

FIELD REPORT | ERASMUS | CTU | CZECH REPUBLIC | KARINA GEPPERT | 3TH MASTER ARCHITECTUR | TU DARMSTADT

In the following essay, I'm going to write about my experience being a student at CTU and living in Prague from an academic and cultural perspective.

First of all I will start with being a student at CTU-academic.

During my first days at CTU I was impressed by the organization of ISC (International Students Club). They made the first days really easy for us and I felt comfortable because of their work. But I will come back to this point later.

Separate from that my first impression of the rest of CTU was pretty good. I was impressed by the Building from the Faculty of Architecture, and the café on the ground floor. Also the fancy library which had a nice café, too. It's fun to ride in the elevator in the Faculty of Electrical Engineering, when you reach the top you will have a nice view of the campus and Prague. You also see this view from one of the design studio rooms.

I like the feeling of a campus, so almost every faculty found a spot on the campus and we are all together.

But the campus seems uncomfortable and empty. Students just rush from one place to the other. There is lots of green and public space for studying but also for relaxing missing. It seems each faculty is for themselves and there is no community between all the faculties. Only the library café seems like a meeting point for every faculty. Equally there is no proposal of sport competitions, a market where each faculty shows their new concepts/ results or parties from every faculty which could help for a better community life at the CTU Campus.

In my opinion the exchange from students and professors are the most important thing during studying at a university. Even for an architecture student it's more important. We get inspired by other people, meanings, lifestyle, and culture. It's important for us to get to know different ways of living in other countries.

In the Faculty of Architecture they tried to form more social study rooms. There is the cafeteria which is pretty nice (I already said) and there is also some benches in the atrium where students can come together. Between the design studio rooms and next to the atrium there are rooms such as an architecture library and extra study rooms. But the acoustics and daylight is so bad that it is just used by students as a napping room (I guess that's the reason). For me, there are nice study rooms, group rooms and also kind of events missing for having a better community.

For example at the TU Darmstadt, every Wednesday evening there is a speech of famous architect who presents his office and his projects. Afterwards they offer wine and snacks. So you get in touch with your professors and other students by having a nice evening. I'm also used to have my own working space which I appreciate now even more. We have eight study rooms. In every single study room there are 20 to 45 students, a kitchen, kind of relaxing zone and every kind of equipment for doing models. Some of your colleagues are in

the same design studio, some of them are doing something different. So it's easy to get help from people who don't know anything about the project, if you want to have a neutral perspective. Cooking, eating and relaxing together makes it even easier to get to know each other, create a community, help and learn from each other.

Once there was an open music session in the Faculty of Architecture at the CTU organized by musical students. Many students from Civil Engineering and Architecture joined the music event, and were offered snacks which they could also enjoy. I wish something like this could happen more often to activate life at the Faculty.

However my first impressions of the campus were positive, as I was astonished by the huge and variable offer of English lectures. Besides lectures from the architecture faculty there were also offers from the Civil Engineering Faculty, Czech Language Course and certainly Czech Culture Course.

Likewise all the design studios provide completely different topics. Different in their function like Interior design for an office company, landscape challenges, libraries, music halls, health care centres and also different in their location, from Prague to a little village in Czech Republic to London. After a short presentation from every studio, we could choose the most interesting one for us and have a deeper look in the task.

In the design studio I think there is a lot of freedom allowed for the kind of architecture you would like to do. They don't try to push you in one direction.

It was visible that my classes were filled only with Erasmus students. Which could have many reasons.

I made the experience that Czech students are too afraid of speaking English. Or it's just the easier way to get lecture in their mother tongue. Also I guess they like to be in their community which other Czech students. Another reason could be that the English knowledge of some teachers is not that good. Deductive reasoning some consolation good are kind of unhelpful.

In summary, it's sad that there is no chance to work with Czech students and get to know the working flow of the full time students of the CTU Faculty of Architecture. On the other hand the lectures are sometimes too trivial and very often the teacher's knowledge of English is imperfect that they even couldn't give you explanations. It's even sad for Erasmus students because I think one of our reasons to go for an Erasmus term is to improve our English knowledge through our classes and teachers correcting our mistakes. But without subject-specific English knowledge from the teacher it's hard to learn from them.

Moreover it's really nice to see that Bachelor and Master students work together in the same design studio and they can learn from each other. Also to be very close with the professor. I'm used to have consultation with their assistant and meet the professor maybe once a month. Here, if you like you can have a meeting twice a week. They used to do it together (professor and assistant). So you easily get into discussion which is pretty good.

All of my impressions are only from my lectures. It could be that other people's impressions are completely different to my own. I also interviewed my buddy and tried to follow her direction.

Summing up I'm really enjoying studying in Prague. Especially some courses which they don't offer in my university. However I would like to be more in contact with Czech students and would like to have more space to interchange experiences.

To complete my reflection of being a student at CTU I would like to touch on the cultural view.

I will present my funny facts about Czech Republic compared to my Country.

Living

Czech student use to share their room – we are not
Czech flat just has to be functional; don't care about design and coziness

Hobby

Drinking Beer is as normal as breathing

People

Czech always seem unfriendly
Czech don't like to speak English

Going out

Going to restaurant and cooking for yourself cost you almost the same
Czech cuisine is the opposite of healthy food

Traffic

Traffic lights always makes noises

Smoking

You are allowed to smoke everywhere

Ambulance and police car

Annoying noise

Let me tell you what surprised me during my stay and being student at CTU.

Before I came to Prague I didn't expect that life here would be so cheap. Even living in the capital of Czech Republic. I guess for most of us life here is really nice because we can spend a lot of money.

On the other hand I'm still confused about currency. Please just insert the Euro. Life here would be so much easier for us and tourists.

I was also surprised about the good traffic transport connection even during the night. You can easily get from one point to the other by tram, metro or bus.

Another fact which astonished me was there are more Erasmus students coming from Argentina than from Germany. But alternatively German tourists are crowding the city center.

I also didn't expect such a nice, wonderful and old city center which attract so many tourists over the weekend.

One of the last points I'll make is that the Czech Republic has so many nice and wonderful places for hiking. The city is really pretty but the nature impressed me even more. For example the Great Canyons, Bohemia Switzerland, Cesky Krulmov National Park and there are even more I will go to.

But the most undeniable fact is that Erasmus people are very easy going and easy to look after. They all friendly, laid-back and open to making friendships. I was afraid of the different cultures but these guys here are just awesome.

To complete being a student at the CTU I have to say I'm so glad of the consisting of work and effort put in by the ISC and the buddy program.

Those people made the term, especially on the beginning of the semester, really easy for me. They help me as much they can and let me feel comfortable in Czech Republic.

The ISC didn't just even give us a welcome package which included SimCard, T-Shirt, Map of Prague and other useful stuff (and I didn't even expect a welcome package)

They also organized:

The orientation week, so we all could find friends so simply in the beginning, which is so important.

They also organized a weekend trip to several spots in the Czech Republic.

Also lots of sport, travel and other events during the semester were arranged by them.

Every week there were one or two Integreat Party's so we could get to know the other cultures from different countries.

They have the ISC point at Masarykova Kolej (just next to the campus) where you can go if you have questions, need printing or just to hang around.

And of course they were there for every single stupid questions we had and would help us.

They organized the buddy program which is very helpful to have your own Czech friend here for translating something, getting to know the culture or to explore Prague. Luckily my buddy studies the same thing as me and we are living in the same room. So we could help each other even in our specification and getting to know each other really well.

Those two 'organizations' helped me a lot to feel comfortable and I would like to know that they get more support and commendation because they do a wonderful work.

I can recommend everyone to study a semester abroad – in Prague.

If you have any questions feel free to contact me.