

ESADE

Universitat Ramon Llull



Spring Term 2021-2022

Barcelona, Spain

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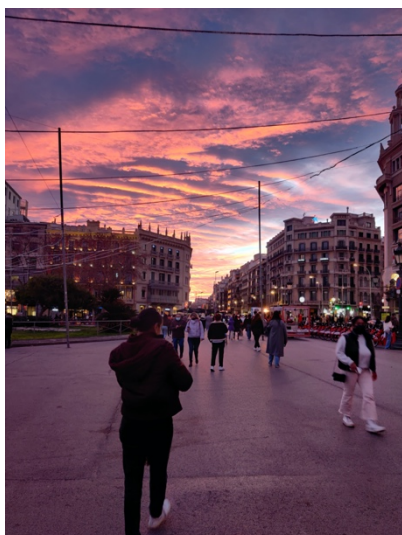
Part I – Monthly Activity Log

Jan 2022

I arrived in Barcelona on Jan 3rd. It's important to remember that the first month of exchange is the time where everyone is figuring everything out. My main goals for Jan were...

- Figure out the transportation ie. purchase the correct metro card and figure out my route to university
- Test out my credit/debit cards in different shops and restaurants to check if my purchases were working correctly
- Get a sim card
- Get settled into my apartment and my area

I was immediately amazed by the city and the culture. Barcelona just exudes energy and life – there is also something to do and always more to see (it's normal to feel like you haven't done everything at the end of your exchange btw, one semester is not enough time to cover all of it!).



The first month was a good time to get a lot of the touristy things out of the way during off peak hours. Things like: *Sagrada Familia*, *Montjuic*, *Parc de la Ciutadella*, *Parc Guell*, *Parc del Laberint d'Horta*. Even just walking around *Placa de Catalunya* and finding nice places to eat is great.

Jan 10th – 21st was our 'intensive period' of courses. This two week period allows you to start and finish however many courses you choose to before the 'main semester' commences. This is usually in person but for us it was online. I chose to do three courses. This ended up being very intense: 7.5 hrs of class a day for two weeks. BUT this meant that I had a much more relaxed main semester and could really enjoy myself once I felt properly settled. I would recommend taking 3 courses in the intensive period.

I got Covid in the middle of Jan (I was actually happy I caught it early into my exchange rather than later when I would be doing more travels). Rapid antigen tests are easily available in most pharmacies and cost about 12-18 euros. You are expected to follow covid precautions like self isolating (and I'd recommend mentioning that you have covid to your flatmates if you live with others... it's not a taboo, most of the time they will be kind and understanding, and will appreciate your honesty). You are not required to declare your positive test to any authorities. Everyone is quite relaxed about covid this side of the world, it is not something to stress about, trust me.



At the end of the month, I made my first trip out of Spain – to London. It was very easy, the flight was 3 hours, and the airport experience was smooth.

Feb 2022

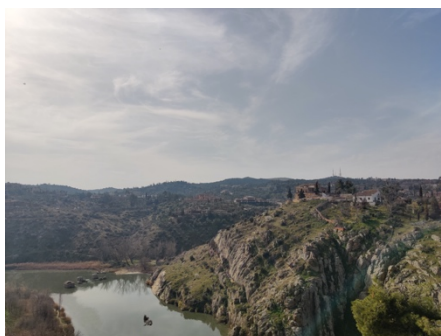
In the second month I...

- Watched my first football match at Camp Nou (Barcelona vs Atletico Madrid)
- Made a trip to Madrid with a couple of exchange friends
- Did a pub crawl with the entire exchange batch
- Went clubbing for the first time since arriving
- Started classes at ESADE
- Ate tapas for the very first time

I started to feel more settled now. Huge tip: don't beat yourself up for feeling disoriented or unsettled in your first month or two... it takes time, but you'll always get there!

I also started to love the area I was staying in (*El Clot*). Very close to the city centre (15-20 mins by metro), very safe, clean and lively.

A big highlight of the month was going to the Sitges Carnival. This is an annually held festival full of music, dance and colour. There are different types of floats that move through the parade where the performers perform different choreographies to different latin music. There is also a couple of streets with bars and clubs (similar to LKF). Sitges is a small town outside of Barcelona that you can get to by coach or by train. It's beautiful to visit during the day as well since it is on the coast of Spain and has many stunning beaches.



March 2022

Some highlights from the third month...

There is a special Catalan tradition called Calçotada. This is traditional Catalan BBQ which takes place during winter (Jan-March). Calçots are the star of the meal, seasonal sweet large spring onions that are prepared over a fire. There is a specific (and very messy!) method used to eat the Calçots. It's an acquired taste but I'd highly recommend getting involved in Calçotada if you have the opportunity – it's a great way to learn about the local culture and values.

I made a second trip to London to visit family and friends. I celebrated Holi at a club which was one of the most fun and memorable nights I've had. I also managed to watch my first ever West End show – Phantom of the Opera. Highly recommend!

Straight from London, I met up with my best friend from high school in HK and we went on a trip to Italy. First, we went to Naples...

The biggest highlight from Naples was the food. After all, it is the home of the Neapolitan pizza!

From there, we took a bus to Rome...

It was amazing to see all the ancient ruins, eat all the authentic pizza and pasta, and believe me, gelato is definitely not the same as regular ice-cream!

When I got back to Barcelona, I also attended my first Salsa dance class and later my first Bachata class! Check out [Seven Dance](#) academy if this is something you'd be interested in.



April 2022

In April, I was wrapping up most of my courses at uni – was meeting group mates at cafes to practice presentations, writing reports, preparing for final quizzes (sounds busy but ESADE was really not as academically intense as UST). My semester came to an end in April but some people finished early May depending on when their exams were.

I had a couple of friends come over to Barcelona to visit me and I managed to squeeze in a couple more trips with some exchange friends. In this month I visited Valencia, Marbella, Mijas and Malaga. Summer had finally come so this was a great time to go to beachy places like the coast/south of Spain. When I was in Barcelona, I spent majority of April and May at the beach (which was a 15 min bike ride away from my apartment).

I made a trip to the Canyon of Mont Rebei – the most beautiful, lush water you will ever see. This was one of the trips organised by one of the many external 'Erasmus' (aka Exchange) travel companies called 'WELOVEBCN' (look at International Services and Activities section for more on this).

Another trip I did with WELOVEBCN was a kayaking trip to a small city called Tortosa. We left early in the morning and took a 3 hour bus ride to kayak along the Ebro river. The bus then took us to Tortosa town where we had an hour to explore. These trips are a great way to meet other exchange and some local students at other universities in Spain. It's also more

convenient because everything is organised for you, all you have to do is pay for your ticket and turn up on time.

I also watched Carlos Alcaraz play tennis live at the Barcelona Open Semi Finals! Unfortunately, this was the one day of summer where we had absolutely awful weather (sun, rain, thunder, hail, and wind... no, I'm not exaggerating!). Otherwise, the weather in Barcelona is beautiful.



May 2022

It was finally time to say goodbye to Barcelona...

This month I...

- Went to the Moco Museum (museum of contemporary art). I'm not much of a museum person but this one was really good, I'd recommend.
- Made a trip to Paris
- Spent more time at the beaches
- Made my way over to London for the summer



I spent the last few days catching up with people who have now become some of my closest friends. Having my last meals at my favourite restaurants and saying bye to the waiters who also became my friends over the 4 months. The people in Barcelona were so warm, welcoming and wonderful.

I cannot express enough how amazing my exchange experience was. For me, there was no better place to have exchanged. You will not regret choosing Barcelona.

Part I – General Information

Visa Procedures

I hold a British passport. Post Brexit, I was only allowed to stay in the Schengen area for a total of 90 days in every 180 day period. If you are a British passport holder – make sure you check the new rules and regulations when you plan to travel to the EU. Brexit also had implications on health/travel insurance – I had to apply through UST's travel insurance scheme since I am no longer covered by the NHS in the EU.

Regardless, you are required to get a Short Term Student visa which allows you to study in Spain between 3 – 6 months. Required docs for visa application:

- [Completed National Visa Application](#)
- Photograph
- Valid passport
- Proof of acceptance for the study, training or volunteer activity or internship.
- Proof of financial means
- Health insurance
- Criminal record check certificate
- Medical certificate
- Proof of residence in the consular district
- Proof of the representative's identity and capacity
- Authorization of legal representatives

Cost: The Visa will cost you around HKD500 or approx. 60 Euros (rates differ based on which passport you hold).

Orientation Activities

Due to covid, we did not have the normal orientation experience that we would've had. That being said, you will get added to an 'Erasmus' Whatsapp group which all the other exchange students where meet ups will be organised, event invitations will be sent out and you yourself can organise meet ups.

It was mostly up to us to create opportunities to meet one another and get to know our university/classes.

International Services & Activities

There are external travel companies targetted specifically towards erasmus/exchange students who want to explore Spain. You can find them online or through word of mouth from your peers at Esade (everyone knows these groups). They are safe and reliable. The travel company I used was 'WELOVEBCN'. Once you sign up to one of their events and purchase your ticket, you get a Whatsapp link that gives you access to the the group chat used to keep in touch with everyone whilst on the trip. This is a great way to meet new people, explore new places, experience new things whilst not having to plan any of it!

Accommodation

Loquo and Airbnb are the two websites most people used to find their apartments. I would say the location of your home is the most important attribute if you really want to explore

and enjoy Barcelona, and still be able to get to Esade easily. Try and be as close to an FGC station as possible. The FGC is the train you take from Barcelona to Sant Cugat. I found an apartment in El Clot (a beautiful and safe part of the city), which is only five metro stops from 'Catalunya', the city centre and connecting station en route to Esade. The most popular areas to live in are Plaça Catalunya, Sagrada Família, Eixample and Gracia.

I found my apartment through this company called [Live Futher](#), and I've had a great experience with them. Their founder was a student at Esade, so a trustworthy organisation that knows what students' needs are. An bonus: Esade students are given a discount on the deposit! They open their houses up to anyone who is aged between 18 and 35 years old, and is coming to Barcelona to study or work. This means that the building was extremely diverse in terms of cultural backgrounds and purpose of being in Barcelona. This made my living experience so much more rich and interesting.

Courses Registration

This process for Esade is far simpler and far less stressful than for HKUST. There is no fighting for places for Esade courses. You simply select the classes you would like to take and submit the form online, and you will be given a place in that course. Instructions will be sent to you well in advance of the course registration date, which will have clear details on how to go about the process. It is very straightforward so don't worry at all.

There is a rule in Esade that in you must attend at least 80% of your classes for each course to pass. So, if you want to travel during the semester, try to organize your timetable so that you have long weekends.

I am majoring in Economics and Marketing at UST – I had ample choice of Marketing courses at Esade, and tons of courses that allowed me credit transfer. However, it was the opposite for Economics – Esade is not a good uni for providing Econ courses, so manage your expectations and properly map out your credit transfer options.

Teaching & Assessment Methods

My classes were average sized approx. 40 people in a class. It does of course depend on the type of course/elective you choose ie. some are more popular than others. The campus has both classrooms and lecture theatres. I chose mostly Marketing modules and electives so my courses were assessed based on course work, presentations, class participation, attendance, quizzes, homework assignments.

Sports & Recreation Facilities

Esade has a gym for students. There are also many affordable gyms around the city. I would recommend subscribing to VIVA Gym if you want to get a gym membership because they have many branches around the city and provide student discount.

There are tons of football fields, tennis courts etc for recreational sport. You can easily find them with a quick Google search.

Finance & Banking (including currency/expenses)

My rent was 425 Euros per month including utility bills. The bills came up to around 50 Euros per month. This is in line with what most students exchanging in Barcelona would opt for. The closer you are to the centre, the more expensive it can get. You should expect to find rates that range between 400 and 600 euros per month.

My transportation became 'free' once I bought the T-Jove for just 80 Euros! There are [different types of metro tickets](#) you can get – the T-Jove allows you unlimited journeys on trains and metros per quarter. KEY POINT: You only need **1 ZONE ACCESS!** Zone 1 includes the city as well as Sant Cugat (where Esade campus is located). The T-Jove really made things a lot easier, even though the initial cost seemed very high. It was worth it.

To pay, I used my UnionPay Hang Seng debit card from Hong Kong. UnionPay is recognised all over Spain/Europe and is recognised by ATMs too. Remember to check the transaction fee when withdrawing cash from ATMs around Europe – different ATMs have different rates. And of course, Mastercard and VISA are widely accepted too.

Social Clubs & Networking Opportunities

There are Esade sports teams (Rugby, Tennis, Dance) that you can join. This was one part of Esade that I think they could improve on – they don't put too much effort into campus life. This is not to say that it took anything away from my overall experience! In fact it gave me more time to explore the city and Europe. If campus life is what you're looking for, Esade is not the best. That being said, the city is full of students so you have opportunities to network and meet people all the time.

Manage your expectations for the campus too – it's two buildings and a couple of canteens. It's lovely but small – nothing like UST's. But you won't be spending most of your time on campus anyway so it's not a big deal.

Health & Safety

Physical safety should not be much of a concern – the general vibe of people in Barcelona is warm and comfortable. Having said that though, Barcelona is known for pickpockets. Always be very watchful of your belongings and your surroundings. Once April hits ie. tourist season... you have to be extra careful. Don't leave your phone on tables at restaurants, never keep phone or wallet in your back pockets or in front pockets of hoodies, best to always have pockets that can be zipped. If you have your wits about you and you are aware and alert, you should be absolutely fine. I didn't have anything stolen from me and felt very safe in Barcelona.

Food

Spanish food is very meat heavy so if you are a big meat-lover, you will be in heaven. It's not so easy being a vegetarian but you do find enough good places after a while. I became quite the foodie over the 4.5 months I was there even though I am not the biggest meat eater...

Here are my food recommendations:

- Can Dende Poblenou (great brunch)
- Gabby's brunch (I liked the fresh juice the most here, food was okay)

- Fat Schmuck, El Raval (meat eaters will love this also the vibe is so cool)
- La Papa (great brunch)
- Macchina Pasta Bar (my personal favourite pasta place in BCN)
- La pizza del Born (one of my favourite pizza places)
- Da Nanni Pizzeria (my ultimate fav pizza place)
- Blu bar Poblenou (one of my fav vegan places and staff is amazing. Vegan food but even my meat eating friends love it)
- La Güerita Mexicana, Sant Antoni (good Mexican)
- Bacoa burger (great meat and veggie burgers)

Transportation

Barcelona's transport system is interconnected and very well integrated. The single tickets are 2 Euro no matter where you go within one zone – and you can use any mode of transportation within 1 hour and 15 minutes. You are much better off getting one of the bulk journey tickets. (There are various zones and tickets get more expensive as you cross zones). I highly recommend the T-Jove. Most people chose this option and were really happy with the decision.

To and fro Airport: The N16 and N17 are cheap and convenient bus journeys. The Renfe (train) became my favorite mode of transport to and from the airport though. You can use your T-10/T-Jove/T-mes, etc (whichever you choose), on this Renfe, and it takes you from the city center to Terminal 2. From Terminal 2 there is a free shuttle bus that takes 10 minutes to terminal 1. Ryanair and Easyjet (budget airlines in Europe) fly from Terminal 2 so the Renfe is actually a great and very convenient option. It's super comfortable and very fast too.

To ESADE: It's quite a journey! But it's a beautiful and rather comfortable one. The FGC takes about 30 minutes from Plaza Catalunya to Sant Cugat, and then you have to walk about 15-20 minutes to get to the university. Sant Cugat is a beautiful, peaceful town. I actually really enjoyed the walk every morning. The weather was so pleasant, especially in September. The last 5 minutes of the walk is through this huge patch of grass – it's gorgeous.

Climate

Barcelona is blessed with wonderful weather. The first few months are really nice. It's very warm but not humid. Make the most of the warmth in September and October. Try to make short weekend trips to the 'Beachy' areas of Spain, and enjoy exploring Barcelona being out and about while it's warm.

Jan to March do actually get quite cold. Our flat was not centrally heated so it was quite a struggle during these months. I do recommend bringing along a thick coat or down jacket. It will be handy for any trips you make to Northern Europe as well.

Communication

Whatsapp is the main communication app used in Spain.

Sim card: I would recommend getting a Llamaya SIM. It's quite unheard of, usually people go with Movistar, Vodafone or Orange. But I found a super reliable and a much cheaper alternative!

My package was 10 Euros for 20 GBS per month, with usability outside of Spain too at no additional cost. Other packages start at 20 Euros for the same amount of GBS.

Cautionary measures

Not too much to be cautious about other than pickpockets.

Quick tips that I learnt along the way: don't refer to Barcelona as 'Barca' unless you're at a football match, you will immediately be spotted as a tourist!

Locals will probably prefer to speak in Spanish to you between the months of Jan-March, before the tourist season begins. So try to speak Spanish wherever possible.

Read up on the conflict between Catalunya and Barcelona if you have time – not essential but it helps to understand the people and their history.

Part III – Checklist

Items to bring:

- Laptop & charger
- Mobile phone & charger
- USB
- Passport & Identity Card
- Clothes (warm clothes for winter and Northern Europe travels! As well as beach clothes)
- Toiletries
- Fanny pack (for emergency cash or phone on nights out)
- Money (Euros)

Try to pack light because you will inevitably come back with more stuff.

Part III – Useful Links

You can find most of the useful links embedded throughout this document.

Here is the website to fill out the spanish health form for travels: <https://www.spth.gob.es/>