

**EXCHANGE REPORT****Name**

Garabet Aslo

Year and semester for exchange

Fall, 2023

Exchange university

UPV, Universitat Politècnica de València.

Degree programme

Computer Engineering, TIDAB

Una Experiencia Valenciana: A Journey of Exploration, Friendship and Academic Growth.

Before departure

Before my exchange journey, I was inspired by the tales of friends who had previously undertaken such adventures. Tokyo was my initial preference, followed closely by Valencia. However, missing out on my first choice didn't dampen my spirits, for I was equally eager to explore the vibrant streets of Valencia. Anticipating a sunny autumn to extend the Swedish summer, stepping out of my comfort zone, and immersing myself in new encounters were all part of the excitement.

Upon receiving confirmation, I delved into basic Spanish using Duolingo and engaged in conversations with Spanish-speaking friends in Stockholm. As mid-August approached, I began packing and mentally preparing myself for the temporary separation from my partner, family, and friends. The night before departing for Valencia, I hosted a lively paella gathering with cherished friends, setting the stage for my Spanish adventure with a perfect kick-off.

Upon arrival

Coincidences are fascinating; just as I arrived in Valencia, a friend happened to be there the same weekend before flying back home to Chile. We seized the opportunity to spend the weekend exploring Valencia together before heading to Gandia, a clam beachside town just an hour away, where I would take an intensive Spanish course for 10 days before the semester started. This period was truly extraordinary! Gandia welcomed around 200 international students, and each day was filled with engaging activities and lively parties following our lectures. Our free time was joyfully spent soaking up the sun on the beach and playing volleyball.

Financials

Financially, a blend of summer savings and the Erasmus scholarship provided a solid foundation for my exchange period. Spain's affordability compared to Sweden, coupled with a stable exchange rate, eased initial expenses such as flight, activities, gym membership (for 5 months), and the first month's rent plus deposit. In Spain, there's always a way to enjoy moments without overspending.

Accommodation

Navigating accommodation was more challenging than expected, with the university lacking dormitories, but shared a list of collected alternatives. Through early and diligent searching on various platforms and proactive communication, I secured an arrangement sharing an apartment with a local resident. The accommodation, coupled with monthly expenses such as electricity, water and WIFI, amounted to 350€ per month. However, I've also been made aware of the unfortunate experiences encountered by other international students, including instances of scams, poor room conditions, and higher rent prices.



University and studies

The UPV campus in Valencia is truly amazing, having extensive facilities including a variety of sports, a swimming hall, a gym, and numerous palm tree-lined parks. My studies primarily were in the School of Informatics, with additional coursework in the School of Telecommunications. Despite being the only international student in my telecommunications course, this provided me with the opportunity to make friends with Spanish peers who shared the same academic journey. The curriculum predominantly leaned towards theoretical aspects compared to my experiences at KTH. A typical study day encompassed lectures, labs, and assignments, often followed by informal gatherings at the beach just 500 meters from the campus.

Courses

Finding courses equivalent to the mandatory ones was more challenging than expected, particularly due to the few elective courses within my TIDAB degree. However, with the assistance of international coordinators from both my home and host universities, I successfully found 3 out of the 4 required courses. The courses I pursued were:

11561 - Operating System Fundamentals
11563 - Network Information System Technology
12414 - Networking Architectures
International Seminars in Life Sciences I

City and country

Spain continually exceeds expectations, revealing new dimensions during my extended stay beyond the typical summer beach vacation. Valencia, in particular, captivates with its beautiful architecture blending the old with the new, and the serene urban Turia Park surrounding the city, repurposed from the former riverbed. Being a perfect city for students, Valencia has lots of biking lanes and a welcoming atmosphere, free from excessive tourism. Exploring various Spanish cities, from celebrating New Year's Eve in Madrid to traversing the amazing streets of Barcelona, Segovia, Peñíscola, Alicante, Granada, and Sevilla, unveiled a tapestry of vibrant cultures. Across these destinations, the charm of delightful tapas,

exquisite wines, and lively nightlife remains a common thread. Spanish people are very social and curious, but slightly shy to speak English. I have still managed to make some Spanish friends however most of my close friends were other international students.



Leisure and social activities

UPV provided an extensive array of sports and social activities, conveniently accessible through a booking app. Additionally, ESN in Valencia and other student organizations presented a diverse selection of activities, parties, and trips at affordable rates. While most of my trips were independently organized with friends, I also participated in a memorable trip to Montanejos and attended several student parties hosted by Erasmus Life, all of which left me thoroughly satisfied with the organization and experiences provided.

Sustainability

While my journey to Valencia lacked sustainability as I opted for a flight due to its convenience, speed, and affordability compared to trains, I made eco-conscious choices once in the city. I enrolled in Valenbisi, the local bike-sharing app, and rarely used public transportation, despite it being free for individuals under 31 years old. Valencia's flat landscape and extensive network of biking lanes made it an ideal city for cycling, with the ability to reach any destination within approximately 20 minutes.

Other recommendations and observations

I wholeheartedly recommend Valencia for an unforgettable exchange experience, full of vibrant culture, artistic marvels, and tasty cuisine. Consider staying in Ruzafa or its suburbs, a trendy neighbourhood conveniently located not far from the university, the beach, and the city center, where many students gather. Make the most of your time in Spain by exploring other cities and villages—affordable student-friendly trips abound, and platforms like BlaBlaCar offer convenient transportation options with the added bonus of engaging conversations with local drivers eager to share insights into Spain's cities, history, and culture. Lastly, immerse yourself in the language and culture. Learning

Spanish, engaging with locals, and taking initiative will undoubtedly enrich your experience and ensure the adventure of a lifetime!

