



Exchange semester in Buenos Aires

Before Departure

I applied for exchange studies because I wanted to improve my Spanish and to explore a new part of the world, South America, that I never had visit before. The reason for choosing Argentina and ITBA was that they had the best offer of courses for my master and Argentina is the country in South America that I considered the most secure. The application to ITBA consisted of making list with courses I wanted to do, a Spanish test, health information, a list with courses I done at KTH along with some other documents, all this was to be send by mail to the University. However, my application never arrived so I was able to email all the documents to the university. Due to all courses are in Spanish at ITBA, I took a Spanish course at KTH a year before my exchange semester. Also, before leaving, I had to acquire an Argentinean health insurance. However, no vaccines or Visa was required before arriving to Buenos Aires, the Visa was acquired with help from the university during the semester.

Arrival

The semester in Argentina starts normally in Mars, however I decided to do the intensive course in Spanish that the university offered one month before. This course has a fee due to it is not a normal course that the university offers for their own students. Some schools at KTH offers scholarships for these types of courses however not the chemistry department, my school. ITBA has a great organization for mentors for exchanges students. Every student receives a Buddy that they can ask questions to before arriving to Buenos Aires. However, how much you meet you Buddy during the semester depends a lot on the person, they are not obligated to do certain things with you. My Buddy was the best, he invited me to join his friends and he helped me a lot. We had most of the courses together therefor we hanged out almost every day. He had been one semester in Sweden before therefor we had a lot in common and of course we celebrated Midsommar together. There were some activities arranged for the international students at ITBA both before the introduction course in Spanish and before the other courses started and during the semester like an international dinner. I think it is very good organized and the person responsible for the international relations is very nice and helpful.



Economy

I received 8000 sek from the Chemistry Department at KTH for the exchange, it basically covered the flight tickets. The Spanish courses at ITBA costs around 3500 sek, something that I had to pay for myself. Another cost that was unavoidable was for the health insurance which costed around 4500 sek. Generally, the prices in Buenos Aires are somewhat similar to the prices we have in Sweden, however some things are cheaper one example is the public transportation. Good to know is that you pay with cash almost all the time and to withdraw money from the ATMs is expensive. Therefor it is good to change to dollars in Sweden and change them to pesos when you arrive in Argentina. Many of my friends that had to pay their rent in cash, used a service that was called Smallworld where you transfer money from your account and then receive your money at an office by showing your passport.

Boende

I found my living on Airbnb before I left Sweden, I rented a room in an apartment where two other girls stayed. I liked it a lot because I did not want to live at a place with a lot of people. The apartment is located in Palermo, a neighborhood that is recommended to stay in. For me it took about 25 min to get to the university, a time that can be considered short in Buenos Aires. The university does not offer any housing which means that everybody must find their own. Many of my friends there stayed at hostels the first weeks and then searched for housing, something that also is recommended from the university to do. However, I wanted to have a place to stay before I arrived and therefore Airbnb worked well. The prices for accommodation are high, I paid 4000 sek per month for the room.

University and studies

ITBA is a small private university with around 1500 students. They mostly offer engineering programs and it is considered to be the best university in South America in engineering. For the students in the last two years the classes start at the late afternoon which meant that all my classes started around six, seven pm and ended around nine, ten. Every course has one class per week, always at the same time. They were basically lectures and some practical exercises were given to be done after class. All the courses were in Spanish and the classes have an 80% mandatory attending.

Courses

Students from KTH must do more credits than other students from Sweden at ITBA, 24 credits instead of 18, this means that I had to study more than the average exchange student that do 15 credits at ITBA. I took two Spanish courses, one economy course, two courses in environmental engineering, one process simulation course, leadership course and one in process control. I plan to include all of them in my degree. I liked the Spanish courses, they were more fun than difficult which was good when I had to enroll in that many courses. The level of the courses varied, the Buddies at ITBA have a document with evaluated courses that other exchange students have done, that shows the difficulty level of the courses. During the first two weeks one can attend different courses and change the courses. My advice is to talk to other students that done the courses or doing the same program as you so that you don't choose a too hard course.

The city and country

I loved living in Argentina, the people are friendly and warm and Buenos Aires was alive and busy. I would say that the people are more relaxed and friendly than we are in Sweden. Buenos Aires is a very European city and Argentina is not a typical South American country since it has had a lot of European immigration.

Spare time and social activities

On my spare time, I hanged out with friends and we ate out a lot, we also stay at home and ordered food and played the typical card game "Truco". I also tried to go to different kinds of dance classes, I found different places that offered Danshall, Zumba, Reggaetón, Salsa, Poledance and Tango. The university has a student union that offer some sport activities, however, I did not attend to any of them. Moreover, the university has a gym that one can use but it requires a health certificate that I never applied for. I became friend with a lot of the exchange students and we did a lot of fun stuff together like traveling for example. Thanks to my Buddy I also meet and got know some Argentinean students.



Recommendations

Try to speak Spanish as much as you can, do not use English, then you will learn faster and learn more. Travel as much as you can, Buenos Aires is not representative for Argentina, the country is huge and has a lot of beautiful nature. Places to visit is Patagonia, Salta and the waterfalls of Iguazú. Then you can also travel to other countries, Uruguay for example is very close and easy, another advice is to travel to Brazil!

