



# Studying abroad in Barcelona, Spain

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La Salle, Universidad Ramon Llull

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## Introduction

As an expat studying in Copenhagen, I've already become a big traveler, hence an opportunity to study abroad for my 4th semester was something I couldn't pass. As it turned out, the whole stay exceeded my expectations and showed how culturally different Spain is from Denmark.

## University

La Salle is one of the few campuses that University of Ramon Llull has around the Catalunya region of Spain. Each campus they have works quite independently and focuses on it's own group of career paths, so you only stay in this specific campus for your whole stay. Campus is quite big compared to KEA, has it's own garden, lecture halls, café, sports areas, gym, bank, library and parking garage.

In comparison to KEA, from the distance La Salle seems to work in a similar way – classes are focused on practical learning and group work, discussions are a big thing in classes. However, it fundamentally has flaws that make it fall behind the Danish higher education system that KEA incorporates. Teachers are considered above you, and their word is viewed as more important than yours; It's not standard to have any sort of teacher evaluations; The curriculum contains lots of meaningless reports you're expected to write; There's not enough English taught classes, so my schedule ended up consisting of 2nd, 3rd and 4th years of my degree here, as well as a 1st year class from a business degree. Do not let this be a discouragement, though, as some subjects are genuinely interesting and worth taking.

With all that in mind, from a technological perspective the university is properly advanced – you'll get access to a well-built online platform to view grades, submit projects, rate peers, access online classes, etc. In addition, every single classroom has a smart-learning setup allowing hybrid classes and consisting of a big touch-sensitive smart whiteboard, along with a camera that follows the presenter, and big screens to show people who have joined the class online.

Classes I have taken are as follows:

Programming Languages – A class all about programming languages, how they work and how they are built. Throughout the semester you end up designing and making your own programming language that turns code to runnable assembly. It takes quite a lot of effort to complete it.

Knowledge Based Systems – You'll learn all about AI here. Not so much about machine learning, but a lot about every other way how a computer mimics humanlike thinking. Part of the class is developing your own chatbot for a specific domain.

Web Projects II – A class about building web systems. This is the only one I suggest you not to take, as the teacher doesn't seem comfortable with speaking English, so every class ends up consisting of 20min lecture about the purpose of one of the dozen of frameworks you'll have to use (mind you, not about how to use it – just what the framework is!), followed by "class work". In summary I can say that the subject is poorly done and I've learned barely anything from this class.

Entrepreneurship and Innovation – All about business, how an idea develops, market research, reports and pursuing the idea to turn it into a successful business model. Not too load-bearing class timewise.

Databases – This class is from some other business degree, and it's basically SQL from scratch. Extremely easy, worth taking if you have to or feel like you want to learn more about databases.

Technological Trends – This class is about various parts of technology and consists of two different sub-subjects throughout the semester, which as far as I know change from year to year. It doesn't take a lot of effort in my experience, but can be interesting and worthwhile.





## Social life

From the social standpoint, Barcelona has exceeded all my expectations. It's a much livelier city in comparison to Copenhagen. It has been about 5 months that I've lived here, and I still have a long want-to-go list, despite being out almost every day. Spain in general has a lot more culture and Barcelona is very lively city, so if you decide to come here for your stay abroad, don't be surprised that people go out to festivals and clubs here not just on the weekends, but in fact every single day. In short, I can say that it's a great opportunity to try out new things and experience a different culture.

Finding friends here is not a problem at all, all thanks to all the Erasmus groups and organizations based in Barcelona. They organize events, trips, meetups and parties every single day, so as an exchange student you'll never run out of things to do. I can recommend checking out [erasmusbarcelona.org](http://erasmusbarcelona.org), [erasmusbarcelona.com](http://erasmusbarcelona.com), Studentfy (app, best for trips) and joining one of the ESN organizations here (Since La Salle does not have it's own, you can join any of the 4, I recommend the one from UB university, as it's the biggest).

Some of the highlights from my social life in and around Barcelona:



Every year the city of Valencia holds a weeklong festival called Las Fallas, where big floats are set up around the city, often taking up over 10 meters in each direction. On the final night of the festival, every float is burned. In addition, there's never-ending fireworks, musical firework shows, parades and parties.

Castells – the human towers of the region of Catalunya is a traditional cultural sport with the goal of building as high of the towers as possible.

I've been lucky enough to be with the university group, as well as a neighborhood group and thus for the past 4 months I have been going to the performances, parties and social events together with them all throughout Catalunya. It's been one of the most memorable experiences of my stay, however it does take a lot of effort and time.

Obviously, communicating with the local people is not an easy task, as English is a third language for them, so making good friends with them takes a while.







Calçotada – A grilling event, except instead of ribs and hamburgers it's long onions native to the region of Catalunya. The surprising thing is that they're in season only in the winter, so don't be surprised that locals here have most cookouts during in January or February!

La Patum – An annual festival held only in a city far away from Barcelona. It consists of thousands of people getting together in a small city square – so cramped, that you cannot see your feet – and performing traditional dances with big floats and fire, lasting from early evening to the next morning.



Looking back on it now, it's really difficult to capture all the experiences in a few highlights, so I can only offer you to do your next semester here and experience it all for yourself.

## Practicalities

Since you would be coming to Barcelona from Denmark, there's some good news for you – it's considerably cheaper! Anything, ranging from rent to food is just cheaper. For reference, here is what I would spend on everyday things and amenities:

Apartment rent – 600 euros per month. I live in a shared house with two other people in the rich part of Barcelona. However, you can find rooms for rent for as little as 250 euros per month and studio apartments for as little as 800 euros per month.

Food – A kebab costs 5 euros, a nice meal costs 8 to 12 euros, a bottle of water is 30 cents in the store, usually 1 euro in a restaurant. It's really a good time to start eating out if you felt like Copenhagen was too expensive.

Transportation – Barcelona has great public transport, so you'll need a ticket. 10 use ticket costs 12 euros and unlimited 3 months pass costs 80 euros, which is absolutely worth it. If you're still too fond of your bike back in Copenhagen, Barcelona has a service called Bicing, where you can pay 50 euros and use any of their bikes for up to 30min throughout the whole year. Train/bus tickets to cities outside of Barcelona can range from 4 to 20 euros, so be cautious on that regard.

Travels – As I mentioned before, there's lots of trip organizers in Barcelona, so you can find day trips for as little as 5 euros, up to 50 euros. There's dozens of cheap flights from Barcelona to Canary islands, Mallorca, Ibiza, Italy, France and Morocco for as little as 10 euros for a return trip (it gets more expensive on holiday seasons and the closer in time to the trip you get)

Overall, the 500/month euros you'll get from the Erasmus exchange is not going to be enough to enjoy Barcelona, but if you're willing to put aside some money for leisure, you're going to have the best 4 months of your life.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me via mail [just1531@stud.kea.dk](mailto:just1531@stud.kea.dk)