

Louise (BA Management & Spanish)

I study Management and Spanish, so for my Year Abroad in Spain I knew from the start I wanted to do a work placement, to best combine the 2 aspects of my degree. I applied anywhere and everywhere; 35 emails, 15 responses and 2 interviews later, I accepted an internship at Unitrips, a small digital travel agency in the heart of Madrid. I got some good advice that the bigger the company, the more likely you'll be doing the same, small job day in and out, and the smaller the company the more variety and responsibility you're likely to have, and oh my, wasn't that person right!



I was genuinely scared for the whole experience in the lead up, to the extent where I put off even thinking about it (would not advise) until I found myself at the airport saying my goodbyes. The whole thing is scary, and it's so frustrating having everyone tell you "you'll be fine" when you bring it up. But the truth is, you probably will be. The intimidating thing at the start was the *number* of new things: city, people, flat, job, even language to an extent, things that would be an obstacle even on their own!

I moved into a hostel on day one and had already lined up some viewings, which was really helpful because that's easy enough to do from home. By day 3, I had a flat in the outer centre of Madrid (Conde de Casal), with all Spanish speakers. I thought, 'fantastic, I'll get so much Spanish practise!' Which in fairness I did, but I was also getting an awful lot of Spanish practise at work, and at a volleyball club I joined. Long story short, it's possible to actually forget you're an Erasmus+ student. While this must have been fantastic for my language, my Spanish still isn't good enough to really connect with people on a personal level, and I found myself relying on my one favourite flatmate (who spoke English, coincidence...?) without a solid group of friends beyond the absolute stars that are my co-workers (I got very lucky there!).

Post Christmas, I decided it was time to get back into the Erasmus+ circle, so I moved into a flat right in the heart of Madrid (my snapchat filter from my flat is the 'Oxford Street' of Madrid, Gran Vía!) And I am very glad I did so. The flat now may be so much grimmer than my first, the wifi may not work and my room is a large box, but the people are a mix of really cool internationals. I like that, by the end of my

year, I will have had a taste of both the Erasmus+ life, but also what it's really like to work abroad. I like that I can't quite sympathise with my course friends at Universities, who say they're only meeting other Erasmus+ people so not actually speaking that much Spanish, because I've got the best of both!



In terms of the actual job: working life is hard! I have to be the one who leaves drinks early because "I've got work in the morning", then barely sees the sunlight during winter because I'm in an office all day. But for me, these are small prices to pay for the fact that I absolutely love my job. I have literally had a hand in every element of the business: social media marketing, promoting on site at Universities, using a new programme to manage our website, learning and implementing Search Engine Optimisation techniques, translating content, promotional material and various emails from Spanish to English, working on a new package in Iceland completely independently, searching for affiliates (in Universities, au pair coordinators, and international companies), organising details for upcoming trips (finding and interviewing tour guides, booking museums for groups, creating an internal manual for the day-to-day running of trips), attending the World Travel Market in London and FITUR in Madrid to explore potential partner companies, and finally leading a tour in Eastern Europe over New Year. Variety, right!

I am absolutely loving my year abroad here in Madrid, and not just because you can do loads of attractions for free with a student card or because you get free tapas with every drink you order. It is a buzzing city that hasn't yet been taken over by tourists and I don't quite want it to end!