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Post-graduate clinical internship in Pediatrics
Hospital Infantil La Paz
Servicio de Pediatría y Enfermedades Infecciosas y Tropicales
Madrid, Spain
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Eramus + Traineeship Program Post-diploma Clinical Internship in Pediatrics

Back in the month of May 2017, while studying for the state exam, I found myself reading about a post-diploma internship through the Erasmus + program on the website of the University of Semmelweis. Having been an Erasmus student myself in the past, I was quickly drawn by the information. As I continued reading about this new program, the more I realized that this is exactly what I needed prior to starting my residency in Pediatrics. The program was open for all recent graduate medical students up to one year after graduation and for a period of minimum 9 weeks. I contacted the Erasmus Officers in Pécs to find out whether it was possible to apply for this program here in our University. Thankfully, my application was accepted by POTE and financially supported by the Erasmus program for three months.

The clinical internship

During my 6th year, I have spent a rotation in Barcelona. The more I got familiar with the Spanish medical programs and clinical setting, the deeper I fell in love with Spain and the more I became drawn to the culture. Madrid as an opportunity came to me from a contact I had in Spain, who knew the head of the department in Pediatrics of a nation-wide famous hospital called La Paz. I was accepted into their Pediatric Infectology and Tropical disease unit.

Honestly, I did not know what to expect. The situation was a little different as I was going to Spain with an MD title and not a student status. In addition I was quite nervous with my level of Spanish knowledge; prior to my travel I have only four months studying Spanish. However, a lot of positive surprise was waiting for me in Madrid. I have received a very warm welcome by the head of the department and staff.





During the entire internship they considered me there as a resident doctor and not a student, respecting my title and diploma earned abroad. Each month I was paired up with a different specialist doctor, and some days with pediatric residents. The language level was my biggest challenge but thankfully I did not get discouraged. The Spanish medical staff was very patient and understanding. Instructions were repeated when they were not clear; questions were answered whenever I needed to ask. The resident doctors made sure they only communicate with me in Spanish in order to practice and improve my level. I spent two months in the acute care department and my last month in outpatient care. I saw many cases of pneumonias, bronchiolitis, and gastroenteritis. During outpatient care, I improved my knowledge regarding vaccination calendars and the necessary vaccinations for travel.

The city life

Madrid is absolutely gorgeous and rich in culture, gastronomy and architecture. It is a very active city filled with tourists and international students mainly from Europe and Latin America. It was really easy to integrate and become familiar with the city. The one thing I had many difficulties with was to find a room. I have started my search well-before heading out to Madrid but it still wasn't enough time. I searched on popular pages like Idealista, FotoCasa and even Airbnb. The main problem was my short-term stay. Most landlords wanted a minimum of six months of stay. Madrid is an expensive city; the minimum rental price is roughly around 400-500 euro a month for renting out a bedroom in the city center. There are cheaper ones outside of the city center but difficult for a non-Spanish, international student to obtain. Due to the annual increase of national and international students the city has currently a lack of apartments to rent for students. Available rooms are mostly handed down between friends privately and are not made public. Luckily I was able to find a room through a friend that lived in Madrid the previous year and still had the landlord's contact information. The room was located in an apartment right in the city center, next to Sol neighborhood. The location made the rent very expensive, 500 euro per month. However I had lovely roommates, a trusting landlord and a great location in the city of Madrid. Madrid has beautiful national parks. My favorite one is probably the most famous one called Parque Del Retiro, where I often went for a nice walk or a morning jog on weekends.



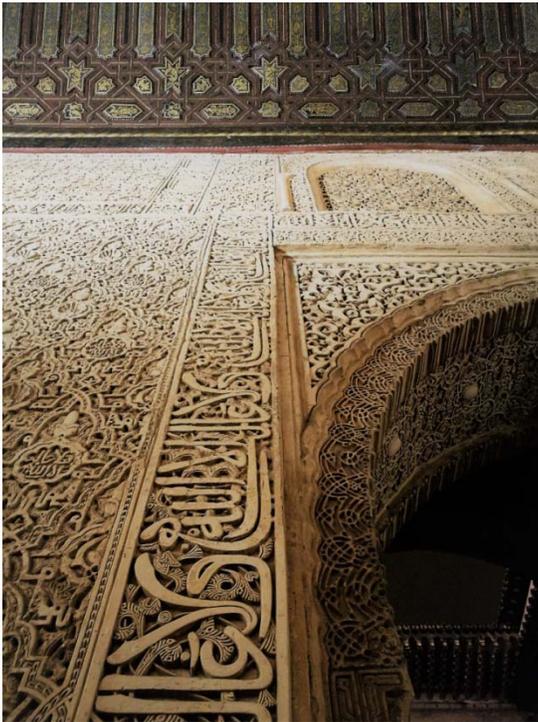
Transportation

Madrid has a great public transportation system. There is an option to apply for a monthly student pass that includes all the transportation systems of the city; the metro, buses and city trains. It is also possible to take the local bus to Toledo free with this pass that leaves from the Plaza Eliptica metro station.

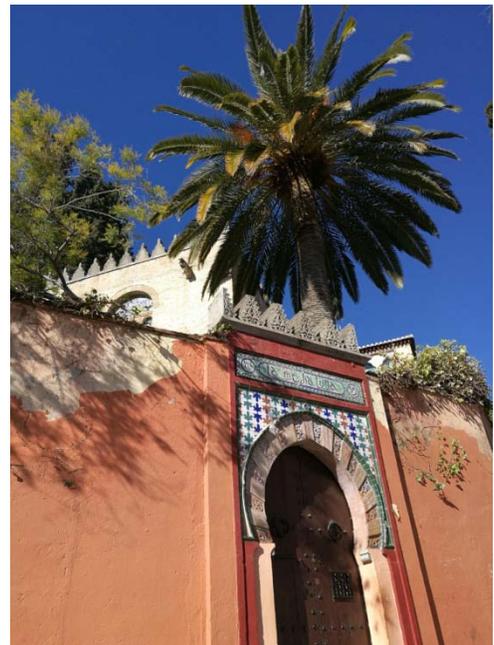
Students can apply until 25 years of age.

<http://www.crtm.es/billetes-y-tarifas/nueva-tarifa-abono-joven.aspx>

Trips and traveling opportunities



There are beautiful cities and places to visit around the capital. I recommend a visit to Toledo, about 40 minutes bus ride away. Other places that are worth visiting include Segovia surrounded by mountains, Alcala de Henares the birth place of the famous Miguel de Cervantes, Aranjuez and it's beautiful gardens and a bit further Zaragoza the capital of the Aragon region of Spain. For longer distance travel, the Alsa bus company offers great deals to go all over Spain. Vueling and Ryanair flight companies often have good deals to go to Morocco or the Canary Islands both departing from Madrid Barajas Airport. Renfe is the national train company, a bit more expensive but offers in turn faster travel time.



Eating in Madrid

The city offers a great variety of restaurants, local and international fast-food chains and what is a must-do in Madrid: Tapas bars. There are a lot of great places that are affordable for students and offer a great gastronomic experience into the Spanish cuisine. Among my favorite places for tapas were TragaTapas in La Latina neighborhood and El Tigre near Gran Via street. Delicious pastry shops are nicely spread out in the city. One of the most famous is La Mallorquina that is located right in front of Sol metro station. Also one must not leave Madrid without trying the famous bocadillo de calamares; the fried squid sandwich that is very typical snack to eat from Madrid. The best places to eat these bocadillos are in Plaza Mayor, my favorite being Casa Rua.



Erasmus Life

Compared to my previous exchange, my contact with Erasmus was limited in the host country. I was already in a post-diploma status and not a student. As my internship was also new within the Traineeship program, the host university didn't consider me as Erasmus student. However, I was lucky to live with two Erasmus girls from France who invited me to join them in Erasmus events like Latino Dance Classes, language tandems and City walking tours organized by the local ESN.

Additional thoughts

This has been the best clinical exchange I had completed during all my medical school studies. I have participated in three other exchanges during my university years. La Paz hospital was far superior in terms of clinical experience both in practical and theoretical knowledge. Most importantly, the medical team was very welcoming and I was considered there as a resident doctor and a part of their team. Further, this period allowed me to truly make the decision of my future specialization program in Pediatrics. I recommend this post-diploma internship to any young graduate who does not feel ready to make a decision for specialization and has an open mind to go abroad to experience a new clinical setting. It is also a great opportunity to try out a European country were one is interested in working in to get to know the system.

¡Muchas gracias!

