

“Madrid me mata”

General Information

I studied from September 2015 until January 2016 at Universidad Carlos III de Madrid. This university was my first choice, so I was happy when I received the confirmation that I was assigned to Madrid. I chose for Madrid because of several reasons. I was curious about the way of life of the Spanish people and was eager to learn a new language. On top of that, they said Madrid is a lively city and the climate is astonishingly beautiful. The central location of Madrid was also a favorable aspect of the city.

Preparation

Because of the fact that Madrid is located in Europe, the preparations are not that extensive. There is a clear guide on the UC3M website which guides you through all the stages of your exchange (before, during and after). Basically, it comes down to arranging your learning agreement and sending a copy of your identity card or passport. So it will not be that much of a struggle.

These preparations will not take that much time, but I would strongly recommend spending some more time on finding a nice accommodation. As life in Spain is mostly outdoors, you should not select your accommodation based on the furniture etcetera. The location is all that matters. Universidad Carlos III de Madrid is located in Getafe, a city to the south of Madrid. It will take you about 45 minutes to travel to the university if you live in the centre. This may sound as a serious problem, but I would recommend finding an accommodation in the city centre. Living in the centre brings a lot of advantages compared to living on the campus. As I mentioned before, Madrid is a city in which most of the people spend loads of time outdoors, especially in the city centre. So if you want to taste the real Spanish lifestyle, you should take part in this. On top of that, every activity in Madrid is shifted more or less two hours later in the day (compared to the Netherlands) so if you are not living in the centre, it will give you some trouble going back home.

Arrival

At the time you arrive in Madrid, first thing you have to arrange is transport to your accommodation (hostel/apartment). The best way to do this, is taking a metro. The metro system in Madrid is quite extensive and works efficiently (which is atypical Spanish). The next things to do are getting a public transport card (is called an ‘Abono’) and a phone contract. It is not necessary to get a Spanish bank account. **Bear in mind that the Spanish people are really bad in speaking English, so it is really useful to learn some easy Spanish sentences by heart.**

Courses

1. Game Theory (6 ECTS)

This course gives an introduction to the concepts of game theory. There is every week one lecture of 2 hours and one workgroup of 2 hours. There is some mathematics involved, but in general I am tempted to say that this course is quite easy. The topics are not that hard and the amount covered each lecture is small. You can take the exam in December.

2. Marketing (6 ECTS)

This course is a bit more advantageous, as it covers both marketing related topics as some consumer behavior. The buildup of the course is the same as for Game Theory: a 2 hour lecture and a 2 hour workgroup. This course is a bit harder though. Despite the relative hardness of the course, I would strongly recommend this course because of the teacher. I have hardly seen such a dedicated and passionate teacher. The classes are very interactive. You can take the exam in December.

3. Regional and Urban Economics (6 ECTS)

This course consists basically of understanding the structure of cities. There are 2 lectures each week of 2 hours. Attendance is not compulsory, but if you do not attend classes, it will downgrade your final grade. This course is extremely easy. You can take the exam in December.

4. Financial Systems and Institutions (6 ECTS)

This is an interesting course during which you will get a better view of the financial systems. Every week consists of one lecture of 2 hours and a workgroup of 2 hours, during which you have to work on an assignment. This course is the hardest of these four, partly because the exam questions are really randomly chosen of all the subjects covered during the course. The exam can be taken in December.

5. Spanish Intensive course (4 ECTS)

During this course you will improve your Spanish skills dramatically. It starts two weeks before the semester starts so it is a really nice way of starting your period abroad. You will meet loads of people who are in the same position as you are (on your own, in an unknown, big, big city). In total this course takes 40 hours.

Finances

Despite the fact that the prices are relatively low at supermarkets etcetera in Madrid, you will be spending heaps of money. Because you are on exchange..

Monthly costs:

- Rent 470
- Public Transport 40
- Mobile Phone 20
- Daily Life 700
- Trips 200

Daily life

My period in Madrid has been an intriguing experience. It differed in a lot of aspects completely from life in The Netherlands. Where in The Netherlands everything has to be done exactly on time, are the people in Spain way more flexible. Having stress is a very uncommon thing and the Spanish vocabulary there is no space for a word like 'hurry'. On top of that, the Spanish people are really friendly and are great cooks. Being in such an environment will influence you for sure! I would truly recommend this great, safe, lively city to everybody.

Feel free to contact me if you got any questions.

Eric van Engelen