



## My Exchange Evaluation

### Basic Information

<b>Host University</b>	Charles University
<b>Semester &amp; Year of Exchange</b>	Semester One, 2025
<b>Otago degree(s)</b>	BCom and BA
<b>Major(s)</b>	Economics, Psychology

### Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent
RETA9539 Intensive Course of Czech Language for Beginners	English	
RETA2001 NZP-Introduction to the New Testament Studies	English	BIBS121
JPB124 The Jews of Central Europe	English	POLS300 (Unspecified)
RETA1003 SZPV2-History of Ancient Israel and its Religion	English	BIBS200 (Unspecified)
APO100156 Nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe	English	POLS315
JEB053 Labour Economics	English	ECON301

Total Otago credits gained:  54 points  72 points  108 points  \_\_\_\_\_

Any comments about these papers?

Were all really great!

How did the academic experience/ workload/ style of teaching differ from Otago?

I really enjoyed the difference in courses taught in Europe compared to our here. They were very niche and interesting. For example, my paper on Jews in Central Europe gave me a completely new perspective on Jewish history – something I think more people should understand. On a similar note, the emphasis of specific topics was rather different. In my Labour Economics class, there was a very strong emphasis on the gender wage gap, something there isn't in New Zealand, which probably stems from equal pay being more normal for us.

The workload was significantly easier. I did however only take the equivalent to three Otago papers by mistake. But my papers in Czech only tended to have one assignment at the end of the semester.

The style was very different. Firstly, the accent barrier made it hard to understand many of my lecturers. Secondly, every faculty at my exchange university had different grading scales and teaching styles, which was an extra complication.

## Accommodation

*What accommodation did you stay in? What were the pros and cons of your accommodation?*

I stayed in a shared-room dormitory. All dormitories at Charles University are vastly different from each other. I was told I had one of the best, but it was still very simple to say the least.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I was blessed enough to have a Czech roommate, because all that was provided was a single hotplate. My roommate let me use her microwave, kettle, pots and pans. Most exchange students have to buy basic utensils when they arrive...</li> <li>• We got a little balcony and bathroom between us and the room next door.</li> <li>• Was cheap.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There was rust in the bathroom;</li> <li>• Small rooms – was in tight quarters with my roommate. Which meant when I wanted some alone time, it was hard to find.</li> <li>• No social spaces in my block. And no one talks to their neighbours, it was a very isolated community.</li> <li>• The staff didn't speak any English, and were rather grumpy when I couldn't speak Czech. It was particularly hard my first days, trying to find my room.</li> </ul>

## Money matters

*Please detail your basic costs, e.g. accommodation, flights, visa, food, insurance*

Accommodation – approx. \$500NZD per month

Flights - \$3,000NZD return

Insurance - \$680NZD

Food – approx. \$60NZD per week

Weekend Trips – approx. \$200 per weekend (hugely fluctuant)

Public Transport in Prague - \$50NZD for four months

*What means did you use to access your finances? What would you recommend? (Credit card, Cash passport, foreign bank account, etc.)*

I got a Wise Card – would strongly recommend, it was very simple and convenient

## Visas & Insurance

*Did you have to apply for a visa? What was the process?*

No, I have an Italian passport.

*Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?*

Yes

## Extra-curricular/Social Activities

*What organised activities were available to students? What extra-curricular activities would you recommend to future exchange students?*

I don't really know what was on offer. Every faculty was very separate (acted as individual schools) and my faculty didn't offer many organised activities, excepted for one whole faculty (staff and students) hike. I know other faculties (like the social sciences and humanities) had numerous activities that would have been nice to be involved with.

There are also a bunch of Facebook and WhatsApp group chats that organise numerous events per week, but most centre around drinking.

*What was the university/ city like?*

University was nice, but as mentioned not very interconnected. The buildings were scattered around the city (up to 30 mins on public transport from each other) and so did not have a campus vibe which was unfortunate.

Prague as a whole is a lovely city! When I first arrived, I was struck with how uniform all the buildings were, and the lack of trees! But as the weather has warmed up, you realise how incredible it is, and the parks are rather nice.

*Any recommendations for things to do, places to visit, places to eat etc.?*

Oh, so many great places!

Places to go: Petrin hill, Letna Park, Charles Bridge, Praha Hrad (Castle), Brevnov Monastery, Strelecky Island

*Any tips for future students?*

- Goggle maps your dorm, the local shop, all your classes before you get there – will make it so much easier if you recognise the buildings (especially in Prague)
- Stick with activities or groups – commitment builds communities
- One way to immerse yourself in the new culture would be to volunteer in a local community or school, teaching English for example
- Kiwi friendliness is unique so be prepared for some blunt interactions – good for resilience building
- Know it's okay to feel alone and not have a big group of friends (or any) – you don't need to find your people on exchange, you can just take time to rest
- Just because people say exchange is the high of their life, doesn't mean it has to be – you can enjoy the mundanity of simply living abroad
- Have fun and take risks !!

## Overall Experience

*Please write one paragraph (or more) about your exchange experience. Please include some photos!*

Studying abroad has been such a unique, growing, fun opportunity. For me it was great mix of traveling, visiting new countries, and enjoying my time in Prague. The highlight of this experience has been building a community with strangers. Doing life and exploring foreign cities with people

who now feel like family is so special. It definitely took a while to find my people and for months although I was enjoying the challenge, I felt like I'd be better off or at least indifferent to being back in New Zealand. But in hindsight, I feel so incredibly blessed to have had these experiences.

I had a bunch more time on exchange without my regular busy schedule. As a result, I picked up new skills. Although it may be hard to keep it up when home, it has taught me resilience and discipline among a turbulent time. The soft skills will stay with me for a lifetime. For that and many other aspects of exchange, I am very thankful!

