When I prepared for my exchange, I took about 1.5 weeks of clothing to suffice (for a boy) since I did laundry once a week. Taking toiletries was not as necessary because everything needed is relatively the same price or cheaper and very easy to access from any small corner store located near the dorm. My flight had 1 layover at London Heathrow airport, which was a bit confusing to figure out because they show you the flight gate about 30 minutes before boarding. This had me worried the first time, so I glued my eyes to the screen of flights just in case.

The cost of living is cheaper than Vancouver. You can almost buy a week's worth of food for just under $25 such as: eggs; milk; bread; water (however the water is supposedly fine from any tap); vegetables; meat; and fruits. Learning how to cook pasta would be a big plus as it was the main go to meal for many students. When making purchase for anything, I preferred to use my card. Every so often I would withdraw cash from an ATM, for which there was a surcharge so I took out enough to last just about a week if needed. Luckily, my funds were from a student loan from the bank and help from my family.

About a month prior to leaving Vancouver, I was contacted by a student from the buddy system. Their first responsibility was to help me from the time I arrive at the airport to whenever I settled in. I was picked up and brought directly to the dorms where they speak to the receptionist (because all the receptionist spoke very little English). My buddy then brought me to the supermarket called "Kaufland" to buy some groceries so that I would not starve in the middle of the night. I was nervous the first night, but I was fortunate to have a buddy that I knew I could rely on for a few days. This is why the buddy system became very important to many students. They held a quick orientation to enlighten the students about the area and what to expect. In addition, they held many events that were to help learn about the city and culture exclusively just for the exchange students.

There are two main dorms, Jarov F and Jarov G, for incoming students. I was put in the dorm Jarov F which is like a hotel. Luckily, it is known for its ugly exterior and relatively nicer interior. Whereas Jarov G is the complete opposite. The exterior of my building was concrete, with rusty guard rails and old windows that open differently (some people never opened them because they had no idea how to). The quality of the room is good for the price, and they were doing some renovations with new furniture as I was departing. I decided to have my own room despite the higher price, but the rent for the 4 months was relatively inexpensive, being roughly $350 per month. Also, if you
do not extend the stay and leave before the 4 months are up, you can get a refund for the remaining time. The only catch is that you must give at least a months notice in advance. The school and dorm are separate businesses so the main contact for dorm issues is with the manager. I had my own room, and it was worth the extra spending because of privacy and not having to worry about another in the room.

There are many classes to choose from as long as they are transferable. I was fortunate to have some classes I needed available in the spring term 2016. These courses also taken by past students were transferable credits. I found the lecturers to be very lenient and understanding of exchange students. However, doing the work is obviously needed in order to pass. Also, given the teachers, they give a lot of insight on their experiences, which was very interesting given their unique perspectives from other countries. This was just as unique as their grading system. 1 is the best mark and 4 a fail. They allow re-do’s for exams if the mark is between 60-70%. However, most classes I took and heard about were mostly just about the amount of work you put in rather than exam marks.

The weather is about the same as Vancouver, so there is no need to prepare for anything out of the norm. Just be sure to prepare for the semester chosen. Prague itself is a beautiful city. There are many tourists which makes the streets crowded at times, but the amount of effort put into the streets and buildings is remarkable. It is endless of beautiful sculptures and decorations. Each building is painted a different colour or tint in order to distinguish one from another. Most roofs are orange clay tile; so going to any of the several viewpoints of the city makes you feel like you’re staring at a painting. Prague is beautiful, and I always noticed something new even on the streets I walked around normally. The tram system is the main means of transportation and comes often. It took roughly 1 week to get used to the system and to fully understand it. The only down part is that you must have your transportation pass at all times or you will be fined no matter what. The fines can be about $80 or more. Do not forget the pass or because the security dress up in normal clothing and surprise you at any moment.

As I mentioned earlier, the buddy system creates many opportunities for students to do things. They plan trips to other countries, parties, various sport activities such as a soccer tournament and even skydiving. They have a Facebook page for all the students to inform them of any events, and there is always something to do. Even other students plan trips and activities and post it for anybody to join. This is what made many connections for others who wanted to fill their time. The buddy system is a connection to different schools also, so there are many opportunities to meet others and travel in large groups, which is safer in theory and more interesting. The cost tended to be worth the trip and the student leaders were usually well informed of the area and the history. Though I never went on one, they were given good reviews from others.
One purpose of my trip was to increase my cultural intelligence. I met so many people from other countries and even though I forget their names after the initial meetings in the first few weeks, they forgive you because they have already forgotten yours too. Thinking back about the “challenges” are actually quite hard. This trip meant so much to me, and it had changed me in the time I stayed. I was taking a risk, which lead me to an opportunity to learn who I was with all these new people.

One challenge I noticed from others, but not personally, was having the patience to deal with older Czech generations. Most adults above 40 years of age barely speak English. It was more common for them to understand German or Russian. It takes time to learn how to handle situations and to hold back any emotions that arise from the strict and forthright attitude of the Czech citizens.

My advice:
Be Open. A saying that went around was "Why not?" This meant why not go out and talk to a new person. Why not approach something you’ve wanted to do. Why not make the effort to find the beautiful places of the city? It was such a simple, yet, strong phrase that pushed me to have experiences with new people that made my stay that much more special. Time is limited, so every opportunity has great value. Also, making the trip into what you want it to be is also very important. Some want to travel a lot, and others want to have a true Czech experience. It is important to make the exchange into how you want to spend it. Push for every experience because every memory made at the end is well worth it.