

GOING INTERNATIONAL

Experience report - Madrid, Spain

by *Raphael Reinecke*

Students of the Medical University of Vienna (MUV) have the possibility to do electives abroad in their 5th and 6th year of study in the maximal extent of one and a half year in total. There are two options: one can apply for a EU-subsidized ERASMUS+ program in one of the participating European countries or for a self-organized elective, which can be done in any country of the world if approved by the university. I have chosen the last option.

Organization

To get an insight into the medical system of a different country and also to take the chance to learn a new language, I decided to apply for a semester abroad in the capital of Spain, Madrid, via ERASMUS.

The application started early in the 4th year and was done via the international office of the MUV. After receiving the confirmation about the ERASMUS placement I had to send a couple of documents to the international office the Autonomous University of Madrid ([UAM](#)), which is a partner university of the MUV. These documents included among others a letter of motivation, CV, summary of ECTS and a Certificate of Good Conduct. Since I stayed in the EU, I didn't need additional health or social insurance. Accident and liability insurance is provided by the MUV.

The next organizational steps were conducted directly in Madrid shortly before the start of the rotations. It has to be said that the international office of the medical school of the UAM is not well organized. In my case, many things were mixed up (especially rotation dates and courses) so I had to organize a lot by myself. Fortunately, the student secretary of the hospital I was placed in was the exact opposite and went above and beyond to help the students getting placed in the courses.

During the registration for the courses we had the chance to select a hospital of choice for our rotations (there are four teaching hospitals of the UAM). I chose the Hospital Universitario La Paz, which is the biggest hospital in Madrid with 1300 beds and one of the most renowned hospitals in Spain. In total, I did four rotations at La Paz: Gynecology/Obstetrics, Pediatrics, Neurology and Emergency Medicine – In this report I will concentrate on my rotation in Pediatrics.

Elective

I was placed in the rotation students in the 6th year at the UAM. Rotations in Spain are completely clinical, there are no seminars or courses. Nevertheless, the medical studies in Spain are much more theoretical. The role of the students, even if they are in their final year is very passive, so that the rotation mostly consists of shadowing the attending doctors on rounds and interdisciplinary conferences. Our practical year is comparable to the first year of residency in Spain. This being said, I was integrated in a very friendly team. I was explained a lot and also was encouraged to participate in the clinical thought process.

Since patients from all over Spain are referred to this hospital, I had a chance to see a lot of rare cases, but of course also all common diseases of infancy. As I was assigned to a certain team of attendings, I also followed them to their outpatient appointments (e.g. pediatric infectious diseases).

The technical equipment of the hospital was comparable to the ones in Austria, but since this is one of the best hospitals in Spain I cannot say if this is also true for other, more decentral hospitals in Spain.

Working hours were also very similar to those in Austria, for the students it was from 8AM to around 4PM. There was a morning teaching conference once a week, which was held by residents (case reports) or visiting physicians referring over a certain topic.

Language requirements

There was a language requirement of B1 in Spanish before coming to the UAM. And without an advanced knowledge of Spanish, participating in the hospital everyday life is difficult because neither physicians nor students or other staff speak English very well. Communication only took place in Spanish, which at the beginning was complicated but improved markedly over the course of my stay in Madrid.

I started learning Spanish one year prior to my stay and had two language courses to a level of B1. During my stay I participated in a [Spanish course](#) which was offered by the UAM for international students and took place once a week over the course of the whole semester for a cost of 60€.

Leisure

As the capital of Spain with over three million inhabitants, Madrid offers endless leisure opportunities. From the cultural highlights like the Prado museum or the royal palace and the great parks like Retiro or Madrid Río to the district Malasaña with its famous nightlife – there is something to do every day. Madrid is in the geographical center of Spain and thus most parts of the country can be reached by bus or train within a few hours.

In summary I can recommend everybody an elective in Madrid and especially at the La Paz hospital. It is a nationally recognized hospital which offers lots of opportunities to learn and see from a medical point of view, the only prerequisite being a good knowledge in Spanish. The city itself offers multiple opportunities to spend the free time with culture, food and activities.

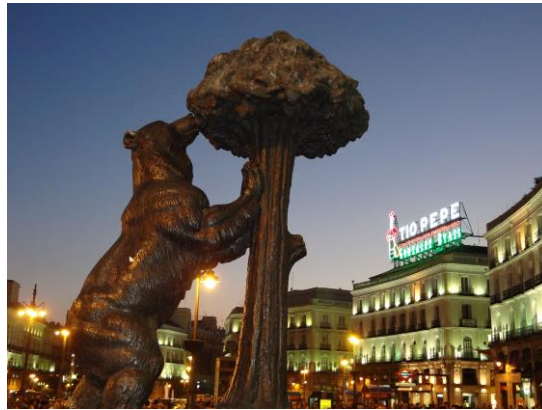
Average cost for one month in Madrid

| | |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| Flight | around 200 € |
| Room in a shared flat | 450-500 € |
| Food and drinks | 150-200€ |
| Transport (under 25) | 20€ |
| Fees for elective | none |
| Activities | 150-200€ |
| Total | 970-1120€ |

Important links

- [UAM Facultad de Medicina](#): UAM School of Medicine of the Autonomous University of Madrid in Madrid, Spain
- [Hospital Universitario La Paz](#): La Paz University Hospital in Madrid, Spain
- [Portal web del Ayuntamiento de Madrid](#): official website of Madrid government in Madrid, Spain
- [Tourism](#): official tourism website Madrid, Spain

Pictures



© David Adam Kess: Statue of the bear and the strawberry tree



© Joaquim Alves Gaspar: Royal Palace in Madrid

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