

Student Exchange Experience Summary

Fall 2011 Semester (September – December)

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Barcelona Barcelona!

Welcome to the most vibrant, fun, and social location in the neighborhood! This city is amazing! I've heard many people say that this city holds the unique combination of being in Europe and enjoying perfect weather. The city center is divided into four major areas including L'Eixample, Gracia, The Gothic quarter & Raval, and the surrounding neighborhoods and villages. I live in the Eixample Esquerra – The left side of the Passeig De Gracia (Barcelona's Champs-Elise). This neighborhood was built during the early decades of the 20th century and therefore is styled in the modernism influence of that era and covered with Dali and Gaudi designs. This neighborhood is a residential area for city lovers. It is full of restaurants, shops, fresh foods markets, and more. It is always active, 24h a day. It is like living on Ben-Gurion in Tel Aviv (Just without the Jamon ☺). The Passeig De Gracia Avenue and the Gothic quarter are the most touristic areas in the city. In these areas you can find the museums, most of the hotels, the night life, etc. Although I must add that the city in itself is driven by tourism and is very multicultural. You will find all types of food varying from Paellas to Falafel. You will also find music venues from all over the world which hold festivals from Jazz to Flamenco. From a shopping perspective, the city is teeming with local and international brands located in the Plaça Catalunya and La Rambla areas.

Barcelona is the capital of Catalunya and therefore the people here are not Spaniards, they are Catalan. The Catalan people are very friendly and the younger generation understands and often speaks English. You would find that the city is very multinational inhabiting people from all over the world. The Barcelona folk cherish their leisure time and therefore the night scene is very active including a long schedule of dinner, bar hopping, clubbing beginning around 20:30 every evening. The famous Siesta is held between 2PM and 5PM is still very present around here. Many shops are closed between these hours although the central ones are open all day long. Besides the Siesta, I guarantee you will feel very much at home here as the atmosphere is very similar to Tel Aviv.

Besides studying don't forget to BE A TOURIST once in a while! I encourage you to use TripAdvisor to help you choose your desired places for visiting. This is a list of the top 10 touristy stuff I enjoyed the most in Barcelona:

1. Buy a museum pass – This card is unlimited in time and gives you access to a selection of museums. Highly recommended for the art lovers amongst us.
2. Climb up Montjuic. On your way visit the MNAC museum at Plaça Espanya and the Joan Miró museum half way up. You can use the escalators to reach the Olympic park and at the very top enjoy the view from the Castle (A must!). You can take the cable car on the way down – the view is amazing!
3. Climb up mountain Tibidabo. What a site from the top and what a beautiful church to visit!
4. Casa Milà – La Pedrera. One of Gaudí's most beautiful creations. I would consider **not** going to the Casa Batlló (The other Gaudí house) since it is expensive and redundant to Casa Milà.
5. Palau Güell – Other than park Güell, the Palau is another beautiful Gaudí creation that includes a free and very interesting audio tour.

6. Parc Ciutadella – Take your laptop (Free Wi-Fi) and enjoy the gorgeous and quiet recreational area of the park. It's very relaxing. On your way visit the local Arc de Triomf.
7. Palau De La Musica – Even if you are not a music fan, take a tour of this magnificent concert hall. In my opinion it is impressive even more than the Budapest opera house.
8. Magic Fountain of Placa Espanya – Every weekend, in the evening, the giant fountain of Placa Espanya engages in a musical spectacle accompanied with lights and water jets.
9. La Barceloneta Beaches and Clubs – The summer will last through September and maybe some of the days in October. Go to the beach, it's worthwhile. The largest clubs in Barcelona (The Opium for example) are situated there.
10. Verdi Street in Gracia neighborhood – is the perfect area to hang out at night. The surrounding area is full of bars, boutiques of local arts and clothes designers, restaurants, movie theatre, and more.

For those who are interested, the gay scene in Barcelona is the friendliest I've ever experienced. The area in which I live is called the 'Gayxample' because it is the home of many gay couples. The area is full of shops, bars, clubs, and other fine establishments that hang a beautiful and colorful flag outside. The gay community is fully integrated into the social life in Barcelona and is respected as equal.

Transportation

The transportation system in the city is very convenient and efficient. The city is interconnected by a frequent subway, bus, and light rail system (Although I loved walking around. Everything is very close).

Fees: The whole city of Barcelona is included in Zone 1 and you will use one pass for it.. There are two types of passes I recommend you to consider using – T-10 or T-50/30.

1. T-10 gives you 10 voyages and costs about 8.5 Euro. It is unlimited in time and impersonal so you may use it consecutively more than once when you want to pay for a friend's ride.
2. T-50/30 gives you 50 voyages over 30 consecutive days and costs about 33 Euros. This card is also impersonal. I used this card because you end up using the system more than 50 times a month.

Each voyage can be a combined bus and subway trip. The system will automatically identify this and will print on the back of the card the number of rides you have left.

I used Google Maps and the local transportation authority's mobile application called TMB. This will give you very convenient directions on how to get from place to place in the city 24/7. In addition, most of the bus stops have an electronic display showing the time to the next bus for each line.

Schedule: Busses run all day quite frequently (5-20 minutes). At night there is a night bus system that mimics most of the daytime lines, although less frequent. The metro runs from

5AM to Midnight on weekdays and Sunday, and arrives every 3-5 minutes. On Fridays the subway runs until 2AM and on Saturday it runs all night.

Leaving the city is quite is also quite convenient. You will find that many close destinations that are worth visiting from the Basque country, Andalusia, Galicia, Madrid, within Spain and other European destinations. For the most, I recommend **El-Pratairport**. Hop on a low cost flight as this is the quickest and cheapest way to travel around. For example, you can fly to Malaga and back for 70 Euros with Ryanair. The train system is another option I used to get around Barcelona area. The main station is **Barcelona-Sants** (Or SantsEstacio). There you will find various destinations within 3 hour ride that cost only 12 way for a return ticket.

Housing

There are various agencies in Barcelona that can offer you a wide selection of flats. I rented an apartment from ShBarcelona which introduce a wide selection of apartments in different locations around the city. This specific agency gets really busy during the summer time and is impossible to reach during that time. I personally arrived in Barcelona a month before the semester and walked into their office. From my experience as well as my peer's, this is the best way to choose an apartment. Another way is to logon and select it from the pictures in their website. If you are considering taking in flat mates, I suggest you contact them before hand, in the Facebook group for the exchange semester, and decide in advance on who takes which room. The prices for a short term (4 months) rental are around 1000 Euro for a fully equipped three bedroom apartment. This typically only includes municipality bills where the payment on water, electricity, and heating is paid separately. In addition, there are agency fees to be paid and two months' rent as a deposit. Most agencies will only work with a local bank account so be sure to open one once you get in town.

Most students live in the following areas:

1. L'Eixample – Close to city center but not THE center. Fit for city lovers that don't like too much activity at night outside their house. This area is usually more expensive than the other areas.
2. The Gothic Quarter – The heart of Barcelona. Lots of night life and lots of tourists. This is where the action happens. Small streets in the oldest part of the city. Close to the beach and La Rambla.
3. Gracia – Most students choose to live here. Small streets of what once used to be a village outside of the city but is now quite central and close to Passeig de Gracia. This area resembles Florentin neighborhood in Tel Aviv. Small streets full of young couples, and a vibrant night life. This neighborhood is relatively dominated by locals rather than tourist and therefore quieter than the Eixample.
4. St. Gervasi and Sarria – Located a 10 minute subway ride from the very center, these neighborhoods are purely residential areas for the upper-middle and upper class families. The main reason for living there is that it is closest to campus.
5. Consider living in SantCugat as the campus is moving there next year (September 2012).

To complement your new home interior design you have mainly three options: IKEA (A bus ride that takes 20 minutes), Chino Shops (Chinese owned shops that have everything you need for low to reasonable prices. These are hard to miss and are available in abundance.), and Zara Home (A more expensive option but similar to our Israeli Golf&Co.).

Day to Day Expenses

In general, Barcelona is more or less cheaper than Tel Aviv. I find that a tourist who engages in shopping, museums, restaurants, and night clubs needs about 50 Euros a day.

Eat - The food in supermarkets is cheaper than in Israel (weekly expense of about 20-30 euros per person who likes to eat in every day) and the restaurants vary in prices from 15 Euros to 60 Euros a meal. I chose to eat mostly on campus because the food was decent and a full meal costs about 7 Euros the most.

Nightlife – Concerts are priced between 10 and 30 Euros usually unless Cold Play is coming to town and the price is the same all over the world. Alcohol is quite cheap and in most places a glass of wine or a beer would cost you about 1.5 Euros (A good bottle of wine in the supermarket doesn't exceed 6 Euros). Night clubs usually cost between 10 to 20 Euros and include a free drink or two in the price of entry.

Clothing – Fast moving brands, such as H&M, Zara, and Bershka are about 10% cheaper than in Israel, although the selection of brands here is wider. The major sales are during July and During January.

About ESADE

Over the past years ESADE has been continuously ranked by various bodies such in the top 20 MBA programs in the world and in the top 5 MBA programs in Europe. Hence, exchanging at ESADE attracts students from top MBA programs all over the world including universities from the Ivy League in the US and top business schools in Asia and Europe. Therefore, the studying environment is very diverse in cultures and personal learning methods which enrich the experience of an international program. The exchange office at ESADE is very professional and supports the incoming students in many levels helping them find accommodation, blend into the study environment. The office runs an open door policy and they are always available for answering day to day inquiries.

ESADE is similar in many ways to our Sofaer iMBA program we have in Recanati. The full time MBA program of ESADE, which you will be taking part in, is focused on group / team work and is mainly challenging at that level. ESADE puts less focus on individual competition on grades and therefore the grading system is not based on a bell curve. Your grade is primarily based on your group deliverables and peer evaluation. Some of the courses include and exam at the end of the semester which is usually scheduled for the last class, i.e. ESADE does not hold a separate exam period as we have in Recanati. The grading system at ESADE is on a decimal point scale from 0 to 10. The absence policy is usually up to 20% of the classes. This is a challenge because many of your exchange peers will invite you to fun trips around Spain and Europe and you will need to coordinate your attendance. Before each

lesson you will be required to sign an attendance sheet which will be physically put outside your designated class room for a limited time before and after class commences.

ESADE has a very strong CSR policy that includes environmental awareness in many forms, such as minimal use of paper. You must be equipped with a laptop if you wish to study at ESADE. Other than course packs including case studies and articles, all activities are online through the Moodle system which is very easy to use. You will receive an ESADE student card which can be recharged at the cafeteria and used for buying food on campus, printing & copying, and as a student identification card.

The building I studies at will no longer serve the MBA program and as of next year (September 2012) the MBA program will be located in the ESADE SantCugat campus which to my understanding is an impressive complex that includes the university facilities alongside many companies that are based in the business area around campus (ESADECreapolis: <http://g.co/maps/qk4uf>). This is part of a positioning plan that ESADE has adopted to separate itself from the classic ESADE vs. IESE local business school “rivalry”. ESADE is entrepreneurial, lean and multicultural in essence while IESE is primarily formal and finance driven. You may bring one formal outfit for official company visits and interviews however you will not need it for classes.

MBASA – Student Association

The student board of ESADE is led by full time MBAers and leads various recreational activities and extra curriculum activities. The association is divided into committees. The first committee you will encounter is the MBASA Welcoming team which will contact you prior to your arrival and will introduce themselves and their activities to you. You will have a chance to participate every week in dinners, outings, clubbing, and cultural events. In addition, you will have the opportunity to join student clubs in various fields of interest such as sports, finance, marketing, entrepreneurship, wines & spirits, and many more. These club host weekly meetings, bring in guest speakers from the industry, hold interesting events, and encourage members to network.

Career Services

Career services are mainly for the resident students. In addition, the unemployment level in Spain is very high and it is difficult to find a job here. Furthermore, you must know Spanish to work for a Spanish company or on its behalf if you are seeking relocation out of Spain. Having an EU citizenship would help you get advice from the career services office as they have a pool of jobs available in Europe.

Choosing Your Courses

Most of the ESADE professors are Spaniards or Catalan with a strong business background. Hence, the professors are experienced in various roles and industries and include this experience in their teaching methods. There are some expats amongst the professors, mainly from Western Europe, such as German professors. Hence, the level of English spoken and presented in the readings is international and manageable for an MBA student from Israel.

The courses are selected by you a month or so before the semester starts (Mine started on the 5th of September). You will receive a fix amount of points and submit your course preferences online in a bidding system. Please note that the exchange students bid only after the resident students have done so. Therefore, you might not be able to participate in courses that are over demanded. However, the selection of courses in English is wide and includes elective courses from various fields of interest (including: HR, Finance, Marketing, Operations, Hand-on workshops, and more). ESADE exchange policy requires you to bid for 4 courses. However, if you choose to take “Doing business in Spanish”, which is a language course, you will be required to bid for 3 other courses.

Courses are divided into two types:

1. Intensive
2. Regular
3. “Doing business in Spanish”

The “Regular” courses take place once a week beginning 1 month after the official start date of the semester (In my case, October) and ending at the last week of the semester. Exams and other deliverables are part of the course schedule and will be presented by the professor during the first session.

During the first month of the semester (In my case, September) ESADE “imports” professors from all over the globe to teach a one week (Some are two weeks long) intensive course. During this week you will be studying from 9AM to 6PM (This depends on the professor. Some individual/team work might be incorporated in this schedule). The courses run from Monday to Friday and you cannot take two courses at the same time due to attendance restrictions.

“Doing business in Spanish” is part of the International Language Center and takes place twice a week for about two months. You may take an online level exam if you wish to be placed in a higher level. This course teaches you Castilian (Spanish as we call it in Israel) and will not help you with the local Catalan language which is weird any way 😊. During this course you will receive homework twice a week typically. I highly recommend taking this course if you have no clue in Spanish because many locals don’t speak English or are reluctant to although they understand English. Besides, it’s a very important language if you seek opportunity in emerging markets in Latin America.

My Courses

1. Strategy Making with CEOs

I highly recommend this course. This is a one week intensive course held during the September Intensives period. My professor, Mr. Xavier Mir is a former executive manager in the confectionary industry. He is very experienced in corporate strategic decision making. He is currently an advisor to boards of directors of large MNCs (US & Spain) and a former executive in the Spanish Agrolimen conglomerate. He is also a very down to earth eye level teacher. He encourages discussion and monitors closely the progress of every study group during the course. The goal of this course was to

strategize, in groups, a plan for organic and inorganic growth of the various companies in the global confectionary industry. I know what you're thinking: "Bubble gum and candy?!" My group represented NESTLES and in one week we familiarized our self with the company and participated in a 24 hour negotiations simulation to acquire other firms represented by other groups in our class. This week's simulation taught me a lot about homing into a specific industry, mapping the relevant information through the eyes of an executive and formulating a growth strategy for the MNC. The course is engaging and very practical and does not include any individual homework assignments. The final deliverable for each group is a presentation. The groups are usually based on locality and you will be assigned with fellow Mediterraneans (Expect working with Egyptians, Lebanese, and so forth). It is fairly easy to get a high grade in this course by being an active participant during this week.

2. Project Management

I recommend this course for students who are interested in a project manager position. This is a regular course held once a week during the entire period of the semester (After the intensive courses end). I choose not to elaborate on the professor because although experienced I did not feel he captivated the class' attention although engaging a policy of open discussions rather than solely lecturing. The course focuses on the planning and definition phases of a project and provides the student with the formal methods and tools to go about these activities. Two major elements are incorporated in the learning experience. The first is an ICP (In company project) which begins at the very first session of the course. The students are placed in groups and are required to choose a company in which one of the group members has worked for and come up with a relevant project to this company. Through the course the professor will break down the project phases into deliverables according to the relevant subject taught during that time. Two presentations will be delivered by the group (Midterm and Final) along with other separate hand-in assignments. The second is presentations given by guest speakers who are project managers from a wide selection of companies and industries. For example, we heard two managers from HP, a professional mountain climber, a CSR manager from BBVA, and more. In addition, case studies are also used to complement the lectures. The presentations are steered by a committee of professors who give detailed feedback on the project and are graded by your peers (i.e. your grade is highly influenced by your fellow students).

3. Managing Sustainability

I highly recommend this course for every MBA student, even if you think that CSR is irrelevant for future managers, which personally I believe it is very relevant. This is a regular course held once a week during the entire semester (After the intensives). This course is unique due to its co-teaching method. I was taught by two professors which are part of the ESADE Social Innovation Research Center. As I mentioned above, this is a very active and focused field in ESADE. Mr. David Murillo and Mr. Marc Vilanova are international experts in the field of CSR. They incorporated a rich

list of subjects into the course curriculum, including Employee Engagement, Green Washing, Social Innovation, Bottom of the Pyramid, Supply Chain and Human Rights, and more. The course touches almost every aspect of decision making of every manager in every level. Through a set of case studies and active Moodle forums, the students are required to challenge their perception of CSR and comment on every class. Therefore, the course includes individual response to two threads a week, one to comment on the previous session, and the other to comment on the next session required readings. Along with the individual assignments, you will choose your group with which you will prepare the final project (no exam). The final project requires your group to contact a company, study its CSR activities and propose and “innovative and feasible” solution in the field of CSR. For example, my group teamed up with Ms. Daniela Prosky-Sion, Director of CSR at Strauss-Group, to suggest trust building activities for employees of the firm in light of the “Cottage-Cheese” social uprising in Israel during the summer of 2011. I really enjoyed this course and feel I’ve learned much! Although in Israel the field of CSR is unfortunately yet to be seriously approached by companies and government, it is deeply integrated into every MNC in almost every industry around the globe. Finally, through the course, many guest speakers presented, including directors from Mango, ASAF, UNESCO, Oxfam, and others.

Visa Information

I did not obtain a visa because I have a European citizenship. However, from talking to my peers I understand that obtaining a student visa for the Schengen (EU countries) is not difficult. Notice that Israelis and Americans have an automatic tourist visa for up to 90 days (in 180 consecutive days!!!). If you plan to overstay in Spain, I have heard that it not a problem but I wouldn’t recommend boarding connecting flights in other countries in the EU. Once you overstay you are encouraged unofficially by the university to stay in Spain until the day you leave. One important tip for obtaining a student visa would be to **apply at least two months in advance**. Go to the Spanish embassy on Daniel Frisch Street in Tel Aviv and ask for the list of documents you need to prepare for the application. You will notice a sign there saying that the application process takes a minimum of 15 days without a maximum mentioned. You will also need to turn in your passport for the entire process so make sure that doesn’t **collide with your Sofaer Business trip abroad during the summer**.

Barcelona Tips

The number one hazard in Barcelona is pick-pockets!

A number of case studies that happened to my peers and visitors:

1. My boyfriend was waiting for me at the **Aerobus** bus station in the city when an old man asked him for directions on a map he does not know. At the same time a man impersonating a police officer commanded my boyfriend to show him his money and passport claiming that there was a nearby theft crime scene. Startled from this

situation my boyfriend let him count his money. The man cleverly slipped three 100 Euro bills into his sleeve and walked away.

2. My peer was entering the subway when a man tried to exit from the same path blocked her way claiming it is the exit and not the entry while his woman accomplice grabbed her bag quietly from behind and took out her cell phone. My brave friend turned around and grabbed it back.
3. My peer was traveling back from the **airport** into the city holding her hand luggage close to her. When it was time for her to get off she kneeled down for a split second to pick up here suitcase. A few minutes later her phone was missing from her hand luggage.
4. My peer who happens to be a 190cm tall American athlete was walking down **La Rambla** (Where most pick pockets operate!) texting on his phone when someone grabbed it from his hand and kept on running until he disappeared in one of the next door allies.
5. I was walking through the **Gothic quarter** with a group of friends when I suddenly realized a hand of a stranger reach out to one of our group member's bag that had an iPod in it. Luckily, we were able to chase him away.

If you want to ask someone for directions, ask a police person in uniform! They know English and are very happy to help.