

# Semester Abroad in Granada, Spain

## University of Granada- Environmental Sciences

### Winter Semester 2019-2020

#### Preparation Phase

I chose to study in the city of Granada for its mild climate, sunny skies, warm culture, affordable prices, and stunning landscapes, among other things! Aside from the paperwork required for an Erasmus semester, my preparation included getting flight tickets, looking for possible shipping options, finding accommodation, as well as other bureaucratic requirements, such as deregistering at the city office.

Getting to Granada is very easy from a city like Berlin. Despite having a really small airport (you can walk from one end to the next in under 2 minutes), there are direct flights to Granada from Berlin a few times a week. On the other hand, flights to nearby Malaga are usually much cheaper, especially when you have checked luggage. I flew directly to Malaga and from Berlin and then took a bus directly from the airport to Granada's bus station. The bus ticket was only 12 € and the ride lasted only about 2 hours.

I managed to fit all my necessary belongings in one big suitcase and a carry-on. I would also recommend looking into shipping options with DHL, which costs about the same as the checked luggage. I would recommend travelling light, though. At the end of my stay I had to leave some things behind so I could have space for gifts on my way back to Germany.

#### Housing

Finding accommodation was probably the most stressful part about moving to Granada. The university does not offer any affordable student dorms, like at BTU. There are some student residences offered by some private companies, but they're very expensive. Most Erasmus students end up living in shared apartments.

My biggest problem with finding accommodation was the rental contract. I only found places that offered full-year contracts, which was complicated since I was only staying for the winter semester. I unfortunately turned down some nice offers because of this, but at the end I had to take a one-year contract anyway on a not-so-nice apartment because I had run out of options. I later found out that it is relatively easy to find someone to take the rest of your contract, as long as your renter agrees. There are many other students Erasmus students moving to Granada at the start of the summer semester who will happily take your contract.

There are many sites which you can use to find apartments. The ones I used the most were Idealista and Badi. (The last one is like tinder but for apartments haha) That's where I found my room. I recommend it because you not only focus on finding a nice place to live, but also nice roommates. Most other sites just

show you pictures of apartments, and you might not who you will live with. There are also many Facebook groups for people looking for roommates/rooms to rent in Granada.

Above of all, I recommend starting early. Granada is a very popular Erasmus destination and the best apartments go fast!

## Studying

The study experience at the UGR - in my case the faculty of science - was pretty different than at the BTU. Sometimes it felt like studying back in high school. Classes were held in the same classroom all day and only lasted about an hour each. Unfortunately, I did not particularly like the study experience, save for a few elective modules that I thought were quite interesting. I would advise future students to look into classes offered by other faculties, as the course offer is far more varied, and the possibilities are huge.

The language part is quite unique. The regional accent in the south of Spain is strong, and it can be difficult to understand for those learning Spanish. Although not mandatory, I think it is a very good idea to take Spanish lessons at the UGR – integrating into Spanish uni life is a lot easier if you make an effort to speak the language. I found that most Spanish students were shy when speaking English, and it might make making new friends more difficult.

## Living in Granada

Life outside of uni can be fascinating in Granada. Whether you like partying, exploring nature, visiting historical sites, or travelling, the possibilities are nearly endless! Best of all, prices in Andalusia are generally cheaper than in Germany. Travelling in and around Granada is a must for exchange students. There are many excursions offered by ESN Granada, and similar Erasmus organizations that are affordable and memorable. The beach, just about a half hour bus drive away from the city, is certainly a popular attraction during the warmer months. And in the winter months, skiing is also just half an hour away at the infamous Sierra Nevada.

Night life in Granada is exciting. Even if you are not a fan of partying, eating out is a good way to spend your evenings. Most bars have “tapas” - for each drink you buy, you get a small portion of food for free. A beer costs around 2 to 3 euros, and with that you get a tapa. It’s incredibly cheap and at most places have great food. It’s a nice way to meet new people and to expand your palate.

Lastly, I’d like to mention my favourite attraction within Granada: the multitude of historical and cultural landmarks. From La Alhambra to El Albaicín, the city has many landmarks and attractions that make living in the city enchanting. An old saying sums it all up: “Give him alms, woman, because there is nothing worse in life than to be blind in Granada”.