# Bowling Green State University Academic Program Abroad in Spain

Orientation Booklet 2019-2020



Plaza de Cervantes Alcalá de Henares, España

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# ¡Bienvenidos!

Welcome to Bowling Green State University’s Academic Year Abroad, Semester Abroad and Summer Abroad in Spain programs. We hope that you are eagerly anticipating your upcoming experience in Spain and imagine that your anticipation is accompanied by a number of questions about what to expect from this new experience.

The purpose of this short booklet and the rest of the information included in your orientation packet is to help answer some of the most common and general questions that arise in the preparation process. The orientation packet will help you prepare for your study abroad experience and provide information that you may wish to share with family and friends. You will have an on-site orientation after your arrival in Spain that will deal with more specific questions about the Spanish culture and lifestyle.

We know that this booklet can’t possibly answer all of your questions. For that reason, we recommend that you read with pencil (or iPad) in hand, ready to jot down any and all questions that occur to you. Then, call, write, or stop by our offices; we’ll be happy to discuss any of your questions or concerns. This may all seem a bit overwhelming now, but we're here to help you, so don't hesitate to contact us with any questions. That's why we're here!

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[mtrafic@bgsu.edu](mailto:mtrafic@bgsu.edu)

Official Documents

**The Education Abroad Office at BGSU is your go-to office for all of your international travel documentation needs. They will assist you with passport and visa information as well as help you to understand BGSU’s insurance coverage for students abroad. For specific details, please consult BGSU’s Education Abroad Office’s pre-departure handbook. For specific concerns, feel free to contact:**

**Education Abroad, International Programs and Partnerships 301 University Hall**

**Bowling Green, OH 43403 419-372-0479**

[**edabroad@bgsu.edu**](mailto:edabroad@bgsu.edu)

Spanish Embassy and Consulates

**JURISDICTION OF CONSULATE ADDRESS**

ME, MA, NH, VT, RI Consulate General of Spain 545 Boylston Street #803

Boston, MA 02116

(617) 536-2506

**IL, IN, IA, KS, KY, MI, NB, WI, MS, OH, MN, ND, SD**

**Consulate General of Spain 180 N Michigan Avenue #1500**

**Chicago, IL 60601**

**(312) 782-4588**

[**http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Consulados/Chicag**](http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Consulados/Chicag) **o/es/Paginas/inicio.aspx (NOTE:** you can change the language to English at the very top of the page)

OK, TX, NM Consulate General of Spain 1800 Bering Dr. #660

Houston, TX 77057

(713) 783-6200

AZ, CO, UT, CA counties of: San Diego, Imperial, Orange, Riverside, Inyo, Ventura City, Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, San Bernadino

Consulate General of Spain 5055 Wilshire Boulevard #960 Los Angeles, CA 90036

(213) 938-0158

AL, AR, LA, MI, TN Consulate General of Spain

World Trade Center #2102 / 2 Canal Street New Orleans, LA 70130

(504) 525-4951

FL, NC, SC, GA Consulate General of Spain 2655 Le Jeune Rd., Ste. 203 Coral Gables, FL 33134 (305) 446-5511

DE, CT, NY, PA Consulate General of Spain 150 East 58th Street

New York, NY 10155 (212) 355-4080

Puerto Rico, Culebra Vieques, US Virgin Islands Consulado General de España

Edificio Mercantil Plaza, Avda Ponce de Leon s/n Piso 11, Suite 1101, Parada 27 1/2

Hato Rey, PR 00919 (787) 758-6090

AK, CA (except Los Angeles counties), HI, ID, MT, NV, OR, WY, WA, US Pacific Islands

Consulate General of Spain 1405 Sutter Street

San Francisco, CA 94109 (415) 922-2995

DC, MD, VA, WV Embassy of Spain, Consular Section 2375 Pennsylvania Ave. NW Washington, DC 20037

(202) 728-2330

# Planning Travel

**Program travel policy.** It is our policy that it is **your responsibility** to take care of all arrangements for travel to and from Spain. This policy is designed to allow you to evaluate your travel options and choose the best arrangement for yourself; for example, you can depart and return to the airport closest to your home or plan to travel with a friend who is also studying with the program. Some students find a great deal through their hometown travel agency, through a travel website, or by using a relative's frequent-flier miles.

We request that students arrive at the Barajas Airport in Madrid **before** noon on the first day of the program. This allows maximum flexibility in travel plans but allows the group to meet up at the airport where they will be met by the resident director and program coordinator. A bus will be waiting to transport you to Alcalá de Henares (please note that the bus service is provided upon arrival only to Spain; as many students travel at the end of their programs we do not provide return transportation to the airport). You will receive more information on the airport meeting, as well as instructions on what to do in case of a delayed or cancelled flight, closer to your departure date. If you choose to arrive after the designated meeting time, keep in mind that you will need to provide your own transportation to Alcalá; taxi fare will be approximately 35 to 40 euros (approximately $40 - $45 at current exchange rates).

Be sure to pay attention to the program calendar as you plan your travel. If you are requesting to stay with your host family before the room and board begins for your program, **you will be responsible for arranging your own lodging until the first day of the program**. Whatever your travel arrangements turn out to be, you don't want to miss the orientation sessions before classes start: we are planning **essential** and informative orientation meetings as well as a tour of both Alcalá and Madrid.

**In the end, don't forget: the decision is yours.** Investigate all the options you wish. Before your departure, you will be required to provide us with a copy of your travel arrangements. It is vital that we have your flight itinerary in order to plan for the airport meeting and make arrangements with the host family for your arrival.

**Note:** It helps to wear BGSU attire on the day you fly to Spain. It makes it easier for you and your classmates to find each other in the airport. Susana and Magda will be there to greet you at the designated meeting time with a large BGSU banner J



# Other Arrangements Before Departure

**INSURANCE COVERAGE.** BGSU contracts with an international services provider, International SOS (ISOS), who will provide international emergency medical, personal, travel, legal, and security assistance services as needed. BGSU also provides international travel medical insurance with University Health Plan (UHP), which works side by side with ISOS. Together, these providers provide comprehensive medical, safety, and security support and coverage.

For more information please visit the International Travel section on the BGSU Risk Management Website.

All education abroad participants, except students participating in affiliate partner programs are automatically enrolled in the mandatory international health and travel insurance plan through United Health Plan and ISOS. Students will be billed through their bursars account. Students participating on affiliate partner programs have insurance coverage built in their program.

**ARRANGEMENTS FOR CAMPUS ACTIVITIES.**

***BGSU students:*** The Education Abroad office and your advisors in Bowling Green and in Alcalá will help you prepare for your return to campus. Please plan ahead and think about your registration and housing choices for the semester or year after your return. We **strongly recommend** that you meet with your academic advisor(s) before leaving for Spain and that you make sure to take any needed numbers or e-mail addresses with you to Spain. Since Web Registration is available, students may register themselves for classes while in Spain. To take advantage of this, you must have a BGSU Falcon e-mail account. Summer students should register for their fall classes before leaving for Spain. Also, you will want to confirm with the Bursar's Office that your bills will be sent to your permanent address, not to an address on campus. Any questions regarding your bursar bill can be addressed to Debbie Lowery in the Bursar’s Office by phone (419-372-8234) or e-mail (dlowery@bgsu.edu). For questions regarding financial aid, please contact Ryan Czech at [rczech@bgsu.edu](mailto:rczech@bgsu.edu) .

***Non-BGSU students:*** You will also want to start considering arrangements for registration, housing, and financial aid for the semester(s) after your return. We **strongly recommend** that you meet with your advisor(s) before leaving for Spain and that you make sure to take any needed fax numbers or e-mail addresses with you to Spain.

**OTHER TRAVEL OPTIONS.** A few other options you may want to consider as preparation for your travel experience:

* ***Eurailpass.*** This pass, which must be purchased in the US, can provide you with a period of unlimited travel on virtually any train in Western and Central Europe. The passes can be purchased for different periods of time and for first or second class. For current information on the benefits of the Eurailpass see: <http://www.eurail.com/eurail-passes>
* ***Abonotransporte*** – This pass can be used for ALL trains, metros, and buses in the Community of Madrid including Segovia, Guadalajara, y Toledo. Most undergraduates (and graduates depending on the age) will be able to get the BONO joven (26 and under) which is 20€/month and allows for unlimited travel on all of the aforementioned systems. Susana and Magda will arrange for you to get the abono upon arrival to Spain (should you want one). Please leave this in their very capable hands J
* ***Flying.*** Flights within Europe on European airlines are usually very affordable. Travel agencies frequently run special packages for students that include a round trip plane ticket and hotel/hostel accommodations. The benefit to flying within Europe is getting to your destination quickly and thus having more time to spend sightseeing. When you are planning a weekend trip within Spain or to another European country, check with a local travel agent in Alcalá or Madrid to see what kind of deals and packages are being offered.
* ***Hostel membership.*** Some students have also found a membership in American Youth Hostels to be beneficial because AYH membership allows very inexpensive, dormitory-style overnight accommodation at youth hostels throughout Europe. For more information, See the American Youth Hostels/Hostelling International website: https://[www.hihostels.com](http://www.hihostels.com/)
* ***Travel guidebooks.*** Check your local bookstore for a good budget travel guidebook for Spain or Europe. One guidebook series almost unanimously recommended by former students is the *Let's Go* series, published by Harvard Educational Services. Look for this year's edition of *Let's Go: Europe* and *Let's Go: Spain, Portugal and Morocco.*

***Pre-departure meeting:*** The meeting is offered through the Education Abroad Office and will help to inform you on different topics about your trip including: risk management, safety abroad, emergency situations, alert traveler, etc. **This course is mandatory for all students planning to study in Spain. Options for this class should appear in your myBGSU account.**

***Orientation Session for Spain***: All students are required to attend the pre-departure orientation meeting co-sponsored by the on-campus program coordinator for Spain and the Education Abroad office. This meeting will cover passport, visa and insurance issues, as well as academic concerns, travel issues, host families and other Spain-specific realities.

# Planning Money

**"HOW MUCH DO I TAKE?"** This is by far the most common question we receive from students preparing for their experience in Spain. The answer to this question varies immensely from person to person – it depends a great deal both on your current lifestyle as well as the new lifestyle you may adopt while in Spain.

Take a look at your spending habits now. Try to get an idea of the amount you spend in an average week or month. Also, think about what type of items you are likely to buy in Spain. Are you interested in books or clothes, travel to different places or lots of social activity closer to home? You may find it useful to consult a travel guide like, *Let’s Go Spain*, for help in estimating your expenses.

Be aware that the cost of living in Spain is definitely higher than that of the US, although not as high as some other European countries. Also *keep in mind above all that the culture of Spain is extremely social,* and that you will most likely be going out with friends for a beverage and a relaxing evening in the plaza several times a week. During free weekends, you may want to catch the nightlife, explore the cultural activities available in Madrid, or take an excursion elsewhere in the country with friends. All these things cost money!

This is not to say that one cannot take full advantage of this experience while still maintaining a budget – on the contrary, many of the best experiences are those that come for next to nothing: the Parque del Retiro in Madrid (free), the Museo del Prado (7 euros with your student ID, free after 5pm on certain nights), and so on. The key is to plan and prioritize.

So, what does all this mean in actual figures? Once again, it's impossible to say for everyone. For financial aid purposes, the program makes up an estimated budget of student costs and we estimate about $200 per semester for books and supplies and $300-400 per month for personal and miscellaneous expenses. Also *consider your plans for vacation periods*. Will you be traveling? Do your tastes run more toward economy-class seats and youth hostels, or first-class seats and five-star hotels? Check the Internet before going to get a sense of travel costs.

Just remember – this is your opportunity to experience all that Alcalá, Madrid, Spain, and Europe have to offer. Take as much money as you can reasonably invest in this opportunity, and try to make the most of every single euro you spend.

**"HOW DO I TAKE IT WITH ME?"** Former students report that the safest and most convenient means of access to money abroad are with credit and debit cards. We would recommend that *you not rely completely on one single method*, but rather have various options. In addition, in case of emergency, it is possible to wire money abroad. Helpful suggestions from former students include:

* ***Credit cards*.** The most commonly used card in Spain is Visa, however, Master Card and American Express are accepted in larger establishments. You can use your credit card not only to charge purchases, but also as a means of receiving cash. It is possible to get a cash advance at a bank or to simply get cash using an ATM. This option has definite advantages, as ATMs are common in Spain, have instructions in several languages, and are available 24 hours a day including weekends and holidays, unlike actual banks. If you don't have a PIN number for your credit card, contact your credit card company to find out how to get one. Regardless, be sure to call your credit card company ahead of time to let them know that you’ll be in Spain!
* ***ATM cards.*** If you have an ATM card, you can use your card overseas to get cash easily at the inter-bank rate, *which is usually better than what you may find at exchange desks*. Be sure to ask your bank if there is an additional service charge for using your card overseas. **Important note**: most ATM systems abroad only support four digit PINs (Personal Identification Number); if your PIN has five or more digits, ask your bank to issue you one that only has four. Note that ATM machines in Spain do not have letters on the key pad, so you’ll need a secret number, not a word or series of letters. Another important reminder: even if you can access both your savings and checking account with your ATM card here in the states, you will probably only be able to access your checking account with that same card in Spain.
* ***Wiring money.*** If you find yourself short of money and need another way to receive money from someone in the States, it is possible to wire money to you through a bank or Western Union. Just make sure that the person sending you money knows the exact name of the bank where you want to receive it, and the exact location of the branch where you want to pick it up. Western Union has several locations in the greater Madrid area (including Alcalá), as well as throughout Spain, to which money can be sent. All you need to do is provide them with the name of the student and the name of the country that they are in (Spain). They should be able to pick up the money at any location in Spain 15 minutes after the call to Western Union is placed. The toll-free number for Western Union is 1-800-325-6000.

# Packing

**LUGGAGE.** There are definite and very strict regulations that govern the amount and size of luggage which can be carried on an international flight. The specific number of bags, size, and weight regulations vary by airline, so you should check with your airline as soon as you make your final flight arrangements. Remember to leave some extra space when packing; you will probably pick up a few souvenirs and gifts during your stay.

Make sure your luggage is sturdy and trustworthy. Virtually all students have suggested that soft-sided luggage of some type allows you to pack more within size and weight limits. Make sure that all of your luggage is well labeled and tagged, with your US address and your address in Spain. (Also put your identification inside each bag in case the tag is destroyed.) You may want to add some kind of clear identifying mark to your bags, like brightly colored tape or yarn, to distinguish it quickly from similar bags when you claim your baggage at the airport.

**PACKING SUGGESTIONS.** Above all, **KEEP IT LIGHT!** Not only is your luggage restricted by the airline, but also you will need to carry it yourself. If you're not sure if you can get around the airport with your luggage, pack it all up, strap it on, and go for a half-mile hike. That should give you a hint. Madrid's airport does have free luggage carts available that can be used to wheel luggage around, but it is not a good idea to have more luggage than you can personally handle and keep track of.

The key to packing light is to *select items that can serve more than on*e *purpose.* Plan your wardrobe around a certain basic color, or neutrals, so that you can interchange items for variety. Easy-care clothes are the most desirable; while on excursions you will appreciate clothing that doesn’t need ironing.

The type and amount of clothes that you pack will also depend on when you will be going to Spain. Average temperatures in Madrid range from 47ºF (8ºC) in January to almost 90ºF (32ºC) in July; of course, temperatures are colder at night and may soar to over 100ºF on most summer afternoons. Indoor temperatures during the winter will be lower than we are accustomed to here in the US – Spaniards tend to be more energy-conscious with their indoor heating.

Spaniards are quite fashionable dressers, and their styles run a year or two ahead of the US. They tend to own stylish and a bit more expensive clothing, but fewer clothes or outfits than the typical American. You will find that you really don’t need that much!

The lists on the following pages are only suggestions – feel free to substitute and modify as needed. Just don't bring your whole wardrobe. Really. You’ll make the most efficient use of luggage space by packing fewer items you’re certain you’ll wear.

Temperature averages in Alcalá: <http://us.worldweatheronline.com/alcala-de-henares-weather-> averages/madrid/es.aspx

**\*\*Note:** It is a good idea to make two sets of photocopies of all important items such as: passport, visa, credit cards, student ID cards, ATM cards, social security cards, and anything else that might be lost if you lose your wallet. Leave one set of the photocopies with someone in the States and keep the other packed with you someplace *separate* from the items themselves. That way, in the case of an emergency, you have proof of everything, and access to all the important cancellation numbers, etc.

###### PACKING LIST - WOMEN

One warm winter coat (that’s easily packable and hat, scarf, gloves or mittens)

One all-weather jacket or windbreaker

One dressy jacket (optional)

One or two skirts for fall / spring

2-3 pairs of jeans and 1-2 pairs of pants

One bathing suit and an old beach towel (that you can leave if you need space!)

One pair of shoes for dressy occasions that may be worn year round

2-3 pairs of comfortable shoes, i.e. tennis shoes or walking shoes (for excursions)

3-4 sweaters or sweatshirts, depending on your preference

1-2 dressy shirts (preferably that can be worn year-round)

1 dress for fall / spring

Supply of your choice of feminine hygiene products, makeup, etc.

Hair care items (if electric be sure they’re dual-voltage or bring an adapter)

Socks/tights/leggings

Underwear and bras (enough for a week +)

Slippers (for wearing around the house –all former students say this is a necessity)

Print out some pictures of family/friends to make your room feel more like home

###### Summer students: trim this list down (2-3 pairs of lightweight jeans or khakis, 1-2 dresses or skirts, dressy blouse, 4-5 tops or shirts, 1 sweater/sweatshirt), a couple of T-shirts and 3- 4 pairs of shorts, which are appropriate for class on hot days or for excursions, although you may feel uncomfortable in “short shorts”. You’ll want comfortable sandals for walking. Lightweight dresses or skirts are great for summer as it can get really hot.

###### PACKING LIST - MEN

One warm coat (that easily packable and one pair warm gloves, scarf, winter hat)

One all-weather jacket or windbreaker

One dress jacket (optional)

About three sweaters

3-3 shirts, mostly dress (button-down), a few sport shirts/polos

1 tie (you will need one for some social functions)

3-4 pairs of jeans

1-2 pairs of pants

Underwear for at least a week

Large supply of socks, including some black socks

One pair of comfortable dress shoes

Another pair or two of sturdy, comfortable daily shoes

Slippers (for wearing around the house –all former students say this is a necessity)

Print out some pictures of family/friends to make your room feel more like home

###### Summer students: trim this list down (2-3 pairs of jeans or khakis, 1 pair of dress slacks, one tie, 3-4 shirts, 1 sweater/sweatshirt) a few T-shirts and 3-4 pairs of longer shorts, which are appropriate for summer classes and excursions. Please do not bring cut off jean shorts or cut off sweat pants.

**PACKING LIST - ALL STUDENTS**

Cell phone (before leaving, check with your provider to see if your service works overseas or if you prefer, shut off your service temporarily and purchase a cheap cell phone or International SIM card while in Spain)

Gift for host family (see section in this booklet on housing in Spain) – **and gifts in general**

Sunglasses

Extra pair of glasses, adequate supply of contact solution, and copy of prescription

Small sewing kit

Laptop or tablet and electrical conversion adapter for recharging

All necessary medications (put these in your carry-on bag)

Antacids, diarrhea medicine (in case you need time to adapt to the Mediterranean diet)

Dramamine (recommended if you get motion sickness)

Basic amounts of personal toiletries & cosmetics in plastic containers

Electrical conversion kit or adapter (useful if you bring a blow dryer or travel iron)

Sunscreen, even if you don’t normally burn

Your favorite hair styling products, since some aren’t available in Spain

One compact umbrella

Warm pajamas or sweats for wearing indoors in colder months

Robe and **slippers**

Wash cloths if desired

Money belt or security chain

Passport – **Pack separately and securely**

Credit/debit cards/ ID – **Pack separately and securely**

###### Summer Cluster Students – required textbook (*Mosaicos*)

Extra ear buds

Travel sized bottles for shampoo, toothpaste, etc. (for your excursions and other travel)

Deodorant (they won’t necessarily have your brand in Spain and past students see this as a big deal)

# After Your Arrival

**TIME CHANGE & JET LAG.** Be aware of the time difference between Spain and the US. Spain is on Central European Time, which is almost always six hours ahead of our Eastern Time Zone and nine hours ahead of our Pacific Time Zone. If you call home at **12 noon** from Spain, it will be **6:00 a.m.** in Bowling Green and **3:00 a.m.** on the West Coast. (The only exceptions are a couple of weeks each spring and fall because Europe moves to Daylight Savings Time on a different day than the US.)

This time change will initially affect the body in different ways, *depending on the individual.* You may have very little problem adjusting your "body clock" to your new schedule, or it may take you a little while. Most students report complete adjustment by the end of the first week or so. We try to help you with this adjustment by giving you some time to rest on your arrival day. Many home remedies have been prescribed to ease jet lag, but the only specific suggestions from former students are to avoid caffeine and other sleep-affecting substances during the hours before your flight and your period of adjustment afterwards. Don’t sleep more than 30 to 60 minutes during “siesta” or you’ll take twice as long to adapt to the new time zone. Try to skip siesta the first day; you’ll sleep much better that night.

**LEGAL OBLIGATIONS.** As soon as feasible after your arrival you should register with the US Embassy using the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program: https://spain.cms.getusinfo.com/citizen- services/registration2.html. Registration with the embassy is important in case of emergency and for replacement of lost or stolen passports. The embassy is your source for all legal information and counsel, so take advantage of it – it never hurts to ask. The locations of the US embassy and consulates in Spain are as follows:

###### Embassy in Madrid Embajada de los Estados Unidos c/ Serrano, 75

**28006 MADRID**

**Tlf: 91.587.22.00**

**Fax: 91.587.22.03**

**Website: https://es.usembassy.gov**

Consulate General in Barcelona Consulado General de los Estados Unidos Paseo Reina Elisenda de Montcade, 23 08034 BARCELONA

Tlf: 93.280.22.27

Fax: 93.280.61.75

**RENEWING YOUR STUDENT VISA.** If you will be in Spain for more than 180 days, you will need to visit the local police station in order to renew your temporary student visa, as described earlier. This is a very short and simple process which will be explained to you once you arrive in Spain. Don’t worry, again Susana and Magda will walk you through this process.

**LAWS GOVERNING FOREIGNERS IN SPAIN.** US Citizens are permitted to remain in Spain for up to 90 days under an automatic tourist visa issued when you enter the country. If you wish to stay longer, it is imperative that you obtain a student visa through the consulate prior to entering the country. US Citizens are not permitted to work in Spain without a special work visa.

During your stay in Spain you are subject to Spanish law. However, if you should be arrested while in Spain, you have the right as a US Citizen to contact a diplomatic officer of the nearest US embassy or consulate before you make any statements. ***VERY IMPORTANT:*** For your own sake, *stay away from drugs and people who use them*. Persons arrested for drug offenses are subject to *severe Spanish law* and neither the program nor the embassy can do much to help.

**RESPONSIBILITIES OF PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS.** You are expected to abide by the norms of conduct which have been established by the program to ensure safety and a positive experience for all members of the group. These norms include **arriving on time for group excursions, refraining from drinking alcohol or smoking while traveling on the bus AND making every effort to speak Spanish during your time in Spain, and especially during program activities.**

# Housing in Spain

As you are certainly aware by now, your accommodations in Alcalá de Henares will be with a Spanish host family. When you think of family please remember that the concept of “typical” family is changing both in Spain and in the United States. Some families are nuclear families with two parents and children. Families may also consist of widowed or divorced individuals with children, or maybe an older couple whose children are grown. There are immense benefits to living in a family situation while studying abroad instead of living in a dorm: you truly get a sense of family relationships in the Spanish culture, you become much more involved in the Spanish day-to-day lifestyle, and you are constantly surrounded by the opportunity and necessity of using the language.

But in order to receive these benefits and have a pleasant living experience, you must actually make the effort not only to speak the language with the family but also to fit into their lifestyle and culture. You will need to adjust to new mealtimes, new daily routines, new habits, and new facilities. Sometimes you will find you prefer the Spanish way of doing things; other times you may long for the American ways. But the only way to find out is to give it a try and get involved.

The housing arrangements in Spain are made by a program staff member called the housing coordinator. This person's work has many facets. Before the students arrive, the housing coordinator visits all prospective host families personally at their homes and uses student requests as much as possible to determine roommate and family assignments for the upcoming semester. After the students have been placed with families, the housing coordinator aids them in the transition, makes periodic personal visits to the homes to see that all is going well, and may serve as an intermediary between the student and the host family when one is needed. Therefore, if you ever have any questions, complaints or concerns about your living situation while in Spain, the housing coordinator is the person to see.

**RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES.** The relationship between student and host family is based on mutual respect. To make your stay a pleasant experience, it is important that you give the host family the same respect and consideration that you would your own family. You will probably develop a very close relationship with your new family and will find what was once just a "house" becoming more and more like "home."

Although facilities and situations may vary from family to family, there are certain basic essentials which you can expect to be provided by your host family. At the same time, there are certain fundamental considerations which they must be able to expect from you. You may, therefore, expect at least the following from your host family:

**Normally, you will have your own room or you and one other AYA student will share a room** which affords you sufficient privacy. The room may very likely be smaller than you are accustomed to; the typical Spanish family does not live in a “house” as such, but rather in a “piso” (similar to larger apartments in the US). Use your limited amount of space wisely and keep it clean and neat. The two of you will also have access to a table which will be sufficiently lighted for you to study. **Linens and towels will be provided (washcloths are not provided).**

**You will be provided three meals a day – breakfast, lunch, and dinner.** These meals will be provided at the normal mealtimes of your host family, which tend to be different in Spain than in the US (“el desayuno” – a light breakfast, “la comida” – served about 3:00 p.m. and the main meal of the day, and “la cena” – a moderate meal about 9:00 or 10:00 p.m.). Mealtimes are often important social times in the Spanish culture, so plan to be present. If you must be away at mealtime, give your host mother some notice and she will provide you with a sack lunch. Even if you don't want a sack lunch, you *must* do your family the courtesy of informing them anytime you will be missing a meal.

**You will be provided with your own set of keys for the "piso".** Take special care of these keys – they are extremely expensive to duplicate. Having your own keys is for your convenience, but does not remove the responsibility of informing your family anytime you will be staying out late or all night (try to provide a telephone number for them if possible). The family and program director will be very concerned for your safety and will not hesitate to take action if you are unexpectedly missing. *Please don't bring strangers into the house without permission* and respect the family's values by not bringing home a member of the opposite sex at night.

**You will be allowed one hot shower a day.** Please understand that hot water, like all basic utilities, is very expensive in Spain – do not stay in the shower more than 10 minutes. And please respect the other family members' needs for morning bathroom time!

**You will be allowed at least one load of laundry per week.** Due to the high cost of water and electricity, laundry is not unlimited either, so plan carefully. Keep in mind that most families don’t have clothes dryers; allow time for your clothing to dry and be returned to you.

**You will be allowed use of your hairdryer, iron, and other necessary appliances.** As with water, electricity is very expensive, so be frugal. *And don't forget your converter!* Outlets in Spain are a different shape and carry a different current (220V), so you will need a conversion kit if you bring electrical items from home. We recommend using a battery-powered alarm clock rather than a plug-in model due to the difference in electric current. **Please be advised to unplug all devices when not in use, this includes charging your laptops and cellphones. Electricity is expensive in Spain; be considerate of your host families and unplug devices once they are charged.**

**Discuss with your family the privilege of using the telephone.** Telephone service is also expensive in Spain; even local outgoing calls are billed by the minute (there is no charge for incoming calls). You should *never* call out from the house without permission and absolutely *any* long-distance calls should be made with a calling card or "a cobro revertido" (reversed-charge or collect).

**The families are asked to advise the director in medical emergencies**. The on-site director will visit the doctor with you in the event of illness or accident (if you wish).

**Absolutely no illegal drugs should be brought into the house.** Possession of drugs by foreigners is a very serious matter in Spain.

**The family is only required to provide you room and board during the period indicated on the program calendar.** Before and after that time they receive no money from the AYA program; if you arrive before the start of the program or remain in Spain after the program ends, you will **be responsible for arranging your own lodging.** *This applies to breaks from school as well.* Because most students leave to travel over winter break and spring break, we do not include these break periods in your room/board fee, and so the families do not receive full payment during these periods (they only receive a minimal amount to hold the room for your return). If you would like to stay with your host family during winter or spring break, you should consult with the host family directly and/or the housing coordinator (if you are in Spain) about how much extra you will be charged and whether or not this is a possible option for you. Please note that families are NOT required to agree to provide you housing during these breaks since many of them may travel or have family plans of their own.

**SUGGESTIONS FROM FORMER STUDENTS.** Former students agree that the most important way to ensure a good relationship with your family is also the key to surviving in your new cultural surroundings: respect and consideration. Almost without exception they advise new students: “keep an open mind” and “go into your experience with no assumptions”. Other suggestions of note:

* “Make sure you inform your family right away of any allergies you have.”
* “Don't forget that yawning and stretching at the table or in public is considered rude. You get used to sort of holding it in!”
* “There is a trick to tactfully declining food. Be sure to try at least a little before you turn it away. Otherwise, you have to try to convince them that you're allergic – which only goes so far!”
* “If you don’t like something, be honest, or you’ll end up eating it all the time and pretending you like it.”

One more important note: the program suggests that a good way to get the relationship with your host family off on a good start is to pack a small gift for them. Some good suggestions from former students include:

* Some kind of personal gift showing where you come from, i.e. a distinctive product of your hometown
* Simple homemade items if you like making things (crocheting, knitting, quilting, embroidery, etc.) or check *pinterest* for ideas
* A picture book or calendar with photographs of scenes from around the United States or your hometown
* A set of placemats and napkins
* College memorabilia for “los niños”
* Scented candles or potpourri
* How about a bag of chocolate chips and ingredients for cookies? Brownies and donuts are also very popular. (Make sure you know the conversions from U.S. measurements to metric.)

# Banking in Spain

We have already described the arrangements you will want to make regarding money before you leave for Spain. However, there are some additional differences to be aware of regarding banking in Spain.

First of all, you must plan your banking around banking hours – they tend to be pretty scarce. Banks, like government offices, are normally open from 8:30 or 9:00 a.m. until about 2:00 p.m., and most do not reopen after siesta hour. Moreover, they are only open on weekdays, not on weekends or holidays – or worse yet, on long holiday weekends (“puentes”). Therefore, you will definitely need to do some advance planning so you don't get caught short. Also note that you need to have your **passport** with you anytime you want to change money.

Student suggestions for changing money: make your transactions in a few large chunks instead of many small ones. When you exchange U.S. dollars for euros, there may not be a commission, but when you exchange traveler’s checks, the bank takes a commission of about 4 euros. The larger amount you change, the smaller the percentage of your money you lose. Shop around from bank to bank to receive the lowest commission rate, as well as the best service. We recommend “La Caixa” in the Plaza de Cervantes (center of town). Also, keep an eye on the fluctuation of the exchange rate from day to day and from bank to bank (they will often be posted outside the bank).

**ATM machines are the most convenient way to access funds from your U.S. checking account**. But do keep in mind that you will pay an "out-of-network" fee (check with your bank to determine what this will be). We strongly recommend talking with your bank to let them know that you’ll be living in Spain for a period of time and that you’ll be using your bank card there. If you don’t, it’s possible that they’ll view your Spanish spending as “suspicious activity” and put a hold on your account.

# Transportation in Spain

As you have probably heard by now, public transportation in Europe is far more available than what we are accustomed to here in the Midwest. On the whole, the number of people who own their own automobile is lower than in the States, primarily because there is less need – you can get anywhere you want to go safely, efficiently, and inexpensively by public transport. All you need to do is take the time to learn to use the system, and you’ll learn the basics as part of your orientation once you’ve arrived in Spain. Here's an idea of what's available to you.

**AUTOBUSES** are an inexpensive way to go, especially when you buy multi-trip passes. You may find city buses especially useful for the following occasions:

*In Alcalá.* Some students who would rather not walk to class elect to use the Alcalá city buses to get to class. You may also find these buses useful for getting to the farther reaches of Alcalá.

*Between Alcalá and Madrid.* Costs nearly the same amount as a trip by train, but may be more convenient in some cases. You can take a bus from Madrid to Alcalá during the night (this is useful to know if you are out with friends and miss the last train). Normally about a half hour trip except during rush hours (then you will want to take the train).

*In Madrid.* Anywhere that the Metro won't reach, the autobuses will.

**CERCANÍAS** is the name of the suburban train system that covers the entire province of Madrid, including the Madrid-Alcalá line. A single ticket is 3,30 euros, so you can save money by purchasing the bono and sharing it with a friend. Always make sure you are getting on the train in the right direction: when in Madrid, you want to catch the train with destination Alcalá de Henares or Guadalajara (from Atocha it always leaves from “Vía 3”).

**EL METRO** is the subway system in Madrid, a very thorough system that is also very easy to use. The street-level entrances are always labeled with a big red diamond. Once you enter, you can get anywhere you want to go by picking up a free metro system map at the ticket window or observing the one in the station. Each of the lines of the metro is color-coded and most transfers within the system are free (there’s an extra charge for the line going to the airport). Just figure out which line you need and which direction you need to go – and where you need to transfer if necessary.

**FOR THE FREQUENT TRAVELER** The Madrid-area transportation system also offer a special monthly pass which allows unlimited access to all of the above-mentioned modes of transportation for one single monthly fee – a mere 20 Euros/month gets you access to everything listed above. It is well worth your investment. Dra. Juarez will help you acquire this handy pass once you arrive in Spain. You'll receive more information about this pass, and many other helpful hints about using public transportation once you arrive in Spain. See p. 6 for additional information about the abonotransporte J

# Communications in Spain

Staying in touch with friends and family back in the US is always an important concern of students coming into the AYA program. Be assured that reliable Internet, mail and telephone service does exist in Spain, and contact with the States is readily available (although a little more expensive than you may be accustomed to). You will have access to WiFi at the Escuela Universitaria, at your host family’s home and many cyber-cafes. Students can also receive faxes if necessary.

**CORREOS.** *Sending mail from Spain.* The mail system in Spain is much like our own postal service. The central *Correos* in Alcalá is open weekdays from about 9:00 a.m. until 7:30 p.m.

* To send mail from Spain, you must (of course) use Spanish postage – don't bring postage stamps with you. The current price for letters up to 10 grams and postcards is about 80 céntimos. You can buy stamps at any “estanco” (tobacco store) as well as the post office.
* Make sure you clearly mark your envelope with the words **AIR MAIL / VIA AEREA**. Don't forget to **include the country of destination in your address: USA / EEUU** (abbreviation for *Estados Unidos*).
* Speed of delivery for an airmail letter can vary from one to two weeks, occasionally more (especially during rush seasons like Christmas).
* As in the US, transatlantic package mail is extremely expensive. If you can allow several months, shipboard mail is significantly less than airmail, especially if your package consists entirely of books or printed materials (a discount applies to these).

*Sending mail from the US.* The current US airmail postage rate is $1.10 for up to one ounce.

* Please make sure you understand and correctly write Spanish addresses. A mistake here could cause your letter to be delayed or lost! Please make sure your parents and friends include all necessary information on the envelope. A typical address in Alcalá might be as follows:

Joe/Jane Student

c/ Libreros, 36 - 1º D

28801 Alcalá de Henares (MADRID) SPAIN / ESPAÑA

Explanation: the "c/" is the abbreviation for *calle* (street), so Joe lives on Calle Libreros, in building #36, on the 1st floor, “piso” A. On the next line, the five-digit number is the postal code, which is followed by the name of the city – Alcalá de Henares – and the name of the province – Madrid – in parentheses. And please**, don't forget the name of the country!**

* Once again, allow a week or two for delivery of airmail letters.

###### PLEASE ASK FAMILY/FRIENDS TO AVOID SENDING PACKAGES

the process for accepting packages in Spain has changed, and the Director of the program will

have to sign for any packages received.

We would like to avoid this except in cases of emergency.

**TELÉFONO.** Telephone service in Spain is quite expensive in comparison to US rates. You should be aware that in Spain, every call is charged by the minute, including local calls. Moreover, telephone bills are not itemized. For this reason, the program insists that you never make outgoing calls on your host family's telephone, even for local calls, without their specific consent. You should make any personal calls from a public telephone or your own cell phone. Never use the family's phone for long-distance or overseas calls unless you place them collect or on an international calling card. You may wish to consider using a Spanish pre-paid cell phone so that your family and friends can easily reach you while you are in Spain. You will receive more hints on how to use the telephone once you arrive in Spain.

*Direct calls to the U.S*.

*Calling Spain from the U.S*. Because of the high cost of calls originating in Spain, many students arrange "telephone dates" with their parents – both parties agree ahead of time on a date and time when the student should be at home, and the parents call the student there. Here is how to dial Spain from the States:

first dial **011** to reach the international operator, then dial **34**, the country code for Spain,

then dial **91**, to indicate the Madrid area, then dial the **seven-digit phone number.**

**Example**: to reach Joe Estudiante, whose phone number in Alcalá is 91.888.12.34, Joe's parents would dial **011.34.91.888.12.34.** You may want to check with your long-distance service to see if a special plan is available for discounts on international calls. Sunday calls are often considerably cheaper.

Of course, the easiest way to “call home” is by using Whatsapp, Google Chat, FaceTime, Facebook or Skype. Not only are these easy, and allow you to videoconference with whoever you’re calling, they’re also “free” as long as you have wifi.

*Cell Phones.* If you have a smartphone, you may inquire with your provider (AT&T, Spring, Verizon, etc.) to see what additional charges, if any might apply to using your phone abroad. You might also consider disabling your wireless service to avoid incurring roaming charges – be smart – shut off your data roaming and disable all push notifications. Note, to avoid charges, you may need to deactivate your phone or remove your SIM card. Please check with your cell provider before leaving the states to make sure that you don’t incur additional international roaming fees & charges. You might also consider buying an international SIM card in Spain.

These are inexpensive, and it comes in handy to have some data available to you in order to use your GPS while venturing around Spain/Europe.

**PHONE TIP:** Don't forget the time difference! Spain is on Central European Time, which is six hours ahead of our Eastern Time Zone and nine hours ahead of our Pacific Time Zone (except for a couple of weeks each spring and each fall, because Spain goes on Daylight Savings Time on a different date).

Of course, a much cheaper form of communication now exists via *Facetime*, *Skype* and *Google Chat*, *Whatsapp* and *Viber* so much of the above information on telephones may no longer be as relevant, provided you can teach older friends and family how to “call” via computer/smartphone. While in Spain, you will likely use *Whatsapp* instead of traditional text messaging as these apps allow you to send messages (and pictures) for free. J **Be sure to download WhatsApp prior to departure.**

The AYA Spain website!

***Resources to check out:***

BGSU Education Abroad website

More information (costs, dates, etc) on the program in Spain

Tourist Office of Spain.

Passport/Visa Issues

Consulate General of Spain - Chicago Office

###### <http://www.tourspain.es/>

Go here to find out information about various cities in Spain. Click on “BUSCAR” and then type in the name of the city you wish to look up.

[http://www.renfe.com](http://www.renfe.com/) [http://www.autobusesdealcala.com](http://www.autobusesdealcala.com/) [**http://www.raileurope.com**](http://www.raileurope.com/)[**http://www.busabout.com**](http://www.busabout.com/)

Hop on these sites to find out about the train and bus systems in Europe.

###### <http://www.xe.net/ucc>or just google it

Check out world exchange rates.

###### [http://www.elpais.es](http://www.elpais.es/)

To check out a local newspaper and practice your Spanish.

###### https://[www.uah.es/en/](http://www.uah.es/en/)

This will give you information about the Univ. of Alcalá (although note our program is not housed here, it is the largest campus community in Alcalá)

###### [http://www.nafsa.org](http://www.nafsa.org/)

Check out the “secussa” link.

###### [http://www.tienda.com](http://www.tienda.com/)

Resource for Spanish foods and other imported products; also has a great list of links to sites about culture, history, etc.

###### [http://personal.colby.edu/~bknelson/SLC/index.php](http://personal.colby.edu/%7Ebknelson/SLC/index.php) <http://www.studyspanish.com/tutorial.htm>

Both this site and the previous one are great for Spanish grammar exercises.

###### [http://www.spanishdict.com](http://www.spanishdict.com/) [www.wordreference.com](http://www.wordreference.com/)

The best online dictionary for words, phrases, conjugations and thesaurus help – FREE!

##### *Books: (Alphabetically by Author)*

DK Eyewitness Travel Guide: Spain. 2016.

Ritchie, Vivian. *Travel to Spain: Discover the Top 6 Things to Do in Spain to Make the Most out of Your Trip*. (available for Kindle), 2015.

Williams, Mark R. *The Story of Spain*. Golden Era Books, 2009.

Wright, Todd. *Spain Travel Guide: Activities, Food, Drinks.* 2018.

Also consider: *Rick Steve’s Spain, Fodor’s Spain, Let’s Go Spain, DK Eyewitness Travel Guide, Spain.*

# In Closing

We hope that this short informational booklet has answered some of the most pressing questions that you have had regarding your upcoming experience in Spain, but in the weeks ahead you will probably think of other questions or concerns. That's why our office staff is available to you – to take the time to talk with you and help make the most of your experience abroad. Don’t hesitate to stop by the office or contact us via phone or email with questions.

We're here to help you get ready for one of the most exciting, enjoyable and educational experiences of your life. Thank you for choosing our program – we're looking forward to helping you in any way we can.

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