

Erasmus study abroad project



Madrid- zona, Banco de España

Why the European Studies?

Initially, I chose to study on the European study abroad project as I had a keen interest in advancing my Spanish. I chose Manchester University for this reason. I knew I would have an opportunity to improve my language skills and skills that I thought I may never use again and this appealed to me.

I found learning Spanish and learning medicine a challenge in itself. The other medical students didn't have this, they chose to study medicine only and they seemed happy. However, I can now look back at my progression over the years and the support I received, and I admit that I am very happy I continued on this path. I must commend the Spanish teachers at the University of Manchester as they did a phenomenal job in supporting me when I wanted to give up and if it were not for them I would not have had the time of my life out in Madrid.

If you've got so far as to be reading this report. Well done, you've done an amazing job and remember that in a year or two, depending on your circumstances you will graduate in Medicine MBChB with European option and this is something to be proud of, it's a great achievement that many of your peers will not have.

Juggling fourth year and medicine can be daunting especially as fourth year is the most compact and the longest of them all but I think if you have any issues discuss this with your base hospital beforehand or explain why you need to leave a session slightly earlier (so long as what you are doing is not mandatory). Communication is key. In addition, your teachers understand if you've been based in e.g. Bolton, finished at 5pm and then have to attend your Spanish class at 6pm.

Overall, I chose the European option to further explore my passion for Spanish as this is something I enjoy and that was key for me.

My placements in Madrid and Medical training in Spain

All of my placements were in the hospital Gregorio Marañón. The closest Metro stop is O'Donnell. I would advise downloading the Madrid Metro Map as I use this everyday to get around. The Renfe/Cercanías app is also worth downloading so you have access to the overhead train map.

The hospital is located in the North of Central Madrid, next to Goya/Salamanca which is the more affluent part of Madrid. I wouldn't say you need to live right next to the hospital. I lived ten stops away and it took 35 minutes to commute but of course living closer is always useful. My friend lived in Cuatro Caminos and her journey was a lot easier than mine. Also consider living near the airport

as you will be collecting and dropping off friends and family all the time, so it helps if the commute is shorter. I will discuss accommodation in more depth later on.

Gregorio Marañón is one of the largest, most well-respected hospitals in Madrid. It's not an easy hospital to get into for first year doctors as they only accept the best. We are therefore very lucky to have a partnership with them. There are various placements you can choose. When selecting I went to their website to see what specialities they offered but to make this easier for you please find a photo of the various departments located within this hospital. I would have found this useful when deciding! You can select any four of the below or perhaps you want a longer placement in one department, you could choose this for 8 weeks.

Hospital General Universitario Gregorio Marañón			
Area 100	Area 200	Area 300	Area 400
Aparato Digestivo Hospital de Día	Neurología U. Ictus	Planta 6	
		Aparato Digestivo U. Trasplante Hepático U. Agudos y Hemorragia Digestiva	Nefrología U. Trasplante Renal
		Planta 5	
Cardiología Hemodinámica Hospital de Día	Cardiología Unidad de Arritmias	U.C.P. Unidad Intermedia Quirófanos Cardiovascular Electrofisiología	Cirugía Cardiovascular Cardiología
		Planta 4	
Enfermedades Infecciosas Hospital de Día	Medicina Interna II	Medicina Interna III	Medicina Interna I
		Planta 3	
U. Medicina Interna D	Cirugía Vascular Periférica Cirugía del Tórax	Neumología S.V.T.S.	Otorrinolaringología Cirugía Plástica
		Planta 2	
Cirugía General II	Cirugía General I	Cirugía General III Quirófanos del Nº 15 al 19	Urología
		Planta 1	
Traumatología y C.O.T.	Unidad Coronaria Unidad del Sueño	Cuidados Intensivos U.V.I. Quirófanos del Nº 8 al 14	Traumatología y C.O.T.
		Planta 0	
Información Admisión-Atención al Paciente Dptº Enfermería Capilla-Reprografía Trabajador Social Entrada/Salida C/Dr Esquedo	U.R.P.A. 24 horas Reanimación Anestesia	Traumatología y C.O.T. Ergometría/Holter/Marcapasos Quirófanos del Nº 1 al 7	Rehabilitación Hospitalización a Domicilio
		Planta -1	
Neuro-Radiología Escáner General Laboratorio Microbiología	Urgencias R.X. Tórax y Urgencias	R.X. Urología y Digestivo R.X. Vascular Acceso a Clínica	Ecografía General R.X. Esqueleto Laboratorio Bioquímica
		Planta -2	
Dietética y Nutrición Laboratorio Microbiología	Archivo Comedor Médicos de Guardia Almacenes Vestuarios	Central de Esterilización	Mantenimiento Servicios Generales Cocina

Before attending any placements, myself and another Erasmus student went to the Erasmus office to get our forms signed. This is located at the metro stop C. Universidad, opening hours 10-2pm Mon-Friday. We found the building "Medicina" located directly behind the metro stop and the Erasmus office is on the ground floor towards the library. We handed in our documents and were given letters confirming who the University Erasmus co-ordinator was. We then sent him an e-mail to confirm a time to meet. As he didn't reply within the next few days we decided to go to the hospital in order to introduce ourselves, to him. He was unfortunately not in, so we went to introduce ourselves to those on our first rotation. I think it is very important to continue going back to his office if he is not in, reason being he needs to point you in the direction of locating your ID badge, which I think is paramount so people know who you are. Just as if you were to walk around in MRI or Salford without a badge, someone will eventually question you. He also handles any problems with placements so it's best to meet at the start, so he is aware of who you are. Those in my last

placement were not aware I was coming (or forgot) and so they contacted him for clarification and after this all was okay.

The day before my first placement I went to the cardiology department, spoke with the secretary and she informed me of the time I needed to come in and where to go and although my supervisor was not around I felt it made me feel more comfortable with where I needed to be the next day.



One thing to be aware of is the title of the consultants. They are called “adjuntos” it took me a short while to realise what this meant. It is also interesting to note that they are all very young as Spain has a different system to the UK. Their students study 6 years in medical school and then they study for several months in preparation for an exam called the MIR. This exam determines the students’ specialty so they all want to do exceptionally well in this! They then go straight into speciality training for 3-6 years and then become adjuntos. Again, this is worth noting as they speak about the MIR a lot!

I chose my first placement as I felt I wanted to improve my knowledge of ECGS and cardiology in general. The first day was good, I met with my supervisor, I attended the morning meeting and then my day began. Each day begins at 8.30am with a meeting. This meeting involves all the residents, students, consultants, and managers within the department. The morning meeting is meant to last 30 minutes but can go on up to an hour. After this the doctors look at new patient notes, changes in previous patients and then begin the ward round. Typically, there is more than one adjunto on the morning ward round with a team of residents/students looking after the patients. In the UK consultants may have 20+ patients to see in one morning. In Spain the doctors have up to 10 patients and this makes the ward round much easier and much more relaxed. The ward round lasts about 1.5/2hrs, depending on if there are many “interconsultas” these are patients who, for example, have a cardiology problem but are on a different ward. It can take time to get to the patients so sometimes the ward rounds were longer than expected. After this the doctors take a break for coffee (not so much the students). At this point I would advise having an apple or something to get you through the day as you stay will on the ward for one or several more hours

depending on the day. During the period after the ward round, this is a good opportunity to ask any questions about the patients, take histories on the ward, examine patients or read ECGs etc. The day typically ends at 3pm but you can stay on the ward longer. The other students typically leave at 1-2pm, you can leave at this point but it depends on you.

The ward rounds can get repetitive, so I advise rotating throughout the different areas within the same department. I spent the first week on the cardiology ward and then asked my supervisor if I could move to another department which he agreed to. I moved onto Cardiología Invasiva and in this department they put in pacemakers surgically and also stabilise arrhythmias e.g. SVT. The adjunto here was half Scottish which made me feel at home, although he only really wanted to speak English, which wasn't great! I suppose if you wanted you could always request to have a placement here instead of generically stating cardiology.

Hemodinámica was on the same floor and mainly involved cardiac catheterisation, which was great to see as I hadn't seen this in the UK. I gained a greater understanding of the interventions that take place after acute coronary syndrome is suspected. I then spent a few days watching open heart surgery, which was great to see. Overall, this was a good placement but very tough to begin with as they expect your level of Spanish to be excellent. I hadn't spoken Spanish since the previous summer, so I was of course a bit rusty. Probably best not to start here in my opinion.

I then moved onto Endocrinology. This was very different to my first placement, they were much friendlier, they spoke slowly so I could understand, and they generally were very interested in speaking with me, which was great! They were based on the ground floor mainly and would travel around the hospital to see different patients on the wards (lots of walking on this placement)! I was here for a week and then moved onto the "consultas externas" aka the clinics. These were great, the adjuntos again were super friendly (all of them!) and they made me feel very comfortable. I was even able to ask the patients question during the consultation. I was here for the next few weeks. This placement was slightly more passive as I was not on the wards, but I got to see a lot of conditions such as acromegaly and I was also able to feel a few goitres. On Thursdays I went to the child endocrinology clinic, this was great, and I urge you to ask if you can do this on your first week, it was the secretary who suggested I do this as my supervisor was away one Thursday. Again, you could ask to do your whole placement in the children's endocrinology department. I also attended a diabetic clinic outside the hospital. Here they checked the patients for retinopathy, weighed them and discussed diet with them. Overall, this is a more relaxed placement with very friendly staff. If you want something where you have a more active role, perhaps this is not the placement for you but if you want to brush up on your knowledge of endocrinology disorders then this is a great placement for you.

I then moved onto Respiratory, which they call Pneumology or “Neumología” and this was by far my favourite placement. It was located on the third floor:



I couldn't have asked for a nicer supervisor (the manager of the department) and although my team was a lot smaller in comparison to cardiology I preferred this. It was the adjunto, 2nd year resident, myself and occasionally medical students. This worked better for me as there was more individualised teaching which I preferred. This placement was very active, with ward rounds in the morning and occasionally medical reps came to speak about new drugs- they brought food as well! Every Wednesday there is an interdepartmental meeting with all subspecialties joining in one (very small) room to discuss patients cases and give presentations. They also had interconsultas on ward rounds and similarly looked after roughly 10 patients on the ward. After the ward round I would take histories and examine patients. I would then present this to the resident who would ask me questions about my history etc. I enjoyed this as I felt part of the team. One thing I would have liked to do was write discharge summaries during this placement. They always referred to this as boring paperwork and suggested I go home if I did not have any further questions, but I think it would have been valuable to write in the notes. Again, your written Spanish does need to be very good in order to feel confident doing so and doing so quickly.

During this placement I also attended on calls which they call “de guardia” yet another useful phrase. I did not stay overnight but I stayed until late and was able to see patients clerked in, I saw them perform an USS of the heart with extremely out-dated equipment, as well as further examinations and interactions with those in A&E. I would encourage you to do a few on calls. It may be best to ask if you can begin at 2pm in the afternoon for handover and then stay until 9/10pm.

I also moved to sleep disorder department for a short while, this was all about CPAP and BiPAP, so maybe read over this beforehand. I then spent some time with the lung function team which were made up of nurses mainly. They run the spirometry and the other lung function tests. It's definitely worth seeing this, if not just for the comical value. The nurses would shout at the patients “TAKE AIR NOW” and “BREATHE STRONGLY” the first few times I jumped but then got used to how they test the patients. They are also very harsh on patients and slightly inconsiderate considering they have COPD or some other lung condition, I don't think they are as understanding of the patient's difficulty in breathing quickly. This is not something we do in the UK as we do not tend to shout at patients as far as I have seen but do not be disheartened as the Spanish are very direct, so they were not offended by any means.

I also attended consultas externas with the pneumology team, this was great as I got to listen to a lot of chests. I learnt how to differentiate between different types of crackles and was able to

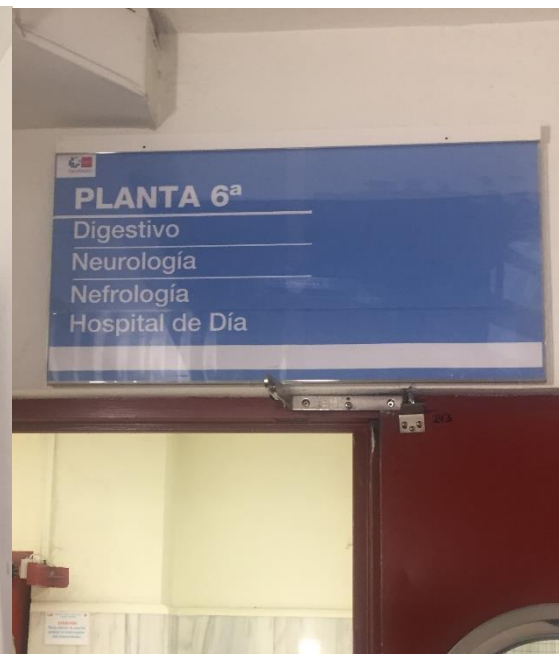
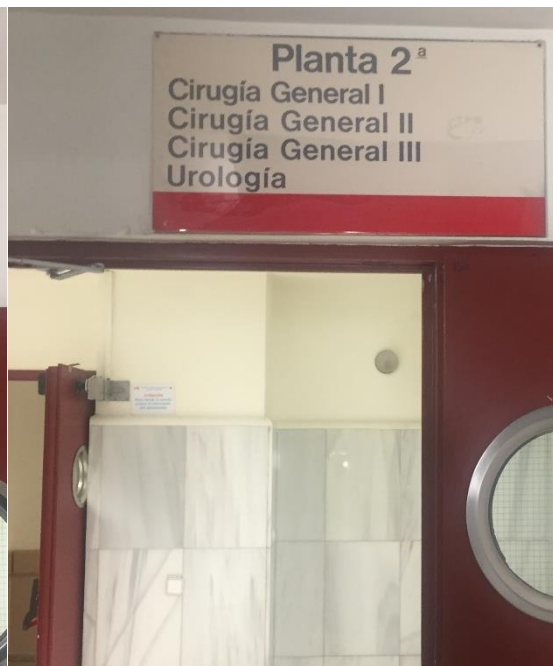
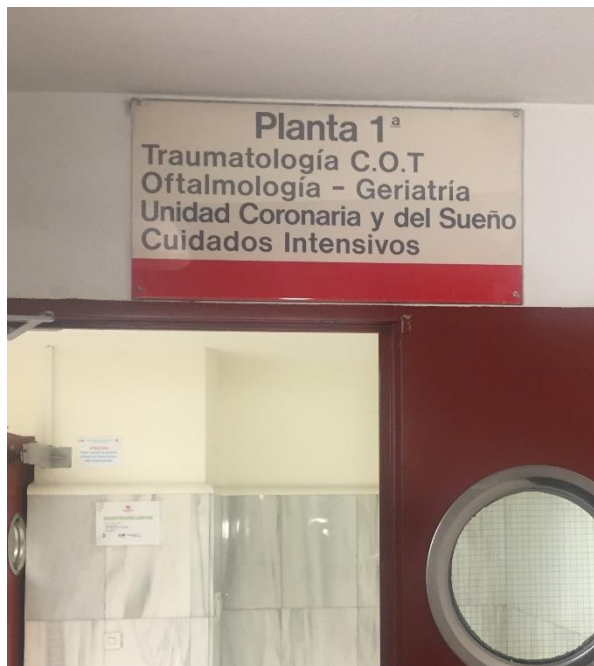
differentiate this from secretions on the patient's chest. This was the first placement in which I attended the lectures with the other students as my adjunto was one of the lecturers. In relation to teaching, I was told by the Erasmus co-ordinator that the teaching was optional, but I would advise going to the lectures when you have free sometime to experience what they are like. You can attend any lectures you want, and I personally think they are good for revising. The teaching and slides are in Spanish and this is therefore a good opportunity to improve your reading and writing skills. Due to the variety, the kindness of the team and the amount I learnt, I would advise this placement.

My last placement was also on the 3rd floor. It was in plastic and reconstructive surgery. This placement was very different to the rest as it was surgical and so I was in theatres every day. There were two other students with me for most of it and there were many residents and adjuntos who were all keen to operate. It almost felt like there was a lot of work but not many theatres allocated to the department, which was a shame. I was able to scrub in and assist but this was only when the first-year resident was not around. I also had to compete with the other two medical students who also wanted to scrub in.

This was probably the most demanding placement as the hours were long, especially so on Thursdays. This is because they book microsurgery in the afternoons, starting at 1pm and going on until at best 5pm and worst 11pm. You could always ask to start later on Thursdays, but it is best to establish this at the start. You also do not have to stay until late but again speak with the surgeon to let them know when you need to leave. Otherwise and this is similar in the UK, they will take offence. My supervisor was quite strict and when I asked to leave after the operation he was keen for me to stay and join the other residents to speak with family members so be prepared to stay an extra hour after surgery on a Thursday. On a positive note I saw a lot of breast reconstruction, abdominoplasties, nose reconstruction (post skin cancer BCC). The placement was varied in surgeries but less so in tasks for students. I did not attend any ward rounds as this was not what my supervisors wanted but I did attend the consultas externas on Fridays as there is no surgery on a Friday. The clinics were a great opportunity to ask questions and also to see patients post reconstruction. On Thursday mornings they have meetings with medical reps these tend to go on for a while so I would often leave and go to theatres. One thing I found interesting was a patient who presented her case to the manager of the department one Thursday morning. She had one enlarged breast and the other less so and wanted a breast reduction, which the manager refused to do as she said it was aesthetic. It was interesting to see this decision-making process. Overall, this was my most intense placement and probably not best to have it last but there was a lot of variety in the operations, which were great to watch.

Of all the placements I would advise the pneumology placement and probably would not advise the cardiology placement if I had to do this again.

Below are a few more images of the hospital floors. It had 6 floors in total:



What you have learnt on the placement with regard to any differences to UK hospitals and practice and the contrasting medical cultures.



There are many differences between the UK and Spain. I would say the main difference is the level of stress which is very problematic in the UK and not in Spain. I believe this is because they are better staffed in Spain and the nurses and doctors therefore have more support among one another.

Another major difference is the dress code! They have “batas” which are the white lab coats. The doctors will wear these, scrubs or both. They tend to dress very casually under this in a t shirt or jeans and trainers are acceptable. They do not dress formally, you can wear nail varnish, rings, large earrings and no one seems to mind. You do not have to buy a bata, if you have your first year lab coat from Manchester bring this, this is what I did but if not they will give you one. Don’t forget your stethoscope!

They have less of a heavy emphasis on ANTT and surprisingly in theatres they use alcohol gel to scrub in! They speak very directly to patients as this is cultural so do not be surprised by phrases such as “dime” when they pick up the phone, it’s not rude. I found in general Spanish people are more direct in the speech and they are also more hands on. The doctors are empathetic in a physical (but professional) way. We are not like this in the UK, we are very hands off.

Another difference I noted was meal times. Do have breakfast as your day starts at 8/8.30am and finishes at 2/3pm. There is no lunch break. After this they have a large lunch around 4pm and then dinner at 9/10pm.

How you have gained from this experience in terms of i) linguistic development, ii) inter-cultural understanding, and iii) in terms of your ideas and future plans.

My language skills have definitely improved a great deal! I would have liked to have stayed longer to improve them even more, but I was happy with my progression. I feel as though I have gained a greater understanding of the Spanish culture and it is one that I like a lot! There's no rushing to get to work, stress at work and then rush to get home and sleep. They move more slowly in Spain and like to enjoy every moment. In terms of future plans, I am not sure what I will do with Spanish but I would like to continue learning.

Addresses, phone numbers and contacts that might be useful for future students.

Although this is subject to change the Erasmus co ordinator at the university of Complutense is Jose MM Villa. His email is jmmvilla@ucm.es but if you have any Erasmus related questions contact his admin team as his job is to sign the paperwork rather than answer questions. Their e-mail is reinmed@med.ucm.es and the number is +34 91 394 1306. The latter e-mail address will put you in contact with the people who deal with the learning agreement and certificate of arrival and attendance. I would also advise that at the end of the placement you ask them to sign you off on e.g. Wed and then take the form to them Thursday as I took my form on the Friday before I left and Jose MM Villa as not there. They said they would post out my document, but it would have been wiser to get it sorted beforehand.

My Erasmus co-ordinator who organised my placement and gave me my ID card was Dr Alberto Tejedor, e-mail atejedor@ucm.es. Again, I would not e-mail him before your placement as they Erasmus office at the university gave me his details and they may change. However, if your placements are still not sorted once you've arrived you could contact him as a last resort and if anything he could re direct you.

Social Aspect

Madrid is a beautiful city there are many places to visit and to help you with this I have put together a list of to do's:

Museums: Reina Sofia, Museo del Prado and Thyssen-Bornemisza

Parks: Retiro, El Capricho, Casa de Campo, Parque San Isidro, Siete tetas parque (great for sunset too)

Shopping: Gran Via (metro stop), Calle Fuencarral (Street off Gran Via), Principe Pio, Madrid Rio2

Food Markets: San Miguel (Sol metro), Mercado de San Anton, Mercado de San Ildefonso

More **Food:** Sol (lots everywhere), 100 Montaditos is a cheap place for beer and tapas very popular, Chipstar in Callao is great, Egeo in Lavapies was my favourite Greek restaurant.

Sweet Treats: Llao llao (amazing frozen yoghurt!), Mimi Creperia, 1902 (best churros!), Valor and San Gines (also churros), Malvys shakes (really fun ice creams in a fish shaped cone)

Terrazas/ Rooftops: Circulo de las bellas artes (phenomenal)!

Cine: The one near Tirso de Molina as this tends to show English with Spanish subtitles

Nails: La Latina (metro stop) – Calle del Duque de Alba

Sunset views: Templo de Debod

Others points of interest: Palacio Real, El Rastro (flee market on a Sunday)

Clubs: Kapital, F*ucking Monday, Opium, Bogui Jazz (on Wed have live music from 10pm)

Bars: Areia (Chueca metro), Malasana área with many bars and Sol has many

Outside Madrid: Toldeo (can go zip lining over the lake), Salamanca, Avila, Segovia, Aranjuez, Cordoba, Cuenca, Andalucia, Valencia, San Sebastian, Bilbao

A good time to travel is during the 2 week Easter Break but this is of course when friends want to visit. At this stage in April I think it's really important to re-charge from placement and leave Madrid so I would strongly advise friends come on other weekends.

There is a lot more out there but these stuck out to me and I visited some of them several times, especially the sweet treats! I celebrated my birthday in Areia and would advise there, it's a Hawaiian themed bar.

In terms of accommodation, I lived in the south in Oporto. I used the app Badi to find my home, you search, visit and buy, it seemed very safe but my landlord also told me my flat was advertised on Idealista so I advise you look there too. I also think this is a good site as a lot of Spanish people use it to find a home! There is also Uniplaces and Spot a home. The latter were unreliable and costly in terms of paying contract fees etc. Both myself and another student used the app Badi to find our homes and we were more than happy! If you want to share with friends, they tend to have 2/3 rooms in some flats or you could rent an air bnb for 4 months.

I would also advise joining the activity groups CityLifeMadrid and BeMadrid. I went to a lot of there events and made lots of friends. They also offer cheap day trips and trips abroad! The first one (Citylife) is much better than the other which ended up cancelling my trip (but I did get my money back).

Good luck! Madrid is so much fun, you are going to have an amazing experience and goes by in the blink of an eye so enjoy every moment! Also find out when the bank holidays are, there are a lot in May, for example, May 1-2nd and May 15th so you can plan trips around the bank holidays. There is also a festival on May 15th called San Isidro, this is located at Marques de Vadillo metro stop and I would advise you go to the events as it falls during the last week of placement so it's an awesome way to say goodbye.

Any questions please ask me sooner than later as its all fresh in my memory now!

