

[ESPAGNE] – [Universidad Rey Juan Carlos Madrid]

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¹ To update the agenda just click right on your moose

I. Your overall feeling after your semester abroad

[Help : How was your experience abroad? If you could go back I time, would you go to this university and why ?]

5/5

I absolutely loved my semester abroad in Madrid, Spain. It was an educational, cultural, and life-enriching experience that broadened my perspective and showed me that the world is full of opportunities for those willing to step outside their comfort zone and explore. The experience not only helped me grow academically but also allowed me to immerse myself in a new culture, meet people from diverse backgrounds and create memories that will stay with me for a lifetime.

GRADE : [a grade between 0 and 5]

=> 0 (I do not recommend this semester abroad to my best friend) - 5 (I totally recommend this semester to my best friend)

II. Before the travel

A. Preparation

1. Visa

No visa is required if you are a citizen of a country that is part of the European Union.

2. The flight

[Help : what flight did you take (the company name, airport etc.) and when did you take your flight ticket]

I flew from Luxembourg to Madrid with Luxair and arrived at Madrid Barajas Airport on January 12th. I had booked my ticket at the end of November. Since classes did not begin until January 26th, I had a couple of weeks to settle in, get familiar with my new surroundings and explore the city. There was also a welcome day organized on January 23rd.

I was very happy to arrive before the start of the semester, as it gave me the opportunity to discover Madrid at my own pace and adjust to life in the city before classes began.

3. My luggage

[Help : what to not forget in the luggage (what was useful and what you would like to have taken)]

I brought a large suitcase (23 kg), a carry-on bag and my purse. To save some money and avoid having to buy everything once I arrived, I packed a frying pan, cutlery and a plate. However, I still needed to buy a few essentials in Madrid, such as a casserole dish, bed sheets and pillows.

Apart from that, I mainly packed clothes. One thing I would recommend is bringing a warm coat. Although the weather starts to get warmer from March onwards, January can still be quite cold. From April or May, however, summer-like temperatures begin to arrive and it often becomes warm enough that you do not need a jacket at all.

If you forget something or need to buy additional items, there is no need to worry. Madrid has many affordable stores, similar to those you would find in France and other European countries, where you can easily purchase anything you may need during your stay.

4. Bank account

[Help : did you have to change bank? To respect some amount requirement on the bank account etc.]

In my case, there was no need to open a Spanish bank account. I would, however, recommend having a Revolut account, as it makes international transfers and payments very easy. One advantage is that you can exchange money into different currencies directly within the app, often at competitive rates.

5. Insurance

[Help : What insurance did you subscribe to ?]

I just had my European Carte de Sécurité sociale.

B. Housing

1. Recommendation to live

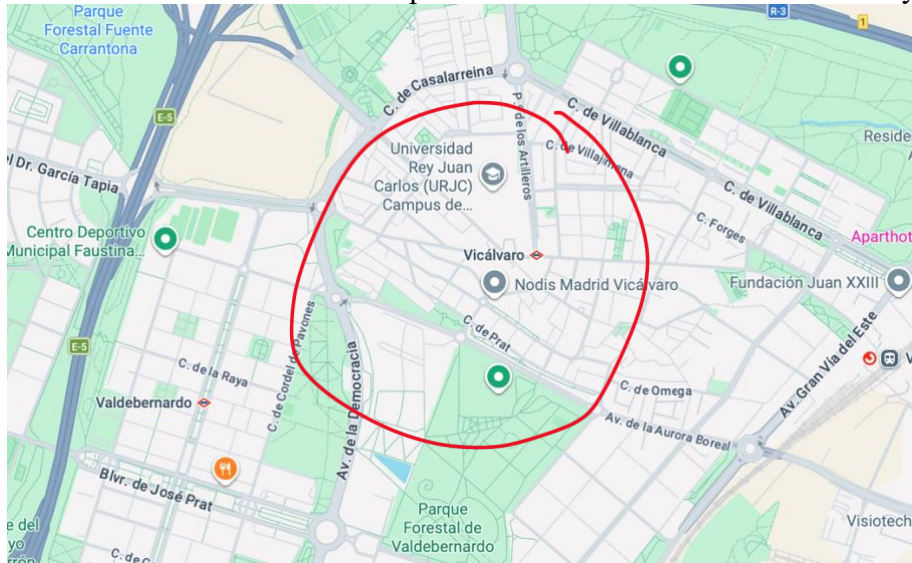
[Help : Do a google maps capture and circle the area you recommend to live in (and the one you do not recommend)]

I lived in Vicálvaro, about a 7-minute walk from the university. Although it is located a bit outside the city center, it is extremely convenient for students because of its proximity to campus.

Getting to the city center usually took between 30 and 50 minutes, depending on the destination. However, I found the journey much faster and easier than I had expected, especially once I became familiar with Madrid's excellent public transportation system. I often took the E3 or E5 bus to Goya and then transferred to Metro Line 2, which brought me directly into the heart of the city. Another option was Metro Line 9, although I found it slightly slower.

One thing I particularly appreciated was Madrid's night transport network. While the metro usually stops running around 1:30 a.m., there are several night buses available. My favorite was the N7 bus, which runs from Plaza de Cibeles to Vicálvaro approximately every 30 minutes. This made it very easy to enjoy evenings in the city without worrying about getting home.

For anyone new to Madrid, Puerta del Sol is generally considered the very center of the city. Personally, I absolutely loved the Salamanca neighborhood, which is known for its beautiful streets, elegant atmosphere and excellent shopping and dining options. I also knew several exchange students who lived around the Ópera area, which is another great location thanks to its central position and lively atmosphere.



2. Find a flat or a room

[Help : How did you find your flat? Do you have any recommendation]

I lived in Vicálvaro, about a 7-minute walk from the university. Although it is located a bit outside the city center, it is extremely convenient for students because of its proximity to campus.

I lived in a studio apartment in a student residence called Nodis. I would definitely recommend it. The residence offered everything I needed during my stay. Utilities, air conditioning, access to a gym and maintenance services were all included. Whenever there was an issue in the room, someone from the residence could come and help quickly.

I had my own private room and bathroom, while the kitchen was shared with other residents. However, this was never a problem because the common areas were cleaned regularly and were always well maintained. The residence also provided several communal spaces where students could study, relax or socialize.

I found Nodis through the URJC website and had also heard positive feedback about it before arriving in Spain. Another advantage was its location next to a large park, which was perfect for going on walks.

Overall, I had a very positive experience there and would recommend it to future exchange students looking for comfortable and convenient accommodation close to the university.

3. Cost

[Help : How much should I plan for a room or a flat?]

The cost of living largely depends on where you choose to live. Madrid is generally more expensive than other Spanish cities because it is the capital. Housing costs can also vary significantly depending on whether you live in a shared apartment with roommates or in your own accommodation. Overall, your monthly expenses will depend on your lifestyle and housing preferences.

III. When I arrived at the university

A. Inscription at the university

[Help : How was the process, what did you have to do?]

Before going to Madrid, I had to complete and sign my Learning Agreement. However, I can assure future exchange students that the administrative procedures for Madrid were much easier than I had expected, so there is no need to worry.

During the welcome day, you will need to present yourself at the International Relations Office. They will check your identification and provide you with all the necessary documents and information for your exchange semester.

Once everything is set up, you will gain access to the URJC online platforms, including the Intranet and Aula Virtual. These platforms are similar to ENT and Moodle in Montpellier, as they serve as your personal student space. There, you can access course materials, schedules, assignments, grades, and all the information related to your classes.

B. Information on the university

1. Class

[Help : for each class tell us how was the class, what did you like and not like, would you recommend it for the next student?]

I took six classes during my exchange semester. Five of them were from the third year of study (Curso 3), while one was from the second year (Curso 2). I will explain this choice in more detail in Section 3.

Initially, I had selected a different set of courses. However, due to scheduling conflicts and overlapping class times, I had to modify my Learning Agreement and choose alternative subjects. In the end, I was quite satisfied with my final course selection, as I felt that the classes aligned well with my academic background and allowed me to continue progressing in my studies.

Although I did not particularly enjoy the course *Management Information Systems*, I found the overall academic experience to be very educational and rewarding.

2. Organization of the Class

[Help : tell us the duration of the class, the volum of work, the behavior of teachers etc. ?]

Most classes were either one or two hours long. However, professors often let students leave about 30 minutes early. Throughout the semester, we typically covered around eight chapters per course.

In general, teaching was mainly lecture-based, with professors explaining the subject. However, there were also moments of interaction and discussion in some classes. In a few courses, we also completed activities or assignments that counted toward the final grade.

3. List of courses and recommendation

[Help : list your different courses and let us know what do you think : level (easier, same or harder than the 1st semester course at MOMA, what you liked about the content, how is the class organization, who is the professor). Finally, for each class, tell us if you recommend the course.]

Originally, I had chosen a different set of subjects. However, I received my final schedule in January, and many of the classes were overlapping. As a result, I had no choice but to change my course selection. In the end, the most practical solution was to choose courses mainly from a single year, as otherwise it was impossible to build a workable timetable, especially since there was only one English programme available.

Balance Analysis (Curso 3) :

This course mainly focused on the analysis of a company's balance sheet. One aspect I particularly appreciated was the assessment structure: if we passed the three midterms, we were not required to take the final exam. The exercises in the midterms were very similar to those we practiced in class, which made it relatively easy to pass.

Financial Management (Curso 3) :

This was a finance course taught by an excellent professor. However, it was quite challenging due to the large number of formulas and concepts. Despite this, it was one of the courses I invested the most effort in and I learned a great deal about financial markets, risk and return.

Strategic Management and Corporate Politics (Curso 3) :

This course was quite similar to the Management courses in Montpellier. The professor was very supportive and understanding. While the content was extensive, it was not overly difficult overall. The multiple-choice exams were quite challenging, as they included negative marking and sometimes complex question wording. However, the in-class presentations were very easy and well graded. The final exam was also manageable, as we were given definitions and questions in advance to prepare. Overall, the course focused mainly on organizational structure.

Management Information Systems (Curso 3) :

I did not particularly enjoy this course, as I am not very interested in information systems within companies and struggled to see how I might apply this knowledge in the future. However, the small assignments were quite easy and allowed for good grades. The final exam was more difficult due to the large amount of material to study.

Marketing Management (Curso 2):

This was an easier course covering basic marketing concepts such as marketing plans, segmentation, targeting, positioning, SWOT analysis, the 4Ps, digital marketing and branding. Overall, it was straightforward and manageable.

National and International Environment of the Firm (Curso 3):

I really enjoyed this course, as it was very interesting and closely related to international relations and the Spanish market. It focused on economic structures and how markets behave, which aligns well with my interests. The course had two teachers: the first one was excellent and explained concepts very clearly, while the second teacher was less consistent and often unprepared, which affected the overall experience.

4. Exam

[Help : How was the exam? Format? Duration? Grade]

The subjects were quite similar to those I had in MOMA. However, there were a lot of MCQs, often with negative marking and only one correct answer. In general, continuous assessment, such as midterms, small tests throughout the semester or presentations usually counted for around 30–40% of the final grade, while the final exam represented 60–70%.

Overall, I found the Spanish grading system somewhat confusing. In some courses, if you failed the final exam, they said you had to retake the entire subject regardless of your performance during the semester, such as Finance or Strategic Management, you needed to pass specific midterms in order to pass the course. Because of this, assessment rules varied significantly between subjects, which made the system difficult to fully understand. However I asked MOMA and they told me they would still calculate the average of all the grades and the compensation system would be applied when converting the grades.

Most exams lasted between 30 and 90 minutes and were generally not very long. While I do not particularly enjoy MCQs and prefer written exams, they were less exhausting and usually provided enough time to complete compared to my experience in MOMA.

Despite this, most courses included regular midterms or assignments that were fairly graded, while exams were generally more challenging but manageable.

Balance Analysis: I did not have to take the final exam because I achieved an average above 5 across the three midterms.

Financial Management: There was one midterm based on a practical case with calculations from chapters 4 to 7. The final exam was an MCQ covering all topics, including some calculation-based questions to determine the correct answer.

Strategic Management and Corporate Politics: Assessment included presentations and two MCQs during the semester. If all components were passed, the final exam consisted of questions and definitions from the course content, which could be prepared in advance.

Management Information Systems: Assessment included an essay for the first professor, in-class practical activities with the second professor and an MCQ final exam.

National and International Economic Environment of the Firm: This course included two short essays with the first professor, one longer essay with the second and a final MCQ exam with one written question, which served as a conclusion to the essay work.

Marketing Management: Assessment consisted of presentations during the semester, and the final exam was an MCQ with a few short questions, such as listing concepts or filling in blanks.

IV. When I lived there

A. Safety

[Help : Is it safe? Is there areas or times I should avoid]

Madrid felt like a very safe city, both during the day and at night. I always felt comfortable and secure throughout my stay. Of course, as in any capital city, you can encounter a wide range of people, but overall I would say it is one of the safest cities I have ever lived in.

I also felt very safe at night, as there are usually many people around, including students and young adults, even late in the evening. Getting home after a night out was never an issue, as the night buses were reliable and there were security people at the bus station to help guide you and show you where to catch them.

B. Phone and Internet

[Help : How to be able to call and have internet]

I used 5G and eduroam throughout my stay, and I did not experience any issues with either connection. Both worked reliably and were sufficient for my daily needs.

C. Events

[Help : How to know about the events?]

Madrid offers a wide range of activities and events, so there is always something to do. In my opinion, it is a good idea to join activities during the first few days, as this is the easiest way to meet new people. Everyone is in the same situation and is usually open to making friends.

The main sources of information for events are the Erasmus networks in Madrid and platforms such as Citylife. During the welcome day, the Erasmus network introduces itself and you can join WhatsApp groups where they regularly share the schedule of upcoming activities and events.

My highlights in Madrid

One of the best things to do in Madrid is simply exploring its different neighborhoods. I especially enjoyed walking through Salamanca, Justicia, and Malasaña.

Other highlights include:

- **El Rastro** (Sundays): a large and very famous flea market with a lively atmosphere.
- **Templo de Debod**: especially at sunset, when many artists, musicians where young people gather to enjoy the view.
- **El Retiro Park**: a peaceful and spacious park, perfect for relaxing
- **Gran Vía**: a central avenue that really shows the scale of the city, with impressive architecture, especially the Metropolis Building.

Madrid also has many excellent museums, such as the Prado Museum, the Reina Sofía Museum (where you can see Picasso's *Guernica*), and the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum. Many of these museums are free for students which makes them very accessible.

D. Sports

[Help : What sport can I do ? and how?]

Madrid is a very sporty city and it really encourages an active lifestyle. There are plenty of options for doing sports throughout the city.

One of the most popular activities is running in the city's large parks, such as El Retiro Park and Casa de Campo, which offer beautiful and spacious routes.

I also participated a few times in the Erasmus Network run club in El Retiro, which was a very enjoyable experience. It was a great way to stay active while also meeting new people in a relaxed and social environment.

E. Eating

[Help : Any recommendation? Or good tips (e.g. an international house buffet)]

In Spain, people generally eat later compared to other countries, although this can of course vary from person to person.

One of the highlights of the local culture is the tapas tradition, where small dishes are shared and enjoyed in a social setting. Madrid is especially known for its typical foods such as churros con chocolate, calamares sandwiches, croquetas de jamón, tortilla española, and jamón ibérico.

For example, Mercado de San Miguel is a very popular place to try a variety of Spanish dishes. It is a great experience and definitely worth visiting, although it can be more expensive, as it is very touristy.

F. Go to the university : bus, car, bike

[Help : How did you get access to the bus, car or bike]

I would recommend ordering your transportation card through the Citylife office. In December, there is an online webinar where you can participate and receive a lot of useful information about housing, university life and other practical aspects of living in Madrid. During this session, they also explain the public transportation system.

They will guide you through the process of ordering the transport card. I do not remember the exact website, but you need to provide your name, address and phone number. However, since a Spanish address and phone number are required, they suggest sending the application through their office instead. This worked very well in my case. You can then pick up the card at their office, which is located on Gran Vía.

At the beginning, you pay a small fee for the card. After that, you can recharge it at any metro station. The monthly pass costs around 10 euros and allows unlimited travel for 30 days.

The metro system is very efficient and easy to understand and the bus network also works very well.

For example, Metro Line 9 connects Vicálvaro with other parts of the city. In addition, buses such as the E3 and E5 are fast and convenient, especially for commuting from Vicálvaro.

G. Travels

[Help : What do you recommend and what do you not recommend]

Sevilla was my absolute highlight as a travel destination. It is an incredibly beautiful city, especially with its parks such as Plaza de España. It is about a 2.5-hour train ride from Madrid. I visited Sevilla during the Feria de Abril, which was a 10/10 experience and something I would highly recommend. It is a fantastic way to experience Spanish culture.

Barcelona is about a 3-hour train ride from Madrid and is also a wonderful city with many things to do. Some of the main highlights include Gaudí's masterpieces such as Casa Batlló, Parc Güell and the Sagrada Família. Other places worth visiting are Parc de la Ciutadella, the Arc de Triomf, Barceloneta beach, the Gothic Quarter, and Passeig de Gràcia.

Toledo is only about 50 minutes away by bus. It is a small medieval city close to Madrid and perfect for a day trip.

Valencia is also easily accessible, around a 2-hour train ride from Madrid. It is a beautiful city located by the sea and offers a mix of culture and beach life.

Although I did not visit these places myself, I know that many friends travelled there during their exchange, as connections are good and distances are relatively short. Popular destinations include Morocco, Mallorca and Portugal.

H. Any other information you would have liked to know about

[Help : What would I liked to know if I could have gone back in time]

Enjoy it to the fullest. Madrid truly has my heart. It is an amazing cit and I love the lifestyle it offers. It is incredibly beautiful, and there is always something to do.

V. After your semester abroad

A. What are you planning do to?

[Help : What do you want to do next year]

I would like to pursue a master's degree in either Management and Business Development or Marketing and Communication for Organizations. My goal is to later build a career in the luxury industry, particularly in sales within fashion or real estate.

B. Did you apply for master?

[Help : in which master where you accepted]

I have applied to several master's programs, mostly at MOMA. My preferred choices are Management and Business Development, as well as Marketing and Communication for Organizations. However, I have not yet received an official admission decision.

[remember to fill in the excel : <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/11-vB4ABdkzIJR1AQ82drWyAVXfnCpRYr8COkeKihnlS/edit?usp=sharing>]