

ESADE

Spring
2019

Exchange Life in Barcelona



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BSc in EcoF

Spring 2019

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Part 1: Monthly Activity Log

JANUARY

Generally, ESADE has a short term in January (like a winter semester in UST but with more courses and activities) and have some courses and an orientation for exchange students. However, I did not find courses I was interested in or need to take, so I arrived at Barcelona on 27th January and skip the whole January semester. I was so lucky that on 28th January, a Chinese football player, WU Lei, join the football team RCD Espanyol and I went to his welcome ceremony.



FEBRUARY

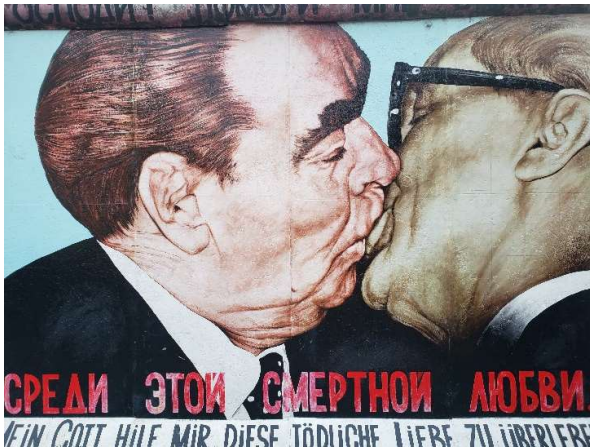
The spring semester began on 4th February. I took seven classes in total and did not have a day off on February. As a result, February is a month to get along with ESADE and Barcelona's daily life. My routine was very stable, and life was peaceful. Generally speaking, courses in ESADE focused more on discussion than those in UST. Personally speaking, my favorite course is *Spain and Catalunya Today: Recent History, Current Affairs* taught by Professor. Alex Fernández de Castro. He really mastered pretty well on the history of Spain and Catalonia and developed his own understanding about it. Besides, his teaching style is quite interesting and affable. So, I highly recommend students going to ESADE to taking his courses.

But life still needs some passion. For me, the unexpected surprise was that FC Barcelona was drawn to play against Real Madrid in the semi-final of Copa Del Rey and I had the precious chance to watch El Clasico in live! As a huge Barça fan, watching my favorite football team fighting against its mortal enemy must be the most exciting experience I could have, let alone the fact that I can cheer my men up with more than 99000 enthusiastic supporters who share the same passion for Barça with me! When we finally sent the ball through their goalkeeper, the whole Camp Nou just burst out the greatest hurrah I have ever heard, we all celebrated this goal and could not be more proud of being a fan of FC Barcelona!



MARCH

There are two kind of courses in ESADE, one of them only lasts for six classes (as know as six weeks), the other lasts for nine or ten class (twelve weeks, including public holidays). So, in the second half of March, half of my courses ended, and I have a ten-day break to travel around. I went to north Germany and Netherlands to experience totally different cultures from Catalonia. Berlin is a city that has a quality of calm, everyone there is quite and focusing on their own business. Amsterdam, on the contrary, is a much opener city, with laws that allow plenty of “radical” activities, the whole city is a heaven for fashion-forward people. But my favorite site of this trip is Keukenhof, which is famous for its tulip garden. I highly recommend you traveling there between March and May.



APRIL

April is both a busy and a cozy month. Many courses have exams or presentations in April while the longest holiday, Easter break, is also in April. The exam or final presentation (if any) of a course is in the last class, which means no study break before final exams, which is quite different with UST. Thankfully, the Easter break saved me from the pressure for a while. I took the second trip during my exchange to Italy, South German and Switzerland.

MAY



All my courses ended in early May. I took a short trip to Paris after the last exam. For the rest of the month, I just deeply feel the Barcelona city by visiting lots of architectural masterpieces and sites of visitors. And that was the time that I fall in love with Gaudi's buildings, especially the Sagrada Familia, it is a place that everyone needs to go and enjoy. I was surprised that a man-made object can use that many inspirations of the mother nature! I flew back to China on 31st May and ended my exchange life.



Part 2: General Exchange Information

Visa Procedures

I am a mainland passport holder, but the procedure of my visa application is exactly the same with those Hong Kong students. The only thing you need to do about the visa is to follow the lead by the website of CONSULATE GENERAL OF SPAIN IN HONG KONG:

(<http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Consulados/HONGKONG/en/InformacionParaExtranjeros/Documents/Visa%20PDF/Student%20Visa.pdf>) and prepare all the required

documents, make an appointment to apply (make sure that you have enough time to get the visa before your flight, e.g. one month before). A reminder is that you need to bring a copy of EVERY PAGE of your passport instead of just the personal information page.

Orientation Activities

Orientation held in the first two weeks in January term. Unfortunately, I had not arrived in Barcelona, so I miss the whole orientation session.

International Service & Activities

First of all, your exchange coordinator is friendly and willing to help you with all kinds of problems, no matter problems in academic or in university life. And there is a Facebook page called “CIEE” which organizes activities for exchange students regularly, you can check on their page and find activities that you are interested in.

Accommodations

You can live in the dormitory, rent a room in Sant Cugat (the small town near Barcelona that ESADE is in) or rent a room in the city. I personally recommend to living in Barcelona city since the dormitory is expensive (around €800 per month) and it is inconvenient to live in Sant Cugat (50 minutes’ travel to the city). I found a room in the website for Chinese people living in Spain (<https://www.xbyhr.com/>). The apartment was in the center of the city, close to metro station Paral·lhel and I could go to ESADE by switching the train once and spend around an hour. The cost was not very high (€430 per month) and the room was cozy and convenient. I have three roommates, all of whom were Chinese, so we have similar living habits and life was comfortable for me.

Courses Registration

Unlike UST, ESADE does not have an add-drop period in the beginning of a semester, and it is not in first-come-first-serve basis, either. In November, the first round of registration is a bidding system. You have 500 points in total, and you need to allocate them into courses you are interested in and you just need to submit it before the deadline. Then, the highest bidder gets the quota. For example, course A has 40 quotas, then 40 students that bid the highest on this course register in this course. After the first round, in December you have the second round, aka the add-drop period. You can enroll the courses which still have quota and drop the courses that you do not want to take. After that, your schedule is settled and unchangeable.

Teaching & Assessment Methods

A class normally takes 3 hours in ESADE and a course has classes once a week. Most of the courses require 75% attendance, and the grading scheme is made up by assignments and exams. There are more group works in ESADE, such as group projects, presentations and discussions. So, plan your time smartly.

Sports & Recreation Facilities

There is a gym on campus, and the price is reasonable. But pay attention that there are two different prices that differ from whether you can use the gym after the normal work time (e.g. after 5:00 PM on weekdays)

Finance & Banking

I opened a local bank account to keep my cash for safety reasons. You just need passport, NIE number on your visa, the ESADE admission letter and a local phone number to open an account. The living cost in Barcelona is generally lower than Hong Kong, especially the cost of food if you usually cook by yourself.

Social Clubs & Networking Opportunities

Pay attention to CIEE page and your email account in ESADE, there will be opportunities to networking or activities held by social clubs.

Health & Safety

Pickpocketing is a major problem in Barcelona, but you will be fine as long as you always pay attention on your belongings. Besides, going out with someone else can also reduce the risk of being stolen. Other kinds of crimes, such as robbery and rape are not major troubles in Barcelona. Exchange students have the right to get free medication, I went to a local hospital to apply for my medical card. After getting that, all kinds of treatment are free.

Food

You need to try TAPAS, a traditional Spanish food style with many kinds of snacks. If you are over 18, Jerez (a kind of Spanish fruit wine) is worth trying. If you miss Chinese food, there are many restaurants run by Chinese people.

Transportation

The public transportation in Barcelona is very mature. The metro system is operated by several corporations, but customers can use the same tickets to take subways, buses (except airport-related buses), mini trains in Barcelona city and towns nearby. For undergraduate students, there is a kind of youth ticket cost €105 that all you travel in unlimited times in 90 days. You can take metro to the airport, but it will be a little straightforward. So, most people take aerobus, which need to buy special bus tickets, to the airport or from airport to the city. You can buy tickets on the bus or on website (<http://www.aerobusbcn.com/en/>).

Climate

The weather in Barcelona is friendly. It does not rain a lot and the temperature is moderate. The most important thing is that, unlike Hong Kong, Barcelona is not wet!

Communication

The first language in Barcelona is Catalan, Spanish is also popular in the city. As for English, in a way it is enough to have basic communication in public. For instance, most shops in the street has at least one employee knowing English. So, if you are just expecting to “live”, then English is enough. However, if you want to get into a deeper level of life in Barcelona, Catalan and Spanish is necessary.

Cautionary measures

The most important thing in Barcelona is to protect your personal belongings! Just keep an eye on them every second!

Part 3: Items to Bring

- Passport and HKID
- Cash
- Credit card from your homeland
- Clothes for winter, spring, and summer
- Laptop
- Suitcase (recommend to bringing an additional small one to travel in Europe)
- Medicine (unlike USA, EU does not have strict ban in bringing medicine in entry)
- Basic living objects (Industrial products are much more expensive in Europe)

Part 4 Useful Links and Contacts

1. Visa application:
<http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Consulados/HONGKONG/en/InformacionParaExtranjeros/Documents/Visa%20PDF/Student%20Visa.pdf>
2. Transportation between the airport and the city:
<http://www.aerobusbcn.com/en/>
3. Website for Chinese people living in Spain: <https://www.xbyhr.com/>