

Barcelona at UAB

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General Information

I have studied economics at the University Autònoma Barcelona (UAB) in the period september til february. The campus, Bellaterra, is located near the village Sabadell, about 30 minutes away from Barcelona (Spain). Autònoma is a big university, 37.000 students. On campus there are multiple shops and cafeteria and there are many events organized.

Preparation

Before leaving on exchange there were a few practical things I had to arrange. I had to stop my dutch transport card (OV) in order to attain the so-called OV-compensation. I did not have to get a visa. In july you can enroll in the courses you want to follow, however most courses were full really fast, so I decided to just fix my courses the moment I was in Barcelona at the university.

Arrival

I arrived a week prior to the beginning of my university, to look for an accommodation and to sort out the metro and train system of Barcelona. Since my university is 30 minutes away from Barcelona by train, I needed to figure out how the trains worked and I wanted my accommodation to be near the train station. I preferred to live in the big city rather than on campus of UAB, which was also a possibility.

I was looking for an apartment with three other girls, which made the search a bit difficult. Barcelona is a very popular city and most agencies ask a high agency fee on top of the rent. This is only if you are looking for a whole apartment, if you rent a single room you won't have that problem. Finding an apartment took me a week, I went to different agencies and mostly looked online at the website of Idealista. Meanwhile I stayed in an airbnb room. I found the perfect apartment, however for a higher price than I had expected before I went to the city. Idealista is the ideal site, but you have to take into account that most advertisement do not mention agency fee and extra utility costs. The four of us payed 675,- inclusive per person for our apartment and an initial agency fee of 2000,-. If you choose to live in the city and not on campus, make sure you live nearby one of the metrostations Catalunya, Provença or Gracia. This way you'll get quickly to UAB.

The UAB arranged an introduction for exchange students to their new university. At first you need to make an appointment at the International Welcome Office, where a student gives you all the information about housing, transport, health insurance and so on. Also you will have to make an appointment at the Gestio Acadèmica of the Economic faculty, where you can sort out any troubles you have with applying for your courses or if you want to change your courses. Since I did not register for any courses yet, I could fix this at the appointment. You can finish your learning agreement with the last signature of the UAB and apply for the Erasmus grant.

Also, you can choose a mentor. This is a spanish student who can show you around at UAB and/or Barcelona. For me it was really nice, because my mentor could tell me everything that was unclear and she showed me around campus.

Courses

I followed the courses Econometrics II, Economic and Management Control, General Sociology and Entrepreneurship. All of them have ECTS credits of 6 points. General Sociology is the only course that isn't given by the Economic faculty. I was kind of disappointed by the course offer, because there were nearly any courses in English from other faculties. The four courses were incorporated in my elective space (24 ECTS).

I really enjoyed the course Econometrics II, it continued on the content of Applied Statistics II, which I followed in the second year of my bachelor. The teacher was american, which was definitely a plus because the other teachers did not speak very good english.

The way of teaching in Spain is very different from I was used to at the Erasmus university. At UAB, they call it an american way of giving class, since it is much more focussed on your class participation than your actual intelligence or learning. They find it really important you show your capacities in class rather than at an exam. I needed some time at the beginning to get used to this, but eventually it was nice because I got to learn the people from my class easily.

Finance

I think you can make your exchange period as expensive as you want it to be. For me it turned out to be pretty expensive, because I went to dinner at least one time per week and went out every weekend. My rent turned out to be higher than I thought on forehand, because I was informed with the rent being around 400,-. Eventually I paid 675,- per month, which is pretty more accurate to what you would pay if you want to live in the centre.

Don't underestimate the costs and realize you will have to pay a lot in the first month. Think of your transport-card (this is 142 euros for three months), deposit for your apartment/room, a language course, etc. I bought a Spanish sim card for internet, which cost me about 20 euros each month.

Supermarkets are about the same prices as in the Netherlands, vegetables and fruits are a bit cheaper. Having dinner is in contrast way cheaper, but then again I went more often. Drinks with going out are quite expensive and most clubs ask entrance, but make friends with local promoters and you get free entrance.

Daily Life

Barcelona is the best city. The weather was really good the whole time I was there (september to february). The people are really friendly (yet lazy, manana-manana) and you have the nicest restaurants. I think the neighbourhoods El Born & Gotic are the best, however Gracia and Eixample are also good. I just spent most time in El Born and Gotic, because I lived there.

I used transport to go to UAB, but moreover I walked everything. There are a lot of nice musea you can visit and the Bunquers is a nice spot where you have a beautiful view over the city. You have a lot of great clubs to go to, either the more expensive commercial clubs like Opium/Otto Sutz/Razmattaz or more local clubs like Jamboree and Marula. I especially joined the latter. Every friday night I used to go to this place called Carabela near the beach, where my friends and I mostly sat from 18-22hr and thereafter we would go out. When I had people coming over from the Netherlands, I enjoyed hiring a scooter to see the best parts of the city in one or two days.

Don't take valuable stuff with you on the streets or when you go out! I think 50% of my friends have been robbed. Pick pockets are everywhere in Barcelona.