**Personal information**

Name: Stefanie Pinsley  
Major: AEM  
Name of host university: ESADE  
Period/Time of Exchange: Spring 2016  
Address of blog if you had one: N/A

**Practical Advice**

**Visa:** Start early and get it over with. It’s really not that hard to get in terms of paperwork and time required.

**Packing:** (What did you not bring that you wish you had? What items do you recommend not bringing?) Forget all of your fancy dresses and heels. Most likely you will be going out in very casual clothing. I wish I had brought a winter coat! I brought a pretty light one, and it wasn’t enough for the cold days in Barcelona and other countries I traveled to.

**Arrival:** (Immigration, was there an Orientation program, Buddy program?) Immigration was easy and way less time consuming than I thought it would be. There was a day of orientation and I think a buddy program that I never took advantage of.

**Academics**

**The University:** (Campus, International Office, Facilities, Social activities): The campus is beautiful and very modern. It’s pretty small and all of your classes will be in the same building. The walk from the FGC station (train from Barcelona) in Sant Cugat to campus is about 15-20 minutes. Apparently there is a bus that runs every so often but I always walked. Sant Cugat is a really beautiful and safe suburban neighborhood right outside of Barcelona. They had a party at the end of the year for students with drinks, games, and a live band. I think the International Office could have been more accommodating at times, but everyone was pretty helpful overall.

**Courses:** (How did you enroll in classes, could you pre-enroll, what was the level. What types of exams were given): You can pre-enroll in classes, but you don’t need to. I figured out some of my schedule with Simone (an international students coordinator) when I got there by appointment. Classes are definitely less work than what I used to at Cornell. There usually aren’t many exams and they’re pretty easy. Some of the exams are online, some are in class.

**Life Abroad**

**Language:** (Was a pre-course offered at the university? Did you need the foreign language to manage your daily life or could you communicate in English?): Language was required and I’m so glad I took it. It was great to learn Spanish to communicate with the locals and feel more at home. I highly recommend taking both the two week intensive course at the beginning of the semester, and a semester-long course throughout the year. In some places and taxicabs, the person you’re dealing with speaks no English. It’s important to at least know some basics.

**Banking:** I never opened up an account at a local bank. Instead I got a credit card through CitiBank that didn’t charge international fees before I went abroad.

**Housing:** (Did you host university arrange housing? If not, how did you find it? How much did you pay for housing?): ESADE does not arrange housing, but they can guide you to certain areas. I found housing online with roommates I met on a Facebook group for ESADE transfers. There are websites that have listings and allow you to book ahead of time. A lot of students choose to find housing once they arrive in Barcelona and stay in Airbnb’s or hostels in the meantime. Apparently you can get a better deal that way. However, I liked having something in place when I arrived to lessen my stress. I paid around 500 euros per month for my apartment that I split with two other girls from Schulich Business in Canada.

**Transportation:** Barcelona is very walkable. However, you can also take the metro or FGC to get places locally within the city and the FGC to get to campus. It’s best to find housing near an FGC station for ease of getting to campus. The ride to Sant Cugat was around 20 minutes long.

**Health and Safety:** (What advice do you have for future students regarding their health and safety? What resources were available for you?): Be aware of pickpotters! Girls, wear a crossbody bag that zips and doesn’t flip. If you have a bag you can zip and wear under your arm, that works too. Guys, never put your wallets or phones in your back pockets. I never had any problems but some of my friends got pickpocketed. It’s all about being aware of your belongings in public and especially crowds or the train. I never felt unsafe, but it’s the most common crime in Barcelona.
Overall exchange experience

*The best thing about my semester abroad was:* The people I met and traveled with

*The most challenging things about my semester abroad was:* Learning to travel in foreign countries where English was not as prevalent, if at all.

*How did your semester abroad change your perspective?:* It made me realize that the world was much more accessible than I would have thought. People, customs, and traditions vary tremendously but it’s easy to adjust to any new place eventually and feel accepted.

*Tips for future students:* Going abroad by yourself is much more beneficial for you in terms of meeting new people and having a unique experience outside of Cornell. Sometimes, it’s easy to want to stick with the people that you already know and feel more comfortable with. Sometimes, this may lead you to miss out on other, new friendships with people from all over the world. Being uncomfortable in your situation is a better way to foster self-growth.