INTRODUCTION TO MADRID CULTURAL GUIDEBOOK

With your departure for Spain fast approaching, many of you have begun to wonder what it's really going to be like spending spring quarter in Madrid. Are the Spanish as open and friendly with foreigners as they're rumored to be? Is there anything that you are forgetting to do before you leave? Will the host madre you'll be living with accept you just as you are now, or will you need to make some adjustments in order to fit into your new household? Will your Spanish be good enough to allow you to do well in your classes, and to meet people outside of class? And just how much should you plan to pack in your suitcases? Hopefully, this guidebook can begin to answer these and other questions.

The information that follows is a collection of advice from former participants. The Center for International Programs and on-site program staff members have added practical information as well. All information was accurate to the best of our knowledge at the time of printing. We recognize that there might be some necessary changes in the program made on site. When you return, we would greatly appreciate it if you could help us update this guidebook for the next year's participants.

Expect the unexpected. Ultimately, no written materials or any other preparation is going to fully prepare you for what lies ahead. The best preparation you can do is commit yourself to keeping an open mind, remaining flexible, and being patient with yourself as you're soaking up your new environment.

We would like to thank the former participants who have shared their experiences and helped with the editing process!

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**Table of Contents**

INTRODUCTION TO MADRID CULTURAL GUIDEBOOK ........................................... 1

BEFORE YOU GO....PREPARATION ........................................................................ 4
  MADRID, SPAIN ............................................................................................ 4
  PROGRAM CALENDAR 2018 .............................................................................. 5
  PASSPORTS ........................................................................................................ 5
  FLIGHT CONNECTIONS ..................................................................................... 5
  AIRPORT SECURITY ................................................................................................ 6
  MONEY ................................................................................................................ 6
  CLIMATE ............................................................................................................. 7
  PACKING AND LUGGAGE RESTRICTIONS ..................................................... 7
    Additional items to bring: .................................................................................... 8
  BILLING ............................................................................................................... 9
  HOUSING BACK AT K ........................................................................................ 9
  FINANCIAL AID .................................................................................................. 9
  HEALTH AND MEDICAL ISSUES .................................................................... 9
  VEGETARIANISM ............................................................................................... 10

YOU’VE ARRIVED! ............................................................................................... 10
  ARRIVAL IN MADRID ......................................................................................... 10
  LOCAL TRANSPORTATION ................................................................................. 11
  TRAVEL/VACATIONS ......................................................................................... 11
    TIPS ON INDEPENDENT TRAVEL .................................................................. 12
  MAIL .................................................................................................................. 12
  SAFETY ................................................................................................................ 13
    WATER AND OTHER BEVERAGES ................................................................ 13
  EMERGENCIES ................................................................................................. 14
  CLASSES AND CREDITS ................................................................................. 15
  THE HOMESTAY EXPERIENCE ....................................................................... 16
    Data Phones ..................................................................................................... 17
  LAUNDRY ............................................................................................................ 17

ADAPTING TO SPANISH CULTURE ................................................................. 18
  HELPFUL HINTS FOR A POSITIVE CULTURAL EXPERIENCE ......................... 18
  CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT .................................................................................. 19
  BECOME FAMILIAR WITH SPAIN AND U.S. BEFORE YOU GO ..................... 20
    GETTING TO KNOW SPAIN: ............................................................................. 20
    KNOW WHAT’S GOING ON IN THE U.S. ......................................................... 20
  SPEAKING SPANISH .......................................................................................... 20
    CASTILLIAN SPANISH ...................................................................................... 20
  GENDER RELATIONS IN SPAIN ....................................................................... 20
  SEXUAL HEALTH .............................................................................................. 21
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RESOURCES ABROAD AND WOMEN’S ISSUES</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YOUR RETURN TO THE UNITED STATES</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YOUR RETURN FLIGHT TO THE U.S.</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PREPARE FOR YOUR RETURN</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBTQ RESOURCES</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADVICE FROM PAST-PARTICIPANTS</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RECOMMENDED THINGS TO DO</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COURSES</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
 WHETHER WE'VE BEEN THERE OR NOT, THE MENTION OF "SPAIN"conjures up familiar images in all of us: visions of spirited bullfighters, crowded, noisy tapas bars, haughty flamenco dancers, sun-drenched castles and beaches, colorful Semana Santa parades. From the Altamira cave paintings in Santander to the Roman aqueduct in Segovia; from the Cathedral at Santiago de Compostela to the storied walls of Avila; and from the Moorish Alhambra in Granada to the Prado and Royal Palace in Madrid, the remains of Spain's rich and fabled past are easy to find.

Most of you, however, will be struck as well by the differences that exist between the contemporary realities of Spain and the images of the country that are featured in many travel brochures. The conservative, tradition-bound Spain, which for centuries asserted its uniqueness from the rest of Europe, has in recent years transformed into Europe's most dynamic and rapidly changing country.

Madrid, the thriving capital, has grown to a population of more than three million. The city is renowned for the variety and energy of its nightlife. During the spring and summer, madrileños young and old wind up an evening at the theater or at a restaurant by stopping off at one of the many chiringuitos, sidewalk cafés that remain open well into the early morning hours. At the same time, within this modern, cosmopolitan city you can still find traditional Madrid, with its bullring, Rastro flea market, Prado, and old quarter extending out around the Plaza Mayor. A word of caution, however: you'll find that Madrid's heady plunge into modernity has also transformed it into one of Europe's most expensive capitals.

As you'll see when you travel, the changes in Spain haven't been confined to Madrid. Barcelona, Madrid's long-time commercial, political, and cultural rival on the Mediterranean coast, is thriving as a business and industrial center and is the focus of a resurgent Catalán language and culture. "Euskera," the language spoken in the region in the north known as the "País Vasco," and "Gallego," the language spoken in the northwest province of Galicia, are flourishing as well after many years of official suppression during the Franco dictatorship. Outside the major cities, television (including the recent addition of private channels), improved highways and trains, and rapid economic growth (and bust) have combined to spread modern consumer culture into traditionally isolated areas--with the advantages and disadvantages that typically accompany such rapid growth. If it's true that Spaniards in many parts of the country are materially much better off than they were a generation ago, it's also true that they now have to learn to cope, especially in the larger cities, with rising crime rates, traffic congestion, high unemployment, and pollution.
We can trace a good part of Spain's ongoing transformation to the emergence of democracy in 1976 after nearly forty years of military dictatorship under General Francisco Franco. Today, Spain is a constitutional monarchy. While its former king, the popular Juan Carlos I, has little political authority under the terms of the 1978 constitution, he is generally credited with having saved the young democracy: in 1981 he energetically intervened to help put down an attempted coup by dissatisfied military officers. Now seen by those in Western Europe and the United States as a stable Western-style democracy, Spain officially ended its many years of political and cultural isolation from Europe when it joined NATO in 1982 and the European Community in 1986.

**PROGRAM CALENDAR 2018**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 April 2018</td>
<td>Depart for Madrid, Spain</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 April</td>
<td>Arrive in Madrid</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 April</td>
<td>Orientation + Classes begin</td>
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<tr>
<td>21-23 May</td>
<td>*Excursion to Barcelona</td>
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<tr>
<td>30 May</td>
<td>Last day of program</td>
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<tr>
<td>31 May</td>
<td>First day available for departure</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 25-31</td>
<td>Semana Santa Holiday</td>
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*Excursion dates are subject to change. You will receive an updated schedule upon arrival in Madrid.

**PASSPORTS**

It is necessary to have a passport to travel to Spain. You should carry a copy of your passport (the first page with your photo and personal information) with you at all times. Carry your actual passport with you only when travel out of the city. We also suggest that you leave an electronic copy with your family and/or in a data cloud (like apple icloud or gmail) that you can access if you need to reapply for your passport.

U.S. citizens are legally allowed to remain in Spain, without a visa, for a total of 90 days. This study abroad program is less than 90 days in duration, and thus the CIP cannot apply for a visa for you. If you intend to remain in Spain beyond the study abroad program (longer than 90 days total), you will need to apply for a visa. If you wish to contact the Consulate General of Spain, they are in Chicago and can be reached at 312.782.4588. Please understand that if you remain in Spain longer than 90 days without a visa, you will be illegally in Spain and risk deportation. The Resident Director and the CIP have no control over Spanish law and are not able to assist you in this matter. Please plan ahead and contact the consulate before you leave.

If you have further questions or intend to remain in Spain beyond the study abroad program, contact the Consulate General of Spain, located in Chicago at 312.782.4588. If your passport is lost or stolen while you are abroad, you will need to reapply at the American Embassy in Madrid at Serrano 75, 28006 Madrid (telephone: (09) 1 5774000).

**FLIGHT CONNECTIONS**

Please allow yourself plenty of time to check in at the airport. Airlines typically recommend arriving at the airport at least three hours early for international flights. Airlines are also searching checked and
carry-on luggage. Keep boarding passes and your identification (passport) easily accessible.

Please take care not to miss connecting flights. It is your responsibility to be in the boarding area at the appropriate time. Should you miss a connection, however, please note that you must be re-routed by an airline representative at the airport. Once you have had your airline tickets altered, you should contact Sra. Vergara (see contact information in the CONTACT section), the Resident Director for your program so that she knows of your delay and can give you new arrival instructions.

If you are unable to contact Sra. Vergara, contact the CIP or a member of the CIP staff (contact information can be found in the EMERGENCIES section), and we will try to assist you in informing the on-site personnel of your situation.

**AIRPORT SECURITY**

All electronic items, such as laptops and smart phones, may be subjected to additional screening. If you bring a laptop, be prepared to remove it from its travel case so that each can be x-rayed separately. Also be advised that you are restricted in the amount and size of liquids that you may pack in your carry-on bag. For further information on security measures, see the Federal Aviation Administration website at [www.faa.gov](http://www.faa.gov).

**MONEY**

How much spending money should you bring? You will want to budget some personal spending money for the occasional meal out, nightlife, personal travel, etc. People spend money differently, whether in Kalamazoo or in Madrid. Former Madrid program participants report having spent widely varying amounts of money during their three-month stay. Last spring, the highest reported amount spent was around $2300 among former participants, and the lowest was $1500. You could, of course, spend less or more money if you're so inclined. If you're planning to travel a lot, or to eat and drink frequently in bars and discotecas in Madrid, you're probably going to spend a lot more. As one returning student said, "take half the stuff and twice the money" that you think you'll need.

As of January 2018, the exchange rate was around .84 Euros to the U.S. dollar. You can check the most recent exchange rate in The New York Times or The Wall Street Journal as well as online at websites such as [www.xe.com/ucc/](http://www.xe.com/ucc/).

Some costs are unavoidable. As is the case on nearly all study abroad programs, you'll need to buy some course materials in Spain. It is unlikely you will spend as much for books there as you do here on campus. You should plan to spend at least $25 for materials used in your classes as well.

You'll also need to spend money for everyday items such as coffee or hot chocolate at the University canteen, a snack before you get on the metro, cell phone costs, movie tickets, etc. Most students report spending about 200.00 USD per month on these types of expenses, so you will want to monitor your spending wisely.

Students report spending the most money on personal travel during the program. This is an area where careful planning can help reduce costs. While hotels vary greatly in price and quality, you can obviously save money by planning day trips to nearby cities, whenever possible, instead of planning to stay two or three nights in those cities. If you eat in restaurants when you travel, plan to spend a lot of money. Even restaurants of average quality can be quite expensive. You can, of course, reduce food
expenses at least some of the time while traveling by buying fruit, cheese, bread, and other relatively inexpensive food, instead of going to restaurants for every meal.

In terms of how to bring money, the best approach is to have plan A, B, and C. Plan A should be accessing money from via your ATM card. The majority of money machines in Madrid, and the rest of Europe, accept American ATM cards. Make sure your ATM card is part of the Cirrus or Plus network and that you have a way to check your balance (most international ATMS will not be able to give you a balance when you get money out of the machine).

As for Plan B, take a little bit of cash with you to exchange in case your ATM card doesn’t work upon arrival. Plan C - You may also find it helpful to have a credit card (visa or mastercard are the best) for emergencies or to book on-line travel.

Overall, prices in Madrid tend to be more expensive than in the U.S., although the prices quoted depend on the rate of exchange. Something you won't want to miss is the custom of eating tapas in the late afternoon. Tapas are individual servings or appetizers of various Spanish dishes -- tortilla, aceitunas, mejillones, and gambas, to name a few. However, the tapas tradition can be quite expensive as well. You can expect to spend $2 to $5 for an individual tapa, and going from bar to bar sampling various selections quickly becomes very expensive.

Metro passes, which enable you to ride all metros and buses for an unlimited amount, are a bargain at $40 a month. So, you can live and study in Madrid for a reasonable amount of money, but you need to budget very carefully!

CLIMATE
You'll arrive in Madrid in the last stages of winter. While it can be quite cool and rainy, it will not be the cold weather you are accustomed to in Michigan. Spring will soon appear, and you should enjoy warm temperatures without it becoming very hot until June, if then. Median spring temperatures range from 34 to 74 F in April and 40 to 84F in May.

PACKING AND LUGGAGE RESTRICTIONS
Please check the airline’s web site regarding luggage restrictions (size and weight) prior to packing your bags! Do Not Assume You Can Check Two Bags! Even if you're willing to pay overweight or excess baggage charges at the airport, we strongly encourage you to resist doing this and to pack as little as possible. You may also want to save some room in your bags for things you plan to buy there.

NOTE: NEVER pack your passport, money, valuables or electronic devices in your checked luggage. Keep those items in a money belt or pouch on your person. Keep your carry-on bag with you at all times.

In general, the Spanish tend to dress up more than Americans. Be aware that what is perfectly acceptable in a Kalamazoo classroom may earn you a few odd looks in a Spanish aula or disco.
Since many Spaniards don't keep the heat turned up very high (compared to American standards), you'll need to pack clothing suitable for being indoors as well, especially clothes that you can wear in layers (sweaters and pullovers are especially useful). This will also serve you well when traveling, as you can adjust to other climates by adding or removing the appropriate layers. Past participants have also recommended bringing a pair of slippers or house shoes, as most Spaniards remove their outdoor shoes inside their home.

ELECTRICITY
If you must bring any electrical appliance with you, keep in mind that you will need both an adapter and a converter. Electricity is 220V/50 Hz. Plan on buying small items such as hair dryers in Madrid.

PACKING LIST
- A couple of nice outfits (separates that will mix/match with your casual clothes)
- Casual clothes for everyday
- Dressy shoes (to match your nice outfits--these are required for admission into most discotecos)
- Folding umbrella and raincoat (not a must, but a waterproof pull-over is a great idea!)
- Sturdy walking shoes
- T-shirts (good for layering and to reduce the amount of laundry you do when you travel)
- Warm pajamas and slippers
- Backpack
- Shorts (just a few pairs – Spaniards only wear shorts during sports)
- Gift for the host madre (see "Gifts" section for suggestions)
- Camp towel (small, highly absorbent towel)
- Plastic bags (larger Ziploc bags are great for holding wet towels and dirty laundry)
- Money belt or neck pouch

Additional items to bring:
- VISA or MasterCard credit cards and/or an ATM card (American Express or Discover is not accepted very widely)
- Contact solutions/glasses: bring a copy of your prescription in case your glasses or contacts get lost or stolen.
- Journal
- Prescriptions (in original containers) and other medical supplies
- Flashlight
Bathing suits (there are indoor pools and great beaches on the coast)

Gifts
It is customary to bring a gift to your host madre, and perhaps for Spanish friends that you meet. Some good ideas include:

- Maple syrup or candies
- Scenic potholders, aprons, placemats, mugs, glasses, or calendars
- Typical food items (i.e. Mrs. Field's cookies, saltwater taffy, honey, etc.)

Show your pictures of home and ask to see theirs. Talk about your country and ask questions about Spain. You will probably find that Spaniards are proud of their country and willing to give you a lot of historical information. Other good topics of conversation include politics and cuisine, as long as you are sensitive to their opinions. Avoid talking negatively about any aspect of Spanish life -- especially religion and bull-fighting!

BILLING
The Center for International Programs does not handle the billing for the program. The Business Office issues the bills and will send your bills for the program costs to your home address just prior to the beginning of each quarter that you are abroad just as when you are in the United States. For specific questions regarding your account, please direct these to Patrick Farmer in the Business Office, 269.337.7226 or pfarmer@kzoo.edu.

HOUSING BACK AT K
You will need to submit a housing contract and proxy form to housing@kzoo.edu prior to your departure. The designated proxy will choose a space on your behalf during the Fall Housing Selection Process. This process occurs during late Spring Quarter.

If you are interested in a living-learning house when you return, you must coordinate with the group you are hoping to live with so they may account for you during the LLHU Selection Process. This process occurs in Spring Quarter prior to the general Fall housing process. Should the proposal not be accepted and you are not offered the opportunity to live in a living-learning house, you will need to make alternate arrangements.

For specific questions regarding housing, please contact Stephen Sanney, Director of Residential Life, at Stephen.sanney@kzoo.edu or 269-337-7520.

FINANCIAL AID
Those of you receiving financial aid may have to take care of some items while you are in Spain. If you have further questions about your specific situation, please direct these to the Financial Aid Office, 269.337.7193 or finaid@kzoo.edu.

HEALTH AND MEDICAL ISSUES
You need to be up to date with your standard immunizations such as measles and tetanus. Please refer to your Study Abroad Handbook for the information on required and recommended immunizations. If you have any questions, contact the college Health Center at 269.337.7200 or your personal physician before you go. Of course, be sure to make doctor appointments if you are concerned about a particular problem (i.e., make a dentist appointment for that sore tooth, etc.)

You will find that what are prescription drugs in the U.S. are often sold over the counter in Spain. So if you are feeling sick, generally you can explain your ailments to the pharmacist and she or he will provide you with medication. However, you should know the generic names of medicines before you leave. That will be immensely helpful when you're trying to explain to the pharmacist what you need (i.e., ibuprofen, acetaminophen, etc.).

Common medical complaints include sore throats (there is a lot of pollution in Madrid) and stomach aches. Bring aspirin, yeast infection creams, Midol, cold medicine, Pepto-Bismol and other medications you generally use.

If you are ill, please see a doctor. Doctors are generally not too expensive, and no one wants to be sick while in Madrid! Sra. Vergara will provide you with the names of doctors in town during your orientation after you arrive.

**VEGETARIANISM**

Unless medically-instructed to do so, people choose to follow vegetarian diets for a variety of reasons. It is, nevertheless, a choice that is not widely practiced, understood, or accepted in some parts of the world. For example—a meal that does not contain beef or goat, but does contain chicken or fish, is often considered vegetarian abroad.

The important point is to be aware that your choice to follow a vegetarian diet, for whatever reasons, has consequences for you abroad and you are primarily responsible for preparing for these consequences and for responding respectfully in the local environment.

**YOU'VE ARRIVED!**

**ARRIVAL IN MADRID**

When you land in Europe, you will be required to go through passport control en route to your gate for the Madrid flight. Be prepared to present your passport and the boarding card for your next flight. When you arrive in Madrid, you will go directly to the baggage claim area to get your luggage, and most likely your passport will not be checked again.
It is possible (yet somewhat unlikely) that your luggage will be searched, as immigration officials will be monitoring you as you exit the baggage/customs area. Do not agree to carry anything from a stranger. In addition, keep your luggage keys with you so that you can easily assist immigration agents in opening your luggage, should they need to look inside. Cooperating with all airline and immigration officials is very important and will make your travels more pleasant – if you are asked questions, remain calm and understand that they are there to protect you too!

You will be met right outside the customs area in Barajas Airport by Sra. Vergara, the Resident Director. From the airport, she will take you to Colón Street where your families will meet you and take you to your new home.

**LOCAL TRANSPORTATION**

Public transportation in Madrid is excellent. You will be able to use the "metro" (subway) or the bus system interchangeably with your "abono" pass. There are metro lines running to most parts of the city, and if you can't get somewhere by metro, you can usually get there by bus or train. Taxis are also abundant in supply; while you can now call taxis by phone, Spaniards mostly hail them by standing at the curb and signaling with a wave of the arm at the first available taxi that comes by. You can tell when a taxi is available during the day by the "libre" sign, which will hang in the front window. At night, a small green light on the roof of the taxi will be on to signal "libre."

Taxi prices are not particularly high by the standards of large cities in the U.S. However, given the amount of travel that you'll be doing around Madrid -- going back and forth twice a day between your home and the university plus going out in the evenings -- you'll want to save money by using the metro or buses.

The "abono joven" pass (for those students 21 years old or younger) enables you to use both the metro and the buses. You must pay a fee of approximately $40 a month for the pass. If you are older than 21, the fee is a little bit more (perhaps over $45). The CIP will give you a transportation stipend to cover this expense. Please note, if you lose your Abono Joven card, you will be expected to replace it at your own expense and you will be responsible for purchasing individual tickets until you have the new pass. An individual pass costs the equivalent of about 1.50 Euro each way.

The metro is open from about 6:30 a.m. to 1:30 a.m. In some places, though, metro stations close earlier. Make sure you know which ones those are -- people have been locked inside the station after exiting at a closed stop. Some bus lines also have limited service throughout the night.

**TRAVEL/VACATIONS**

When you travel in or out of the country, please inform the Resident Director and your host madre of your plans, indicating where you are going and approximately when you will return. If you are planning on being gone for more than 48 hours, you must notify a program administrator. You must also leave addresses where you can be contacted at approximately 48-hour intervals. This policy applies to all students on study abroad. Be sure to check in at the addresses you’ve given, with the Resident Director, or with someone at home during your travels. If an emergency should happen at home or with you, this information will make communication possible.
TIPS ON INDEPENDENT TRAVEL

- Avoid traveling alone. This will ensure that you don’t have to deal with illness, theft, or emergencies by yourself. Do not plan on sleeping in trains alone at night.

- Definitely take some kind of pouch for documents, money, and tickets. The best rule is never to remove it. Sleep with it and take it in the shower if you have any doubts (especially for those of you planning to stay in International Youth Hostels).

- When traveling, keep documents with you, not in luggage on a train rack or in a checked bag.

- Plan an itinerary and leave copies with the Resident Director. Also, make sure that your Spanish family and someone in the U.S. has a copy.

- Call home and/or text Sra. Vergara, especially if there is an itinerary change.

- Talk to security personnel concerning where you will enter boarding areas, which plane, train, or bus is yours, etc.

- Be wary of complete strangers who approach you and offer you rides or discount housing. As is expected here in the U.S., never accept a ride from a stranger.

- Always carry your passport with you while traveling.

- Check to see what kind of discounts you can get with your International Student I.D. card: usually there are discounts for museums, bus rides, etc.

- It’s a good idea to carry a map with you, even when you’re just in Madrid.

- Monitor local and international news events as well as State Department Travel Advisories (http://www.travel.state.gov) for information regarding U.S. Citizens traveling abroad.

MAIL

You can expect letters to and from the States to take about two weeks to arrive. Packages can take longer. Make sure "airmail" or “por avion” is specified on all letters and packages. Sending packages home can be very expensive. In general, former participants recommend avoiding shipping things if at all possible.

You may receive mail in care of the Universidad Nebrija at the following address:

Student’s name
c/o Sra. Mª Ángeles Vergara
EL CENTRO DE ESTUDIOS HISPÁNICOS
Universidad Antonio de Nebrija
Santa Cruz de Marcenado nº 27
28015 Madrid, SPAIN
Telephone:
91 452 11 03 (Remember Spain is 6 hours ahead of Michigan)
After your arrival, you may use the address of your host family to receive mail. You will receive this address upon arrival.

Please note: Due to recent global events, customs control in Spain, among other places, has become stricter. Because of this, sending/receiving packages from the US has become more complicated. Packages from the US are often held at customs and can remain there for up to a few weeks. There is also added paperwork which can only be completed by someone with a Spanish ID. Taxes must also be paid, which can sometimes be expensive. These are things to keep in mind when exchanging packages while abroad, as the process can be more inconvenient than expected.

**SAFETY**

It is quite possible that you may not be accustomed to living in a very large urban area, and it will take a few days to learn to navigate the city. The possibility of being mugged or pick-pocketed is just as likely in Madrid as in Chicago or New York or Kalamazoo. The difference of course is you are a guest, or tourist, and may draw attention to yourself, unknowingly, because of that. Use of normal common sense and caution will serve you and your money well in this regard: women should get used to holding on to their purses while they walk, and men should not carry their wallets in their back pockets. You should also make photocopies of relevant pages in your passport. Carry these copies with you in place of your passport while walking around Madrid. Only bring your actual passport with you when traveling outside of the city; otherwise, leave it at home.

When you are walking in the city and in other areas, be sure to walk assertively, as if you know where you're going. A strong and confident posture will let people know that you're not a tourist. Be especially wary when walking late at night, and find out which areas of town you should not frequent after dark or by yourself. Please make sure that you have read the “Responding to Physical or Sexual Assault While on Study Abroad” section in the Study Abroad Handbook to be prepared in case you or a friend ever find yourself in such a situation. It is always best to be prepared.

Madrid has quite a number of people who are experts at mugging you through distraction. Quite often, they will hand you flowers, poems, and other little trinkets and then insist that you pay for them. It is wise not to take things from these people, walk away, if possible. If you are seated, and approached by more than one person, and asked for money, it is wise to sternly tell them “go away” or “leave me alone” in Spanish (i.e.: ¡Déjame!).

When you go out with friends, make sure you are aware of how much you are drinking. Even 1 or 2 drinks will impair your judgment and make you potential targets for criminals. If you're noticeably drunk, you are much more vulnerable to potential safety hazards than when you're sober.

**WATER AND OTHER BEVERAGES**
Tap water in Spain is generally safe to drink, and many students are able to drink the water from the first day with no ill effects. When eating in restaurants you may wish to specifically request tap water (agua del grifo) to avoid being given expensive bottled water.

EMERGENCIES
In case of an emergency, you should first contact your resident director. She will notify the appropriate people on site. The number for the police is 091 and for all emergencies is 112 (fire, ambulance and police). Although emergencies rarely happen that would require you to call one of these numbers, they can and do happen, and you’ll feel better if you are prepared. Verify these numbers with the program staff members at your orientation on site.

In case you cannot contact a program administrator for some reason, you can call one of the following numbers of the Center for International Programs staff:

Center for International Programs  
269.337.7133 (voice) or cip@kzoo.edu

Margaret Wiedenhoeft, Madrid Program Manager  
269.267-5800 (cell) or mwieden@kzoo.edu

THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM

RESIDENT DIRECTOR

The Kalamazoo Study Abroad Program in Madrid is under the supervision of Sra. Mª Ángeles Vergara, the Resident Director. She will act as your academic adviser, coordinate extra-curricular activities, and oversee all other aspects of the program. She can be approached about any issue related to your stay in Madrid.

UNIVERSITY SETTING

The Universidad Antonio de Nebrija is one of only four private, non-sectarian institutions of higher education in Spain to be chartered by an act of the Spanish parliament, signed by King Juan Carlos I and thus granted the right to call themselves “universities.” First incorporated in October 1985, the Universidad Antonio de Nebrija currently has a student body of some 1200 Spanish and international students and a teaching faculty of more than 190 full and part-time professors.

The University has five “ facultades” or “Colleges” offering degree programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels in Applied Language and Linguistics (including Teaching Spanish as a Foreign Language), Economics and Business Administration, Law and European Studies, Communication, and Computer Science and Technology. Universidad Antonio de Nebrija boasts a 14:1 teaching ratio, unheard of in the overcrowded Spanish public universities such as Universidad Complutense, with 138,000 students.

About 10% of the student body is international students, many from other European countries
studying at Nebrija under the ERASMUS/LINGUA program. There are two other U.S. study abroad programs at the University as well. A significant number of Nebrija’s students also study abroad. Typically there are two Nebrija students at Kalamazoo College every year. The Centro de Estudios Hispanícos, where Kalamazoo students will take most of their classes, has been an integral part of the University since its inception.

**CLASSES AND CREDITS**

The focus of the short-term Madrid program is to improve the students’ proficiency in Spanish, and also to provide an introduction to Spanish and European culture and everyday life. Please refer to the program description for detailed course information.

You are eligible to receive three K units of credit for the short-term program in Madrid. Two units will be earned in Spanish Language and 1 unit in Social Science for the Spanish Culture course. Students should expect all courses to be taught in Spanish.

Grades from all study abroad courses will appear on the Kalamazoo transcript, but are not included in the Kalamazoo grade point average. The transcript will list the title of the course, the appropriate discipline and a translation of the local grade into the Kalamazoo “A, B, C” grading system. Students must earn the equivalent of a “C” in the local grading system to receive credit for course work completed abroad. All course work must be completed and turned in before the end of the academic program or no credit will be given. Please consult your program description for more details regarding the academic program and requirements.

Courses at Nebrija are specifically designed for Kalamazoo College and other international students. There will be a language placement test given upon your arrival, and you will be placed in language courses accordingly. Students who are particularly weak in Spanish (as indicated by language placement test results and at the discretion of the Resident Director) will be required to attend additional tutorials as part of their Spanish course in order to successfully complete the other courses.

Students are required to participate in cultural activities arranged by the Resident Director; these may include but are not limited to tours around Madrid, visits to museums, group meals, etc. Kalamazoo College students will be able to use all Nebrija facilities, including the library. To receive the eligible credit, you must attend and pass all classes. Regular class attendance is required. Classes will meet Monday through Friday.

You can appeal your grades in writing within five weeks of their submission by the Center for International Programs to the Registrar's Office. When the grades are finished, the Registrar will notify you by mail that your grades are on your transcript. It is your responsibility to obtain a copy of your grade report from the Registrar's Office, regardless of whether or not you are on campus.

**LIVING IN MADRID**
THE HOMESTAY EXPERIENCE

Please familiarize yourself with the "Housing Definitions and Regulations" as stated in the Study Abroad Handbook.

All of you will be living in homestays in private households in Madrid. Some of you may be living with another international or Spanish student. For most of you, these living arrangements will be very different from what you've experienced in living with your family in the U.S., or in living in the dorms or in apartments here in Kalamazoo. The custom of taking students into private households in Madrid has a long history, especially in households run by señoras trying to raise children without the assistance of a husband. One reason this practice has become a custom was the arrival of numerous American colleges and university students, who began coming to Madrid in large numbers in the 1960's.

The heads of households receiving K students tend to be señoras, some of whom live alone and may be older. In a few instances, the households may consist of a married couple and their children. Most of these heads of households are accustomed to having American students living with them during the academic year. As is the case with all private households that receive Kalamazoo students anywhere in the world, the College compensates the heads of households fairly for their willingness to take international students into their homes.

The program administration will make every effort to place you in the sort of household you'd prefer, but you need to keep in mind the fact that they may not be able to match you with exactly the situation you're seeking. In this regard, as in many others where life in Madrid is concerned, you'll need to be prepared to be flexible and to make some adjustments to a different way of living.

Depending on your family, some may expect you to be present at family meals on the weekend, which often tend to be more of a special occasion than weekday meals. Be aware that spending more or less time with your family will have a direct bearing on your relationship with them. If you choose to travel every weekend, they will probably assume that you are not interested in getting to know them.

HOUSING IN MADRID

Most of you will be living in apartments known as "pisos," as very few Madrid residents live in individual houses. Madrid is a very large city and most students do not live near the Universidad. In fact, most study abroad participants should expect to commute at least one hour per day to class. Most Spaniards keep the heat quite low by American standards, so you should be sure to bring warm clothes for sleeping (see the suggested packing list).

In some cases, the water will be hot only at certain times of the day, and the head of households may object if you take long showers since energy costs in Spain are very high. The head of household is responsible for feeding you throughout the week (14 meals), and you should be sure to be home on time for those meals. If you need to miss a meal, inform the head of household that you'll be absent. You will then be responsible for paying your own expenses for the meal(s) you eat out of the house.

MEALS
Spaniards take special pride in their cooking. Your host mother will appreciate sincere compliments, and the important thing to remember is to be clear about your food likes and dislikes from the beginning. Be very specific about what you will and will not eat. It is essential for student welfare that no family discovers this after the student's arrival. Any extra expenses incurred because of special dietary needs, including additional food for those who are "big eaters," must be borne by the student.

For the spring program, students will receive $850.00 as a stipend to pay for one meal per day, either lunch or dinner. You will need to discuss with your host mom which meals you will receive in the house and which you will purchase on your own. There is a cafeteria at Nebrija where you may eat lunch. As Madrid is an expensive city, you will want to budget your stipend wisely.

Always leave your hands above the table when eating; not to do so is considered rude. Rest your wrists, not your elbows, on the table. Do not touch your food, but use the bread as a pusher (the Spanish almost always have bread at every meal).

Spain is famous for its paella, a saffron rice dish that generally contains chicken, peas, and shellfish. Spaniards enjoy jamón serrano (dry, thin slices of ham leg) or tortilla española (an egg, onion, and potato omelet sliced like a pie) on thick slices of French bread. Other popular items include cocido, a stew made of chicken stock, ham bones, garbanzos, and several vegetables. This soup is generally served in two courses. The broth is served first, followed by the meats and garbanzos.

**Desayuno:** Spaniards tend to eat a small breakfast. This generally consists of a cup of café con leche or cola cao (a hot chocolate drink) and a roll or muffin. Some Spaniards choose to drink their café with a few cookies or crackers and dip these into their drink.

**Comida (almuerzo):** Spaniards generally eat lunch, the biggest meal of the day, at two or three o'clock in the afternoon. Lunch generally consists of several courses, which are eaten together as a family. The first course is usually a soup or salad, followed by a second course of pasta or vegetables, then the main course, and finally a postre (sweet). The postre is usually a piece of fruit or yogurt. After lunch, expect to spend some time with your host family talking over a cup of café. This is a good time to talk with your host family. Do not rush from the table immediately after eating. The host family will expect you to visit with them casually.

**Merienda:** This is a light snack, usually eaten about six o'clock in the evening. It may be a piece of fruit, a roll, or even a small sandwich.

**Cena:** Dinner is usually a light meal served late in the evening, at about nine o'clock. A bowl of soup, leftovers, or a sandwich is the usual fare. Don't expect a huge meal, so fill up at lunchtime.

**Data Phones**
Most students purchase SIM cards for an unlocked phone or use WI-FI for their current US phone. The important thing is that you have a way to contact the RD (What’s App or text) in the event of an emergency.

**LAUNDRY**
Your señora will inform you when you arrive how laundry will be arranged in the house. You may or
may not be able to do it yourself. Again, if you don't know what to do, don't hesitate to ask.

LEAVING YOUR HOMESTAY

As a matter of policy, you'll be able to stay in your households only when classes are in session. When the academic program ends, you must vacate the household the morning of the second day after the end of classes.

ADAPTING TO SPANISH CULTURE

HELPFUL HINTS FOR A POSITIVE CULTURAL EXPERIENCE

While common sense will get you through a lot of potentially awkward situations in an unfamiliar culture, you should be aware of a few cultural differences that exist between Spain and the U.S. You should bear in mind that Spaniards tend to be more socially formal than most Americans, but if you're willing to adapt to your new culture by observing some of the Spanish norms, you'll run into fewer problems at home, in the classroom, and elsewhere. Listed below are some helpful tips:

- Speak Spanish at all times in the home.
- Don't invite people to your home unless you've asked the head of household if it's all right to invite a guest.
- If you do have guests, treat the señora of the house with respect. Introduce her to your friend, and try to engage her in conversation for a few minutes before you leave.
- If you want to take a guest into your bedroom, ask the señora's permission first—especially if the guest is a member of the opposite sex. In Spain people entertain guests in the living room.
- Respect people's privacy at home: the Spanish often regard certain areas of the house as a place of retreat in order to be alone.
- Make sure you know the rules for using the shower and water in your home. For example, don't just assume that it is OK to wash out socks in the sink.
- Don't wear a hat in the house or in class.
- Don't take off your shoes in public, and above all, don't walk around barefoot at home—Spaniards will often wear slippers in the house, as they frequently have bare floors. You may want to bring a pair to keep your feet warm.
- Be sure to cover your mouth when you yawn.
- Don't put your feet on furniture, whether at home or in class.
- Avoid going out in public with large groups of Americans.
- When in bars, do as the Spanish do: enjoy the company of the people you're with rather than absorbing yourself in the act of drinking as an end in itself. Despite the more open consumption of alcohol, drunkenness is not socially acceptable.
- Avoid smiling at people on the street: it may be interpreted as a "come-on" rather than as a sign of general friendliness. Likewise, don't be surprised if people don't smile at you.
- Don't be surprised or offended if people don't always say "por favor" and "gracias." Unlike in the U.S., it is not considered rude to not say these things when asking for something.
If you go outside wearing very short shorts, you may well attract some unwanted attention. However, shorts are certainly acceptable in the spring and summer.

Of course, there's no guarantee that if you do fail to observe some or all of these norms, you'll be openly criticized for it. However, many Spaniards will regard a failure to acknowledge these sorts of norms as proof that you aren't particularly "bien educado" (well mannered). As their culture is one which places great value on exhibiting proper degrees of respect and self-control in socializing, they won't be as inclined to want to meet or spend time with you if you seem unwilling or unable to observe what they regard to be normal standards of conduct.

If you are unsure of something in your homestay, ASK, ASK, and ASK again! No one is going to expect you to catch on to everything at once, so anything you don't understand, ask people to repeat and clarify.

**CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT**

Over the period of your stay in Spain you will probably learn the most from daily living in a different culture. In the day-to-day experiences -- the morning walk to the university, a trip to the market, a meal with your family -- lie the real challenges, frustrations, and joys of living in a new cultural environment. It is an immensely rich and rewarding experience that you can anticipate with pleasure.

However, everyone has bad days once in a while, and some people will experience them more often than others. It is normal to feel like you just want to go home -- everyone has felt that way at some point in her or his travels. Students who have been abroad in the past offer the following advice:

- First of all, be prepared to have unhappy days and know that they will pass.
- Remember that the Spanish have bad days, too. If someone in your host family is having a bad day, don't take it personally and automatically think they're unhappy with you. If they seem to be bothered about something, ask them. If it is something to do with you, it is most likely a simple misunderstanding. Don't let problems fester.
- Know how you handle stress at home, and try some of the same activities in Spain that help here in the States.
- Talk to others in your group, perhaps with someone who's having a good day but who can relate to your feelings.
- Try doing something that will involve you in the present; simply doing something can work wonders. For example, if you have nothing to do one Saturday and you are feeling homesick or miserable, give yourself a task that will help you to get to know the local culture better. Try going to a local church, searching for a specific item in the market, going to a café in a different part of town, etc. Immerse yourself and keep busy.
- Sometimes, though, you will find that you need to be away from people and/or the local culture for a while, so you might choose to hole up with a book, listen to music, or write letters.
- Keep a journal, even if you haven't ever done so before. You'll enjoy it more than you can imagine when you return from study abroad.
- Be patient with yourself! There will be times when you feel you are the only one that is miserable and having a bad day -- you're not!
- Lastly, just tell yourself that you can do it. You can and will survive in a different culture.

You'll learn that everyone has her or his own way of coping in a different culture and that what might
help some people some of the time, won't help everyone all of the time. This learning process, coming to really
know yourself in a way you haven't before, is part of the
adventure. Many times, you will just have to fend for
yourself and accept the challenge.

**BECOME FAMILIAR WITH SPAIN
AND U.S. BEFORE YOU GO**

**GETTING TO KNOW SPAIN:**
Talk to your fellow students! One of the best ways to
start preparing for your experience is to do some
background reading and research on Spain. Familiarize yourself with the current political situation and
educational systems, historical background, current events, customs, and cultural norms. Arrange to
talk with one of the students who have been there in the past. You will have had the opportunity to do
this during your orientation, but often time’s individual conversations are extremely helpful. Former
participants and the current Spanish students on campus will be your best sources of information. They
know what it’s like to be in your shoes as you try to imagine what the next few months will hold. Don’t be
shy about contacting them — they expect and want to talk to you!

**KNOW WHAT’S GOING ON IN THE U.S.**
Some people have had the embarrassing experience of learning that people abroad seem to know more
about U.S. history and politics than they do themselves. You can expect to be asked your opinion about
current events and U.S. politics. You can also expect to hear the opinions of others, and not all of them
will be complimentary of the U.S. Should such a situation arise, the best advice is to remain respectful,
even when disagreeing, and to resist the temptation to criticize Spain, as you are a guest. Start keeping
 abreast of current events and continue to do so while you’re in Spain.

**SPEAKING SPANISH**
Probably all of you are feeling Spanish-language anxiety -- relax! It will be OK if you walk off the plane
and don’t understand a word your host family says to you. Everyone who has been abroad where
another language is spoken has lived through that experience. There are, however, some great
opportunities to practice your Spanish here before you go. Some ideas for practicing Spanish include:
renting Spanish movies, listening to Spanish music, and practicing your Spanish with the Spanish-
speaking students on campus.

**CASTILLIAN SPANISH**
Spanish in Spain has its own variations. The most noticeable shift in pronunciation is the substitution of
“th” for the soft “c” sound (for example: Cáceres is pronounced Cátheres). The “tu” and “vosotros” forms are also much more common than the “usted” or “ustedes” forms. It’s polite to address strangers
older than yourself in the “usted” form when first introduced, but unless there is a marked difference
in age or position, you can probably lapse into the “tu” form as soon as they do. Also, in conversational
speech, the past perfect tense is much more common than the preterite. For example, one would tend
to say, "Yo he hablado con ella" rather than "Yo hablé con ella."

**GENDER RELATIONS IN SPAIN**
While in recent years Spanish women have gained an ever more active voice, traditional male machismo is still present. At home there are still clearly-defined spheres of men’s and women’s work. Most married Spanish women still take their primary pride in a well-kept home and family, leaving career concerns second place. Dating patterns also differ. To go out as a couple is a much more serious step in a relationship than it is here in the U.S. Most young people go out in groups, rather than pairs, to movies, bars, and cafés. It is also unusual to invite a date to visit your home.

Women should expect a certain amount of overt attention, and should not be surprised if they receive unwanted stares or comments in the street. Such comments are called piropos, and are generally tolerated in Spanish culture (although that is changing). As they are almost always non-threatening, the best advice for dealing with them is to simply ignore them, as Spanish women do. However, visiting international students from Spain recommend that women never go out alone at night. If you must go out alone, you should try to avoid empty streets and try to walk with crowds of people.

**SEXUAL HEALTH**

Issues of sexuality can be complex in your own cultural environment, and much more so in one with which you are less familiar. While living in a culture that is not your own, it is more challenging to evaluate situations and to assess risks for emotional distress, disease, and assault as a result of intentional or non-intentional sexual contact. Sexually transmitted diseases are prevalent everywhere in the world, and the HIV virus can lead to death. We strongly recommend that students educate themselves on safe sex practices, pack condoms from the U.S. when they are traveling abroad, and be cautious about their sexual activity while abroad. For further information regarding HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, please consult with Kalamazoo College’s Health Center or your physician.

Learning about Spain’s culture with regard to acceptable and safe sexual behavior, is one of your responsibilities as you prepare for and experience study abroad. It is also very important that participants understand the local norms and cultural patterns of relationships between genders. What are the local dating patterns? Is it the custom for females to have male friends (or vice versa) or is that considered unusual? If you accept a drink or some other “gift”, are you tacitly consenting to sexual activity? If you invite a member of the opposite gender into your living space, is it culturally and/or legally acceptable for him/her to expect intimate contact? Is the legal definition of “consent” different from the definition in the U.S.?

At a minimum, you must be aware that some behaviors that may be culturally and legally acceptable, and seemingly safe, at home may not be in Spain – and vice versa. Certain behaviors will also communicate different messages in Spain than they do in the U.S. Sra. Barbado and other program staff members will give you guidelines to the local cultural norms for relationships between genders and laws regarding this issue.

**RESOURCES ABROAD AND WOMEN’S ISSUES**

1. **Helpline: 559-1393.** Helpline is a telephone counseling service based in Madrid, which is staffed by trained volunteers who are under the guidance of a professionally-qualified Director. The service exists under the auspices of the Community Mental Health Program and seeks to provide support for English-speaking people who encounter personal problems while in Spain. In the past, Helpline was open for four hours nightly from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. That may or may not be the same this year.
2. **City Numbers.** These were provided by a former participant: you might want to double-check these numbers when you get there. These were obtained from the newspaper El Mundo.

- Policía municipal ......092
- Policía nacional ........091
- Bomberos Madrid ......080
- Alcohólicos Anónimos ......341-8282
- Ayuda a familiares de alcohólicos (AL-ANON) ....... 402-9853
- Información 24 horas para la mujer .......... 900-191-010

3. "Instituto de la Mujer." This government agency is dedicated to helping women obtain equal rights and assistance with legal, economic, labor, marriage, and emotional issues. It is also helpful for information concerning help groups, questions on rape, abortions, and other subjects.

- Almagro 30, Bajo Iz.
- Castelar 11
- 28030 Madrid Tel: (91) 347-8036
- 41001 Sevilla Tel: (95) 422-5620

**Abortions:** Abortions are generally considered illegal under Spanish law except in the following cases: a pregnancy due to rape; when the fetus has severe physical or mental damage; or when the pregnancy will provoke serious physical or mental damage to the mother. If one of these conditions exists, the abortion must be performed in authorized clinics to prevent malpractice.

If an abortion is considered, you should consult with Planned Parenthood clinics or the Instituto de la Mujer for more information and to determine whether the law regarding exceptions can be applied to your specific case.

4. **Planned Parenthood.** There are many centers available, often run by the city and very economical. There are also many private centers where test results are obtained much quicker and at a higher price.

- Subdirección de Planificación y Evaluación
- Dirección General de la Mujer
- Conde de Peñalver 63, 1º
- Tel: (91) 580-4700

5. **Casa de la Mujer.** This center hosts a number of support groups for different situations such as wife or child abuse, alcoholism, etc.

- Almagro 28
- 28010 Madrid
- Tel: (91) 308-2704 (aft.); 24-hr emergency #: 900-100-009 (toll-free in Spain)
YOUR RETURN TO THE UNITED STATES

YOUR RETURN FLIGHT TO THE U.S.

Remember, if you need to change the return date on your ticket and your ticket was arranged by Travel Leaders, please contact Ms. Bev Gould at bgould@travelleaders.com

PREPARE FOR YOUR RETURN

As you are preparing to leave, please remember the following:

1. Be aware of any products you are packing that may not be able to pass through U.S. customs.
2. Don’t forget to set aside some U.S. cash for the trip home.
3. Remember: when completing customs forms, a trip with your host family to the country does not constitute time spent on a farm. Answering otherwise on the customs form when re-entering the U.S. will make for a long chat with immigration officials concerned about parasites.
4. Remember to write your host family a thank-you letter or email when you get back to the States.

READJUSTMENT

Going home is usually a very exciting prospect. Most students look forward to seeing family and friends they have missed, eating food they haven’t had for so long and enjoying activities that may not have been possible during study abroad.

Remember that returning home is also a transition very similar to your arrival in Spain. Just like your arrival, you can expect to feel frustration, anxiety and confusion at home, on your campus and with your friends. Craig Storti puts it this way in The Art of Crossing Cultures:

“The problem is this word home. It suggests a place and a life all set up and waiting for us; all we have to do is “move-in.” But home isn’t a place we merely inhabit; it’s a lifestyle we construct (wherever we go), a pattern of routines, habits and behaviors associated with certain people, places and objects—all confined to a limited area or neighborhood. We can certainly construct a home back in our own culture—just as we did abroad—but there won’t be one waiting for us when we arrive…In other words, no one goes home; rather we return to our native country and in due course we create a home.”

At the foundation of this transition is the task of determining what to do with the changes that have occurred while you were away and the changes that have taken place within you as a result of your time in Spain. Life for your family, friends and teachers probably will not be the same as when you departed, but you were not there to gradually adjust to those changes with them. And they have not been able to get used to the things that are different about you.

Hardly anyone avoids the discomfort of this period of growth, but the good news is you will eventually find a way to include your new ideas, skills and outlook in your life back in the U.S. Here are a few questions to consider before your return. Your answers may help you recognize the changes that have occurred during your sojourn.

☐ What have I learned about Spain’s culture that I did not know previously? In what ways has this changed my view of Spain?
By being abroad and able to compare my culture with a different culture, what have I learned about the history, values and traditions that make up my home culture?

While I was away, what significant events have occurred in my country, my family, in my hometown, among my friends and on campus?

How have my personal values changed because of my study abroad experience?

In what ways have my stereotypes or biases changed?

What new skills have I developed (e.g. adaptation skills, second language proficiency, sensitivity, etc) and how might I maintain them?

How can I express these changes to my friends, family and teachers?

What might I do to continue to deepen my understanding of Spain?

All of the members of the Center for International Programs staff have also experienced this challenge, and we encourage you to feel free to talk with us, or someone in the Counseling Center if you are having problems adjusting, or if you just need to talk. The first week back on campus, we invite you to attend a re-integration celebration, where faculty, staff, administrators and international students gather to welcome you back. In addition, we provide many opportunities for students to continue their study abroad experience through activities and functions on our campus. We welcome your participation.

As when you were abroad, be patient with yourself! Continuing to write in your journal about your feelings and experiences will help you to weather this difficult time.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

You will want to take a guidebook with you—perhaps one from the “Let’s Go” series, “Lonely Planet” series or a Rough Guide.

http://allabroad.us/resources.php - Contains resources to help find funding opportunities, information about making study abroad support career development, reasons to study abroad, information to support diversity in study abroad, and information about discrimination abroad.

http://www.diversityabroad.com/ - “…connects talented diverse and underrepresented students and graduates to international education and career opportunities that prepares them for leadership in an interconnected world.”

http://www.purdue.edu/cie/learning/global/toolkit/ - includes 8 modules designed to help students learn about cultural worldview frameworks, intercultural openness, intercultural empathy, and cultural self-awareness.

https://travellatina.org and @TravelLatina on Instagram


https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/go/lgbt.html - U.S. Government’s resource guide for travelers who identify as LGBTQ


https://baniamor.com/ - Bani Amor
Blogs, interviews, and posts that revolve around identity, place and the colonial nature of travel culture; Has a series of interviews with travelers of color and an article listing travelers of color to follow

http://matadornetwork.com/bnt/7-things-latino-travelers-understand/ - Luis Guillermo
7 Things Only Latina Travelers Understand

http://www.browngirlsfly.com/ - “A Melanin-Infused Perspective on Travel”


http://www.expatica.com/nl/moving-to/Moving-home-Reverse-culture-shock_104957.html - Article on Reverse Culture Shock
Books


Various. *Diversity Issues in Study Abroad*, [https://www.brown.edu/academics/college/special-programs/international-study/student-resources/while-abroad/diversity-while-abroad](https://www.brown.edu/academics/college/special-programs/international-study/student-resources/while-abroad/diversity-while-abroad)
Collection of quotes from study abroad participants from Brown University who are from historically disenfranchised communities.


**LGBTQ RESOURCES**


[https://www.outrightinternational.org/](https://www.outrightinternational.org/) - The Outright Action International is an association of individuals and organizations dedicated to building a free and peaceful world, respect for individual rights and liberties, and an open and competitive economic system based on voluntary exchange and free trade. They currently have members and representatives in over 100 countries.

[http://studyabroad.isp.msu.edu/forms/glbt.html](http://studyabroad.isp.msu.edu/forms/glbt.html) - Covers some of the issues a LGBTQ student may wish to research before departure.

[http://www.lonelyplanet.com/thorntree/index.jspa](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/thorntree/index.jspa) - Includes both general travel information and a special discussion section (Thorn Tree Forum) for LGBTQ travelers.

**ADVICE FROM PAST-PARTICIPANTS**

**RECOMMENDED THINGS TO DO**

“In Madrid, you will have opportunities to see just about everything, and as long as you get out at night, you will find the hot-spots and if you don’t, they will find you.”

“It seems like every day is a holiday in Madrid. There are so many national holidays for Saints and Patrons that there are festivals and food and crazy things going on all the time. I recommend trying as much as you can; you are only there for 6 months.”

“Take a day trip to Toledo or another city near Madrid on the weekend.”

“Although this is common sense and you have heard it a million times, don’t forget it: There were people in my group who found themselves in dangerous situations because they were too careless with their drinking. You may think that you are being smart, but just think twice. Spanish men are not afraid to take advantage of an American girl by any means and they are very forward with their actions as well as their words. As for the guys, little girls are not afraid to take your wallets.”

“Know the exchange rate, that way you don’t lose a lot on buying useless things.”
“Buy a waste wallet/pack so you don’t get robbed. Always watch your belongings!”

“There are always fiestas, and all of them are fun.”

“GET TO KNOW YOUR HOST FAMILY! The best way to become fluent and truly learn the language is to talk as much Spanish as you can with your host family. Make sure you understand the rules of your host family and do your best to respect them, which means (as I have learned from my host madre) don’t show up drunk to lunch or dinner as hard as it can be in the nightlife capital of Europe.”

“Don’t be afraid to ask questions or have people repeat things slowly so you can understand. Try as hard as you can to avoid speaking English in situations like these and don’t immediately ask people if they speak English because it is rude.”

“Guys, ALWAYS keep your wallet in your front pocket and don’t let anyone touch you on the streets-if people come up to you asking you in English if you like soccer and do something weird with your leg tell them "No Me Tocques" and make sure you check your pockets for your wallet. Girls, always keep your purses zipped and in front of you at all times when walking in public, especially when taking stairs and what not.”

“Check out a Flamenco dancing bar!”

“The siesta is key and I suggest taking it whenever possible”

**LIVING IN MADRID: CULTURE AND CITY LIFE**

“There is not a gym facility on campus. It took some searching to find a good gym, although there is a TON around Madrid. I explored a bit and checked out about 5 gyms in my area before choosing one, because it is important to compare prices and equipment.”

“Staying with a host family allows you to learn much more about the culture. You are thrown into a new part of the world and a new family, and are forced to adapt. This allows you to learn the language, learn the culture, and most importantly learn about a family that has been living there their whole lives. The best thing about living with a host family is the relationships you build with them. I today still send emails to my Madre and her son. I came in as a stranger but ended up leaving feeling apart of their family.”

“There is enormous amount of history right in the city (My favorites were El Museo Prado, El Palacio Real, and Plaza de Toros).”

“Spanish host families typically do not speak English, therefore you will need to work on your Spanish a lot by speaking with them.”

“Dressing was difficult for me because I am an athlete and I am used to sweats and a T-shirt, but that does not work in Madrid. I remember I tried to go to the market down the street to get a coke and I had my sweat pants on -- my Spanish sister told me that I couldn’t go out of the house with them on and that it was disrespectful and I would get mean looks and stares. Flip Flops are also not looked highly upon; most of the females wear heels and ballet flats. Jeans and a T-shirt just will not fly; they will not attack you or anything but you will get stares that are not friendly.”
“Be careful with your money. Europe is not cheap and if you do not have an unlimited supply of money don’t spend all of your money on stupid things, such as drinking every night in bars that cost a fortune.”

RECOMMENDED PLACES TO VISIT

- Parque Retiro -- a huge park with a pond – it’s a relaxing area to hang out, read, and enjoy the sun and day.
- Plaza Mayor is a key place to visit, where most nightlife begins.
- All the museums are worth seeing and walking around.
- Experiencing a real Madrid soccer game is a must and watching a bull fight is almost just as exciting.
- Segovia, Toledo, and Barcelona are not far and are great cities to see.
- The islands of Mallorca and Ibiza are great vacations trips to relax on the beach and experience a spring break-like atmosphere.

COURSES

“The university is much smaller than I had imagined. It really is only one building! Class sizes are only about 10-15 students, which is super conducive to practicing your Spanish, especially speaking the language. The professors were all very helpful in making students feel comfortable speaking the language in class.”

“The difficulty of courses really depends on which level you test into. The C level courses are quite difficult and require a decent proficiency in the language, whereas the A and B levels are pretty similar to the Spanish courses at K.”

“As for courses, I HIGHLY recommend Art in the Prado. I am by no means an art person (I am a bio major), but to this day, I would put it as one of my favorite classes I have even taken. I learned so much. Not only about art, but about the history and culture of Spain.”

“Go out and have fun, don’t get crazy, and make sure -- no matter what, even if you stay out till 6am -- that you get a coffee and you get to class. You may be hung over or still drunk, but don’t act like an idiot and ruin the experience because you have to be sent home or you leave a horrible impression on the professors.”

“Do not fall asleep or stretch in class!”

FOOD

“Try every food, especially churos, doner kebobs, paella.”

“The homestay food is amazing. Home cooked Spanish food is much better than what is served in restaurants.”

“A huge part of the Spanish culture is wine/sangria -- now it reminds me of Spain”

“There are so many tastes and sights that remind of Madrid, but the one that reminds me most is paella. The smell, the sight, and the taste take me back to my Madre’s dinner table.”
“Seek out ALL Doner Kabops in your area as you will soon come to find that their food is the best deal around.”

“There are butcher shops everywhere that have rows and rows of pig legs (jamón)”

“Churros con chocolate - So good.”

GENERAL ADVICE FOR STUDY ABROAD

“The best advice I can give is that you are going to get home sick and you are going to miss your family, friends, boyfriends/girlfriends, etc. It gets lonely, so make sure you do not mope in your madre’s house. Get out and meet the group of people that you are with and enjoy you time with them.”

“Prepare to make a fool of yourself - have a sense of humor.”

BUENA SUERTE!!!!
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