

## 1. Preparation:

### Insurance

I had an ISIC with insurance for my stay (card version not available on the German webpage). Besides that - an EHIC. A tip – if you're sick and want to go to the doctor, you have to go to the medical centre which is assigned to the area you live in. For a visit at the GP, an EHIC will be sufficient.

### Travel

I took a Ryanair flight to Alicante which is 1 hour away from Murcia. You can check the buses going from the airport to Murcia at [www.alsa.es](http://www.alsa.es), tickets are being sold by a lady at the bus stop. There's also an option of going to Alicante city (CG) and then catching a bus/train to Murcia (trains: [cercanias](http://cercanias.es), buses: [www.alsa.es](http://www.alsa.es)), in case you arrive late.

### Application process at the UM

I received clear instructions on my email and simply followed what I was told to do. In order to have access to Aula Virtual, which is their version of Moodle, you need to sign up for the courses at *Secretaría* at your faculty first. Once you do that, you'll have to pay 6 € at the bank for the insurance (necessary documents will be given).

### Introduction events, Buddy program and ESN

There was one introductory event organized directly by the university at the *Espinardo* campus. During that event, we were given the most important information and received our student cards and a certificate of arrival (which is way more important than the card – you'll need it to buy a bus ticket or sign up for the courses at the university). In case you can't come, it's possible to pick up the documents later. The meeting was not obligatory but very informative.

There is a Buddy program at the university, you just have to sign up for it before the deadline. Also, the ESN Murcia does a great job here. It organizes an introductory week for all international students, trips - at least one a month, language tandems and many other events. Additionally, all the students that work within the organization are very friendly and helpful. [esnmurcia.es/](http://esnmurcia.es/)

There's also a 2-ECTS, free Spanish course at the beginning of the semester and I highly recommend participating at it because it's a perfect way to get to know other students. Again, you just need to sign up before the deadline

## 2. Accommodation

### How did you find yours?

I booked an Airbnb room for the first week of my stay and searched for a flat while I was in Murcia already, using the following webpages: [idealista](http://idealista.com), [easypiso](http://easypiso.com), [fotocasa](http://fotocasa.com), [pisocompartido](http://pisocompartido.com), [enalquiler](http://enalquiler.com), [pisos](http://pisos.com), [milanuncios](http://milanuncios.com). There're also some rental ads in Facebook groups, at the university and in different places in the city. I was writing messages on WhatsApp (they use it a lot here!), visiting flats and finally found mine via *idealista* after three days. It was a bit difficult because, usually, landlords didn't want to accept students that were coming for half a year only. So, even though the flats are not very pretty, don't be too picky.

### Any tips and mistakes that should be avoided?

I didn't have any rental contract and paid the money directly to the "Housemeister" – this is a quite common practice. The flats are rather of low standard, there's no central heating which means 15-17 degrees in the flat from half of November (luckily, I had a small heater in my room; I paid around 20 € extra for electricity, each month I was using it).

DON'T rent a room at *Espinardo* – you'll live closer to the campus but you'll have to spend at least 20 minutes in a tram each time you'll want go to the city centre (and all the activities happen there). I only had classes three times a week and renting a room at *Espinardo* would have been a very bad decision. Also, there's no public transport at night.

Finally, I would recommend living with the Spanish because it's the best way to learn the language.

### Was there any special student accommodation?

Yes. It's [www.vimur.um.es](http://www.vimur.um.es) but I didn't use this option because it's only for international students and I wanted to live with the Spanish.

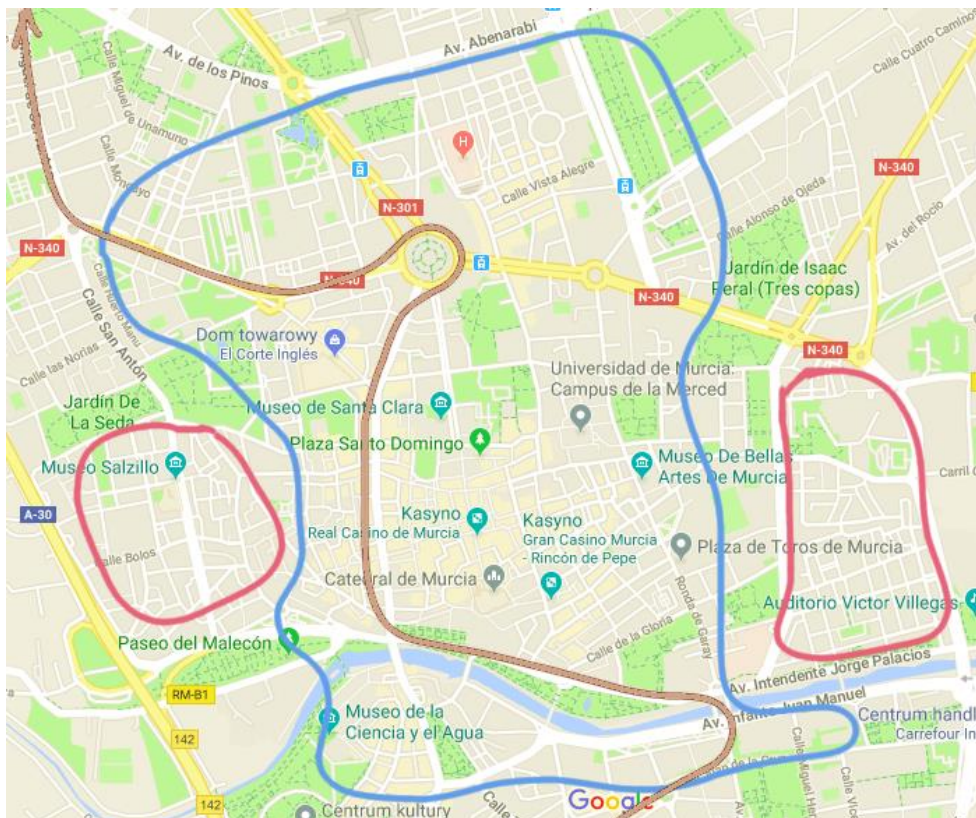
### The cost of rent?

The "Warmmiete" is usually 170-250 € a month, when renting a room in a shared flat.

### Which area of living would you recommend?

Murcia is a relatively small city and any place within the blue area is good. Don't take a flat in the red areas – both are unpleasant, ugly and rather unsafe at night. Besides those zones, Murcia is a safe city and I never experienced any bad situation here, also when walking at night alone.

I have also marked a bus which goes directly to the university and leaves every 20 minutes – *Latbus*, number 39.



### **3. Studying at the university abroad**

#### **How was the day to day life on campus?**

I wasn't completely satisfied with the university. I was unlucky with the subjects I took and I think in general Spanish universities can't be compared with the organization of German universities. I probably would have had my problems at any Spanish University. It did feel like a primary school and the organization was rather bad. The attendance was compulsory (but only during the tutorials), we also were given some small homework and had intermediate tests – usually two during the semester. The university was also rather strict, but I actually liked that part because it meant everybody was on time and no one would leave the lecture room until the class was finished. The good thing was that all the studying materials were uploaded online, and no extra materials were needed. A dinner at the faculty canteen is 5 € but there's also a microwave where you can heat up your own meal.

There's a quite big variety of courses in English, you can check the lists here: [courses in English](#).

#### **Which courses did you take?**

I took three classes, all in Spanish – *Economía Mundial I*, *Matemáticas de las Operaciones Financieras* and *Economía Industrial y Teoría de Juegos* (6 ECTS each). I also took French at the language centre, which was worth 2 ECTS, but I can't have it recognized at Viadrina. I did like *Economía Industrial* - it was interesting and quite easy. *Economía Mundial* contained a lot of theory and was conducted in a relatively strict way. *Matemáticas* contained a lot of material and, even though I had passed three finance courses at Viadrina already, I still had to study quite a lot. The good thing is that there're many groups for each subject, therefore, you've got a huge flexibility when creating your schedule. One remark: *Cuatr. (1)* means winter semester and *Cuatr. (2)* – summer semester. Finally, I would recommend taking *optativas* courses as they're easier than the regular ones.

#### **Were you allowed to take courses from different faculties?**

Yes, but you have to take at least 60% of the courses at your faculty. It's fully allowed to combine courses from different study programmes within your faculty.

#### **Were there any language courses?**

Yes, there're various language courses, however, there're all more expensive than at Viadrina and each level is divided into 2 parts. This means two semesters are needed to complete an A2 level, for example. There's also a two-week, free Spanish course at the begging of the semester.

#### **How did the exams take place?**

The exams looked the way the professors told us, they were similar to what we were doing in class and had the same structure as the intermediate tests and tutorials. No additional materials were necessary neither for the exam nor during the semester. Usually, the exam was around 70% of the final grade.

#### **What is your overall opinion of the university in general?**

I didn't like the studying system here. Most of the exchange students took courses in English, therefore, there were few international students in classes taught in Spanish. Yet the professors were not any supportive. Don't expect your exams will be easier or you'll get some extra points because you're from abroad – exchange students are graded exactly the same way as the Spanish students. The university itself didn't organize special events for international students, there was only an introductory meeting. However, the ESN works really, really great here!

#### 4. Day to day life and free time:

##### How high are the costs of living in total?

Murcia is one of the cheapest regions in Spain - the flats are cheaper than in FFO or other bigger towns in Spain. I would say you'll need less money that you need in FFO to live here.

##### How much does the public transportation cost?

There're three types of public transportation: [Transportes de Murcia](#) (operates in the city), [Latbus](#) (city and surroundings) and [Tranvía de Murcia](#). A monthly pass costs 20 € for each but there's no special pass which would combine two of them or all three. If you want to do that, you should get a *Bono estudiantes tricolor* instead or have a monthly pass and the *Bono* (a single ticket in *TdM* is 1,05, in *Latbus* – 1,85 and 1,4 in tram, while it's 0,35, 0,8 and 0,5 when you use *Bono*). *Bono* is a card in which some amount of money is deposited, and it's used to buy single tickets at lower price. There're also city bikes – [MuyBici](#).

##### What can an exchange student do in their free time? What did you do?

- You can, or even should, participate in the ESN Language Tandems which are organized each Monday. It's an interesting event and a perfect way to get to know other students.
- There's a big skating community in Murcia and there're various groups that go skating basically every day (Facebook - *Patinar en Murcia*, *Patinar por Murcia*, *Patinea*, *Patinadores Region de Murcia*...). Those groups are not any related to the university. Skating so often is probably one of the things that I'll miss most.
- Each Thursday, there's a huge street market at *Avenida de la Fama*.
- There are free workshops and other events organized by the city: [www.redesmurcia.es](http://www.redesmurcia.es).
- Travel! Keep in mind that the tickets for both trains (*Renfe*) and buses (*Alsa*) are cheaper when bought in advance. Moreover, there're cheap flights to Balearic and Canary Islands from Valencia, Madrid or other cities. There's also another bus company – *Lycar*, which operates in the Murcia region.
- Enjoy the weather. Murcia is one of the warmest places in Europe and it's still possible to swim in the sea in November. The weather is great here – even in winter, the temperature basically never goes below 0 degrees at night, and it's always above 10 degrees during the day. Until half of October, I was wearing shorts every day!

##### All in all,

Murcia is a nice, non-touristy city where I feel almost like on holidays because it's warm, it doesn't rain, and the sun shines every day. This is also the 5<sup>th</sup> biggest city in Spain so you definitely will not be bored. There're palm and mandarin trees all around, also in the city centre, and most of the plants remain green throughout the whole year. The Spanish are very friendly and helpful but also loud. The bad thing is that *Los murcianos* don't pronounce the letter 's' which makes them difficult to understand. However, they are very patient and won't mind repeating the same phrase three times, and, after some time, you get used to their accent. I didn't like the university, but I only had classes three times a week.

I would say the first month was quite stressful as I didn't know how the university works, had to search for a flat and organize everything. However, having overcome the first culture shock, I really started enjoying Murcia and I know it will be very difficult to leave. (At the end of the semester, I found job in Murcia to be able to stay here longer). I do like this place, and I encourage you to consider Murcia when selecting a university to spend your semester abroad. :)