

Vamos a Madrid!

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From September to December 2016 I was given the opportunity to study Economics at Universidad Carlos III de Madrid in Spain. While the university is located in the Madrid urban region, it is actually situated in Getafe (Social Sciences) and L egan es (Engineering etc.).

The first important preparation were the many required forms. Fair warning: this may take a while. Nothing in Spain is known for its speedy procedures, so bear that in mind when the deadlines are coming up. Meanwhile I was also looking for accommodation. I started searching in August, which in hindsight might have been a bit too late, since the number of options I had to choose from had already diminished quite a bit. I found quite a lovely room in a student flat in the center of Madrid with Uniplaces, which turned out to be great in both house and location. It was a bit further from the university itself, but very manageable (40 min door-to-door).

If you're from the EU, you don't have to worry about getting a visa. UC3M does however required that you are insured for the costs in case you should die, apart from regular European health insurance. So you will need some kind of travel insurance that covers that.

Another thing I'd advise you to do in advance is arranging your transport card. If you're under 26 years old you can get unlimited public transport in and around Madrid for 20 euros a month, but you need a transport card, which can take a while. You can order it online for 4 euros, or get it at a desk (with appointment) for 4 as well. Scheduling appointments can be done around a week in advance.

I arrived in Madrid at the end of August and, even though I would have been able to move in directly, I spent a week in an AirBnB with my mother as a kind of holiday. After that week, I moved in into my flat, which I shared with 8 other international students.

Courses

I took 4 courses while in Madrid. They also offer a Spanish language course, but sadly enough all of those interfered with my course schedule. Bear in mind that some courses have mandatory attendance (or weekly tests that count towards your grade). I took all English courses, but if your Spanish is good enough there's even more available courses in Spanish. The courses I took were:

- Game Theory (4 ECTS): interesting course, covers quite a bit of material and can be quite mathematical as well. Definitely not the easiest course, but pretty doable. 3 midterms, which help you keep up with the material.
- Urban and Regional Economics (4 ECTS): my favorite course. Quite a good professor (Ms. Holl) who had interesting lectures and assignments. We had to write a paper as well, I did one on Rotterdam. Weekly assignments and all lectures were mandatory.
- Economics of European Integration (4 ECTS): Good tutorial teacher, not as good of a professor. Basically International Economics, but then easier, and with a lot of EU theory added. The practical part is pretty easy, the theoretical questions on the EU are quite hard. Also wrote a paper for this course on the Greek crisis. Weekly assignments on practical questions.
- Organizational Design (4 ECTS): this is actually a business course. Lot of work in groups, sadly enough, you keep the same group, and mine wasn't very motivated. Material is interesting (lots of business cases), test is very doable.

They also offer quite a range of finance and accounting courses, for instance. All of my courses go into the exchange window the ESE offers. For the Erasmus+ scholarship you have to get 24 ECTS, so I kind of had to pass all of the courses, which I did. The level is a bit lower than at the ESE.

Finances montly:

Rent (incl utilities): 465

This is quite a lot for Madrid, but I lived right at Callao (literally), so you pay quite bit for the location as well. If you want to find something a bit cheaper, search EARLY and check Malasana, La Latina or more up north (Salamanca etc.).

Groceries: +/- 180

They have a few LIDLs there which are relatively cheap. DIA is a bit more expensive, same goes for MERCADONA (and, surprisingly, ALDI as well). Near the Uni at Getafe they have a nice Hipercor as well. I cooked almost every day (or I made enough for two days), which is cheaper than eating out etc. of course.

Fun activities (bars etc): +/- 140

Transport: 20

Abono Joven

One time Road Trip with flatmates to Sevilla and Granada was about 250 euros.

I did not have a lot of other expenses, maybe some shopping for clothes, but not a whole lot else. Most of the courses do not require you to buy any books or other material, so that saves you quite a bit as well. The cheap transport also helps. I did not change phone provider, since I could cheaply use little bit of data for WhatsApp, but I've heard Lyca and Lebera have good offers.

Incoming money:

Erasmus+ : 200

Dutch transport: 90

Dutch scholarship (stufi): 530 (basic+extra)

Arrange the Dutch stufi with DUO far in advance. Make sure to fill in that you start on the 1st of September, even if your first mandatory attendance there is on the 2nd or 3rd. This takes a long time, so plan this further ahead than I did.

Daily Life

I planned my schedule in such a way that I only had uni courses two days a week, so lots of time for fun stuff! I lived very close to the center, retiro, the palace and basically everything, so there was lots to do. I also had fun flatmates and we did a lot of stuff together, such as going to a theme park, running, organizing dinners and nights out, watching movies and series and we even went on a road trip. There's also a lot you can do with the Erasmus Students Network, such as barcrawls or city tours. The fun thing is that you meet a lot of new people this way.

Madrid is definitely a party city so going out is great. Fucking Mondays is pretty big, as well as College Nights Tuesdays and Fridays at Moondance. Some nights you can even go out and drink for free. Other nights I would suggest pregaming quite bit because drinks in the clubs are rather expensive. Midnight churros at San Gines are a must as well. Kapital is well known for its 7 floors, but my favorite club was probably Moondance, which was always filled with students.

If you're there for Halloween: prepare for a party. Joy/Kapital are fun. Visit a theme park as well (Parque de Atracciones), you won't be let down. Halloween weekend might have been the best weekend I've had in Madrid. In December we rent a car and went on a road trip with flatmates. A good way to see more of Spain. And the rest of the time? Basically, just enjoying life, studying a bit and having fun. Go to a lot of the early activities in September and you'll make new friends in no-time. Also, Duolingo can be a fun way to learn a bit of Spanish for free.

Basically, Madrid is fun, Spanish, warmer, less rain, what are you waiting for?