

## My Mobility

Students from Ca' Foscari Recount their Learning Experiences Abroad

### A girl on the move

Chiara Rutolo

LM Crossing the Mediterranean: towards Investment and Integration (MIM)

Destination: Universities of Barcelona (Spain), Montpellier (France)  
and Meknès (Morocco)

In a letter to 'Joe' Chiara Rutolo writes about life in three towns: Barcelona, Montpellier and Meknès, all of which were mobility destinations on her Joint Master's Programme.

Dear Joe,

I don't know where to start.

It feels like for the past two years I've never stopped! I've been travelling all around the Mediterranean; living in Barcelona, Venice, and Montpellier. I've travelled to Tunisia and Morocco and lived in Meknes with a local family for three months. I've even visited Alcoy, Paris and Brussels! Sounds thrilling, doesn't it?

The truth is, it's been the most exciting, beautiful, and constructive experience of my life, so far. Particularly as day by day I get to know so many different cultures, and I could say I've also virtually travelled to Mexico, Lebanon, Egypt, and another 11 countries as well.

In the 2016-2018's edition of the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree MIM, we were 31 students, with 14 different nationalities. I still remember when we first met in Barcelona, in September 2016, on the first day of the course. Our diverse faces scanning the room, curiously looking at each other and wondering 'what language will I have to use to communicate with her?', 'mmm... blonde... mustn't be Spanish'. It's been so exciting and I've learned something from every one of my peers during these two years that has enriched my cultural understanding and changed my life for the better, forever.

In August 2016, before leaving for Spain, I thought I already knew how to deal with different cultures, how to overcome the obstacles of living in a new city, in another country, sharing a flat with people I did not know and who probably spoke another language. I'd been in Erasmus in Paris for 1 year during my bachelor, after all! But I was wrong. Living in Barcelona has proved to be very different from my experience in France. As you can imagine, sharing a flat with a couple has nothing to do with sharing it with two friends. I also learned Catalan; ate the best *jamon Serrano* (the Spanish ham) I had ever tried, and enjoyed the Barcelona night life and its beautiful sea, often both in the same night!

Then I moved to Venice, where I had the chance to see its beautiful Carnival for the first time. And trust me, I ate as many *frittelle* as I could.

But even after all those *frittelle*, the experience that definitely made me grow the most was living in Morocco with a local family. I was not alone, a friend from the masters was with me, but we both felt courageous to take this decision as no one else wanted to. And you can guess why... it wasn't always easy. We slept on a Moroccan sofa for three months, which - believe me - is nothing like the sofa you're imagining. We lived in a house where everyone respected the Ramadan fasting period, with all its good and its bad. Growing up in Italy on generous portions of pasta three times a day, it was hard for me not to eat and drink while having to go to university under the 35 degrees' sunshine. But at the same time wonderful because at the end of the day we all broke the fast together with *ftor*, the 'night breakfast'. Thank *Allah* as the nights were often spent playing ninja with our two little Moroccan brothers - one of the funniest things ever! Not to mention going to the *hammam* on Fridays nights with our Moroccan mum, and preparing couscous with her... We couldn't experience a more authentic Morocco than this. When in September 2018 we moved to Montpellier for the last semester, me and Maria Elena were missing our Moroccan family so much that we kept on listening to '3andw ziin' (a local traditional song) all winter long.

During these two years of the master, I studied, I travelled, I learned. I have walked on the sand of Moroccan desert, cycled by the marvellous Camargue's canals watching flamingos flying over my head. I would need a thousand pages to tell you everything, and even then it wouldn't be enough. I would need to show you pictures, videos; I would like to walk with you in Venice, to show you its wonderful little corners where every sight becomes a work of art. Unfortunately, all I have is this letter. A letter I have willed to taste like Moroccan couscous and smell like the Mediterranean Sea. I am proud of all I have learned and accomplished throughout these experiences, and feel incredibly humbled by all the amazing people I have had the chance to meet. I will carry a piece of every one of them with me, as I hope they will do with me.

Now I've got to run; there are many more adventures to be had and memories to be made! All of which you'll no doubt hear about next time.

Lots of love,  
Chiara