

# Exchange Report

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IE Business School, Madrid

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Marketing and Management (Year 3)

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## Part 1 – Monthly Activity Log

### September 2017

I arrived in Madrid on 31 August due to flight delay. School started on 4 September, so I had a few days to get familiar with the city, the neighborhood and the university. The semester was started with an orientation week where there were talks, workshop and a few mingling activities held for exchange students. I attended the 'Tapas night' which we basically got to meet all the other exchange students. There were free food and drinks provided and the atmosphere was really good. I made some great friends that night so you must participate in this event if you want to make friends! I also joined the kayaking event organized by the school. It was quite fun and was also a lovely way to make new friends as well.

I spent most of my time in Madrid this month, adapting to the lifestyle here. I visited most of the tourist attractions in Madrid and went to a few small towns near Madrid (Aranjuez, Toledo, Segovia and Torrelodones). I also went to see bullfighting but I wouldn't recommend animal-lovers to watch it as it was quite disturbing to me (I wish I did some research before buying the ticket). As for my school life, I didn't have many classes yet as some of my courses haven't started yet. I had quite a lot of free time exploring the city. I think it took me 3 weeks to entirely adapt to the lifestyle here.



### October 2017

The workload increased in October as all my classes had started (I took 6 courses in total). Projects and mid-term exams all of a sudden appeared. The good thing was that the workload was still far less than that from HKUST. The assessment method of IE focuses more on presentations than exams as there weren't many tests and they were undemanding. Yet, there was at least one presentation in every course (I have made 12 presentations in this semester in total). Good thing is that you will definitely feel more confident in making presentation after studying here!

I managed to travel to Toulouse and Bordeaux (France) at the second weekend. These two cities are pretty and unique in its own way. The scent of autumn has arrived in these 2 cities which made them even more charming (Madrid was still



summerish). I also went to Porto and Lisbon (Portugal) at the last week of October. Honestly, I have fallen in love with Portugal! The food there was amazing (and also cheap), the weather was perfectly warm with blue sky, the sceneries were captivating, the cost of living was lower, and the people were very nice (friendlier than Spaniards, in my opinion). I highly recommend everyone to visit Portugal!



### November 2017

Time flew and October passed in a blink of an eye. I have totally gotten used to my learning in IE. Classes were very interactive as professors always encouraged discussions in class. My November was all about striking a balance between travelling and school work. It was a bit stressful as the due dates of projects were very close (so having good groupmates is VERY important in this case). Travelling-wise, I went to Rome, Pisa, and Florence (Italy) at the second week of November. Italy was beautiful but it could be better if it was not so rainy (though most parts of Europe are rainy and gloomy in Winter). I spent 2 days in Rome, half day in Pisa, 3 days in Florence (I wish I spent more time in Rome and one less day in Florence though). The food in Italy was amazing as expected but wasn't cheap at all.

Tips: Eat tons of gelato (I love the pistachio favor!!), pizza double the size of your face and pasta (the authentic Carbonara has quite of a lot of pepper in it, so don't be surprised)!



I went to Granada and Seville (Andalucía, Spain) at the next weekend. Granada is quite small and to me, the only interesting attraction was the Alhambra (Arabic

palace). Remember to buy the ticket online A MONTH beforehand as it is highly-sought. Seville is so much more fun-filled compared with Granada. It also had perfect weather even in late November (I felt like I was in California when I was there!) The cost of living in Granada and Seville is much lower than Madrid so grab this chance to enjoy tapas and churros. Don't forget to watch flamenco! Flamenco is an Intangible Cultural Heritage which was popularized in the late 18th and early 19th Centuries in western Andalucía. I watched it free of charge in a restaurant called 'La Carbonería' and the dancer was really professional. I didn't have high expectation at the beginning but ended up being awe-stricken by his tapping speed and the emotions he displayed through his dancing.



## December 2017

December was the time for examinations and final presentations. There were classes during the exam period so I needed to prepare for both my revision and presentations. I didn't have any breaks between my exams and classes so I didn't travel anymore before the semester ended. December was also the month for farewells. I was glad to have made so many friends from around the globe but was depressed to say goodbye. So, we tended to say 'see you soon' rather than 'goodbye', hoping to meet one another again in other places. Anyways, my exams ended quite early (on 15 Dec) and I started my 5-week-long travelling!



I travelled to Hamburg, Amsterdam, Paris, Barcelona, Gothenburg, Stockholm, Milan, Venice, Munich, Vienna, Bratislava, Budapest, Krakow and Prague. To be frank, it's

quite hard to pick which city is my favorite. Some have stunning natural sceneries, some with breath-taking architectures, and some with comforting food at low price. All in all, I learnt new cultures, took a lot of pictures, made new friends, and tried different cuisines during my travel. I absolutely love the surprises you get from travelling.

On 25<sup>th</sup> January, I returned to Hong Kong with two full suitcases and memories I would never forget.

## **Part II – General Exchange Information**

### **Visa Procedures**

The link in Part IV provides all the information you need regarding the visa application. You would need to apply for the short-term student visa. I highly suggest you schedule an appointment online once you received the confirmation letter from IE as timeslots are occupied very quickly. You would be asked for many documents so you need to be very careful as you would not want to visit the embassy more than once to hand in all the documents.

Tip: Remember to photocopy all the pages of your passport, including the empty pages!

### **Orientation Activities**

(Please see September's activity log)

### **International Services & Activities**

There is a department called 'International Mobility' which helps exchange students with all kinds of matter. They are quite nice and helpful. They also organized networking activities for students.

### **Accommodations**

I found my room through [Spotahome](#). The service fee was not low, to be honest but I chose it because the site is pretty trust-worthy and it has the largest number of listings compared to other rental websites in Madrid (and it is founded by IE alumnus!). At first, I wanted to rent a studio but was in vain after a month of searching (I don't know why all the landlords rejected my request); and when I decided to request for shared apartment, I succeeded immediately. I was so glad that I picked a shared flat as I met wonderful flat mates there. Also, my apartment is just 5-minute away from IE which was very convenient but it is on the Serrano Street (a street full of luxury brands like the Canton Road in HK) so the rent was a bit expensive (560 euro/month).

## **Course Registration**

The course registration is more competitive and complicated than I thought.

1. Classes are filled quickly so you need to act fast like you do in UST.
2. There is not a waiting list for classes that are full.
3. You have limited chances to amend your choices. (3 chances before the semester starts and 3 more after the semester has started)
4. You can't drop the course after 20% of the sessions are taught.

I took 6 courses which are 'Retailing', 'Entrepreneurship and Innovation', 'HR Management', 'Corporate Entrepreneurship', 'Professional Ethics and Corporate Responsibility' and 'Business Intelligence for Startups'. I would highly recommend you take the Business Intelligence course as that was the best course I had in IE. The Professor (Brian) is very funny and kind (with his grading as well) and I learned a lot about business data analysis in a fun way.

## **Teaching & Assessment Methods**

Professors taught mainly by going through business cases, reading materials and PowerPoint slides. They also encouraged in class and online discussion. The teaching method is quite similar to UST but with more engaged discussion. On the other hand, the assessment methods are homework (very little), examinations and presentations. After years of training by the HK education system/HKUST, you will do fine, don't worry.

## **Sports & Recreation Facilities**

IE has a small campus. The only sport/recreation facilities are a couple of ping-pong tables near the MMB 31 building entrance. There is a gym centre called 'CR7' next to the campus so many IE students go there for gym.

## **Finance and Banking**

I didn't open a bank account in Madrid as there is high administration fee (especially high for Chinese). I took money from atm machine with my HSBC bank card through union pay. There was a service fee of HKD\$20-40 every time I took money but it was way cheaper than that of having a local bank account.

## **Social Clubs and Networking Opportunities**

I missed the social club fair held at the campus so I didn't join any clubs. All the clubs hold their booths and introduce themselves on that day. There are quite a lot of clubs that you can join. Most of my friends didn't join any clubs so I am not sure about them.

As for networking opportunities, there are endless opportunities for you to make new friends at IE, be it joining orientation activities or the 'speed networking' events held by the International mobility team. You can make many friends in class through group projects as well. Seize the opportunities to make new friends from different countries as IE is a very diversified university.

### **Health and Safety**

I didn't visit doctor even I had flu for a few times. I recovered through taking the medicine I brought from HK. Most Spaniards don't see doctor often, they would just visit the local pharmacies for medicine and advice.

Regarding the safety issue, Madrid was unexpectedly safe to me. I have never had my properties stolen or have come across any bad guys. Many of my friends (girls) went to bars and clubs till after midnight and no accident has occurred to them. But you still need to be careful with your belonging as pickpocket is prevalence in Europe.

### **Food**

Eating out is expensive in Madrid but groceries are very cheap. I usually bought my groceries at 'Mercadona' as it is the cheapest supermarket in Madrid but with great quality. If you are lazy, you can order take away from 'Deliveroo' and 'Glovo' at a low price as well.

### **Transportation**

Madrid has an extensive transportation network so it is very convenient for you to travel around in Madrid. Students can have unlimited rides on metro and buses at a monthly fee of 20 euro. It is very important for you to schedule an appointment to create your student metro card as soon as possible. I have waited 2 weeks for my appointment and I spent quite a lot on transportation before that.

### **Climate**

Madrid has amazing climate. You can always see blue sky and it is warmer than other European cities all year round. It seldom rains as well. It is very hot and sunny till October (you definitely need sunscreen and sunglasses!). However, in autumn and winter, the temperature range is quite large which means you may experience



summer and winter in a day. In winter, the daytime temperature is around 5°C to 10 °C but it could drop to below 0°C at night.

## **Communication**

Spanish people speak very limited English so you may need to learn some basic Spanish before you arrived. Google translate was my best companion in Madrid! Nonetheless, I highly recommend you download the app 'Duo Lingo' to learn Spanish as it is a well-designed app to learn foreign languages during your leisure.

## **Cautionary Measures**

Don't store all your money in one place. I recommend you using a waist bag to keep your money when travelling. People have many tactics to steal your properties or ask for money so you really need to stay cautious at all times in Europe. Beware of strangers approaching you.

## **Part III – Items to bring**

- ✓ Passport and ID card
- ✓ Money, credit/debit card(s)
- ✓ Phone
- ✓ Laptop
- ✓ Adapter(s)
- ✓ Phone cable(s)
- ✓ Power bank
- ✓ Medicine
- ✓ Windproof jacket
- ✓ Padlock (useful when staying in hostel)
- ✓ A small cabin-proof luggage bag for travelling

## **Part IV – Useful links and contacts**

Visa application requirements

[http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Consulados/HONGKONG/en/InformacionParaExtranjeros/Documents/Visa PDF/Student Visa.pdf](http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Consulados/HONGKONG/en/InformacionParaExtranjeros/Documents/Visa%20PDF/Student%20Visa.pdf)