

Exchange experience report Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Autumn 2019

For my mandatory exchange programme I decided to go in Krakow, Poland at the Jagiellonian University. I included this University in my application because of the interesting courses it offered in English and because I always found Poland a fascinating country. After this semester, I can say that my expectations have been confirmed and I had a great time in Krakow.

The courses I chose were Refugee Law, Judicial Cooperation in Criminal matters in the EU, Monetary Law and Monetary Policy, the Law of International Commercial Contracts, the Constitutional Legal History of East Central Europe and Case Based Legal Reasoning. I found these courses very interesting and I would recommend all of them, however I have to say that the ones I enjoyed the most are the first two as they were dealing with something different from what I have studied so far during my LLB and I liked a lot the teachers. At the Jagiellonian University, the way of examination depends on the course. I had oral exams as well as written ones while on the other hand, for other courses we had an assignment or a presentation to make. Overall, I can say that it is easier to get high grades compared to Groningen.

Polish language is very difficult and Polish people do not really speak English. After two years in the Netherlands adjusting to this aspect was quite challenging as Dutch people have an excellent level of English. On the other hand, in Poland communicating with locals is difficult. However, at the University level and in the offices they all speak good English and therefore it was not a problem dealing with information regarding courses taught in English as well as documents needed for the Erasmus programme. The International Office for Erasmus students is very efficient, in fact it was not a problem communicating with them even when I was still in the Netherlands. They answer to emails quickly and they were very fast in providing the needed documents. It is important to mention that the teachers I had in Krakow were very kind and available. They were aware of the English level some Erasmus students had before attending the exchange programme so they were not very demanding and they were not expecting their level to improve a lot in a short time. Therefore, during exams they focused on the content of what students wrote rather than the level of English.

Regarding finance and the various costs per month, it is possible to say that Poland is very cheap compared to the Netherlands and Groningen. In fact, I was able to get a studio for 300 euro in the city centre. Going out for dinner is also very cheap and Polish food is very good. In general, life costs are very low and this aspect makes Krakow a perfect city for students. In the city the public transportation works very well and bus and trams are always on time. However, during my semester abroad I was mostly walking as I was living in the city centre and everything was close.

It is worth to mention that the Jagiellonian University has an amazing ESN committee which each week organizes many events. Thanks to their fantastic work, I was able to meet many friends and people from different countries. Each weeks there were international dinners, language meetings, board games and parties. There is also the possibility to being assigned to a mentor who is a Polish student member of ESN who can help you during your time in Krakow. I highly recommend to apply for the mentor figure as thanks to this opportunity I met a great friend who helped me for everything during exchange. In Krakow there are many international students as the Jagiellonian University is not the only University of the city. Because of this, Krakow is an alive city and pubs are always full of students.

During Christmas Krakow becomes very beautiful due to decorations and the Christmas market. Many people come from all over Poland as well as Europe in order to have a walk in the city during this time. It looks like a fairy tale and many concerts and other events are organized by the town hall.

While in Krakow, I would recommend visiting Auschwitz as it is just one hour far by bus. There are many associations who organize daily trips from Krakow to Auschwitz and also a guide is included. I would say one cannot renounce to this experience while being on exchange. During my time in Poland I also visited many cities such as Warsaw, Wroclaw, Poznan and Zakopane. They were all very beautiful but I would recommend to visit Wroclaw during Christmas as it has one of the best Christmas markets in Europe.

On the light of these considerations, I can state that I would recommend Krakow to any students interested in the exchange programme. It is an amazing city full of international students, the courses are very interesting and easier compared to Groningen and the teachers are available and kind.