

EXCHANGE REPORT

ESADE Business School, Spain
2022 Fall Semester Exchange

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Monthly Activity Log

September

I landed in Barcelona just before orientation week kicked off on 28/8. It was a fantastic opportunity to connect with fellow exchange students, and I enrolled in the Spanish Intensive Course which was an enjoyable experience. In September, I explored Barcelona's Gaudi's architecture, visited La Sagrada Familia, Casa Mila and Casa Batllo, and relaxed on beautiful beaches like Barceloneta and Castadefells.



Then, I joined a group of friends from the exchange program for a memorable trip to Portugal. We visited Lisbon's steep slopes, picturesque trams, and the stunning Sintra, then moved on to Porto, where the stunning sunset views were unforgettable. Next, I travelled to Nice with two HKUST friends. The blue ocean was mesmerizing, and although it was too cold to swim, we took long walks along the beach. And to my delight, I found some excellent pho in Nice that satisfied my Asian cravings.



October

In the start of October, me and my friends explored other parts of Spain together. We made a trip to Costa Brava, Girona, Valencia and Madrid via trains. The science museum and aquarium in Valencia were super cool! The highlight of my trip to Madrid was the Retiro Park, where the infamous Palacio de Cristal was located. It was so calming just to walk in the park with all the beautiful greenery. Back in Barcelona, I visited Park Guell, another famous Gaudi's architecture located on the middle of the hill, overlooking the city.



Later that month, we had a Mid-term break for more or less two weeks. I went Tenerife and Switzerland respectively and they were my one of my favorite places that I have been to so far! Tenerife is one of the Canary Islands and has super cool landscapes including a volcano and multiple black sand beaches. Driving around the island was the best way to enjoy Tenerife. There are also a range of fun activities to choose from, including diving, whale watching, stargazing, water park, etc. I was so lucky to have seen a sea turtle during my dive!



Switzerland, needless to say, was so beautiful. I went with a friend from HKUST and we visited Luzern, Interlaken and Grindelwald. We purchased the half-fare card, which was a better deal compared to the SwissPass if you do not need to take long train rides to multiple cities.



At the end of October, I went to a flamenco show with a friend. I would say you cannot miss out on this if you are in Barcelona. I also celebrated Halloween with a bunch of friends in Barcelona, and it was a memorable experience.



November

Despite all fun I had had from my frequent travelling, I started to feel homesick. So I made a trip to London to visit my old friends from Hong Kong. It is crazy how much London resembles Hong Kong! The subway system, double deck buses, and China town all cured my homesickness. I also made a trip up north to Leeds to meet a friend that I met during my last summer internship. Leeds has quite many thrifting options, including shops and market, and are generally cheaper than London.



Later that month, my family came to visit. I first met up with them in Madrid. Then they came to Barcelona on the days that I had school. Afterwards, we visited Paris together. It was so nice to see my parents again after 3 months of separation. The highlight of my trip in Paris was visiting the Dior Museum, which has archives of past designs of the maison. The dresses displayed were intricate and beautifully designed, definitely worth a visit if you are into fashion.

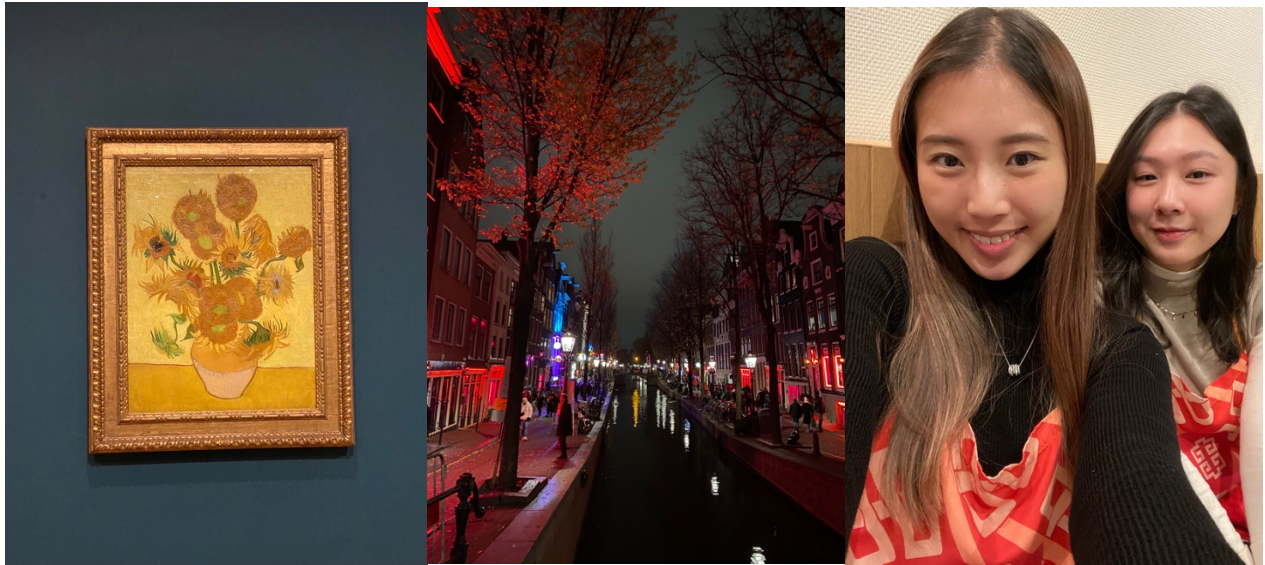


After my parents left, I made a trip to Vienna and Budapest with my friends from exchange. Since Christmas was nearing, Christmas markets had opened when we were there. Unexpectedly, Budapest had really good food. They are famous for foie gras (which I love haha). I really enjoyed the food from Paprika Vendeglo (their Goulash soup was SO GOOD) and Comme Chez Soi (you must make a reservation for this resto).



December

The semester ended at the beginning of December, meaning that I had more time to travel. I first travelled to Amsterdam and visited the Anne Frank Museum and the Van Gogh Museum.



After that, I went on a 5-day tour to Morocco with my exchange friends. We stayed in Marrakech for a day, then slowly made our way to the Sahara Desert by driving through the Atlas Mountain range. Riding camels and sandboarding in the Sahara Desert was a once in a life time experience that I will never forget.



As Christmas was approaching, most of my friends were leaving Barcelona to head home. After the two trips, I went back to Barcelona to farewell my exchange friends. It was so difficult to say goodbye:(

Luckily, my boyfriend came to travel with me and we spent Christmas in Finland. Starting from Helsinki, we travelled up north to Rovaniemi, where Santa Clause Village is located, then Levi, for skiing, and Tromso, a city in Norway, and finally back down to Stockholm.



January

Treasuring my last bit of time in Europe, I made a trip to London again to see my friends from Hong Kong who have immigrated to the UK. Then, I did my first ever solo trip to Prague. As I was sick, I was not able to make the most out of the trip sadly



I spent the last few days of my exchange in Barcelona to reminisce all the good times I have had in my beloved city. I still miss the bustling streets, delicious paella and tapas and the beautiful weather and ocean of Barcelona. I am sure you will feel the same way if you make Barcelona your exchange destination:)

Part 1 – General Information

Visa Procedures

To study in Spain for a period of 3-6 months, you must obtain a Short Term Student visa. Be sure to apply for it in advance to ensure that you will get the Visa in time! You would also need to schedule a time slot on the consulate's website to submit your application in person. For more info, check this website:

<https://www.exteriores.gob.es/Consulados/londres/en/ServiciosConsulares/Paginas/Consular/Visado-de-estudios.aspx>

Orientation Activities

The orientation week was a great time to meet other exchange students. There were several Barcelona tours held by the exchange team which I did not sign up for, but I did register for the Spanish Intensive Course, which I think was very worth my time!

International Services & Activities

The International Students Association of ESADE offers various activities that you can participate in. Additionally, Erasmus Barcelona is a reputable website that arranges trips and parties for exchange students in Barcelona. I personally went on a well-planned Morocco trip through Erasmus. If you're ever unsure of what to do on the weekends, you can also consider going on a day trip.

Accommodations

The campus is situated in Sant Cugat, a town located on the outskirts of Barcelona. Although the commute from Barcelona to Sant Cugat typically takes one hour, I advise staying in Barcelona due to its abundance of popular tourist destinations and restaurants, as well as its comparatively lower costs.

Stay in safer residential areas like Eixample, Gracia and San Gervasi. I shared a flat with 2 other HKUST students in the area between Gracia and San Gervasi called Lesseps. Our monthly rent was 1800 euros in total, which was only 600 per person. I would say between 400 – 800 euros is an acceptable range for monthly rent.

Some of my friends stayed with host families, which would be the cheapest option, ranging from around 200 – 500 euros per month. If you prefer to have more personal space, you could also rent a private room in student residence for around 800 – 1000 euros per month. There are several of them near the Marina station (near Arc de Triomf) but the con is that it is further away from ESADE.

Courses Registration

For class enrollment, all you need to do is choose the classes you are interested in and rank them on an online system. You will receive instructions ahead of the registration date, explaining how to complete the process, so you would not need to worry. At ESADE, it is mandatory to attend at least 80% of your classes per course to pass. If you plan to travel during the semester, it is recommended that you arrange your schedule in a way that allows for long weekends. I only had three days of classes back to back, so I was able to have four days every week off for travelling.

Teaching & Assessment Methods

I took the following courses:

- Communication and leadership
- Managing diversity
- Entrepreneurship
- Project management
- Digital successful careers (no credit transfer)
- Spanish Beginner

My coursework was evaluated based on factors such as course work, presentations, class participation, attendance, quizzes, and homework assignments.

Sports & Recreation Facilities

Esade provides a gym for its students, and there are additionally numerous affordable gyms throughout the city like VIVA and BDiR.

Finance & Banking (including currency / expenses)

Register for the HSBC World Debit Card, which also works with mastercard payment, and deposit your Euros there. Most shops and restaurants accept credit card payment, so usually cash is not needed. If you do need cash, you can withdraw it from most ATMs with a fee using the HSBC World Debit Card.

Social Clubs & Networking Opportunities

As the ESADE campus is relatively compact, there were no designated booths for promoting the school's social clubs. However, you can stay informed about upcoming club events and networking opportunities via emails from both CIEE and ESADE.

Health & Safety

You can purchase the ESADE health insurance from Cigna. It has an extensive network of hospitals and clinics in Barcelona.

Food

As a seafood lover, Barcelona was like heaven for me. And unexpectedly, Barcelona has many authentic Chinese food options. Some of my favourite restaurants include:

1. La flauta – For yummy tapas, try their beef tenderloin and foie gras toast and fried camembert!!
2. BelleBuon - Authentic Italian restaurant, their truffle pasta is the bestttt, and they have large portions
3. Joncake – The best basque cheesecake you will have ever eaten in your entire life I guarantee you
4. DelaCrem – The best gelato in Barcelona! All of their flavours taste like the food itself, personally like their pistachio, hazelnut and passion fruit flavours the most.
5. Fast Eddies - Delicious cheeseburger, my friend who is a beef enthusiast claims that it is the best cheeseburger that he has ever had and it is perfectly executed.
6. Arume - If you have more budget, Arume is the best place to go for some contemporary Spanish food. Their duck paella and pork fillet are must-try's
7. Brunch and cake - a very popular brunch place that I have yet to try
8. Rice – the go-to food delivery app for Chinese food
9. Yuan Lao Si Hotpot – If you miss a good old mala hotpot, this is the place to go!

10. Casa Raimundo – A seafood restaurant in Sitges, which is a small town by the coast 1 hour away from Barcelona. Super good value for its price, only 45 euros pp for generous portions of seafood that you and your friends probably cannot finish.

Transportation

Be sure to purchase the T-jove transport pass. This pass offers unlimited rides on all modes of transportation, including metro, trains, and buses, for a period of three months. Plus, keep an eye out for any discounts that may be available to make the pass even more affordable.

During my own exchange program, I was thrilled to discover that the pass was available at half-price, making it an incredible value for the cost. It's important to note that San Cugat, where the campus is located, is situated within Zone 1, meaning that purchasing the pass to cover this zone alone will suffice.

Climate

The climate in Barcelona has to be my favourite in Europe. It is mostly sunny and the temperature falls comfortably between 20 - 30 degrees from August to early October and 10 – 20 degrees from mid-October to January. It is less humid than Hong Kong, making the heat more tolerable. However, there is no AC in all metro stations, meaning it can get super stuffy and hot in the summer.

Communication

You can purchase pre-paid sim cards from Orange and Vodafone and top up monthly without any contractual commitment. I used Orange's service but I would recommend Vodafone over Orange as it has more stable internet connection and its data roaming coverage should include the UK as well.

Cautionary measures

As you have probably heard, Barcelona is known for theft as a super popular travel destination. Very luckily, I had not been stolen from the entire time during exchange. However, I have a friend who was not so lucky. Her bag was stolen in a restaurant because she left it on the floor unattended. Here are some tips to not become the target of thieves:

1. Never leave your phone on the table in restaurants
2. Keep your bag in your sight in restaurants
3. Be very conscious of your surroundings especially in crowded places like the metro
4. Try to always bring a bag that has a zipper, and keep it zipped
5. Try to dress more low-key and blend in with the locals
6. Avoid wearing designer brands

Part 2 – Checklist

Items to bring:

- Laptop and charger
- Mobile phone and charger
- Travel adapters
- Passport and ID card
- Clothes (both summer and winter clothes)
- Fanny pack (anti-theft)
- Euros

- Hairdryer

Part 3 – Useful links

ESADE Health Insurance - <https://oncampus.es/en/seguros/oncampus-esade/>

Visa Appointment -

<https://www.citaconsular.es/en/hosteds/widgetdefault/2a9226069ba3f7adf7ede162585ca3e3f#services>