Introduction
I studied at the university of economics in Spring of 2017. I am a business student concentrating in accounting and marketing.

Preparation for exchange:
I recommend getting an early start on your VISA application. I left mine until the last minute and caused a lot of undue stress as they took their time with mailing my passport back to me. There are multiple types of VISAs so make sure you apply for the correct one. There are a few good translators in the metro Vancouver area who can help translate information if needed. Make sure you fill everything out clearly and in Czech when specified as friends had their passport sent back without a VISA due to errors.

My round-trip flight cost me ~$1200 CAD flying in and out of Prague via KLM. I recommend searching for flights immediately after getting accepted as you can find cheaper flights when you get an earlier start.

I packed very light for my trip. One 65L backpack fit all my clothing and a normal backpack fit my school supplies and camera/other accessories. I found this to work out just fine as I had 1.5 weeks’ worth of clothing that I could continuously launder and rotate. If I ever needed anything I went to the mall where they have a cheap clothing retailers such as H&M. There are many things that would be more convenient to just purchase in Prague than to bring with you (hair dryers, etc.). You will likely need a lot less than you originally think. Over-packing makes your life a bit more inconvenient as you’ll need to bring more/bigger suitcases which can be a hassle.

If possible, try to bring a travel bag that fits the size requirements for Ryanair/EasyJet as it is far cheaper to fly with only carryon once you’re in Prague.

Arrival and Orientation.
VSE sets you up with a “buddy” to help you get oriented in Prague (you must sign up – don’t miss the deadline!). Most buddies are very helpful and will pick you up from the airport if you communicate with them ahead of time. The buddies are always there if you need anything from them. Most buddies were Czech or Slovak which helped in applying for metro passes and other activities that required the Czech language.

The first week has no classes and is full of activities organized by the school. I would recommend signing up for these as they are a great opportunity to meet new people who are in the same situation you are. “Ice Breaker Weekend” is the culmination of this first week and I highly recommend attending. It is focused on team building activities with parties each night. This is the best opportunity to meet all the people who will be in your classes this semester as many people attend. This weekend is very fun and I guarantee you will be telling stories about this weekend the rest of the semester.
Accommodation:
There are student dormitories provided by the school (Jarov). Do not be expecting a luxurious student apartment when you arrive – the buildings are old and are not aging well. Although I hear that they are renovating most of Jarov F (as of Spring 2017) so you may be paying more for the newer and nicer rooms. There are some rooms that have been renovated and are much nicer but are also more expensive. Jarov is very cheap to live in; The whole semester cost me ~$600 CAD living with one roommate and 2 other flatmates. It is cheaper to have a roommate in addition to flatmates but you must decide if this is worth it. I enjoyed having a roommate but I came across others who regretted their choice of having both roommates and flatmates.

I recommend Jarov F as that is where most exchange students stay. Jarov G has more local students and is less lively from my experience. Some students chose to live outside of the dorms which I would not recommend. You will miss out on so much of the fun that happens in Jarov and you will miss out on meeting people. Jarov also has a good and cheap laundry facilities, study rooms, and basically anything else you will need. The best gym equipment is in Jarov C which is a short walk from F or G and costs the same amount. You can buy a monthly gym pass which is cheaper than paying day by day.

The dorms are located about 20 minutes from school and 30 minutes from downtown. Both day and night trams come to the dorms frequently. There are also multiple corner stores within walking distance and 2 grocery stores within 2 tram stops.

Academic information
The classes at VSE are far easier than at SFU. I took three 3 ECTS credit courses and two 6 ECTS credit courses and had no issues at all with handling the course load. I would recommend scheduling your courses to have a 4-day weekend to travel. You will inevitably want to go on trips and it is much nicer to not have to worry about getting back in time for class or skipping classes. Many courses are marked heavily on attendance and participation so make sure you show up to classes! That being said, the professors are mostly very understanding and can help you if you have plans interfering with deadlines.

The Czech Language for foreigners class was a good way to learn some basic phrases to use at bars and restaurants to fit in a bit more with locals. Other than that, just take courses that work with your schedule and will transfer back.

Many of the transferable courses are masters level so you will need to message the professors to get permission to enter. I found the masters classes were still easier than SFU courses so no need to worry about that.

Country Information
The weather in January, February, and March is quite cold most of the time! It only snowed a few times but you will need to bring a jacket with you. The weather after March is beautiful most days so you will also need to bring some summer clothing for these months!
The local parts of Prague require you to have cash on you for payment. The more touristy areas will accept cards but always carry cash to be safe. There is a reliable ATM right outside of Jarov which charges a small fee for each withdrawal. I would occasionally pull out a large amount of cash and store excess in my dorm to avoid paying the withdrawal fee more often than I needed to.

**Assorted information about the Czech Republic:**
The Buddy System and other Erasmus programs in Prague organize trips frequently both inside and outside of Czechia. I went on a couple and they were both a great time and cheap!

The Czech locals will generally not be friendly to you. Most Czechs over 40 don’t speak any English and don’t take an interest in learning any. You will get yelled at in a grocery store or bar/restaurant by employees at least once – it is a rite of passage as an exchange student in Prague. Using basic Czech phrases is an easy way to get on the Czechs’ good side, though.

The Czechs love their beer. It is cheap and a large part of their culture. You can take a short trip to Plzen in the Czech Republic where the most famous Czech beer is brewed. “Na zdravi” is “cheers” in Czech – a phrase you will use often.

**Assorted Tips**

The cost of living in Prague is very low compared to Vancouver. You can get a week’s worth of quality groceries for ~$15 CAD or eat out at a good restaurant for $10-$15 CAD per meal. As I was budgeting I would cook most my meals at home and eat out occasionally. If you pay more than 40 CZK for a beer you are paying too much!

The first few days before getting your student metro pass, make sure you purchase single use passes for the trams. Prague has a surprising amount of undercover transit police officers who will ask to see your tickets. If you don’t have one the fine is expensive and non-negotiable.

Always go out on the Tuesday “Nation to Nation” parties. Tuesday is when most of the exchange students come out and is extremely lively most the time.

Many people decided to get SIM cards for their cell phones upon arrival. The Buddy system offers you a deal on a cheap plan through Vodafone as well. After one month with the Buddy System plan I never renewed it. There is plenty of free WIFI in Prague and I would only contact people over internet services anyhow. It is cheaper to get your phone unlocked in Canada than in Prague. If you plan on getting a SIM card, ensure you unlock your phone before departing.

Always say “yes”! There will be some times where you would rather stay in and catch up on studies or watch Netflix but you will regret these nights when the semester is over. If an opportunity arises for something fun you should take it. These will be the best months of your life – don’t waste them!