

Experience Report – Study Abroad Semester in Madrid

(Winter Semester 2025/2026)

During the winter semester 2025/2026, I had the opportunity to spend a voluntary study abroad semester at [ESIC University](#) in Madrid, Spain. I am a student at Hochschule Trier and I chose to complete one semester abroad as part of my studies. The semester abroad was not connected to obtaining an additional degree; it was a voluntary exchange semester designed to broaden my academic and personal experience.

Host University and Study Program

ESIC University is a private university located in Madrid. During my semester abroad, I attended courses taught entirely in English. The university organizes its academic offerings in so-called “blocks,” each of which consists of several related modules. I was assigned to the block **Digital Management**. Within this block, I attended the following courses:

- E-Commerce
- Digital Client Management
- Information and Architecture
- Spanish Language Course

All courses were taught in English, except for the Spanish language course, which was designed specifically for international students who wanted to improve their Spanish skills.

The course *E-Commerce* focused on online business models, digital sales strategies and the structure of online marketplaces. We analyzed case studies and discussed current digital trends. *Digital Client Management* dealt with customer relationship management in the digital age, data-driven marketing strategies and customer retention methods. *Information and Architecture* focused on the structure and usability of digital platforms, including website organization and user experience principles. Additionally, the Spanish course helped me to improve my basic communication skills, which was especially useful in everyday life in Spain.

Preparation and Application Process

The preparation and application process was relatively simple and well organized on the German side. I contacted the International Office at Hochschule Trier, especially Jessica Rock, who provided extensive support throughout the entire process. She helped me with all administrative steps, including the Learning Agreement and required documents.

In addition, I received support regarding my Erasmus+ funding. The responsible staff member guided me through the funding application and the required paperwork. The communication was clear and helpful and I always felt well supported by Hochschule Trier.

Since Spain is a member of the European Union, I did not have to pay any tuition fees at ESIC University. This was a major financial advantage of studying abroad within the EU.

Accommodation and Living Situation

I lived in an apartment near the Royal Palace of Madrid (Royal Palace of Madrid). The location was excellent and very central, which allowed me to explore the city easily.

However, commuting to the university was somewhat complicated. I had to take the train and then transfer to a bus to reach the campus. Although public transportation in Madrid is well developed, the daily commute required good time management.

The search for accommodation was done independently before my departure over idealista. I was very lucky finding it. My landlords were an old couple who were very kind. I have heard from otherst hat they have not been as lucky or even got scamed. Housing in Madrid is relatively expensive, especially in central areas. Nevertheless, living in the city center was worth it because of the vibrant atmosphere and accessibility.

Costs of the Study Abroad Semester

As mentioned, there were no tuition fees due to the Erasmus agreement within the EU. However, the cost of living in Madrid is relatively high compared to many German cities. The main expenses included: Rent, groceries and dining out and travel within Spain

Madrid was definitely the most expensive city during my time in Spain. However, thanks to the Erasmus funding and careful budgeting, the costs were manageable.

Everyday Study Life and Leisure Activities

Academic life at ESIC University was structured differently than at Hochschule Trier. Classes usually started at 4 p.m., which meant I had a lot of free time during the day. However, lectures sometimes lasted until 9 p.m., which could be exhausting.

Attendance was mandatory, with a required minimum attendance of 70% in all courses. This meant that regular participation was necessary in order to pass the courses.

One major challenge was the organization at the host university. It took almost two weeks before I knew my final schedule and the exact block I would be assigned to. Initially, I had to select four possible blocks, and only after my arrival was I informed that I had been assigned to Digital Management. The process was chaotic and poorly organized.

There was supposed to be an introductory welcome event for international students, but it did not take place due to organizational issues. Administrative processes, such as receiving the Erasmus confirmation documents required for funding, were also significantly delayed. Although the staff was always friendly, many matters were postponed repeatedly, which caused frustration.

Despite these organizational difficulties, everyday life outside the university was excellent. Madrid offers countless leisure opportunities, including cultural events, museums, restaurants, parks, and nightlife.

Travel and Cultural Experiences

One of the greatest advantages of my semester abroad was the opportunity to travel extensively throughout Spain. During my stay, I visited: Valencia, Barcelona, Málaga, Granada, Toledo, Segovia, Zaragoza, Tenerife and Mallorca. I was able to see an incredible variety of landscapes, cultures and historical sites. Spain offers beautiful beaches, impressive architecture and vibrant city life.

Spanish cuisine was another highlight. The tapas bars, local markets, and traditional dishes made the cultural experience even richer. If your goal is it to travel as much as possible, I would definitely recommend to study in Madrid, because the city is right in the middle of Spain and Madrid has so many travel opportunities.

Social Experience and Personal Growth

I met many wonderful people from all over the world. Interestingly, there were also many German students in Spain. Nevertheless, I formed friendships with international students from different countries and cultural backgrounds from all over the world. As a woman, I felt extremely safe in Madrid. I never felt unsafe walking alone at night, even in the city center. Compared to other cities I have visited, Madrid gave me a strong sense of security and comfort.

The semester abroad significantly contributed to my personal development. I improved my English skills, gained basic Spanish knowledge, became more independent, and learned how to adapt to new academic systems.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Advantages:	Negative Experiences:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Opportunity to travel extensively• Meeting international students• Improving language skills• Experiencing a new culture• Personal growth and independence• Traditional, amazing food	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chaotic organization at the university• Delays in administrative processes• Late communication regarding course assignments• Expensive

The only real negative experiences were related to the organization of the host university. Academically and personally, the semester was highly enriching.

Recommendations for Future Students

I would definitely recommend studying abroad in Madrid or Spain in general. Spain offers a high quality of life, cultural diversity, excellent food and many travel opportunities. Madrid in particular is a vibrant, international and welcoming city. For me, Madrid is – beside the fact that it does not have a beach – the best city in Spain. As a woman who loves shopping: I have never seen a better shopping area anywhere ever!

Future students should prepare for possible administrative delays and remain patient when dealing with organizational matters. However, these challenges should not discourage anyone from taking this opportunity. To do my semester abroad in Madrid was definitely one of the best decisions in my life. I would regret it for the rest of my life if I would have never taken this opportunity.

A semester abroad is an unforgettable experience that broadens both academic and personal horizons. I am very grateful for having had this opportunity and would make the same decision again at any time.