

Exchange Report: ESADE Business School

Barcelona, Spain



Year 3 BBA ECON Major

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Monthly Activity Log

August

I arrived in Barcelona on Aug 11th, around two weeks before the semester started. I booked my accommodation via Uniplaces website (<https://www.uniplaces.com/>) in advance, and I recommend you to have your accommodation sorted prior to your arrival. Exchange students get different kinds of flat, from on-campus dormitory, studios, and to shared flats, and which one to choose depends on your personal preference. In my case, I wanted to share my flat with others as I wanted to meet new people, and it turned out to be one of the greatest choices I've made throughout my exchange. Anyway, a few days after my arrival, I travelled a bit inside the city and to Paris. I had an absolutely amazing time adapting to the new environment of art and beauty. By the end of the month, I chose to take the two-week Spanish Intensive course. I got to meet many new friends, and it helped me a lot build the basic for Spanish. I would highly recommend taking this course.



September

September was a month full of activities as well. On September 11st, National Day of Catalonia, you will see thousands of people marching on the streets with the Catalan flags. Brunch in the park—an electronic festival—takes place throughout September. By the end of the month, the entire city celebrates La Mercè, the annual festival of Barcelona. During the week-long festival, there are a variety of activities ceremonies, remarkably Castellers (human towers), firework, Gegants (Traditional festival giants), and concerts. Make sure you make the best out of this month and explore the local culture!





October

I had wonderful trips in October to Costa Brava, Valencia, and Montserrat, and Sitges. These trips were organized by Erasmus (<https://erasmusbarcelona.com/trips/>). They have monthly activities, parties, and meetups, so make sure you check the website/mobile app out! We had a two-week mid-term break from school, and since most of the exchange students do not have mid-term exams, it is a perfect opportunity to travel!



November

Compared to October, I had much more school works, as we were approaching to the final season. I was busy with preparing for presentations, report papers, and the final exams. Even so, the workload was far less extensive than UST.

December

I travelled to multiple cities in Spain—Granada, Sevilla, Madrid—throughout a week to mark the end of my exchange. I had an amazing time with my friends, and it was nice to see how different the other Spanish cities are from Barcelona! My school finished on December 5th, but I stayed the whole month in Spain to properly bid farewell to my beloved city.



General Exchange Information

- Visa

You'll need to apply for "short-term Schengen student visa (6 months)". Scheduling an appointment is mandatory, so I suggest check the available date as early as possible. I applied at the Spain embassy in Hong Kong, and the entire process took two weeks and was free of charge. The details of required documents might differ based on your nationality, so please do go through the website thoroughly before the appointment. Getting the visa was not particularly complicated for me, except I had to get photocopies for EVERY SINGLE PAGE of my passport, but I still suggest you to apply in advance so you don't have to rush through the process.

- Orientation Activities

ESADE does not offer a lot of orientation activities, but as mentioned above, I recommend you to take the two-week Spanish intensive course.

- International Services & Activities

I recommend checking out a website called Erasmus. They organize multiple parties/activities/trips for the exchange community at a reasonable price. You can also join the parties and meetups organized by ISA of ESADE. You'll have so many opportunities to meet new people and have fun.

- Accommodations

Exchange students get different kinds of flat, from on-campus dormitory, studios, and to shared flats, and which one to choose depends on your personal preference. In my case, I wanted to share my flat with others as I wanted to meet new people, and it turned out to be one of the greatest choices I've made throughout my exchange. If you want to stay near the city center, I recommend Gracia and Eixample. They are safe, not far from the major attractions of the city (beaches, clubs, restaurants, bars, malls, tourist spots), but also not right in the middle of the chaos of a busy city.

- Courses Registration

As a reminder, ESADE's course enrolment system is not as efficient or well-illustrated. In general, you can choose the courses you want in mid-July through a bidding system, and you get enrolled in most of them. For me, I could not get all the courses I wanted, so I had to add a few more. However, in the first week of school, I was informed that I was not enrolled in any of the additional classes due to a technical error in my enrolment. I had to talk to my advisor quite a few times just so I could at least meet the minimum credit requirement. I could only choose from the courses that were still available, and the courses I was interested in were not part of my options. Changing the study plan last minute was frustrating, and honestly, I was quite disappointed by how inefficiently the administrative staff coped with the problem.

I took *Anthropology: In Search of Principles* / *EEO: Re-Imagining Capitalism* / *Español: Elementary* / *Marketing from Strategy* / *Never Too Many Movies* / *CEE: the Emergence of China*. I really enjoyed *Re-Imagining Capitalism*, *Never Too Many Movies*, and *Español* courses. The professors are passionate, and the contents are thought-provoking. They allowed me to explore the Spanish culture, language, and a new perspective towards the current social system. Highly recommended!

- Teaching & Assessment methods

As an exchange student, you can only take elective courses. The assessment methods are quite similar to the one at UST, comprised of assignments, presentations, final exams, participations, etc. The workload in general is far less extensive than UST courses, so passing or even excelling in these courses is not that challenging. Personally, I found some courses poorly designed and taught. Yet, I still enjoyed the learning experience as these courses had a very different style from UST's business courses.

- Sports & Recreation facilities

ESADE has their own gym, and the price is around 25-30 euros/month. I personally recommend you to join the gym membership near the city centre, if you don't live on campus. From my understanding, ESADE does not provide many choices in sports teams, but you can definitely join one outside campus through meetups or Erasmus activities.

- Finance & Banking (currency/expenses)

Given the infamously complicated process of opening a local bank account as a non-European passport holder, I decided not to open a Spanish bank account. Instead, I activated overseas withdrawal for my Hong Kong account (Hang Seng Bank) prior to my departure and withdrew a relatively large amount every month. I found Sabadell ATMs convenient, cheap, and accessible to use. On the other note, Barcelona is not particularly expensive to live in. The rent ranges from 500-800 Euros/month, of course depending on where you stay. The average monthly living expense was around 500 – 600 Euros. Eating out in Europe is generally quite expensive, so I recommend you to try to cook at home in case you want to save more budget for experiences/activities.

- Social clubs & networking opportunities

Since ESADE does not have a large nor active campus environment, you do need to try to reach out to people outside the class. Stay tuned for the activities other exchange students organize, or try to organize one yourself as well! Exchange students are quite friendly and open to new experiences and exploring Barcelona.

- health & safety

Barcelona is relatively safe, yet pickpocketing is definitely a big problem. DO WATCH your belongings, especially your smartphone. I suggest not hold your phone in your hand at all in crowded places. If you stay out late during the night, make sure you're in a group as well. HKUST also provides a health insurance to exchange students, so make sure you know what the insurance covers.

- food

Barcelona is a city of food. Even though I was not a huge fan for the traditional Spanish food, I still had so many options for delicious international cousins. Whatever kind of food you look for, you can find many amazing places for it. Many restaurants in Barcelona are on *the fork* (a discount app), make sure you check them out before going!

- transportation

Like many other exchange students, I bought an unlimited three-month ticket (T-Jove) for the first three months and then T-10 passes until I left. I find this quite economical if you live in the city, as you'll likely use the public transport quite a lot. For the T-Jove ticket, you'll only need the pass to Zone 1. To and from the airport, Aerobus was always my preferred transport option. It comes every 5 – 10 minutes, has multiple stops throughout the city, and it only takes around 30 minutes to get to the airport from Plaça de Catalunya.

- climate

The weather in Barcelona is AMAZING! The humidity, the temperature, the sun, and the breezes are just perfect. If your mood depends on the weather or you love sunbathing at the beach, I'm sure you'll be happy most of the time in Barcelona! :)

- communication

I purchased a prepaid SIM card from Vodafone. Choosing a SIM card depends on your personal usage of data and preference for plans. It is easy to open one too, just remember to bring your passport!

-cautionary measures

As mentioned earlier, pickpocketing happens a lot in Barcelona, but you'll be fine if you stay alert. And once again, stay in a group when it gets late at night.

-other notes

As lucky as I was to have a chance to make friends from different cultural backgrounds, I also saw quite a few exchange students who only stay within the group of people from their own country. You're only staying in Barcelona for four months, and it's a city full of diversity and friendly international communities. It might be tough at the beginning, but I suggest you reach out to the exchange students and local people. It'll make a whole lot of difference in your exchange.

Items to bring:

- Passport / HKID / Bank cards
- Chargers, adapters
- Jackets because it gets cold by November

Useful links and contacts:

Trips, meetups, activities:

<https://erasmusbarcelona.com/trips>

Flathunting:

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