

Exchange semester Fall semester

The last 7 months I spend my time in a beautiful country in South America; Argentina. It was a wish coming true, going on an exchange to South America and especially Argentina. Many people asked me why, but I truly do not know. Of course, I wanted to make my exchange special and unforgettable but where exactly I did not know. When I took a look at the destinations for the first time I discovered that only the countries in South America captured my attention. When I had to make my final decision and write a motivation letter, I had the best feeling with Argentina. After 7 months I can only say that I will never regret this decision.

At the end of June I departed to Argentina finally, knowing I would be living there for 6 months. I departed one month earlier than the semester starts at *Pontificia Universidad Catolica Argentina*, as I took a Spanish course at another university in the city. During the first week I stayed in a hostel and used my time to find a room for the other months and went to my Spanish course. The Spanish course was a great opportunity to already meet some awesome people, which I enjoyed my time with till the very end of this adventure. The hostel, as well as my room later on were located in the neighbourhood of Palermo. Quite a big part of the city, which is located close to restaurant, clubs as well as parcs and the small airport of the city. I would definitely recommend you to stay in this neighbourhood, the neighbourhood is big and divided by a railway in 2 parts, you will find delicious restaurants and nice clubs. The price for a room may be 1.5 times higher than in Tilburg, I think it is definitely worth it, you have to make the best out of it, isn't it?

After 1 month I left the Spanish course and started at my own university *UCA* in the neighbourhood of Puerto Madero. Puerto Madero is a new modernized part with lots of high buildings, both for living and offices. It is really enjoyable to walk along the river or visit the ecological parc a little bit more close to the real river. At the beginning it may seem quite far, but because I lived close



to Plaza Italia, a small square that divides Palermo and a huge area with lots of parcs, it was quite doable as Plaza Italia has a metro station. In 15 minutes the metro, line D, will drive you from Plaza Italia to Cathedral, a church that is located at Plaza de Mayo, the main square. It was really refreshing to walk there every day, especially during sun rise.

During the first days at *UCA* you will have 3 days of introduction, you will get the practical information you need regarding the VISA procedure, course election and other important dates. The VISA procedure is quite easy, *UCA* will help you with making the 2 appointments and explain you something about what to bring etc. The VISA will give you permission to the country for 6 months, so take a close look to the expiration date if you go back in January or something as some people had to pay a fine in the end because they left the country too late. During the first 2 weeks at *UCA* I followed I couple of courses to try them, after these weeks you will have to make a selection for the following months. As a Tilburg University student, 1 hour corresponds to 1.5 ECTS, so you will end up choosing subjects with in total 20 hours. This means you will have to follow faculty courses, as the international ones are only 3 hours

and are not diversified enough regarding themes. Be aware, that you will follow courses in Spanish.

In Argentina it is important, both for the courses as well as your normal, social life that you will be able to speak some Spanish. During the semester you will follow a Spanish course and it is advised by me to take a Spanish course beforehand at Tilburg University. Next to that you got the popular and energetic Latin American culture. One thing I noticed quite fast was the way people do the things in their lives, they just take it easy. As European this might be an irritating thing sometimes, but you will get used to it very quickly. The other thing that is quite typical for their culture, is the way they plan their lives and especially daily lives. As UCA has a participation grade and a 75% minimum attendance I had to get up early in the morning. Soon I noticed that 7.30 in the morning, people will not be going to their jobs and in the metro. Therefore the people in Argentina are used to eat after 9 in the evening. This is something you see a lot as restaurants do not open before 8 o'clock. Although you may think that it is a little late, you will get used to it very quickly as the evening and especially nights in Buenos Aires are long. Take it easy and just explore all the amazing restaurants they have in the city. One recommendation; Don Julio, please make sure you go there early as it opens up at 19 in the evening with a queue already waiting.

You might think that going out for dinner might be quite expensive, but in Argentina it is completely normal to order or 1 big dish, with some side dishes or another combination to share. Besides you also got cheap places who are quite nice, such as different burger places, therefore you will be able to have an amazing dinner and evening for 10 euros or less. This compensates a bit for the higher rent you pay in comparison to Tilburg. During the semester I had to expenses for the university, the only thing you need to pay is the Spanish course.

After the 2 introduction weeks I had my first trip, to the Iguazu waterfalls at the border of Brazil and Argentina. I went there with the International Student organization *BAIS*. During this trip I saw the most beautiful falls I have ever seen and met amazing people as it is a trip with over 200 international students. If you decide to



Buenos Aires I would definitely recommend you to go to the falls and I think this trip is an amazing one. As UCA also has their own kind of 'buddy' program, *PALS*, it is also possible to go with them later on in the semester. Next to these waterfalls Argentina offers a wide variety of nature. They have the dessert in the north and the glaciers in the south of the country, and in the west of the country you got the small city of Mendoza with lots of activities as you got the mountains close but also hundreds of wineries in the area. Argentina is known for its steaks and wines, therefore Mendoza is a nice thing to do during the semester. Only a couple of days will be sufficient, and with the plane you will fly there in just an hour. After the semester I had 4 weeks for vacation left as I was flying back the 21st of January. During 3 weeks I visited Peru and Colombia, amazing countries at the north of South America. These countries were truly amazing, the nature in both these countries is unique and so beautiful. If

you want to see some amazing nature, green and unbelievable I think you should definitely visit these 2.

I visited these 2 countries after I had finished my exams at the university. Most of the host universities offer 2 different type of courses; international ones and faculty ones. The international ones are most of the time in English and the faculty one can be in the language spoken in your host country. At UCA they have a variety of international ones, but as you need a specific amount of credits, you need to follow some faculty courses as well. These are the courses that the students from Argentina follow as well. The international courses are relatively easy and will end earlier on, or may even not have a final exam but a report or presentation. The faculty courses will end up later on in December. The final exams of these courses were from the 1st of the December onwards in my semester. The exams are most likely in Spanish, but I was allowed to reply in English. Another possibility is that you have an oral exam, which is quite common in Argentina. Although it might sound difficult that the exam will be in Spanish, the level of the exam is not like ours. The level of education is a bit lower in Argentina, and therefore it will be easier to understand the Spanish questions and to answer to them. Underneath you will find a small schedule with my courses;

COURSE	EXAM	COMMENTS	ECTS
Teoria de los Juegos	2 midterms and 1 final	Can be a little bit hard to understand sometimes	7,5
Estrategia de Producto	1 midterm, 1 project and 1 final		7,5
Distribucion y Trade Marketing	1 project, 1 midterm and 1 final		7,5
Principios de Emprendedurismo	Couple of small projects	Course in Spanish, lectures can be boring	4,5
Valuation in Emerging Markets	2 projects		4,5

I can only conclude that my 7 months in Argentina have been truly amazing. I have made wonderful friends, and met even more amazing people. Next to that I have seen beautiful parts of the world in South America. I would definitely recommend everyone to go on exchange to South America if you are into Spanish and are curious to the nature, the countries and the culture. I would definitely do it again, although I maybe would choose another university, as I know there are universities where the things you need to do are easier.