

# MONEY WHILE ABROAD

It is broadly estimated that students should allow \$100-\$200 per week (\$400-\$800 per month) for living expenses, including food and personal expenses. Your abroad experience fee includes accommodation and textbooks.

Read below for considerations related to managing your finances while abroad.

## Getting Cash

### ATMs

The least expensive and quickest way to get cash in Prague is through one of the many ATMs located throughout the city. Staff will show you the ones closest to your housing during the Discovery Week neighborhood walking tour.

Whenever you can, use ATMs that have an indoor vestibule (connected to a real bank), and try to go to ATMs from national and international banks, like UniCredit, Komerční banka, Česká spořitelna, Československá obchodní banka, Deutsche Bank, and Raiffeisenbank. These banks will charge lower withdrawal fees than ATMs that cater to tourists. However, you should still expect an international transaction fee of around \$5-7 USD per transaction.

Before you depart the U.S., find out whether your bank has a 'sister' bank in Europe that will give you lower withdrawal fees (i.e. Bank of America has a sister bank called Deutsche Bank). You should also ask your bank about any other fees associated with withdrawing abroad so that you are aware.

## Creating and Keeping a Budget

### Preparing an Emergency Fund

When you set up a budget, start with preparing an emergency fund. Ideally, you should not touch this money for the entire duration of your time abroad.

Your emergency fund may look like a set amount of money that you leave in your bank account, or you may leave a portion in your bank account and keep a portion in cash in the form of Czech Koruna. Remember that if you travel with a large amount of cash, it's a good idea to divide it and store each portion in different places (don't forget where!) in case that your wallet or bag is stolen.

A good amount of money to keep in your emergency fund is at least \$100 - \$500. This may be used to travel to the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate, pay for a night at a hostel or hotel (if needed during a trip away from the city), or any number of necessities in case your wallet or bag is stolen.

In order to prevent dipping into your emergency fund, we recommend that you do not carry all of your cash and cards with you when you go out. If you take all forms of payment with you, you are placing yourself at a higher risk if your wallet is stolen.

Please keep in mind that it is not permitted for you to obtain any part-time employment while in Prague, as you are in the country on a student visa. Please make sure you have enough spending money for the semester before you arrive in Prague!

### **Preparing Your Spending Budget**

After you've set up your emergency fund, you may want to plan your budget for the semester.

It's tempting to go on a spending spree when you first arrive – but it's a smart move to make sure your money lasts for your 3.5 months in Prague. Making a budget helps ensure that you live within your means.

Consider the following questions:

- How much money are you bringing?
- How much will you be spending on essentials (food, toiletries, etc)?
- How much will you have to spend on optional expenses?

Here are a couple of highly-rated apps used for budgeting:

- [Goodbudget](#): The Goodbudget app is based on using the envelope system, known as Kakeibo, which means “household account book” in Japanese. The envelope system is designed to let you know how much money is allocated to each expense, along with how much is saved each month.
- [Mint](#): Mint is a free budgeting app that allows you to connect all of your financial accounts in one digital space so you get a high-level overview of your financial health. The app also allows users to track spending and savings and set and track budget goals.

[Watch this video](#) to hear from Alumni about budgeting during your experience abroad.

# Expenses to Keep in Mind

## Food

Food costs will account for a significant part of your budget. We estimate that students will spend **\$300-\$400** per month on food.

Let's say you decide to have all your meals at local restaurants, you could see the following prices:

- Breakfast: \$4-10 USD
- Basic lunchtime options: \$7-\$12 USD
- Meal at Pub or Restaurant: \$10-\$20 USD

That brings your total daily budget for food to around \$21-\$42, not including snacks or more than just 1 drink per meal. Over the course of the semester, you would spend anywhere from \$2,205- \$4,515 USD on food. This can quickly add up if you are not careful and you can deplete your savings in a matter of weeks.

Prague has many affordable supermarkets and farmers markets where you can find fresh products. Ordering your groceries online is also quite popular, and you can do so on sites like Tesco.com and Rohlik.cz, where they have webpages in English. The major supermarket chains are Billa, Tesco, Albert, and Lidl. You have access to all of these within walking distance from your student housing.

During Discovery Week, your program staff will share tips on how to cut grocery costs.

## Personal Expenses

In addition to food costs, there are other expenses you'll want to consider, some discretionary, while others, necessities. It's easy for discretionary spending to get out of control, so make sure to build necessary expenses into your budget first.

Necessary expenses may include:

- **Local phone plan.** Remember, it is Verto's policy that each student has a functioning cell phone that can receive incoming texts and calls and access local data.
- **Toiletries.** At some point, you'll likely need to purchase things such as shampoo, menstrual products, contact solution, etc.
- **Personal needs.** This could be laundry detergent, dish soap, a haircut or style, etc. Because these aren't daily necessities, they can often be overlooked in building a budget.

Discretionary expenses may include:

- Gym memberships
- Independent travel
- Clothing/apparel and shoes
- Souvenirs/gifts for friends and family
- Going to the movies, dining out, coffee, etc.

## Prague for Cheap or Free

Remember that many places offer student discounts! You will be eligible for student discounts when you show your International Student ID card (ISIC), which you'll collect from Verto staff in your first few weeks in Prague.

We recommend you make the most of your time in Prague, and your budget doesn't have to stop you.

Check out our quick list of free or cheap attractions here:

- Prague Castle
- Vltava River
- Astronomical Clock
- Dancing House
- Old Jewish Cemetery
- Old Town Square
- Kampa Island
- Lobkowitz Palace
- Old Town Hall
- Charles Bridge
- Farmers Markets throughout the city
- Petřín Hill
- Vyšehrad
- Letná Gardens
- David Černý artwork

And so much more!

Keep in mind that students enjoy their time abroad on a wide range of budgets. Ask your on site Care Team Leader for more ideas on how to manage your budget while abroad!