



EXCHANGE REPORT

IE University



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Accounting & Operations Management

Fall 2018

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September

I arrived in Madrid few days before the school started so I could explore Madrid and get familiar with the city. Since IE has no halls, students need to plan for their own housing. I got my housing settled before arriving in Madrid, which gave me plenty of time to look around in the city. I was living near the Metro station Atocha, which is a perfect location since it's only 2 stations away from center of Madrid, and it's one of the main stations in Madrid to get around and travel.

As I got Thursday and Friday off for the first two months, I took the opportunity to travel a lot. I went to Granada and Sevilla in the first week to experience the south of Spain. I also did sky diving in Sevilla as Sevilla has such nice weather, and it's definitely the perfect place to have your first skydiving experience. I also traveled to Barcelona and caught the La Mercé Festival, which is Barcelona's biggest festival of the year. Other than that, I traveled to Portugal and also took some day trips to some nearby cities like Segovia and Toledo.

There was only one orientation event, tapas night, and it was the best chance to meet people as all the exchange students and amigos (exchange buddy) would attend the event.

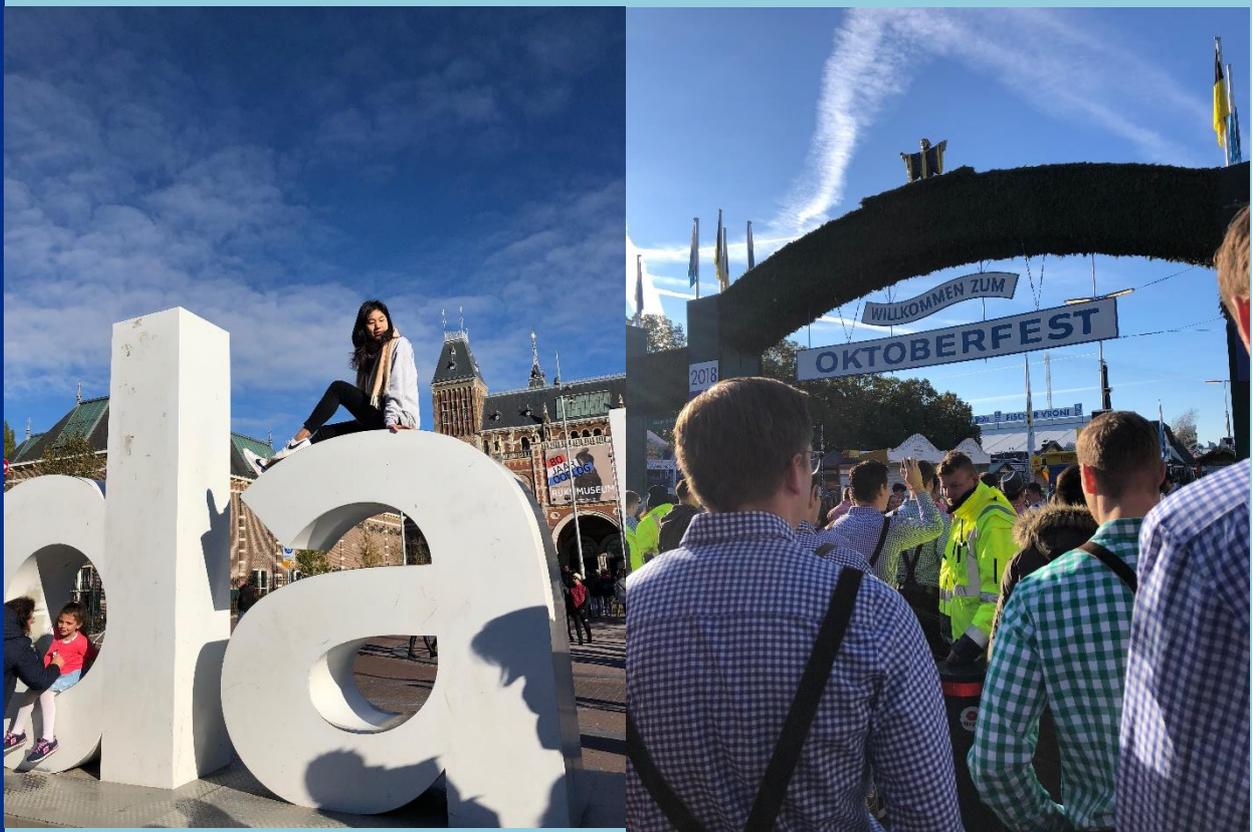


October

As in September, I also got Thursday and Friday off in October, thus, I spent a lot of time traveling.

Oktoberfest is the world largest beer festival held annually in Munich, and I thought it would be really great if I could experience the festival in person. But since everything was really expensive during the festival and I did not plan ahead, I ended up flying to Frankfurt and took an overnight bus to Munich for Oktoberfest. (even a hostel for one night was super expensive, and taking an overnight bus saved me from the fee of one-night accommodation XD) Oktoberfest was definitely a festival worth going, but remember to plan ahead, that will save you a lot of money.

In the end of October, I took a trip to Amsterdam. There were so much to see in Amsterdam, and everything was really eye-opening. Stroop waffles and pancakes are definitely the food that you must try. The city gives you surprise everywhere, even sitting somewhere in the city feeling the vibes is amazing.



November

As IE doesn't have regular class schedules, and two of my courses actually started in November, it was a really busy and intense month for me. I spent the entire month in Madrid, catching up with people that I met during exchange and exploring Madrid.

Toward the end of November was also the time when the reality hit. Students started to prepare for final presentations and study for the final exams. Unlike in the US, presentations here are more like a casual sharing rather than a formal presentation, which was really chill compared to the US ones.

Staying in Madrid for the entire month really gave me a great chance to explore around. Make sure to go to the museums and the palace, since there are certain times that student discount is offered, which could save you quite a lot of money.



December

December was my last month in Madrid, and all my courses ended in early December. I had two finals and four presentations, but it was not really stressful for me as IE was a lot chiller.

After the semester ended, I went on traveling to Italy, France, Czech Republic, Austria, and Hungary. It was really nice traveling in Europe in December as all the cities were decorated for Christmas, and that was something very different from Asia. Make sure to check out the Christmas Market in all the cities that you go to and try all the Christmas food and hot wine in the Christmas market, you will definitely enjoy your time and be amazed by the Christmas atmosphere.

Try to make your exchange experience worth it and meet as many amazing people as you can, after all, this is probably the only chance you can get away from the stress and tension.



(1) Visa Procedure

You need to make an appointment for the visa application, and the processing of visa normally takes 2 to 3 weeks. The consulate in Hong Kong are really strict with the requirements. For the copy of your passport, make sure that you photo copy each and every single page of your passport, even the blank page. Make sure you apply for your visa as soon as possible.

(2) Orientation Activities

IE doesn't provide a lot of orientation activities. There was one Culture Shock session, but it's more like a lecture telling you about the culture in Spain and the culture shock you might encounter.

The only orientation activity was the Tapas Night, which was held in a bar off campus. All the exchange students and Amigos (exchange buddies) will attend the event, and that was probably the only chance to meet all the exchange students.

(3) International Services & Activities

The office that deals with exchange students is really great and quite responsive to the emails you sent. They will answer all your questions. Even after my exchange semester, they're more than willing to respond to my email and attend to my needs.

(4) Accommodations

Students would need to find their own housing since IE has no halls. Finding your housing before arriving is highly recommended, especially when there are a lot of things going on in the beginning of the semester, you wouldn't want to waste time looking for housing. I rented an apartment on Spotahome with other 2 students from HKUST. There is also a facebook page where ie students post housing and look for roommates.

(5) Courses Registration

IE sends exchange students really clear instructions on how to enroll in the courses. Just keep in mind that courses sometimes have irregular schedules, so you can plan your trips ahead.

(6) Teaching & Assessment Methods

IE has a strict attendance policy and missing more than 30% of the classes can result in failing the course. Other than that, everything else was really chill. Most of the ie students don't study that hard, and exchange students seemed to work harder than the local kids. Only 2 out of my 5 courses had final exams, and other courses had only presentations.

(7) Sports & Recreation Facilities

IE has very little sports facilities, but IE students do get some really good deals with some gyms around.

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

IE partners with two local bank branches, so it's not hard to open a bank account in Madrid. I personally did not open a bank account since my debit card from back home worked perfectly well.

(9) Social Clubs & Networking Opportunities

As in UST, there are a lot of clubs, societies and sports team at IE and all the students are welcome to join them.

(10) Health & Safety

I think Madrid is one of the safest cities in Spain, just keep in mind that pickpocketing still happens especially in some crowded area. Always keeping an eye on your belongings will be fine.

(11) Food

Food in Spain is definitely not cheap compared to Asia and cooking yourself will save you a lot of money. But make sure to try some signature food like Churros con Chocolate, Paella, Tapas, jamón, you will definitely regret leaving Spain without trying them.

Spanish people usually have lunch around 1-3 pm and dinner starting from 9pm. If you want to have good food in local restaurants, prepare yourself to adapt to the local dining time.

(12) Transportation

Madrid has a really good deal for students under 25. The youth pass per month is 20 euros, and you can get around with metro and buses. You need to make an appointment for the application of youth pass. Apply for it as soon as possible so you can get the pass earlier to save money. The website for the application:

<https://tarjetatransportepublico.crtm.es/CRTM-ABONOS/entrada.aspx>

(13) Climate

Madrid is pretty hot in the summer, but it also gets really cold in December or even November. So remember to bring some winter clothes.

(14) Communication

The mobile company I chose was Vodafone. The fee was around 15-20 euros per month, and you get to use it all over Europe. There are definitely some other cheaper plans or company out there.

(15) Cautionary measures

The only thing to be concerned about is that you have to be really careful when dealing with the housing and the landlord. From what I heard, a lot of students did not get their deposit back and some landlords can be really mean to exchange students.

Items to Bring

- Phone
- Charger
- Adapter
- Laptop
- Winter clothes
- Passport
- ID
- Money
- Contact numbers
- Snacks

Useful Links and Contacts

Travel:

- Goeuro.com
- Renfe.com
- Skyscanner.com
- Hostelworld.com
- Airbnb.com

Consulate General of Spain in Hong Kong

<http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Consulados/HONGKONG/en/Pages/inicio.aspx>

Student pass in Madrid (transportation)

<https://tarjetatransportepublico.crtm.es/CRTM-ABONOS/en/trada.aspx>

IE person in charge of exchange students:

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