

Exchange Report

ESADE Business School Barcelona, Spain

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Spring 2023
MARK & OM



1. Monthly activity log

January

I arrived in Barcelona on the 7th of January and moved into my apartment, which I shared with two other girls also exchanging at ESADE. I spent the first weekend exploring Barcelona with my flat mates. On the 9th of January, we had orientation day at ESADE, where we had a talk on student life and important information about ESADE and living in Barcelona, as well as campus tour. It was great to meet other exchange students, and there was over 200 of us this year. At the end of the week, there was another orientation gathering for exchange students at a sports bar.

For the following two weeks, I had winter intensive courses. I only took Spanish course (which has 6 sessions, each 3 hours). During weekends, I explored Barcelona with other exchange students, it was very enjoyable. I had one week off before the start of regular semester, so I travelled to France with my flat mate.



February

Spring semester started at the beginning of February. I had 7 classes per week, and since ESADE has 80% mandatory attendance requirement, it was quite a busy week. On weekends, me and my friends went to day trips to small cities nearby Barcelona, such as Girona. It is quite convenient and not expensive to travel via train. At the end of the month, I travelled to Belgium for three days with two friends from UST.

March

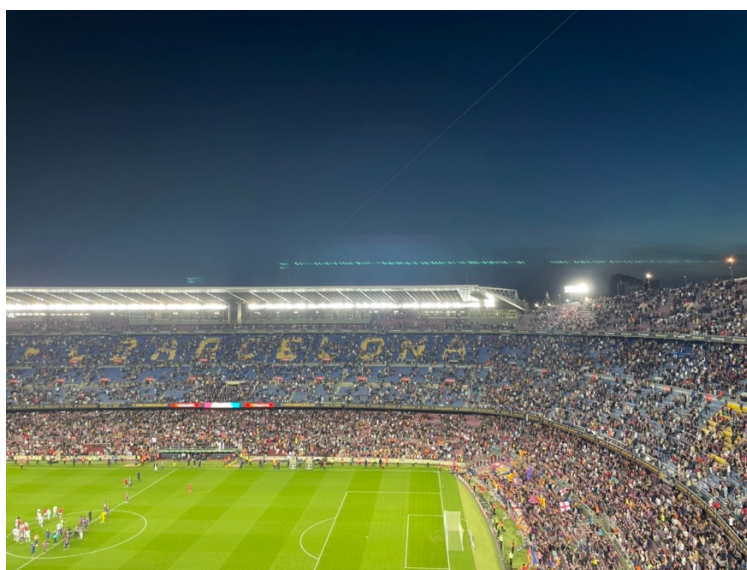
Since two of my courses only last for 6 weeks, they are ending in mid-March. I had a few project presentations and reports to hand in. During mid-March, exchange students got one week off school. My friends and I went to the South of Spain for a few days, taking buses to Malaga, Gibraltar and Granada. The weather is quite warm and sunny. At the end of the month, my friend visited Barcelona, and we went around touristy spots in Barcelona including Sagrada Familia and Tibidabo.

April

During Easter break, I travelled to London for 4 days to visit a few of my friends, it was nice to catch up with friends from high school and university. After the Easter break, it was nearing the end of the semester, I had many projects to complete. We would typically need to submit a written report and also do a presentation per course. Three of my courses also have in-class exams, they took place at the last two weeks of April.

May

After the semester ended, my friends and I gathered and we went to some places in Barcelona together, including watching a La Liga match at FC Barcelona. I went to Czech Republic and Austria with friends from Hong Kong also exchanging at ESADE, then I flew back to Hong Kong on the 14th of May.



2. General exchange information

2.1. Visa procedures

I applied for a study visa (which is a visa exceeding 90 days for studying/internships/training). The Spanish consulate website lists out all the documents you will need to submit to them, and you will have to book an appointment with the Spanish Consulate office in Hong Kong to submit your documents in person. Their office is in Wan Chai. To be safe, I will suggest making your appointment earlier (as soon as you get your acceptance letter from ESADE), as they need some time to process and approve your study visa.

2.2. Orientation activities

Before the semester, ESADE opens a WhatsApp group for all exchange students to join, and they send details of orientation events there, as well as by email. The first orientation activity was on 9th of January, where all exchange students meet up at school for welcome talks, some light snacks and a campus tour. On the 13th, there was another orientation event at a sports bar (Belushi's), followed by a clubbing event. In the first two weeks of school, there were also walking and bus tours around Barcelona, so we can learn more about the city and its history.

2.3. International Services & Activities

ESADE's activities for exchange students are all organized by CIEE (international student organization at ESADE). Apart from the orientation activities above, they also organize social activities such as pub crawl or karaoke night. Also, there is international week, where we can apply to be a host (for when other students come to Barcelona) or apply to go to another country to take part in activities organized by a partnering school.

2.4. Accommodation

There is on-campus accommodation, but most exchange students choose not to live there. The Business school is in Sant Cugat campus (which is around one hour away from Barcelona's city center), so most of us choose to live in the city center. I rented a flat in Eixample district with two other girls exchanging at ESADE. I would highly recommend living in Eixample district because it is very near the city center, easy to get to the airport and very safe. Gracia and Provenca are two other districts some of my friends lived in. We rented our flat from SH Barcelona, which was a housing agency recommended by ESADE. The price was fair although there is agency fees.

2.5. Course registration

ESADE uses a bidding system for course registration. During the first round, you will choose courses and allocate points to them based on preference. There will be a detailed guide on how this works sent via email. You will then be enrolled in your courses, and there will be a change round (kind of like add drop, where you can change your courses). The first round is in mid- November and the change round in late December.

2.6. Teaching & assessment

In January, ESADE have intensive courses which are only 2-3 weeks long, but have classes every day or almost every day (kind of like winter or summer semester in UST). In the regular semester, the courses last between 6-10 weeks, and each lecture lasts 2.5 hours with break in between.

As for assessment methods, it is similar to UST- they have group projects, report, quiz or exam. It is important to note that ESADE's courses generally have 80% attendance requirement for pass, and the professors put a lot of emphasis on participation in class.

2.7. Finance & Banking

I did not open a bank account in Spain. I applied for HSBC's world debit card, and used that to pay rent and also for most of my daily expenses in Spain and in travel. I also brought a sufficient amount of Euros in cases some restaurants or stores do not take card (but almost all do take card).

You may get cash in ATM machines around the city, but they do take a small fee for the service each time you use the machine.

2.8. Climate

The coldest period was January and February. In the daytime, it was around 10-15 degrees, but at early morning or night, it is much colder, at 0-5 degrees. From mid-march until May, it is much warmer – around 20 degrees during the day. However, there is still temperature difference after the sun sets. Barcelona's weather is great, me and my friends all quite like it. It is rarely rainy, and the sky is almost always blue.

2.9. Health & Safety

My flatmates and I all brought some medicine from Hong Kong, so when we felt sick we mostly took our own medicine instead of visiting a health center or hospital. However, there are also lots of pharmacies, so you can get medicine there too.

As for safety, although Barcelona is known for pickpocketing, I think in general I felt quite safe, especially after I got more familiar with the city. I personally never got pick-pocketed but have heard of cases where my friends lost their phone or wallets. It is important to be alert when you are alone or it is late at night. In general, people in Barcelona are out till quite late, even in 11pm or 12am there are still a decent amount of people on the streets, so I did not feel unsafe.

2.10. Food

There is a lot of restaurants in Barcelona. Local food and tapas places are open until late at night, as Spanish people eat dinner quite late. There are also lots of Asian restaurants, although they are generally on the expensive side (expect 10-20 euros/ person/ meal).

My flat mates and I cooked a lot. There were a few large supermarkets near my accommodation (Lidl, Aldi, Bonpreau etc.), and the supermarkets are everywhere in the city.

2.11. Transportation

I bought the T-jove card (40 euros which gives you three months of access to the metro and buses in Barcelona). It was a really convenient arrangement. To get to the airport, you could either take the metro or the Aerobus (express bus from city centre to airport). The Aerobus is not included in the T-jove's plan.

For travelling, flight tickets can be very cheap (less than 20 euros for a ticket is possible!). The airlines me and my friends take the most are Ryanair, Vueling (a Spanish airline) or Easyjet.

2.12. Communication

I got my SIM Card from Vodafone once I landed in Barcelona. They have 10 Euro monthly plans which give you 40 GB per month. However, it is important to note only 10 GB can be used out of Spain (so if you are travelling more during that month, you may consider buying a 15- or 20-euro plan).

As for communication with locals, most of them know very basic English. I would suggest learning some basic phrases to help with communication (even if you don't remember how to say the whole sentence, it helps a lot if you can catch a phrase they are saying). In general, people in Barcelona are very friendly and are willing to help.

2.13. Sports and recreation facilities

ESADE's Sant Cugat campus is quite small. There are two main academic buildings, where we have all our classes at. As for food options on campus, there are two cafeterias and a food truck. There is also a library and a gym. The gym offers student plans.

2.14. Social clubs & Networking opportunities

Personally I did not join any clubs at ESADE, most of my friends did not do so either. A course I took which has great networking opportunities was Consulting Academy- I would highly recommend this course to anyone considering a career in consulting. The set up was that in each lecture, a speaker from a consulting firm would give us a lecture about consulting or share their experience. The professor was a former consultant from Deloitte, and he had many industry connections- we had sharings from consultants at top consulting firms.

2.15. Cautionary measures

The most important thing is to be careful of your belongings- pickpocketing is quite common, as Barcelona is a very touristy city.

3. Items to bring

- HKID, Passport, Visa
- Bank card
- Portable phone charger
- Euros (cash)
- Backpack (suggest a larger one so you can bring for short trip)
- Luggage
- Medicine
- Clothing & 1-2 thicker jackets

4. Useful links

Spanish Consulate website on student visa

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

Erasmus website (student organization organizing parties/ activities for international students)

- Can see their blog posts on travelling, life in Barcelona and tips to settle in

<https://www.erasmusbarcelona.org/post/find-accommodation-in-barcelona-for-erasmus-students>

CIEE (international student organization at ESADE) website

<https://marewebs.wixsite.com/finalciee>

Omio (to check train/bus/airline prices, and for ticket booking)

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