

Exchange Semester in Krakow, Poland at AGH University of Science and Technology.

In the winter semester I travelled to Poland, to the beautiful city of Krakow for an exchange semester at the AGH university. The city has an international atmosphere, coined by tourism, which means it has plenty of activities and interesting locations to visit. But before I dwell on this topic, I will start with the very beginning. What to put in mind before travelling.

Travelling abroad comes with various concerns and requires meticulous planning. How to find accommodation, how to get acquainted with transportation, currency and exchange rates, payments and transactions, and many more.

For the accommodation, and from my own experience, it is highly recommended that you start looking for accommodation as early as possible. There is an option to rent a room in the dormitory at AGH University and the prices can be seen on their website, however, if you decide to rent a private apartment or room in the city then you may need to search online to find a suitable option. **Beware** that some websites may post incorrect information or may hide parts of the truth; therefore it is wise to go through reviews of each website and learn from others' experiences to acquire insights before you start contacting and before you sign any binding contract. There are some incidents of exploitation but they are not to be generalized, the majority are sincere and provide reliable information.

The currency in Poland is called **złoty** (Code: PLN). As a student travelling from Germany my bank account is in Euro (Code: EUR). Hence, I invested some time in reading about the exchange rate and I visited a branch of my bank in Germany to ask about the possibility to pay using my German bank card (EC Card – EC-Karte). Your bank will help you understand the fees they charge on transactions conducted in Poland and the exchange rate. When carrying out payments in Poland in shops you will experience when the employee asks you if you would like to pay in złoty or Euro, which at first glance may seem confusing. Basically, what they mean is that: would you like to pay in złoty and thus your bank in Germany carries out the exchange process according to its exchange rate or to pay in Euro and then the process of exchange will be conducted in Poland according to their exchange rate. Furthermore, there are plenty of money exchange ATMs all over the city which allow you to withdraw money in złoty directly using your bank card, however their exchange rate was inconvenient to me, so I ended up paying for mostly everything with my card without holding much cash. The wide majority of shops and restaurants in Krakow accept the German EC card, only very few don't.

There is another possibility to conduct transactions. You may download an application called **Revolut** and create an account. This app allows you to transfer money in Euro to it and then you can exchange the desired amount to złoty and use that either to pay directly or to transfer money to Polish bank accounts, which reduces the complicated calculations you may go through when using your German bank account to transfer money in złoty. Thus, you transfer the correct amount, not more nor less.

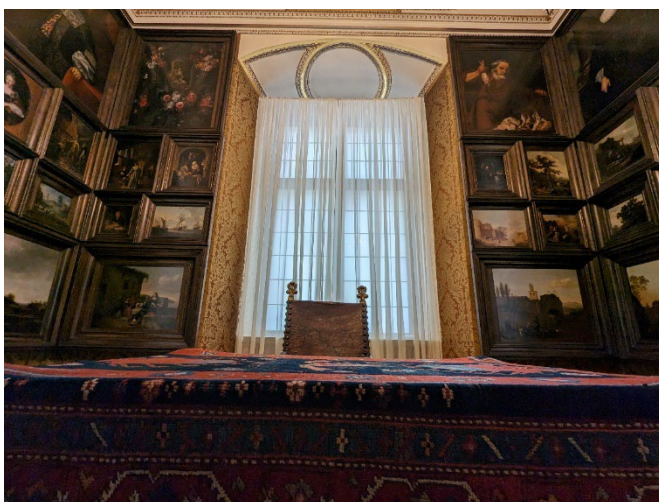
Transportation in Krakow costs around 4 złoty for 20-minute ride and around 6 złoty for 60-minute ride. You can download and use an application called **Jakdojade** through which you can buy tickets and activate them when taking a bus or a tram. In the application there is a choice to use reduced prices. **BEWARE**, those prices you can use **only** after you apply for an AGH students' card and receive it, while your TU Ilmenau student card does not designate you eligible to buy tickets for reduced prices. When you buy a ticket, the application would usually ask you to insert the vehicle number, this is usually written inside the vehicle you are taking on the upper sides next to vehicle's ceiling and sometimes you may be required to insert the line number. This you can find on the application itself according to the bus line you are taking. The ticket will have a timer on your phone and if the inspector asks you to show them your ticket you will have an access to it through the application. In addition, there is an option to buy a paper ticket from the ticket vending machines you may find at stations. Those machines support different languages deeming them easy to use.

AGH University of Science and Technology (AGH UST) offers a wide variety of interesting international courses and faculty specific ones as well. Furthermore, it offers a buddy program, through which you can apply and get introduced to a student at the university who aids you by providing plenty insights regarding the university. For example, where to find the timetable and how to navigate the website efficiently. Your buddy (Mentor) informs you about the abundant events, parties, and activities the university offers. Usually, you can access information through a website called **USUS WEB** - <https://www.usosweb.uj.edu.pl>. Such information constitutes grades, registration status, timetable, and many more. Furthermore, you get an E-mail account from the university like at TU Ilmenau. You should check your inbox on daily basis, because it is the basis professors use to communicate with students. A course I would highly recommend is **research methods in management**, which introduces you to the massive world of research in social sciences and encourages you to conduct a small research to sharpen your skills and put the theoretical information into practice. The course is faculty

specific (faculty of management) and aims to support Master's students who are preparing for their thesis.

Now we move on to the good part. The beautiful city of Krakow. It is the second largest city in Poland after the capital Warsaw. Krakow has a rich history and a vibrant nightlife. You can explore the countless bars, restaurants, and clubs with your friends. Moreover, the city has numerous museums that can be accessed by students for free on particular days, usually each Monday. Although, it is better to ask or check out online to make sure which museum is available free of charge for students on which day.

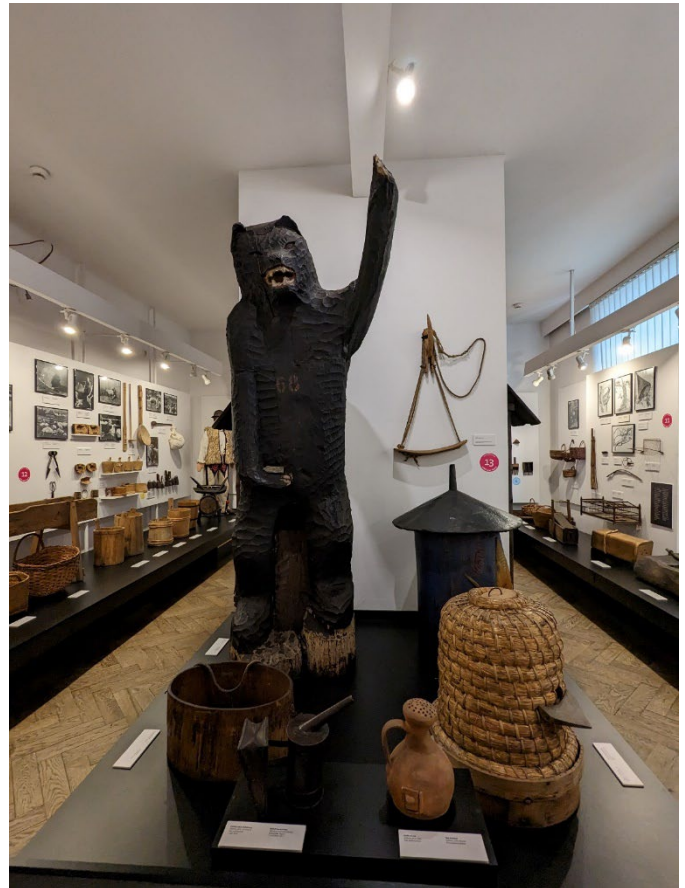
I did not have the chance to visit every and each museum and location, however I visited plenty of them. For instance, the Wawel royal castle is a masterpiece with multiple locations you can visit and learn about the history of the city and Poland. For example, I was mesmerized when visited the State Rooms due to the brilliant classy and aristocratic architecture involving outstanding paintings you could look at for long time and enjoy the smallest details and the stories they tell.





If you would like to enjoy the scene of Krakow from a high altitude, then I highly recommend visiting the Krakow hill.

Another interesting location you should visit is the ethnographic museum. The museum is very large and you can spend hours looking at all the amazing details it has. I spent approximately 3.5 hours inside and it was an experience I will always recommend.



Additionally, don't forget to visit the capital of Poland, Warsaw. It has rich history, fine architecture, and plenty of interesting activities that you may enjoy.

Now I leave you with few photos to appreciate the beauty of Krakow.

