

Personal Report

Autonomous University of barcelona, WiSe 2021/22, 1 Semester FB 3 – International Business Information - Bachelor

Language

Which language did you use? How did you communicate with your fellow students?

I used English to communicate with international students and I improved my business English. Before my semester abroad I didn't speak Spanish, so I took Spanish classes as well. The university does provide language classes, but they are really expensive for exchange students (approximately 900 euros), so I found a language school in El Raval. The neighborhood is not the best, but it was very cheap (300 euros for 17 3 hour-sessions. I can really recommend it, it is called Worldclass Barcelona. With local students I tried to use my Spanish skills..

How well were you able to follow classes linguistically at the partner institution? Did the partner university provide language classes?

I could follow the classes very well. The university provided language classes during the semester.

Accommodation

Did the host university arrange for accommodation? How would you describe the quality of your accommodation?

Yes, they provided dormitories. The quality of my accommodation was very good.

How high were your overall monthly costs for accommodation (in Euro)?

450€

How well was the accommodation situated? How long did it take you on average to reach the partner university (in minutes)?

The accommodation I chose, was not provided by the partner university. It was in Gracia, a beautiful neighborhood with mostly local people. It took sixty minutes to get to UAB. It is not in Barcelona, but outside on a hill. I was very happy with Gracia, but if you want to live in a younger environment, Barri Gotic and El Born would be great as well. I don't recommend living in El Raval, its very poor and doesn't feel safe to walk there at night. In Barcelona most windows are hardly insulated, in the winter time it can get really cold, so I used an air conditioner to heat my apartment. I lived in the apartment with my boyfriend, so we shared the rent. It was 800 euros, including water. Electricity and gas had to be paid separately. Those extra costs varied between 24-70 euros a month, which we split as well. Barcelona is very well connected, I would recommend to use google maps. A friend of mine rented a bike for her entire stay and used it all the time in the city.

Which web sites, forums, facebookpages, contacts, etc. can you recommend for looking for accommodation?

We found our apartment at Casamona, this real estate agency was very helpful. When we were still in Germany they showed us an apartment on a video call so we could get an impression. Later on we traveled to Barcelona in advance for one week to go apartment hunting and to avoid a scam. There are many rooms to rent in Barcelona that have little to no light, and some real estate agencies show photos of a different apartment to find a renter. But I have to say, that Casamona charged 800 euros for agency fee and took 168 euros VAT (MwSt).

Where have you been accommodated (name of dormitory, location, part of town, etc.)?

I lived in Calle de Sant Antoni Maria Claret 38 in Barcelona. Gracia is a beautiful, quiet neighborhood. Grocery store, pharmacy, gym, hair salon, etc. were only 1 to 5 minutes away. Not many people were speaking English there so I had to improve my Spanish, but for me it wasn't problem at all. In the street were no clubs, but if you want to go clubbing, you could go to Carrer de Tusset, its not far away and there are many clubs like Sutton, Bling Bling, etc.

Arrival at the Partner University and Orientation

Which is the best arrival time?

I went there on September 6th, so I had a week until classes started. This way it wasn't stressful at all and I had time to settle in, make a wifi contract, etc. I also went to the university before to know how it looked like. UAB has a ginormous campus and several train stations. It can be confusing at first. The city is called Bellaterra and there is also a train station, but the campus of economics and political and social sciences is at the train stop "Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona".

How did you organize your arrival? Were all important questions answered? What did you have to find out yourself? How fast were you able to get in contact with the domestic students?

We went to Barcelona by bus, which I cannot recommend. There are several flight that are cheaper and take way less time. We had signed the apartment contract beforehand. Our landlord waited for us there, explained details and handed over the keys. UAB provided an online meeting via Teams for all exchange students, that were divided into groups. They said it was mandatory. If I am honest, it didn't help much. You will find most information by talking to other students and sharing your knowledge. The international office of the UAB is very difficult to contact. They have several phone numbers and emails on their website. They have an office on campus that is open only a few hours a week. But don't panic, when you feel like you missed something. They are very tolerant and chill. Also you should try to get into WhatsApp groups asap so you can communicate with other students and get a reminder in case you forgot something.

Living Abroad

Compared to Frankfurt, how high was the cost of living abroad? What additional expenses did you have during your semester abroad?

A bit less expensive that here. If you want to go to a gym you should take a look at DiR. I only paid 14 euros a month and the contract lasted 6 months. They had a pool and courses like spinning, body pump, etc. I went to small grocery stores and saved a lot of money, I buy mostly fresh produce, no meat, dairy products etc. and saved a lot of money because of that. My monthly spenditure on groceries was about 200 euros. When you're buying your train ticket you should buy the T-joven ticket. It lasts for 3 months and is the best deal. You need only one zone, when you study at the economy campus.

How far were you able to travel with your semester ticket? How were the libraries? Was their use free? Did the university provide computer workplaces/ computer pools? Was Wi-Fi available on-campus? Did the university provide a sports program? Was this free of charge?

My ticket included one zone (airport, university in Bellaterra, entire city). Getting a wifi contract there can be very difficult, because you also need a Spanish bank account. That's why a friend who already lives in Spain made the contract and we gave her the money. If you don't want to rely on other people I think it would be best for you to find an apartment that has Wifi already. Student life on campus was very nice. The university starts at 9 o'clock, so you can sleep a little longer. There are people that send a lot of links to ERASMUS parties into WhatsApp groups, friends of mine liked it. Some local people are very welcoming and integrate international students but there but are also a lot that stick together. There were many international students that where very nice and and wanted to socialize. UAB has many cafeterias, the coffee is very cheap and the food is fine. The library is perfect for studying, they have computers as well. UAB has a gym, a pharmacy, etc.

Studying at the Host University

How would you describe the academic standard of classes compared to Frankfurt?

A bit easier.

Did you experience any difference in teaching methods/ class structure? Which were the difference regarding your expectations and your experiences at the partner university?

The professors were very relaxed time related, they took long breaks and waited until a majority of the class arrived. I didn't expect much. But I was a bit disappointed of the UAB organization. During my stay, the website got hacked and email, website, wifi etc. were unattainable for a few days. The university tried to reorganize but it was pretty messy. Our final grades were uploaded on different platforms for example. Classes were two hours with a break in between. One teacher included Spanish graphs in his presentation and told the international students, that it was self explaining. But many professors asked in advance how many international students were present and adapted their actions. What surprised me is, that you can call professors by their first name.

Final Remarks

What should future exchange students know/ do/ avoid? How would you overall rate your exchange experience? In what ways have you benefitted academically, personally, linguistically for your future career?

Now I am talking a little bit Spanish and I am also more confident with making decisions. Living abroad is such a fun experience. I loved meeting new people and we already planned on meeting again in the foreseeable future. When you just learned Spanish, it is so practical to be able to speak to local people. Some people think it is a huge thing to live abroad, but actually it is not, everybody can do it. I recommend:

Avoid: -renting an apartment that you haven't seen before, try to at least make a video call with the agent/ renter. -closing a wifi contract

Do: -connect with other students/ people and share your knowledge -buy a T-joven ticket -go to Barcelona earlier to settle in. My semester abroad will remain unforgettable because I got more independent, met so many nice people and fell in love with Barcelona.