

# EXCHANGE REPORT

**IE University**



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# Monthly Activity Log

## January

I was extremely excited to be in Madrid, as I had never lived in Europe before. I arrived in Madrid with no housing, as I had planned to find housing after arriving. I spent the first few nights in a hotel along Gran Via (Central area) and that provided me with a great chance to explore Madrid, while looking for housing. My schedule was also relatively sparse during this period, so I took this opportunity to meet as many people as I could, while also reaching out to the basketball club.

With half of my classes starting next month, I also used this as an opportunity to travel. I took a day trip to Segovia with my pals from HKUST, and also took trips to Belgium, Hungary and Slovakia, and Morocco for 3 consecutive weekends.

Meet as many people as you can, and also take advantage of your sparse schedule to travel.



## February

After three straight weekends of travelling, I decided to spend this month exploring Madrid and catching up with people I met in January. IE doesn't really provide many orientation events, and their clubs are not very well structured. If you want to meet new people, you really have to be proactive. I did this by talking to my peers in class, and luckily I found a group of friends that played basketball weekly. I spent most of this month in Madrid, and caught up with many of my friends through coffee and dinner.

I spent essentially the entire month in Madrid, but I was able to sneak in trips to Cuenca, Toledo, Avila and Malaga.

Don't get too taken away with travelling, I think it's important to really value your time in Madrid and get to know the city as much as you can. I discovered so many bars, cafes and restaurants just by walking around from neighborhood to neighborhood.





## March

March felt extremely short, and I barely spent any time in Madrid this month. The time I did spend in Madrid I did my usually routine of studying, catching up with friends, and just enjoying my time exploring Madrid.

The reason for me not being in Madrid was that my schedule this month provided many opportunities to travel. Many classes at IE don't have regular schedules, so there will be times where with good course planning you'll have 5 consecutive days of no classes. Thus, I went to the Netherlands and spent almost a week with a good friend of mine. Additionally, Spring break began during the last 8 days of April and I used this time to explore Portugal from North to South and returned to Madrid through Seville.

March was another month of travel, but we have Spring Break! Plan ahead, that way both accommodation and flights are cheaper. Also, don't get carried away by travelling to as many countries as possible. I think its nice to really get to know a country, and visit all the small enclaves.



## April

This was my final month of school. A few of my courses ended early, and with the same thing that happened in January my schedule was freer. I spent this month making sure I was up-to-date with the content for my final exams. I only had 3 finals and 1 presentation, so I didn't feel a lot of pressure. Many of my friends were leaving this month, so I spent this month hanging out with my friends one last time and enjoying my final month at IE.

This month my travel plans all focused on Spain. I visited Burgos, San Sebastian, Cordoba, Granada, Alicante and Valencia. San Sebastian is a must-visit, trust me. Alicante is also a great place to check out.

Do make your exchange worth, and travel as much as you can. Just don't get too carried away, as it is nice to get to know as many people at IE as you can.



# General Exchange Information

## 1) Visa Procedures

Make sure you apply for the VISA as soon as possible, do not spare a second. You need to make an appointment for your visa application, and usually they're all fully booked for 3 weeks or more. The processing of the VISA itself can also up to 2 weeks or more, and keep in mind your application may get rejected (two friends of mine from HK did).

The most recent appointment for my visa application did not fit my timeline, so I decided to go straight to the office without an appointment, expressed my urgency and they fortunately processed my application. This was in Chicago by the way, things may be different in Hong Kong.

## 2) Orientation Activities

IE in all honesty does a very poor job with orientation activities. You can join their amigo program, which is great if you want to be partnered up with a local. However, your experience is completely dependent on your buddy. Many of my friends had poor experiences, luckily my amigo was great!

Aside from that, there is an info session which is basically a lecture. Don't expect to meet a lot of people there. The one orientation event they have is the Tapas Night, make sure you attend this. This will be your only chance to meet all the other exchange students and make some friends.

## 3) International Services & Activities

The office that deals with exchange students is great. They'll attend to all your needs and answer all your questions. Don't be afraid to email them and approach them when you need help, I bombarded them with emails prior to arriving in Madrid.

## **4) Accommodations**

I would suggest finding your housing before arriving, unlike me. I got my housing through "MiCasaInn," it is a private student dormitory. I was a 20 minute walk from school, in Salamanca – the poshest district of Madrid. I loved my housing, but keep in mind it was quite expensive. Look at other sites like uniplaces and spotahome. Many of my friends used these links.

## **5) Courses Registration**

Course registration instructions will be clearly explained by IE. Keep in mind you can only change your schedule a total of 6 times. 3 before school starts, and 3 during the academic year. Their system is very easy to read, but its inconvenient to look at all the available courses. Also, keep in mind year 1-2 courses end later than year 3-4 courses.

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

Many of the students don't study that hard, and as an exchange student I felt like in my business courses I studied harder than most of the other students. Courses have strict attendance policies, that can result in failing if you miss more than 30% of classes. However, some professors do not take attendance. Final exams tend to have a weighting of 40% or more, so keep that in mind.

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

The only sports facilities IE has are 2 ping pong tables, nothing more... They don't have many facilities honestly. They have a lot of space for you to study, and an extremely small library if you can call it one.

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

I opened a bank account and had my parents wire transfer me money. Your foreign credit card will be useable in most areas though, so don't worry. If you want to set up a bank account like I did for free, visit City Life Madrid. They will help you with a bunch of things aside from opening a bank account. All for free too!

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

There are quite a few social clubs at IE, and you can see all of them from their website. All the clubs will be listed online with the club leader's name as well, and the easiest way to get into contact with the club is to send a Facebook message directly to the club leader.

There's always a few lectures on campus open for anyone to attend and these are great networking opportunities. Aside from that, many professors are also working while teaching and building a good relationship with them is valuable.

## **10) Health & Safety**

Overall, just have some common sense in terms of safety. If you wouldn't do it in Hong Kong, don't do it in Madrid. Keep in mind though that Madrid is one of the safest cities in Spain, and there was never a second that I did not feel safe no matter how late at night it was.

## **11) Food**

Food is quite expensive in Madrid. Obviously cooking is the cheapest option, and you can get your meals to cost all the way down to 3 euros. If you do want to go out to eat cheap food, there are a few options. Check out the really local tapa places, local markets, and 100 Montaditos



is great for a cheap meal and drinks. These meals for me usually cost around 8-10 euros. If you go anywhere else, it usually costs me 20 euros or more to get full.

A side note, Spanish people eat very late and eat multiple meals throughout the day. Lunch tends to be the biggest meal and occurs between 1-3pm. Dinner on the other hand usually starts from 9 onwards.

## **12) Transportation**

The metro system in Madrid is superb. Just make sure to get a student card, it cost 20euros and provides you with unlimited travel via subway, train and bus for 30 days. All this information will be provided by IE.

## **13) Climate**

It tends to be quite dry, and during my stay it was quite rainy. Also, don't think that Spain is warm all the time. It can get quite cold in Spain so bring some winter clothes.

## **14) Communication**

There are many mobile options to choose from. I chose Lycamobile, and set it up through City Life Madrid. I paid 15 euros for 5GB of data and unlimited calling and texting within Spain. If you pay 10 more euros, the plan will work EU-wide. I have heard that there are cheaper plans out there though.

## **15) Cautionary measures**

One thing to keep in mind is when you're finding housing. Make sure you're using a reliable website, one that someone has recommended. I've had a few friends that were cheated, after having sent the deposit to the landlord only to find out the property didn't exist.

# Items to Bring

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Phone</li><li>• Charger</li><li>• Passport &amp; id</li><li>• Money</li><li>• Laptop</li><li>• Luggage</li><li>• Duffle bag</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Backpack</li><li>• Camera</li><li>• External harddrive</li><li>• Spanish apps</li><li>• Toiletries</li><li>• Winter clothes</li></ul>
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# Useful links and Contacts

## IE References

- <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>

## Explore Madrid

- <https://www.timeout.com/madrid>
- [Citylifemadrid.com](http://Citylifemadrid.com)
- <https://xceed.me/blog/en/the-ultimate-erasmus-guide-2017-in-madrid-where-to-eat-drink-party/>

## Accomodations

- [Micasainn.com](http://Micasainn.com)
- [Spotahome.com](http://Spotahome.com)
- [Uniplaces.com](http://Uniplaces.com)

- *Beroomers.com*

## **Travel**

- *Goeuro.com*
  - *Usually more expensive, but gives go overview of what companies provide what service for specific route.*
- *Alsa.com*
  - *Spanish bus for traveling around Spain*
- *Renfe.com*
  - *High speed train in Spain*
- *Skyscanner.com*
- *Airbnb.com*
- *Bookings.com*