

The only sad thing of the exchange in Buenos Aires it was that we knew it had to finish.

I have been in exchange for four months, between August and December 2015, in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The University was called "Universidad de Buenos Aires, which is the biggest public University in the city.

Preparation

Before leaving for the exchange there are few things to arrange but nothing really complicate. Because all the courses and exams are in Spanish it is required the level B2 of Spanish. It is possible to show any certificate even from online courses. In addition, many people that did not have the certificate managed to be accepted anyway by showing certificate or enrollment in Spanish classes of a lower level, and by showing willingness of putting effort in order to get to the level for the beginning of the exchange. Few more documents are required as the transcript of grades, personal health insurance, copy of passport etc. They all have to be in Spanish but I translated everything by myself without paying any translator and they accepted them. It takes a bit of time but it allows you to save a lot of money. What is more, as European it was not require to do anything for the student visa before the arrival in Argentina. There are few appointments to attend after the arrival in order to get the student visa, which is required to approve the exams. Anyway everything will be explained with email from the secretary and the responsible for the international relation, Alexia is available to clarify any doubt about the process.

Arrival

Personally I did not look for any accommodation in advance, as I did not know anything about the city, rent prices etc. So I booked a hostel for few days and I started to look for an accommodation after the arrival. From my experience and the story of some friends it is not too difficult to find a room after the arrival, with some effort a couple of weeks should be enough to find a nice place. In addition, before the beginning of the courses the University organizes drinks and activities for the exchange students. Hence, these are very good opportunities to meet other exchange students, having advices about houses and maybe even start to look for a house with some of them. I rented a house with Thibault the other exchange student from the Erasmus University and other two exchange students I met after the arrival, one in the hostel and the other one at a drink with the Uni. If you prefer to get a room before the arrival, Recoleta and Palermo are the two places where almost all the exchange people live. I was at border of the two, exactly at the metro station Aguero. It was perfect as I was 10 minutes walking from the University and 30 minutes walking from Palermo where there are many restaurants, pubs and clubs. If you want to be really close to the nightlife a place between Plaza Serrano and the metro station Plaza Italia is ideal.

Courses

I went in exchange for studying but even to travel and discover the country. So I did not choose the most difficult courses. I took Geografia Economica, Estructura Sociale Argentina and Topicos de Microeconomia. The first two they were interesting as they allowed me to have a deeper knowledge about the country, its characteristics and development. The last one it was a very interesting course about Microeconomics and Behavioral Economics. The professor is also very good. These three courses did not have mandatory attendance to classes but I went almost to every class as it is very helpful in understanding the material and become more confident with the terminology in Spanish.

Classes start at the end of August and they finish between half of November and half of December. It is very important to know that the pass grade is a 4 and there are midterms for most of the courses. Frequently if you pass the midterms with an average of 7 you do not have to do the final exam so it is possible to finish earlier.

The academic year there is divided is divided into two semester and you can take 4 courses per semester so 8 per year. ECTS credits do not exist so you have to follow the guideline from the ESE to compute the conversion of credits. I am still waiting for the transcript of grades that should arrive soon and than I will write to the examination board for the conversion.

In general professors are really nice with exchange students, they consider the difficulties due to the language when grading the exams and in case a student have particular needs they always try to help. It is also important to remember that the same subjects with different professors are completely different. Anyway you will receive a file when you will be asked to subscribe for the courses with feedback for all the courses and professor from students of previous years.

Finance

Life is cheaper than in Europe, but the exchange rate continue to change and last year there was 30% inflation so costs of living can be very different from one year to the other. During my exchange I spent 320 euro per month for the rent, inclusive with a cleaning lady that came once per week. This was considered a good price for the area. Other exchange students paid more or less between 550 and 200 euros per month for the rent. 550 for very good houses, sometimes even with a small swimming pool, garden and barbecue in good positions. 200 euro for houses a bit outside the neighborhood of Recoleta and Palermo, in a double room.

A dinner costs between 15 and 25 euro. 25 euros is the price for the very best restaurant, as Don Julio and La Cabrera that I strongly suggest.

Public transports are super cheap, I paid around 20 cent per run and the price of the taxi is around 3,5 euro to move around the city center.

For sport facilities I paid 50 euro per month for gym, swimming pool and boxing classes.

The price of food in the supermarket is more or less like in Europe, just the read meat that is super cheap. I paid 6,50 euro per kg for the best steaks.

Daily life

Living in the city center is similar to Europe and it is safe. While if you wish to go outside the city center is better be really careful and ask to some Argentina whether it is a good idea as there are some very poor and dangerous area. In the city center on average there is a good organization, and public transports work well. Just the traffic that is quite crazy, the first time will get a taxi you might get a bit impressed but you will get used soon.

I personally believe that the city is incredible, dynamic and vibrant, you can really do everything you want and there are many festivals and activities going on all the time. People are very welcoming, and with Latin charm. I enjoyed every moment of the period there. What is more, if you are not vegetarian and you like read meat you will get crazy with all the barbecue, "parilla" or "asado" as they call it there. You will have it at least one per week. Most of the houses have a barbecue on the balcony or terrace.

The Universidad de Buenos Aires is more or less well organize, it is a bit different with respect to what we are use in the Erasmus as there is no interaction with students during the class, slides are rare and professors explain for two hours without breaks. It is going to be really useful to ask advices about the relevant material and summaries to some Argentinian in the class.

Furthermore, if you organize your study well you will have time for travelling and there are incredible places to visit. I have been travelling around Argentina and Uruguay and I had awesome experiences. After the end of the courses I could not stay in the continent a long time so I did not travel around the other countries but many people go in Chile, Peru, Bolivia and Brazil. They all have very good time.

I would also advice in case you are interested in the Dele certificate of Spanish, which is the only one recognized internationally to take it in Buenos Aires. I tried the C1 level at the end of the exchange and it cost me approximately 50 euros. Doing the same certificate in the Netherlands costs around 230 euro so it is really a good deal.

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