

Going on exchange is really an Erasmus+ ! Universidad Autónoma de Madrid – Gijs Steverink

General Information

This report is about the Erasmus Internship Program I've done at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (UAM) during the first semester of the year 2016-2017. I've arrived the 9th of September and finished my last exams the 24th of January.

Preparation

There are a number of things you have to do before you can enjoy your stay in Madrid. Before applying for this exchange you should check if you don't have any overlap in your schedule at the Erasmus University (EUR) and the UAM. You have to be aware that the lessons start in the first week of January in Rotterdam, but you have to finish your semester at the same time in Madrid. This will cause some problems if you don't plan your schedule the right way. Later I will give some advice about this when I discuss the selection of courses.



Due to the fact that I'm a European citizen, I didn't have to arrange a visa for the period I stayed in Madrid. You will have to check if your own health insurance is valid in Spain and what potential costs will be compensated by your health insurance. It is really important to bring your European Health Insurance Card, because this card gives you access to the health care.

Regarding accommodation, in my case, it was really important to book my room some months before I came to Madrid. I've stayed in the Residence Erasmus de Rotterdam at the campus of the university. At their website you'll find a lot of information about applying for a room, the costs and all facilities that are included in the building. If you want to stay in a room in the centre of Madrid, make sure it is close to a train station of Cercanias.

Furthermore I've booked my flight with the KLM from Amsterdam to Madrid several months before I went. If you do so, a return ticket will cost you about 100 euro. If you'll book later, it could cost you twice or three times as much.

The moment you've been selected by the EUR for a place at the UAM, you will receive some emails with information about the selection procedure for courses and some practical information about the campus. The UAM will assign you a coordinator who is your point of reference for the Learning Agreement and any other important documents. You'll also be able to apply for a student mentor, who will help you around at the university.

At one point you will be able to choose your courses at the UAM. The system for choosing courses is very chaotic and confusing. You will have to register at several websites to arrange your courses and you access to Moodle (the Blackboard of the UAM). If you want to follow courses in English you should be early with your registration, because there are only limited places for these courses. Other courses are in Spanish and I would recommend to have at least a level of B2 for Spanish if you want to follow these courses. If you eventually don't like the courses you've chosen, you will have some weeks at the beginning of the semester to change courses.

It is important that if you want to do a Spanish language course, you have to register early and follow all the deadlines for the level test and the registration for a class. Otherwise you might not be admitted to the language course.

Regarding the Erasmus Grant, you'll have to fill in some forms and let it be signed by your coordinator at the UAM and the Exchange Coordinator at the EUR. Make sure to terminate your OV-card in the Netherlands.

Lastly a good tip is to arrange your RENFE Public Transportation Card in advance, if you have an address somewhere in Madrid you could send it to (for example the address of your student mentor). If you order your card on the website of RENFE it will take about a week before you'll receive it. With the card you have access to the bus, train and metro in the whole city of Madrid and to some cities as Toledo or Segovia. It will cost you only 20 € per month.

Arrival

After a good flight, I arrived at the 9th of September at my room in Madrid. It was just a few days before the start of the classes. I had to go to the International Relations Office to get my student card and to sign some papers. During the first weeks there are many introduction parties and activities for exchange students and you'll meet a lot of people from all around the world. I would really recommend to do as many activities as possible during these weeks, to get to know other students and the city centre.

The first week was really exhausting due to all the impressions, the warm temperature in Madrid and the rather late times for lunch and dinner in Spain. After some weeks Madrid will feel like home.

Courses

As said in the earlier section, the registration for courses is really chaotic. The structure of the courses also differ from the EUR. Many courses don't really use a fixed book for the course, but online articles and some chapters from several books which can be lend from the University Library. Most courses consist one or two lectures and a tutorial a week. You'll be able to choose your courses in the morning or the afternoon.



The courses I've chosen at the UAM:

- **Title:** Economic and Financial History (group 421)
ECTS: 6
Description: This course is about important economic historical events worldwide, like the Gold Standard, the Great Depression and the Japanese Miracle. It is different from the History of Economic Thought course at the EUR. Although the level of the course is not that high, I found it pretty interesting.

- **Title:** Dynamic Macroeconomics Analysis (group 431)
ECTS: 6
Description: A course about macro economical subjects like the Solow Model and OLG-models. The teacher is very kind and is able to tell a lot about the subject. This course was my most difficult one, because it is very mathematical. I would only recommend this course if you're really interested in mathematics.

- **Title:** International Economy (group 146)
ECTS: 6
Description: Not my most favourite course, due to the fact that both the teachers of this course are very chaotic. The course consists a lot of subjects in the field of International Trade and Exchange Rates which are all only briefly discussed.

- **Title:** Financial Instruments Accounting Analysis (group 421)
ECTS: 6
Description: This is a course about the analysis of financial statements. For a team assignment we had to analyse several companies within an industry and tell something about all sorts of financial ratios. In this course you will use Excel a lot.

- **Title:** Spanish Language Course
ECTS: 4
Description: The level A.2.2 Spanish language course was really nice. I would really recommend to do a language course, it's very helpful.

Total ECTS: 28

Finances (5 months, approximately)

My monthly income:

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|------------------------------------|------|
| Erasmus + Grant: | 250€ |
| Conversion OV card: | 100€ |
| Dutch 'studiefinanciering': | 280€ |
| Contribution parents/ own savings: | 390€ |

Total income: € 1000

My monthly expenses:

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| Housing: | 450€ |
| Transportation card: | 20€ |
| Gym membership: | 30€ |
| Cost of living (food, going out, etc.) | 500€ |

Total expenses: € 1000

Daily Life

Life in Spain and especially Madrid is amazing! The weather is great till the beginning of November. Every day will be sunny and warm and you will see that many people will go out and meet late in the evening. Many people meet at Puerta del Sol from where they will go to restaurants, bars and clubs. If you're a real party animal, you're at the right place in Madrid. There are a lot of great clubs. The food in Madrid is delicious and not that expensive. Lunch is most of the time around 2/3 in the afternoon, and it's not uncommon to have dinner at 10 in the evening.

Public transportation in Madrid is really good, there are a lot of connections to several cities nearby. I've been to some cities, like Toledo and Segovia, but cities like Sevilla, Barcelona and Granada are also possible to visit. Take into account that if you're going to live at the campus, like I did, that the last train back to the campus will leave at 12:00 at night. The first goes again at 05:00 in the next morning.

There are a lot of great museums and places to visit, like Parque del Retiro, in Madrid. Be sure to know some Spanish, because many people will not be able to speak English with you. One of the things I liked very much is the view from the rooftop terrace of el Centro de Belles Artes in the centre of Madrid. Furthermore I have good memories of the hike I've done in National Park de la Sierra de Guadarrama, near Cercedilla.

My exchange in Madrid has been a wonderful period and I can look back at many great things I've done and a lot of amazing people I've met. Go to Madrid and enjoy a sangria in the sun! ¡Pásalo bien!

Some useful links:

- **UAM:**

<http://uam.es/ss/Satellite/es/1233310431425/subHome/Internacional.htm>

- **UAM Language Centre:**

http://www.uam.es/ss/Satellite/es/1242669658348/contenidoFinal/Espanol_para_extranjeros.htm

- **RENFE Public Transportation Card:**

<https://www.tarjetatransportepublico.es/>

- **European Student Network (ESN) UAM Madrid:**

<http://www.esnuam.org/>

- **Residencia Universitaria Erasmo de Rotterdam:**

<http://www.resa.es/es/residencias/madrid/residencia-universitaria-erasmo/residencia/>

If you have any questions or doubts about going on exchange to the UAM in Madrid, feel free to send me an email at: gijsteverink@yahoo.co.uk