
Experience Report Erasmus+

AGH University of Science and Technology in Kraków

Motivation and Preparation



As part of the Master's program "International Business Economics", a voluntary semester abroad is scheduled in the third semester

in order to give more weight to the international component. At the beginning of 2022, two fellow students who were friends of mine asked me if I would accompany them on such a semester. Since the idea appealed to me, the decision on a suitable location began. Unfortunately, we were already relatively late with our plan, which meant that the deadline for some universities had already expired. The still abundant number of remaining universities was limited only by our requirement to study in English. Out of the remaining three universities in Austria, Poland and Turkey, we all quickly chose Poland, as Eastern Europe appealed to us.

Further planning and organizational processes then began around $\frac{3}{4}$ year before the start of the stay abroad. Thanks to the excellent support from the International Office at every step, everything went smoothly and without complications. The acceptance from the partner university came a little later to our utmost satisfaction.

Housing



As a student of the AGH, the nearby and inexpensive (about 100€ per month) student dormitories are ideal. Alternatively, you can also contact the local 'Erasmus Student Network (ESN)', as they not only offer advice

for Erasmus students, but also have a partner network for this. My fellow students and I decided to rent a larger apartment together and live as a shared apartment.

Unfortunately, as it turned out too late, we got into the hands of a scammer. For this reason, I would like to strongly advise against looking for an apartment in Kraków on your own, i.e., without the help of local people or organizations. In particular, I would like to warn against the aforementioned scammer. He offers accommodations under the names '[Stefano Trani](#), [Gabriela Teresa](#), [Fideste](#), [LokalNest](#), [Localife](#)'.

Studying at AGH Kraków



For English-speaking students, there is a considerable selection of 'International Courses' offered. Some are available on the internet at any time and are described in full detail in a provided PDF. Other courses, especially faculty-specific ones, are announced by e-mail in an Excel spreadsheet a while before the semester starts. Overall, the study program was fairly similar and held few surprises for us. Nevertheless, there are some notable differences to the teaching at TU Ilmenau. Depending on the course, the teaching units are composed of up to three parts, the (i) Lectures, (ii) Laboratories and (iii) Projects. At AGH, attendance is not compulsory except for the lectures. In addition, you have to register individually for all parts of the course. A further difference is that the winter semester is shorter. It ends in February, and the examination period is only about two weeks. The re-writing period follows directly after the actual examination period and, in

contrast to the TU Ilmenau, failed examinations can be repeated here right away, as the grades are usually published after only a few days. Compared to the teaching at TU Ilmenau, the studies at AGH are less time-consuming, at least in the field of business administration and economics.

For finding buildings, the university's own app 'Welcome to AGH UST' can be recommended (available on [Google Play](#) and the [Apple App Store](#)).

Life in Kraków



Already in the first days of our stay it became clear that Kraków is a beautiful city. In the centre there is a well-maintained old town with a large market square. The old town is surrounded by a 4 km long green ring consisting of walking paths, trees and lawns. At the southern end of the ring is the beautiful Wawel Castle (*Zamek Królewski na Wawelu*). Furthermore, the city is crossed by a river, the Vistula (*Wisła*), along which you can take beautiful walks, also past the castle. If you are looking for green spaces, this city is definitely for you.

There is also a large meadow (*Błonia w Krakowie*) and a park (*Henryk Jordan Park*) directly near the university, where an ice-skating rink is also set up in winter. If you want to get a nice overview of the city, the nearby viewpoints 'Kopiec Kraka' and 'Kopiec Kościuszki' are well worth a visit, albeit the latter is subject to a fee. Another recommended place is the equally nearby 'Zakrzówek'. This is a beautiful lake surrounded by nature.

It is highly recommended to use public transport in Kraków (or other Polish cities) for trips such as those mentioned above. This works smoothly and extremely uncomplicated. For this purpose, I recommend the app 'Jakdojade' (available on [Google Play](#),

in the [Apple App Store](#) and on the [Web](#)), because here one only has to enter a destination and then the route is directly displayed on the map and described. Also, the tickets, which are 50% off for students (note: only for students of Polish universities) and thus cost a maximum of €1.30 (for a 60-minute ticket), are affordable. If you are interested in traveling to other Polish cities such as Warsaw, you can get tickets at a low price (again 50% discount for students) on the website of 'PKP Intercity'.

In general, life in Kraków is comparable to life in a large village, as local students were able to confirm. In Kraków, as in the rest of Poland, you can pay conveniently by contactless card or e.g., Google Pay.

Leisure



In Kraków we were offered countless leisure opportunities. Here, everyone who is used to Ilmenau will have a nice experience.

In the city itself, in addition to the previously mentioned places, there are also a number of interesting museums. On each day of the week, the entrance to certain museums is free of charge, so that one can experience culture here at no cost if timed correctly. If you have missed that specific day and do not want to wait a week, these are fortunately very affordable for students. My personal favourites are on the one hand the 'Muzeum Książąt Czartoryskich', because this is the only museum in all of Poland that has a painting by Leonardo da Vinci on display, namely the 'Lady with the Ermine'. On the other hand, the 'Muzeum Lotnictwa Polskiego' is recommended for anyone interested in civil and military aviation, as it exhibits especially historical helicopters and airplanes. My friends further recommend to visit the Wawel Castle from the inside.

Away from the city, there are a number of other places that should definitely be seen during a semester abroad. Especially the nearby concentration camp Auschwitz should be mentioned here. Seeing this place with my own eyes was a profound experience. We had booked a combined tour with an English guide for about 70€, where you first visit a beautiful salt mine (*Kopalnia Soli 'Wieliczka'*) before going to the camp in Auschwitz (*Oświęcim*) subsequently.

If you are looking for the mountains, you will enjoy the nearby Tatra Mountains (about 2 hours by car to Zakopane). In my experience, these are simply breath-taking (see e.g., the teaser at the beginning of the chapter).

City trips are also easy to make with the trains. Even Danzig (*Gdansk*) can be reached within 5 hours. Warsaw is also highly recommended. Another city that I enjoyed very much is Wrocław (or *Breslau*) as depicted in the image below:



Lastly, it is worth mentioning that with the help of the nearby airport, you can also take weekend trips to other European cities. For about €150 you can get an outward & return flight and accommodation for about four nights in Riga (Latvia) or Thessaloniki (Greece). For about €100 more you can also visit Stockholm (Sweden) and Oslo (Norway) for a few days. This variety of cultural impressions for such an affordable price was for me or us one of the most formative experiences.

Concluding Remarks



Finally, I can only come to one conclusion: Participating in the Erasmus semester was for me the undisputed highlight of my university career. I can highly recommend this experience to everyone and would do it again if I were not about to finish my studies.

I can recommend Kraków in particular for all the reasons mentioned. Here you can find a good trade-off between the advantages of a big city and of a village or a smaller city like Ilmenau.

For me, it is definitely clear that I will make sure to gain more experience abroad in the future, even after I graduate. I will also move back to Kraków for some time, because I not only had a wonderful time here, but also met a wonderful resident.

Jakob