

Yo soy Madrileña

General Information

I did my semester abroad at the Universidad Carlos III de Madrid (UC3M) in Spain. I had to do my exchange in the fall semester in order to avoid any study delay. The exams in Madrid were in January but a lot of exchange students ask to take them in December because they need to be back in January. Even though my classes already started in Rotterdam I decided to stay in Madrid and take my exams in January. I didn't have any class obligations in Rotterdam so for me that wasn't a problem. I would advise you to check beforehand if you are able to stay and take exams in January because at UC3M only international exchange students are supposed to take exams in December. But a lot of teachers do make exceptions for Erasmus students.

Preparation

Since Spain is in the European Union I didn't have to do any legal paperwork to live in Madrid. After being accepted to UC3M I needed to fill in an online application and after a couple of weeks I got my admission letter. After that they told me they need a copy of my passport and insurance card. They sent me an email with a link to their website with clear instructions on what to do before arrival, during arrival and when leaving. So make sure you read that so you are prepared. Also before going I needed to fill in my learning agreement and both my university and Host University needed to sign it. Also in order to receive the Erasmus grant you need to fill in some paperwork. In order to receive an extra 90 euros a month I stopped my public transportation card. You need to fill in a form that needs to be signed by the exchange coordinator. Make sure you stop the card the day that you leave at one of the machines otherwise you won't receive the money.

Before going I was already looking for rooms because I wanted to have a room when I arrived. A lot of people stay in hostels and look for a room when they arrive. That way you can see different rooms and decide if you like the neighborhood. I was looking on Madrideas and Erasmusu. I knew that I didn't want to stay on campus because the campus is 1 hour away from the city. I feel like if you are going to such a lively city you should stay in the city center. But if you are looking for really cheap accommodation, between 200 and 300 euros, the Getafe campus would be best for you. I finally found a room in a student complex through Madrideas.

If you are looking for a room in the city center I recommend the following neighborhoods, the first being the best: Sol (in the heart of Madrid), Malasaña (hipster neighborhood), Chueca (gay neighborhood), La latina, Atocha (near the train station), Salamanca (rich neighborhood). Malasaña, Chueca and La latina have a big variety of nice restaurants, café's and bars. I

Arrival

When I arrived I already had my room so I didn't have to worry about that. The first thing I did is I got a prepaid phone card at Orange. You can find Orange everywhere in the center. Also what is really important to do as soon as you can is to arrange your public transportation card. You need to pay 20 euros every month and you have unlimited use of the metro and trains. You will need this because you will need to take the train from Sol to go to Getafe. There are 2 ways you can do this. Either make an appointment online or go to certain tobacco stores really early to avoid a line and get it right away. I tried going to a tobacco store twice but the line was too long (I would have to at least wait 3 hours). I decided to make an appointment online and got it for a week later.

The university had an orientation day where they inform you about everything of the University. If you want you can sign up for a buddy before arriving in Madrid and on the day of the orientation you will meet your buddy and other students in your group. I highly recommend this as you will meet a group of 10 people that are also on exchange. On the same day you will see a stand of the Erasmus Student Network. I decided to sign up even though there was a long line but I made some great friends waiting in that line. ESN organizes around 4 trips and also has activities almost everyday. This is the best way to meet other exchange students.

Courses

You choose your courses and then you have 1 week to change the ones you don't like. Make sure to be ready to sign up for the courses when it starts. Even though I did this I still didn't get some courses I wanted to take because the system crashed because of the high activity. Before choosing your courses check online how the course is put together. Most courses have assignments and midterms and a final exam.

My courses:

Introduction to Sociology- 6 ECTS: This was a really fun and interesting course. The teacher was very good. If you keep up with the class work and read the book it is easy to pass.

Game Theory- 6 ECTS: This was actually a very hard class. It is not a fun class to have on exchange. You need to make sure you keep up with the class work.

Auditing Financial statements- 6 ECTS: I really liked this course because it really interested me. There were a lot of assignments so if you do your best on these assignments you already have a lot of points before making your final exam.

Introduction to patrimonial law- 6 ECTS: I took this course in Spanish because it fit perfectly in the schedule I wanted. It was definably an interesting course but it requires a lot of reading. There are 2 assignments and 2 midterms.

You need a 5.0 to pass most of the courses so it is not really hard. I will incorporate these courses in my elective space.

Finances

Budget:

Room: 400

Groceries: 80

Social life: 300

Transport: 20

Mobile phone: 20

Sport facility: 30

Travel costs: 200

Total: 1050

Daily life

Madrid is such a beautiful and lively city. There is so much to do. There are a lot of great restaurants, bars and clubs. The weather in Madrid is really nice. It is very easy to move around in Madrid. I like to walk everywhere. But you can also take the metro, which is very simple to understand. I lived in a house with 13 other people, which was really nice because I made some really great friends. I definitely recommend living with a lot of people during your exchange. There is always someone who is up for doing something. We cooked together, went out or to the movies together. It was an incredible experience.

Also in the weekend I traveled to different cities in Spain. Madrid is in the center of Spain so it is easy to go to the south and the north. I used the bus and blablacar to travel in Spain. The bus is cheap compared to the trains but it takes a lot longer. BlaBlacar is cheaper than the bus but you will have to take a ride with strangers. I also went on trips with ESN which was really fun.