

Exchange Barcelona 2015 Student Report

General information

University: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona
Location: Bellaterra, this town is approximately 30 km away from the centre of Barcelona
Period: September 2015 – January 2016

Preparation

I chose this university because I wanted to visit Spain and I wanted to learn Spanish besides my regular courses. I ended up with the University of Barcelona. This University is situated not in the city of Barcelona but approximately 30 km away from the centre. At the university they have a university campus with 2700 beds available for bachelor and master students.

The first thing to arrange was a room, as a VISA was not mandatory for me because I have a Dutch Nationality. You have to make a decision between renting a room in the city centre of Barcelona or at the Campus next to the University. Both have (dis) advantages. First there is the distance between the university and the city life of Barcelona. By train it will cost you around 40 minutes travel before you reach the city centre. You have to decide if it is worth being quite far away from the city centre. For me it was not a problem because I took my car there so the distance was not one of the problems I had, as by car it is 20 minutes.

Partly based on the fact that I went by car, I decided to rent a room at the Campus. This turned out to be a really good choice. The advantages are, that you save a lot of time searching for a room in Barcelona which is a disaster as there are so many people that want this and there are really not that many rooms available. Another positive point is that the university is less than two minutes walking from the Campus. They are literally situated next to each other.

Besides being far away from the city centre of Barcelona there are some downsides of living at the Campus. The rooms are very old and neglected. This is due to the fact that the buildings were built for the 1992 Olympic Games. Since then not much has changed. There are three types of rooms you can choose from. 1-person rooms (I took this room because then you do not have a roommate but it will cost double (545 euro per month), there are 3-person rooms and 5-person rooms, the bedrooms of these 3 and 5 person rooms are not private!

I could keep on writing for hours about the condition of the Campus but I must conclude that this is only a minor issue. The Campus has a lot of advantages versus a room in the city centre. There are so many exchange students at the Campus that there is always something to do, swimming pool, bar, restaurants, football field, tennis fields and so on. Especially the daily activities were superb! Every day there were activities, which could be a party at the bar or a daytrip to the mountains or to cities. All activities are quite cheap! I even went to Marrakech in Morocco as an organised trip. Of course there are positive things about living in the city centre or at Barceloneta beach. But the people you will meet at the campus, the activities they organise and the things you do in combination with the campus are really nice and worth it.

Before I forget, make sure your health care insurance is also valid in Spain. Sometimes it is not automatically for countries outside your own country.

Arrival

Take in mind that Spanish people in general are very slow. Not just at the bank (you have to have a Spanish bank account in order to rent a room at the campus) but also at the information desks at the university and at the Campus. Make sure that if you have a deadline, let's say you have to pay an amount for a trip or something like that, make sure you give them enough time to administrate.

If you arrive in Spain, I can imagine you do not go by car, from the airport it is very easy to find the Campus and university, as there is a train station right next to them. If you are renting a room at the campus, in order to pay you have to have a Spanish bank account. You can get this at the main square at the university. If you open a bank account at Catalunya Caixa you do not need a NIU number (the equivalent of a Dutch BSN number). This saves you a lot of trouble getting this number. In the emails you get after application of the University and the Campus it is quite easy to follow these steps. First thing is going to the International Welcome Point at the University to make your Exchange official. From there it will be obvious what to do. Also at the campus they arrange information meetings. During these meetings they provide you with all the information you need. These meetings are also nice because they are often the first opportunity to meet new people!

Courses

Before I chose my courses I spoke to two people that already went to the UAB in order to speak to them about the courses. For me it was very important that the exams ended before the beginning of the third semester at the Erasmus University because then my courses started that I had to follow. If you choose the courses that are explained below you have the opportunity to do the 'early exams'. These early exams are extra opportunities for the exchange students, as a lot of students have to go back at the beginning of January instead of after the normal exams in the middle of January. *(I am not responsible if they do not have this opportunity anymore, obviously)*

-Economic policy (6 ECTS points)

This class was about economic policy. The content of this course was not really hard to study. There were readings every week and you had to hand in one handwritten page summarizing the reading. These homework handwritten readings were 30% of the total final grade so worth handing these in. Attendance and effort was 10% but the teacher didn't take attendance. There was a true/false mid-term and a final exam, both they counted for 30%.

-European economic integration (6 ECTS points)

This course was about the integration of countries to the European Union, especially countries in the south of Europe. The same teacher of the course Economic Policy gave this course. The grading's are nearly exactly the same except that the midterms are 35% instead of 30% and the readings to hand in where 20%.

-Foreign trade (6 ECTS points)

This class focused on why and how countries trade and on how the processes of exporting and importing goods work. There was a group project with presentations and everybody had to do an individual project. These two projects counted for 35% of the final grade.

-Labour law (6 ECTS points)

This course was about the concepts like employer, employee and contract. You learn about regulations and laws concerning employment relationships especially in Spain. There were three midterm tests for a total of 50% of your grade and a final exam. Which was an exam based on open questions.

Finances

The expenses you have are:

- Rent 545 euro (I paid 545 euro per month for a one-person room at the campus, there are cheaper alternatives)
 - Public transport, a return into the city is around 4 euro. So make the calculation yourself.
 - Food, fun and excursions, these are not cheap. If you want to have a really good time it is not mandatory to spend a lot of money but things like excursions to Morocco are going to be costly.
 - Spanish Course and all other expenses depend on your own interests.
- Per month my total expenses were around 1200 euros. This was partly because I had my own car and made lots of trips with people I met.
- Optional are a Spanish phone number and a gym subscription but this is also not mandatory.

Daily life / Advice

Barcelona is a really nice city. There are a lot of things you can do. If you stay in a room at the campus the activities also take you to the nice places of the city. Public transport is well arranged. Make sure you buy the right ZONE-ticket. Barcelona works with zones.

I end this student report with a couple of advices:

- If you want to rent a room in the city, do it quick as there are limited spaces.
- If you rent a room at the campus (<https://www.uab.cat/web/vila-universitaria-home-1241074134636.html>) make sure you arrive on time and not in the weekends. They are not open every weekend. It would be a pity if you arrive when they are closed.
- Do not get irritated about the quality of the rooms. They are old. You now know this in advance.
- Be well prepared before you leave, otherwise you have to buy a lot of things.
- Be aware of the pickpockets in the city. I have seen it happen a couple of times.
- **Apply for the Facebook groups! There is a lot of information on these pages.**
- **Enjoy!!**