¡VENGA! SPRING 2012

La ciudad de Córdoba
Why this location is ideal for a well-rounded study abroad experience.

The controversial bullfight
Animal rights activists and traditionalists have a long road ahead.

Home sweet home?
You’ll be surprised how hard returning home is. Pointers inside!

What to bring
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Top ten places to visit in Spain

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DURING THE WEEKS BEFORE my departure to Spain, I found myself still feeling unprepared. What clothes should I bring? What will locals be like? What kind of food will I eat? How will I make friends? These uncertainties are the main inspirations for creating this magazine — to not only build up confidence and encourage all students to study abroad in this culturally rich area of the world, but to also provide ample information so the reader is prepared before takeoff. I also wish to bring to light the fact that while you’re abroad, not everything is going to go perfectly as planned. Articles are included that give enough information so you at least have an idea of what to expect from social interactions.

The College of Wooster’s Off-Campus Studies Office provides an annual pre-departure session, during which students learn about some of the psychological effects of studying abroad. They also provide you opportunities to talk one-on-one with a student who previously traveled to Spain. While these sessions are helpful and I encourage your attendance, they still left me feeling unprepared. Granted, it was impossible to get ready for absolutely everything, but I found myself doing a lot of research on my own, almost too much.

Yes, personal research is important, but where do you start? This issue of the ¡VENGA! magazine should spark an interest in this research process. It provides interesting facts, tips, background information and history, laying a foundation upon which you, as a student, can start your own investigation. I hope after reading this, you have more confidence and a better idea of what your experience will be like than I did.

Emily Bartelheim
Editor
Andalusia (pronounced an-duh-loo-SEE-uh) is the second largest and most populated autonomous region located in the southern-most part of Spain. The territory is divided into eight provinces: Huelva, Seville (its capital and largest city), Cádiz, Córdoba, Málaga, Jaén, Granada and Almería.

Andalusia has an excellent climate for travelers who enjoy sunshine all year round. Generally, the weather is akin to the United States' midwest; spring and autumn are lovely seasons (midday temperatures are around 75°F), and summers (especially July and August) are usually dry, extremely hot and subject to only occasional rains, with temperatures reaching up to 100°F or slightly higher. Winters are not nearly as harsh as they are in Wooster, only dropping to around 50°F at the lowest, often still perfect for sunbathing (even though locals wouldn't agree!) in the afternoon since the sunshine is so much warmer than in the U.S.

According to coloursofspain.com, Andalusia is one of the most visited parts of Spain because of its sandy beaches and year-round sunshine. The landscape is probably the most varied of any of the regions in the country. You can do practically anything from windsurfing on the windy Atlantic coast to skiing in the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

The name “Andalusia” traces back to the Arabic language Al-Andalus. Home to the melting pot of Spain, Andalusia has a handful of different religious and cultural influences from Judaism, the Moors, Catholicism and Muslims. Interestingly enough, many of the cultural phenomena that are seen internationally as distinctly Spanish are largely or entirely Andalusian in origin, including flamenco, bullfighting and Moorish-influenced architectural styles.

Andalusia is also home to many historically famous sites such as Granada’s La Alhambra (a palace built by the Moors in the thirteenth century), La Mezquita in Córdoba (a mosque with a cathedral built around it), the old quarter in Seville (unchanged for centuries; tiny bars and art galleries) and the caves of Nerja in Granada.

Another highlight of this lush area of Spain is its people and culture. The distinct dialect that comes with the territory is initially quite hard to understand. Natives tend to swallow their consonants, often completely leaving “s”s off the ends of words. Consider it like a southern accent in the U.S. Don’t feel bad if you need someone to repeat something; they understand. They often even poke fun at themselves. Such an inviting place is made alluring by its people and their warm personalities. Andalucians are some of the friendliest people in all of Spain.
The quaint city of Córdoba offers rich experiences.

Editor Emily Bartelheim recounts her own study abroad experience.

Architectural genius Antoni Gaudi

Time out: free time, feria, holidays

Photo by Emily Bartelheim '12

Photo by Stephanie Quon '12

Photo by Emily Bartelheim '12
In Spain, bullfights are important because it’s part of our culture ... Europe has never had bullfights, and they don’t understand them...

—Bullfighting, p. 14

Want a more hands-on way to research Spain but don’t know where to start?

Check out our accompanying tumblr website for videos, links, photos and more to help prepare you for your study abroad experience!

studyabroadandalusia.tumblr.com
password: andalusia
Córdoba provides one of the more well-rounded study abroad environments, allowing students to sample a little bit of everything from the Andalusian culture.

THE CITY OF CÓRDOBA is smack-dab in the middle of the Andalusian region. In 2008, its population was measured at 325,000. Its ambiance and opportunities provide an ideal study-abroad experience. The surrounding countryside is full of mountain ranges and miles of olive trees, villages with baroque churches, while the city itself features flower-rich courtyards (famously Cordobesan), Moorish architecture and ample social gatherings. And don’t worry if you’re not completely fluent in Spanish; the city is heavily toured by foreigners, so many of the locals speak a little English.

Different cultures and religions (Jews, Muslims, Christians) all lived peacefully together here at one time. Important philosophers and artists also emerged from Córdoba, such as painter Julio Romero de Torres and flamenco artists Joaquín Cortés and Paco Peña.

This city’s melting pot culture has produced some of the kindest you will encounter in Spain. Sure, you will stand out because you are American (see “How to blend in” on p.32), but here the people are more polite and inviting than residents of larger cities who can be somewhat judgmental. Córdoba has something to offer everyone, and if nothing else, it is only a little over an hour’s bus ride away from the southern coast!

Living in Córdoba allows you to experience things that you would not be able to in other places; it is home to the world-famous Mezquita, and its mini melting pot culture gives you a little taste of everything.

Fun Fact: Saint Rafael Archanangel is said to be the protector of Córdoba. The whole city pays tribute to him on Oct. 24.
The more you know about Córdoba’s history, the more interesting it becomes. Learning about the history of Spain is important so that you have a basic knowledge of people’s experiences, opinions and lives. The city of Córdoba is over 2,000 years old and was originally inhabited by the Romans. It became more famous as a hub for the Moors who conquered the city in 711 A.D. At the time, it was the most developed metropolis in all of Europe. Córdoba’s history has basically led to a culmination of cultures. Not many know that the province of Córdoba was one of the most important capitals in Europe because of its religious melting pot. To this day, the Moorish architecture and structures are still visible all over the city.

Córdoba underwent three Arabic rulers in the tenth century, but their leaders lacked stability, increasing their vulnerability to invasions of the Northern Christians. Once invaded, the new rulers chose not to destroy the great Mezquita because of its undeniable magnificence.

This world-famous Mezquita is a must-see. It is a massive tenth century creation, said to be the third largest place of worship in the world, according to Sacred Destinations. It was formerly a mosque, comprised of several arches and over a hundred columns (see above photo), but what makes it even more unique is the cathedral built right in the middle of it. As a sort of “stick it to ‘em,” when Christians invaded, they built a cathedral inside of the mosque — the Villaviciosa Chapel.

Social Butterflies

Not only is Córdoba a town of history and one of the most attractive destinations in all of Andalusia, it also has a great social and night life. As an exchange student, you will surely come to love La Plaza de las Tendillas (see photos on p. 7). This is the central square of town that has statues, beautiful buildings, fountains in the center square and orange trees lining each street. It is surounded by shops and restaurants and is almost always full of people. A tapas bar around the north corner also provides an option for social evenings — each drink you buy comes with a free appetizer (tapa)! Whether you want to meet someone for ice cream, sit on a bench and people watch or go clothes shopping, this plaza is always hopping.

There are dozens of plazas throughout the town (typical of the Andalusian township), all of them beautiful and glowing with charm. Some are courtyards to churches, but many simply connect winding streets that haphazardly run into each other. La plaza de potro, for example, is so beautiful that it was referenced in Miguel de Cervantes’ literary masterpiece “Don Quixote.” Not only are plazas great for hang-outs with friends, they are also ideal locations for some quality diary-writing time.

Another place of interest is the Roman Bridge, or Puente Romano. This colossal viaduct is a two-way passage over the Guadalquivir River that consists of 16 arcs with asymmetrical molds. The bridge reflects the city’s Roman beginnings, with a statue of the town’s patron saint, San Rafael, in the middle. The view of this historical overpass is best at night; lights illuminate each arch, creating a romantic photo opportunity.

Smell the Roses

Córdoba also has its own annual feria, held during the last week of May (see “Time Out” article for more info. on the feria on p. 25). The festival features flamenco music and dancing beneath shades and canopies with colorful lamps at the fairground off the north bank of the River Guadalquivir.

La Semana Santa (Holy Week) is also a key event in Córdoba (as well as all of Spain). As many as 30 parades take place during the celebration: locals fill the streets and follow hand-crafted floats seeping incense. If you’re lucky enough, a procession may even pass your house and you can conveniently watch from inside your home.

In addition to these festivals, the famous floral courtyards of Córdoba also have a contest every year: the Festival of the Patios Cordobes. During the first two weeks of May, the marvelous courtyards throughout town have a contest. If you love flowers and gardens, this Córdoba-specific affair is definitely worth witnessing.
A personal account...

...by Emily Bartelheim, editor.

Cramming my study abroad experience into one small article isn’t the easiest task I’ve ever assigned myself, so bear with me. It’s impossible to include even close to everything, but I can safely begin with the fact that breaching my comfort zone was one of the best decisions I have ever made.

I have lived in Wooster, Ohio my entire life. I was born, raised and now attend college here. I wanted to become as fluent in the Spanish language as possible (seeing as it’s my minor), and I knew it would be much more difficult if I didn’t “go big or go home.” Professors constantly tell students that the best way to become fluent in another language is to immerse yourself in the language. So in the fall of 2010, I studied abroad in Córdoba, Spain.

I participated in the Programa de Estudios Hispánicos en Córdoba (PRESHCO), which was sponsored by The College of Wooster, meaning I paid my normal tuition rates for the semester (save a plane ticket to and from Newark, New Jersey and any pleasure-spending).* To do this yourself, simply ask the Off-Campus Studies (OCS) Director for programs sponsored by the College and you won’t have to pay many extra fees (visit http://www.wooster.edu/Academics/Off-Campus-Study/Choosing-a-Program/Programs-By-Location/Europe to view programs currently offered in Spain).

You may be hesitant about study abroad because you don’t know anyone else interested in going. To this I say, even better! I was the only student from Wooster in my program, and once I landed in Spain I was actually thankful. Other students formed cliques that created a barrier from the Spanish world. The impression they gave off was that of tourists — exactly the opposite of the goals of studying abroad. They were not exposed to the language as much as I was, and I feel that they ended up focusing more on drama in their American group of friends than their cultural experiences. Granted, I may be creating an overarching theme based off of just a few collections of students I personally saw, so this may not be the case for you, but do heed my warning.

Upon arrival, my program traveled around the northern provinces of the country. To be honest, this first week was somewhat discouraging. Citizens of the larger cities (such as Barcelona and Madrid) were curt and seemed to pay no attention to us because we were Americans. Once in Córdoba, I felt much more at peace. Locals were intrigued instead of annoyed and smiles were exchanged everywhere I walked. I found myself loving Andalusians. They are an incredibly heart-warming people.

PRESHCO (as many others) had a special “compañeras de conversación” program which sets you up with one or two Spaniards around your age that you can contact and meet up with as much as you want. The connections you establish between yourself and someone from across the ocean are alarmingly easy; you will probably have more in common than you think. And don’t worry, many young Spaniards are trying to learn English as much as you are Spanish, so communication mistakes are judgment-free. In fact, I am still in contact with the friends I made. Take advantage of today’s free technologies like Skype and tuenti (Spain’s own version of Facebook).

The lifestyle in Andalusia is what left the biggest imprint on my personality. While at school in Wooster, my life has always been on full-speed. I’m one of those people that likes to do everything. In Córdoba, I realized just how high-strung I was; Spaniards eyed me peculiarly because I was power-walking everywhere and dodging slow groups of people like a ball in a pinball machine.

So, a note of encouragement: enjoy your experience. Allow the culture to affect you. After returning home to Ohio, I have found a vast improvement in my optimism and enjoyment of day-to-day activities.

If you thought coming to college taught you a lot about yourself, why not take the extra leap and experience another culture of interest? With a new self-confidence and the help of others, this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity will teach you not only about the warm Andalusian culture, but also about yourself, one of the most valuable lessons of all time.

*Wooster has since ended the consortia agreement and no longer promotes the PRESHCO program.
Andalusian cuisine

Above photo: A popular snack or breakfast item in Spain is pan tomate (bread with a tomato paste). Ask your host family to make her own recipe; each rendition is delicious, but home-made is the best.

Arabic flavors linger in Andalusia, with its robust use of spices and a landscape full of olive, almond and orange trees. Avocados, tomatoes and green peppers also grow in profusion, and the abundance of tropical fruits has earned the region its Costa Tropical pseudonym.

While Andalusia specializes in these great produces (among others), the most important factor to consider before adjusting to Spanish cuisine is their dining schedule. While large northern cities, such as Madrid and Barcelona, have subtly evolved to fit the more fast-paced work lifestyle, much of Andalusia has stayed true to tradition; a day’s meals somewhat resembles as follows:

**BREAKFAST**
A cup of strong, black coffee and something sweet like a cookie, or toast. Generally, breakfast is a light meal to start off the morning.

**LUNCH**
La comida is the main meal of the Spanish day (as is dinner in the U.S.) and rarely takes place before 2 or 3 p.m., or even later on weekends. Plan to be in it for the long haul; a typical lunch menu at a restaurant involves soup, a fish or meat course, salad and dessert, followed by coffee.

**DINNER**
La cena is usually a lighter snack (think soup or tapas) and normally starts around 10 p.m.

The Spanish consider meals to be social gatherings. Rarely does anyone sit, eat without conversation and leave within half an hour. If you go to a restaurant, a typical meal lasts at least an hour, usually two. Even the waiters are leisurely. Meals are considered an occasion to enjoy by relaxing and conversing with friends.

Generally, you don’t need to tip in a restaurant. The Spanish may leave some loose change behind or round up the bill to the nearest euro, but usually nothing more.

Taking left-overs is not encouraged, some may be insulted/offended. Try to finish your plate in all circumstances as a compliment to the chef.

Many Spanish families have a brasero under their dining room table. Because the buildings are commonly constructed from cement, they get quite chilly in the winter. The brasero is basically a space-heater; the table is then covered in a soft blanket that you pull over your lap and warm your legs. Get cozy!

Merienda is an afternoon snack. It’s usually a cup of coffee and a sweet, eaten around 4 p.m. after a siesta.

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Photo by Emily Bartelheim '12
Table Manners

Spaniards eat the same as Americans as far as utensils are concerned — forks are still held in the left hand, knives in the right, etc. Unlike Americans however, fingers and/or bread are never used to scoop food onto a fork or into your mouth, so keep that in mind if someone flashes you an odd expression while you mop up excess juice or sauce with a roll.

Spaniards also consider it more polite to refuse large or extra helpings rather than leave untouched food on your plate; they may even take it as a personal insult to their cooking. Also different from the American culture, some of the Spanish (mostly the old-fashioned elderly) consider it unattractive to eat while walking about in public. While in the U.S., you may grab a bag of chips to eat on your way to class, but it would be better to eat it before you get up and leave while in Spain.

In restaurants, the social norm is to combine everyone’s meals/drinks together onto one bill. Between natives, it is usually expected that people take turns paying for the whole bill, instead of in the U.S. where each person's tab is paid for separately. This adds to the culture's more shared social experience/environment.

Tapas

A nibble here, a nibble there … the tapeo (tapas bar crawl) is a social affair where friends, co-workers, even entire families stroll from bar to bar sampling the lip-smacking likes of smoked cod, jamón serrano and tortilla.

According to Proper Spanish Tapas, “the first tapa was simply a hunk of bread which was placed over a glass [of wine] to keep the flies out. Hence the word ‘tapa’ was born, literally meaning ‘cover’ or ‘lid.’”

There are also special tapas restaurants where you can purchase any drink and receive accompanying tapas for free. Tapas (similar to the American appetizer) include anything from hot dogs to tortilla, jamón con queso or croquetas (mouth-watering breaded and fried balls of potato, cheese and meat). In any case, tapas are an enjoyable and affordable way to spend an evening with friends.

Keep in mind that there is no drip coffee in Spain like we are used to in the U.S. Their coffee is much richer and stronger; it could be considered between American coffee and espresso as far as flavor goes. Many consider Spanish coffee of a much better quality than American coffee. Many who travel here begin drinking coffee even if they don’t normally, simply because it tastes so much better. To the right are some terms to help when ordering your daily dose of caffeine.

| CAFE SOLO | black coffee in a small cup |
| CAFE CON LECHE | similar to a latte, it is coffee diluted with rich milk, served in a larger cup |
| CAFE CORTADO | basically the same as a café con leche, just served in a smaller cup with a dash of cream or milk; very typical in Spain |
| CAFE AMERICANO | contrary to what you might be thinking, this isn’t American-style coffee — it is a café solo in a large cup diluted with water |
| CAFE DESCAFEINADO | decaffeinated coffee |
Olive Oil

Olive oil is the nectar of life in Spain, where 44 percent of the world’s olives are produced. About 300 million olive trees grow in Andalusia alone, most of which are rooted in Jaén and Córdoba. The olive is used in a wide range of foods and products, from dinner to cosmetics. Whether drizzled on your breakfast toast, a mid-afternoon sandwich (bocadillo), vegetable salad or chicken, olive oil in Spain is extremely fresh and of better quality than almost any other you will ever try.

There are many factories in Andalusia that welcome tourists, one of which is Aciete de olive virgin extra Luque ecológico. The factory has been passed down through generations and is located in Castro del Río, in the heart of Andalusia between Córdoba and Granada. The entire process is completely organic, which not only produces the highest quality olive oil, but also increases its nutritional value.

Process

Olive oil is produced by grinding olives and extracting the oil. Green olives usually produce a more bitter oil, and overripe olives can produce rancid oil. For good extra virgin olive oil, care is taken to make sure the olives are perfectly ripe. The process is as follows:

1. The olives are ground into paste by using either large millstones (traditional method) or steel drums (modern method). Most factories today use steel drums because it is much easier and does not seem to affect the end product.
2. After being ground in the steel drums, the paste is stirred slowly for another 20 to 30 minutes. The paste is then spread on fiber disks, which are stacked on top of each other in a column, then placed into the press. Pressure is applied into the column to separate the vegetal liquid from the paste. At this point, the liquid still contains a significant amount of water.
3. Traditionally, the oil was separated from the water by gravity (oil is less dense than water). This very slow process has since been replaced by centrifugation, which is much faster and more thorough. The centrifuges have one exit for the watery part and one for the oil. Olive oil should not contain significant traces of water because water accelerates the process of organic degeneration by microorganisms.
4. The oil produced by only mechanical means as described above is virgin oil. Extra virgin olive oil satisfies specific high chemical as well as certain criteria that sets it apart from other kinds of olive oil.
Olive oil contains a wide variety of valuable antioxidants that are not found in other oils. Hydroxytyrosol is the main antioxidant compound in olives and according to the American Journal of Physiology, and is believed to play a significant role in the many health benefits attributed to olive oil. Epidemiological studies suggest that olive oil protects against certain tumors, as well as reduces the risk of coronary heart disease. Olive oil is considerably rich in monounsaturated fats, most notably oleic acid. The United States’ Food and Drug Administration website states, “Scientific evidence suggests that eating about two tablespoons of olive oil daily may reduce the risk of coronary heart disease due to the monounsaturated fat.”

In addition to the internal health benefits of olive oil, topical application is also quite popular. Extra virgin olive oil has been known for generations not only for its healing qualities but also as a natural, deep-penetration moisturizer, regenerating skin cells and softening the tissue. Many locals in Spain, for example, swear by the oil and claim that the reason their skin appears so young and healthy is because of the olive oil in their diet.

Ham
Spain’s meat of choice

Ham is all the rage in Spain. It comes dried, raw, fried, with cheese, in dishes and even as a flavor of potato chips (which are surprisingly tasty). Hams in Spain are not only classified according to preparation, but also by the breed of pig, their pre-slaughter diet and the region where they are raised.

Spanish dry-cured hams are similar to Italian prosciutto, but are cured longer and taste slightly different. Sliced paper-thin and a source of great pride among Spaniards, there are two main traditions of artisanal cured hams in Spain: jamón serrano and jamón ibérico.

Jamón serrano (meaning ham from the sierra, or mountains) is dry-cured country ham, made from white pigs. It is prepared with nothing other than sea salt, the right environmental conditions and time. The meat is covered in salt for about two weeks in order to preserve it and draw off excess moisture, then hung to dry for a year to eighteen months. The ham legs are usually dried at higher elevations, giving it the name mountain ham.

Not to be confused with jamón serrano, jamón ibérico is the true pride of Spain. It comes from the black Iberian Pig. It has a deep red color, and a melt-in-your mouth flavor that is unparalleled. These hams are prepared similarly to the jamón serrano as far as salting, drying and curing are concerned. The Iberian Pigs are classified by the amount of acorns they eat, which determines the ham quality. The more acorns they eat, the better the meat.

Essentially, jamón serrano is cheaper than jamon ibérico. (Jamón ibérico can be easily sold for around $80 a pound!) There is a great difference in taste, but for the average study abroad student, it is recommended to only try jamón ibérico when it is already paid for.

Check out our tumblr for authentic Spanish recipes from a cooking class in Córdoba!
studyabroadandalusia.tumblr.com
password: andalusia
BULLFIGHTING

Spain’s heated, ongoing debate
Origins and Execution

Some say the bullfight derived from the Romans as a warm-up for gladiators. Others believe the Moors turned the killing of a bull into a ritual, spearing it from horseback. Yet another theory is that it began as a peasant game that morphed into something more regal. But all in all, the origin of the bullfighting tradition is still uncertain.

The bullfighting season is from March to October, with matches held every Sunday evening. The concept of a “bullfight” in the U.S. is typically misconceived. The traditional corrida de toros (bullfight) begins with the paseillo, when all the participants of the bullfight enter the ring and present themselves to the public. Two aguacilillos on horseback symbolically ask for the keys to the puerta de los toriles; it is behind that door where the bulls are waiting. Once this door opens and the bull enters, the three main parts, or tercios, begin (all separated by a bugle horn).

The three phases of a corrida de toros are as follows:

1. **Tercio de varas (third of lancing)** — during this third, the torero (bullfighter) stares down the bull. The torero uses the capote — a large cape that is pinkish-mauve on one side and yellow on the other. This provides important indicators of the bull’s behavior, and weakens the bull for the next stages. This tercio ends with two picadores stabbing the bull at the base of its neck.

2. **Tercio de banderillas (third of flags)** — this phase consists of the three bandilleros trying to jab a pair of their flagged darts into the charging bull as close to the first wound as possible.

3. **Tercio de muerte (third of death)** — this stage is what most Americans would recognize as bullfighting. It involves the torero, the bull, a sword and a red cape (la muleta). This phase shows an artistic symbiosis between man and beast, with the torero presenting his mastery in domination. The bullfight ends when he kills the bull with his sword.

Below photo: El tercio de banderillas features the matador jabbing flagged spears into the base of the bull’s neck in order to continue weakening it for el tercio de muerte.

Photo courtesy catchthejiffy.com

Controversy
Tradition or animal cruelty?

In Spain, sports are all the rage; soccer is the most popular and basketball comes in second. But there is one sport that is quite controversial: the bullfight. In fact, there is a debate as to whether it is a sport at all. While aficionados believe it to be an art form, there is a large dispute over the animal cruelty. In Spanish newspapers, bullfighting still appears in the culture section rather than the sports section, though many disagree. The conflict will continue to be an ongoing conflict between animal rights activists and traditionalists for years to come.

Many Spaniards do not want bullfighting banned simply because of tradition, not because they particularly enjoy it. These advocates of bullfighting claim that the bull’s death is not in vain because it is eaten afterwards, and that the bull does not suffer extensively because a good torero will kill it efficiently. The strength of this argument, however, is questionable — while the final kill is quick, the animal still suffers extensively during the rest of the fight, which often lasts around two hours.

On the other side of the spectrum, there have been more and more changes recently. In October of 2011, Spain’s region of Cataluña banned bullfighting entirely (though this particular move was more about nationalism and politics than the sport itself — the region has been trying to separate themselves from the rest of the country for some time now).

According to National Public Radio (NPR), attendance at bullfights has also dropped nationwide over the past few years — from 2,622 in 2007 to 1,724 in 2010, almost a one-third drop. This decrease in attendance could be due to Spain’s current economic crisis (it is an expensive hobby, as well as the fact that many young Spaniards do not see any romance in the sport at all.

The corrida de toros is something the Spanish are raised with. Estimates suggest that 24,000 purpose-bred bulls are killed each year in front of an audience of 30 million” ("Spanish Culture and Society"). Even if they do not approve of or like that the bulls are killed, they still respect it. This pull between personal values and cultural traditions proves that the sport is so engrained in the Spanish culture that it would be difficult to completely remove it.

However, international opinions (most likely including your own and many other Americans’) are strongly opposed to the tradition. Many foreigners consider this sport not only shocking, but also cruel and unfair to the bulls.

Before you travel to Spain, be aware that the topic can be sensitive. It is a complex situation and many factors contribute to each side’s opinion. While it is easy to criticize the Spanish culture in an initial (and somewhat natural) gut reaction, it is important to consider all the contributing factors. For centuries, bullfighting has been considered a special art form, similar to ballet, and, like the tercio de muerte, it will not come to a quick and painless end.
Down to the sources themselves

In interviews with current residents of Córdoba, Spain and College of Wooster Spanish professor, Brian Cope, Emily Bartelheim ’12 discussed personal opinions on bullfights. Cordobesan participants included Pepe Colmenero, 51, Curro Galindo Bolance, 21, and Mari Carmen Mateo Herencia, 23. Their responses are as follows:

What do you think about bullfighting?

Colmenero: I have a problem with it. When I see a bullfight, on one side I understand the supporters, but on the other hand, I feel very badly for the bull.

Bolance: I think that it’s very unpleasant because it hurts the bull, and we wouldn’t like it if someone did this to us.

Herencia: I am completely opposed to it. To me, it’s an outrage to think that the mistreatment of a living thing is culturally established. I don’t like the “fiesta de toros” at all. I also don’t identify with it as connected to being Spanish.

Cope: I have mixed feelings; it is cruel, but it is also a cultural tradition. I support and see the rationale for doing away with it.

Why do you think bullfighting is so important for some people in Spain?

Colmenero: In Spain, bullfights are important because it’s part of our culture. If it weren’t for bullfighting, that type of bull would disappear because this particular breed is only bred for the bullfight.

Bolance: They’re important simply because of tradition – you learn that this is very important for your nation throughout your whole life, starting as a child.

Herencia: Because some Spaniards confuse their cultural identity with maintaining cruel ancient traditions.

Cope: People enjoy it for the same reason that people enjoy going to a baseball game here [in the U.S.]. And those who don’t necessarily follow bullfighting might enjoy taking in a bullfight just as those who may not follow baseball might enjoy spending an afternoon at a ballpark.

Do you think the tradition should be eliminated altogether from the culture?

Colmenero: I don’t think it should necessarily be eliminated because there are centuries of tradition. There were already bullfights before the U.S. became independent from Europe. Spanish culture is full of themes of bulls – in paintings and sculpture (Picasso), literature (Lorca), etc.

Bolance: They shouldn’t be eliminated because Spain has always lived with bullfighting, but I do think they should be improved so that the animal doesn’t suffer so much.

Herencia: Of course it should be eliminated, we have already seen the mistreatment of people (violence in general and the exploitation of slaves). I see it as the mistreatment and “assassination” of animals which has existed since the time of the gladiators.

Cope: If not eliminated, reduced or allowed to die off. The fans are absolutely devoted, and I don’t think it is reasonable to think that it can suddenly be banned. Although that is what happened in Cataluña, I believe that the tradition has weaker roots there than elsewhere, and Cataluña is much more progressive than the rest of the country.
Spain’s finest

Many talented artists have come from Spain, ranging from writers to dancers to actors to sculptors. Read up on a few of them before you travel. Additional articles are available on our tumblr.

[studyabroadandalusia.tumblr.com](http://studyabroadandalusia.tumblr.com)

password: andalusia

Photo by Emily Bartelheim '12
Above photos: When building his “Casa Milà,” better known as “La Pedrera,” Gaudí wanted the people who lived in the flats to know each other, so he only installed lifts on every other floor so residents had to communicate with one another on different floors.

Opposite page, top right photo: A view looking up at the intricate ceiling of the Sagrada Familia.

Opposite page, far right photo: Up close and personal, La Sagrada Familia’s initial impact is breathtaking.

ANTONI GAUDÍ i CORNET was born in Reus, Spain (on the west coast of Barcelona) on June 25, 1852. His family was considered poor, and Gaudí was sick with rheumatism throughout his entire life. As a child, he was not only unable to romp around with the other kids outside, but was sometimes even carried by donkey. It is unsure whether he would have been the genius architect he was without the disease.

Gaudí had been interested in architecture from a young age, studying the subject intensely in Barcelona at age 17. He was not the most academic of students; he only passed because of his exceptional work, even though he did things his own way.

Throughout Gaudí’s career, a debate existed as to whether he was a madman or a genius because he went against all known rules of architecture at the time. He developed his own style that used a mixture of materials in buildings, for example, combining unfinished rubble with ceramic tiles (a recurring feature in his work).

Gaudí never used cement. He preferred to build with everyday materials, creating pillars out of bricks instead. This may relate back to his low-income childhood, though it also creates beautifully organic designs that appear much more costly than they really are.

Gaudí also had an affinity for nature, which set him apart from the other Art Nouveau artists with whom he was associated. Art Nouveau is based on natural forms, remaining purely ornamental and linear. Gaudí believed that nature consisted of forces that work beneath the surface, and that what we see is merely an expression of these inner forces.

His first major project was Güel Park in Barcelona. His project was to create a garden-city that was in complete harmony with its countryside. He designed structures that fit into the landscape like puzzle pieces, as if they were one entity that lived and grew together. A few structures in the park are a seemingly endless bench that runs through the whole park in the form of a snake, decorated with ceramic tile fragments, as well as houses for visitors, a church, large staircases and other structures.

One of his most famous creations is the Sagrada Familia...
The structure features several pillars jutting in different directions, inspired by a tree. “Do you want to know where I found my model?” he once asked a visitor in his workshop. “An upright tree; it bears its branches and these, in turn, their twigs, and these, in turn, the leaves. And every individual part has been growing harmoniously, magnificently, ever since God the artist created it.”

While it is breathtaking upon sight, there is a good deal of controversy surrounding the church: new materials are being used in its construction today, which some feel that Gaudí would not have wanted in the basilica. When you visit the building, you can see the contrast in the stone color between the front and back of the building. The actual style of construction is also slightly different between the new and old parts of the building.

Like most of his works, Gaudí was always on site of the building of his creations, actively directing the construction of La Sagrada Familia. He would often modify the work until it was exactly what he wanted. Because of the existing designs today, however, his work is partly open to interpretation. This is particularly challenging because the actual construction stones are irregularly shaped. Visit our Tumblr for details on how to visit the Sagrada Familia along with more of Gaudi’s works.

At age 73 (June of 1926), Gaudí was walking between streets in Barcelona and was hit by a tram and knocked unconscious. Passersby assumed he was a beggar because of his disheveled appearance and lack of identity documents, so some time passed before anyone came to his aid. By the next day, someone recognized him but it was too late and nothing could be done. He died two days later, at the height of his career. He is buried in the chapel of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in the crypt of the Sagrada Familia.
CATHOLICISM
AND RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

HISTORY

Spain has been a predominantly catholic nation for centuries, beginning after the Christian invasion in the eighth century. During the Spanish Inquisition (1478–1834), Spain made sure that Protestantism did not have a chance. By the time dictator Francisco Franco built the new empire (1939–1975), people were already used to the church directing their lives.

Under Franco, Catholics were the only power-holders. Franco created laws stating that Roman Catholicism was the only legal religion, and therefore the only ones who could own property, publish books, etc. Franco even abolished divorce and civil marriages. Eventually people (especially women) could hardly do anything without the Church's approval. After some time, citizens started to speak up, but many stayed loyal to the duo they already grouped together: Franco and the Church.

El Día de los Santos Inocentes is Spain’s April Fool’s Day — people play tricks on friends and family on Dec. 28.

Roman Catholicism is still the dominant religion in Spain. Some 80 percent of Spaniards profess to be Catholic.

Two percent of the country’s population claims to pursue other religions — Islam takes the biggest share — while around 18 percent claim to have no religion or be atheist.

Estimates vary, but most researchers agree that only about 30 percent of Spain’s population actually practices its Catholicism.
MODERN SPAIN

Nowadays, the new constitution allows people to worship whatever religion they choose. The laws the church previously created have been removed, and now children have the option of a religious school (similar to in the U.S.), though congregations have been declining in size. Now, the main dispute is between church and state.

The country’s previous leader, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, wanted to relax things a bit. He legalized stem cell research and gay marriage (2005). In addition to becoming Europe’s third stem cell bank, Spain has also established three research centers specifically for the study of stem cells and regenerative medicine. There are those who oppose both legalizations — hundreds of thousands of people marched through downtown Madrid in mid-June 2005 in protest of the gay marriage bill, claiming it was an assault on the institution of marriage. Despite this intense opposing force, polls showed that between 55 and 66 percent were in favor of the bill, according to The New York Times.

Religion, particularly Catholicism, still plays an important role in many Spaniards’ lives. Baptism and marriage are still widely practiced, but the most noticeable effects on the country are its religious fiestas.

RELIGIOUS FIESTAS

As you will notice in the “Time Out” article, many of Spain’s holidays are rooted in its Catholic history. Interestingly enough, almost every day of the year has its own saint, and each Spaniard typically celebrates the day of his or her own saint like a second birthday. Each region’s holidays vary slightly because of their different saints, etc., but many celebrations are consistent throughout the whole country.

Semana Santa, Holy Week, hosts a main somber parade, as opposed to the celebratory tone many fiestas have. It takes place every year the week before Easter, and often includes large floats, processions and strange apparel. People line the streets to showcase skillfully hand-crafted floats and shrines to saints, carried by the nazarenos (men in robes with hoods that resemble those of the Ku Klux Klan, so don’t be alarmed). Thousands of people follow each city’s processions every year.
ONE OF THE STAPLE EXPERIENCES of your study abroad experience should be a flamenco show. Flamenco is a southern Spanish art that originated in Andalusia. It has four major facets: cante (song), baile (dance), toque (guitar playing) and palmas (hand claps).

Female flamenco dancers traditionally wear patterned skirts or dresses made of expensive material. Their tops are fitted down to the hip bone, where the skirt flays out with many ruffles. Males typically wear black pants and a solid shirt. Flamenco shoes have heels similar to character shoes. Some have taps on the toes in order to enhance the feet clicks during the show.

Although many details of flamenco’s origins and development are unknown, certain facts appear to be reasonably well established. It originated in Andalusia in around the fifteenth century, when Spain was under Arab rule. Music and musical instruments were modified and adapted as they encountered Arab and Jewish culture. This created a hybrid of dance, music and song that was only first recorded 200 years ago.

The gitanos (gypsies) of the Guadalquivir delta (Seville, Jerez, Cadiz) have been seen as the true keepers of flamenco ever since. Marginalised, introspective and poor, they continue to rely on flamenco to liven life. But payos (non-gypsies) have also danced and sung for two centuries, holding their own claims to the cocktail of claps, wails and dexterous guitar work.

In the nineteenth century, flamenco’s popularity surged. During this Golden Age of Flamenco (1869–1910), it developed rapidly in cafés cantantes, a new type of venue offering ticketed public performances. Along with this publicity, the dances became more organized. Dancers quickly became a public attraction, but the gitanos felt the form was being diluted because they believed spontaneity was everything.

From 1915 on, flamenco shows were organized and performed all over the world, initiating a flamenco renaissance in 1955. Outstanding dancers and soloists soon made their way into great theatres and concert houses. The flamenco guitar (which previously helped feature the dancers) came forward to be a soloist art form, enhanced by virtuosos like Paco de Lucia. Mass media has brought flamenco to the world stage, but it has always been and will remain an intimate genre of music.

Most flamenco performers are professionals, taking additional courses in ballet and contemporary dance. Most guitarists undergo rigorous professional training and can often read and play music in others styles of music as well, such as classical guitar or jazz. There are two categories of flamenco (palos):

Cante jondo (or cante grande)
If you come across a handful of men in a dark bar in Jerez, one tapping an unfathomable rhythm on the table, another clapping, a third man playing the guitar and a fourth wailing, his parched, straining voice possibly untroubled by tuning, then you’re probably experiencing cante jondo. This purist form of flamenco is an angst-fed affair, so don’t expect chirpy little ditties. At its best, jondo can be a gripping scene. The singer is usually emotionally wrecked and might even need to be carried from the stage at the end.

Cante chico
This is a less intense and more recent form of the song that sometimes includes polka dot-dressed dancers. The alegría has a famous studied dance, while the bulería unfurls at breakneck speed. Both are impressive to watch.
Flamenco takes place in four main settings: the *juerga* (flamenco party), in small-scale cabaret, concert venues and the theatre. The *juerga* is the most intimate close-encounter setting available. It is similar to a "jam session" and can even include the audience’s own dancing, singing, *palmas* or pounding in rhythm on tables. In this context, flamenco is organic and dynamic: it adapts to the local talent, instrumentation and mood of the audience.

The professional concert, on the other hand, is more formal. A traditional singing performance has only one singer and one guitarist, while a dance concert usually includes two or three guitars, multiple singers (singing in turns, as flamenco *cantadores* sing solo) and many dancers. But no matter the venue, one tradition remains firmly in place: the *cantadores* (singers) are the heart and soul of the performance. Even though the dancer(s) is front and center during performances, the *cantador* is the one who recounts the dark and profound stories through the music.

There are many places in Andalusia where you can make reservations with friends for tapas and a flamenco show. One great venue is in Granada, at Le Chien Andalou, at Carrera del Darro Nº7. This intimate cave seats about 30 people, featuring a tiny stage with barely enough room for one guitarist, one singer and one dancer. You can simply see the show, or also come for tapas beforehand. Either way, if you make reservations here with your friends, you will have a great time.
THE SPANISH LOVE THEIR DOWN TIME, often filling it with naps, paseos (evening walks), extended meal sittings and social gatherings. Some watch remarkable amounts of television together, others may go shopping, but one way or another, the Spanish culture as a whole is very centered around socializing with those you love. Paseos are becoming more and more popular; people have always loved talking and strolling through the streets chatting with friends and neighbors.

Young Spaniards enjoy late nights, often waiting until well after midnight before heading to a club or bar. If dinner is not until 10 p.m., why rush to be out and about by 11 p.m.? Often times clubs do not open until 1 or 2 a.m. anyway, so don’t feel pressured to be the first ones on the dance floor. Along the same lines, if you make plans with a Spaniard to meet somewhere at 8 p.m., say for tapas, don’t show up before 8:30 p.m., otherwise you will just be waiting. Time is relaxed in the leisurely culture; don’t rush yourself anywhere. Unlike the United States where you may call a friend if they are 15 minutes late, Spaniards are stress-free. Time will not run out, so don’t stress about it.

In general, Spaniards enjoy time off of work as well. To begin, many schools in Andalusia have four-day school weeks (Mon.–Thurs.) instead of the traditional five (Mon.–Fri.). The average wage earner is entitled to four weeks’ annual leave (although some get more) and also revels in the generous allocation of 14 public holidays. Most of these holidays are standard throughout the country, chosen by central government, but the rest are allotted according to local habits. Some of the regions even have their own “national” holidays, as well as feast days celebrating something or someone close to their hearts. To add even further confusion, the regions can choose different holidays each year, which are often dictated by which festival days fall on a Sunday — you don’t want to waste a public holiday by placing it on a weekend after all. Among these holidays is the annual Spring feria: a prolonged party across the Andalusian region.
What is feria?

The Spring fair, or feria, is a week-long celebration that takes place in May. It dates back to 1284 when it was a live-stock market on Pentecost Sunday.

The two most popular locations for ferias in Andalusia are Seville and Córdoba. The Seville feria, one of the most well-known ferias, has small tents called casetas where people gather to eat, drink and dance. Each city’s feria varies slightly, but adheres to the same backbone. (To give you an idea, in 2010, Seville had 1047 casetas, while Córdoba had 113.) Like Seville, Córdoba has a magnificent entrance, or portada, but Córdoba’s remains the same every year rather than having a freshly themed one, as in the Andalusian capital. The portada of the Córdoba feria is vast, 153 yards wide with a 50 yard-tall main central tower, two smaller ones at either end, two main arches on either side of the main tower and a multitude of Mezquita-style red-and-white striped double arches (see photo on page 24).

The most important difference between Córdoba’s feria and Seville’s is that all the casetas have to be open to the public. In other words, anyone is free to go in and buy a drink, order a tapa and strut their sevillanas skills on the dance floor, without having to know someone or have a formal invitation.

What can I expect to see?

On the first official night at midnight is the alumbrado – when all the lights of the portada and all the casetas are switched on and followed by a spectacular firework display.

The daily Paseo de Caballos, the parade of pure-bred horses, riders and carriages, is also well worth seeing. This takes place between noon and 8 p.m. The men who ride these horses often sport the traditional Cordobesan hat, which is flat with a wide brim. The traditional dress for women is the exquisite traje de cordobesa or a skirt and jacket, with their hair swept up into an elegant bun covered by a net (see above left photo).

Throughout the week-long celebration, the Caseta Municipal puts on concerts by famous musicians and local groups, such as Rocio singers, plays and musicals, flamenco performances, comedy shows and children’s entertainment such as clowns and magic shows.

Like the Seville feria, Córdoba’s also has a funfair called La Calle del Infierno (Hell’s Street), with a big ferris wheel, rides, shooting ranges and all the usual funfair attractions.

During the feria, bullfights also take place at Córdoba’s bullring, Las Cañijas, one of the seven most important in Spain. You will also find a host of other cultural activities around the city.

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**MAJOR HOLIDAYS CELEBRATED IN SPAIN**

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<tr>
<th>Holiday</th>
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<td><strong>Año Nuevo</strong> (New Years Day)</td>
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<td><strong>Día de Reyes</strong> (Epiphany)</td>
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<td><strong>Viernes Santo</strong> (Good Friday)</td>
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<td><strong>Día del Trabajo</strong> (Labor Day)</td>
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<td><strong>Asunción</strong> (Assumption of the Virgin Mary)</td>
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<td><strong>Día de la Constitución</strong> (Constitution Day)</td>
<td>December 6</td>
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Siesta
Spain’s daily cat nap

The Spanish siesta takes place every afternoon from about 3 or 4 p.m. to 5 or 6 p.m. (yes, that’s early afternoon in Spanish time). The traditional reason for the afternoon shut-eye was to shelter workers in the fields from the brutal midday heat. They would feel refreshed after their doze and work later into the evening — longer than they would have been able to without the siesta.

While people still work in the fields of Spain, this reason does not account for why shops and businesses close down today. Yes, offices can get hot too, but the invention of air conditioning has done wonders in this department, so why do they still even have siestas?

One big reason is because the Spanish like to have a long lunch. At home, your host mother may cook lunch for the whole family (and yes, that could include her 35-year-old accountant son; he will still come home for mommy’s cooking). The meal can last up to two hours (longer if time allows); a rest before going back to work is essential after that.

The siesta also allows Spaniards to stay up later in the evening without fading early. (You will rarely hear one of your Spanish friends say “I think I’ll have an early night tonight.”) If you have had a really late night, an afternoon snooze can be just the thing you need.

While the siesta is slowly declining in the Spanish population (moreso in larger cities like Madrid and Barcelona), it is still going strong in Andalusia. The more laid-back lifestyle of southern Spain allows for a little extra afternoon “me time.”

While abroad, if you do not feel the inclination to lounge in bed every afternoon for a few hours and you decide to take a paseo or go shopping, you very well may find that a good portion of the stores are closed for their own siestas. The cultural phenomenon is usually welcomed with wide arms by study abroad students. It is a nice break from our hectic hustle-and-bustle lifestyle at home. It is said that Americans live to work, and Spaniards work to live. For example, a typical American takes an hour-long lunch break, where the Spanish workday can allot up to three hours for lunch. Consider the siesta something to look forward to!

Inmaculada Concepción
(Immaculate Conception)
December 8

Navidad
(Christmas)
December 25

Opposite page, left photo: A couple rides their horse in a procession in Seville.

Opposite page, right photo: Spaniards dance sevillanas and celebrate in the Plaza Española in Seville.

Above, top photo: Study abroad students wear the traditional vibrant-colored dress for the Córdoba feria. Hair is typically pulled into a low side bun and accented with a flower.

Above, bottom photo: The feria de Sevilla has beautiful light displays at night. In the far right of the photo, you can see an illuminated portada.
TOP TEN PLACES TO VISIT IN ESPAÑA

2. BARCELONA

Barcelona is no doubt the most popular city to visit in Spain. From its Gaudi architecture, Las Ramblas, the vibrant city life, dance clubs, beaches and museums, fun awaits your arrival at just about every block. The city is known for its winding streets (there is no street grid system, it’s more of a capillary of veins), so be sure to have a detailed and accurate map. This city also offers students a chance to explore the Catalan language and culture which once dominated a large part of Europe. There are plenty of free things to do, such as visit Gaudi’s La Sagrada Familia and Parc Guell, Las Ramblas, the Picasso Museum and the beautiful Barceloneta beach!

4. SEVILLE

Seville (Sevilla) is one of the more popular destinations of Andalusia. It is not only the home to flamenco and bullfighting, but also has some of the most beautiful gardens and buildings in the country. This hot, vibrant city is full of cathedrals, parks and cafés. However, don’t expect the ambience to be as gung-ho about touristy-flamboyant Spanish culture as other cities — the lifestyle here is quiet and laid-back. Make sure to visit the Plaza de España and the cathedral.

5. SAN SEBASTIAN

This city is on the northern coast of the Basque region and has one of the most beautiful beaches in the country. Tourists flock to the Costa Blanca and Costa del sol, but there are also plenty of other beautiful beaches (all along the 5,000 miles of coastline of the country). You just have to find the one that’s not too crowded! The city is known for its great culinary tradition. Must try: pintxos (see left photo), the best tapas in all of Spain, according to general opinion.

When it comes to experiencing Spain as a whole, there are so many options of places to travel that it can be overwhelming. Compiled below is a list of some of the more popular cities to visit, along with a brief description of what to do there. Visit our tumblr for more details on each city, including places to visit, how to travel, etc.!
6. BILBAO

Near San Sebastian, Bilbao does not have the beaches to compare, but it does have the Guggenheim museum. It is said that to fully appreciate the Guggenheim, you should allot yourself a full day (too much modern art can be a bit daunting; get a wrist band to take a few hours off).

8. CÓRDOBA

The Mezquita (mosque) is this charming city's main attraction, though the surrounding old and Jewish districts are equally appealing. Córdoba is perfect for a day trip. The best time to visit is in May, which begins with the Cruces de Mayo Festival, immediately followed by the Patio Festival. Here, you can pamper yourself in an Arabic bath, visit the botanical gardens and wander through the orange groves.

9. SALAMANCA

Salamanc is a university town two and a half hours northwest of Madrid. Its striking sandstone architecture is amazingly uniform and clean. The city is famous for its nightlife and university (one of the oldest in Europe), creating a great place for foreigners to learn Spanish. The best time to visit is the second week of September, during the festival of the Virgen de la Vega, as well as the return of the students. The winter here can be quite chilly, so if you go between November and February, bring a coat!

10. TOLEDO

The city of Toledo is built on a massive hill, which inspired paintings of artist El Greco. Toledo is famous for its steel, so why not buy a sword while you're here (or a letter opener if weaponry isn't your thing)? Semana Santa (the week before Easter) is also a beautiful time to visit. Artwork of El Greco appears throughout the cliffside city, along with hundreds of tiny shops and winding roads.

While your first impression of Spain will most likely be that of tourism, travel a few miles inland and you will find towns, villages and even cities that are hardly touched by the tourist transformation many have undergone. Unlike the coastal cities that attract swarms of tourists, these gems retain their traditional lifestyle, cultural integrity and individuality. In such places that are not affected by tourism, there is an intimate relationship between the land and its people that is unlike anything in the U.S.

So yes, touring these big cities and coastal attractions is perfectly fine, but in order to completely expose yourself to the true country of Spain, delve deeper into the heart of the land and its people. Don’t spend your time in your comfort zone of McDonald’s and strip malls. Take a taxi to the nearest small town and walk around the local market. You’ll never know what you can find.
TRAVEL CRAZE

Some of the best experiences abroad are spent on weekend excursions with friends and/or family. Luckily, there is much more public transportation in Spain than in Wooster, so it is easier to travel in Europe than in the U.S. Not only do most cities have cab systems, but they also have many city buses, charter buses and train stations. But before moving on to the next point, be wary of getting overcharged in taxi cabs — they will try to trick you if you are American, so make sure you watch the meter upon arrival.

When traveling from city to city in Spain, it is easy to plan routes without going too far out of the way. For example, if starting your journey in Seville, Córdoba is basically on your way up to Madrid, so you can easily plan a day there on your way up north. Bus tickets in Spain are also easy to buy — if you wish, you can reserve your tickets entirely online and all you have to do is show up at the station with your driver’s license. Good websites for looking at bus schedules and booking your tickets are: http://www.estacionesdeautobuses.es/ and http://www.avanzabus.com/web/de-fault.aspx.

There is also a simple solution for traveling from country to country while in Spain: Ryanair. Ryanair may not seem like the most luxurious of travel spaces from the cabin view (left), but the price is definitely worth it. Ryanair is a low-cost airway that travels between countries in Europe — it is even possible to get tickets as cheap as ten euros! They are supported by advertising and selling products during flights, so as long as you can put up with some sub-par social interactions from the flight stewards, Ryanair will be worth your while. However, heed their luggage size and weight limit — the charges for overweight or oversized baggage are quite high. Backpacks are usually a safe bet, but nothing much bigger than that. Check out their website for more details: http://www.ryanair.com/.

If lucky enough, your family (or members of) will be able to make a visit while you are in Spain. This is the best way to explain your experience to them. It is also helpful to reserve them a hostel room; even if your host family offers them a room, it is good to have separate time. It will also help them as well — it will allow them a break from the strong Spanish culture and give them some time to avoid culture shock. It’s also advisable that you make the reservations before they arrive (and not have your family make them) because you are more familiar with the city and can get them a room that’s in close proximity to your home.

Hostels are also a cheaper option than a hotel. A good website to use is: http://www.hostels.com/spain. While they may be sharing a room with someone else, the amount of money saved will be certainly worth it — especially since touring the country isn’t the cheapest activity. Take them around your town, have them eat lunch with your host family or friends (you can serve as the interpreter — a great way to practice your language skills!) and travel with them to another city for a great bonding experience. Your family members will also most likely feel slightly insecure (at least at first), so their visit will provide you an opportunity to step up to the plate and build your confidence. Besides, what makes an experience better than sharing it with the ones you love?
Perceptions of Americans abroad is a complicated topic anywhere, but especially in Spain. Yes, there are some Spaniards who have negative opinions of us; but, as we will examine, this is due mostly to cultural differences. Spain’s negative sentiments surrounding Americans date all the way back to the Cold War (1940s); the U.S. did not provide as much defense from Fascist dictator Francisco Franco as Spain would have liked, so many of these anti-American sentiments have to do with the American government more so than with its people.

A good deal of discussions about the U.S. presidency and government come up every day in Spanish conversation. Andrea Patton ’14 lived in Madrid for a year after she graduated from high school. She said, “They’re [Spaniards] just weirdly in-tune to American government. It’s not like they love it or don’t love it, they just know a lot.”

As an American study abroad student, your first encounters with locals may be tense or uncomfortable, but it is important to remember that this awkwardness is most likely due to cultural differences. Despite some tension toward Americans, Spain’s economy thrives on American money. According to Peter Orsi, a contributor to Journalism.Berkeley.edu, tourism is the number one source of profit for the Spanish economy, and the largest population of tourists is American. Therefore, some of Spain finds itself in a sticky situation because it dislikes this dependence on us (as well as other tourists), but still needs the money. Such a love-hate relationship can be confusing to us as travelers because we are encouraged by Spanish businesses to vacation, but may then feel uncomfortable around some of the Spanish population.

The “anti-American” attitudes some Spaniards have seem to be directed at the younger American (from around 18 to 25 years old). Brian Cope, a Spanish Professor at the College of Wooster, said, “I felt the stigma more when I studied there as a college student than I do now when I go to do my own research … I think that age might affect people’s perceptions.”

The Department of Translation Studies at The University of Tampere compiled a list of American stereotypes from a set of Spanish high school students in the late 90s and found that they are due mostly to curiosity rather than judgment. The list included statements such as, “The typical American is very rude [and they] yawn a lot, never trying to hide it.” Taking this into consideration, it is important to be sensitive to Spanish etiquette and customs. Yawning is thought of as impolite, as is eating most foods with your hands (yes, even fruit). The individuals questioned were also concerned with the fact that Americans “speak very quickly and very loud.” One reason for this perception may be that Spaniards are more accustomed to the European English accent (i.e. England, Britain), so American English comes across as harsh. Thus, our self-consciousness could be lessened if you speak English quieter than you normally would.

In “El Castillo,” Richard Maddox said, “The most frequently mentioned notions of Spanish social virtues are ‘openness’ and ‘grace.’” He emphasizes the importance of these two qualities in the Span-

**Will Schoenfeld ’12**

As far as being judged, my experience was very mild. You could tell that certain bar populations weren’t thrilled by the arrival of American students, but to be fair most of the time we were obnoxious, loud and numerous. Other than that, I actually felt very welcome around Spaniards.
ish society not only as values, but also says
that they drive social interactions as a ba-
sis for relationships: “The social virtues of
being abierto (having the quality of open-
ness) and having gracia (grace) reflects
images of the self and community … to be
open involves not only a personal ability
to be superficially friendly and intimate in
ways that break down barriers of reserve
between people but also a degree of genu-
ine light- or open-heartedness, spontane-
tity, warmth, sympathy, trust and generos-
ity in relation to others.” An example of
abierto would be the inclusion of families in
everyday conversation — rarely will a
Spaniard ask you how you’re doing with-
out also asking how your family is doing.
Families are important aspects of their so-
cial lives and are viewed as an extension of
the individual.

More recently, as a result of the de-
velopment and explosion of the internet,
Spanish youth have adopted many aspects
of American culture. You will find many
young Spaniards’ pop culture references
the States’ pop culture — many of their
movies, TV shows and music are Ameri-
can. Patton said, “[Spain’s youth] has ab-
sorbed more American culture than other
countries. All their TV shows are Ameri-
can, Ford sponsors Real Madrid, they
love KFC and McDonald’s … even their
cultural attitude toward [binge] drinking
alcohol is similar to America’s.” For
example, many of my Spanish friends in
Córdoba loved the shows “How I Met Your
Mother” and “The Simpsons.” The music
in almost every club and bar also played
mostly American music — from Beyoncé
to Kanye West to Shakira to Eminem.

This growing presence of American cul-
ture in Spanish youth is most likely the
reason for another stereotype in Spain:
Scantily-clad women
easy American girl. Scantily-clad women
are everywhere in our culture: music vid-
ios, movies, fashion (short shorts and
skirts, tight shirts, etc.) and not to mention
reality TV shows like Jersey Shore and La-
guna Beach. These all add to the portrayal
of American women as “easy” and “loose.”

Jessica Warnock, a study abroad exam-
iner, wrote of her pre-departure excitement
at the thought of being “exotic” and different
instead of “Sarah plain and tall” as she is at
home. However, “due to the massive influ-
ence of American culture [in Spain], [Amer-
icans] are rarely considered mysterious or
unusual [anymore, which] leads to various
labels and presumed behaviors. Some of
these basic characteristics include wealthy,
obnoxious, loud and often ignorant … as
well as the drunk, sloppy and easy Ameri-
can girl.” While out and about on a Friday or
Saturday night, even if an American girl is
lucky enough to escape the interests of some
of the less-than-noble local men looking for
an effortless score, she will most likely still
be considered “trashy” and in an inebriated
state. If you look around a typical Spanish
bar, you will see very few drunk local wom-
en, if any at all. “The ones that always draw
stares are the loud rowdy American women,”
Switzer said. But even without alcohol, there
is a general opinion that American women
are easy, so drink responsibly, ladies, and al-
ways walk with a friend.

Many generalizations of Americans, such
as that all the American students studying
in Spain have a lot of money and do not really
care about the poor Spanish economy, also
eXist simply because Spaniards know no
better. What they do not realize is the huge
diversity among American cultures within
the U.S. as a whole. This may largely be due
to the fact that, according to the Institute
of International Education, 82.3 percent of
U.S. students studying abroad in the past ten
years have been Caucasian. The Diversity in
International Education Summary Report
for 2010 also stated that “[study abroad stu-
dents] remain overwhelmingly white and
female.” Because such a large portion of the
American population in Spain is comprised
of this “dominant traveler,” we can see why
Spaniards may think what they do.

This disproportionate ratio of study
abroad students not only gives other coun-
tries an incorrect impression of the “aver-
age” U.S. citizen, but it also limits one of the
main goals of studying abroad: globaliza-
tion. According to whatisglobalization.org,
“Globalization is the process of integration
of cultures. It comes from the interaction of
people from different cultures and societies.
Through globalization, people from all over
the world have started … bringing people
together.” Having more diversity among
traveling American students would be an
advantage; it would allow us to come to-
gether to work together in creating a more
society/culture-conscious world.

Spain’s exposure to different ethnicities
is also limited for historical reasons. Dur-
ing Fascist Dictator Francisco Franco’s rul-
ing, he prohibited immigration into the
country. According to Prospect (Journal of
International Affairs at The University

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**Maya Matalon ’12**

Studying abroad in Córdoba was one of the most special and
amazing experiences I have had in college, but there were definitely
timing moments when I had to learn how to adjust to the culture and the
expectations of the Andalusian society. One such experience involved
how many Spanish as well as other Europeans perceived Americans,
especially American females. There were definitely many negative
associations that included viewing us as “stupid” or “easy.” There were
certain times where I heard others speak about us in Spanish in nega-
tive ways. When we went out [to clubs], we were treated as Americans
who just want to party and sleep around … Despite these negative
stereotypes about Americans, once we spoke to other Spanish youths
or adults, it was very easy to get past the stereotypes on both sides.

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**Peter Hause ’13**

Being in a city like Granada that’s not very
big, and not being fluent, I felt that there were
points where [judgement from locals] may
have been the case. However, I never felt it
in a threatening way; it wasn’t a ‘bad’ kind
of judging, if that makes sense. Take time to
wander within your first couple of weeks there
and notice the interactions of people and ways
of doing things. Then just do your best to be
similar without forgetting about your roots.
Why would you want to blend in, you ask? Harmonizing with locals is favorable for safety reasons as well as for a richer study abroad experience. When you travel abroad, there are a few things you can do to help blend in.

First things first: the most obvious attribute that will set you apart from the crowd in Spain is speaking English. Pickpockets tend to gravitate to unsuspecting tourists, and if you stand out as American there is a greater chance they will snag your goods. Even when in loud and frantic Barcelona, the English language tends to stand out much more than Spanish. If you and your friends are speaking English, try to keep your voice down if you can. If people around you can hear you talking in English, pickpockets can hear you too.

Along the same lines, to protect yourself from scammers and pickpockets, make sure you keep your hands over your possessions as much as possible. This is not meant to scare you from going to Spain, but pickpocketing is the most common crime travelers experience there. Walk with confidence. Act like you know where you are going, even if you do not, and make sure not to take your map out in public.

Also, try to avoid wearing anything flamboyantly American (i.e. no American flag hats or t-shirts), and stay away from bringing sweatpants, torn-up clothing, Northface jackets and flip-flop sandals. Blending in your appearance will help create a more comfortable atmosphere for your travels. (See “Fashionistas de España” article for more information on Spanish fashion!)

José Antonio Cámara Alcaide, 20

In Spain, the American culture is viewed as having more advances, technologically speaking. On the other hand, a lot of older people don’t like American food, and something else that tends to surprise them is the American patriotism. In my opinion, I adore the American culture and one day I would like to return to the U.S.

of California, San Diego), Franco’s regime “imposed on the people of Spain ideas of cultural unity, based on an extremist conservative nationalist perspective.” Spanish youth were taught that Spain was the “spiritual leader and champion of the Christian world, and that there could only be a single Spanish culture.” Immigration was also discouraged. This, logically, limited the variety of ethnicities present.

Immigration has more recently started to increase for employment purposes. According to Liverpool University Student Russel Seaman, upon exposure to recently-growing minorities in Spain, “[these racial] differences are generally not problematic, but can be frustrating and challenging if you are not prepared for them.”

Every student should be conscientious of his or her impression as an American abroad. As previously mentioned, the American personality tends to be bold in comparison to the Spanish temperament. In general, Spaniards on the coast are very welcoming and friendly to foreigners. A recent CIS (Center for Sociological Research) survey found that “93 percent of the Spanish public [around the coasts] welcomes foreign visitors and thinks they improve life in Spain.”

The further inland you travel, the less tolerable locals will be. It is more likely you will encounter more cultural differences the farther away from the shore you are because there aren’t as many tourists; though this is not to say Spaniards like Americans, because this is not true either. I remember many instances in Spain in which I felt I was glared at, most likely for my blonde hair and bad Spanish accent. I often felt uncomfortable in certain public situations, but as my time in Spain continued, I realized it was simply a cultural difference. “Spaniards simply stare more in general,” said Heidi Buffington ’10, current American resident in Barcelona and former College of Wooster study abroad student. “When one is caught staring in America, they will immediately look away, but if one is caught staring in Spain, they will look away only to look back right away ... Personal space [in Spain] is much smaller and staring is more common.”

This is also true in similar encounters while walking when people do not side step or get out of each others’ way when walkways are crowded. I was baffled by this at first. I was almost knocked over on several occasions, but eventually got used to it because I realized people did it to everyone; they weren’t just targeting me.

Also in regards to uncomfortable situations, Patton confirmed, “Compared to America, there is a cultural difference. I think part of it is because they’re [Spaniards] a very social people. Meals last an hour and a half just because you’re talking ... people-watching/looking at people is just a bigger deal than [in the U.S.]” Patton also noted that she felt more comfortable and accepted once she improved her Spanish accent: “I didn’t have any issues with being judged because I could speak very well ... once I actually got down the accent, people would mistake me for a native. I think [acceptance] has a lot to do with accent.” Buffington agreed that accents affect how much study abroad students feel accepted: “Spaniards do not feel like [Americans] are as integrated. Therefore, they are just as uncomfortable as you are. They don’t know what to do about it either.”

As long as you are aware of your surroundings, you will be just fine; be aware of what people do around you and try to follow suit. Seaman was similarly optimistic when he said, “Opinion [of Spaniards judging us as Americans] is on the tourists’ side and through continued mutual respect of each others’ different customs and lifestyles, the relationship between tourism and Andalusia will be happy for years to come.”
The truth is, nobody has a “perfect” study-abroad experience. You may struggle with language barriers, feel homesick or get a late start making friends, but the key is not to stress about it. As much as people would like to, the experience cannot (and should not) be sugar-coated. Everyone’s experience is different. Here are some difficulties past students had in Andalusia:

**Heidi Klise ’12, College of Wooster, Granada Fall 2010**

“I often felt out of place, especially because of my blonde hair. I also felt judged when I would mess up Spanish words or when I didn’t understand what the other person was saying. This mostly came from females close to my age…Occasionally an older woman would obviously look me over with a scowl. A woman who worked at the heladería (ice-cream shop) near my apartment always looked at me with narrow eyes and I never knew why. I found men were more patient with my language in general.

Granada residents have a reputation of being rude to tourists, though I never had any horrible experiences. I felt more judged in Barcelona; Madrid was more welcoming, and small towns or farms were even more kind.

However, if you want to immerse yourself in the local culture when you travel, it’s best not to be worried by others’ judgments. Be kind and keep striving to improve your language skills. People will appreciate if you try as opposed to giving up. It’s just a matter of time.”

**Will Schoenfeld ’12, College of Wooster, Granada Fall 2010**

“I felt surprisingly homesick in Spain, and I can offer a few reasons. For one thing, living in Granada was a scene change from life back home [in Chicago]. Obviously the language and culture was different, but I was bothered by unexpected things. I’ve always liked open space, either in the form of actual country or a front yard. Living in an apartment, I had neither. That and the general lack of greenery in Granada threw me off.

Another thing I was thrown by was the people adjustment required. Not so much the Spanish people — I found the majority of Spaniards to be quite warm and willing to associate/aid me and other Americans — but I had a much harder time integrating with my American peers. The program (IES) was very large, and comprised of several large groups from the same school. Because of this, the group began cliquey and didn’t really change throughout the trip.

The other part of my experience that really dragged me down was my health. I had two nasty bouts with pneumonia and long term coughs while abroad. Although this let me get to know various wonderful people on the IES Granada staff, it really restricted my social life and detracted from my studies. Being sick abroad is awful — dealing with doctors and a language barrier also adds to the stress.”

**Maya Matalon ’12, Oberlin College, Córdoba Fall 2010**

“It was definitely important to me to meet other Spanish students, which was very difficult for me to do at first. The program I was on made it very easy to spend the entire semester with only Americans, which went against my goals for my abroad experience. I had to learn how to be super outgoing and talk to those in my classes, and make an effort to contact Spanish students I had met, either through our “conversation partners” or in other forums.

Another difficult experience I had when studying abroad was the way the university was conducted. I come from a small liberal arts college, and I was used to small classes based on discussion and analysis rather than lecture and memorization. I chose to take a literature class that was not part of the program, in the University of Córdoba, and found it to be very different from what I had experienced. The class was entirely lecture based, and we would be tested every week in front of the whole class about details from the novel or play we had been asked to read. It was a very daunting experience, and it took me some time to get used to that format of learning. Luckily the teacher, as well as the program tutor, was there to help me overcome the difficulties I was having. Although it is a very different system of learning, I still managed to learn a lot from that class, as well as a different way of approaching literature and engaging in study.”
Clothing trends in Spain tend to follow somewhat closely to those of the U.S. — let’s call it American style with a European twist. Spanish boys dress similarly to Americans, but they do enjoy their scarves. Girls’ fashion is also similar to the U.S. Girls around their twenties tend to dress more casually during the day (almost always wearing jeans) and more formally at night for dinner or a club.

No matter whether you take on a Spanish fashion flair, try to stay away from flip-flop sandals, sweatpants and Northface jackets.

Spanish boys love their button-up shirts. Dress is very similar to americans, so don’t worry about making a lot of new purchases for your trip. Suggested are sweaters, jeans and nice t-shirts. Try to steer away from athletic shoes for everyday wear.

Dark leather jackets are always a go-to for locals. Pair one with a floral scarf for a fun mix of fabrics! Boots and jeans are also a dependable wardrobe staple. Girls also tend to have very long hair and wear large pearl earrings.

The everyday dress for Spaniards includes a scarf, big or small. You’ll definitely want to bring a few for your trip (yes, guys too!) — you’ll find they keep you much warmer when the temperature drops at dusk.

Want more ideas for where to clothing shop in Spain? Check our Tumblr!

studyabroadandalusia.tumblr.com
password: andalusia
What to bring

One of the biggest pre-departure dilemmas is that tricky business of packing. Is it humanly possible to cram every article of clothing you own into a mere two suitcases? The unfortunate answer to that question is no. You can try, but ultimately, luggage can only handle so much stress — you don't want to be "that kid" in the airport whose suitcase busted open from a broken zipper.

Lightweight luggage can do nothing but help your case (pun intended). There are weight limits at airports. There are also plenty of places where you can buy decent luggage for a reasonable price, like T.J. Maxx, Kohl's, Target and other discount stores of that nature. And remember, if you are in a big enough pickle, your parents can always send you a package. It is always nice to get mail anyway, right?

Many people become overwhelmed when trying to plan their long list of essentials, so here is a broken-down list to check off as you go:

- **Important Documents** — passport & student visa (and copies of them), proof of insurance, medical records, acceptance letter from your study abroad program, driver's license (and copies of it), extra passport photos (in case you need a photo for a bus pass or school ID card).

- **Clothing** — Only bring what you will need. Dark clothing that you can layer is often the best because it not only hides dirt, but you can also switch up your outfits easily. Try to leave your nicer things at home since you probably would not be a happy camper if anything nice were stolen, lost or ruined in your host family's washing machine. However, this does not mean you should dress like a bum the entire time, it is just recommended that bringing expensive jewelry and designer labels is risky. A pair of comfortable walking shoes is also key!

- **Toiletries** — This is more of a personal decision — it is really whatever you are comfortable with. If you want specific products (girls may care about this more), you should probably stock up and bring those with you, but you can also save some room in your suitcase and buy things there. El Corte Inglés (similar to an upscale J.C. Penny or Macy's) usually has a lot of products from the U.S., as long as you don't mind paying a little extra.

- **Small Duffel Bag** — This will come in handy for those weekend trips or excursions with your friends. RyanAir (a great option for quick and cheap flights in Europe) charges extra for luggage that is bigger than a backpack, and packing in a small bag will just make your life easier. There is also an abundance of cobblestone walkways in Andalusia, so "wheely-bags" are a pain.

- **Money** — Make sure to pay a visit to your bank before going abroad. You not only should notify them of debit card usage (contact your credit card company if also applicable), but should also get a wad of euros so you are not penniless when you land (you might even need money for a cab ride from the airport). Around $100 U.S. is good for starters. Let the bank know how long you will be abroad, otherwise they may cancel your card in suspicion of fraud.

  Also, an easy way to save some coin while in Spain is to withdraw cash in large amounts as you need it. Each transaction on your debit card will cost you an extra fee for overseas usage, so the fewer amount of times you use it, the better.

- **Converters** — Use these for your laptop, ipod and camera. DO NOT use them for hairdryers or straighteners — buy these overseas because the voltage difference is much higher in all of Europe than in the U.S. Catching the house on fire probably won't be the best way to befriend your host family or fellow student residents...

- **Other Miscellaneous Items** — small flashlight, alarm clock, journal, maps (Michelin maps are great), an extra memory card for your camera, prescriptions (make sure you bring enough to last your whole stay), a few photos from home, identification tags on all of your luggage (inside and out), make-up mirror, DVDs.

Check out our tumblr for more ideas of what to pack!

studyabroadandalusia.tumblr.com
password: andalusia
Which program do I choose?

IES Abroad: Salamanca

The Institute of European Studies (IES) Abroad Salamanca program is a language-immersion program that aims to improve students’ written and oral proficiency in the Spanish language. Through this program, all courses are taught in Spanish by faculty from the Universidad de Salamanca (USAL). Classes offered include Art History, Economics, Spanish Language and Literature, Political Science, Religion and Sociology.

Most students who study abroad through this program also take a class at the actual Universidad de Salamanca as well as the Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca (UPSA).

At the UPSA, there are three main facultades: the Facultad de Teología, the Facultad de Comunicación and the Facultad de Psicología. The following areas of study are available at both universities: Fine Arts, Biology, Environmental, Chemical and Social Sciences, Law, Economics and Business, Education, Pharmacy, Philology, Philosophy, Geography and History, Psychology and Translation and Documentation (please note that course offerings vary from semester to semester — for this reason, it is not possible to officially register until you arrive in Salamanca). A few classes IES Abroad students have taken in the past are as follows: Antropología de la cultura de Iberoamérica, Economía de la Comunidad Europea, Curso de moderna: la Inquisición y sociedad en la España Moderna, Literatura Española and Historia de la música española.

There are four different USAL campuses in different areas of the city. The distances to commute to these different locations from the IES Abroad Center (located near the Plaza Mayor) are as follows:

- Campus Histórico – 5 minutes
- Facultad de Educación – 10 minutes
- Campus Miguel de Unamuno – 15 minutes
- Facultades de Psicología y Bellas Artes – 30 minutes

IES Abroad also provides ample opportunities for students to become involved with extracurricular activities, such as sporting clubs and student societies. These are great opportunities to meet local students and create long-lasting relationships with Spanish students your own age. (Please note that club and event activities also vary from semester to semester, so you will learn about your opportunities upon your arrival in Salamanca.)

If you are already confident in your Spanish language proficiency and wish to become even more comfortable and accustomed to the language and culture, the IES Program may better suit your needs than the Arcadia Program in Granada. Salamanca is a smaller city than Granada and will provide a more intimate environment with greater opportunities to get to know university students.

If you have any questions about the program, there are more than 800 past IES abroad students available to provide first-hand insight on issues such as housing, getting a cell phone abroad, creating a budget, local culture and more on the IES website: www.iesabroad.org.

Arcadia in Granada

The Arcadia University Center for Contemporary Studies in Spain provides educational opportunities in collaboration with the Universidad de Granada and its Centro de Lenguas Modernas (CLM). Previous experience with the Spanish language is not required in order to enroll in this program — there are courses available in “beginning Spanish,” “intermediate,” “advanced” and ”superior.” If you wish to quickly boost your level of Spanish proficiency before the start of your semester abroad, there is also an option to enroll in an intensive one-month, three-credit Spanish course upon arrival in Granada. (Please note that this is at an additional cost, and the calendar for this option differs from the regular semester calendar.)

Studies for students at the Universidad de Granada are customized in order to successfully integrate class schedules with students’ Spanish language goals. There are different options for course loads which should be discussed with your program manager upon application, including an intensive option and an environmental studies option. Elective classes are available in the following areas of study: Spanish language, culture, art, history, politics, economics, business, music, geography and more. Students also have the option of choosing a course from one of Arcadia’s exclusive programs in environmental studies. For information on Granada’s professors, visit the arcadia.edu.

The Arcadia program, like others in the past, offers periodic events and excursions throughout each semester to further students’ exposure to the Spanish culture. Some of the more recent semesters’ excursions have included guided tours around the Albaicín and the Alhambra, trips to Madrid, Segovia and Toledo, and a weekend in Sevilla.

Arcadia also offers different housing options: a shared apartment, residence hall or a carefully selected Spanish household.

If you are at all worried about your Spanish language proficiency, the Arcadia Program in Granada is the choice for you. If you know nothing more than basic Spanish, this program provides the tools and help for you to learn the necessary skills to survive in Spain for a semester. Granada also has a fusion of Spanish and Moorish architecture, along with a “bigger-city” feel.

For more information on the Arcadia program, visit arcadia.edu/abroad.
Many students looking to study abroad work themselves into a tizzy debating whether to live with a host family or in a student dormitory. There are pros and cons to both scenarios, but keep in mind that your housing situation (while important) should not be the sole measure that determines your academic and personal success overseas.

If you feel the transition to living abroad would be eased by having a pseudo-family overseas, living with a host family is probably the way to go. This family may be anything from a single woman living in an apartment to a young newlywed couple or a traditional mother-father-children household; you never know what you will get.

Living with a family not only provides a first-hand experience of the culture, but also automatic conversation and relationship opportunities. Your family is an immediate connection to the Spanish community; they can give you tours, explain cultural phenomena, introduce you to customs in a low-pressure environment, and answer any questions you have. The Spanish home is a safe zone for you to become comfortable, make language mistakes, learn what to do and what not to do in certain situations, and have steady support and help free of judgment.

At the same time, opting for a host family in your application puts a lot of things up in the air. Sometimes the match of a student and a family does not quite line up. You may have heard a horror story or two about conniving host parents who prohibit leaving the house after dinner, or give a curfew of 11 p.m. on the weekends, but these are rare circumstances.

Sure, it is possible you may clash with someone’s personality in the house, but if the problem becomes urgent, confront your program leaders and they will do their best to solve the issue as fast as possible, even if it means your relocation.

Individuals who consider themselves more independent and outgoing will enjoy an apartment or student dormitory. Some programs offer individually-leased apartments while others provide a student dormitory (residencia) with other Spanish students.

Living on your own can be empowering. You have the freedom to do what you want when you want, as well as ample opportunities to get to know Spaniards your own age. You can tutor each other with languages (many youth there are quite gung-ho about learning English), go out for tapas and learn more about the Spanish youth culture.

However, there is also a downside to living in an apartment or residencia: it is much more difficult to immerse yourself in the Andalusian home culture because you do not have an immediate connection otherwise present with a family. Some young Spaniards are skeptical of Americans and hesitant to converse at all. As a result of our country’s political standings and reputation, some Spaniards have a negative impression/opinion of Americans (See “American image abroad,” p. 34). While one should keep this in mind, don’t let it scare you away from convincing them otherwise. (Not to encourage obnoxious arguing, which would support their negative impressions, but subtle gestures and comments can only help.)

The most important thing to remember (no matter your final housing selection) is to get involved in extracurricular activities. It is the greatest of all ways to meet locals, develop your language skills and become culturally immersed outside the home. Choose something that you are already interested in, such as a sport or volunteer activity, or branch out and try something completely new. Many programs have pamphlets of extracurricular options you can participate in, so go on — get out there!
Top row photos: A student’s dining room and roof patio in Córdoba. The entire rooftop of the house allows sunbathing and socializing in the warm months.

Middle row photos: A student’s room, bathroom and deck in Granada. Some may be so lucky to live in this penthouse with a beautiful view of the town.

Bottom photos: An example of a student’s room and restroom in a host family’s house in Córdoba.
For most individuals, reintegrating back into the college community in the States is not an easy process. You have to adjust back to the Wooster environment, to the changes that have taken place since you have been gone and to the changes that have occurred within yourself.

What you will experience upon returning home is called “reverse culture shock.” This may seem like a strange possibility, especially since you are returning home, but coming back to Wooster is just as difficult, if not more so, than your arrival abroad, so don’t expect everything to be smooth sailing.

A feeling of alienation is perfectly natural, just like when you (most-likely) got lost in the Madrid airport. Whether you are aware of it or not, you may have changed, and that affects your comfort level with the environment at Wooster, your interactions with friends and family and even your academic progress. Don’t hesitate to ask for help from a counselor or make an appointment with the OCS director. Everyone is there to help. It is their job, after all.

But how can you hang on to your experience as well as use the independence and growth the experience brought you back here at home? Here are some pointers to help you out…
RE-ENTRY PROGRAMS
- The College holds an annual Returnee Photo Contest in September. Photos are displayed on the Lowry Art Wall and in the Center for Diversity and Global Engagement throughout October.
- By becoming an Off-Campus Studies volunteer, you can help out with events, such as OCS pre-departure orientations, introductions to off-campus study, the OCS study fair and more.
- You may attend one of three sessions of the Lilly Reintegration Program (held at the Lilly House) that encourage you to think and explore more deeply into your abroad experience.

HELPFUL REINTEGRATION STRATEGIES
- Anticipate reverse culture shock and be realistic. You will have highs and lows. This is normal, you are not alone. Give yourself time.
- Your friends and family may not respond to your stories as you might have expected. Be brief and to the point when reminiscing.
- Try to share your experience in creative ways. For example, cook for friends. It'll be hard to find someone who doesn’t like Andalusian cuisine!
- Try to keep mental comparisons and judgments to yourself until you find a balanced perspective. Not everything will be up to par with Spain.
- Relax. Be realistic and patient with yourself and others. Give yourself time to adapt and process your experience. Your fellow program participants are going through the exact same thing you are, so try having vent sessions with them.
- Be creative. Find an outlet for your feelings: journal, blog, sketch, write a story or poem, cook, make a photo album or scrapbook, etc.
- Stay in touch with the friends made during your study-abroad experience.
- Reintegrate academically. Develop research projects or an I.S. topic that incorporates what you explored in Spain, or take a class that involves an aspect of your experience (Spanish language, history or culture class).

WHAT OTHER STUDENTS SAY...

Students Will Schoenfeld ’12 and Heidi Klise ’12 studied abroad in Granada in the fall semester of 2010 and have different points of view upon returning home. Here are their own experiences upon returning home. (But keep in mind your coming-home experience may be completely different from others’.)

Klise ’12:
I found it difficult to return home after being abroad mainly because I didn’t have much to do. It’s hard to explain just how impactful it is. People ask, “How was Spain?” but it’s not a question that can be answered in one sentence. When I was able to talk to friends who were abroad, it made coming back to school easier.
There was some reverse culture shock as well. It took some time to adjust to the tempo of the states and of a busy academic life, especially since Granada was so easy-going.
My main outlets were friends, Spanish music and movies and my Junior I.S., which was about flamenco dancing. Finding food similar to what I had in Spain was also nice. Any chance that I got to hear the Spanish language, whether through music or movie subtitles, was also a great comfort — it made so many memories flood back.
My advice for future returnees? Bring back clothes or something physical that, if you close your eyes will help you feel you’re back in Spain. But it’s healthy to get back into your routine at home.

Schoenfeld ’12:
I left Spain with an abundance of awesome memories, but at the same time I was very ready to get back to the states and see my friends and family. I still frequently miss it, though.
I started a blog while abroad, but my biggest outlet for expressing my feelings became my friends. I grew very close with my roommate in Granada, as well as my host mom, who was easy to talk to and interested in how I was doing. I also utilized Skype and Facebook a lot, finding that they allowed me to keep up with friends and family back home.
I’ve been lucky enough to be able to keep up with my host mom through Skype, and I can’t stress enough how great it is to be able to keep in contact with people you grow close to over there. I was also able to meet up with one of my host brothers in a trip to London with my family this past summer (2011). It’s amazing how time abroad can make the world a smaller place, and nothing proves that more than meeting a dear friend from Spain in an English pub for a pint and some bilingual conversation!
Homesickness & how to deal with it

Being homesick while living abroad in a rich and vibrant culture is more common than people want to admit. Here are five quick and easy tips to help make things a little easier:

1. **Skype home.**
   
   This may sound like common sense, but it can really help. Skype is a free application you can download online that allows you to video chat across the world for free. Just sign up with a username and password and you're good to go!
   
   The key is to not call home too often. Try to keep it at a maximum of once a day, and make an effort to keep the conversation positive. If you miss your family or friends, boyfriend, girlfriend or even your dog, giving them a call can help ease the heartache (especially if it’s free!).

2. **Go out with your friends.**
   
   Sometimes, a night out with your program or Spaniard friends can do wonders for homesickness. It can take your mind off of things back home, help you relax, have a good time and reinforce relationships that will make Spain feel more like home sooner rather than later.

3. **Bring photos.**
   
   While you may have albums upon albums of photos online, print a few off before you leave. Creating a decorative collage in your Spanish room will not only make it more aesthetically pleasing, but also bring a little familiarity.

4. **Get out of your room.**
   
   It's incredibly easy to hide in your room while abroad, but doing so prevents you from meeting new people, learning new things and experiencing another culture. You didn't leave the U.S. just to hide in your room, right?
   
   Make sure to spend large chunks of your time out of your room (even if it's just going for a walk, grabbing coffee or talking with your host family) to get your mind on other things. You never know what might happen, but you do know that nothing will if you're alone in your room all the time.

5. **Talk to someone.**
   
   There are administrators for your program who have received training prior to their job and they can help you or get you to someone professional if you need it. If you are feeling depressed about making friends, think about how you made them in high school and college. You've made connections before and you can certainly do it again.

6. **Write a letter.**
   
   Sometimes, there's nothing better than a good old fashioned letter. The excitement of having something tangible from home will immediately bring a smile to your face. Try keeping up with other friends through letters instead of just Facebook.

Information from OCS Get Lost! handbook 2011
The mission of Off-Campus Studies (OCS) at The College of Wooster is to support The College in providing motivated and independently-minded students with a rigorous and comprehensive education encompassing values of diversity and global perspectives, through the facilitation of domestic and international off-campus study.

Go while you still can!

Studying abroad is truly a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. You may hesitate to leave campus out of a fear that you are afraid you might miss out on life back in Wooster. But think about it; when is the next time such an experience will be so easily accomplished?

The College of Wooster’s OCS office has created a system that makes the study-abroad process easily manageable. Studying abroad opens the student’s eyes to insight from around the world. This stage of your life (ages 18-22) is when your energy and curiosity are very high, making this a prime time to study abroad.

Yes, the language immersion could be considered the biggest benefit from studying abroad, but it also opens students’ eyes to the importance of being culturally aware, as well as spread the Wooster name and network around the world. What more is Wooster about than global engagement?

Even if you ultimately decide to go elsewhere and not Spain, it will be an eye-opening experience. Take it from Burton: “My main reason for not studying abroad was that none of my friends went abroad. Hindsight kills me as to how I could have been so blind to this idea while a student; one of my buddies a few years younger went to Botswana! The options are literally endless and I think that each incoming student should be aware of the opportunities abroad ... not studying abroad while a student at Wooster is probably my single biggest regret. It would have opened my eyes to the human condition that exists outside of our country earlier in my life. It also would have helped shape my political views that I arrived at after traveling on my own for a few years.”

In the modern-day increasing global economy, speaking another language and understanding foreign cultures has never been more important. Take your time to seriously explore your options and this amazing opportunity that has been placed before you as a member of The College of Wooster family.

For additional resources on the study abroad process, visit Wooster’s Off-Campus Studies Office’s website at http://www.wooster.edu/Academics/Off-Campus-Study.
Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn’t do than the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines, sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.

— Mark Twain