

# 2015 Fall Exchange Report

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## Part I Activity Log

### **August 2015**

My long-awaited exchange journey started! I arrived in Barcelona together with other exchange students in late August. Thanks to the help from our buddy Anxi, we settled soon. We took the time to walk around the city and did a little bit city exploration.

### **September 2015**

For the first two weeks of September, I took a non-compulsory Spanish Intensive Course. The class schedule was from 09:30 till 14:00 for 14 consecutive weekdays. Indeed, this was quite demanding and exhausting. After taking this course, I allowed myself to have a short trip to Southern France (Lyon and Nice) before kicking off the fall semester.

The semester started on the Sept 14 and it took me a while to get used to the class duration here as each class has 3-hour lecture with 15-20 minutes break.

'La Merce' has been a week-long festival during mid-September here, so please mark it down on your diary. It's so much fun. You should not miss the Corre Foc (fire run) at night! The name sounds scary but indeed this's a very amazing activity, just remember to wear thick clothes (long sleeves and long trousers) so as not to hurt yourself. I regretted that I missed out the biggest day of the festival (the last day) as I was in Italy (Milan and Venice) with my friends. Dubbed as City of Water, Venice did amaze me by its picturesque islands.



### **October 2015**

For most of the days, I attended classes and hanged out with friends. My friends and I had a day trip to Sitges- a small town near Barcelona. It is definitely worthwhile to spend a day there, especially if you are a beach lover!

October was a month with a slightly heavier workload. For me, I had to write two 2500-word essays and did several group projects. Still, these were manageable and I've got time to travel around.





Though I am not a football fan, I watched a football match because football has played an important role here. That match was FC Barcelona against Real Sociedad. That was fantastic! I could feel the togetherness of Barça football fans. I kept shouting for Barça team as well! No doubt, Barça won as Messi, Suarez and Neymar scored 4 goals. Hurrah!

A friendly reminder here: the weather was getting colder in November, so it would be a last chance for you to spend good time on the beach.

## December 2015

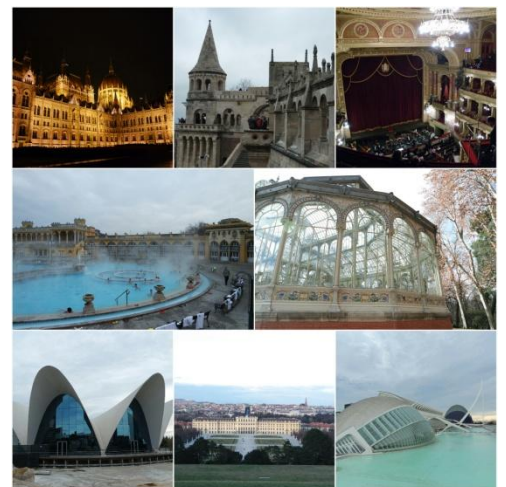
For this month, I had no classes at all and finished all exams and presentations in November. I was quite free and I have hosted my friends who came to Barcelona. Basically, I just travelled around the Europe. Countries that I have visited include Portugal, Netherlands, Swiss, Belgium and London. As December is a Xmas time, there are a lot of Christmas markets with nice decoration and some are quite impressive like those in Brussels (Belgium), Sintra (Portugal) and Hyde Park (London). The more I travel, the more I realize that I know a little about this world only.



## January 2016

Time flies, I realized that I have got only 2 more weeks to go. I grasped my last chance in Europe to travel more. I managed to go to Valencia, Madrid, Budapest and Vienna. After visiting so many cities, my favorite city is still Barcelona. The culture is so rich, the weather is superb almost all the time, Spaniards are super helpful and friendly and you name it. Yet, all good things must come to an end. In mid January, my friend and I took the flight back to Hong Kong. Barcelona, I will be back!

Note that there will a big sale all over Spain starting from 7<sup>th</sup> January and you can enjoy this shopping season!



## Part II General Information

### 1) Visa Procedures

For applying for the visa, you have to bring your passport, the return flight tickets, insurance proof, admission and housing letter issued by ESADE/ HKUST. As the application takes almost 1 month to complete, it is better to apply it as soon as possible. For more information, you may refer to this website:

<http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Consulados/HONGKONG/en/InformacionParaExtranjeros/Pages/VisadosUniformeSchengen.aspx>

### 2) Orientation Activities

For the first two weeks of September, there are some talks held by exchange coordinator and CIEE. They introduced Barcelona and gave you some tips for exploring Barcelona better.

### 3) International Services & Activities

There is a student club named CIEE for international students and plenty of activities are offered by them like ice-breaking sessions, welcoming party, farewell dinner and more.

### 4) Accommodations

There is an on-campus accommodation in Sant Cugat but I don't suggest you to live there because the rent is quite expensive and it is far away from city centre. In that case, you cannot discover the city to the fullest. I myself live in an apartment in L'Exiample with my exchange-mates and other guys. I rented it at 500 euro with all utilities included. Other possible convenient locations are in Plaza de Catalunya and Gracia, these regions are of good safety. Usually, the rent costs you 400-500 euro. You search for an apartment via RESA housing agency, Facebook group and other channels.

### 5) Courses Registration

Courses registration is quite simple and easy. Approximately 2 months before the semester starts, you can enroll the courses online. You can add/drop the courses for a designated period of time but class swapping does not work here. In addition, various courses are

provided for different majors, like Marketing, Management, Finance and Operation Management. It is not a big problem for the credit transfer issue.

#### 6) Teaching & Assessment Methods

I took 6 courses here, including the Spanish intensive course in early September. All courses adopt small-class teaching. Usually, there are 30 students in the class. Class participation weighs a lot, usually at 20%. On top of that, there is a strict requirement for the class attendance- you have to attend at least 80% of the lectures. Regarding the course workload, this differs a lot depending on the professor. But in general, the workload is a lot lighter than when I studied at UST.

#### 7) Sports & Recreation Facilities

There is a gymnasium in the campus and it is not difficult to find a sports centre in the city centre. If you like cycling, I highly recommend you to buy/rent a bicycle here as Barcelona is a bicycle-friendly city or you can simply go to the seaside or main roads for cycling.

#### 8) Cost/Expenses

The living cost is a bit higher than Hong Kong as food and transportation are more expensive. Compared with other cities in Europe, the cost of living is reasonable. I spent 850-1000 euro a month in which the largest expense is the rent. If you dine out, it costs 10-15 euro for a lunch set and 20 euro for the dinner meal. Grocery shopping is cheap though.

#### 9) Social Clubs & Networking Opportunities

There are tons of opportunities to meet with new friends including the Spanish intensive class, CIEE networking session and clubbing.

#### 10) Health & Safety

As a non-EU student, the medical expense is dear but you may buy medicine from a pharmacy.

It is heard that pickpocketing is so common in Barcelona but my belongings haven't been stolen so far. I personally think that Barcelona is a safe city. As long as you are not absent-minded, everything is ok! Just keep an eye on your valuables when going out.

#### 11) Food

You can always enjoy great food here. Typical Spanish cuisine includes tapa, pincho, croquette, jamon and sangria. An interesting thing is that the dining time is quite different from HK's. I had lunch here at least from HK time 2pm and had dinner late too.

## 12) Transportation

Barcelona is well-connected with metro, bus and tram. One point to note: Metro runs overnight on every Saturday and it operates till 2am on Sunday. Fantastic! In the weekdays, even though you go out late at night, you can always take the night bus to go back home. As I live in the city centre and the campus situates far away from city centre, it takes me an hour to go to school. The only way to go to school is by FGC (a train). Just get off at Sant Cugat Station.

In general, the single ride within zone 1 usually costs 1.5 euro. Barcelona has divided into different zones in which zone 1 is mainly the city centre and zone 2 is where the campus is located. To save money, it is better to buy a T-Jove ticket which is valid for 3 months. It costs you 155 euro, it is quite expensive but it offers unlimited rides for you within 3months.

## 13) Climate

The climate here was perfect all the time. I would say Barcelona have got the nicest weather in Europe. Apparently, the temperature drops in mid-November. The weather becomes chilly. Remember to bring both summer and winter clothes with you.

## 14) Communication

Though Barcelona is in Spain, the main language is Catalan (a local dialogue) instead. Of course they speak Spanish as well. Compared with other European countries, they cannot understand English well. So, it will be difficult to communicate here if you don't speak Spanish at all. My advice for you is to learn some basic Spanish before going here. It helps a lot!

## 15) Cautionary measures

You can withdraw cash by using ATM. A debit card with 'Union Pay', 'Circus', 'Visa', 'MasterCard' and 'Plus' will do. So you do not need to bring a substantial amount of cash to Barcelona.

## 16) Courses taken

- Español Intensivo Basico 1
- CEE: The Emergence of China in 21<sup>st</sup> Century
- CI: Introduction to Sales Management
- EEO: Business Ethics
- Marketing from Strategy to Action
- Project Management

## Part III Items to bring

- ✓ Credit Card & Cash
- ✓ Passport
- ✓ Laptop
- ✓ Chargers
- ✓ Money belt
- ✓ Summer and Winter Clothing
- ✓ Memory card
- ✓ Hygienic products
- ✓ Medicine
- ✓ Stationery

Barcelona is definitely an amazing city that you should choose for your exchange journey! ☺ Good luck for your exchange application.