

Great people, tasty food and amazing weather! This is Barcelona!

General Information:

University: Universitat Pompeu Fabra (UPF)
City: Barcelona
Country: Spain
Period: September – December 2016

Preparation:

An exchange is a very interesting and exciting experience, however it requires some matters to be dealt with before leaving.

Firstly, after carefully choosing the destination according to your tastes you have to apply by sending the CV, motivational letter and OSIRIS results. Secondly, before leaving you will have to fill in the Grant Agreement and the Learning Agreement both of which have to be signed by the home and the exchange universities. Moreover, you need to have two insurances: health insurance and accidents and travel insurance. For the health insurance I used the Dutch one (Bewuzt). The accidents and travel insurance can be acquired on the website for which the administration of Pompeu Fabra provides the link in the email with instructions to complete the application. I received the email at the beginning of March. The basic package offered specifically for Erasmus students (exchange students) was approximately 30 euros. Besides these, you will have to complete an online form and send a passport-sized picture together with a passport photocopy. Thirdly, you will have to choose the subjects you want to follow during the exchange period. In the first week of July you will be able to enrol for these. The courses are divided into different time slots, thus making it easy to choose the subjects without a chance of them overlapping.

Finally, an extremely important issue is housing. Start searching for accommodation several months in advance if you want to find a relatively cheap and well-situated apartment. Personally, I wanted to live in a student residence to get to know other fellow students and also avoid the hassle with finding a reliable landlord and good service. I was very satisfied with my room (single studio with shared kitchen) at Residencia Pere Felip Monlau and with the location of it (El Raval). Metro and bus stations were in 5 minutes walking distance and La Rambla in 15 minutes. Also, I was absolutely happy I could practice my Spanish as most of the residents were natives. However, if you do not know Spanish it is not a problem, the residents and the staff have a good level of English. In the city you might need to know some basics, however Spanish people are very friendly and even not knowing English they will try to help you. The information about other residences can be found on the UPF website. In case you want simply a room in an apartment you can look on Facebook: *Housing Barcelona, Erasmus Exchange Students Barcelona* and also the websites: *Idealista and Housing Anywhere*.

Arrival:

On the 1st of September I was already in Barcelona and had several days to enjoy the city before starting the Landing Program I signed up for (intensive 2 weeks Spanish course).

The weather was absolutely great for going to the beach, however I would not be able to survive September without a fan. So keep that in mind!

The lessons started on 26th of September and until that time Erasmus Student Network (ESN) organized many activities for international students such as picnics, tours around the city and different parties. It is a great way to meet new people and make friends already from the beginning. Several days before the start, UPF organized an introduction day where administrative and organizational matters were discussed. Also, the *Mobility and Welcome Office* (Spanish abbreviation is OMA) were quite helpful with providing the information on several issues I encountered.

Courses:

The necessary amount of credits to earn throughout this trimester is 24 ECTS. At UPF all the economics related courses are worth 5 ECTS and the courses from other faculties were ranging from 4 to 8 ECTS. However, I only picked economics courses, as I could not find something I liked from the other faculties. Also, I took 2 language courses, each worth 3 ECTS. Thus, in total I took 26 ECTS.

International Economics I (5 ECTS)

This course is almost the same as International Economics at EUR. However, the models and the theory are presented in a different way. The accent is placed mostly on graphical and analytical interpretation combined together with the intuition, whereas at EUR the focus was more on real world interpretation and intuition. I have to admit that sometimes I liked the graphical and analytical representation more and I understood better the material. But at times it made me confused, as simply the intuition made more sense. However, there is nothing to be worried about as having already followed the course at EUR already gives a good base knowledge for this course. About the grading of the course: it is quite fair and not too harsh. Throughout the course you have to prepare for the seminars and answer in front of the class one of the exercises solved at home. You will receive grades that will account for 30% out of the final grade. The final exam consists of 10 multiple-choice questions out of which you have to choose only 9. But not only you have to choose the right answer, you also have to explain why did you choose it, which sometimes might give you some extra points in case you chose a wrong answer.

Financial Management I (5 ECTS)

This course is an easier version of the Finance 1 at EUR focusing more on investment decisions, rather than finance decisions. It was a good experience to refresh the memory about the concepts and formulas studied. However, as the focus was more on investment decisions, it added value to the understanding of this matter. Throughout the course we had to attend seminars (participation 5%) and prepare some exercises, however these were not graded. Also, there was a group assignment that accounted for 15% out of the final grade. The exam consisted of 19 multiple-choice questions (some theory) and 11 open questions (calculation based).

Business Logistics (5 ECTS)

This course focuses on the key concepts related to supply chain management and business logistics. The entire course was very well organized and structured. Besides the theory from the slides (I did not need a book), there were plenty of guest lectures and interactive activities that helped comprehend the material better. These activities included the usual

exercise solving but also a Beer Game, which made us work in teams and understand the concepts related to Inventory planning much better. Besides, the entire class had write articles in a blog and also a report (project) in groups of 3-5 people. I was one of the 3 project coordinators and our task was to help the groups throughout their work on the report. It was a great experience that taught me skills like goal-setting, effective problem solving and time management. Thus, if you have a chance I really recommend you to do one of the tasks: project coordinator or blog coordinator. Even though it seems like a lot of work, it actually helps you understand the “Business Logistics” world. Also, we had the opportunity to visit MANGO warehouse from where about 2000 shops around the world are being supplied. Finally, the exam consists of 40 multiple-choice questions and requires you to be well prepared with the calculations (Inventory topic) and some theory.

Business Games (5 ECTS)

The course is based on the application of the 2jt Business Simulation. The first 2 weeks you learn the characteristics of this simulation and then the teacher will assign groups (companies) with whom you will have to take decisions throughout the entire course. The team I was working with was a very motivated and responsible one. It was an interesting and fun course, which helps to understand how a firm operates in the real world and what kind of difficulties it may encounter. Another great aspect is that there is no final exam and the grade for the course is based on the progress of the team and the reports written during the period.

Landing Program (3 ECTS) – Spanish A2

This intensive 2 weeks course started on 6th of September and ended on 16th of September. The classes were held every day and lasted for 3.5 hours. It was quite some work to be done, but the teacher made the course very fun and easy to follow. Also, there was not too much homework to be done and so I could enjoy the city on those days as well.

Fall Program (3 ECTS) – Spanish B1

This course started on 5th of October and ended on 29th of November. I had classes twice per week and these lasted for 2 hours. It was not so time intensive as the previous one I took, but it was definitely more material intense (grammar mostly). Also, combining this with other subjects was a bit more challenging, but most of the work was done in class.

Finances:

Barcelona is a touristic destination, thus the city centre is quite expensive in general. However, outside the city centre everything gets way cheaper. Going out and groceries expenses are quite similar to the Netherlands, but the transportation is 2-3 times cheaper.

Monthly costs:

Rent: €609

Nutrition: €200

Public Transport: €35

Mobile phone: €10

Social life: €100

Dancing activities: €50

Average cost: €1004

Daily Life:

At the beginning of my stay in Barcelona I could not hide my excitement about everything that was happening to me. This excitement lasted for the entire period, as this city is a continuous source of fun activities, great people and breath taking views. I was keen to practice and improve my Spanish as I had just a basic level of understanding and people there were always very enthusiastic to help me succeed in it. However, one thing to mention is that you should never call a Catalan person – Spanish, they are very sensitive about this topic.

All the subjects had a mandatory attendance for the seminars and some for the lectures as well. I was attending all of them as I found it more useful going to the lectures (the slides were not always clear). Besides studying, during the first 2 months I was going quite often for walks in the city and to the beach. The city of Barcelona is a beautiful place where you will always find something new to see. A 'must see' is the hills of Barcelona from where you can enjoy the view of the entire city. Also, I would recommend visiting Tibidabo, Park Guell, Montjuic and definitely Sagrada Familia. It is very easy to get to all of these destinations as Barcelona has a developed transportation system. Metros and buses go everywhere you might need and even during the night there are night buses. Within Barcelona you can travel wherever you want by simply buying a subscription for 3 months for €105. Besides traveling around Barcelona I also visited Valencia and Tarragona. I wish I visited some more cities, but I had a lot of friends and family visiting me who wanted to see Barcelona, which was absolutely fine by me anyway.

Finally, Barcelona was always my dream place to live not only because of weather, people, food and beautiful language, but also because of dancing. I have been dancing my entire life and always wanted to experience this 'latino' vibe somewhere in Spain. I have been taking classes at a dancing school in Barcelona (uDance) where I practiced Bachata and Salsa. Besides, I was going to different social dances evenings at Café de les Arts, Antilla and Mojito. I improved a lot my level of dancing and will come back some time to enjoy this vibe again.

This city is full of diverse activities, amazing concerts, good food, interesting people, beautiful views and unique culture. To be completely honest, for me four months was not enough to see and experience all it has to offer. But during these four months I fell in love with Barcelona and it became my soul city where I definitely want to return!