

Universidad Pontificia Comillas - Madrid - Spain

Did you come across any problems during your application at the university? Subjects, country specific.

With the application not really. I could subscribe when I was still in Holland, so I did, but it turned out that I couldn't follow 2 lectures that were schedule at the same time, I thought it didn't matter, but it did, so then I had some trouble to find enough courses to follow that could fit in my schedule. I had to follow 7 courses to earn enough credits, and you had to fill in 8, so if one was not approved you had to fill it in again and add another one.

How did you arrange housing, any tips here?

In Spain there is a site called Idealista, it's kind of easy to use, because every room that is available is on that site, so you can just send an email or call the owner immediately and they can arrange something with you. I just sent out some emails when I was here (Netherlands) to set up arrangements to visit some rooms, but I didn't close the deal, I just wanted to see the room first. I got a hostel for the first week actually, but I found a room in 3 days, so then I already moved. It was kind of easy! It is recommended to book a hostel first, because I also visited other rooms that were really nice on the pictures, but in real life they weren't. The room was all furniture but I had to buy bed sheets by myself.

Any tips for booking flights tickets?

Early booking, I just flew with Ryanair, which was kind of cheap! I only booked one way trip, because I was not sure when my exams would be, so I didn't book my return ticket. I bought my return ticket 2 weeks after starting because then I knew already my schedule and when my exams would be.

What is the best time to arrive?

I arrived quite early, my course started at the first of September, but I got there two weeks upfront because I had to find a room and I just wanted to have enough time, and I think it's recommendable because some people just arrived the day the course started, and they didn't had a room yet, and they searched everywhere so they stayed in a hostel the first 2 weeks, so I think it's recommended to arrive earlier.

The university didn't really have an introduction week like in Tilburg, they only had 1 introduction day, but it was university related and not like partying or something like that. It was one day before the classes started, just to tell us some things about the school and school information.

How did you have to adjust to the cultural differences?

Not really! I mostly had other Erasmus friends, or people from the Netherlands. I only had 2 classes with Spanish people and I didn't speak them that much. I also lived with other Erasmus students. There were not a lot of cultural differences, but still they live very late in Spain, you don't eat at 6pm, but around 10pm in the evening and everyone it's out late, doesn't matter what time, there are people always on the streets. I really liked that! I already spoke a little bit Spanish, so I really expected to improve it, but I didn't because if you're in Europe you speak English with everyone, so it's not necessary to speak Spanish.

The way of teaching was very different, because in the Netherlands you just go to a lecture or you do not go to the lecture it doesn't even matter, you sit there and you listen. In Spain it felt like high school to me, just sitting in classrooms, and everyone participated, you need to present every week, writing essays, and sign your name in the attendant list, really like high school. There is only one type of classes, not really lectures, but tutorials with around 30 people each. The relationship between students – professor is really close, if you pass him/her in the hallway, he/she says hi to you, and knows your name,

and that doesn't really happen in Tilburg.

The university is just one big building, with normal classrooms, no lecture rooms. You don't have good food at the university. You can go outside university out for dinner really cheap, tapas everywhere, but not really at the university.

Do you have any suggestions for associations to join or other ways to come in contact with local/exchange students?

There are not that many associations at my university, there was one student association but they didn't organize that much. In Madrid you have several universities and IESN was only active in one of them which was not mine.

Are there any places that you have to take a visit to?

I did some local trips, to Segovia and Toledo, but because you are in Spain, and it's also close to the Netherlands, so it's not like that you need to see everything and visit everywhere. I went to Porto in Portugal. I just wanted to spend most of the time in Madrid because that was the place I was on exchange.

Overall

The whole experience in Erasmus was really great, I really recommend everyone to go! At the beginning I hated the university because I had to do so much, and I was not used to that, come to every lecture and participate in everything, but at the end it turned out to be quite nice, and the exams were not that hard. So it was different, but I really recommend you to go there! My university was quite close to the city centre, I just had to walk for only 20 minutes.