

Mañana, mañana

by Maximilian Ast

General information

I was chosen to go on exchange at la Universidad Autónoma de Madrid for the fall semester of 2015 (Block 1 & 2). I arrived on the 31st of August 2015 and returned right before christmas, on the 22nd of December.

Preparation

Given that I am a EU citizen, there were no visa issues or anything similar that I had to worry about. So really the only thing I had to arrange before leaving to Madrid was to find housing. This, however, turned out to be quite challenging. After weeks of searching, I decided to book a room in advance at an agency called *Erasmus Flat*. The room cost 690€ incl. and I certainly enjoyed some benefits with this room, e.g. my own bathroom, a cosy french balcony facing the idyllic court yard and a superb location (Calle de Fuencarral, one of Madrid's most famous streets in terms of shops and culinary offers). Do yourself a favor, though, and DO NOT book a room in advance. I definitely paid too much despite of all the benefits mentioned before. I had friends with accommodation that was just as good for less money. Moreover, your room does not even need any luxurious extras as you will spend most of your time being outside anyways. If I could do it again, I'd book a Hostel room for 1-2 weeks and then team up with friends you will have already made by then so that you can look for something together. Main advantage of this is obviously that you can visit the place before signing anything. Recommendations from my side concerning good locations: Malasaña (my barrio!), Chueca, Salamanca, Sol. Just keep in mind that you have to take the train from Sol Metro Station to get to uni, so you don't want to live too far from Sol. The train takes exactly 20 minutes.

One thing I'd totally recommend figuring out in advance, though, is booking your transportation card online via an agency called *Citylife Madrid*. You waste a tremendous amount of time waiting in line at the tobacco stores to get that card. So trust me on that, definitely get it before so that you can start exploring Madrid right away without having to wait 1-2 weeks to get your card.

You should actually check out *Citylife Madrid* for any kind of information regarding Madrid. They do an amazing job at helping you out, whether that is getting you a sim card, giving you descriptions on the different neighborhoods in Madrid, or, as already said, booking your transportation card.

Arrival

My arrival was pretty smooth and stress-free. I arrived at my flat in the evening and already met a couple of my roommates. The day after, I went to the *Citylife Madrid* office to pick up my transportation card. I can't even explain what happened in the beginning, but you are just automatically caught up in all different kinds of introduction parties and events offered by the various exchange student agencies that are located in Madrid. You pretty much can't get around meeting new people and having fun. My university's ESN committee also organized an introduction week with lots of cool things to do, e.g. siesta in Retiro Park, visiting museums, and, of course, parties. I'd honestly recommend to go to any event you come across - you have all the time in the world during that phase, so seize every opportunity you get to dive right into the best experience of your life!

Courses

Title: 18256 - Economic and financial history (421)

A course on the history of finance and monetary policies. Mainly about important events and turning points in history, for example the golden standard and the financial crises. It was a very easy, yet interesting course.

ECTS credits: 6.00

Title: 18269 - Derivates markets (431)

If you ever wanted to learn about forwards, futures, swaps, options, etc. then this is your course! It's very mathematical and quite interesting since you learn about things that are actually applied in reality. We had two exams (worth 50% respectively) and they were certainly not easy! You should definitely study enough, this course is no breeze.

ECTS credits: 6.00

Title: 18270 - International corporate finance (431)

This course has nothing to do with the finance 1 course you have in IBEB second year. Main topics of this course were cross-exchange rates (FX market in general), interest rates, arbitrage opportunities, and a bit about financial instruments. I found this course very poorly organized and chaotic. The professor was often poorly prepared and in general the study material and exercises were not really clear so that it was difficult to study for exams. In short, I would not take it again.

ECTS credits: 6.00

*Notice that I only took three courses. I could only do that because I already took a minor in second year.

Finances

My monthly expenses included...

Housing: 690€

Transportation card: 20€

Gym membership: 20€

Mobile phone costs: 20€

Costs of living: 500-600€

Total: Around 1200-1300€

The Erasmus Grant definitely helped in living life more lavishly. I must say though, that you could easily live well in Madrid with 200-300€ less per month. Especially on accommodation you could and should spend less than me.

Daily life

I was actually looking forward to write this part and beginning to write it puts a big fat smile on my face. But now I am realizing that this is quite hard because... Where do I begin?

I had never been to Madrid before and the city absolutely blew my mind.

Spanish life is happening in the streets - everyone is outside, everyone stays up late, restaurants and bars are packed no matter what day of the week it is. Madrileños certainly know how to enjoy life. And it won't take long for you to figure out how either. It is that special vibe and charme the city pours on, which will immediately get you hooked. You just worry less and seize the day by hanging out with friends at the numerous amazing places that are to be explored in Madrid. That could be a laid-back afternoon followed by a beautiful sunset in Retiro Park, a couple of beers at one of the many cosy plazas, or enjoying the amazing Spanish food. Oh and have I mentioned that you will wake up to fabulous weather more than 95% of times?

It sounds cheesy, but studying in Madrid for this one semester was hands down the best time of my life. And I surely wish I could live it all over again. Make the most out of it! So that you have as much to reminisce as I do.