Education there is based on quality, innovative methods, and tradition. All my tutors at the Jagiellonian University were nice and open towards Erasmus students. The subjects were interesting, as I choose most courses for non-Erasmus students. I have to say that not all subjects were super-easy, but thanks to my good preparation from our Department of English Studies, I could pass all of them with excellent results, and I did not have any difficulty with understanding the English language.

So, if you decide to go to Cracow, I am sure that you will have a fantastic experience, personal as well as professional. A further asset for me was the support I received from home as it was provided by the teachers at our home Department of English Studies. Finally, all my study efforts were also recognised academically through the acceptance of the Erasmus courses that I completed as part of my studies abroad!

So, what are you waiting for?

Go, grow and enjoy your study abroad!!!



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