

**Exchange university**

UPV – Universitat Politècnica de València

Degree programme

Civil Engineering

An Erasmus journey to Western Europe

Before departure

I applied for an exchange semester in Spain to improve my Spanish language skills. Therefore, I took a preparation course to refresh my Spanish two weeks before the regular university started. This preparation course was booked in advance and took place in Gandia, a city in the south of Valencia. As European there is no visa required to travel to Spain. I also searched for accommodation in advance before departure.

Upon arrival

I arrived one day before the language course started. That also was the day when we could move in the accommodation. After two weeks of that course, I moved to Valencia where the introduction day took place and the campus was shown.

Financials

The costs of the language course (260 €) were completely covered by KTH. Furthermore you get Erasmus+ scholarship if you're coming from Sweden. Living costs there are on average much less than in Sweden. Buying a beer in a restaurant costs 2 € for example. Fresh fruits are easy to get everywhere and much less pricy as well.

Accommodation

For my room in a shared flat in perfect location I paid 350 € including any expenses, a huge living room, kitchen and two bathrooms! Even though it was a two months search in advance. I can recommend you to use "idealista" the Spanish platform for housing. Many people (especially from the language preparation course) decided to look for accommodation as soon as they arrived in Spain. It ended up in an "apartment hunt" and for some in quite stressful situations as everyone searches at that time and the market gets quite hot. So I'd recommend to search in advance and compare prices, but be aware not to be scammed! I would say reasonable prices for a room are 270 € - 400 € including "gastos" (= ancillary costs), depending on the location.

Many people live at the "Blasco Ibanéz", a big straight road that leads through the whole city. I lived at the "Plaza Xúquer" what has a nice green square in the middle and not much car traffic, but many bars and restaurants. From there it was a 7 minute walk to the university. A bike station of "valenbisi" (=local bike rental) is at this square too. With those bikes it's a 12 minutes ride to the city center / old town and around 15 minutes to the beach.

University and studies

The university has five different locations where 35.000 enrolled students study. The main campus (where I had my courses) had a very beautiful and green park with palm trees. The classrooms were quite old though, but fulfilled their purpose.

Courses

The course selection took a long time. Even though I looked all the courses up in advance, I changed almost every course on my learning agreement after arrival. This was due to a clash of course schedules as I took several courses in different faculties. However, sometimes the course was not in English or Spanish rather than Valencian language.

Overall the process of course selection was taking a very long time and processed slowly. It took around 2.5 months until I was finally enrolled in the courses. Especially one course I would have needed for the Master's thesis I was not allowed to take because it was a research course in another faculty. Even though it first was approved on my learning agreement, it ended up in an annoying long process. I got then an individual compensation work offered, what ended after not getting any responses anymore. So, be prepared to slow communication and complicated processes.

City and country

Valencia is very well located as it has access to the sea, including an incredible huge beach. Furthermore, Madrid can be reached by train within 2 hours and Barcelona is a 4.5 hours ride by car. Valencia also has a very beautiful old town surrounded by a huge park (Turia Park) what originally has been a river until 1957.

Very common food are tapas, bred with various topics. Additionally, Valencia is the origin of Paella, a meal of rice that's cooked in a special pan with several ingredients.

Leisure and social activities

There are a lot of sport activities offered by the universities such as tennis, soccer, dance class, gym, beach volleyball, etc. I paid around 40 € (~420 SEK) for half a year of membership where you can participate in the sports program. There's also a swimming pool on campus what I used more often. Even though that is not included in the membership as it is operated by a private company.

Besides sport activities, all people like to socialize and go out for having dinner or a beer far more often than people in Sweden do. During the semester I mostly had contact with the people I met in the language preparation course in August. So I definitely recommend to take that course!

Other recommendations and observations

In Spain it is very common to have "Siesta". That means that offices and smaller stores are closing in the early afternoon and re-open around 5 p.m. That was something I weren't used to before. Especially in the beginning when you have to do a lot of organisational things to do it appears a little weird, but you'll / you have to get used to it ;)

For trips I could definitely recommend you to go to Sevilla and Granada, two cities in southern Spain. In the north I can recommend you to go San Sebastián. This city is much sorted and appears super clean. I went there to surf, what the place is famous for. Below some impressions from Sevilla and Sierra Nevada.

