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Erasmus en: Universitat de Barcelona

My Erasmus experience in Barcelona

In Germany, Barcelona is known for its mild climate, its architecture and (obviously) the football club. But it has more to offer and in the past few months I learned a lot about its history, culture, and its people. I had already been to Barcelona once in 2009 for a few days of family vacation and remembered it as a very appealing, flourishing city. I spoke Spanish already but wanted to have a deeper experience with the local people (rather than with Erasmus students) so I prepared myself by taking Catalan lessons from a girl from Barcelona who was on Erasmus in my city, Münster. Finding a flat was difficult in the beginning but I was very lucky and with the help of a friend I found a student's flat share with 3 Spanish-speaking people (Catalan, Bask and Argentinean) in lovely Eixample.

First I did not know how to get in contact with locals but people made it very easy for me, as they were outgoing, interested and open-minded. The classes I chose were mainly optional subjects so there were always different people. But I was warmly welcomed and had in every class people to talk to, with whom I would sit or do a group project. Comparing this to Germany I think it would definitely be harder to set one's foot in a class there.

I tried to establish an everyday life and registered in a gym near my house, applied for a volunteer's service in an NGO in el Raval, got to know a lot of Erasmus students (although I thought it was sad we always talked English), had a Catalan-German language exchange and spent a lot of time with my very great roommates. I felt very welcome here and not like a normal "tourist" (although in the street I got treated like one – mainly because I'm blonde) because I could experience Barcelona during summer, fall and winter, with its celebrations like 11.09. and la Mercè but also very interesting special occasions such as the 9N referendum.

Being an Erasmus-student has been different for me than being a "normal" student. In the beginning I couldn't follow the classes in Catalan easily. One professor switched to Spanish for me, but the others didn't and I felt more comfortable with that. Because I was hearing and trying to speak the language every day, it improved rapidly. I also didn't spend as much time in the library or studying as in Germany (only one exam this semester?), maybe because I only took 4 classes (12 hours a week).

I had never lived in a city as big as Barcelona but I got used to it. Though I don't know if I could live here forever. I miss riding my bike (I used Bicing but that's not as hazard-free as in my town) and hated to be sometimes almost 1-2 hours in the metro per day(!). As a vegetarian, living and eating here was easier than I had imagined although I missed a very cheap "Mensa" (student's cafeteria).

In total I enjoyed living in a city where others do their vacation, having the sea right beside, the streets lively, almost always good weather, and being able to learn a new language, get to know a different culture. I would recommend every student to do the same, Erasmus in general, or even in Catalunya. (visca!)