

# Exchange Report

## IE University, Madrid

### IE Business School



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## Monthly Log

### August

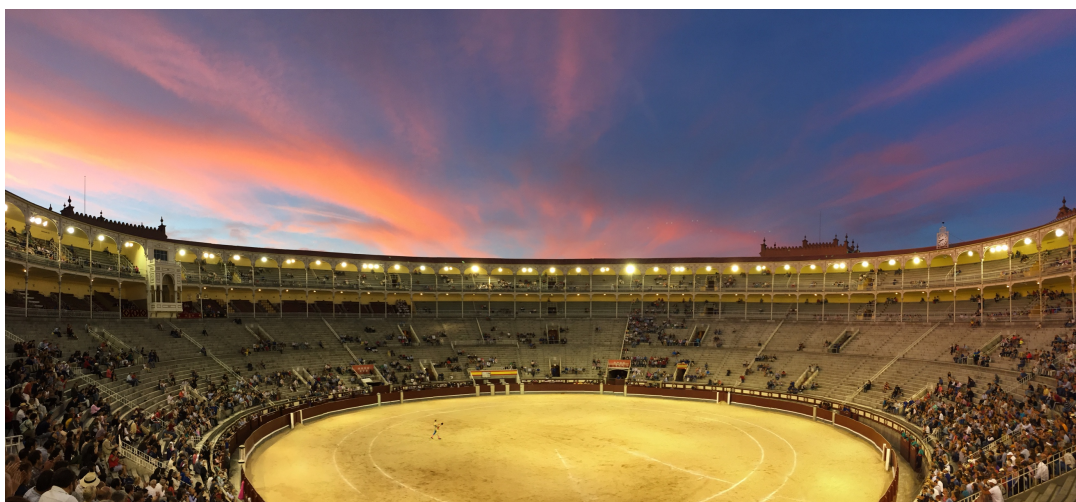
I arrived on 25 Aug in the afternoon. I took a taxi to the hotel which I booked in advance. It cost me exactly EUR30 which is a fixed amount for any taxi trips going from and to the airport. I felt delighted when I came to this city as people here look friendly and nice. After I settled down my stuff in the tiny room, I started to walk around the city, most importantly I had to get my sim card. I heard from other HKUST students saying that Vodafone is their preferred choice, so I went for it. It took me about 30 minutes including waiting time to get the sim card, which was quicker than I expected. Throughout the final week of August, I mainly walked around the city and travelled like a tourist. I went to the Palace, Temple of Debod and Retiro Park, etc. I also went to some fish markets to try out some delicious seafood. Other than travelling, I had to deal with some registration stuff such as making a public transport card, opening a bank account and visiting the campus. Most importantly, I had to get adapt with the JET LAG!

### September

I moved into a shared flat with 5 rooms in total which I rented from Spotahome, (a housing agency operated by IE students) the flat where I will stay for four months. For the first few days, I tried to ice-break with my flat mates who also seemed eager to meet new friends, maybe because I am the only Asian in the flat. I would see it as a practice so that I could be more courageous to meet some new friends on campus. On the first day of school, I tried to talk to as much people as I could. No matter it was an orientation session which I met two good friends who became my travelling partner later on there or during lesson time, I could still meet some new Amigos! After a couple of orientations (I missed the orientation party though ☹), I started to make some good friends. Afterwards, we planned the first trip in Spain which was going to Malaga. It was a good time to enjoy the sunshine and beach in the southern part of Spain. At the end of the month, I started a trip to Barcelona with one of my UST friends. During the trip, we watched a soccer game and ate a lot of seafood.

### October

It was getting cold that time in Madrid, similar to Hong Kong's weather in Autumn though. Unfortunately, I caught cold that I had to enter a hospital because I couldn't find a clinic in the city. It turned out that I have to pay over EUR130 as I didn't buy the medical insurance beforehand. So here I strongly recommend you buy the medical insurance. After feeling a bit better, then I started to walk around the city and tried to be a Madrid citizen. I watched two games of Real Madrid, and I think the atmosphere there was great! Other than that, the mid-term exams were coming, and I started to study. Similar to HKUST, there is a library where you can study. However, I preferred studying in my room with more privacy. Unlike HKUST, the courses are not exam-oriented which means they are not focus too much on studying the contents on the textbooks, though they have examinations. Therefore, as long as you understand the things taught in the class, you will know the answers of those questions.



Bull-fight in Madrid

## November

After mid-term examinations, I took advantage of the allowance of 30% class absence for the whole term to travel around Europe. I travelled for three weeks in countries ranging from Portugal to Italy and from Greece to Netherlands. This is the first time I travelled alone in foreign countries. The trip began from Porto where I met another exchange student from Barcelona who was studying in China. We chatted a lot about Barcelona and also Madrid, especially during the time of Catalonia's independence, we shared our opinions with each other on that issue and it broadened my horizon. Along the trip, I met many local people as I rented rooms from Airbnb, I think this was a golden opportunity for me to learn the cultures of a country through living in a host. The most unforgettable living experience will be during the time when I stayed in Pisa, the host was extraordinarily nice to the residents. He made breakfast for us by baking some apple cake. Other than that, he acted as a local tour guide and recommended some good restaurants and must-go spots to us. This experience impressed me a lot that I have never been welcomed by a host in that way. After the three-week trip, I went back to school and shared my travelling experience with my friends.

## December

This is the last month I stayed in Madrid. I started to miss this city, friends that I met at school and food, etc. Final weeks of the semester also mean that it is the time for final examination. Fortunately, I only got 3 exams which were not demanding, so I could manage to go around the city once again before I left. I made a list which consisted the places that I had to go once again such as the Temple of Depod and Bullfighting, and also restaurants that cooked delicious Seafood Paella and Jamon. At last, I managed to go through all the lecture notes whilst checking all the items on my to-do list. During the final weekend, I joined a Christmas party held by IE, it turned out that it was mainly organized for the IE Business School students, which meant I was too young to join the party. However, my friend and I still attended the party. What we didn't expect was that we met a lot of new friends there in the party, and they were very friendly to us and shared some graduate school experience with us. It was a wonderful night which it was my first time going to a clubbing event in Madrid. After dealing with all the final stuff in Madrid such as closing the bank account and getting back the rental deposit, I left Madrid and travelled to Paris to start my second Europe trip, with two of my

good friends this time. Apart from Paris, we also went to Zurich, Munich and Vienna along the way to Finland. We enjoyed much during this trip and it enabled me to get to know more about different foreign cultures.

## **General Information**

### **Visa Procedure**

As I don't have to apply for a student visa, so I am not quite familiar with the procedure. However, from what I heard from the other student who also went to IE for exchange, she said that it took around 3-4 weeks for the visa application. Also, be reminded to have all the documents prepared for the visa application. Below are the links for the Visa application:

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

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

### **Orientation Activities**

IE University holds tremendously many orientation activities ranging from welcoming party to Tapas night and from kayaking to city sightseeing. Once you have registered online on Campus Group < <https://clubs.ie.edu/login>>, you can join any activities that you like. Most of them are held weekly so you won't be afraid of being alone and doing nothing throughout the whole semester. For me, unfortunately I missed the welcoming party which I heard it was quite fancy and exciting. Despite so, I attended the Tapas night where I met my Amigo for the first time, I said thank you to him for explaining some of my doubts. In addition, I joined the kayaking which I teamed up with some international students and rowed the kayak in a country park.

### **International Services and Activities**

As mentioned above, you may browse activities from Campus Group and register the one that you are interested. Apart from that, sometimes the school office will send out some email inviting international students to attend some activities such as the cultural shock workshop. Not only you can learn how to get over your homesick (if you have any), but also you can cherish the opportunity to meet some new friends from other places. During the second week of school day, there were clubs setting up booths to promote some upcoming functions. For instance, football club will organize some regular training and matches for members, you only have to write down your contact information and they will inform you whenever there are functions held by the club.

### **Accommodation**

For the accommodation, I chose Spotahome, a start-up run by the students in IE Business School. They offered a wide range of rooms and flats for students to live in. However, they

charged a huge amount of one-off commission fee, around EUR200, of which I think their listings are similar to AirBnb, so I suggest you may visit AirBnb before choosing Spotahome. My room is about 15-minutes walking to the campus and just one station away from my nearest station if I take metro. The transportation in Madrid is quite convenient, so I think it is not a big deal if you live in the city center (where the IEU is located in the South-East part), and you can save the rents from renting the expensive flats near the campus.

### **Course Registration**

You will have all the information regarding the course registration sent by the school office via email a few weeks before the semester starts. Be reminded that if you are a year 3 or 4 student, your academic campus is in Madrid, while year 1 and 2 student will attend classes in Segovia Campus. Typically, you can choose any courses that are available in the system as they already help you filter the campus location. Unlike HKUST, you are not assigned to a single time slot to register courses, so you better check the system opening time and register the class once the enrollment period is open as it serves as first-come-first-serve. Also, be reminded that IEU allows students to have time clash in their timetables, but the classes have to meet the minimum attendance requirement which is 70%. For instance, if you have two classes which they have 30 minutes overlap with each other, so the system will calculate whether the overlapped time will be over 30% of the total time of each of the courses, if it is lower, then it is fine and you can enroll both courses, if not, the system will forbid you from proceeding. As long as you proceed, you do not have to worry about failing the class due to the participation issue.

### **Teaching and Assessment Method**

Generally, IEU's teaching and assessment method are quite similar to HKUST's, with professors giving out lectures and some group discussions held in the class. Also, each of the course normally will consist group projects, assignments and examinations for evaluation and assessment. In my opinion, compared to HKUST, IEU is not focus too much on examinations. In other words, the assessment breakdowns are quite balanced which means even you don't perform well in exam, you can still get good grade as long as you perform well in other aspects such as group project or assignment. Furthermore, there are more group presentations held in-class compared to HKUST which will definitely brush up your presentation skill.

### **Sports and Recreation Facilities**

To be honest, IEU doesn't have much sports and recreation facilities due to a limited space on campus, they only got two to three academic buildings where they call it "campus ". Inside the campus, the only sport facility where you can find is table-tennis table, there are three in total, so you can play with friends or even strangers after class to expand your social circle. Other than that, there is a canteen underground of the main campus where you can have lunch (I will prefer going off the campus and have lunch, there is one who cooks delicious burritos and tacos).

### **Finance and Banking (including currency and expenses)**

As we all know, people are using Euro in Spain. In my opinion, you must bring a certain amount of cash (around EUR 1,000) before you get there as it takes time to open a bank account there. I opened an account in **Sabadell** and it was super convenient that they just required me to provide a passport and admission letter, afterwards, they were going to prepare the account for me. It took me about one week to get the account ready which my parents could transfer money to me and the other two weeks to get my bank cards ready so that I could make online payments and withdraw money from ATMs. Regarding my expense in Madrid, the living expenses are super low compared to other European countries, especially when I cooked by myself, I saved a lot. For a meal in a restaurant, it is about EUR 15 ~ EUR 20; While if I cooked at home, I used only EUR 20 for the whole week! For accommodation, I spent EUR 625 per month including bills. Other things including clothes and entertainment, it depends on what kind of things and activities you are going to pick. For me, I spent in total around HKD 80,000 for the whole semester. After all, it really depends on how you are going to spend in the whole semester.

### **Social Clubs and Networking Opportunities**

There are many clubs in Madrid. I will say their frequencies of going to the clubs are much higher than those in Hong Kong, and their expectations as well. Literally, there are club events held nearly every day. If you are interested in going one of the events or if you have no idea of which event should you go, then you can join the Facebook group called **Citylife Madrid** which you will find nearly all the club events held in the city.

### **Health and Safety**

There are no clinics in Madrid, so if you are sick unfortunately just like me, then you have to visit a hospital. But the thing is most of them only speak in Spanish, even if you are in the emergency department. So, you better go with the local students or you may use Google translate. Furthermore, be reminded to buy medical insurance before arrival as the hospital charge is so high, it was about EUR 130 for visiting the doctor, and also you need to buy the medicine by yourself in a pharmacy. Regarding the safety issue, it was quite safe and secure in Madrid, even during the time when Catalonia claiming for independence, there were only protests against independence which were held peacefully in the city. As long as you don't commit any serious crime nor getting trouble with someone, you will be fine.

### **Food**

Madrid mainly serves Tapas which are kinds of small portions of food look like tasting dishes, so you can order two to three of them and order a beer for the meal. Other than that, there are fish markets where you can enjoy some fresh seafood. You will be surprised by its freshness even though Madrid is in the center of Spain! Mexican food is another favorite choice of cuisine for Madrid people, there are many good Mexican restaurants in the city, especially one that sits in the corner around the campus.

## **Transportation**

In Madrid, there are two main transportations – Bus and Metro. When I first arrived Madrid, I took a taxi from the airport to the hotel which it cost me EUR 30, it is a fix cost no matter you are going to or from the airport. Apart from that, I never took the taxi again in Madrid as the metro is super convenient that it covered the whole city. Most importantly, students only have to pay EUR 20 per month to have unlimited access to the metro and bus, so it is not necessary to take the taxi nor Uber!

## **Climate**

The weather in Madrid is quite similar to Hong Kong, the main difference will be the humidity which it is quite dry in Madrid. However, I heard that January is the coolest month in Madrid which you may have chance to see some snow in the city if you are lucky! Although, normally it doesn't snow, I will suggest you to get some extra jackets lest the temperature suddenly drops.

## **Communication**

Madrid is a city where people are well-educated, but don't expect every one of them do speak in English. Sometimes, if you get lost in the city, and try to ask for someone's help, then you should prepare your Google translate as most of time they may not understand English. However, in IEU, all of the students speak in English, so don't worry about talking with them!

## **Cautionary Measures**

TAKE CARE OF YOUR PERSONNAL BELONINGS. There were so many pick-pockets in European countries. Fortunately, I had never been robbed or picked-pocket during the whole semester. However, I have heard of many of my friends got robbed in other city, particularly in a busy district. Therefore, whenever you are in a crowded area such as watching a football game, you better keep your personal belongings safe.

## **Items to Bring**

- Passport
- Cash
- Clothes esp. Jackets and suits (for job interview)
- Laptop
- Charger
- Adapters
- Two checked-in luggage (big one, trust me, you will definitely need it)
- Power bank
- Medicine
- Stationeries
- Camera



## **Useful Links and Contact**

<https://campus.ie.edu/webapps/login/> <Academic Canvas>

<https://clubs.ie.edu/login> <IE Activities>

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

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

<https://www.ie.edu/university/student-life/student-services/living-in-madrid/>  
<Living in Madrid>

[https://www.metromadrid.es/en/viaja\\_en\\_metro/Tarifasybilletes/TTP/](https://www.metromadrid.es/en/viaja_en_metro/Tarifasybilletes/TTP/)  
<Transportation Card>

<https://www.bancsabadell.com/cs/Satellite/SabAtl/Personal/1191332204474/en/>  
<Sabadell Bank>