

ESADE

UNIVERSITAT RAMON LLULL

Spring 2019 Exchange: Barcelona, Spain



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Monthly Activity Log

January 2019

I arrived in Barcelona on January 6th, 2 days before the semester at ESADE starts to get a bit more comfortable with the environment I was in. I had arranged my accommodation with a student housing company (more on this later) who picked me up from the airport upon my arrival and dropped me to the apartment and helped me get familiar with the services of the flat. I had two friends who were previously living in Barcelona show me around now and help me arrange my SIM card and transport card.

Before the official semester started, I opted to take the Spanish Intensive Course (which is optional but I highly recommend taking it). It helped me a lot with my Spanish for the rest of my time in Spain and was also where I made pretty much all my closest friends on exchange. Even if they weren't in my class, we would all meet up after to hang out as that was the only time where all the exchange students had the same schedule.

The first two weeks were packed with intensive courses - which are great to take if you want more free time over the semester to travel, but don't take too many so you're also able to meet people and go out to new places with them. After they were done, I went to Madrid and Segovia to visit one of my best friends from high school. By the third week of January, I had made a solid group of friends and we took a day trip to Girona, went out for a lot of brunch, explored the best clubs in Barcelona, watched FC Barcelona play against Seville at Camp Nou and visited most of the major tourist sites.

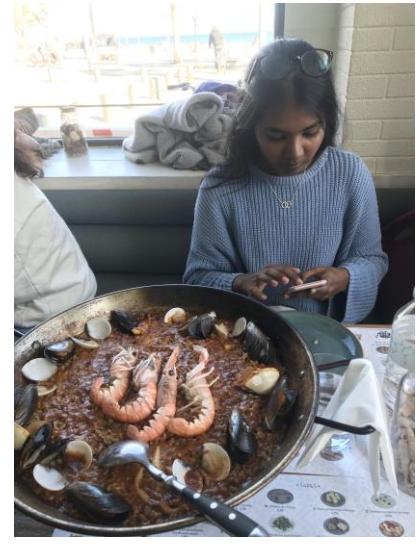
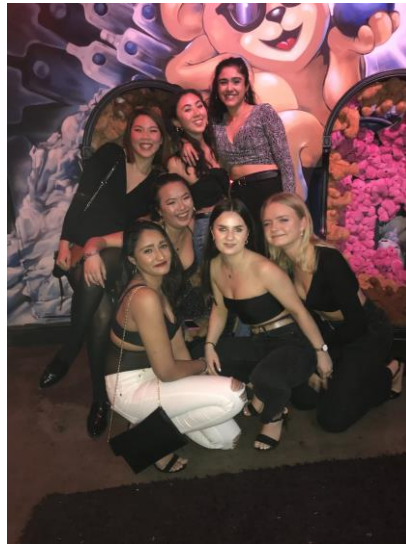


February 2019

The first half of February was a slower month in terms of traveling for me as I had gone to Madrid again to get my UK visa and had to leave my passport with them for 15 days. (Please see the visa section to avoid what I had to go through).

Side note: I did get to do a bit of within Spain traveling, including some overnight trips (if you take the bus or train) as I didn't need my passport and could get away with using my ID card. I could enjoy a 2-day trip to Valencia where I got to eat some of the best paella (as it is the home of the Paella). A lot of the sales were ending in February as well so I made the most of shopping which was one of the best parts of Europe - cheap, cute clothes!

At the end of February, I had finally gotten my passport back and took a trip to London for my best friend's 21st birthday after which I went to a smaller town in the UK, Bath, and the entire trip was incredible.



March 2019

This was one of the most hectic but most fun months I had during my exchange. We started off by going to Sitges for one of the biggest carnivals in Europe, which I highly recommend. After I got back, another one of my close friends from school visited me in Barcelona from the UK and I took her around which was a cool feeling because by this point, Barcelona was home and coming back from a trip felt so comfortable and refreshing, and showing people around felt normal, as if I knew everything about the city.

In mid-March, I traveled to Prague, Budapest and Vienna which was one of my longest trips but a lot of fun. I went with 3 of my friends but met loads of other exchange students there, as you'll see, you overlap trips with a lot of people you know which makes it even more fun. We traveled from place to place by bus which was a cool experience and a cheap way to travel around when cities aren't too far from one another. My closest friend came to Barcelona right after this trip and introducing my two worlds was an exchange highlight for me - so try to do it!

After this, I set off straight to Lisbon and Porto with a bunch of my other exchange friends. That was my favourite trip out of all because it was the perfect mix of relaxing, sightseeing and partying. We made it into a bit of a road trip and stopped at Cabo da Roca and Sintra so side note, if you know how to drive - I highly recommend getting an international permit for exchange because renting a car and splitting the costs is an amazing way to travel and not too expensive either!



April 2019

After I got back from Portugal, I made sure to spend at least 10 days in Barcelona at a stretch to keep on top of all my courses, tests and work because that's also a super important part of exchange. I still had friends visit during this time and shortly after my entire family came to Barcelona for the Easter holiday.

I don't regret spending Easter with my family but if you can't make your class schedule as amazing as mine was (with classes only on Wednesday and Thursday), then this might be the only holiday you're able to travel with your friends. I got super lucky in that, my close friends also had good schedules, so make sure to try and arrange your classes so you can get your credits and get enough days off in a week to travel during the semester. Especially since classes at ESADE are compulsory!

I went around Italy - Florence, Pisa, Tuscany, Cinque Terre and Bologna with my family and then my cousins and sister stayed back in Barcelona to sightsee and enjoy the nightlife. By the time I got back from my holiday was when I had a few exams and presentations, going into May. I also got lucky and most of my courses were report and participation based as opposed to exam based.

May 2019

I finished all my classes, exams and presentations by May 9th which was later than most people. I only had my return flight to Hong Kong booked for May 31st so I had the rest of the month to travel and absorb all the places I loved in Barcelona as well as to say bye to all the wonderful friends I had met along the way. With this time, I went to London again, and this time visited Bristol too. After which I went to Greece - Santorini, Crete and Athens and then came back to Barcelona before heading off for my final tour around Spain - Ibiza, Marbella and Seville. I wouldn't recommend doing what I did and rushing the end of your

exchange by traveling because I wish I got to spend more time in Barcelona before heading back to Hong Kong. My exchange semester was the best 5 months of my life thus far and something I'll never forget.



General Exchange Information

Visa Procedure

Spain's visa procedure is one of the easier ones but you need to schedule an appointment at the consulate. You need to apply for a "short term Schengen student visa" and you can find all the updated info regarding the documents needed and the form you have to fill out via this link:

<http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Consulados/HONGKONG/en/InformacionParaExtranjeros/Documents/Visa%20PDF/Student%20Visa.pdf>. Make sure to submit an appointment request **one month before** you want to apply for the visa (the appointment date you want), as it typically takes a month to get an appointment. All in all, you should be starting the visa process **2 months** before your departure date. Also, something I would've missed had a friend not told me, the Spanish Consulate requires you to submit a photocopy of every single page in your passport, even if it is blank.

Accommodation

I stayed in Eixample, which was in the city of Barcelona and pretty much the safest neighbourhood to live in whilst not being far from the main city centre, clubs, tourist spots and the beach. I would **not** recommend staying on campus as ESADE is in the outskirts of Barcelona, in Sant Cugat. Although it takes an hour to get to school every day from the city, you'll have 200 other exchange students doing it with you as most stay in Eixample, Gracia, and Gothic Quarter. I would not recommend the website I used for housing as it was expensive and quite inflexible. Most of my friends stayed with one another as they had

met on the exchange students Facebook group and used websites such as airbnb and uniplaces to find, affordable, larger and nicer flats to live in together. Alternatively, you can also use airbnb on your own first and go there and meet other people that are looking, although this is more stressful!

Transport

The best way to get around are buses and metro because taxis are super expensive in Europe. I got a 3-month metro pass called a T-Jove. You only need to buy a Zone 1 pass and can essentially use it for any bus/metro/train in Barcelona (except some Airport buses/trains) and Sant Cugat (***NOTE** - Sant Cugat (ESADE) used to be in Zone 2 but as of January 2019 is a part of Zone 1 so you do not need to spend extra money for a 2 zone pass). Keep the pass safe though, you can't get a new one if you lose it but if yours gets damaged, you can get a replacement at the station if you show them your old one and your ID number. After the 3 months are over I got T-10 passes which are shareable, 10 journey passes because I wasn't in Barcelona much and didn't need it - also Barcelona is a beautiful city to walk around in.

To and From the Airport: I always took the Aerobus which is 5.99 euros or 10.2 euros for a return journey. It's super convenient and quick, only taking about 20 minutes to the Airport and has 3 drop off locations in the city making bus stops reachable by foot! You can also take the night bus if you have a late-night flight as the Aerobus runs till 1am and starts up again at 5am or even regular bus from Plaza España which is cheaper (you can use your regular transport card) and it's just as convenient. There is also the option of the RENFE train which takes a bit longer so I didn't love it or taxi which is about 35 euros one way.

Food

Spanish food is the best food, in the links section below - I've put a whole bunch of my favourite restaurants that you must try on a google doc, along with bars and must see tourist spots. You can get pretty much any cuisine in the city and often, it's realllly good. Brunch is the best part though which you'll see by my extensive list of brunch places. Supermarkets - particularly **Mercadona**, Dia%, Carrefour, and Spar are super cheap and great for groceries if you plan on cooking. If you're hungry in the middle of the night, there's also 24/7 "Supermercats" every 100 meters that are slightly pricier but always good to have the option!

Finance and Banking

As I mentioned, my rent was expensive (700 euros a month) but I would look hard because there's amazing places for 400-500 euros a month. I also had a monthly spending for food, sightseeing and travel which I cut down a bit on because of my expensive rent and it wasn't difficult as Europe can be cheap to eat and travel in (depending on where you go). I didn't set up a local bank account in Barcelona because it's quite a complicated process and you don't need to for 5-6 months. Instead I activated foreign withdrawal which is super easy to do in Hong Kong itself at your local ATM (Ask your bank if you're unsure). I used to withdraw a bulk of money every month and lock it in a safe because there was a withdrawal fee from HSBC of 20 HKD per withdrawal. ***Side Note***: Mine didn't work the first 2 times and I was nervous but to avoid this go to Sabadell/La Caixa ATMs in Barcelona and select to withdraw from your savings account!

Climate

I love winter so I enjoyed Barcelona thoroughly because the first 2-3 months can be cold (0 degrees in Sant Cugat - 12 degrees in the city), although their winters have gotten better! I would take sweaters from Hong Kong but buy your proper winter jacket in Spain because they're cheaper and more suited to their weather. Make sure your apartment has a heater though because you will need it during the night. By April/May, the weather gets beautiful and pleasant so make sure to pack a few summer clothes as well but again not too many because the variety and prices of clothes there are amazing!

Communication

I never struggled with getting around because of a language barrier so I wouldn't worry about that too much. Google translate will always be your friend if you do need it but it's a touristy city with lots of English speakers. The intensive Spanish course will also definitely give you the solid foundation you need to make your way around the city.

Orientation Activities

Whilst ESADE has some great orientation activities in place and it seems like a lot - make sure you keep check on your ESADE email for the tours they offer as that's a great way to meet people. The first week along with Spanish Intensive Courses, they'll have icebreaker events, intros to ESADE, meeting your buddy (do this, they're SUPER helpful and put a lot of effort in), safety sessions, etc. Try and make it to all the orientation activities you can although it can be easy to do what I did, I went to all the compulsory ones, made a great set of friends and didn't try a lot of other cool optional ones they had which might've been a great opportunity to meet even more people.

Courses

I'm a Marketing and Information Systems major and I must say it's a bit difficult to know with ESADE if they offer courses you've seen from previous exchange students in the semester you're going in. They often change it up but offer a lot of super enjoyable courses that you can transfer back for both these majors and electives. The variety isn't too extensive as they only offer their version of elective courses for exchange students so pretty much all your classes will be filled with other exchange students. The courses I did were: Español Intensive, Digital Business in the Era of Big Data, Never Too Many Movies, Digital Advertising, Communication and Leadership, Anthropology: Cultures and Religious Traditions, and The Marketing Manager.

All my courses were mostly coursework based with 2 tests in Never Too Many Movies but that was one of the most fun and interesting courses I took. A reminder that courses have 80% attendance so plan your schedule well or you may fail a course from not attending it because you're traveling. ESADE uses an elective (ECTS) system so keep in mind that 2ECTS = 1 Credit.

Teaching Methods and Assessment

As I mentioned, I barely had any tests/exams but many courses do. You'll find all this information in the course syllabus. A lot of the grade also usually depends on participation so not just showing up for 80% of classes but being proactive in class. It's a less rigorous system than HKUST and they grade you on a 10-point scale, and you'll need to get 5/10 to pass.

Sports and Recreation

Although I didn't participate in any sports team myself, ESADE has a lot of facilities and opportunities for students even the exchange students. You can train with their teams for football, basketball, etc. or even get a gym membership as they have great offers for students. I would say it's smart to get one if you plan on **a)** going to the gym and **b)** if you have long breaks between classes/class everyday so you can make the most use out of it. Otherwise I would recommend joining DuetFit gym in the city which also has great offers and facilities.

Social Clubs and Networking

Always keep a look out on your email as ESADE offers a lot of networking events and events for exchange students especially by the International Students Association who also arrange outside of Barcelona activities and trips. Another great way to meet people. You'll also see people set up booths in ESADE with announcements for cool events like TedX.

International Services and Activities

I mentioned the International Students Association above who are mainly responsible for all the activities for exchange students as well as Erasmus Barcelona which is it's own organization. ISA is a part of ESADE and only have so many resources but they have fantastic activities, reach out to them if you have something you think other exchange students will like as well and they usually try to organise it. Erasmus is an app that is run by two people that arrange overseas and local trips for exchange students from all universities in Barcelona so it's a great way to meet people as well, it's also very well priced. They also arrange parties and are super trustworthy so definitely a handy app to download.

Health and Safety

ESADE will provide an English-speaking doctor's contact details for all its exchange students, so just be sure to keep a copy of your insurance on hand whilst you're there and you won't have an issue if you get sick or if anything else happens. As far as safety is concerned, Barcelona is fairly safe. Be sure to watch out for pick pockets and stay smart in the night as I mention below.

Cautionary Measures

- Make a list of places you might want to travel to on exchange and if you need a visa for any that don't fall in Schengen Region E.g. Morocco and UK, get it done in HK because all consular services are in Madrid which is far and they keep your passport.
- Pickpocketing and sometimes mugging can happen, stay alert, take a taxi if it's super late and you're alone, don't carry around too much cash and use a money belt/fanny pack!

Items to Bring

- Passport and HKID Card
- Laptop and Charger
- Phone and Charger (with spare chargers incase you leave one on a trip!)

- Toiletries
- Clothes and Shoes
- Money/Credit Card/Debit Card
- Medicine Kit
- Fanny pack/Small Bag
- Lock and key for suitcase

Useful Links and Contacts

<https://apps.apple.com/us/app/erasmus-barcelona/id1290154238> - An awesome app designed by Barcelona exchange committee that tells you which clubs have the best deals for a different nights, trips that they're planning e.g. hikes/volcano tours/ski trip, etc.

<https://www.barcelona-student-housing.com/> - If you decide you want to stay in a similar student accommodation as I did

www.goeuro.com — Cheap trains for travel

www.alsa.com - Cheap buses for travel

Radio Taxi: +34 933033033 - For if you need a taxi and want a fixed rate/extra security beforehand

My Barcelona Guide —>

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1F6erk1N6BP2h1lXigFhsBdIDKrhbCmn_4RL6-Ll6mcM/edit?usp=sharing