

My Study Abroad Experience – University of Zaragoza

I am originally from the United States and moved to Germany to attend the University of Oldenburg. Therefore, I had recent experience in moving countries which helped me when I moved to Spain. Being part of the EUREC Renewable Energy Program, I was expecting to travel to the University of Zaragoza during the duration of my masters. For this reason the preparation had mostly been taken care of in terms of application.

Although I would have preferred to take advantage of the additional grant money to travel as environmentally friendly as possible, I was travelling with two cats that prevented me from doing so. Travelling with cats definitely created some additional stress. I do believe that my cats may be the most well travelled cats in the world because they have now lived in three different countries. They did not enjoy being on the plane and were much happier travelling on the train before and after the airport.

When we arrived in Zaragoza, we stayed at an AirBnB for a couple of days while I was searching for apartments. What I found was that most places that were advertised on the internet through a real estate agency were only interested in applicants that were planning on signing lease for at least one year. Because of this, I had to look for independent landlords renting apartments which ended up working out great. My landlord has been very nice and allowed me to extend my lease when I decided to stay in Zaragoza throughout the summer. The apartment was located near a tram stop that took me directly to the university. It was a thirty minute tram ride which I was happy to do because the engineering school of the university was located north of the city center without much around it. I preferred being closer to the city center with more things to do and see nearby.

The course curriculum was very interesting. It was unlike any program I had ever experienced before. The course was set up in a series of Modules that had different teachers that were both faculty and people from the industry that came in to teach the modules. It was very interesting to learn from teachers that were working in the industry day to day because it really showed how they use the material we were learning in their jobs. We were also provided with several field trips to some of the places where these teachers worked. These trips included a wind farm, a hydrogen research plant and the CIRCE Experimental laboratories. Each trip was very informative and provided great insight into what it would actually be like to work in these places. In this regard I think the curriculum was very well done because, the point of getting this degree is to find a job in this industry and this program really focused on what would be required in the field.

During my stay in Zaragoza I took advantage of the language courses offered by the university. This is not the largest or most popular city in Spain and therefore does not have too many English speakers and learning Spanish has been very helpful for getting around. My suggestion for anybody coming to Zaragoza would be to take the time to learn some Spanish. Most people are very patient and helping when they see you trying to communicate with them in their language.

Overall, I have been very pleased with my experience in Zaragoza, this is a beautiful city that has been very welcoming. The course curriculum was in line with what I was expecting to in terms of content, which was boosted by having professors that were from the industry. Travelling to study in another country has been a wonderful opportunity. Having the chance to take in a new culture while getting to learn their language is a truly live changing experience.