



Exchange report: IE Business School

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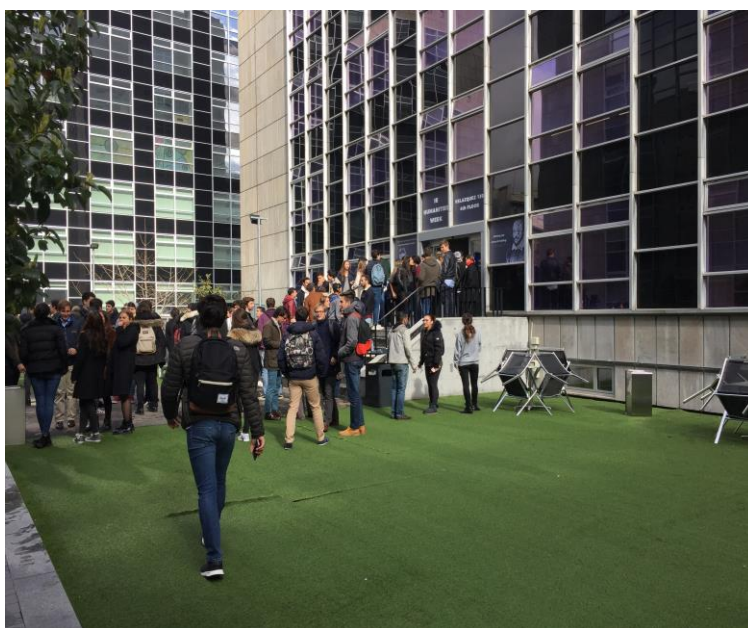
Part 1 – Monthly Activity Log

January

On 4th Jan, I departed from Hong Kong to Madrid. The school commenced on 8th Jan, and I went to Madrid few days earlier to settle well before the start of the semester.

Right before I arrived, I have already rented a shared room with my friends. IE Business School does not have an official student hall. **Therefore, it is necessary for incoming exchange students to find their own residence in advance.** There are several middlemen companies in Madrid which provide quite a lot of options for renting. IE Business School did not really help exchange students to find a home, but they did recommend some institutions you can look for. Idealista and Spotahome were those I have used. And at last I had rented a home with Spotahome because it was the only one responding to my requests. It offers adequate overview about the houses with videos or clear pictures. The service fee was quite high, but I rented the house around 2 weeks before I departed so I did not have many choices and time for consideration. Bear in mind that you should start looking for the accommodation **at least 1 month before you go**, as those affordable and convenient options could be running out really fast.

IE Business School has two campuses, one in Madrid and another one in Segovia. For exchange students, you mainly stay in the Madrid campus. When I first arrived at the Madrid campus, as you can see from other exchange students' reports, I shared the same opinion with them: "Wow it's really a small school." The campus composed of 3 main buildings only, with all the offices and classrooms inside it. Although the campus was really small, it has all necessary facilities including a dining place. The class content of IE is quite similar to HKUST, yet the class size is way smaller than HKUST, so somehow it encourages more interaction with the professors and your classmates. One thing to mention about IE: there are lots of smokers in IE, as you can see tons of people clustering outside the campus in



every break of lectures.

In late Jan, I have been to two cities that were close to Madrid, Segovia and Cuenca. They were both magnificent with great natural landscape and traditions. If you are going to Segovia, you must try a dessert called Ponche!

After those trips, I have also been to Ireland, which was another beautiful city I liked in Europe.



February

After a whole month on settling, I started enjoying my time in IE and Madrid with a lot of ongoing adjustment to the local style. The first thing I found interesting is the living environment and habits of the locals. “Siesta Fiesta”, the golden time the Spanish have every day, is a completely mind-blowing concept to a guy from Hong Kong. Every day from 2pm to 5pm, a lot of shops and organizations close down for rest, which is totally unimaginable in Hong Kong. This certainly brought me some extent of inconvenience, yet I still really appreciated how they enjoyed their vibes and

life. One thing to mention: numerous Spanish people utilize this period of time to take their dog for a walk (FYI (if you don't know), Madrid is basically a dog society where almost everyone owns a pet dog). So if you are a doggie lover, great; if you always think that dogs are terrible disasters, think again if you really want to go there.

The lecture style was quite similar to HKUST, which was a great thing as it didn't take me long to adjust. The professors here highly encouraged interaction in the classes, so you can expect lots of discussion time and question sessions in every lecture. I had enrolled in 3 classes which were Product and Brand Management, Corporate Valuation and Entrepreneurship Do-it-yourself. I will talk about these courses one by one:

1) Product and Brand Management

The professor was very experienced in this field as he has worked in a lot of MNCs such as P&G and Nestles. He taught the courses with quite a lot of real-life business cases and advertisement examples. So it was not hard to catch up with the course contents even you have missed some of the lectures. The course had a mid-term, a final and also a group project. But the workload was completely affordable for those who can survive in HKUST. So generally it was a good experience to be in this course.

2) Corporate Valuation

The professor had really worked in the M&A department of a large bank, so what he mentioned in the course was certainly useful tools for those who were interested in this field. He gave quite a lot of homework, almost one every week. And some of them required you to utilize almost everything you learnt before (the homework can be a valuation of a huge company utilizing multiple approaches). So the workload can be quite a lot sometimes, yet you can really learn a lot by finishing them with your own research and revision. The course only had a final, so if you planned well, the course was still manageable.

3) Entrepreneurship Do-it-yourself

This course was quite eye-opening to me. The professor himself was really an angel investor, so he had so many related experiences about entrepreneurship to share with students, no matter what industry you were interested in. He taught a lot of new concepts and tools for entrepreneurship. You will have a lot of group work to do in this course, almost one per week. But the workload really depends on your group mates. If everyone does their work, it can be quite easy. There was no final exam, but a presentation. Overall, I quite enjoyed taking this course.

Aside from all the study and settling, I also utilized my time to travel around Europe. I have been to Ireland in late Jan, then Portugal, France and also England. The plane tickets were quite cheap when I planned ahead and booked all of them almost a month earlier. So just make sure you have a plan as early as you can and organize everything in advance if you love to travel.



March

March is a month full of midterms and assignments (actually not a lot of them). As IE Business School had a very strict requirement on attendance (they checked attendance every class), I did not travel that much in March, just to make sure that I meet the 70% of attendance requirement policy. I had only one midterm which turned out to be not really hard. I spent most of the time in the city with my buddies for coffee, food and also different tourist spots like the temple of Debod and some museums. It was very comfortable staying in Madrid, as you can easily spot the slower life pace of the locals here. Just treasure your time, enjoy a small cup of flat white and chit-chat with your closest one. That's all in Madrid.

Then the Easter break came. It was from 24th March to 2nd April. I went to Netherland and Belgium with my friends from HKUST who were also on exchange in UK and Sweden. Amsterdam was just amazing and it was the best city in my mind now. So if you have a chance, go to Amsterdam.



April

It was the last month I spent in Europe. The semester ended very earlier at the end of April. Originally I planned to travel to more countries afterwards, yet I changed my plan at the very last moment. So what I did in April was simply enjoying the life in Madrid. Coffee, desserts, local dishes, music, and also a little bit of alcohol and other secret fun. In Madrid, you can have all interesting stuff every nights, it was just whether you wanted to step out of your home for it.

When it was closer and closer to the end of the semester, stuff also started coming to me. I had the presentation of the Product and Brand Management on the second week. And then at last I had two finals and also another presentation in the last week before I left. I studied really hard in order to score high so I can compensate for those attendance scores I lost during my travel, and I made it.



Part 2: General Exchange Information

1) Visa Procedures

The application of Visa to Spain can take a long time, so please make sure that you make an appointment as early as you can. My Visa took me around one month. Prepare all the necessary documents before you go to the office. You will need:

- Visa Application Form
- Recent color photos
- Passport
- HKID
- Letter to explain why you are going to Spain (a simple essay will be fine)
- Support documents from HKUST (the offer letter from SBM office)
- Financial proof
- Flight tickets
- Some related documents (Check the updated list from the Consulate)

2) Orientation Activities

IE organizes a “Tapas night” event for you to meet your buddy. You will be able to chat with your local buddies and also have some traditional local appetizers. But that’s all. They did not organize any events or orientation camps like HKUST. It is all on you to greet new friends and buddies.

3) Internal Services and Activities

There are quite a lot of student clubs and associations in IE. But they rarely organized events or activities, perhaps it was because of the spring semester.

4) Accommodations

You need to arrange your own accommodation. I first rented a airbnb for January, and then a shared room with other students and locals through Spotahome.com. The airbnb was in Tribunal, which was a district similar to LKF in Hong Kong. And then I lived in Diego de Leon which was way closer to the campus (around 15 minutes to walk).

5) Course Registration

The platform of IE does not give any favour to exchange students. You have to compete with all the local students to make sure that you can be in the courses you want to take. For me, I decided to take around 5 courses, but things went

beyond my imagination as some courses went out of quota within 5 minutes. So you really need to be quick and decisive when you register for courses.

6) Teaching and Assessment Methods

They are similar to HKUST, with focus on presentation and application. They also require students to do group work and discussion.

7) Sports and Recreation Facilities

It was one of the greatest problems of IE Business School. They did not have any useful recreation facilities except two table tennis tables right in front of the campus. They did not even have a gym. Yet I heard from other students that the school had some agreement with some of the local gyms, which could give students special offers.

8) Finance and Banking

Flight ticket to Spain – hkd 6164

Rent – 1250 euros (first month airbnb + 3 months in shared room)

Mobile – 30 euros (including the additional fee while travelling)

Living expenses – 2000 euros

Transportation – 120 euros (student metro card fee: 20euro *4 + application fee)

Travelling – 2000 euros

9) Social Clubs and Networking Opportunities

Different clubs have their own plan on activities for members. I was in more than 10 clubs. Not all of them have events, so you have to check the online schedule regularly to keep yourself updated.

10) Health and Safety

I was healthy all the time in Madrid, and I brought my own medicines so I did not know much about the healthcare system there. But I saw quite a lot of pharmacy stores in the street so I guess it is not hard to look for pills in case you are really sick.

11) Food

There are really a lot of great food and numerous restaurants in Madrid. Just go out and explore every single one that looks tempting. Many of them can be pricy compared to food in Hong Kong, but you can always google to look for some cheaper options with great qualities.

P.S. You may see it in the report of other exchange students, but 100 Montaditos is really the best place for those who want alcohol and cheap food. It was great for parties, pre-drink or some fun occasions. It had many stores around the city and you can easily spot it out.

12) Transportation

As a student, you can make a student transportation card for 20 euros per month. It can be used for all different public transports including metro and buses in Madrid. It is really a good deal because a single metro trip can already cost you 2 euros. You need to make your online reservation, bring all the necessary documents and visit the office. The staff there may not be able to understand English but they will probably get what you want when you show them the printed reservation.

13) Climate

It was freaking cold in Madrid during January to February. It was always below 10 degree and it took me quite long to adjust. I remembered the time I kept shaking even I was in my own room. So you must bring enough jackets and clothes to there.

14) Communication

I really recommend people to learn some basic Spanish before you go. I know nothing about Spanish and I had some difficult time in Madrid. You just can't expect people to understand English. Basically, a majority of the people in supermarket, restaurants, gyms or even a bank (!) can only understand Spanish. If you don't know basic words about Spanish, you can't even order a dish in Madrid, unless there is a English menu so you can point at it to order.

15) Cautionary measures

I did not get pickpocket at all, because I was really aware of where I was and those people standing next to me. Just be careful when you were in places with lots of people in Europe. Don't act like an easy target and they will look for another targets instead of you.

Part 3: Items to bring

- Laptop
- Cash
- Mobile
- Credit card
- Camera
- Clothing (More for the freezing weather)
- Gloves
- Electronics
- Passport
- Adaptor
- Charger
- Offline Google Translate for Spanish
- Offline map
- Power bank
- Strong and large backpack/suitcase 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>

<https://www.idealista.com/>

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

<https://www.spotahome.com/>

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

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

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