

TU Delft travel report - ETSAB Barcelona - Charley Meyer

General Information

- Charley Meyer
- Bachelor Bouwkunde (Architecture)
- The Netherlands, Delft
- TU Delft, faculty of Architecture
- 01/09/2014 to 01/03/2015
- Subjects at ETSAB, faculty of Architecture, Barcelona

Preparation and contact with your own faculty

For my minor (the fifth semester of the Bachelor Architecture in Delft), it was possible to study abroad for half a year. I chose to study in Barcelona at the university of UPC at the faculty of ETSAB; Architecture.

For us it was possible to make a top five selection to the university's we wanted to go to. I didn't know that much about most of the university's at that moment and I didn't had time to figure it all out, so at that moment I only looked at the city's, the languages and the chance to get in. I wasn't even sure if I really wanted to study abroad, but at the moment I got accepted at ETSAB, Barcelona, I was really happy about it and sure I would go. I had a better look at the university and what the university had to offer. We needed to choose subjects, but it was not totally clear what subjects we could chose and my own university didn't know that much about this either. But there was more than enough information about the most important stuff; how to sign in, when and where to go and about all the forms we had to fill in. I got accepted with another girl from the TU Delft, so we could figure it all out together when we arrived in Barcelona.



Study programma

I studied for half a year in Barcelona at the university of UPC, ETSAB. I have always been interested in travelling, learning languages and getting to know different cultures. Studying abroad seemed like the perfect possibility. I chose for Spain in general because of the language; I had Spanish classes in High School and I wanted to improve it. Besides that Spain seemed like the perfect country for me. Barcelona is a city where everything comes together; the location, the climate, the beach, so much stuff to do during the whole year, the food, the language and a lot of students.

I didn't know that much about the university before I left. I only heard about some courses that they would be really easy next to the courses at our university in Delft. There were a lot of Erasmus students but still so much more Spanish and mainly Catalan students. This was a bit of a problem; they accepted when you didn't speak Spanish that good, but in the same time they switched to Catalan all the time. I already had a hard time understanding Spanish, but Catalan was not possible to follow for most of us. There was a big difference between the teachers; some didn't accept Erasmus students because they couldn't follow the classes and they said they would fail, and some were really happy having Erasmus students in their groups.

I'm sure the level of the courses at ETSAB is different than the courses in Delft. They would have been much easier in general, but because of not understanding everything it was a bit difficult for most of us. Because everyone told me the courses

would be easier than the courses I was used to, I chose to do some of the 'harder' courses. This was a bit of a mistake, I didn't spoke the language that good at the beginning and it took me some time to get used to the way of living in Barcelona. If I could do it again, I would have chosen the more easy subjects to have more time to figure it all out and focus on the language. The most interesting thing of following courses in Barcelona was to learn a language and do courses at the same time.

There were some courses which were really interesting for me. The course I loved the most was Historia II, this was about the history of architecture and art. I learned a lot about great architects and interesting buildings I never knew that much about. In Delft we don't really have a course like this, only about the history from a long time ago. The teachers of the classes spoke really nice spanish, so after a while I could almost understand everything they were saying and because there was no book to learn from for the exams, we had to make notes during the classes, which made me go to all the classes and pay really good attention. Some other courses were really interesting for me because I learned a lot about the city Barcelona. For example in the course Nueva York - Barcelona and Urbanistica I, we learned a lot about the plan of Barcelona, the types of architecture and some important building for the city. It was really nice to get to know a city this way.



Ludwig Mies van der Rohe - Barcelona Pavilion

For living in a city like Barcelona, six months is clearly not long enough. Especially as an architecture student there are so many great places to visit. But in the end I felt a bit home sick about my university back home. It's clear that it's hard to compete with the TU Delft. There were always enough people to help me with understanding everything in Barcelona, but still it was hard to get used to some methods of the university.

Fundering and prerequisites

For studying abroad in Europe for half a year, it's easy to get a Erasmus scholarship. My home university sorted out all the forms I needed, and I simply needed to fill it in and achieve the courses of the first two years. Because the Erasmus scholarship changed in the year I was studying abroad, it took a while to receive the scholarship but that was not a big problem.

I think normally the cost of living would be a bit cheaper than in Holland. But because of studying abroad only once, I made it a bit more expensive.. I wanted to live in the centre of Barcelona, what of course was far more expensive than living in the neighbourhoods further away from the centre. I wasn't sure about what other neighbourhoods would be nice to live for students and because I only had half a year and I wanted to have my own place as soon as possible, I took the first good offer. The centre was perfect to live for half a year. Close to the beach, a lot of bars and restaurants, shops, a lot of young people and always something to do.

I noticed really quickly it was more important than in Holland to always have some cash. There were small shops and supermarkets where it was not possible to pay with card and besides that there were many people on the streets selling stuff and food. Some other international students signed in for a spanish bank account, but with my Dutch bank it was possible to withdraw money without extra costs, so for me it was not necessary. I only needed a creditcard for thing like booking a hotel or a soccergame, but there were always people who could lend it to me.

Accommodation	€450,-
Food	€180,-
Insurence	€0,-

Local travelling costs	€15,-
Course material	€30,-
Entertainment	€35,-
Language course	€0,-
<u>Total</u>	<u>€710,-</u>

I had a bicycle so I didn't spend much money on travelling, sometimes for the metro or a cab but this was very cheap. I don't think I had to pay more insurance than I normally do in Holland, but I'm not totally sure about that. I went out for dinner many times. Going out for tapas and drinks was so easy and cheap, I preferred doing this with my friends than eating alone so this happened all the time.

Accommodation

I preferred to arrange my accommodation myself. I wanted to live in the centre and the university and the university accommodations were far away from the city. On Facebook there were different groups for housing and general stuff for students in Barcelona and in the group 'Students housing Barcelona' I found my room. Many students were looking for a room at the same time, so in the beginning it seemed a bit difficult to find a nice place that easily. Besides that I didn't know the city that good in the beginning, so I had no idea in what neighbourhoods I should look next to the city centre. I contacted all the available rooms in or near the centre and directly I got invited to have a look in a apartment in el Gothic; the very very centre of Barcelona. The entrance of the building was in the most famous shopping street of Barcelona (Av. Portal de l' Angel). The room was really bright and nice, there was a nice living with balcony's and the room I came for was pretty big. The landlord told me some other persons came to see the room and were interested, but later that day he called me to tell me they chose me and I could move in immediately (this was my third day in Barcelona). There were 5 other international students living in the apartment. We didn't hang out a lot together, everyone had a different schedule and was eating at different times, but it was always nice to have a little moment together. Because it was in the centre, there were always a lot of people outside and a lot of noise. Sometimes when I was in a hurry it was a bit annoying to hurry through the crowd but for the rest it was perfect. I loved living in the centre of Barcelona.

Language and culture

I already followed Spanish classes at High School for two years so I already knew the basic of Spanish. I already knew that all my classes would be in Spanish or Catalan and not in English, so I already spend a lot of time learning Spanish before I arrived. The problem in Barcelona was that most of the people speak Catalan, and with the knowledge of Spanish it's not that easy to understand this language. In the shops and in university I always tried to speak Spanish. In university I only chose courses where the teachers spoke Spanish and not Catalan. Some teachers sometimes switched to Catalan without noticing and then it was a bit difficult to pay attention. Some people in Barcelona (also students) refused to speak Spanish, even when I asked something they gave me an answer in Catalan, which ofcourse I couldn't understand. I wanted to improve my Spanish as soon as possible so I took my Spanish books with me wherever I went and I spoke Spanish all the time. I didn't follow a Spanish course in Barcelona. Most of them were a bit expensive and I thought I could learn it myself as well.

Free time

The second day in Barcelona I had a introduction for my study. All the new students from my faculty came here together. Because everyone was new in the city, everyone was really open and trying to make contact with each other. Immediately we had a group with students from all different countries and university's. From the beginning I spent a lot of time with them, we went together to eat tapas, have drinks, go out and see the city. These are the people I have been seeing during the whole year and I still speak to them all the time. They also organized meetings for Erasmus students during the whole year, but because I met such great people already, I've never been here.



My group of friends

Because everyone knew different cool places, we went together to see these places. Really nice parks where we spend a lot of time (Parc de la Ciutadella), a lot of different tapas bars or places to drink, we had party's in some of our flats and ofcourse we spent a lot of time at the beach. In the beginning I thought I had time to do all the stuff I want to do in Barcelona and see the whole city, but after a while I realised that Barcelona has too much to offer and it's not possible to do this in half a year; I have to come back. Especially for an architecture student like me Barcelona is a great place; there are so many interesting buildings and ofcourse the grid of Barcelona and the history is for sure very interesting.

Travelling

To go to Barcelona I went by plane. I didn't want anyone to bring me and this was the most easy way with all the stuff I had to carry. I arrived at el Prat, the closest airport to the city, and from there it was really easy to take a buss to Placa Catalunya, where I already booked an Airbnb room for the first night.

It took me some time to figure out the public transport but actually it's really easy. There is a metro in the whole city. I always bought a 10-trips ticket for only 10 euro because I didn't use the metro that often. Most of the students bought a three months ticket for the metro, but I had a really nice bicycle and I preferred to be outside and ride my bicycle. Actually I only travelled by metro when I had to go really far or when I went out. For going out it was also not that expensive to share a cab with some other people. The only part I really hate about Barcelona is the pickpockets. You have to take really good care of your stuff all the time, especially in the metro and buss. Even in university you couldn't leave your bags alone for a moment. Once my friend got robbed at the Ramblas, but we noticed immediately he was missing his phone. A minute before someone came to talk to us and he was the first one we suspected. I checked the pockets of this guy and then I found his phone back. Especially for tourists it's a big problem in Barcelona, pickpockets are everywhere!

From Barcelona it was really easy to go to other city's. I didn't had time to do that a lot, but I made a few trips to nice places. For example I went to Ibiza with my friends for a few days, we found really cheap tickets and a big house we could rent. It was in November, so not really a party place at that moment, but it was really nice to hang out with all of my friends and see some beautiful places on the island. I've also been to Valencia with some friends for a few days. It was really cheap to book a buss and we rented an Airbnb room, also a great city to spend time!

Other

I'm sure Barcelona is the greatest city to live, but I would not go back to study. Maybe for an internship it would be nice, but I think Holland, especially the TU Delft, has a lot to offer to students like me. The best part of studying abroad for me was getting to know the language, the culture and a lot of international people during my study. It was really cool to learn Spanish at the same time as doing the regular ECTS. It was great to see how students from different country's live. I'm sure it was one of the greatest experiences of my life. In the beginning I wasn't really sure about going away for half a year, because I knew I would miss my friends and family a lot. But in the end I'm so glad about it and six months was for sure not long enough. Actually nothing changed back home in Delft, everyone was still doing the same thing and I had a great half a year with so many valuable experiences. For people who are interested in other cultures, languages and international people, I'm sure it's a great experience for you!