

Hallo an alle!

Remember, remember, the fifth of November (2014)... I would like to remember the date with this „letter“ sending you from Bonn☺. My name is **Martina Palášková** and I have just fulfilled one of my dreams – I am studying abroad thanks to the Erasmus programme. I am here for the winter semester, which (has) started at the beginning of October and will come to an end in February. It is my fifth semester which means the worst time of my bachelor programme – next semester I am hopefully going to graduate. So besides studying at this university, I am in touch with my colleagues from Prague University and do homework for my home department in addition I write my bachelor thesis. As if this is not enough – I attend a German course twice a week. Do you think I am crazy? Maybe, but I like challenges and this is one of them!

So **why Germany?** First of all, except for Malta there wasn't any English speaking country (neither Ireland nor UK) and according to the experience of my friends – the more you are in the south, the more you party and less study and the more you are in the north, you have to study. And believe it or not (I am not the most diligent student) I wanted to study. Since I was studying German at my high school (not now at the university!), I wanted to push my luck and decided for Germany. We Czechs have so many prejudices! I wonder why myself. I was told that people here are unfriendly but I was nicely surprised when I had to completely change my mind! Considering prices daily costs– there are many discounters – the food there is as expensive as in our country, sometimes even cheaper! What is really expensive are services but that's pretty common.



The famous lockers in Köln

First of all before arrival there is some(as I called) **“paperwork”**. It is necessary, but c'mon, it is not so terrible! English department of University of Bonn cared very well about us, whenever we had questions, they replied us almost immediately, well, Germans, but this is what I like about them. The only problem I had undergone was the accommodation. Please, do not panic when you don't know the result of your dormitory immediately, but send the request as soon as possible! I got a reply one week before I was supposed to move to Bonn!



Currywurst - must!



Banana Weizenbier - for beerlovers:)

Since we were able to move into our flats on 1st October which was Wednesday, and the Welcome week which started on Monday, we had to find a temporary accommodation for two nights. (Couchsurfing was my choice since I have been using it for a few years and have just good experience). On Monday September 29 – our **Welcome Week**, we had to go to the International Department, where we were provided with other information. The students who were taking care of us were so nice and friendly, really beyond my expectations! The sun was shining, the weather was warm, there are many alleys and trees in Bonn – this city couldn't make a better first impression on me☺. As Erasmus students, we were divided into groups in which we took part in trips and with this group I am in touch so far (mostly Italians and one very nice Polish

girl – it is always fun to speak Polish-Czech and laugh each other about the similarity of the words). During the welcome week we had to pay a semester fee 254EUR, it was meant for one semester and for that fee we got a **Semester ticket**, which also serves as a student ID. With this ticket we are able to travel around the region (which is quite large – Köln, Düsseldorf, Dortmund, Münster, Aachen) for free and at the weekend it is free for one more person – a friend of yours can travel with you for free.



A way to my university (on the right with a view on Hofgarten)



Haribo shop

How is **Bonn university**? It served as a chateau, now it is a university for more than 200 years, a really big one. You can easily get everywhere by bike – very common, not like in the Czech Republic. Bonn is a really green city. It used to be a capital city after 2WW. Everything works perfectly, trains are on time (almost always), kebab at every turn and don't forget about HARIBO! (HAns Rlegel BOnn!:) So many things you probably didn't know☺. Bonn is definitely a student city. Strolling at the area university you must be careful not to get in the way of students riding their bicycles. If the weather is nice, many students like to relax at "Hofgarten" – a big area in front of the university. Bonn lies on Rhine, along the river there are many beer gardens, usually very busy. There is also a night district called "Altstadt" where not only young people like to hang out in the evening.

How is studying? You choose subjects you want to study and write an e-mail to a teacher that you would like to attend their class. Usually it is not a problem. In my opinion the level of teaching is comparable. For literature seminars we have to read books and then we discuss one book for 3 weeks for instance. What I like is that at the end of every lecture students knock on their desks to express their appreciation. I highly recommend you to apply for the paid **German course** (60EUR), the University of Bonn will let you know. Once you are in the country you should speak their language. Germans also usually speak English, but it is always better to speak the language of native speakers. You can also apply for **sports** at this university. I have chosen swimming and one of the requirements was speaking German, another challenge☺.



The invitation from English department



Castle Eltz - the most romantic castle in Germany (not Neuschwanstein!)

At the weekends I make **trips** with people from my welcome week group, which is usually for free. I have visited a few castles on Rhine (UNESCO heritage), a chateau in Brühl. Bonn is also close to the Netherlands and Belgium! For me it is not THE Erasmus everybody thinks of when it comes to it. I have to study a lot, but it will pay off. Except being forced speaking everyday English or German I think it will help me next semester.

Are you afraid of unfriendly people and no friends? Please, be not! Just try to switch to a sociable mood at the welcome week and then everything is ok. The English department even provides a few meetings during the semester

plus since this semester they have offered students of the department a course of German for free! Seize all opportunities you have! German people are also friendly; at least this is my experience. Our cultures are more similar than you can imagine - except not eating Wurst every day (but beer!). And if you really missed your country, it is just a few hours from borders.

I hope I gave you enough reasons why to go for Erasmus in Germany, so viel Glück und tschüss!

Herzliche Grüße

Martina ☺

If you have any further questions, feel free to contact me: **martina.palaskova@gmail.com**

PS: useful links:

<http://erasmus-database.naep.cz/modules/erasmus/> -

experience of students from Erasmus

<http://meinfernbus.de/> - the cheapest way of getting to Köln, which is close to Bonn (even cheaper than Student Agency)

www.db.de – for all connections (online you can download an application to your smartphone)



A trip to Köln with our Welcome Week Group – from the left: Germany, me – Czech, Poland, Germany, Italy, Italy, Turkey, Bulgaria