

**Full name:** Ron Saat

**Email:** [ronsaat7@gmail.com](mailto:ronsaat7@gmail.com)

**Degree Program at TAU:** MBA

**Host University:** ESADE Business School

**Exchange term:** Fall 2020 (2.5 months)

---

### Exchange Experience

#### **About and city**

I found Barcelona to be a truly amazing city and one of the best cities in the world to study in. I was in Barcelona during the Covid-19 period when all the restrictions that were imposed by the authorities were enforced, and I had a very good time, so I cannot imagine the exchange's experience in normal time. The local people are very nice and happy. The city is full of non-local visitors (immigrants, international students, and tourists). It is a very easy city to live in: it is easy to find an apartment, the public transportation is good and accessible, and English speakers have no problems in getting around.

When it comes to attractions, Barcelona is never boring. It is possible to enjoy superior nightlife, nice beaches, plenty of parks, museums, sporting and cultural activities, a popular soccer team, good and diversified restaurants, and the location of the city allows the students to visit interesting places around Barcelona, like Andorra, Costa Brava, Tenerife, and indeed almost any place in Europe is cheaply accessible. If truth be told, when I was there following the restrictions imposed by the authorities due to Covid-19, there was no night life, it was impossible to leave Catalunya, and it was impossible to enjoy the soccer team of Barcelona. Additionally, the restaurants were open and closed intermittently.

The things I mentioned above, as well as the reasonable cost of living make the city very popular among international students.

## **About the Host University**

### Atmosphere, and social activities

ESADE Business School is one of the best MBA schools in Europe. It is a fully international school (on average only 5-10 % of the students are Spanish). All the courses are taught in English and all the employees at the campus speak English. The atmosphere among the students is very good with a lot of social activities, though in the Covid-19 period there were not as many social activities as usual. The exchange students study with the full-time students (there are no lectures only for the exchange students).

### Campus and remote studying

Until the Covid-19 period the lectures took place only at the campus. During the Covid-19 period, ESADE implemented the hybrid model of courses being taught simultaneously at the campus and online. During my semester there was an option for the exchange students not to come to Barcelona and participate in the lectures remotely. I do not know what the model will be in the post Covid-19 era, but I absolutely recommend coming to Barcelona and participating in the courses at the campus, since it is an excellent experience.

### Location

ESADE has 2 relevant campuses as following.

- Sant Cugat – the main campus of ESADE. All the courses for the first-year students are taught there, as well as part of the courses of the second-year students. Sant Cugat is a suburb half an hour by train from Plaza Catalunya. Even though it is not located in the city, the students love it for the beautiful views and the nice atmosphere.
- Pedralbes – Another campus of ESADE is located on Pedralbes Street, close to the center of the city. It is not a big campus and some of the second-year courses are taught there.

### Career Center

ESADE has a career center and career platform which is accessible to exchange students. Even after completing their studies, exchange students can pay an annual fee of EUR 50-100 and get all the career services enjoyed by ESADE alumni. For those who looking for an international career, this might help since ESADE is connected to global potential employers.

## **Courses and professors**

Usually, second-year students are required to take at least 4 courses. In the Covid-19 period ESADE allowed students to take 2-5 courses. Every course entails 10 lectures of 3.5 hours (3 hours of studying and a half-hour break). Following are my experiences in the courses I took:

- Geopolitics – taught by Angel Saz and David Murillo. For those who are interested in geopolitics it is a fascinating course. It is about how to read the political map of the world, the common regimes, and the international institutions. The recent events such as the rise of China, the US elections, and Brexit, make this course very interesting. The requirements of this course are relatively high, though not prohibitively so.
- Sports Business Management—is about the sport sector and its revenue stream. It is a unique course in which students learn how to look at the sport sector from a commercial point of view. The course is taught by Carlos Canto and Keegan Pierce, who are very knowledgeable about the industry. The course includes lot of guest lectures by senior figures from the sport industry. The requirements are not too high.
- Leader as a Coach – taught by Robert J. Emmerling. The students in this course have the opportunity to experience coaching sessions and understand the psychology of managers, peers, and subordinates. The requirements of this course are moderate.
- Spanish Course – it is not compulsory for exchange students, but it is free and in the Covid-19 period it was taught remotely (before the Covid-19 period the lessons took place on the campus).

## **Accommodation**

There are plenty of reasonably priced and located apartments for rent and hotels in Barcelona.

### Neighborhoods

Eixample and Gracia are the favorite haunts of students since they are in the middle of city, with lots of bars, restaurants, etc. Public transportation is also very good. Nevertheless, some students prefer to live in Sant Cugat since it is a very quiet place near the campus. As a rule of thumb, anywhere that is a 15-minute walk from Plaza Catalunya (the main site in Barcelona) is fine.

The best option for finding an apartment to rent is the Facebook page of ESADE and IESE (another business school in Barcelona) where students advertise demand and supply of roommates, though not all of the advertisers are student, some of them are agents. Other options are applications like Roomster, Airbnb, etc. For those who want to see the apartment with their own eyes, I suggest coming to the city a few days early.

## **Visa**

In non-Covid-19 times, usually, as the semester lasts more than 3 months, students need a visa from the Spanish Embassy in Tel Aviv (a technical issue). Now, in the Covid-19 period, as Israel is a red country, it is necessary to get a visa from the Spain Rmbassy even if the semester lasts less than 3 months.

## **Transportation**

Transportation in Barcelona is very convenient and quite cheap. The metro and buses run almost everywhere. There are 2 common multiple-use tickets:

- T-Usual – unlimited transportation for one month. When I was there, the cost was EUR 40 per month.
- T-Casual – 10 rides all over the city, including suburbs like Sant Cugat. This might be the best option and the cost when I was there was EUR 11.

To get to the Sant Cugat campus take train S1, S2, or S6, get off at Sant Cugat station and then walk 15 minutes (or use a scooter or bicycle).

To get to the Pedralbes campus take metro L3, get off at Maria Christina station and take a bus or rent a scooter or bicycle. Alternatively, get off at Raul Palau and walk for 15 minutes.

## **Insurance and Health Services**

ESADE and the Spanish embassy have no special requirements regarding health insurance. The insurance services can be provided by Israeli institutions or EU institutions. If you need the Spanish health services, whether public or private, ESADE can give you the information you need.

## **Living expenses**

As a rule of thumb, the living expenses in Barcelona are 60-80% of the living expenses in Tel Aviv. Following are the estimated monthly living expenses (denominated in EURO):

- Accommodation: 400-1,000
- Transportation: 30-50
- Medical insurance: 40-60
- Groceries: 150-180
- Coffee shops, restaurants, and bars: 100-400

These expenses do not include variables such as clothing and night life (clubs). Traveling to destinations outside Barcelona are also not included.

### **Food**

There are plenty of different kinds of restaurants and supermarkets in the city. For those who eat Kosher, there are a several restaurants, and one minimarket. Beit-Chabad is also available, though in the Covid-19 period it was impossible to go there. For a list of Kosher places in Barcelona, see:

[https://www.totallyjewishtravel.com/kosherrestaurants-TJ2423-Barcelona\\_Spain-Kosher\\_Eateries.html](https://www.totallyjewishtravel.com/kosherrestaurants-TJ2423-Barcelona_Spain-Kosher_Eateries.html)

About the food at the campuses: there are moderately priced dining facilities. There is very nice Falafel place 10 minutes from the Pedralbes campus.

### **Night life**

Due to the Covid-19 restrictions, the night life was unavailable. According to the other students, the night life in Barcelona is one of the best in Europe, with many different clubs open at different hours (there are even parties until 7 am and later).

### **Tips**

Following are some tips for exchange students:

- I do not know if the lectures will take place only on campus or if the hybrid model will be implemented, but if you have the option of going to Barcelona – don't give it up! It is an excellent experience.

- If you have no problems living with others, try to find student roommates. Socially, in that way it is easier to connect to other students and other people.
- For those planning an international career, try to use the career center as much as you can (participate in the career fair for example).
- There are Israeli students in ESADE's full MBA as well (not always but usually). If you do not know anyone in the ESADE student community, you can try creating a contact with them before you come.
- On the first day on campus, you are supposed to get a backpack and reusable water bottle from ESADE so there is no need to buy.

### **General experience**

To be honest, the Covid-19 and all the restrictions were damaging to the exchange experience. Still, I feel lucky to have had the exchange in Barcelona. I highly recommend ESADE as an exchange destination. In non-Covid-19 times, I am sure that it will be indescribable. Honestly, I cannot think of a better city than Barcelona for an exchange experience.

Feel free to contact me on any issue,

Ron