



Exchange Report *ESADE Barcelona*

Fall 2022
CHAN Wing Yan
20704016

Monthly Activity Log

August – September

I arrived a few days before the semester start. As I lived with other HKUST exchange students, we just explored around our neighborhood, getting familiar with the transport.

In September, I visited most of the famous attractions in Barcelona, the Sagrada Familia, Casa Miro, Picasso Museum. Most of the attractions are close to each other, mainly located in Passeig de Gracia and Placa de Catalunya. You can get more information from the TripAdvisor forum, like how much time will be spent in the museum, to plan your trip better. (Link: https://en.tripadvisor.com.hk/Tourism-g187497-Barcelona_Catalonia-Vacations.html)

In the end of September, there will be a festival called La Merce. A lot of activities will be organized, it is definitely a must-see if you are visiting Barcelona in the fall term. (Link: <https://www.barcelona.cat/lamerce/en>)

PS: There will be free entry for most attractions in different dates and time. Just check the website for information.

October

I visited Portugal with my friends for a few days. There was very sunny and hot there. Nata is a must-try! There might not a lot of things to see there but it would be a great place for sight-seeing and relaxation.

November

I visited Rome and Venice in Italy, and Vatican with my friends. Definitely recommend visiting Rome and Vatican while Venice to me is just too touristy. The food in Rome is very good, Authentic Carbonara and Tiramisu are must-try. I would recommend everyone to visit the Vatican Museum, St. Peter's Basilica and Borghese Gallery in Rome.

If you are an art lover, I would also recommend walking around the city and tracking down all the Bernini statues and paintings in Rome and Vatican. You can see them around the city. Plus, if you really like art, you might need a whole day to see through every part of the Vatican Museum as it is a large museum.

Also, remember to book the tickets in advance, at least few weeks before!

PS: Just like that in Spain, in the first Sunday, most of the attraction in Rome will be free to entry, including the Colosseum. It might help you save a lot of money if you plan your trip wisely.

December

I visited Prague for a week as my friends were exchanging in there. An interesting thing is that there are a lot of Vietnamese immigrants there, so I would recommend eating some Vietnamese cuisine there. Also, the Christmas market there is also very good. Chimney cake and honey wine are definitely must-try.

I also visited London for the new year count down. Definitely recommend watching a musical there, even though it would be quite expensive. I would recommend watching Hamilton and Phantom of the Opera. You can download the app TodayTix for cheap musical tickets. And for Hamilton, you can enter the ticket lottery for 10 pounds tickets maybe 2 weeks before the show. For Phantom of the Opera, there will be on-the-day tickets at 10 am every day which cost 20 pounds only.

January

I went to Cologne in Germany for a few days. There is not much to do in Cologne, so two days would be enough. Cologne is the origin of cologne (the perfume), so there is the Farina Duftmuseum, the oldest cologne brand in the world. There is a guided tour which costs around 5 or 9 euros. But make sure to book in advance because there will not be English tours every day. You should also try the Currywurst there. It is simple yet very delicious.

Visa Procedures

As a Hong Kong permanent resident, I got my visa pretty quickly. I applied for the study visa few weeks before my flight.

Link:

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

Key points:

- Insurance provided by HKUST will not be accepted

I bought the ESADE campus insurance and make sure to do it in advance because it will take some time for the official insurance documents to be issued. Also, you will need the insurance document to get the acceptance letter from ESADE (which is also needed for you visa application). The university's insurance will take a long time to be issued. Therefore, I suggest you to just buy an insurance on your own.

- It's easier to print out everything

Even though you can submit the documents you are missing via email after the application, I still think it will be easier to just print out everything and let the person in charge to filter the useful documents for you.

- Better to buy your flight in advance and include it in your visa application

It is listed as optional in the study visa application requirement. But the person in charge took it. PS, I also bought the return ticket.

- For HK permanent resident, print out your HKID card as well

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- For me, not printing every page of the passport is not needed

Listed in the previous report, you need to print out every page of the passport but in my case they just took the personal information page.

- Remember to reserve appointment in advance

I'll recommend you to check it out at least a few weeks before.

- You can ask the person in charge on how to fill the application form

So if you are not sure on some items, just leave it blank first.

- Make request of the bank statement from the bank in advance

You will need 3 months of bank statement as your proof of financial means. It will take around a few weeks for it to be delivered to you from the bank. Also, the bank employees (HSBC) would say you can also print it on your own as it would be basically the same, but I still make the request just to be safe.

Orientation Activities

Only one campus orientation talk was held. There were mingling session, walking tour around the campus, tips in living in Spain (like how to prevent theft, how to buy transportation card, etc). It lasted around a few hours.

Some might recommend taking the Spanish Intensive course. Indeed, you can meet other exchange students in class. However, the course is a 5 day course and 5 hours each day. So it might be tough to catch up especially for a complete beginner. Since for the first week you will have a lot of miscellaneous stuff to do, the intensive course will be too exhausting.

However, even though the intensive course will have 1 oral and 1 writing test, the tests were easy and the tutor will help you revise thoroughly. So no need to stress out about it.

International Services & Activities

Not much is provided by the university. However, most of the office staff speak English. So getting around the campus or asking them questions will be easy.

There were quite a lot of activities and parties organized by ERASMUS. There were trips around and near Spain, particularly a trip to Morocco. Personally, I did not apply for it but there were a lot of international students going.

Accommodations

I co-rented an apartment with the other two HKUST students going to ESADE.

Remember to search online for the apartment in advance. I remembered there were also students asking in the exchange students WhatsApp group for a room or roommates but there were not many choices left a month before the semester start.

The monthly rent was quite expensive, normally it would be around 600 euros to 800 euros per person. Another thing to notice is to check out the safety level of the neighborhood as if you are travelling around, you might need to walk (maybe alone) in the middle of the night. The rent in safe neighborhoods will be expensive as most of them are affluent neighborhood. Therefore, I would also recommend the nearby neighborhoods. They are generally safe as well.

Plus, I would also recommend you search for the neighborhood on Google Maps to see if there would be metro stations, supermarkets, gyms nearby.

Links for safe neighborhood info:

- https://en.tripadvisor.com.hk/ShowTopic-g187497-i44-k2538646-Safe_neighborhoods_in_Barcelona-Barcelona_Catalonia.html
- Previous exchange reports also mentioned the neighborhood choices

Links for apartment hunting:

- <https://www.airbnb.com>
- <https://www.idealista.com/en/>
- <https://housinganywhere.com>

Another useful link for the noise map of Barcelona:

- <https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/mapes-dades-ambientals/soroll/en/>

Courses Registration

The course registration will be based on point appointed. Everyone will have the same amount of points and you can just decide the rankings of the courses you want to register and allocate the points. Don't worry if you cannot enroll in the courses you want. There will be a second round, which is on first-come-first-served basis.

Teaching & Assessment Methods

The teaching style is quite different from HKUST. ESADE will be mostly discussion based, so remember to do the readings before class. There might not be PowerPoints provided as well. However, the exams will not be very specific or technical.

Sports & Recreation Facilities

There is a gym in campus but I didn't join. I joined the VivaGym which is quite affordable, so I would recommend you to check it out. Another thing is that, movies will be cheaper on Wednesday nights and it

will cost around 8 euros, very affordable. There are films with original English audio, so no worries if you don't know Spanish.

Finance & Banking (including currency / expenses)

I would recommend you to get the Mastercard Debit card, especially if you have an euro account in your HSBC account. (Link: <https://www.hsbc.com.hk/debit-cards/products/mastercard-debit-card/>). If you do not have that or cannot apply for the debit card in time, you can still apply for a virtual debit card from Revolut. It is very convenient to use with ApplePay. (Link: https://www.revolut.com/promo/sub-shine-cs/?gclid=Cj0KCQiA3eGfBhCeARIsACpJNU-I9OYV4djERBeNFEesoyw3WdpCSx35JkOjIbc8sbRiLFCV9EPCGlaAs7-EALw_wcB). Or you can just stick with your credit cards on hand but make sure to activate the overseas usage before your flight.

Social Clubs & Networking Opportunities

There are sport teams in ESADE and there will be a experience session at the start of the semester. The sports team will also do promotion in the exchange students Whatsapp group, so just pay attention to that. If you are doing the Digital Minor electives, the professors will invite a lot of guest speakers and organize a lot of talks and activities.

Health & Safety

I have never been to the hospitals. ESADE will provide a list of doctors who speak English during the orientation talk. However, you can buy medicines easily in pharmacies which are everywhere.

Food

Spain and Catalonia have a relatively rich food culture. Other than Spanish food, you can find food from other countries easily here as well.

If you have enrolled in the course Art & Culture in Spain & Catalonia: 2000 years of beauty, the professor Alex will have a list of recommended restaurants and food around Spain for you. At the end of the semester, he would organize a farewell lunch for all exchange students, definitely recommend!

Transportation

You can buy a T-jove card, which will be discounted as half price from September. It is originally 80 euros and valid for 3 months and you can use it for unlimited times inside the specific zone.

Climate

Generally, Barcelona is quite hot and dry.

From August to October, Barcelona would be very hot and very sunny. It would be a good time to go to the beach. I believe starting from November, the weather would start to get cold. There should be heating available later that time as well. Remember to ask your landlord on how to turn on the heating since some of the heating is centrally controlled while some of them you need to turn it on yourself.

You might need time to adapt to the cold weather but after a while the would be more acceptable than that in Hong Kong. However, I still recommend you bring a down jacket since the other parts of Europe will be very cold, like Rome, Venice, Germany.

Also, generally Sant Cugat (ESADE campus) will be much colder than Barcelona, especially in the morning. And the air conditioning is quite cold inside the classroom.

Another thing is that it would be very stuffed and hot inside the train. Therefore, I would recommend you wear a t-shirt with a hoodie outside or just bring a jacket during winter.

Normally, it does not rain in Barcelona. But when it rains, it could rain quite heavily. Therefore, an umbrella might still be necessary.

Communication

Not many people in Barcelona speak perfect English, especially in residential areas. Therefore, getting to learn some Catalan (what they actually speak in Barcelona) or some Spanish would be very useful. However, I think you can still manage to communicate with Google Translate. In commercial and attraction areas, most people are able to speak English. Also, the younger generation can also speak good English in Barcelona.

Cautionary measures

In my opinion, Barcelona is generally quite safe. Luckily, I have never encountered any thefts. However, be careful of your belongings, not let it be unattended.

Items to Bring

Bring the usual items for travelling. Ask your landlord whether bedsheets, hairdryers, etc will be provided before you pack.

Notice: In January 2023, you still need to wear masks in public transport.

Useful Links & Contacts

<https://www.reddit.com/r/Barcelona/>



