

Universidad de Granada (Spain)

Environmental and Resource Management (BTU) / Grado en ciencias ambientales (UGR)

Summer semester 2021 - 6. Semester



Preparation (planning, organisation and application at the host university)

The semester abroad is a mandatory part as an environmental and resource management student at the BTU for the 5. Semester, thus I had plenty of time to prepare for this. I knew quite early on that I would like to learn Spanish and decided on Universidad de Granada in Spain because it was highly spoken of. All courses at the UGR are in Spanish and therefore I signed up for the Spanish course at the BTU in my first semester and simultaneously started a language course in Berlin so that by the time I started the semester abroad I would be the required level B1.

I started the application process early by preparing my motivation letter, CV and learning agreement ahead of time knowing that these would require the most time. Thankfully, the courses on the UGR website were all listed and described thoroughly. In December 2019 the application process would open for the academic year 2020/21. With sufficient preparation, the process was fairly easy to complete. In March 2020 I received my confirmation that I have been given the space at the UGR by the BTU and would then in Juli 2020 receive an email from the UGR with the necessary steps to complete my application. The UGR was throughout very helpful and very responsive to all my emails (**Oficina RRII Ciencias** <ricienc@ugr.es>). Additionally to my Erasmus Grant, I also applied to 'Ausland-BAföG' with the [Studentenwerk Heidelberg](#).

Websites with useful information:

- [Online Application Procedure Erasmus Students IN](#)
- [Buddy-Mentor Programme](#)
- [Grado en ciencias ambientales - cursos](#)
- [Títulos de Grado - Horarios, cursos, calendario de exámenes](#)
- [Calendario Académico](#)
- [Induction Days for incoming students](#)

In June 2020 I finally decided to postpone my semester abroad as the Covid-19 Pandemic restricted travels and lead to the closing of many Universities. In the hope that the summer semester would offer me a better exchange experience, I delayed my semester abroad by one semester. Again, the UGR and also the BTU were really helpful and accommodated the changes without problems.

Accommodation in the host country

I arrived in Spain in March 2021 while the semester already started in February 2021. I flew from Berlin to Granada airport (*Federico García Lorca Granada Airport*) via Madrid with the Iberia Airline which at the time was the cheapest option (Last minute/5 days prior: 160€/one way with luggage). At the airport, I was then picked up by my Airbnb host. Because I had many exams in Germany at the same time as my semester started at the UGR I was not able to find accommodation prior to my arrival. I stayed my first 3 nights at an Airbnb/Hostel (Casa de Alegria) in the centre. Within these 3 days, I was able to arrange multiple viewing quite quickly and finally found the best apartment for me.

Generally, you can find shared apartments 150€ and 350€ for a room in the centre of Granada. Neighbourhoods (Barrios) that I can recommend are Albaicin and Realejo. Each has its own interesting character. Albaicin is the old Arabic town on the hill of Granada and consists of beautiful narrow winding streets and offers the best views over Granada, the Alhambra and Sierra Nevada. Many students live in this Barrio and in the evening you will always find people playing music in the various plazas. Realejo is the Jewish quarter with the best bars and restaurants in Granada and is less hilly than Albaicin.

I ended up living in a shared apartment in the Barrio 'Barranco del Abogado' (which is just next to Realejo) and paid 350€. However, there are definitely cheaper places and therefore I recommend looking for apartments early but generally, it is better to check the places once you have arrived before confirming. Best is to book a hostel for the first nights (e.g. at *El Granado Hostel*). Due to the Pandemic, I left this to the last minute because I did not want to cancel the apartment and not receive my deposit back (which is usually one month rent). Finding an apartment is relatively easy and can be done through either Facebook groups (e.g. '*Alquiler de pisos en Granada y alrededores*' or '*Pisos y habitaciones de alquiler en Granada 2021/2022*') or through [idealista.com](https://www.idealista.com).

I have heard many horror stories about finding a room, especially regarding the landlords. Therefore, I recommend to thoroughly check the information given and ask a lot of questions (especially to the housemates that already live there). Best to always contact in Spanish because many do not understand English well enough or generally prefer if the potential housemate already speaks Spanish.

Studying at the host university

Unfortunately, my whole semester was conducted online due to the Pandemic. All classes were live and not recorded which meant that you had to be present at each class. Some classes also did not upload any material. Granada (or generally Andalucia) is known for its very strong and hard to understand accent which made it particularly difficult to understand the content. Personally, I was not able to take any notes and therefore was just trying to understand the context during the lectures. However, most of my professors and fellow students were super helpful and offered either additional tutorials or even their notes. Similarly to the BTU, the UGR had a kind of Moodle (in this case *Prado*) where Professors would communicate with their students and upload material.

I was largely happy with the selection of courses that I have chosen:

- Economía del Medio Ambiente y Gestión de Recursos Naturales (9 ECTS)
- Población, Territorio, Paisaje y Sostenibilidad (9 ECTS)
- Genética de la Conservación y Medio Ambiente (6 ECTS)
- Riesgos Naturales (3 ECTS)

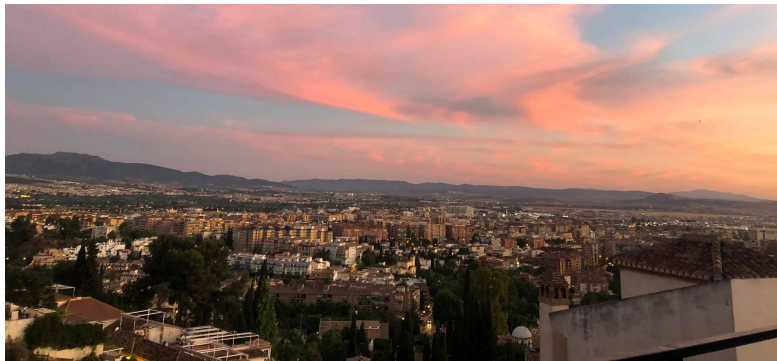
Especialmente Economía and Población were challenging due to the large amount of homework and group work required but at the same time were the most interesting courses. Many courses include either practical exercises (e.g. Genética in the lab) or excursions (e.g. Población to an ecological farm in Granada).



The university also offers [language courses](#) at CLM for Erasmus students which I, unfortunately, was not able to attend. However, I have heard really good feedback. Also, the University offers a Buddy program which a UGR-Student is assigned to you in case you have any questions about the university or the city itself.

Everyday life and free time

I can not emphasise enough how much I loved to live in such an incredible city as Granada! Being a student city you had plenty of opportunities to meet people from all over the world. The Erasmus program is very well established and different organisations (e.g. Emicet or ESN) offer regular short trips or events for students at a very affordable price. I have often organised trips with friends or my boyfriend to various places such as the Sierra Nevada for hiking and camping (~1h), Almuñecar to go to the beach (~1h), Malaga (e.g. Frigiliana, Nerja ~2h) or other places in Andalucia such as Sevilla (~4h), Ronda (~3h), Cordoba (~3h) and Cadiz (~4h).



But also in Granada, there was no shortage of opportunities to explore and experiences different things. One of my favourite activities was to aimlessly walk through the narrow streets and find beautiful views and places - esp. sunset at San Miguel Alto or San Nicolas is a must! Granada has a large abundance of plazas with various bars and restaurants. Commonly in Granada, you receive a free tapa (including mini paellas, tortillas, sandwiches, sushi etc.) with every drink (~2.50€) that you buy which often would be sufficient as a lunch or dinner (after ordering a few drinks). I was fascinated by the extensive history of the city that dates back as far as 500 BC and various architecture including the masterpiece Alhambra reflects the changes that Granada experiences throughout time.



A fact that I absolutely loved is that you can find Pomegranates everywhere in the city (Granada means Pomegranate in Spanish, however, the city was not named after the fruit). Also, Granada is a very small city and you can basically walk everywhere without needing public transport. However many places are situated on a hill so that sometimes you will need to hike a bit to reach your destination. Something that I was never really able to get used to was Siesta (between 2 pm and 5 pm) which meant that all shops are closed that most bars did not serve tapas.



Conclusion

I am so grateful to have had the chance to experience living and studying in Granada and would unquestionably recommend this experience! It has truly been an amazing time in which I have learned not only to improve my language skills (esp. my confidence with speaking it) but also met fascinating people along the way. Granada is honestly a magical place that offers a large variety of opportunities.

Finally, I would offer my last recommendation for your semester abroad let it be in Granada or elsewhere (things that I would have liked to have done differently):

- Avoid the Summer semester because the semester starts while many exams in Germany are still ongoing. The winter semester offers a better transition and preparation time.
- If you can, do not overload yourself with courses esp. if they are in a language that you are not 100% fluent in - it can be very frustrating and stops you from enjoying the experience.
- Live with Spanish speaking people in an apartment - that will help you to practice more every day. Many have told me that living with other Erasmus students was not beneficial for their language skills. I was lucky enough to have lived with 2 Spanish people that spoke little English
- Join a language course if it is offered and if this is your main aim during the semester abroad.
- Try a new hobby/sport etc. (e.g. learn to dance the flamenco or join a pottery class).
- Visit tourist places early and make yourself familiar with the city you live in early because later in the semester you might not have the time to.

But obviously, you have to find what is best for you! These are just some things that I would have liked to have done differently. However, I still enjoyed every second of my semester abroad.