

MBA Exchange program @ ESADE Business school
Program Summary
Fall 2014

Raziel Einhorn
raziele@gmail.com

Contents

- Introduction
- About ESADE
- Before arrival
- Arriving to Barcelona
- Transportation
- Travelling
- ESADE learning method
- Courses I took
- Social activities
- Budget
- Additional tips

If you're reading this summary, it either means that you have an interest in joining the exchange program or you have already decided to go and now you're considering which school to go to.

This summary will not try to persuade you to go. It's a unique, amazing and life-changing experience, but it has its costs, both financially and mentally. My only advice here is if you decide on going, prepare to be fully committed to the process, so both you and the people you meet abroad will be able to benefit from this experience.

Though not perfect, ESADE is by far one of the most educational, mind-opening and inspiring experiences I have ever had. In this summary I will try to explain why and how ESADE allows this experience to happen, as well as some advice and tips which will help you, the exchange student candidate, make the right decisions in the process.

About ESADE

ESADE is considered one of the best business schools in Europe (currently rated 4th by the Financial Times) and is well-known around the world. ESADE has in fact 3 campuses: one is based in Madrid; the second is based in Barcelona and the third is based in Sant Cugat (a town nearby Barcelona). The Sant Cugat campus is the newest among the three, and it is the one you will be studying during the exchange period.

As an exchange student you will join the Full-Time MBA program. The FT-MBA students can select whether to finish the program in 12, 15 or 18 months according to their preference, as well as change it during their studies. During the exchange period you will probably take the elective courses with those who are towards the end of their studies.

In my experience, ESADE emphasizes three major elements that make it unique:

(1) Teamwork: Most of the work in ESADE is held in groups – formal assignments, projects and presentations, as well as clubs and social activities. (2) Diversity – ESADE is literally international, having students from more than 40 countries. You can imagine how interesting the sessions are, not to mention the conversations in the hall (3) Commitment – Everyone in ESADE – staff and students – are committed to making the MBA experience better and more fun. It's not something you can measure, but it's definitely something you

feel, whether it's a summit held by students and supported by staff, an informal session held by the professors just to share their knowledge or just a social dinner someone is having in his apartment.

Before arrival to Barcelona

Shortly after you get the acceptance notice from TAU, Melissa Handley – the ESADE exchange coordinator – will send you a welcoming email, where she will guide you through the process and offer some assistance. Melissa is wonderful and helpful – don't hesitate to ask her for whatever is on your mind. I highly recommend asking her for the "International students guide book" which I have found very useful during the preparations for the program.

There are 4 main things you need to attend to before arrival: Visa, Accommodations, Financials and Courses.

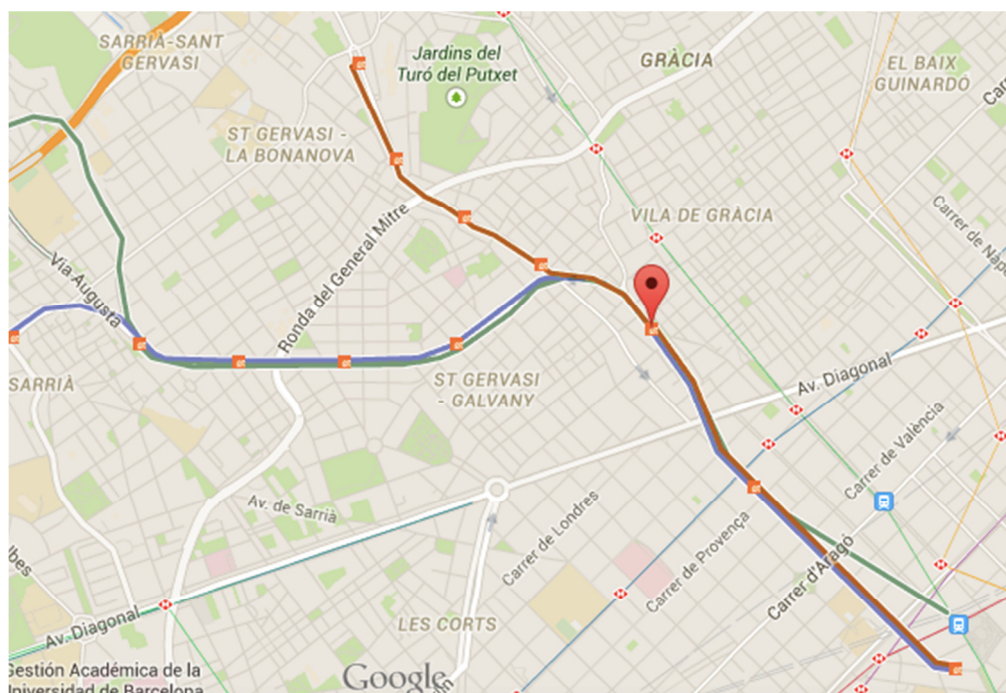
(A) Visa: Israeli citizens are allowed to enter Spain with a touristic visa, which is given automatically when you arrive. However, this visa applies only for 90 cumulative days. If you are planning on staying less than 90 days (either by going back to Israel or by travelling outside of the EU) then you should be OK. However, if you don't know your plans yet or you just want to be on the safe side – you need to get a student visa (also

	Application for Schengen Visa This application form is free	PHOTO
I. Surname (Family name) (x)		FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

called Schengen Visa). Since I didn't make travelling plans prior to my arrival I decided to get a student visa. The application fee is around €75 and you pay it directly in the Spanish embassy (don't forget to bring the exact amount in cash). Please be aware to bring all the required documents with you, with emphasis on medical statement (given by any family doctor) and a financial statement (Just ask for the letter saying how much money you have in your current account). I have found the embassy's staff VERY

helpful, as they allowed me to send them some of the documents via email as well as submitting some of the documents in Hebrew. I spoke with the woman in charge of the visa process at the embassy who was very helpful so I recommend asking for her when you're there. The process itself took around 2.5 weeks on average, in which my Passport was kept at the embassy.

(B) Accommodations: There are several options for you to stay in Barcelona, and numerous ways to get those options. One can rent an entire flat alone; rent a room in an apartment with fellow ESADE students, with other exchange students or with locals. Each option has its advantages and disadvantages. My best advice would be to contact Jura Zymantas (via her Facebook profile or via email). Jura is the students' advisor for all of the non-academic issues and is in close touch with the students, so she can help you find roommates and apartments. Personally, I have found a great apartment via www.aparteasy.com just in the middle of Barcelona. I also found the ability to pay them with any combination of cash/credit card/PayPal very useful. The preferred location for the apartment depends only on your personal preferences. Most of the MBA students live in the area of Gracia or Eixample (two of the central neighborhoods in Barcelona), however there are quite a few who prefer the more touristic locations such as El Gotic or El Born. My best advice here is to look for a place close to the FGC train route that goes between Plaza Catalunya and Sant-Cugat so your daily travel to ESADE would be short. You can see the route on the screenshot below (marked in green), where the red mark is on the Gracia FGC station.



I rented a 2-room apartment for myself and with intentions to have guests during my stay in Barcelona. The apartment was fully furnished and the monthly rent included utilities, TV and Internet, and also included the agency fee (a percentage of the monthly rent). In addition, I had to deposit 500 EUR to the agency, which I got back when I checked out. I paid quite a lot for the apartment due to the fact it was just for a few months (beyond 6 months monthly rent drops) and also due to the central location of the apartment. One can definitely reduce this expense by exploring the other options I have mentioned.

(C) Financials: As all of the payments are made in Euro, I would highly recommend checking your fees with your bank and credit card provider: payment fees; cash withdrawal fees; conversion rates and so on. I have spent some time with them over the phone, just asking “how much money will I pay to do XXXXX”, but it saved me a lot of money and headaches along the way. In short, these are the main actions I took in order to minimize fees:

- Estimating how much Euros I would need and securing that amount in my Israeli bank account in advance.
- Asking my bank to issue me two international credit cards (MasterCard and AMEX in my case) that would charge my bank account with Euros directly. The additional credit card was for backup purposes.
- Minimizing cash withdrawals, or performing a large withdrawal each time, as any withdrawal charged me with a fee.

(D) Courses registration: Registration for courses is about 3 months prior to the beginning of the semester. Registration method is bidding-based, similarly to the registration method in TAU. I didn't have any problems getting all the courses I wanted, and it is to my understanding that ESADE staff is really flexible, so in case of any issues, I highly recommend consulting with Melissa.

How to find and select courses? Melissa usually publishes the complete list of available courses, along with instructions of how to get into the ESADE intranet (the equivalent to myTAU) where you can find the syllabuses and perform the bidding process. I would recommend asking Melissa for the previous term's feedback. This

feedback contain very useful comments, including which courses had a lot of work, which professor was too hard/too soft, and so on. These comments are pretty reliable, however you should take into account that ESADE staff put a lot of effort on quickly implementing feedback and thus improving the level of the courses.

Arriving to Barcelona

The exact arrival time is totally up to you. I would recommend arriving a few days before the beginning of the semester. You can use the time to relax, make sure that the apartment is ok, get to know the neighborhood and explore Barcelona before the semester begins (especially if it is your first visit). It's also a great opportunity to meet fellow exchange students and find out who is taking the same courses.

Transportation

Travelling in Barcelona and in Spain in general is quite easy. Public transportation is pretty wide-spread and available almost 24 hours. There are a few main ways of transportation I used during my stay:

- Metro – Spread throughout Barcelona, Barcelona's underground train system is very useful and reliable.
- Buses – Buses are also wide spread and also work at night (partially and with different lines marked as N – noche).
- FGC – Catalunya's train system. I used the FGC daily to travel between Barcelona and Sant Cugat.
- Trams – used in some parts of Barcelona (usually the suburbs). I didn't get the chance to use them myself.

All of the above – Metro, Buses, FGC and Trams – support the same ticketing system, so you can buy and use the same ticket for all of those. There are several types of multi-pass tickets and the cheapest option depends on your plans. I would recommend holding two

tickets – one for inside Barcelona and one for the daily travel to SanCugat. In any case you can find a great explanation for every option in ESADE's guidebook you get from Melissa.

- Flying: Travelling inside Europe by low-cost flights is extremely affordable when you book enough time in advance. I have travelled to Lisbon and Milano with Vueling Airlines. I recommend using www.kayak.es to compare between flights.
- Driving: I have rented a car three times during my stay. It's a joyful and economic way to explore Spain if you have more than 2 people with you. Prices can go as low as 20 Euros per day for a Seat Ibiza. Don't forget to bring both your driving license and an international driving license, as the police here demand to see both during inspections.

Travelling

There are so many places to see and things to do, in and out of Barcelona. I can only suggest consulting with the people in ESADE, both students and staff. They can offer options less known to short-term tourists.

In addition, there was a great online map with a lot of recommendation. Some of it is outdated but most of the places still exist. The URL is:

<https://mapsengine.google.com/map/edit?mid=zEDTEHQidgIk.kHVkraZi7te8>

ESADE learning method

As I have mentioned – ESADE is very much about teamwork. In most of the courses I had, a group was assembled at the beginning of the course and each group was given a project or a big assignment which was suppose to be developed as the course go forward and be delivered at the end of the course (usually – in a combination of deliveries and a presentation).

Another part worth mentioning are the clubs. There is a club for every major subject in the MBA – Consulting, Entrepreneurship, Finance, Marketing etc. Every student can enlist to number of clubs and even try and be a part of a club's board. Every club has its own eco-system: special courses/workshops, social activities, study tours and trips and so on.

As an exchange student you don't have any limitations in enlisting. On the contrary – try and enlist as much as you can to be able to pick the best activities!

Courses I had in ESADE

- **Entrepreneurial Finance** – by far one of the best courses I had. Prof. Luisa Alemany teaches how to evaluate financial needs of a company, the different options to get additional funds, and how to find the best option. Along with the coursework, we consulted for a real start-up on its next financial step, pitching our conclusions and recommendations to the Professor and to the CEO. This course was taken as “semi-intensive”, meaning there were two sessions every week – on Mondays and on Fridays.
- **Leading the management-consulting firm** – How do professional service firms (PSF) work, and how do they earn money? What does a consulting project look like? And what to do when there is a conflict between different entities in the firm? Prof. Jay McGonigle provides insights to these questions and more. The course includes one session per week and it uses the case method, so be prepared to read a lot of cases and discuss them in class, as 30% of the grade is class participation.
- **Creativity and Innovation: Design Thinking** – An intensive course given by Prof. Juan Ramis Pujol. The course is about following the process of an innovative project, from the stage of thinking about a target subject, through identifying a problem, figuring and finding a solution, and how to test and improve that solution. The course included mostly group work, with breaks where the professor gave insights from the previous activity and instructions for the next one.
- **Strategic sales management** – In this course Prof. Jaime Castello Molina and Marcos Gomez Jimenez taught us how to build a full Sales/Marketing strategy as a derivative of a firm's strategy. Similar to Entrepreneurial Finance, we were divided into groups, where each group had been assigned to a real company that presented a marketing problem (new market, new product etc.). Throughout the course, we implemented the theory into a complete sales strategy for the company assigned to us and presented it in class.

Overall I felt all the courses I chose were interesting and enriching on the one hand, and not too hard in terms of requirements, workload etc. on the other hand. I would definitely recommend all of them. Take into account that – unlike in TAU where courses repeat pretty much every semester – In ESADE different courses are held on fall and spring. The good news are that, as far as I know, both terms offer great courses.

Social activities

ESADE has a reputation for its student social life, not without a reason. Life in ESADE is full with social activities, such as Gastrofest (food festival), weekly gatherings (also known as TGIF – thank goodness it’s Friday) and even organized trips abroad. People are very much engaged in celebrating holidays together, traveling together, and basically just finding a reason to celebrate. I would suggest joining the Facebook groups as soon as possible. Note that there are several of these: at least one for each class (batch) one for every club (and yes, expect a sharp incline in the number of your Facebook notifications).

Budget and major expenses

I stayed in Barcelona for 4 months (from the beginning of September until after Christmas), and on average my main monthly expenses were as follow:

<u>Rent (including utilities and Internet)</u>	1200 EUR
<u>Food</u>	100–150 EUR
<u>Going out</u>	150–200 EUR
<u>Gym</u>	20–90 EUR
<u>Transportation</u>	30–100 EUR
<u>Cellphone plan</u>	10–20 EUR
<u>Misc. Expenses</u>	300–500 EUR
<u>Total</u>	1810–2260 EUR

tips

Additional

- Cellular plans – There are numerous cellular providers in Spain and the pay-as-you-go plans (the equivalent to the Israeli “talk-man” plan) come with a relatively low price (usually between 7 to 15 EUR per month for a 1Gb/2Gb plan). You can buy a sim-card in almost any kiosk or counter, charge the card with the required amount of money (also called “top-up”) and choose your preferred plan. Top-upping your sim-card can be made at any ATM machine, in the Metro/FGC tickets vending machine and even online. Please note that it is required to supply an identification certificate (passport in our case) when you buy a sim-card. I have tried several providers, and found Orange Spain to be the best in terms of price and coverage in Barcelona. Other providers may be cheaper but I experienced a lot of lost reception. Another major benefit with Orange is their Go-Europe plan – if you travel to other EU countries, you can have a data plan of 100Mb a day for 1 EUR for every day you travel, so you don’t need to rely on Wifi networks or to purchase an additional sim-card. I’ve found it extremely useful when I traveled to Milano and Lisbon.
- Day-to-day behavior – life in ESADE have a very dynamic characteristic. Things are always happening, sometimes very quickly, and you may get a feeling of chasing the events. Don’t be! Not all activities fit everyone. You should decide what kind of activities you’re interested in. I, for example, was not interested in sports events, and therefore have always prioritized other activities. It’s totally natural to feel the urge to do everything and be everywhere, but don’t lose yourself in the process. Tranquilo!
- When should I go? Should I go for the Fall term or for the Spring term? – An important questions I have been asking myself. Obviously it depends on your individual timing, however in general I would highly recommend to take the exchange program as late as possible so you will be able to gain knowledge and value to share with your fellow students. Take into account that on fall term you will be engaging mostly with second-years, meaning people in their last (or almost last) term. On spring term you will be engaging mostly with students who are in the middle of their program. There is

no preferable term and in both you meet great people, it just that experience will be slightly different.

ENJOY AND REMEMBER THE TWO
MOST IMPORTANT WORDS IN SPANISH:
TRANQUILO
NO PASA NADA
😊