Bowling Green State University
Academic Program Abroad in Spain

Orientation Booklet 2015-2016

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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Official Documents

PASSPORT. A passport is an identification document issued by the traveler's home country and is required for travel to virtually any country in the world. A US passport issued to a person over 18 years of age is valid for ten years; if issued at a younger age, it is valid for five years. If you do not currently hold a valid US passport, you must obtain one for yourself, and can start right away, following the steps below. Please allow at least 6-8 weeks to obtain a passport.

Very Important: you must have a passport, not a “passport card”, to visit Spain.

(1) Pick up a passport application at your local post office, city hall, courthouse, passport agency (in large cities), or travel agency. Applications may also be downloaded from the passport section of the U.S Department of State website at http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english.html. Please note that you will need to apply for the PASSPORT BOOK and not the Passport Card.

(2) Complete the form.

(3) Submit the completed form to the proper place (ask when you pick it up), along with:
   (a) proof of US citizenship, i.e. certified birth certificate
   (b) picture identification, i.e. driver's license
   (c) two passport-type photos (full-face 2x2 black/white or color, taken within last 6 months)
   (d) check or money order for the current passport fee (currently $140.00)
   (e) cash / check / money order for the processing fee [this is separate from the passport fee—currently $25.00]

(4) Wait - processing may take several weeks. As soon as you receive your passport, sign it as indicated and guard it very carefully wherever you go. Loss or destruction is a serious matter and should be reported immediately to a US passport office, US embassy or US consulate.

(5) Make several copies of your passport to take along with you when you travel to Spain.

VISA. A visa is a document issued by the government of a foreign country which gives the traveler permission to enter that country and travel freely. Spain, like most Western European nations, grants a “tourist” visa, valid for 90 days, to holders of a valid US passport upon entrance to the country. Therefore, AYA students going to Spain for only the summer session need not go through the process of acquiring a “student” visa. However, all students going to Spain for more than 90 days must acquire a “student” visa, following the steps below. Requirements have recently changed and we recommend that you 1) carefully follow all the steps listed below and 2) check the website of the Spanish Consulate (most students use the Chicago office which is at http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Consulados/Chicago/es/Paginas/inicio.aspx) to ensure that requirements haven’t changed.

(1) Obtain a valid US passport (see above).

(2) Request an application for a student visa from your designated consulate of Spain. To find out which one that is, consult the list on the next page (Ohio, for example, falls under the jurisdiction of the Spanish consulate in Chicago). Visit the Consulate of your jurisdiction’s website for the most updated requirements.
(3) Gather all of the visa application requirements and schedule an appointment at the Consulate General of Spain’s office in order to submit your paperwork. The Education Abroad Office will help you review and organize your application packet in advance so you are prepared for your visa appointment.

BGSU’s Education Abroad office and your faculty director will help provide you with all of the information you need about the visa application process. We will also provide you with notarized letters verifying your enrollment in our programs as well as any other information you may need. Please be sure to begin the Visa Application process immediately as it can sometimes take up to 15 weeks.

The temporary student visa is good for up to 180 days; you will renew it once you are in Spain (explained later on in this booklet) if you are staying for the academic year.

Special note to International Students*: You should contact the Spanish Consulate directly for instructions on obtaining your student visa. Our office will provide notarized statements to support your application but the Consulate may have different or additional requirements depending on your country of origin.

*Depending on your country of origin, you may need to apply for a tourist or student visa in order to enter Spain
<table>
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<tr>
<th>JURISDICTION OF CONSULATE</th>
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| 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  
| 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.
Other Arrangements Before Departure

**INSURANCE COVERAGE.** One important item that you should be checking into as soon as possible is your insurance coverage. All program participants will be provided coverage while in Spain through the private Spanish insurance provider SANITAS. This coverage includes office visits at any of the SANITAS clinics in Spain as well as hospital care in the event of accident or illness. It does not include dental coverage, follow-up care for pre-existing conditions, or medicines. You will be asked to fill out a form so that we can add you to our group policy for the time you are in Spain. You will not be billed separately for this coverage; it is paid for by the program. Please note that this coverage is for Spain only. You will not have program-provided insurance while en route from the US to Spain, from Spain to the US or while traveling outside Spain before, during or after the program. It is your responsibility to check with your insurance company to make sure that you have adequate coverage at these times.

**INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ID CARD.** The International Student ID card, available through the Education Abroad Office (216 University Hall), is required for all students participating in a BGSU study abroad program. This card has many benefits for students traveling abroad, including student discounts, a 24 hour Help Line and limited sickness and accident coverage, including emergency medical evacuation if warranted. The cost is approximately $25.00 per calendar year. Please note that these cards are valid for one year from the day you apply.

**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 fax 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.

*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 and how to purchase one, contact your travel agent or Atlas World Travel (see travel section of this booklet).

- **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, contact American Youth Hostels 733 15th Street, NW, Suite 840 Washington, DC 20005 or stop by the Education Abroad Office.

- **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*.

**Study Abroad Preparation Course:** You must complete the on-line study abroad preparation course prior to your departure for Spain. The course is offered through the Education Abroad Office and may be taken for 1 credit hour (though you may also take it without receiving credit). If taken for credit, you will receive a grade of pass/fail. The course is an introduction to culture shock issues and general travel considerations to keep in mind when studying abroad. Please contact the Education Abroad Office for more details: [http://www.bgsu.edu/education-abroad/pre-departure-information.html](http://www.bgsu.edu/education-abroad/pre-departure-information.html) This course is mandatory for all students planning to study in Spain.
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 night life, 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), 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? Consult with your travel agent for an estimate of likely costs of traveling.

Just remember – this is your opportunity to experience all that Alcalá, Madrid, Spain, and Europe have to offer. So 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 travelers' checks, credit cards and ATM 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:

- **Travelers' checks.** Travelers’ checks are less popular now than in the past, although they are more secure than carrying large amounts of cash. Remember that whenever you exchange US dollars or travelers' checks for euros, the bank will charge a commission. Travelers’ checks are NOT accepted by most stores, and fewer banks are accepting them in recent years.

- **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 probably 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. Contact your bank to find out if their ATM system participates in an international network. **Plus** and **Cirrus** are two networks which can be accessed in Spain. 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 one 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 47°F (8°C) in January to almost 90°F (32°C) in July; of course, temperatures are colder at night and may soar to over 100°F 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.

**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 (hat, scarf, gloves or mittens)
___ One all-weather jacket or windbreaker
___ One dressy jacket (optional)
___ One or two skirts for fall / one or two skirts for spring
___ 3-4 pairs of jeans (or 2 pairs of jeans, 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 blouses (preferably that can be worn year round)
___ 1 dress for fall / 1 dress for spring
___ Supply of your choice of feminine hygiene products, makeup, etc.
___ Hair care items (if electric be sure they’re dual-voltage)
___ Socks, tights and/or hose
___ Lingerie (enough for a week +)

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, one pair warm gloves, one scarf
___ One all-weather jacket or windbreaker
___ One dress jacket (optional)
___ About three sweaters
___ 6-8 shirts, mostly dress (button-down / turtleneck), some sport
___ 1 or 2 ties (you will need one for some social functions)
___ 3-4 pairs of jeans
___ 1-2 pairs of dress slacks
___ Good supply of underwear
___ Large supply of socks, including some black socks
___ One pair of comfortable dress shoes
___ Another pair or two of sturdy, comfortable daily shoes

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 while in Spain)
___ Gift for host family (see section in this booklet on housing in Spain)
___ Sunglasses
___ Camera
___ Extra pair of glasses, adequate supply of contact solution, and copy of prescription
___ Small sewing kit
___ Music player and compatible charger
_____ Laptop or tablet and electrical conversion for recharging
___ Alarm clock (battery powered or spring wound, not electric)
___ 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 (Strongly recommended if you get motion sickness)
___ Basic amounts of personal toiletries & cosmetics in plastic containers (not too full)
___ Electrical conversion kit or adaptor (useful if you bring a blow dryer or travel iron)
___ Deodorant / Antiperspirant
___ 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
____ Travelers’ checks – Pack separately and securely
____ Credit, ATM and calling cards / Identification – Pack separately and securely

___ Summer Cluster Students – required textbook (Mosaicos)
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 Traveller Enrollment Program: [https://spain.cms.getusinfo.com/citizen-services/registration2.html](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:  
[http://spanish.madrid.usembassy.gov](http://spanish.madrid.usembassy.gov)

**Consulate General in Barcelona**

Consulado General de los Estados Unidos  
Paseo Reina Elisenda de Montcada, 23  
08034 BARCELONA  
Tlf: 93.280.22.27  
Fax: 93.280.61.75

**RENEWING YOUR STUDENT VISIA.** 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.
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 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 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 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.

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; you are responsible for any medical expenses, for example, medicines which are not provided through SANITAS. The on-site director will visit the doctor with you in the event of illness or accident (if you wish). The AYA program is able to make small loans in the event of a medical emergency, but you must be sure that you have adequate insurance coverage while you are abroad.

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. measures 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.

Note also that at some Spanish banks, you don't normally take care of all of your business at the cashier's window. At most banks, you must first see the appropriate bank officer (to change foreign currency or travelers' checks, look for the sign that says “cambio”), who will take your transaction and then give you a receipt to carry to a cashier's window, where you receive your euros. Never forget 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. A “bono” (10 trips) is currently 9.70 euros.

*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. It is least expensive when you buy a "Bonotren" good for 10 trips (currently about 23 euros). 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 and buy your ticket (save money by buying a 10-trip “bono” for 12.20 euros - a single ticket is 1.50-2 euros), 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. You may find this option to your advantage, and you'll receive more information about this pass, and many other helpful hints about using public transportation, once you arrive in Spain.
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 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.
**TELEFONO.** 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 cards.** To use a calling card for international calls, you must have a calling card which has an international number (appears at the bottom of international AT&T cards, for example). If you're not sure if your calling card can be used from Spain, or want to find out how to get an international card, check with your phone company! Using a calling card from a company such as AT&T, Sprint or MCI may be helpful as calls can be placed from any telephone and you can speak with an English-speaking operator. There are also local calling cards that can be used to call the United States.

**Collect calling** To place a long-distance call collect ("a cobro revertido"), you will need to call the operator, who will direct your call. Be aware, this costs a good deal of money, considerably more than a direct call from the US to Spain.

**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.
**Cell Phones.** Some students find it convenient to purchase or rent cell phones in Spain. They are less expensive there than they are in the States, and many operate on a pre-paid money card system rather than a certain number of minutes per month. One benefit of purchasing a Spanish cell phone is that all incoming calls to that cell phone will be free to you (although the person calling you will incur their normal long-distance charges). If you have a smartphone, you may inquire with your provider (AT&T, Spring, Verizon, etc.) to see what additional chargers, if any might apply to using your phone abroad. You might also consider disabling your wireless service to avoid incurring roaming charges.

**SUPER-IMPORTANT TELEPHONE 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, and texting through 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 and Viber instead of traditional text messaging as these apps allow you to send messages (and pictures) for free. 😊
Resources to check out:

Web Sites:
- http://www.bgsu.edu/arts-and-sciences/romance-and-classical-studies/studies-in-spanish/study-abroad.html The AYA Spain website!
- http://www.travel.state.gov/ These sites provide travel and safety information about Spain and other countries worldwide.
- 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.travelsmith.com Check this out for travel accessories and more!
- http://www.xe.net/ucc Check out world exchange rates.
- http://www.elpais.es To check out a local newspaper and practice your Spanish.
- http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01271a.htm This will give you information about the Univ. of Alcalá.
- http://www.nafsa.org Check out the “secussa” link.
- 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.
Both this site and the previous one are great for Spanish grammar exercises.

http://www.spanishdict.com
www.wordreference.com
The best online dictionary for words, phrases, conjugations and thesaurus help – FREE!

Books: (Alphabetically by Author)


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 e-mail, fax or letter with your 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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