



Exchange Report

Ramon Llull University, ESADE Business School (Spring 2018)

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Part I: Monthly Activity Log

January

I arrived Barcelona on 5th January. The first two weeks were mainly orientation activities such as security talks and walking tours. I got to know a lot of exchange students through the Facebook group and the orientation week. You can also join a Spanish intensive course if you want to learn some useful phrases for daily life. The last two weeks were used for intensive courses (like winter semester in UST). I took a course called “Implementing Strategy: Processes and Indicators” because I wanted to take less course in regular semester while some students would use these two weeks to travel. I did a lot of sightseeing in Barcelona such as Park Güell, Montjuic, La Sagrada Familia and Tibidabo. I also went to watch a football match at Nou Camp (FC Barcelona VS Espanyol). The match was amazing and I got to see Messi on LIVE!

February

The regular semester started in February. Exchange students were only allowed to take the core (easier) course in ESADE because most of the advanced courses were taught in Spanish. I took “Supply Chain Management”, “Project Management”, “Managing Services”. They were transferred as elective credits for my Operations Management’s major requirement. The workload was much lower and very easy to get a pass. Apart from these courses, I also took “Never Too Many Movie: Spanish and Catalan Society Through Cinema” and “Arts and Culture in Spain and Catalonia: 2000 years of beauty”. I learnt a lot of local culture and activities from these two classes and the professor was super friendly. I went to Nice, France during one of the weekends. It was located very close to Barcelona and the beach was very beautiful.



March

March was a traveling month! I got three weeks off with just very few assignments. I went to Morocco, Amsterdam, Prague, Budapest, Vienna and Bratislava with other exchange students. The most unforgettable trip was Morocco, where I joined a local tour to the Sahara Desert. That was my first time riding on a camel and lived in a tent inside the desert. Be careful that March was still cold in Eastern Europe. Therefore, remember to bring more clothes if you travel in March. I got sick during my trip because I did not bring enough clothes.



April

April was a busy month. I had many presentations and examinations during this month. In ESADE, a large portion of grading were based on group projects and group presentations. Therefore, I had to attend a lot of meeting at school. The exams were much easier than UST and normally took place in the last lesson (around one-hour long). I spent the whole April enjoying the sun in Barcelona and working with assignments. The weather in April was optimal. People were celebrating Saint-Jordi's day (Catalan Valentine's Day) in mid-April. You would see lots of people carrying flowers and books around on that day.

May

It was nearly the end of semester. I just have a few classes left at the beginning of May. Everyone was leaving at that time except those who took courses in summer semester. Before coming back to Hong Kong, I went to Berlin and London.



Part II: General Exchange Information

Visa Procedures

The visa application was easy and straightforward. But there were quite a lot of documents required. For example, housing letter, acceptance letter, banking statement, return flight tickets, hard copies for EVERY PAGE from your passport... As we only go for one semester, applying short-term student visa would be enough. I would recommend you apply for it at least one month before you leave and do remember to book your appointment in advance.

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

Orientation Activities

Orientation began on 8th January, including several security talks by the school, ice-breaking activities organized by an international student committee in ESADE and free walking tour. It was a good way to meet other exchange students.

International Services & Activities

There is an international student organization called CIEE and they organized activities regularly. Make sure to keep track on the Facebook group if you want to join them.

Accommodations

You can either live in the campus in San Cugat or live in the city. I rented an apartment with the other exchange student from UST in the city center called Balmes 166. It was costed 800 euros a month (all electricity and water bills included, also a cleaning lady would clean my house once a week). This apartment was pricey but it was located just 5 minutes away from Provenca station, where the train (FGC) would get me directly to the Sant Cugat station without any transfer. Besides, the area I lived in was very safe and convenient. Even when I went back at night I would not feel insecure. Some of my friends did live on the campus. But it took around 45 minutes for them to get to the city center. I would recommend you to live in the city center because it is closer to the airport and easier to hang out with your friends.

There are many travel agencies online, for example, "spotahome" and "uniplace". The link below is the housing website that I used. (<http://www.barcelona-student-housing.com/index.html>)

Courses Registration

There were two stages in the course registration process. The first one took place in November, where you had to allocate points to the courses that you wanted to take. It was not in first-come-first-serve basis. Just submitted the form before the deadline would be fine. The second stage was the add-drop period where you would add,

swap or drop any courses. However, the add-drop period ended before the semester started and most of the courses required 80% attendance so make sure you plan ahead. If you have any questions, feel free to email the exchange coordinator. They will reply quickly.

Teaching and Assignment Methods

ESADE focuses a lot on group work. For business courses, more than 50% of the grade is based on group project. Unlike UST, one course is 3-hour long in ESADE and with 15 minutes break in between. It is good for exchange students because we can have more day-offs.

Sports and Recreation Facilities

There is a gym in campus and the fee is not expensive. But if you are not living in the campus, I would recommend the gym in the city center like the one called Eurofitness.

Finance and Banking (including currency/expenses)

I didn't open a bank account in Spain. I have activated international banking option in the ATM in Hong Kong before I came. Therefore, I could withdraw money at the ATM in Barcelona. Also, most of my living expenses were paid by card. It will be more convenient to have a Spanish account but it is not a must.

Social Clubs & Networking Opportunities

Like I mentioned before, CIEE is the only international student organization in ESADE. Sometimes there will be some one-day hiking trip organized by a group of exchange student. They will announce it on the Facebook page.

Health & Safety

In general, Barcelona was a safe country. But remember to take care of your belongings in the crowded areas such as metro, clubs, restaurants... Pickpocketing is very common in Barcelona. A few friends of mine have got their phones/laptops/wallets stolen. Do not bring too much money and passport when you go out. I did not visit the doctors during my exchange. During orientation, the advisors will tell you the details of finding English-speaking doctors.

Food

One of the main food in Barcelona is tomato bread. I really love it because I am a bread-lover and it is relatively cheap. If you eat out at the restaurant, it costs around 15-20 euros (for a set menu). I normally cooked at home to save money. There were several Asian supermarkets in Catalunya where you can buy instant noodles, rice and much other Asian food. Besides, the paella and Sangria were very nice.

Transportation

The transportation system in Barcelona is efficient. You can get to the airport easily by taking the metro or Aerobus (only takes you 40 minutes from Plaza Catalunya to the airport). Metro runs overnight every Saturday. Even if you back home late during weekdays, you can take the night buses which connect the whole city. I bought one T-Jove for 3 months and one for 1 month. ESADE is located at zone 2 so you need to buy a 2 zones ticket. It costs 140 euros for a 3-month ticket but you can take as many metro and bus as you can.

FGC website: <https://www.fgc.cat/>

Climate

The weather in Barcelona is very nice in April and May. Even during winter, it is not that cold compared to other European countries. It seldom snows but I did see it once during my exchange.

Communication

It will be better if you learn some basic Spanish before going to Barcelona. They speak both Catalan and Spanish but not all of them know English. Be ready to use google translate and body language all the time.

I bought the mobile data plan in Hong Kong (HKD 300 for 12GB, available across all European countries) However, I could not have local call. Some of my friends used the mobile service providers there such as Vodafone (around 15euros per month)

Cautionary measure

Pick-pocketing is a major problem in Barcelona. As long as you are aware of all your belongings all the time, you will be fine. Moreover, make sure you go clubbing with your friends and figure out the transport to back home before going out.

Part III: Items To Bring

- HKID and Passport (and copies)
- Housing Letter (and copy)
- Acceptance Letter (and copy)
- Winter clothes
- Cash
- Laptop
- Small suitcase or backpack for travelling
- Medicine
- Camera

Part IV Useful Links and Contacts

1. Visa application:

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

2. Housing:

<http://www.barcelona-student-housing.com/index.html>

3. Transportation:

<https://www.fgc.cat/>

4. Travel:

<https://flights.ryanair.com/en-gb/> (airline that I took the most during my exchange)