

Purdue University GEARE Guide
Spain
Fall 2017

Nora Schneider
Sam Albert
Matt Cirillo

PURDUE

U N I V E R S I T Y[™]

uc3m | Universidad
Carlos III
de Madrid



GEARE

**Global Engineering Alliance
for Research and Education**

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Introduction

Congratulations! You've been accepted to study abroad in Spain, and most readers will likely be going to Universidad Carlos III de Madrid. Get ready for a semester full of amazing memories and experiences. As a member of GEARE, you'll also be working or conducting research abroad, bringing your total time out of the country to about seven months. While there will be quite a bit of research and preparation involved, our hope is that this guide makes the process easier for you and gives helpful advice to succeed abroad. Most of this guide is aimed for students who will study in Madrid, but some of the content can be applied to all locations of the country. We hope you find this guide useful, but be aware that some of your most memorable moments will be spontaneous and unexpected. ¡Vamos!

Getting Your Visa

Semester Long Visa

The Purdue Study Abroad office should make it very clear for you what you need for your visa application and when you need it - they should even be able to take it all to the Spanish Embassy in Chicago for you. They usually take everything to the Spanish Embassy around October break so make sure you keep that in mind when getting everything organized.

What you will need:

- Completed application form
- Valid passport (the actual thing)
- Certificate of admission to the program (provided by Purdue SA)
- Medical insurance for the stay (provided by Purdue SA)
- Document showing you have sufficient financial means (could be a print out of your Purdue financial aid/scholarships, a printout of your bank account balance, etc.). For 2014 it was 532.51€/month
- Housing in Spain (not necessarily required, see embassy website)

- Passport sized, color photo on white background (the global engineering office will have days where you can go and get these photos taken and printed. They will give you 2 copies.)
- Proof of payment of application fees

Over 180 day Visa

For those studying and working in Spain/Europe, or those studying in Madrid for more than one semester, extra steps must be taken to stay in the Schengen region for over 180 days. You will receive a visa in your passport that is good for 30 days, and within one month of arriving in Spain will need to carry out a few more steps to obtain a student card (Tarjeta de Estudiantes) that shows your residency in Spain (Don't worry! It seems worse than it is!)

Visa Application (Before Arriving)

In addition to the above, normal-visa requirements, you will also need the following:

- Medical certification that you are healthy
 - This will be a physical-form completed by a doctor; can be done at PUSH
- Conviction Information Request Form from any state you've lived in the past 5 years, signed by an apostille
 - Will include Indiana & your home state if you're an out-of-state student.
 - You'll need to do some research on the exact procedure for getting this from your states
 - First step is usually sending fingerprints, which can be taken at and sent from a location near Purdue
 - They'll mail you your criminal record
 - Each criminal record must ALSO be signed by an apostille from the respective state, which essentially makes it official. Again, you'll have to research exact details for your state, but this will usually involved a fee around \$5-10 and will require you to either mail it in with a cover letter or drive to Indianapolis or city from your state and have it signed in person.

Student Card Application (Within 1 month after arriving)

- First things first: find somewhere to live! You need a signed contract with your landlord/rental agency to get proof of residency. (MAKE SURE IT IS A LEGAL CONTRACT)
- Register as a resident with your local town hall
 - Required Documents

- Passport
- Housing contract (signed by you and landlord)
 - If you are in a homestay, and don't already have a contract, just draft one up and have your host parents sign it. They might be able to help with this whole process as well.
- Proof of Appointment (printed)
- Form from website (some people didn't use this, but it can't hurt to bring)
- Creating an Appointment (Appointment = Cita previa!)
 - This website is used to create an appointment
<https://www-s.munimadrid.es/CitaNet/Concertar.do>
 - Tipo de servicio (Type of service)
 - Atención al ciudadano
 - Gestión
 - PADRON
 - Oficina
 - OAC Centro* NOTE: Choose an office close to you, all districts have a separate office
 - This office (OAC Centro) is at [Calle de Atocha, 70, 28012 Madrid, Community of Madrid](#) (Very close to the Anton Martin Metro Stop).
 - Fecha
 - Choose a date that works for you but is relatively soon, this whole process must be done in the first 30 days
 - After filling in all your information, keep the proof of appointment and print it out.
 - ***If you don't have an appointment or can't get one when you need to go, you can go without one, but go right when they open! They won't be too happy about it but you can do it.
- Suggestions
 - Arrive early, the service is based on a ticket, first come first served, system. 30 min before is a good idea.
 - Go to the office the day before to see where it is, the Atocha address can be identified by the name "Línea Madrid" on the door.
 - Some of the agents speak English, but don't count on it
 - You will leave with a form confirming your registration. **DO NOT LOSE THIS FORM**
- Get your Student Card (Tarjeta de Estudiantes)

- Required Documents
 - Proof of Appointment
 - Passport
 - Copy of Passport Info Page
 - Visa
 - Copy of Spanish Visa (*Make sure you have the stamp! AKA you'll need a copy of it *after* entering Spain. Outside of the office there's a machine where you can make copies for less than 1€)
 - Application Form EX-17*
Find it [here](#):
 - Copy of acceptance letter to university in Spain
 - Registration form from Town Hall*
 - See previous instructions
 - Copy of Boarding Pass into Spain (Some people did not need this)
 - Passport Photos (Bring at least 2)
 - Form 790 Code 012*
See following instructions about this form.
- Creating an Appointment
 - This is the website for creating an appointment (cita).
<https://sede.administracionespublicas.gob.es/icpplus/citar>
 - Provincias Disponibles
 - Madrid
 - Tramites Disponibles para la Provincia Seleccionada
 - Expedicion de la tarjeta de identidad de extranjero (huella)
 - Select "Passport" for your Identification
 - Fill out personal information
 - **Note:** It requires a Spanish phone number.
 - Select office:
 - Only Avenida de los Poblanos does online appointments, and since this office is designed specifically for this process I recommend going there.
 - Select an appointment*
NOTE: This website only allows appointments to be made around 5 days in advance.
 - Keep the form that is provided to you proving your appointment and print it out for the appointment itself.

- There are many print shops in Madrid that if you bring a flashdrive will print it off for around 50 cents.
 - Location of Appointment
 - [Av de los Poblados, 51, 28024 Madrid Form 790](#)
 - A short walk from Metro stop Aluche on the Line 5/Renfe stop Aluche on C-5
 - A taxi ride costs around 20€
 - It's a huge, yellow, sketchy-looking building, you'll most likely see many people walking there from the metro stop
 - Form 790 Code 012
 - [Link](#) for instruction to fill out form 790
 - [Link for Form 790 Code 012](#)
 - You will need the IBAN number from your bank account
 - The online version is a new option so none of us used this method
- NOTE: The NIF number at the top is your passport number.
- At the bottom of the form, you must fill out the correct amount for a student registration, (15,45 euros)
- Suggestions
 - Arrive early, there is a line at the police station and the agents will see you so long as your appointment is on the correct day. (aka you can arrive an hour before your appointment)
 - Stand in the line for Huellas (Fingerprints). It's inside the building in the center area.
 - Be organized, only bring what is needed and in a single folder.
 - Make an appointment for late morning so you can complete the 790 requirements in the early morning and complete your appointment in one day.
 - Agents speak some English, but not much.
 - Your card will be ready in about 20-30 days; return with your passport and the form you are given at the end of the appointment.
- DO EARLY. This can be a time consuming process! Be aware of the batch Visa deadline!!

Packing

What TO Bring

- European outlet converters
- Daily contacts
 - If you wear weekly or longer contacts, bringing some daily's can be incredibly helpful for travel as you don't have to carry around contact solution and worry about losing one!
- Mini shampoo/conditioner/soap
 - You can easily buy full sizes when you get to Madrid, and this will get you through the first couple days. Plus you can then refill them and bring them along on your travels
- Good backpack that fits EasyJet/RyanAir carry on size
- Portable phone charger
 - Really helpful for traveling when you don't want to leave your phone out to charge in a hostel
- Plenty of pants
 - Pants > shorts in Europe
- Layers
 - Don't bring anything super-warm, instead rely on layers in the winter so you don't have useless clothes when warm weather rolls around
- Comfortable, clothes toed walking shoes
- Any specific medicine or toiletries you know you need and don't want to worry about hunting down there
- Lots of extra passport sized photos/copies of your passport/copies of your visa!
 - You'll need at least one for your metro pass, and very likely will need more for other things

What NOT to Bring

- Notebooks/general school supplies
 - Can be bought for cheap in Madrid at Chinos
- Rainboots/umbrella
 - A cheap umbrella can be bought when it does. A raincoat, however, could come in handy for some traveling
- Power converter
 - Debatable, but I never used mine (my laptop charger had it built in) and it's actually kind of heavy
- Books on Madrid

- The internet has everything now, and more up-to-date
- A completely full suitcase
 - You WILL buy things
- A lot of clothes
 - Rebajas - big biannual sales in Spain - are going on right when you get there in January. You will want to take advantage of the cheap, European style clothes!
- Anything you would absolutely hate to lose
 - Bring everything at your own risk. Especially with traveling, packing and unpacking your things in dozens of random places, items are easily lost, stolen and broken.

Banking/Credit Cards

There are a lot of options when it comes to banking. Since I was going to be in Spain for my internship as well, I decided to open a bank account since I would eventually be getting a paycheck. I opened my account with Santander at UC3M campus. It took a while for them to get my account set up and it was a hassle to close the account from a different location at the end of the summer. However, Santander will have locations and ATMs all over Spain and territories of Spain, which was really convenient. I know people who had good luck with Sabadell bank and had Citylife Madrid help them out. If you choose to open a Spanish account, you can do a cash deposit or wire transfer. Make sure you look into all the fees involved before making a decision! Ask your current bank about foreign fees and transactions because it might not be too bad to stick with your American account.

In fact, there are some American banks that have a partnership with European banks. This can eliminate some transaction fees for ATMS (check the first link below). For example, using a Bank of America card with a Deutsche Bank ATM means that you don't have to pay a \$5 transaction fee. However, you still have to pay the 3% transaction fee.

As for using a credit card, one suggestion is the Chase Sapphire card, which has no foreign transaction fees.

Here are some links if you are interested in getting a credit card that is convenient for someone going abroad.

<http://www.nomadicmatt.com/travel-blogs/avoid-paying-bank-fees-traveling/>

<http://www.nomadicmatt.com/travel-tips/picking-a-travel-credit-card/>

<http://www.nerdwallet.com/blog/top-credit-cards/nerdwallets-best-travel-credit-cards/>

Getting to Madrid

A little planning ahead can make your first day in Madrid a lot less stressful, and also save you some money. Below are a few tips on how to get from the U.S. to your hostel, apartment, or homestay in Madrid:

- Purchasing flights:
 - Use sites like the ones below to find the cheapest airfare from any city in the U.S. to Madrid (the airport is “Adolfo Suárez Madrid–Barajas Airport” or MAD)
 - <https://www.skyscanner.com/>
 - <https://www.momondo.com/>
 - <https://www.kayak.com/>
 - You can set price alerts on the site above to get notified when prices rise or fall for any given trip. Use this to know when to buy.
 - Generally, I suggest buying flights about 2 months ahead of time. Buy sooner if you want extra assurance, but it may be a little more expensive further ahead of time. Watch out for deals as well.
- The Madrid airport itself is self-explanatory and you shouldn’t have any issues
- Getting from the terminal to the city center:
 - The metro is the best way to get around Madrid in general, and this is no exception. You can take the line 8 from the airport to Nuevos Ministerios, and connect there to get wherever you need to go.
 - You can buy a “tourist pass” for the metro directly at the airport, and I highly recommend getting a pass for 5 days or so. This will give you time to get the student card, and it’ll be a lot cheaper than buying individual metro passes
 - You could also take a taxi, which I believe is a 30 EUR flat rate to anywhere in the city center. That’s pricy, but if it’s late or you’re just tired, it’s the easiest option for sure.
 - Check this out for more info: <http://www.gowithoh.com/us/guide-madrid/airport-transport/>

Housing

Apartment

The most common housing option is definitely getting an apartment in the city center. Living in an apartment in the city gives you a lot of freedom to come and go as you please and makes going pretty hassle free. There are a lot of apartments available, but you have to be diligent because there are a lot of students looking for places to stay around this time. The one you have your eye on before you leave could be taken by the time you get there, but don’t give up! Prices can range anywhere from 350 euros to 650 euros per month depending on location, size,

and quality. It's probably a good idea to familiarize yourself with the different neighborhoods so you have an idea of where you want to look before you get there (see below). When looking at apartments online, it's important to keep in mind that photos can be deceiving so it's probably best if you go see the apartment before you commit to anything.

You will most likely communicate with landlords and rental companies through Whatsapp so make sure you have that set up. The websites often have an email option, but calling/texting via Whatsapp will get you the best results. Yes, phone calls will be a little scary if you aren't super confident in your Spanish skills, but do it anyway! The most common apartment website is idealista, but there are other options as well:

- www.idealista.com
- www.helpmadrid.com
- www.madrideas.com

Another thing to keep in mind is that when you go to class, you will be going south of Madrid, so if you choose to live in one of the northern neighborhoods, your commute will be a bit longer.



Opera: Nicer area right by Palacio Real, will most likely be more expensive

Sol: Known as the official “center” of the city, full of life but also tourists

La Latina: Hip and younger neighborhood

Malasana: Known as hipster neighborhood; lots of charming cafes, restaurants, vintage shops, and bars; great nightlife and smaller feel within Madrid (devoid of busy streets)

Chueca: Known as gay neighborhood; also a lot of nightlife, restaurants, etc.

Salamanca: Nicer neighborhood around the park, might be more expensive

Moncloa: Farther away from center, but right by the big university in Madrid so it’s full of students and student nightlife

Las Letras/Huertas: Known for a ton of bars and restaurants

Lavapiés: Ethnic area in Madrid, cheaper for living as it’s not as nice and farther away, but best area for ethnic food

Homestay

Living with a host family is another great option for living abroad. I had the chance to live in an apartment and a homestay while abroad, and while both have their pros and cons, I’m very happy I got the chance to live in a homestay. You will most likely pay a monthly rent that will include an agreed upon number of meals per week. I think mine technically included 2 meals per day, but they were always willing to feed us if we were home. My family lived in Leganes, so the commute to class was easy, but it’s more difficult to go out late in Madrid.

The main benefits include getting to fully immerse yourself in Spanish culture and see what a Spanish family is like. They will also be a great resource if you ever need advice or a reliable source about something. My host family completely welcomed us as part of the family while we were there; we joined in at their family events, went to football games, went out to dinner, and talked all the time! It’s also likely that you’ll end up spending a lot of time with Purdue students

which will make it harder to get into the habit of speaking Spanish so living with a host family is great way to force yourself to practice your Spanish.

You also have the option to stay with a host family for a few weeks while you look for an apartment which can be helpful since you will have a lot of questions in the beginning. There is always a risk of ending up with a family that is not very welcoming, but chances are, they will be fine, and it could potentially turn into a great relationship. The people I know who did a homestay were all generally pleased with their arrangements.

Some homestays are set up directly with the host family, which gives you a lot of freedom in crafting your arrangement, but is slightly more risky. On the other hand, you could pay for a service to match you with a host family; I don't personally know anyone who's done that in Madrid. Below are some good websites to help you find a homestay with either setup:

- <https://www.homestay.com>
- <https://www.goabroad.com/providers/cultural-homestay-international/programs/explore-spain-while-living-with-a-host-family!-125548>
- <http://madridhomestay.com/english/>
- <https://homestayfinder.com/searchhost.aspx?country=ES#.Wc8XiWiPLZu>
 - I know this website looks awful, but it's actually how I found my homestay, and I had an amazing experience!
- <http://www.venamicasa.com/spain-homestay/homestay-in-madrid/>

UC3M does have student housing, but I don't know any Purdue students who took advantage of that.

The First Week

The time between arriving and the start of classes will be very enjoyable because your only real responsibilities, besides perhaps apartment hunting, is to have fun and get to know the city. However, there are a few important things to take care of that will be discussed here.

The first major cultural differences you may notice involve the schedule of meals and sleep. A Spanish day can generally be thought of as shifted a few hours later than the average American day. For example, the earliest classes at UC3M begin at 9:00 AM. This is when most businesses will open as well, and breakfast will typically be very light. Around 11:00 AM, another small meal may occur. Both of these early meals will be small and usually sweet. A much larger lunch will occur around 3:00 PM and dinner will be about 9:00 PM or later. These times can be difficult to adjust to at first, so it is recommended to buy a few snacks from a local grocery store to help hold you over. Don't worry though, because the new schedule will feel very normal within about two weeks.

Madrid is a great city to explore because of its excellent transportation system, extensive history, and long list of things to do. In our first week, we used a company called **Sandemans**

New Europe Tours. Register online for their free walking tour and meet the tour guide in Plaza Mayor. It runs about three hours with a quick break for lunch. Our tour guides were very nice and energetic, and it was a good introduction to Madrid. They also have free tours in many other European cities, but your limited weekend time is probably better spent exploring on your own. Another highlight of the first week was visiting the **Prado museum**. Madrid is an excellent city for art enthusiasts, as there are plenty of museums. The only other advice for exploring Madrid is to pick a new neighborhood everyday and start walking. Remember that the metro is never far and can connect you to any area.

Many people will be interested to know how to handle their phone and data plan while abroad. Fortunately, the process is not too difficult. Most study abroad students would recommend buying a Spanish **SIM card**. This process involves going to a local store, signing up for a plan, and switching the SIM cards in your phone. The two biggest carriers are **Orange** and **Vodafone**, and they have locations all over the city, including Sol, the city center. Using this method will change your phone number to a Spanish number, so make sure to tell your friends and family ahead of time. Be aware that the employees in these stores will likely speak very little English, so it is recommended to bring a friend, roommate, or host family member to the initial meeting to help translate if you're not confident in your level of Spanish. For a basic plan, it typically costs 20€ per month for 2GB of data. You should also download **WhatsApp** because it is the messaging app of choice in Spain and most of Europe. Locals will be confused if you try to use iMessage or an Android messaging app.

Note that some U.S. carriers will require you to “unlock” your phone before a new SIM card can be used. This involves calling your service provider and unfortunately completely paying off your phone. After the phone is paid off, it may take up to three business days to process. You may want to look into this issue before leaving for Spain.

One of the most underrated processes to acclimate to Madrid for the semester is getting your **Abono**. An Abono is simply what Madrid calls the card that allows you to ride all public transportation. Technically, it will be an Abono Joven because we're under 26 years old. The cost will be 20€ per month, which will allow unlimited access to both the trains and metro system. [See the Transportation section](#) for more details about acquiring your Abono.

Shortly before classes begin, UC3M will have an orientation for all incoming international students. The Leganes and Getafe campuses have different orientation days. Ours was on Monday, with classes starting that Wednesday. The day will be a nice introduction to campus and you'll meet your buddy if you signed up for the **UC3M Buddy Program**. You can also take this time to sign up for ESN, **Erasmus Student Network**. It offers cool trips and other activities in Madrid every day of the week. However, the location to register is on the Getafe campus, which can be around a 20 minute metro ride with a 10 minute walk from Leganes.

On Tuesday, the next day, course registration will open at 9:00 AM. Some of us found it to be a hectic experience because Spanish students are allowed to register earlier and many classes will be close to full. The way classes are offered at UC3M also does not allow for easy schedule

changes. Oftentimes, you have to decide on a specified group/section and register for those classes. Taking a class in another section will often create scheduling conflicts. In addition, while Purdue offers most classes in both the fall and spring, UC3M only offers its classes during one or the other. The link below can explain the process further:

<https://www.uc3m.es/ss/Satellite/UC3MInstitucional/en/TextoMixta/1371220467391/>

As for class supplies, don't bring anything from home, except for perhaps a calculator. You can buy a couple binders, paper, and pens at a local store very cheaply. We also did not have to buy textbooks for our classes, which was a nice way to save some money.

Transportation

Madrid has a FANTASTIC public transportation system that you will definitely take advantage of! To get a student abono pass will cost 20€/month and will be able to get you onto all of the metros, Cercanias, and buses.

- The metro is the train system that will run throughout city center
- Cercanias is a commuter train that you will take to get to classes in Leganes/Getafe.
- Renfe/Ave are the trains you can take to other cities throughout Spain which is not covered by your abono but prices are reasonable.
- Taxis will be running at all hours with reasonable fees. There is a 30€ flatrate to and from the airport.

Getting an Abono

The easiest way to get your abono is to make an appointment at an office in one of the train stations. Make sure you select a pass for someone under 26 so you get the student price. You will need to bring a copy/actual passport to the appointment along with around 5 euros to get one initially. They will probably take a picture of you there for the card.

Use this [link](#) to make an appointment. Select the first option and then the option for 7 to 25 years old. After entering your passport number, you can choose to finish the process online or make an office visit. If you select the online option, you'll receive your Abono in the mail within 20 days. The recommended method is to select "Pedir cita previa" and choose which location to visit. The employees won't speak English very well and there will probably be a wait, but there is a separate line for people who make an appointment online and you'll receive your Abono immediately. Make sure to bring your passport. To activate or recharge your Abono, use one of the machines located at the entrances of all metro stations. Once you have your Abono, it is also recommended to make a trip down to Leganes and visit campus in order to familiarize yourself with the process of getting there. See directly below for more details.

Getting to Campus

If you are living in city center and commuting to Leganes/Getafe you will need to utilize the metro and Cercanias.

The Cercanias lines you will need to get to class will be the C5 (to Leganes) or the C4 (to Getafe). Both the C4 and C5 leave from Atocha so you can take the metro to Atocha and get the Cercanias from there. The C4 also leaves from Sol if that works for you. Here is a [link](#) to the Cercanias map and [link](#) to the metro map.

Shopping

Grocery shopping will be a fun experience in the beginning, and you should be able to manage with minimal Spanish skills

Recommended Grocery Stores

- Mercadona: favorite store of Madrilenos, a bit farther of a trek from the city center but is cheap and great quality
- Dia: very cheap, common throughout Madrid, usually pretty messy
- Carrefour: a bit nicer than Dia but also common throughout Madrid
- El Corte Ingles: very nice supermarket in the basement of the main building, but also more expensive
- Local mercados: Throughout the city there are neighborhood markets with various food sellers inside. Some are very fancy with actual foodstands/restaurants, like Mercado de San Anton, while others are strictly for grocery shopping, like Mercado de los Mostenses by Plaza de Espana
- Your local fruteria: see if there are any small produce stores near you (like the cute one on Calle Noviciado). The owners are often very friendly with recommendations of what's best and will try to learn your name!
- Alimentacion: these don't have official names and are sporadic throughout the city, recognized just by the "Alimentacion" or "Frutos Secos" signs. Good for dry-goods you need quickly and alcohol. Not recommended to buy produce there.

Attire and Clothes Shopping

You may hear many things about European style before going, such as to NEVER wear shorts, to invest in scarves, to never wear gym clothes out, etc. While many times there is truth to them, you should also keep in mind the Madrid is a big metropolitan city with many international residents, especially students. Therefore you'll see all kinds of dress on the street and shouldn't

feel like you'll get weird looks out in anything in particular (to an extent). However, here are some sweeping generalizations:

- Students dress nicely for class. You will most likely never see a guy in basketball shorts and a T-shirt or a girl in short shorts at UC3M. Girls don't necessarily wear heels, but they're put together in jeans and a sweater at least.
- People don't wear workout clothes around. Go ahead and do it, but you will notice you're the only one in running shoes, shorts and T-shirt on the metro.
- Madrilenos are not used to the same cold you are coming from Indiana, and will therefore wear heavy winter jackets even in April.
- If you plan on going out to clubs, be prepared with nice clothes. While bouncers can't tell you outright that you're not allowed in, they can tell you a much higher price based off what you are wearing. Most girls wear heels going out and guys wear pants (no shorts) and button downs.
- Try to keep the USA gear to a minimum (although you will be amused when you see students and Madrilenos with the random "Cleveland" shirt)

Prices on clothes will be generally cheaper than in the US so you might be tempted to do a lot of shopping but keep in mind you need to get everything back home! Here are some popular stores:

Clothes

- Zara
- Primark
- Bershka
- H&M
- Pull & Bear

American Things

- Taste of America
- Happy Day Bakery

Pretty much anything else

- Corte Ingles (Huge Department Store/Grocery Store that tends to be pricier)

Classes at UC3M

As far as which classes to take for credit at Purdue, this varies a lot by department. You'll have help through GEARE, the Study Abroad office, and hopefully your academic advisor, but also

feel free to reach out to us or other past students for advice on which courses to take. We would be particularly helpful for AAE, IE, or ME students, but we can do our best to help with anyone!

That said, I'll try to include some general advice on classes at UC3M below:

Course structure:

- Most classes at UC3M run two hours long twice a week, so prepare yourself to sit in lecture for a while with a 5-10 minute break.
- Generally speaking, classes in Spain have few to no required assignments. This is nice because it frees up a lot of time you'd normally spend on homework, but **be careful!** The Spanish students are used to this system and study a lot on their own time in order to pass the exams. If you expect to pass the exams just from lecture and the required assignments, you will probably fail.
- If there are recommended assignments, you should do them. Or at least some of them.
- Often the final exam counts for at least 40% of the final course grade, so finals can be pretty high-pressure. Try to at least take good notes and do a few exercises during the semester, and be prepared to not travel much during May.

Attire

Spanish students tend to dress a little nicer for class than in the U.S., but the difference is small. If you want to fit in, avoid wearing gym clothes or sweatpants to class, but there's no need to dress up. Put on a T-shirt and jeans and you'll be fine.

Getting to know local students

This is something Purdue students have typically struggled with, for two main reasons: 1) the locals already have their own friend groups established, and 2) there are so many Purdue students at UC3M it's easy to just stick together. However, making friends with Spanish students is a big part of the study abroad experience, so get out of your comfort zone! The people I know who were most successful at making Spanish friends did these things:

- Find a sports team or club to join and go all-in
 - More on this below...
- Ditch the other Purdue students. No need to be rude - just focus on time meeting new people

This can be genuinely hard - it feels like freshman year again, except everyone else is already an upperclassman. But, tough it out - once you make a few connections, the Spanish students are nice, welcoming, and will be a great part of your experience.

Student Organizations at UC3M

One unfortunate thing about UC3M is it's nothing like Purdue in terms of the number of active student organizations or sports teams. I personally called or emailed a lot of clubs upon arriving, and most never responded. My best advice is to go by word of mouth to find groups that are

active (the women's rugby team, for example) and also be willing to try new things in order to get involved.

Food and Drink

Once you arrive in Spain, your daily schedule for meals will change and it will take some time to adjust. As briefly mentioned earlier, you'll probably have something light and sweet throughout the morning. Lunch doesn't start until at least around 2:00 PM, and I found it very common to eat at 3:00 or 3:30 PM with my host family. This meal will be quite large though and it is here that the relaxed culture of Spain shines. Spaniards don't like to rush this meal and will be interested in having a good conversation. Dinner occurs at 9:00 PM or later and is usually lighter than lunch but still large enough to satisfy most people.

A few notes:

- Spaniards love their sweets. I think there are more bakeries in Madrid per square mile than anywhere else, but I can't confirm that. With so many cheap places to get beer and dessert, many people will love the food culture of Madrid.
- In the U.S., the bartender needs to know what brand of beer you want, and there are often many choices. In Spain, there are really only four or so well-known brands of beer. Whenever you order one, you simply ask for a 'cerveza' and it will typically be a light beer. However, the one thing you can change is the size of the glass. Common sizes, from smallest to largest, include a caña, doble, pinta, and jarra.
- In Spain (and most of Europe) servers do not receive many tips because they receive larger wages and a service charge is included in the bill. Don't feel that you have to tip, but if you receive good service, then leaving a little extra change will be appreciated.
- Servers in Spain will not be checking in with you frequently. If you're in a rush to get the check, take some extra time into account to wave him/her down and wait for the slightly slower service.
- When eating out with friends, try to bring enough cash and ask for one check for whole table. It will be a much faster and easier process if everyone contributes their portion of the check and tip in cash.

Popular Spanish meals and drinks:

- Tapas
 - This famous Spanish dining custom is very enjoyable. Typically the rule of thumb is to order as many dishes as there are people. By passing around each dish, it's a great way to try new food without committing to an entire meal.
- Tortilla de patata
 - Also known as a Spanish omelette, it is a thick tortilla made with eggs, potato, and onion. Very common for breakfast but can be eaten at any time of the day.

- Croquetas
 - Small breadcrumbed balls with a soft center of potato, meat, and cheese, among other things.
- Sangria
 - Well-associated with Spanish culture. Sugar, fruit, and usually some brandy are added to wine.
- Tinto de verano
 - Simply half-wine, half-lemonade, but it can also use soda or other carbonated drinks.
- Jamón
 - Ham is the most popular type of meat in Spain. Jamón Iberico has a distinct look and you will eat a lot of it. You will also see many stores that sell the whole leg of the pig, and many Spanish households will display these in the kitchen until needed.
- Bocadillo de calamares
 - Despite being in the center of the country, Madrid makes excellent sandwiches with fried calamari. It's often a quick, cheap, filling lunch.
- Paella
 - No doubt better and more famous along the coast, it's a large pan of rice mixed with ingredients like chicken, seafood, and vegetables, depending on the specific dish. Oftentimes, the serving size is large enough that at least two people need to order the same paella dish. It is definitely recommended to try in Valencia or Barcelona.
- Chocolate con churros
 - You may be accustomed to churros in the U.S. that have Mexican roots. The biggest difference in Spain is that the churros don't have cinnamon on them. They are covered with powdered sugar and served alongside a cup of chocolate. This chocolate is melted such that it is very thick and viscous. The cup of chocolate can also be consumed like a drink.
- Porras
 - Essentially thicker churros for those who like more sugar and dough.
- Patatas bravas
 - Fried pieces of potato that are served with a tomato or aioli sauce.

Recommendations:

- Chocolateria San Gines
 - The most famous place in Madrid for chocolate and churros. It's open 24 hours and has a pretty central location.
- 100 Montaditos
 - This is the Spanish equivalent of McDonald's, with many locations around the city. They offer 100 sandwiches for around 1-2€ each, but they are very small, so be prepared to order at least three. This is also a great location to grab a jarra of beer with friends, and they have two days per week when each item on the menu is 1€, including drinks.
- El Tigre

- Will be very busy on weekends, but recommended to try at least once. Customers pay 5€ for a jarra of beer or sangria and receive a large plate of tapas with their drink. Great for large groups because there will be plenty of food but it's usually loud and finding space may be tough.
- NAP Pizza
 - Located in Lavapiés, this small corner restaurant serves delicious authentic Neapolitan pizza.
- Takos
 - Excellent tacos but so popular that the line will be long, so get there a few minutes before open or close in the afternoon. Located near Plaza Mayor.
- Restaurante Botín
 - The oldest continuously operating restaurant in the world, founded in 1725. Can be expensive but possibly worth checking out.
- Restaurante Ojala
 - The biggest draw here is that the basement is a lounge area with the floor being made of sand.
- Museo del Jamón
 - Has multiple locations with each one doubling as a shop for plenty of ham. Bars with steel countertops and a menu that includes many different bocadillos are a staple. Some locations have standing-room only while others make use of tables and servers.
- Plaza Mayor
 - Many different restaurants are located here, with nearly all of them being guaranteed to be touristy and serve below-quality food. However, eating or getting drinks here once may be nice to sit and take in the activity of the plaza.

Bars and Madrid Nightlife

Lucky for you, Madrid is a city with a thriving nightlife! There is no way I can cover all of it here - and even if I could, discovering cool new places can be half the fun. I'll try to give a few general recommendations and then list some fun bars and clubs.

Nightlife Schedule

In Madrid, the entire schedule of life is basically shifted back by a couple of hours ([actually there are some interesting historical reasons for this](#). Spoiler Alert: it's because of the Nazis.). I typically ate dinner with my host family at 10pm, for example. So, it shouldn't be a surprise that this applies to nightlife as well. Do not show up to a bar at 9pm expecting a party - I would not plan on arriving until after 11pm at least. With clubs, I would never show up before midnight, and it'll probably get good around 2-3am (although sometimes arriving early means cheaper cover!). They don't just start late in Madrid - they end late, too. It's fairly common to party until the Metro opens up again at 6am.

Recommendations:

I like using [articles like this one](#) to find new places to go out. This is also something you can do to find fun bars or clubs in new cities you visit.

- Teatro Kapital
 - Let's get this one out of the way first. Madrid's 7-story club, this is definitely somewhere you want to go while in Madrid...once. Personally, that was enough for me, but you can decide for yourself. It's a lot of fun, but be sure to check out some of the smaller clubs on here as well!
- Space Monkey
- Joy Eslava
- Madklyn
- El Rincon
- Tupper Ware
- La Via Lactea
- Risuena
- Fabrica Maravillas

Fun Things to Do and See in Madrid

While living in Madrid, you'll be close to so many fun things to do. This list should get you started and hits most of the highlights.

- Tour the Royal Palace and Almudena Cathedral
- Explore Parque Retiro and take a boat out on the lake
- Go to Mercado San Miguel
- Visit Parque de Oeste and the Temple de Debod
- Check out El Rastro market on Sunday
- Take a ride in the Teleferico cable car
- Visit a few of the many famous museums in Madrid, including El Prado
- See a bullfight (might be too graphic for some)
- Stay out until the sunrise (see previous Bars and Madrid Nightlife section)
- Walk along Gran Vía and see the Plaza de Cibeles
- Go to the opera at Teatro Real
- See a flamenco show
- Eat at Restaurante Botin (the oldest restaurant in the world)
- Go to see a football game
- Explore Casa de Campo and the Madrid Zoo
- Walk along the Madrid Rio park
- See a concert while a band is on their European tour
- Go skiing at Valdesquí

Travel

While most of you don't need to be convinced, traveling outside of Madrid will be one of the most rewarding experiences of your time abroad. It is highly recommended to travel both within Spain and the rest of Europe. Take advantage of budget airlines and weekends with nothing to do for classes. There is so much to see, but we've summarized everywhere that we were able to visit while living in Madrid.

Day Trips

- Segovia

The main attraction here is the Roman aqueduct, which is pretty cool to see in person. There is also a very nice alcazar and cathedral that are worth your time. Segovia is a great day trip because the town is small enough to walk across in 20 minutes and has so much history and great architecture. We traveled there early in the semester with ESN, and it was about an hour and a half bus ride.

- Toledo

Toledo is more famous than Segovia because it is much larger and was once the capital of Spain. Toledo has an enormous alcazar that has been transformed into a military museum, in addition to a grand cathedral (there's sort of a pattern with alcazars and cathedrals in Spain). It will take about an hour to get here by bus and will provide a very enjoyable day of exploring.

- El Escorial

This location is actually connected to Madrid by the train system. Simply use line C-3 or C-8 to get there in about an hour. The train station drops you off in the town, called San Lorenzo de El Escorial, and requires 20 minutes or so of walking uphill to get to the monastery, known as El Escorial. The place is quite large and you can spend a lot of time there, especially if you want to see every piece of artwork on display. Nevertheless, this former residence of the king has a beautiful basilica, courtyard, and gardens.

- Aranjuez

This is actually where the royal family of Spain lives. It has a beautiful residence, bullring, and gardens. It can be reached with Cercanias line C-3.

Spain

- Barcelona

Barcelona seemed like the most glamorous city I visited in Spain, and was pretty pricey, but worth it! You have to go to the Sagrada Familia which is a basilica designed by Gaudi that has been under construction for 100 years and is absolutely breathtaking! Park Guell is also

designed by Gaudi and is a nice relaxing thing to do for an hour. Las Ramblas is the main strip of shops and restaurants where you will find tons of people. I got around just by walking and didn't have a problem so you shouldn't need to worry about figuring out public transportation too much. Plus, there are cabs everywhere.

- Valencia

Valencia is a beautiful city and very worth visiting. In particular, there is [a festival in March called Las Fallas](#) which is really incredible and unique. I know that for me and a lot of students Las Fallas was the highlight of our trips within Spain - I highly recommend going! If you want the full Valencia experience, you'll have to stay a few days after the festival as well, since it really takes over the city while it's going on.

- Alicante

I lived in Alicante for the whole summer doing an internship. Alicante is a huge tourist destination so think of it as the Miami of Europe. Alicante and San Juan have amazing beaches on the Mediterranean Sea and beautiful views! People in Alicante love to party! During the off season there's not a lot going on, but when it gets warmer there will be no shortage of things to do. It's a great place to go if you're interested in a relaxing beach vacation.

- Granada

Granada is one of the most popular destinations in Andalucia, and for good reason. There is a lot to enjoy in Granada, such as enjoying true Tapas culture, but by far the biggest attraction is La Alhambra. Do not leave Granada without touring Alhambra, and I'd say it's one of the must-see things in all of Spain. **Important:** you'll need to book your passes well in advance of your visit, so I'd make this one of the first trips you plan. You should be able to [book tickets fairly easily online](#); you can also get a [Granada Card](#) which includes the Alhambra tour among other things. You should also explore the Albayzín neighborhood during the day if you can. Making it to the Mirador de San Nicolas viewpoint gives you an incredible view of La Alhambra.

- Sevilla

I would definitely recommend making it to Sevilla if you can. It has a very traditional feel to it, as there is hardly any modern architecture and many places stick to siesta more strictly than in Madrid. Additionally, I highly suggest going during late April/early May when the festival Feria de Abril occurs. This celebration lasts for a week and includes men riding horses in the street, women in flamenco dresses, and hundreds of tents on the fairgrounds called casetas. These tents are private, but if you can quickly befriend a local, he/she can get you inside without a problem. Be sure to also see the incredible sights of the Plaza de España and Royal Alcázar.

- Córdoba

Most people will say that this was a great place to see, but only spent less than half a day there. Indeed, you most likely need around six hours here. Córdoba is relatively small with a few great attractions. It is also located along the major Renfe line that runs between Madrid and Sevilla, making it a perfect stop between connecting trains. Highlights include the Roman bridge and the Mosque-Cathedral. These two sights are stunning, especially the hundreds of arches inside the

Mosque-Cathedral, which has a tower that can be used for a great view. Be aware that the train station is at least a 20-30 minute walk from the center of town.

- Cádiz

In February, Cadiz celebrates carnaval, and the entire city turns into a giant party! Everyone will be wearing costumes that may be political, funny, and over the top. Almost everyone participates in a group costume so I would suggest getting together with some friends and coming up with a costume idea. At the end of the festival, there are musical performances, dancing, and fireworks throughout the city. Also, this festival is a huge deal and it's very crowded so if you are thinking of going, book lodging ASAP. Another option is to go with CityLife Madrid, which we found very enjoyable.

- Tenerife

Tenerife is part of the Canary Islands and is technically part of Spain so your phone/banking should all be fine there. You can stay on the north or south side of the island; the north is more of the locals and the south is more touristy so take your pick. One of the main attractions was hiking Mt. Teide which is a volcano that's about 11,000-12,000 ft tall! It took us around 5-6 hours to hike all the way up and then we took a cable car down (you can take the cable car up, but what's the fun in that?). It was not an extremely difficult hike, but the elevation can make it more difficult. It will be very cold at the top so pack jackets, hats, gloves, etc. for when you get up there. Other than Teide, there are lots of beautiful beaches (with black sand so bring shoes to the beach). There are also some natural pools along the coasts, but they can be dangerous so be careful! We also rented a car while we were there which obviously made traveling a lot easier and it wasn't terribly expensive if you're splitting between several people.

- Basque Country

I would say the Basque Country is the most beautiful scenery Spain has to offer. It's in the mountains, and everything is green and gorgeous. The Basque people take A LOT of pride in their food, and I can confirm it is worth a trip to try. I visited Bilbao and San Sebastian which were both great cities. Bilbao is home to the Guggenheim Museum as well as great restaurants. San Sebastian is right on the coast and is great place to hang out for an afternoon. If you can arrange transportation, I would also recommend straying from the bigger cities if you visit. San Juan de Gastelojaxe is a small church at the top a hill overlooking the ocean and has spectacular views!

Outside of Spain

- Italy

I absolutely loved Italy when I visited. The country is gorgeous and you will have the best wine and pasta you've ever had. I went during spring break (Semana Santa) and really enjoyed spending a full week there visiting many different locations. If you travel at this time though, you have to be willing to spend more money on airfare, even for the budget airlines. Rome and Vatican City were a joy to explore with their extensive histories and famous sights. Next, I

traveled up to Florence, which was beautiful of course. Definitely plan your itinerary ahead of time here and buy tickets online, because you don't want to waste half of your day waiting in lines. I also took a day trip to San Gimignano, a perfectly picturesque small town in the Tuscan countryside that is home to the world's best gelato place. From there, I was able to hit both Pisa and Verona in one day. Pisa only requires an hour or so to see the leaning tower and is full of tourists. Verona was very nice because it seemed to be a great combination of good Italian food and architecture without the large crowds. Lastly, I ended my trip in Venice, which was a great experience. There are always a lot of people and it can be confusing to navigate, but that is also the point. If you don't get lost in Venice, you're not doing it right. Pick a general area you want to explore and just start walking. There will be more than one time that you emerge from an alley to see a canal pulled straight from a painting. Other recommendations are St. Mark's Basilica, St. Mark's Campanile, watching a glass blowing demonstration, and taking a ride in a gondola. We also took a boat ride to a nearby island called Burano, which has a small town that paints each of its tiny houses a different vibrant color.

- The Netherlands

I completed my internship in Delft, so I had a lot of time to travel around The Netherlands. If you are visiting from Spain, the highlights I'd recommend are: Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, Utrecht (probably in that order). However, I'll add that there are many beautiful cities in the Netherlands, such as Delft, that have all of the charm of Amsterdam but none of the bustling tourists. Also, The Netherlands is such a small country that you can get anywhere via train within a few hours. So, if you'd like to take a Dutch trip, you can basically fly into whichever airport is cheapest and travel from there. For some reason, I found that the connection between Madrid and Eindhoven tended to be the cheapest.

- England

If you plan to visit London, finding things to do will not be an issue. I would recommend getting an Oyster card which is what they use for their trains (tube). I think I bought a 3 day pass version of the Oyster card to get me through the weekend, but there are lots of options. London is expensive and you'll probably spend a lot on public transportation because London is a lot bigger than Madrid and the train is more expensive. Regardless of the prices, I loved London and would highly recommend! Keep in mind that it rains a lot so bring an umbrella! I also bought a coupon booklet at the airport which actually made a lot of the touristy things a lot cheaper and it gave us an easy way to look through things to do. One of the things I wanted to do, but didn't get a chance, was go see a play/musical. Some of the ticket stands sell tickets really cheap the night before a show.

- Hungary

Like many people, I only visited Budapest while in Hungary. The city is characterized by multiple suspension bridges and is actually split into two sections by the Danube River. Buda occupies a hill and lies on the west side, while Pest is the busier, more traditional city on the east side. Something you may consider buying at the airport is the Budapest Card, which has options of 24, 48, or 72 hours that allow free or discounted entrances to attractions, free public transportation, and a free entry to one of the bathhouses. It is highly recommended to visit a

bathhouse in Budapest because they channel the water from nearby hot springs. Different locations have different prices and rules, so a little research should be done ahead of time. Other recommendations include St. Stephen's Basilica, Shoes on the Danube memorial, Matthias Church, Fisherman's Bastion, Buda Castle, and the Parliament building. Buy tickets ahead of time to tour Parliament, or purchase a tour in any language if English is sold out because it is truly incredible to see. At night, you can take a river cruise to see the Parliament building beautifully lit up. Additionally, near Buda Castle is the labyrinth where Vlad the Impaler, the inspiration for Dracula, was held prisoner. Most people will not have trouble getting through, but it can be quite dark and creepy at times. Lastly, don't worry that you don't speak any Hungarian. Most locals in Budapest actually know English pretty well.

- Morocco

My trip to Morocco for Semana Santa was the best trip I took while abroad. A few friends and I booked the trip through CityLife Madrid since this trip was a whole week and in a very foreign place. We road tripped around the country for the whole week and went to around 8 cities. It was a spectacular experience to visit somewhere with a culture so different than the US or even Spain. Some of the highlights were riding camels to our camp in the desert where we spent the night, visiting the world's second largest mosque (after Mecca), and seeing artisans at work making beautiful mosaics. Because we went on an organized trip, everything as far as housing, scheduling, and some meals was done for us which made the trip a lot less stressful. It was pretty hectic the whole time so, if you choose to do this, just go with the flow. They told us that Spanish and English would be enough to get by, but Spanish was almost useless and English was hit or miss; Arabic and French were their go-to languages. We spent a large portion of this trip on buses between cities, and we met some amazing people on our bus that we remained in contact with after the trip. We had a lot of time to meet new people from all over the world!

- Scotland

As my last stop in Europe, I went to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in Edinburgh, Scotland in August. This massive 28-day comedy festival happens each year, so it'd be a great way to spend your last few days in Europe! The city itself, as well as the surrounding countryside, is beautiful and very worth visiting, but I only went to the festival for a few days so I can't speak much to the rest of Scotland.

- Germany

Germany is absolutely a country worth visiting, and I have had great experiences there backpacking. I would caution, though, that Germany is so large and there is so much to do that, if you plan on being in Europe again, your semester in Spain may not be the best chance you have to visit Germany. If you do, then Munich, Berlin, and Hamburg all deserve their good reputations. I also highly recommend taking at least one short trip outside of the city while in Bavaria - it is a beautiful area that you shouldn't miss.

Miscellaneous Advice

- Apps to download
 - TriCount
 - This app will be extremely useful when going on weekend trips with a group of friends. It keeps track of how much everyone has spent on food, gas, lodging etc. and displays how much everyone owes and who they owe it to.
 - Google Translate
 - You can download languages beforehand, so do this before going out!
 - SpanishDict
 - My personal favorite Spanish app. Not great for translation, but great as a Spanish dictionary.
 - UC3M Aula Global app
 - Not great, but can still be useful to view assignments and announcements.
 - Madrid Metro app
 - There's also an app called Moovit that works pretty well for directions on trains & metro.
 - Venmo
 - This is great to use with your friends from the US, so download it, but those from Europe will probably not be able to use it. I don't even think you can download it without a US phone number.
 - Maps.me
 - Nice maps app that allows you to easily download large areas, and can give walking directions while offline!
 - Hostelworld
 - This is my preferred app for booking hostels, since you can make reservations and keep track of them for many hostels all in one place.
- Apartment vs. Homestay
 - Many Purdue students opt for an apartment in the city, with other Purdue friends and/or with other international students. This can be a ton of fun, but you likely won't get a very Spanish experience, and most likely will speak English all the time. For this reason, **I would strongly encourage you to stay in a homestay.** It's an incredible way to get to know the Spanish culture, and you have the chance to form some pretty strong relationships with your host family. It's a little more risky, since you don't know them before arriving, but I know of many more good experiences than bad.
- Getting a haircut
 - Something I never thought about prior to coming to Madrid, there are many places that are quite good and cheap. A simple men's haircut is about 10€. If your Spanish isn't great, try to simplify your explanation as much as possible and/or show them a picture.
- Watching the Super Bowl
 - You can find the game playing at any Irish bar and some American restaurants. It was very crowded when we went, so get there a little early.

- The game will start at midnight and end at 3am so be aware of that if you have class the next morning.
- Registering for Purdue classes while abroad
 - Don't forget about fall registration for Purdue while in Madrid. You can have your registration "meeting" with your advisor through email.
 - Keep the time difference in mind in order to register when it opens.
 - You may have to speak with your advisor about getting an override if you are taking a prerequisite while abroad since it won't transfer back to Purdue until August or September.
- Receiving your UC3M certificate of departure
 - You'll receive an email from UC3M about this shortly before finals are finished. On the day of your of your last exam, simply go to the office and ask to pick it up. We never had to do anything with it, but it may be required by UC3M.

After Returning to the U.S.

I don't think any of us experienced reverse culture shock and we were very satisfied with our experiences abroad once we returned home. During the first week of classes in August, the Study Abroad Office holds a welcome back reception. Be sure to check it out if you can and reconnect with friends to share your study abroad stories. If you enjoyed your experience so much that you'd like to spread the word and get others involved, there will be a study abroad fair shortly after the beginning of the semester. Here, you can volunteer and promote both general study abroad and the GEARE program. Remember that most study abroad programs are exchange, so enough students have to want to go abroad in order to facilitate the program. You can also join the GEARE Ambassadors program to help spread the word. Lastly, your grades will take some time to transfer back to Purdue. Nothing is required on your part, but most students' grades were transferred between August and September.

Closing Words

Student: Sam

Major: AAE

Email: samuelalbert21@gmail.com

Advice: For my closing words I'm going to list some things I'm glad I did in Madrid, and some things I wish I had done or done better. Please feel free to contact me regarding any of this, AAE classes at UC3M, or any other advice you might want.

- Things I'm glad I did:
 - Stayed with a host family
 - Traveled mostly within Spain when I took trips
 - Las Fallas in Valencia and my trip to Andalucia were highlights!

- I did take some trips out of Spain - Morocco for spring break was amazing - but you are there to experience Spain! Don't treat this as one long backpacking trip
 - Don't leave every weekend - make sure you leave some time to stay in Madrid too!
 - The internet is a great way to find fun stuff to do, but also take some time to just wander the streets of Madrid
- Things I wish I'd done:
 - A better job of meeting and getting to know Spanish UC3M students
 - A better job of distancing myself from all the Purdue students and making new Spanish friends
 - This is bittersweet to say, since I do have some great friendships at Purdue from my time in Madrid. In the end it depends on what you want out of this experience.
 - Taken a trip to the Basque country
 - This area is a little far from Madrid and can be overlooked as a trip destination, but it's very worth visiting! I'll have to go back
 - Attend a Real Madrid soccer game
 - I did attend a Leganes game, which I do recommend as well
 - Join a club or sports team at UC3M
 - I kind of tried to do this, and when a few clubs turned out to be inactive I basically just gave up. I should have kept looking!

All in all, my semester in Madrid was amazing and I'm excited for all of you. I hope this guide helps you get the most out of it. **My single best piece of advice is this: take some time to reflect on your experience so far at least once a month.** You're there for long enough that you can shift your priorities if you aren't satisfied with how it's going so far. For example, after spring break I realized I was taking so many trips I barely felt like I knew Madrid anymore, so for the last part of the semester I made a point to stay in Madrid more on weekends and spend time with my host brother. It's your experience, so shape it however you want, just be sure to reflect and decide if it's going the way you want or not.

Again, don't hesitate to reach out to me if you want!

Student: Matt

Major: AAE

Email: mcirillo@purdue.edu

Advice: Madrid may not have famous attractions or buildings on the level of other European cities, but the architecture, people, culture, and general feel of the city have made it one of my favorite (I'm biased of course). I'd like to list some things below that summarize my experience.

A few highlights:

- Living with a homestay family

- My homestay family was amazing and the whole situation worked out so well. I know that not everyone gets that lucky but I think it usually works out well for most people.
- Las Fallas in Valencia and trip to Tenerife
 - These were my favorite trips within Spain and so enjoyable. I would really recommend that people put attending Las Fallas on their bucket list; it was that much fun.
- Attending a football game
 - Specifically, I went to see Real Madrid in El Clasico against Barcelona. This was the game where Messi scored the winning goal with seconds left on the clock.
- Staying mostly within Spain
 - Exploring Europe is great, but I recommend getting as much as you can out of Spain. This also includes not traveling every weekend and exploring new locations in Madrid.

A few not-so-highlights:

- Not befriending more Spanish students
 - I got to know other Purdue students very well but did not reach out to local students as much as I should have.
- Failure to quickly adjust to the Spanish academic style
 - I kept up on the course material and got through most of the semester pretty easily, but the month of May was a nightmare.

Now I'll get into some advice you can take into your own experience. I made the mistake of taking five engineering courses while abroad. I would say take no more than four engineering classes and maybe mix in a humanities course or two that is less intense into your studies. It will be less stressful if you are willing to work hard independently outside of class as soon as you arrive in Spain, but that of course is much easier said than done.

For me, time seemed to move very slowly for the first few weeks while I adjusted to the city and culture. However, after about a month in Madrid, the time really seemed to fly by. I think being able to live in the moment and really process what's going on around you is important. If there is a plaza you pass by everyday going to your apartment, for example, try and sit there for five minutes watching the crowds. Madrid has a great atmosphere about it, and hopefully everyone will be able to take that memory with them when they leave.

I hope that you are really excited to go abroad soon! I have no doubt it will be an incredible experience. Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have, even for the smallest of concerns. ¡Buen viaje y buena suerte!

Student: Nora

Major: CE

Email: schnei51@purdue.edu

Advice: My biggest piece of advice is not to take Madrid for granted while you're there. It's so easy to take advantage of the opportunity to do lots of traveling, but Madrid will be your home for several months so take some time to really immerse yourself and make yourself feel like a Madrileño! Also, you may meet other Americans studying abroad whose universities set everything up for them and made it easy for them, and you may be envious, but, looking back, I'm glad I had to figure it out on my own and that I had to figure things out for myself.

Highlights

- Going to Morocco
 - This trip was the most unique experience I had while abroad (in a positive way!), and I'm so glad I got to experience Morocco for a whole week during Semana Santa.
- Living with a host family
 - I ended up living with a host family on accident which is a long story (see lowlights), but it was such a happy accident! I still talk to my host mom about once a week!
- Traveling to most of the main cities and territories of Spain
 - Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, Alicante, Salamanca, Cadiz, Sevilla, Granada, Bilbao, San Sebastián, Alicante, Tenerife, Menorca
- Traveling by myself sometimes
 - Every once in a while, I had to travel somewhere on my own, and I really appreciated getting to take that time on my own to enjoy my surroundings.

Lowlights

- Exposing my landlady for tax evasion, and getting kicked out of my apartment (don't worry, this probably won't happen to you!)
- Not forcing myself to make the effort to invest in more friendships
 - I was hesitant to befriend Spanish students because I felt like there wasn't enough time, but try to find out which UC3M students will be at Purdue the following year!
- Not taking my classes more seriously
 - I don't regret prioritizing my other experiences, but I should have tried to focus on academics a little more

I have always been a reserved person, and I had hoped going abroad would bring out my social side. While I was abroad I didn't feel any different and was slightly disappointed I wasn't able to lose my shyness, but after I came back, I found myself being a lot more confident and outgoing so I think you won't take in a lot of your experience until you get back.

I know you've heard this enough times, but this experience is what you want to make it so don't try to live other people's experiences. You'll form your group of friends and develop a way of living naturally so try to go in without too many expectations and just enjoy!

¡BUENA SUERTE!

