

### **Tip 1 - Workplace dynamics**

Safe to say I was not sure what to expect when arriving here, especially not in the workplace. I remember feeling very lost and forgotten at my initial arrival, despite the welcoming co-workers, I was uneasy about the lack of structure and was worried about the weeks to come. I found that keeping a good stream of communication via Whatsapp and planning ahead with coworkers was what quelled that anxiety. 'Going with the flow' is important here and being sturdy in yourself is important. For example, I came when there was construction being done at the faculty and people, because of the summer months, were constantly coming and going with vacations. I was a little discombobulated at first but saw that taking things day by day and seeing what presents itself to you is the best way to stay afloat. The work/life balance is a lot different here than in the US, I find people less anxious about work here, especially in the summer.

### **Tip 2 - Everyday Life, Transit**

Public transit is amazing in Prague and can take you anywhere you need to go within city limits! I take the tram every day to the lab and it is quick and easy to get where you need to go. I found that using the 'Transit' option on Apple Maps very helpful. Just put it where you need to go and click the Transit option and it'll tell you the easiest way to get there using public transport. I also found that once you get used to it, you start to understand how to use the transit without having to use your phone - like riding a bike! Some of my favorite things to do are to take the tram all around the city and look out the window as they weave through the streets and watch new people get on and off. Something to keep in mind is that in Czech culture elders and mothers are held in very high respect. If you are riding a full tram or metro and have a seat, it is looked down upon not to give up your seat to an elder or a mother with children that is standing. I find this cultural custom very admirable.

### **Tip 3 - Safety**

Prague is a very safe city. I have rarely felt unsafe or worried about making it home safely. Despite this, I do believe that, especially after dark, it is very important - especially for women - to stay alert of everyone around them. Something that I found helpful is talking to locals about places they avoid after dark. I have been advised that the 'Zizkov' side of Vinohrady is best avoided after dark for the bars have the tendency to get unsafe, especially when traveling alone. If you do want to stay past dark, I find that sticking to the more touristy sections of the city is very safe. Another thing to be aware of is pickpocketing! This has thankfully not happened to me but I have heard it is a big problem in the touristy sections. Make sure you have all your bags zipped up and close to you especially around Stare Mesto and Karlův Most as well as the public transit in those areas.

#### **Tip 4 - Food**

Food is a tough one. I found, especially in the first few weeks, that adjusting to Czech grocery stores was much harder than I expected. Not being around the produce, meat, bread and snacks I am used to is difficult, especially as someone that does not like to spend my money eating out at restaurants. I remember the first few weeks I was really struggling with balancing work and food, it took me a while to establish a good rhythm with food that kept me energized and satisfied. I remember one day I tried to make a meal that I used to make at home in Oregon, I went out and tried to buy all the same ingredients that I would in the US but after searching through four different grocery stores I still could not find what I was looking for. Instead, I looked around at what other people were buying and filled up my shopping cart with more local and fresh ingredients. Czech grocery stores bake bread and pastries everyday, and often have sales on fruit and vegetables that are in season. A favorite of mine are the grapes that ripen in the summer. I recommend not fighting for what you are used to but embrace what is in front of you instead.

#### **Tip 5 - Social dynamics**

Social dynamics is another difficult topic, Czech social norms are much different from the friendliness and smiles that are commonly exchanged in the US. Making friends is very different. I have had a hard time with this here and I believe it partly lies in the emptiness of the dormitory due to the summer months. At my dormitory, there are communal spaces and kitchens that are open to everyone but I have unfortunately rarely found anyone there. Especially being an introvert, I have found this aspect of Prague a little depressing and unfortunate. People are more closed off and shy than in the US. Despite this, being able to entertain yourself and see past this has helped me. I have had a few nice conversations with people at cafes and bars so I would recommend this to anyone who is in need of social interaction.