

Universidad Autónoma de Madrid 2016/2017: Oscar Opstal

General Information

Last year I went on exchange to Madrid in Spain. The university I studied at called Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (UAM). I stayed there for the first semester. The classes were from the 10th of September until the 23th of December. The exams took place in January.

Preparation

To go or study in Spain, you don't need a visa if you're having an EU passport. Some other things are really important to organise as preparation. It's possible to apply for the Erasmus grant. You need to fill in some forms. The Learning Agreement, the agreement between the two universities and you, has to be filled in and signed. And in case you're a Dutch student, it's possible to replace your OV-chipcard for a monthly subsidy of €100.

The contact with UAM is quite well. In time you get emails about the enrollment of the university and the sign ups for the courses. It's possible to choose courses from the second, third and fourth year. Some courses are in English but most of them are in Spanish. I chose only English courses.

After your preparation it's also time to think about housing. There are multiple sites where it's possible to prearrange a room or an apartment. Well I heard that sometimes you don't get what you expect, so I decided to move a bit earlier to Madrid to find a room. UAM is quite far from the city in the north of Madrid. With the train from Sol it's only 25 minutes so it's important to find a room near Sol.

Arrival

I took my flight from Amsterdam with KLM. If you book it more than a month before, a return will cost you around €100. I took my flight two weeks before the start of the courses. I booked an hostel for a few days and I already send some emails in advance if it was possible to arrange some visits. Most of the emails you send won't get a reply, but I arranged two visits for the first days. While I was in Madrid, I checked idealista.es a couple of times to see what was coming available. My two visits were not what I expected; too small and too expensive. During that time, many other students are searching a room. I started calling some suppliers of rooms on Idealista and planned some other visits. One of the rooms was really big and the house itself was clean and spacious. It was only a 5 minutes walk from Sol so I decided to move in. I lived with 7 other Erasmus students. I paid 470 excl. gases and electricity but it was worth it in comparison with the rooms I saw before.

In the days of your arrival, it's important to fix your transport card. It's necessary to make an appointment online at one of the transport offices. When you're 25 years old or younger, you can travel unlimited with metro, train and bus for €20 per month.

The 10th of September I had my Welcome Day at UAM. You meet some other Erasmus Students and it's important to arrange some things at the International Office to complete your enrollment. The first few weeks the ESN organises a lot of events, trips

and party's. Not only ESN, but also companies like Citylife Madrid, BeMadrid and Your Little Spain organises a lot of trips and events. Especially the first month, I would recommend to participate in as much as trips and party's as you can. There is time enough and with the amazing weather it were for me the best weeks of my Erasmus period.

Courses

Due to the fact I already finished some courses for my third year, I only needed 16 ECTS. I took 3 courses and a Spanish course, what counted for 22 ECTS. My classes were given in English.

- Economic and Financial History (6 ECTS)

This course orientates about the total history of economic and monetary policies in the whole world. It's in general about the main events and turning points in economic history. It includes a mid-term, a presentation and the final exam. The level is not really difficult, but you need to know everything.

- Macroeconomics I (6 ECTS)

This course is about the main issues in Macroeconomics; GDP, Inflation, Unemployment, Macroeconomy in the long and short run and financial markets and crises. The first few weeks it's really easy, but the last weeks it's getting difficult. The course includes two mid-terms, many homework assignments and the final exam.

- Dynamic Macroeconomics (6 ECTS)

This course was the most difficult, due to lots of mathematics and complicated economic models. In fact, the professor of this course was Dutch. He works and lives in Spain for years and makes the classes, despite the difficult economics, more interesting with his relating stories and experience about the economy in Holland and Spain. If you attend the classes and practice his explanations, it won't be a problem to pass the test.

- Spanish Course A2.1 (4 ECTS)

I really recommend subscribing for the Spanish Course. As it's really obligatory to speak some Spanish words in Madrid it's also not really difficult. The Spanish course is twice a week and at the end you need to make an assignment.

Finances

My monthly expenses

Rent	€500
Transportation	€20
Mobile Internet	€15
Grocery	€120
Social Life	€300

€945

My monthly income

Parents	€450
Grant	€220
OV subsidy	€100
Stufi loan	€100

€870

The daily life is not really expensive in Madrid. The transport costs, groceries and even restaurants are always possible for a good price. But if you want to go out, the entrance fee is almost everywhere €10/€15. Ofcourse you want to make some trips, so that will cost money too. As I am a football fan, I went to a few matches of Real Madrid and Atletico, than it's normal to pay around €50 for a match. So if you want it's possible to spend not that much during your exchange, but though you will.

Daily life

The life and social environment in Madrid is absolutely amazing. Everyone is really easy going and no one seems to stress about anything. Especially September and October, the weather was really good. When I arrived it was sometimes 38 degrees and at the end of October it was still comfortable with 20/25 degrees. In a few weeks you're already used to the Spanish way of life. Everyone lives on the streets. No matter which day of the week, every night the streets are busy and restaurants are full of Spanish people. In Holland, I'm eating dinner at 7, in Madrid I didn't ate before 9. As Madrid is the centre of Spain, it's easy to make trips to other Spanish cities and even to Portugal or Morocco, as flight tickets are really cheap. I went to Valencia with a group trip. With my roommates, we hired two cars and went to a villa in the south near Malaga. I went with the cheap and perfect bus company ALSA to Zaragoza and Barcelona. And I took a cheap flight to Marrakech and spend there some days. I will never forget these trips and they were all really amazing.

As I am playing field hockey in Holland, I took my stuff to Madrid to hope to play some hockey there. With some research I got in contact with a Spanish team that I could play hockey with. It amazed me how kind everyone was and open to help me with everything. Three times a week I played hockey with those guys and I am so happy I did it. They really became my friends and at the end of the semester it was sad to leave them. It were definitely five amazing months and I would do it all over again if I can. The months will fly by so enjoy every moment!

Don't hesitate to contact me if you have some questions: oscaropstal@hotmail.com