

**“Wish I’d Known” Survey
Valladolid, Spain**

PACKING AND TRAVELING

Specifically, what kind of LINENS did you need to bring?

- Bringing your own towel is nice if you plan to travel
- Beach towel, extra sheet for traveling in hostels, 1-2 hand towels
- None, they were provided by my host family.
- None, unless you want to steal an airplane blanket...they come in handy.
- Only towels
- 1 beach towel, towels for showering provided by family
- Didn't NEED to bring any, family was more than happy to provide anything. If you travel, you might want a sheet to use for hostels, otherwise, you have to usually pay up to \$10 to rent one.

What are you glad you packed from home?

- Girls—tampons (because they're expensive here); gloves, scarf, hat, cosmetic and other health and beauty stuff you really like from home
- Long underwear, Febreze, slippers (a must for Spanish homes!) and sweaters. My own music and headphones, earplugs and a journal. Pictures of my family and other things to show host family. All contact solutions...they were expensive there!
- Medicine from my own doctors (sore throat, ear, etc.)
- My teddy bear, pictures of family and friends, a travel pillow, stain remover, skirts, nicer clothes, and snack foods: popcorn, granola bars, and my favorite things—you miss them a lot!
- Plenty of film!
- An English/Spanish dictionary and travel books.
- Toiletries that I prefer
- Very glad I brought peanut butter to eat and pictures to show my host family

What do you wish you had left at home?

- A lot of summer clothes and pairs of shoes because you buy so much stuff here anyway
- My Columbia jacket—it was too big and it screamed American.
- Half of my clothes!
- Cool weather clothes—wasn't expecting the heat.
- Lots of clothes that weren't worn.
- Too much clothes!
- An umbrella—it rarely rained.
- Not so many jeans and nice pants
- Socks, I didn't wear a single pair, or sweatshirts.

Do you have any travel tips to pass on (planning advice, safety considerations, guidebooks, train vs. bus, etc.)?

- All the guide books work great (i.e. Let's Go) when traveling in other cities and when looking for hostels; girls should walk arm in arm; the buses are cheap, but not always as comfortable as the trains
- Take a guidebook. Call for reservations if you plan on arriving somewhere on the weekend, in the afternoon. It is easier to find empty hostels before noon.
- Sometimes buses are faster and normally cheaper. Travel as much as you can with not too large of a group.
- Always plan at least a week early. Sometimes going through travel agents isn't bad. The bus is uncomfortable, but always take the bus if you are traveling shorter distances.
- Bring a "Let's Go" type of travel guidebook. Especially if you plan on traveling outside of Valladolid.
- Lonely Planet: Spain
- Buy a travel book (Lonely Planet, etc) beforehand and read up. Train is good for traveling throughout Spain but takes some patience to book tickets. Do everything you want so you don't regret it when you return home. Pack a small suitcase in a larger one and only pack what you can fit in those. You'll have the room of the extra suitcase to take home the things you buy while abroad.
- Be sure to wear one of those money belts, they were nice to have rather than having the hassle of a purse. Also, confirm your flight. The books on Europe and Spain were nice to have too; they were a great guide and have a lot of useful information in them. I used them all over Spain and in England. You can buy them at Barnes and Noble or any other bookstore I'm sure.

What places would you advise future students to see and why?

- Barcelona—lots of cool stuff from Gaudi (Parc Guell, Sagrada Familia etc.); Granada—Alhambra; Sevilla—beautiful with nice weather; San Sebastian—mountain region very beautiful
- Check out the beaches in Spain and the theatre in Valladolid.
- Travel as much as possible—See southern Spain and all of Europe!
- Santander—great beaches and weather
- Southern Spain like Seville, Granada. These are great cities.
- San Sebastian—beautiful beaches! Barcelona—so much to see! Bilbao—Guggenheim Museum is amazing!
- Barcelona and Madrid—they were beautiful
- Granada—the Alhambra...it's beautiful! Check out the theater in Valladolid, it's a cool experience. Barcelona and Parque Guell
- Barcelona—friendly, fun, entertaining, different, Mediterranean Sea. Salamanca—castle, shopping. San Sebastian—relax, beach
- I really enjoyed Barcelona a lot. There was so much for you to do and to see. I took a bike tour in Barcelona and would highly recommend it. The tour guides are from the States and therefore the tours are in English and are very comical. I would consider it being my favorite activity all summer.

MONEY AND COMMUNICATIONS

How much money in U.S. currency would you recommend students have at their disposal for their whole time abroad?

- For 5 months \$3,500-\$4,000
- \$2,000-\$3,000
- \$600-\$800 (for summer w/lots of traveling)
- Depends on the type of spender the person is. If a big spender, about \$3000, if not \$1500 to \$2000.
- I would say at least \$1000 especially if you plan on traveling around Spain/Europe.
- \$500-\$1000
- I spent \$1500; some can get by with \$500. It depends on how much you buy and travel.
- I think for the summer, you're SAFE with \$2000. I don't think you'd need that much, but I took a trip to England, a long weekend to Barcelona and a weekend in Madrid and spent close to that amount. It depends on what kind of spender you are. I don't buy a lot of souvenirs or clothing so I didn't spend as much money as others did on those sorts of things. I guess it depends on where your motives are.

*How much money did you have in foreign currency when you left for your program?
Was it enough?*

- \$300—enough to last me while getting accustomed to things
- None—got money from ATM when we arrived
- I had none because I used my debit card.
- None, I exchanged once I arrived in Spain, but I would maybe suggest bringing about £100 when you leave.
- €30, yes it was enough.
- None—I got mine when I got to the country and it was fine. Others took some out in the airport in Spain.
- I exchanged 100 euros before the trip and that was perfectly fine. It wasn't necessary to exchange before hand. There were plenty of ATM machines all over the airports to get us by.

*How did you manage your money (credit cards, traveler's checks, bank accounts etc.)?
How and where did you access your money?*

- I use a credit card whenever I can because it's a better exchange rate. Traveler's Checks have a better exchange rate than regular bills. I have an account in Spain, but if you're going to open one go to Telebanco because they have the most ATM's.
- I used traveler's checks and a checking card. They are both nice. A check card is easier for traveling outside of Spain.
- My mom kept track of bank accounts and I knew my limits. I brought Traveler's Checks for emergency and didn't use them. I got cash thru my ATM card—there were machines everywhere!
- I used my debit card. That is the utmost easiest way to deal with money.

- ATM card, but I would suggest having a credit card
- Credit cards and ATM card, ATM machines all over—probably easiest. Never used my traveler's cheques.
- Debit card is the easiest with the least amount of fees. Just be careful and protective not to lose it or so no one finds out your PIN number.
- I used the machines. They are EVERYWHERE. Probably a couple on each street, so there was never a problem finding them. I found that those with Traveler's Checks really had troubles and ended up losing money in the deal.

How much money did you spend on books?

- None
- \$10
- No money was needed to buy books for classes—all reading materials were provided
- \$5
- Not a dime. For the summer term, no books were needed; the teachers had handouts for us instead.

How did you communicate with the U.S.? What would you recommend to future students (e.g. calling card, set up e-mail account and where, etc.)?

- There's e-mail in the school, but it's really slow. There's also a thing with MCI I use where you can call from Spain cheap and it gets charged to the other person. The price for the other person is relatively cheap.
- E-mail and MCI Worldcom
- Calling cards—never found a really good deal. I emailed a lot.
- Calling cards (buy them in Spain because they're cheaper than US cards and you receive more minutes to call the U.S. Email is a good thing too.
- Email mainly, but I did purchase a calling card to call home a few times.
- You can email from school's computer lab, phone cards from Kiosks work well and are cheap and then I called from pay phones.
- Buy calling cards at the kiosk outside of Corte Ingles. Cards from home are a rip-off. Email is available (somewhat limited) at the university.
- I would suggest buying the calling cards at Corte Ingles. You can get 550 minutes for 20 euros. I believe it was 3rd (or 2nd) floor of Corte Ingles to buy them. I was able to call the US with them as well as to England with them and they used the same amount of minutes for each, unlike the AT&T cards. Don't buy the AT&T cards; it's a big loss of money.

SCHOOL WORK

How did your academic experience abroad differ from your U.S. experiences concerning:

Relations with professors/Classroom Instruction?

- Personable, they try to help out as much as possible

- Professors are cool and always understanding—you might even go out with them!
- Much more relaxed—call the Profs by name and class doesn't start on time!
- Teachers related on a personal level more, and it felt like an equal amount of time was spent outside of class with us.
- Professors are awesome. They are very helpful when you need them and they teach classes well too.
- Professors were extremely accommodating and helpful and caring!
- Professors were friendly and helpful.
- More personal relationships—call professors by first names; go out with them at night, etc.
- Relations with professors were great. They ended up being very good friends of ours, yet were able to maintain respect in the classroom and keep their respect as professors. Teaching style was very laid back which made learning a lot easier, the floor was always open to discussion and I really feel that I learned a lot more with it being so casual.

Grading?

- About the same scale, but I'm not sure about overall because we get Pass/Fail grades
- More laid back
- Easier
- I really didn't understand the grading procedure, but I passed my classes.
- Fair
- Graded according to level you were at
- Grade fairly strictly, but fairly.
- Grading was fair, as any other school. If you were prepared and did the necessary work, you did fine, if you were lazy and sluffed off, you got the grade you deserved.

Study habits?

- Unfortunately I don't study as much here because there is so much to do and see.
- If you really want to learn, you should study...but I studied less in Spain than in the U.S.
- Less than U.S., but still study lots for exams
- Pretty much the same
- Studying was not hard. There wasn't much work given.
- Less studying in summer program than in a regular semester
- 1-2 hours per night
- I had to study almost every night before class. I had reading and writing assignments as well as a few projects and papers.
- I really didn't study all that much outside of school. During the day I had breaks between classes though and so therefore got most of my homework and studying done in that time.

Library?

- It's a warm place—and quiet...good for getting stuff done.

- It's a community library, and there are never any spots available to study at.
- Limited places to study at.
- I didn't use it.
- There was one near campus, but it wasn't necessary to use it
- Don't even bother. It's a huge hassle to get your ID made for it and expensive.
- Didn't use one.

Computer Access?

- Barely any computers in the school, but if you get a library card you can sign up for an hour each time, 2 hours per week.
- The labs are a lot better in the U.S.—try to be patient!
- 5 computers—not always working
- We had 5-7 computers depending on which worked
- Computer lab is a lot smaller than what we are used to but we managed.
- There was a computer lab on campus with Internet access and it was open reasonable hours.
- Computer lab with internet—5 to 6 computers
- Limited access at school.
- I didn't experience any problems with accessing computers. We had to wait every now and then, and take our turns, but for the most part, there was always something available. Everyone kind of picked and chose their times and we all settled in on a routine.

Other?

- Too much English is spoken at school—need a strict Rule—NO ENGLISH!
- If you don't have a strong background in Spanish—it will be challenging! Not many people in Valladolid speak English.
- It's not just a cakewalk. There is work to do and if you don't, your grades will be affected.

What enabled/hindered your successful academic experience?

- Intercambio helped me out a lot with my schoolwork, but there were so many other things to do other than study. You can learn a lot from Spaniards by going out to cafes with them or something like that.
- Go out and talk in public with the Spaniards.
- I thought the teaching was better—they worked with us until we all fully understood.
- Language barrier was hard—having classes 100% in Spanish when I've had little background with Spanish.
- Enabled: My study habits. Hindered: Going out, traveling, heat.
- I really wasn't all that fond of the other students that came in and out while we were there. They took away from the experience a lot. There were a handful of Italian students that came while we were there and we all had a lot of problems getting a voice in the classroom because they talk SO much and generally aren't speaking very clear Spanish (since Italian is so similar) so we missed out on a good portion of class lessons after they showed up.

SOCIAL LIFE

How did you meet students from your host country?

- At the school.
- Bars, cafes and gym
- By going out and through a partner set up by the school.
- Bars/Night life
- Being out and about in Valladolid talking to people was great. Meeting people I clubs was also good.
- I didn't. But we did meet both French and Italian students who were great.
- Most often we met peers in the bar scene or in cafés.

How did you like to spend your free time and why? Is there anything you regret not doing more of in your free time?

- Going out for café with my friends, spending time with my Intercambio.
- Going to cafes, walking around city, shopping, watching TV (good to learn from), talking with host family and writing in my journal.
- Shopping, beach—only way to cool off.
- I liked visiting the city. Valladolid is big enough that I was able to see a different part of the city almost every day.
- Exploring a little more around Valladolid and going to some of their museums.
- Walking around/ shopping
- Traveling, exploring the city, hanging out with friends and my host family.
- We went to the Plaza Mayor nearly every night and had coffee, ice cream, soda, etc., and chatted with the locals. The people in Valladolid are very friendly and very willing to strike up a conversation with you. They want to practice their English just as we want to practice our Spanish.

What opportunities for social, recreational, and cultural events that the host university or program offered did you like the best? Why?

- The University set up a lot of fiestas in the beginning to get everyone to know everyone else and the city. They set up excursions to other cities every Saturday for the first month, which was nice.
- Thursday nights at “horas lentas” and “sotobanco”—we always got stuff for free!
- Day trips on the weekends—you can get to see different cities in Spain.
- Movie nights, fiestas, and dance classes—experienced the culture in natural setting with regular people
- I liked the parties at night.
- Weekend excursions were very great!! I recommend going on these.
- Dance lessons, video showings, welcome/goodbye parties
- Movie nights, dance classes, bar nights, Saturday excursions. All were great except movie night, but I just didn't like some of the movies.

- We took a lot of trips on the weekends. They were pretty fun, a good experience anyway. Some got a little boring, looking at Cathedrals continuously, but it was still a good experience just the same, to travel with all your peers and professors.

What piece of advice would you give future students regarding their non-academic life while abroad?

- Try to go out with Spaniards as much as possible and travel a lot because it's cheap and there's a lot to see in Spain.
- Travel—leave at night and go out even if you don't feel like it.
- Travel and go out as much as possible and get to know your families
- Mingle and try to meet non-Americans! Practice your Spanish as much as possible.
- Travel around Spain, it is so worth it and there is so much history and cool things to see.
- Travel a lot! I learned more outside of class and it's fun and exciting.
- Travel as much as possible and miss class to travel if you have to. It's really ok, just let your professors know and don't do it every week. Get out and explore the city. It's pretty interesting.
- Don't sit at home, get out and enjoy the city. Walk the streets, explore the city. Sunday evenings in Campo Grande all the little old couples go dancing to live music, it's great to watch. Check out the big market on Sunday mornings across the river; go to the beach during the siesta time for something to do, walk in some of the shops just to interact with the people. Take advantage of everything you can.

CULTURAL ISSUES

Are women treated differently in your host country than in the U.S.? If so, what advice would you pass on to women who are thinking of studying in your host country?

- In the clubs women are asked to be kissed or are just kissed after only 5 minutes of knowing a guy. The guys ask you to go home with them a lot. You just have to be careful and stay with friends!
- The moms will treat you like little kids and baby you—serve your food even.
- I think women there are more traditional. Being American—you draw more attention from the males—remember just be careful.
- Yes, girls need to be prepared for hooting and more by Spanish men. Never go anywhere after dusk alone
- No, the women are independent like U.S. women
- The men are a bit aggressive at clubs, so stick together with friends when you go out to clubs.
- No
- It's somewhat more traditional (America 20 or 30 years ago), but nothing too bad.
- Learn to ignore the comments the men on the streets make, no matter how much you ignore them, they're gonna keep making remarks. The men are very aggressive, we did find, in SOME situations that if you showed a ring on your finger and said you were married, SOME backed off, but not always. Don't take offense, just get used to it.

Are minorities—racial, religious, sexual identity—treated differently in your host country than in the U.S.? If so, what advice would you pass on to members of any minority group that are thinking of studying in your host country?

- The people in my town pretty much keep to themselves and do not worry about anyone else. If you can't speak the language very well they won't be as helpful, but your Spanish will get better with time.
- It doesn't seem to be a problem at all. Girls with blonde hair get harassed a lot!
- Don't discuss your views with strange people.
- Racism and discrimination exist everywhere in this world, but Spain is nothing like the U.S. when it comes to these issues.
- Nothing that I noticed.
- Not really. Valladolid's not very ethnically diverse.
- Seemed similar to the US.
- I honestly didn't notice any type of racial issues.

OTHER COMMENTS

- In Valladolid there's the best spoken Spanish in all of Spain. You will learn more here than most other big cities, because most people speak Spanish here.
- I love Spain—studying abroad is the best experience! I wish that I could have done it for the year!
- Everything is going to be different. Get sleep and take care of yourself. Your body is much more susceptible to illness when things are different and you are under emotional stress.
- Let the University of Valladolid know ahead of time if there are Beginners coming to the program—otherwise they won't schedule Beginner's classes!!
- Plan ahead, but do spontaneous things too. Don't rely on the Study Abroad people back home for help. Understand that mistakes will be made that aren't your fault but you have to deal with the consequences that are not too great. Get to know your host family and ask them questions and see if they'll take you to interesting places around town. They have a lot of knowledge, usually. Don't be afraid to joke around with your host families and professors—most are great and pretty funny. Be open-minded and patient if you have a roommate—no one is always happy and it takes teamwork to make it work. But have fun with your roommate too, just take breaks sometimes. Go on the planned excursions through the university—they're already paid for and usually are worth it.