

Name: Renan Almeida de Carvalho  
University: KU Leuven, Belgium

Since I received the notice about the cultural scholarship I could see my exchange program with other eyes. In the beginning I was worried about living 6 months in Europe and not being able to visit other places beyond Belgium. Now, I am super happy that I can realize my old dream of meeting new cultures and people around Europe.

Besides enable me to visit other countries, the scholarship made that I could live better in Leuven. Nowadays, I don't hesitate to go to a student event to save money because I know that I will be able to travel anyway. Due to this, I am much more involved in the university student life.

In the next paragraphs I would like to talk briefly about my experience travelling alone during 20 days around Europe on the Easter break.

I chose Italy as the first country to visit and I don't regret it. The first city that I've been was Rome. There I booked a room in a house of local people. It was a big experience to stay with Italian family because I could know how the typical life in the city is, and not just the tourist one. During 4 days in Rome I could walk through the city and visit the historical places like Vatican Museums, Coliseum, Pantheon and all the others.

After Rome I took a train to go to Pisa and then Florence. The first stop in Pisa was just to see the famous Tower of Pisa and its buildings around. It was awesome because as I was alone I always had to ask for people if they could take a photo of me, and for each people that I asked we were talking a little about us. In one of this situation I met I guy from India that was travelling alone as well, so we could talk about our travel and share our experiences. We become friends and 3 days after we meet each other at Venice!

After Pisa I've been in Florence. There I could visit the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore, considered by UNESCO an Intangible Cultural Heritage. I was lucky because I've been in Florence on Easter Sunday and I had the pleasure to participate of the folk festival called "*Scoppio del Carro*". It was a really deeply immersion on the Florentine Culture.

The next and the last city in Italy that I visited was Venice. I have to confess that it was the most beautiful city that I've ever seen. In Venice I could learn more about the glass art in the ancient tradition of Murano Island.

Finally, I decided to go to other country and I chose countries from Eastern Europe. From Italy I went to Krakow, the second largest city of Poland. There I had one of the biggest experience of my life. I visited the concentrations camps Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II that was the largest of the German Nazi concentration camps and extermination centers. It was hard and painful, but as the Memorial say: "There is no way to understand postwar Europe and the world without an in-depth confrontation between our idea of mankind and the remains of Auschwitz". Besides that, I had the opportunity to visit the Wieliczka Salt Mine, that is one of the world's oldest salt mines in operation. It was incredible because I could understand how a mine works and how is inside.

From Poland I went to Budapest by Bus. The city is completely different from the others that I visited. I could enter in the Budapest Parliament and know the whole history of the city and its buildings. I also tried the Goulash soup, that is a typical dish with meat, onions and paprika. Budapest is an interesting place because the city in the night is completely different from the day. I remember that I walked around 30 kilometers and visited all places again in the night just to see the view from different perspectives. It was worth it!

Name: Renan Almeida de Carvalho  
University: KU Leuven, Belgium

After Budapest I decided to go Vienna. There I stayed again with local people and I could talk and know how the real life in the city is. I also visited both Hofburg and Schönbrunn palace. It was really interested to know and see how the Imperial family lived that time.

The last city of my trip was Prague. There I visited all famous museum and historical places like the Castle of Prague, The Old Town Square, The Astronomical Clock, The Lennon Wall and many others. I also ate the famous Trdelnik that become one of my favorite desserts.

These 20 days travelling alone was a such experience in my life. I tried to visit all important places on each city that I visited and meet people from all over the word. I can say that I could understand a bit about the culture of all places that I've been. Each place has a special way to eat, talk and live. I also could learn about myself as a person and about the world that I live.

It was only possible because of the partnership between Insper scholarship program and The Hantos Prize Foundation. Thank you very much to contribute with my exchange experience and my growth as a person.