

My exchange (ERASMUS) stays in Czestochowa

Częstochowa

Czestochowa is a city in the southern part of Poland, with an estimated population of about 240,027 inhabitants as at June of 2009.

The city is known for the famous Pauline monastery of Jasna Góra, which is the home of the Black Madonna painting which is translated in Polish as Polish: *Jasnogórski Cudowny obraz Najświętszej Maryi Panny Niepokalanie Poczętej*. This is a shrine that was dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Every year, millions of pilgrims from all over the world come to Czestochowa to see this. The city also was home to the Frankism in the late 18th and 19th Century. There is also a Lusatian culture excavation site and museum in the city and ruins of a medieval castle in Olsztyn, approximately 25 kilometers from the city Centre. Which is in my opinion a must go place whenever anyone finds themselves in Czestochowa.

City name

The name of Czestochowa means "Czestoch's place, This comes from a personal name of Czestoch mentioned in the medieval documents also as Czestobor and Czestomir. There are different variations of the name include Czanstochowa" used in 1220, and **Czestochow** used in 1382 and 1558. A part of today's city called **Czestochówka** was a separate municipality mentioned in 14th century as the Old Czestochowa (*Antiquo Czanstochowa*, 1382) and *Czestochówka* in 1470-80. The city was also known in German as *Tschenstochau* and in Russian as *Ченстохов* (*Chenstokhov*).

Why Czestochowa

I believe the best way to know is through personal experience.

as a result of this, i have always been curious about different cultures and customs. If you ask me, what other better way to experience different cultures than to put yourself right in the middle of it.

During my preparation for the ERASMUS program, my initial choice was to go to Surrey in England, I received a mail from the LUT that Surrey university may or may not accept my application because of some ongoing resolution that was needed to be sorted out. I got a suggestion of choosing Czestochowa in Poland. I will accept that i had had some reservation about this choice because i have never heard of the city before. Out of curiosity, i followed through with the application process, and i must confess, am glad that i did.

On arrival

I arrived in Poland Krakow, after taking a flight from Helsinki Vantaa Airport to Stockholm Sweden. Then i took a train from Krakow to Katowice which was about 80km apart. And latter from Katowice to Czestochowa, which was again about 75km apart.

On arriving at the Czestochowa train station at about 10pm, i had earlier contacted my supervising lecture prior to my arrival in Czestochowa and so, he was already waiting for me at the train station. We drove to the student apartment and all the paper work about the accommodation was taken care of.

Student Dormitory

There were three student dormitories available to student studying at the Czestochowa qUniversity of Technology, these were, MALUCH student dormitory, SKTSHAT student dormitory and finally HERKULES.

I will recommend for any one going to this place for ERASMUS, to consider choosing Sktshat because its much more newer and better. You may be offered during the application process Maluch but request for Sktshat.

Living in the student dormitory was pretty cheap as it costs about 500pln a month which is about 125€

Events and attraction

Some of the event you should try to experience at least one is the speedway (żużel) event, which is one of the biggest sporting event in the city and also in Poland. Next is the Juvenalia, which is a student based event, featuring a three days life concerts for all the students living in Czestochowa.

One of the places that is a most go, is the Jasna gora monastery located right in the city center. Annually, there are more than 2million pilgrims visiting the monastery. it is about a 106m, making it the tallest historic church tower in Poland. It offers views over the monastery complex. After falling many times over history, the current tower dates to 1906. Another interesting place is the Chapel of Our Lady. This Chapel of Our Lady contains the revered *Black Madonna*. The picture is ceremoniously unveiled at 6am and 1.30pm (2pm Saturday and Sunday) and veiled at noon and 9.20pm (1pm and 9.20pm Saturday and Sunday. Next, which was one of my favorite was the ruins of Olsztyn. The Olsztyn Castle ruins is located about 11km east of Czestochowa, is a refreshing trip out of town, if you find dungeons refreshing it's about a day trip. The castle was built in the 14th century by King Casmir the Great and fell into ruins after it was destroyed by the Swedes in 1655.

Night life, restaurant and bars

The city has a very busy and good night life compared to the fact that it's a small city and a very catholic culture.

There are series of pubs, from Irish to Italian, Mexican and also lots of local bars and pubs. An important phrase to know before heading out it (Jedno piwo proszę) meaning one beer please.

Some name of some bars that will be worth checking out when in that town, is Oslo. It is a bar that has its own local brewery where they brew all the beer they sell. its quite a unique experience. one of their trade mark is the honey beer.

Another unique bar is the Bar Pierożek. it has a medieval theme and an interesting green beer can be found in the bar called zielone piwo. the bar is located right in the middle of the city centre .

There are many other bars which are too numerous to mention. Also, was lots of night clubs, one of which is Mohito, which is not too far from the university and its mostly attended by students.

Another is Donkichot , this is one of the most popular club in the city and its located in the center of the city centre. it is the biggest and most talked about place.

Other clubs in the city include, Mexico pela, Retro and also Disco Ray. Carpe Diem Klub is a club that cuts across bot club and a pub, and its more of an underground thing.

The city also has a very healthy restaurant life, both foreign and local cuisine. This is basically what anyone can find without much stress.

Studies

Studying at the university was a bit complicated at the beginning as it will be in any other universities. Finding the classrooms and also understanding the time table posed similar challenges as anyone could encounter in any other university.

The program was in English and as such, the teaching was in English language. This was a bit challenging as most of the lecturers struggled with the use of English language. The course offered where interesting and the teaching method were very nice and comfortable. The teachers had an open door policy, which means the student were free to discuss whatever problems they may have had during the course or wit the class.

The local people and also the local student students were always excited to meet and talk with the foreign exchange or foreign students. There was a very welcoming environment and a relaxed atmosphere for studying.