

Country: Spain

City: Barcelona

Host Institution: UPC

Course of Study: Hydropinformatics and Water Management (EuroAqua)

Semester: Winter 2012-2013

My experience as an exchange student at UPC, Barcelona, overall, was wonderful, although some things did take some getting used to.

Preparation:

As it is typical for the students in my program to study at UPC for the third semester, the application process to the university was quite straightforward. As a non-EU national, what was confusing was the visa process. Although the university regularly deals with such issues with foreign students, I could not get a straight answer on whether I needed a visa and the residence permit or if the two were synonymous. I was fortunate enough to be able to enter Spain without a visa, which made things a bit easier, but my classmates who were from countries where such privileges were not given struggled to find out accurate information from the international office at UPC, which is supposed to be the go-to place for these kinds of issues.

Accommodation:

No assistance was given by the university of the program in finding accommodation, and all of us were left to our own devices to arrange our own housing – something we were all used to by the third semester in the mobility program. I felt that the housing logistics at BTU to be far superior as the university provided much more information and there were a lot of options for low-budget student accommodations. While I understand that Barcelona is a much bigger and rather popular city to live in, some guidance provided by the hosting institution, especially to those who did not speak the local language, would have been very helpful. Personally, I found a good shared flat with locals

where I was able to improve my Spanish language skills and meet people from outside of the university.

Study at the host university:

It took me a while to get used to everyone being late to classes – even the professors were late to their own classes! Other than that, and the fact that a couple professors did not seem very prepared to or enthusiastic about teaching students, the overall learning experience at UPC was satisfactory. One thing that I wished was possible was to interact with more local students in the classroom, something that was not possible as most of our classes were tailored to our degree program. I enjoyed the small class sizes though, and also the fact that most professors were easily reachable when we had questions or concerns. Our schedule was a bit intense on the days that we had classes, but I would have still preferred to have it this way and have a day off during the week if I had a choice.

Everyday life and leisure:

Because of my living arrangement, I was able to branch out of only sticking to my peer group from the program. By interacting with people that have lived in the city for a long time, I was able to feel at home quite fast, and take advantage of the activities and sites that the locals enjoy, which I found invaluable. The cultural, social, and natural opportunities Barcelona offered was so diverse, and, although I started feeling quite fatigued towards the end of the semester when we had to prepare for exams and final reports, I enjoyed my time and the people that I came into touch with in Barcelona thoroughly.

Lastly, I would like to thank the funding that I received while in Barcelona, for I had no other scholarships and would have had less time for my studies and leisure had I had no funding sources at all. I am truly grateful.