



POLITÉCNICA

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Period of Study: September 2019 – January 2021

Introductoin

In my previous studies I did an exchange in America for two semesters and I had such a great experience that I knew when I came to KEA that I wanted to go again. I was told I could go on exchange in either my third, fourth or fifth semester and ended up choosing to go in my fifth. The reason for that was because I was still getting settled in on my third semester and I knew that the fourth semester would be the one that prepares you the most for the seventh semester.

The reason I chose to go to Madrid was to experience something new and to also try and get a good foundation in Spanish. I have always wanted to be able to speak Spanish so this was the perfect opportunity.

What classes I took

Before going to Madrid I had been warned that they did not offer many classes in English but decided I wanted to go anyway. Once I arrived I was told that the few teachers that had thought in English did not want to do it anymore and had switched over to Spanish. This made it difficult to find classes for me but in the end I managed to sort it out.

English for Professionals: This was the only class that was offered in English and that's why I picked it. There are two options, the first one is to take a 100% final exam in January and not have to show up to any classes. The second option is to show up to the classes and have homework and smaller tests throughout the semester. I chose the second option because that way I would be done in the middle of December.

If you have been studying on the international line in KEA then this is not a high level of English. The class is twice a week for 2 hours and you have homework every week. At the beginning of the semester I did not feel I was benefitting much other than getting the credits for the class but as the semester progressed we started practicing presenting in front of the class and practicing going into an interview which I found to be helpful.

Spanish Class: This class is not run by the school so you have to pay around 100 euros for the semester but you do get 3 credits for it. The classes take place on the campus and luckily for me my class were in the same building as my English class. This is also twice a week for 2 hours and the people in your class are exchange students from different departments of the school. This class was a lot of fun and kept me motivated to learn Spanish the entire semester.

History of Urban Law and Planning of Madrid: We had city walks three Sundays in a row in the beginning of the semester four about 2 hours each. We saw all the main places in the city and got a guided tour from the teachers. After the three walks you had to write a 20 page paper about something you would want to change in a city of your choice and how you planned on doing so. The paper was due in the middle of December and you had to present it for 10-15 minutes. This class was fun and a great way to get to know the city. It's also nice because all the exchange students are in this class so you get to know them better.



Building Materials: This class was only available in Spanish so I wrote a paper instead of coming to class. The paper was 20 pages and was supposed to be about a material that the teacher was teaching in his class. I met up with the professor in the beginning of the semester to decide what material to write about and then I was able to send him an email throughout the semester if I had any questions or needed help. I found this to be pretty useful, I wrote about cement and concrete and got to learn a lot about it.

Building Legislation: This was another class only available in Spanish and I did the same thing as in Building Material. I had more freedom in this class regarding what topic to write about and was allowed to choose anything that was related to the environment. I chose to write about the construction of office buildings and what sustainable solutions can be implemented in different parts of the construction phase. I was interested in the topic so I enjoyed learning and writing about it.

Introduction to BIM: This class is in Spanish and when I showed up to the first class I found out it was an introduction class to Revit. I told the teacher I was from KEA so he knew I had worked with Revit before. He told me that for me to pass the class I could draw up a house and hand it in. I was glad that this class was not hard since it gave me more free time to write the papers I had in the other classes.

The School did not start until September 1st and my classes did not start until September 9th which was 2-3 weeks later than the semester at KEA. Because I had so many papers I finished school on the 13th of December and did not have to come back after Christmas to take any exams in January. This gave me a long Christmas break and the ability to start my internship earlier.

Because I did not have to attend that many classes I also did not get to know that many people which is what I would have wanted. I was lucky enough though to have great roommates who invited me into their social circle. I had a great time since I don't mind writing papers and was happy to have a lot of free time to learn more Spanish. I therefore only recommend going if you are okay with writing papers or if you speak Spanish.

How helpful was the receiving school in the process of choosing classes and settling you in?

They were extremely helpful with everything regarding classes and settling in. They made a WhatsApp group where you could ask anything and they always replied very quickly.

What challenges did you experience culturally while being abroad?

The only main thing I had to get used to was that dinner time is around 22:00-22:30 but I was quick to adapt to that. I knew the weather would be good so I brought a lot of shorts but once November hits it started to get cold and I did not bring any coat. I therefore highly recommend having some warm cloths once winter comes.

What was the best cultural/personal experience during your studies abroad?

Once I had seen most of the main tourist places in Madrid I went with a friend to Valencia for a weekend. We went by bus and then booked accommodations on Airbnb. Valencia is a very beautiful city to visit and also has a beach. If you do not want to plan the trip yourself there is an organization that plans many trips throughout the semester. Two girls that where from Russia on Erasmus went with them to Valencia, Barcelona and Lisbon.

How was the application process?

The application process in KEA was very effortless and well organized. You knew exactly what steps you needed to take and in what order and they were very helpful if you were in any doubt.

Where did you live?

I started looking at apartments six months in advance since I had heard it was hard to find a place in Madrid. That ended up being way too early since they are usually advertising only one month in advance. I used the site Idealista which is a good site. You can pick the neighbourhood you want to search in and what price you want to pay and it filters it for you. All the communication goes through WhatsApp so you need that in order to communicate. The advertisements may be in English but that is most likely because your chrome browser translates it for you so make sure when you send them that it is in Spanish unless you are sure they speak English. The problem I had was that those who answered me wanted someone for a minimum of 6 months and preferably a year. Since I was only for 4 months this was a problem. The ones offering the possibility of less were usually companies renting to exchange students. They usually charged around 400 euros just to make the contract and the apartment had maybe 6 rooms and only one bathroom.

I spent a lot of time on this site and finally found an apartment where I was able to stay for only 4 months.

I heard that some of the exchange students had gotten scammed so be careful not to pay any money unless you have seen the apartment. Most people are arriving in September so it would most likely be easier to find something if you are able to arrive earlier. You could rent Airbnb for the first couple of days and that way you could go and see the apartments you are interested in.

My apartment was near Atocha station. I liked the neighbourhood since I was close to park Retiro and close to a metro station so I had no problem getting around. It took me around 45 min to get to school but since it was only there twice a week it was fine.

I paid 450 euros for my room and then each month 35 euros added on top of that for water and electricity. The people in my class found that expensive but I was happy since the location was good and I did not need to commit to being there long.

You can buy a metro card where you pay 12.5 euros for 10 trips which is what I did since I did not use it that much. You can also get a card where you pay a monthly price of around 20 euros if you are under 26 and 55 euros if you are older. With that card you can travel unlimited for the month and also in busses. In order to get that card you have to show up to a metro station that has offices where they make the cards. You need to bring you passport, money for the card and a picture of you that is taken in a photobooth. You can book an appointment for this online but the waiting list is so long that its better to find a time where they are not busy and just wait.