
Jessica

I came to Prague as an Erasmus student during the winter semester of the year 2022-2023. As a student who was diagnosed with Asperger from a very young age, I can understand that spending several months abroad in another country can seem quite scary for students that are on the spectrum. I however believe that an Erasmus experience could be very beneficial for students with autism or other special needs, especially in Prague.

First of all, an Erasmus comes with many opportunities to practise your social skills and cultural adaption. Before I came to Prague, I was a bit worried that cultural barriers combined with my Asperger would make it difficult to make friends. However, I managed to quickly make friends thanks to the student club SIMS. This student club organizes events for Erasmus students and has members which eventually became very good friends and turned out to be some of the kindest people I ever met. They are very aware of potential cultural barriers and social struggles and they made me feel very included. Erasmus students in general are also relatively easy to talk to since everyone is a bit nervous. In just a few months, I went from being quite unsure to a real Czech social butterfly. If Erasmus has had any value for me, it surely would be that I gained much more confidence when it comes to my social skills. If you manage to be friend people from another country, this reassures you that it is possible to make friends even when you struggle socially. You only have to be patient with yourself and remain open to other perspectives.

Secondly, Charles University also offers help and counselling for students with special needs. Throughout my semester, I was seeing a therapist regularly at Carolina Centre. At Carolina centre, every student has a right to 10 free sessions with a licensed therapist. From my experience, the therapists at Carolina centre are very helpful and do their absolute best to give you the best possible service. 10 sessions may not seem like a lot, but they had a significant impact on the things I was struggling with. So know that there is help available at Charles University if you would ever need it.

Thirdly, an Erasmus experience can also make you more confident in terms of independence. My Erasmus helped me to become more independent and self-reliant in many ways, whether it be household, cooking, paperwork, travel, etc. These were also things I was not always perfect in. During my first few weeks abroad, I remember feeling very overwhelmed and also homesick at times. But by now, I can confidently say that I am able to properly take care of myself thanks to Erasmus. So much that I am still struggling with the thought of going home again.

Overall, an Erasmus experience may feel very scary and overwhelming. But if you are willing to give it a try, I am pretty sure you will not be the same afterwards. I never met any Erasmus student before who came back completely the same as before.

So if you feel like an Erasmus might not be good for you due to Asperger, I truly recommend you to at least give it a try. Know that there is always help available for you and know that there are people here that truly care about helping you.