

<Autonomous University of Barcelona Program Report>

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1. Classes

At the Autonomous University of Barcelona, I took a course called *Women's Rights Protection*. It was a class centered on women's rights while also covering various other human rights issues.

The class was fundamentally lecture-based. However, the professor frequently asked students questions during lectures, and students were always free to ask questions or share their opinions at any time. Overall, I felt there were far more opportunities for students to express their views compared to classes in Korea. Perhaps because it was a course on human rights, activities that allowed individuals to express their opinions, such as discussions and presentations, took up a significant portion of the grade. Over the roughly three-week period, there were two project presentations and two discussions in total. When paired with native English speakers for discussions, the large gap in English proficiency made it challenging, but fortunately, the debates were conducted in a gentle, conversational atmosphere where we simply exchanged ideas.

The discussions covered various social issues, with women's rights as the main overarching topic. The topic for the first discussion was whether customs that violate women's rights should be restricted, while the second discussion focused on corporate privacy violations and the resulting infringements on women's rights. A variety of topics were prepared, and one was randomly assigned for each discussion. The presentation projects also broadly focused on women's rights. For the first presentation, which was simpler and had a shorter preparation period, we selected two countries and researched relevant human rights reports to present on the current state of women's rights violations in those countries. The second presentation was more challenging, as we had to choose our own topic involving human rights violations. The presentations were also held in a warm, encouraging atmosphere focused on sharing opinions rather than a critical or evaluative one.

Whether it was just the general culture in Spain or because I was an international student, the professor treated everyone very kindly and warmly. Although there were students from Australia and the UK, many were Asian students from China and Korea. Therefore, when preparing presentations, the professor personally offered extra help to non-English speaking students to brainstorm and organize their ideas. Additionally, students could stay after class to chat with the professor about coursework or daily life if they wished. The professor even mentioned that we could email her anytime after returning to Korea if we had questions about the course material or women's rights. Her cheerful personality made the class all the more enjoyable.



2. Local Life

I applied for the university dormitory after hearing that exchange students could stay there during the program. However, during the process, the host university was slow to reply to emails, and my name was accidentally omitted during the room assignment processing. After waiting for them to contact me regarding the dorms, I

eventually sent an inquiry email, but the host school handled the situation irresponsibly. In the end, I had to secure accommodation through Airbnb instead of the school dormitory. However, because some Airbnb hostings do not allow long-term stays, I had to move multiple times. Furthermore, when I visited Barcelona, the weather in Europe was unusually hot. Since European summers are usually relatively cool, air conditioning is often not installed in standard homes. While classrooms, large supermarkets, and popular tourist restaurants had air conditioning, local restaurants in the outskirts of Barcelona and regular homes did not, making it extremely hot during the day. I heard that even in the dorms, some rooms have air conditioning while others do not, so it would be wise to double-check when applying.

The cost of living in Barcelona is quite a bit higher than in Korea. Simply buying basic food for one or two days at a large supermarket cost around 30,000 to 40,000 KRW. Dining out in downtown Barcelona, in particular, was very expensive. Eating alone cost about 50,000 KRW, and dining with two people cost around 80,000 KRW. You might think this is just because it was downtown, but considering that two slices of pizza at a restaurant near my accommodation on the outskirts cost around 13,000 KRW, it seems that prices across the board are high simply because it is a tourist destination. Naturally, souvenirs are also expensive; even a small magnet often costs over 10,000 KRW.

Since public transportation is expensive, it is best to purchase a 30-day pass. In my case, because my accommodation was quite far from the university, I had to buy a more expensive Zone 2 pass to travel to school. However, if you stay in the school dormitory, I recall that a Zone 1 pass is sufficient for sightseeing in downtown Barcelona. Based on the Zone 2 pass, the 30-day ticket cost around 30 euros.



As for Spanish cuisine, I personally found it to be the most delicious among all the European countries I have visited so far. Dishes famous among tourists—such as honey cod, paella, and churros—were so good that I completely understood why they were renowned. Personally, I found *porras* even more delicious than churros. However, because dining out was expensive, I couldn't do it often; instead, I mostly bought groceries at the supermarket and ate simple meals at my accommodation. Fruits were particularly cheaper and sweeter than in Korea, so I ate them frequently as snacks. The oranges and flat peaches were delicious. Since I stayed in an Airbnb and found it difficult to cook properly, I frequently ate canned food or items that could easily be microwaved. Spain also has microwaveable rice products, but since they are quite different from Korean rice, it is a good idea to research the types of rice carefully before buying.

3. Local Culture

Perhaps because Barcelona is a major tourist city, people downtown are extremely friendly. The university and my accommodation were located in the outskirts, so people there were not quite as friendly as downtown, but overall, every local I met in Barcelona was basically very kind. The food generally suits Korean palates well, so I think adapting to local life won't be a major issue for Koreans. Because of the heavy tourism, most people in the downtown area could speak English, though you occasionally run into people on the outskirts who do not.

Since Barcelona is a famous tourist spot, there are various cultural activities to enjoy. You can easily spot various works of Gaudi's architecture throughout the city, including the Sagrada Família. I couldn't go inside because I didn't book a ticket in advance, but I heard that the interior of the Sagrada Família is much more spectacular than the exterior. Looking at it from the outside, I didn't think it was quite as amazing as its reputation suggested. Aside from that, there were plenty of cultural experiences to enjoy, such as flamenco performances and the Picasso Museum. Additionally, Girona—famous as a filming location for *Game of Thrones*—was easily accessible by train from Barcelona. Although I didn't get to see it myself, I heard that about a week after my visit,

the live-action Disney *Tangled* movie was also filmed in Girona. It seems to be a city widely renowned internationally for its beautiful scenery.

