

Exchange Report



**IE University**

**Madrid, Spain**

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## Part 1 - Monthly Activity Log

### September

As IE University does not have any kind of student hall or dormitory, we have to find a place before arrival. The school, however, does provide some recommendations on different agencies and residences in helping you to locate suitable accommodation.

(<http://www.ieustudentlife.com/living-in-madrid>)

I chose RESA, a brand new residence which is especially for university students as advertised on the website. Expecting it to be open on 1 Sept, 2016 as it promised, I stayed in a hotel just next to the address for a few nights upon arriving Madrid. While the truth is I ended up staying in another hotel (which is 30 min away from IE while the original site is only 5 min walking distance away!!!) that RESA arranged for me and other residents for the whole September.

My first impression of IE University is that it is really small! Although it's small, you basically got what you need there assuming you won't be spending much of your exchange time there anyway. For business students, we usually have lessons in the 8-storey undergrad building and PV21, a house-like building with 3 floors. Classes at IE are pretty much the same with those in UST, except the class size is a bit smaller. Another point you may want to note is that people like to smoke outside after class, which I really hate, so you may have to endure a bit if you do too.



The best of September comes in the last weekend, when we went to Munich for the famous Oktoberfest. Be sure to book your flight and accommodation earlier as they only get more expensive the later. The fair started at 10 in the morning and people were drunk by mid day. Hit the venue before noon if you want to secure a table and surround it with your friends. But it always nice to join someone randomly and drink and dance together as people come from all around the world for the beers! Last but not least, costumes are important! Gals wear dirndl and guys wear shirts with lederhosen. It's true they are quite expensive, but everybody would wear so. So dress up and enjoy☺

## October



Since not all classes had regular schedules, in which some courses might even start in late October, it gave me lots of free time to explore different places. So every time when I had two or more consecutive days of holiday, I would plan a trip. That's how I have been to over 20 cities without failing the attendance requirements.

In the first week of October, I joined a 3-day trip to Barcelona and Zaragoza organized by Citylifemadrid. It is an organization specialized in events and travel planning especially for youngsters and foreign students like us. Other than short trips to popular cities in Spain such as Ibiza, Valencia and Seville, they also hold long guided trips to Morocco and more. Not to mention that there are different parties held regularly every week as well. As a student with a tight budget, I found this very appealing and convenient as all activities are offered at a reasonable price and they will have everything including transportation and accommodation booked for you, so why not take this chance to know some new friends while having fun at the same time.

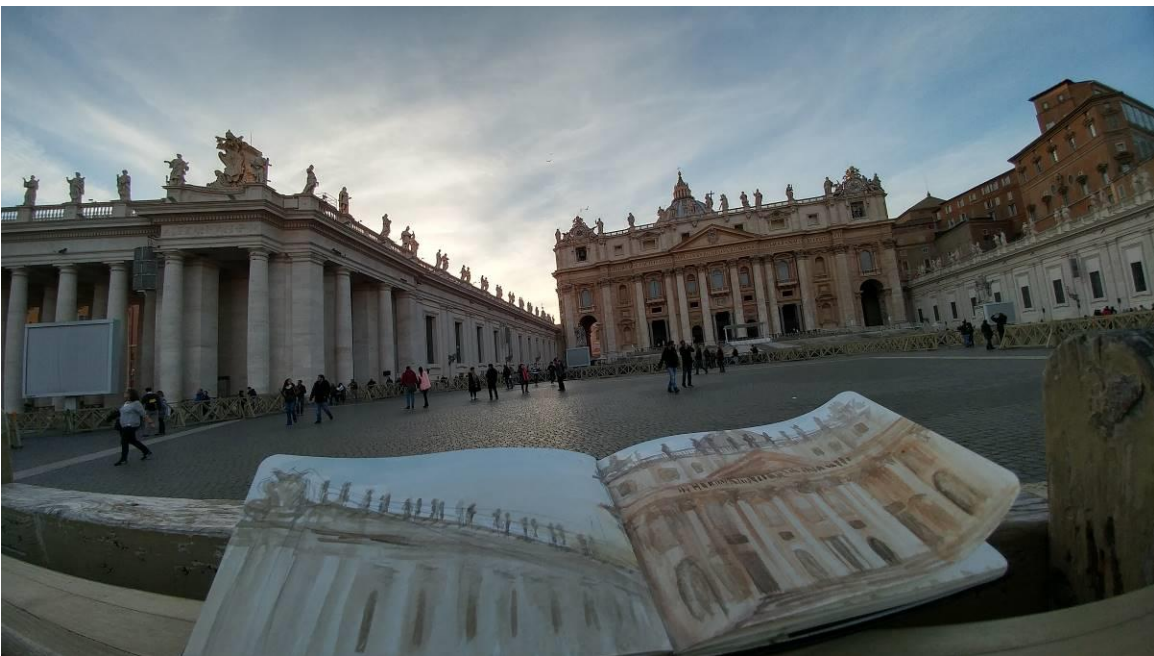


## November



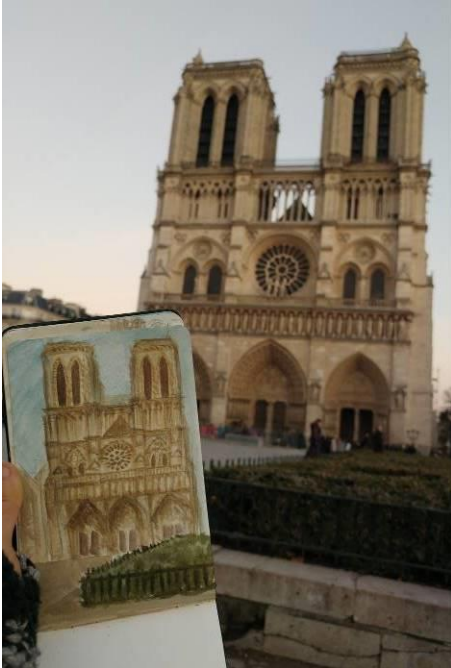
Halfway through my exchange period, one of the highlights in November was my trip to Seville, the town famous for its Flamenco show.

I think exchange is a very precious experience as you are given the opportunity to see and try as much as possible as a student, in which we have the physical ability to go further and have little to worry about. So what I do is that I always search for restaurants where I could taste the best local specialties and cuisines, star all the landmarks and must-visit places on my google map, and make sure I book every traditional shows and events that are of my interest and worth watching. Only by doing so that I felt I was not wasting a single second and gaining the most out of it.



## December

Reaching the end of the semester, it's true that you will get a bit busier, but I think it's still manageable if you have good time management skill. Even though I had four exams and four presentations in December, this just didn't stop me from planning more trips until my schedule was fully packed. In fact, I went to three countries during exam period and I had always brought my laptop and notes with me so that I could work and revise at night.



## **Part 2 - General Exchange Information**

### **1) Visa Procedures**

Visa application normally takes three weeks. Please remember to prepare all necessary documents beforehand and an **online appointment** is compulsory! Since I didn't know about this in the first place, it just costed me another trip to the embassy.

Here's the link:

<https://espcghk.acuityscheduling.com/schedule.php>

<http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Consulados/HONGKONG/en/InformacionParaExtranjeros/Documents/Visa%20PDF/Student%20Visa.pdf>

### **2) Orientation Activities**

Unlike what we have at UST, there was no orientation week, camps or over-night activities. What they had especially for exchanges students was a tapas night, in which there were free flow of tapas (Spanish small snacks) and two glasses of drinks.

Another signature event would be a party held mainly for freshman, but many exchange students joined as well. The school arranged around 10 coaches to pick us up at 11 something at night and took us to a partying place outside Madrid (more than 1-hour bus ride from school). The party didn't start until 1 and we were dropped off at school at around 5 in the morning.

### **3) International Services & Activities**

There was a club registration day where all student interest associations held booths to introduce themselves to newcomers including freshman and exchange students. I did sign up for quite a number of clubs, but I never receive any emails or notifications for meetings or events or anything, which was quite disappointing. Though I did participate in a career event from a club I didn't sign up for, it was promoting its event on the school Facebook page. So you may want to keep track of the page as many sports team will post their training schedule there as well.

### **4) Accommodations**

There are no dormitory or hall of any kind. You are advised to secure a place for your stay before arriving to Madrid. The school, however, does provide some websites and agencies to help you find a place.

### **5) Courses Registration**

You will receive the link and timeslot for your course registration soon after the enrollment confirmation is issued. It's a fairly simple system where you can see all the courses available to you. You can only take Year 3&4 courses in the Madrid campus as Year 1&2 courses are offered in the Segovia campus. So please check the IE BBA pathway/logbook before you decide the courses you would like to take. You will be able to view some of the syllabus on a system like Canvas, but bear in mind not all courses may be open as it claims to be, so please refer to the course registration system for the most accurate information. Unlike we have at HKUST, you are able to take courses with not more 30% time clash.

### **6) Teaching & Assessment Methods**

Classes are conducted in a way very similar to the ones in UST. We listen to lectures, have group discussions, projects, presentations, quizzes and exams, depending on the

subject. Although most professors are Spaniards, you should be safe if you only take classes that are taught in English. Teachers will upload course materials to a system like Canvas. The class size is bit smaller, around 20-40, as there are no large lecture halls, but only classrooms.

### **7) Sports & Recreation Facilities**

There is no gym at school. However, there are two gyms, CR7 Fitness and Basic-Fit, just across the street which offers different monthly plans at good prices. You will find a badminton net and two table tennis tables in the lawn just in front of the main building.

### **8) Finance & Banking (including currency / expenses)**

Bank Sabadell is associated with the school and they are usually responsible for account-opening services for IE students. There are a few Bank Sabadell near the school, the staff will know once you mention you are from IE and would like open an account. The bank card you will get is a debit card. You can basically use it as credit card to book tickets and accommodations, pay for dinner and do all kinds of shopping. You can use the card to get money from ATM in other European countries (outside Spain), but of course there will be charges, usually 5%.

### **9) Social Clubs & Networking Opportunities**

Refer to **Part 3 International Services & Activities**

### **10) Health & Safety**

Seeing doctor may be troublesome when you don't know the language. Make sure you know the closest clinic/hospital before you get there. There are a lot pharmacies and drug stores, some open 24-hour. Unluckily I got hand-foot-mouth disease when I was travelling in Vienna. It was during Christmas time and no clinic was open. I had to go to the hospital and everything was in German. It took a while for me to find the right department and the doctor only issued me a prescription. Although I didn't get any medicine, seeing the doctor only (a meeting less than 10 min) cost me 150 euro. So my advice is try to keep yourself in good health.

### **11) Food**

In RESA, the student residence I was staying at, there were meal plans offered. I chose half board in which I got 20 meals of breakfast plus 20 meals of lunch or dinner. The food provider is the same as the one at IE, called Do Eat!.

Traditional Spanish cuisine includes tapas, which is a wide range of small-portion food, usually served cold with a slice of bread. Don't forget to try the famous paella (Spanish seafood rice) and Sangria (alcoholic drink).

### **12) Transportation**

There is a transportation card similar to the Octopus in Hong Kong. It can be used for most public transports in Madrid like bus(including those to the airport and some of the intercity/town & long-route buses) and metro. Students can get it for 25 euro (unlimited rides valid for a month) in specific metro stations and tobacco stores. The plan needs to be renewed for 20 euro monthly.

### **13) Climate**

Madrid is extremely hot during summer time, that's why they have "siesta", in which people take long breaks (usually from 1400-1700) and most small shops will be closed. Although there won't be snow in Madrid and the temperature doesn't drop below 0°C, I think it's still a must for you to bring a coat/down jacket that will keep you warm enough outdoor, especially if you plan to go somewhere during Christmas/Winter time.

### **14) Communication**

People don't really speak English in Spain and in most European countries. I always predownload/use offline Google Translate to facilitate better communication.

### **15) Cautionary measures**

Although I had never been robbed or lost anything, theft is not uncommon and it's always wise to keep your valuable items close to you. Don't bring too much cash when you travel, you can always use your card. Be alert and don't only focus on your phone while you walk on the street. I have heard that people's phones do get snatched away on busy street in day time.

### **Part 3 - Items to Bring**

- Passport & ID
- Money (Cash and debit/credit card(s))
- Laptop
- Adapter(s)
- Comfortable shoes suitable for walking long distance
- Pre-downloaded Spanish Google Translate/ other Spanish translation app
- Strong & large enough backpack for short trips (mine was broken on departure day, I had to buy one at the airport)
- Power bank
- A small bag/purse & wallet for travelling

### **Part 4 - Useful Links and Contacts**

<http://www.ie.edu/university/student-life/living-in-madrid/>

<http://www.ieustudentlife.com/services-in-madrid-canq>

<http://www.ieustudentlife.com/living-in-madrid>

<http://www.citylifemadrid.com/>

<https://espcghk.acuityscheduling.com/schedule.php>

<http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Consulados/HONGKONG/en/InformacionParaExtranjeros/Documentos/Visa%20PDF/Student%20Visa.pdf>