



SPANISH
STUDIES
ABROAD

*The CENTER for
CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY*

The CENTER for CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY

HAVANA, CUBA STUDENT HANDBOOK

Table of Contents

Mission Statement	2	Group Meetings and Activities	14
		Speaking Partners	
Travel Information	2	Travel and Visits from Family	15
Booking Your Flight			
Arrival		Packing Suggestions	15
Orientation		Fashion, Clothing, Other Items	
Residency in Cuba		Security and Personal Care	
Getting Ready to Go to Havana	3	Plug-in Appliances	
Online Account		Courtesy Gifts	
Items You Must Send to the U.S. Office of Spanish Studies Abroad		What Not to Bring	
Passport and Visa		Housing	17
Bank Accounts and Money		Housing Rules	
Budgeting for Your Trip		Housing Norms for Students and Host Families	
Income Taxes ,Power of Attorney		Special Dietary Needs	19
Absentee Voting		Public Transportation	20
Facebook Group		Keeping in Touch with Family and Friends	20
Accepted Students Chat		Mail and Packages	
Departure Newsletter		Telephone, Internet, Email	
Emergencies and Emergency Contact Information	7	Video Calls and Smartphone Apps	
Health and Wellness	7	Computers	
Health Insurance		Billing Details	24
Emergency Medical Help		Payment of Fees, Financial Aid	
Prescriptions, Injections		Scholarships	24
Health Information for Travelers to Cuba		Spanish Studies Abroad Scholarship Program	
Drinking Water		Videographer Grant	
Fitness		Alumni Scholarship Fund	
Machismo		Outside Scholarship Opportunities	
Academics with Spanish Studies Abroad and Universidad de La Habana	11	Possible Additional Fees	25
Universidad de La Habana		Transcript Fees	
Credit		Refunds	25
Books for Classes		Places to Stay in Havana	26
Schedule of Classes, Study Visits, etc.		Academic Pledge, Program Conditions & Release Statement	28
Spring Semester Schedule			
Spanish-Only Policy			
Course Registration			
Course Withdrawal Policy,			
Program Transfer Policy			
Academic Honesty			
Transcripts			

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Mission Statement

The mission of Spanish Studies Abroad (The Center for Cross-Cultural Study or CC-CS) is to promote in-depth understanding of Spanish-speaking countries for our students, through specifically designed academically rigorous university-level and cultural travel programs. We consider all of our students to be willing to cross cultural boundaries, to live as members of another culture, and to thus learn about others as they learn about themselves.

In accordance with our mission, Spanish Studies Abroad promotes equal opportunities within our programs and does not discriminate on the basis of an individual's race, religion, ethnicity, national origin, age, physical ability, gender, sexual orientation, or other characteristics. We believe in educating students on cultural tolerance and sensitivity, acceptance of differences and inclusiveness.

Travel Information

BOOKING YOUR FLIGHT

All students should plan on arriving in Havana **before 3:00pm on the start date of the program**. Please note that **when booking your flight, you should always refer to your program calendar** which is located in your e-acceptance packet-- the link was sent to you in your acceptance email.

In order to allow flexibility to our students in making flight arrangements, we do not offer a group flight option. You will be responsible for purchasing your own flight to Havana, Cuba. We have provided you a list of U.S. commercial airlines in your acceptance packets. Please contact them to secure your space on the flight as soon as possible.

Your insurance will not be included in your flight ticket price. In this case, Spanish Studies Abroad will purchase insurance for you from Asistur in Cuba, before you arrive in Cuba. **The charge for this will be added to your student portal and must be paid before we can begin the process for you.** Spanish Studies Abroad will need your full name and passport number before purchasing insurance. **Please make sure your Personal Information in your student portal is complete and your passport has been uploaded.**

Once you have your flight itinerary, you must submit the information via your online account, or email it to info@spanishstudies.org. If you have any delays or last-minute changes in your flight itinerary, please inform our U.S. and Cuba office at info@spanishstudies.org and your parents or guardians. **If you are en route to Havana, you will need to also inform the Havana Resident Director at cuba.spanishstudies@gmail.com.**

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ARRIVAL

We **recommend** that you bring a copy of your Spanish Studies Abroad acceptance letter with you for your flight to Cuba.

Most students will enter Cuba through the José Martí International airport and will arrive in either Terminal 2 or 3, depending on which airline or charter company you choose. **Spanish Studies Abroad staff will be waiting outside of whichever terminal the majority of students will arrive at until 3:00pm on the start date of the program.** This will be made known during the Departure Newsletter that will be sent out a couple of months before the start date. **If you fly into a terminal that is different from the specified terminal, it is your responsibility to arrange transportation to your**

homestay.

You will go through passport control in the terminal and then customs. Sometimes immigration and customs officials will ask you questions such as “Where will you be staying in Havana?” and “How long will you be in Cuba for?” Be sure to have your host family’s address (written down if you have not memorized it) and explain that you are studying at the Universidad de La Habana through Spanish Studies Abroad.

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You will then go through security and go to the carousel to pick up your luggage. Be patient. Sometimes it can take up to two hours for luggage to come through to the baggage carousels. Before you leave the airport, an official will ask to check your baggage claim receipt. He/she will then compare it with the sticker on your luggage and then let you leave.

You must bring enough cash with you to Cuba to last you the full term. You should exchange \$150 USD into Cuban currency (CUC) in the airport when you arrive in Havana. This will allow you to have some spending money during the first few days of orientation. Please see the section *E/X' Z{b` _nx'Jn| x'Aw* for more information about handling money in Cuba.

ORIENTATION

Prior to the start of your studies at Universidad de La Habana, Spanish Studies Abroad will lead you through an important orientation to help you adapt to your new home. Topics will include an overview and tour of the city, health and safety information, customs information, social interactions, behavior policies for the homestay where you will be staying, and university coursework.

Attendance at orientation is mandatory.

RESIDENCY IN CUBA

Beginning January 1, 2017 international students studying in Cuba for less than six (6) months will be ineligible for the carné, the document which serves as a temporary residence card. Students must extend their visa each month by going to the Immigration office and paying 25 CUC each time. For a semester in Cuba, budget \$100 only for the monthly visa renewals.

During orientation, the Resident Director and Spanish Studies Abroad staff will advise students on the procedure and accompany them on their first visit to the immigration office for the visa renewal.

Getting Ready to Go to Havana

Before you depart, there are a few things you need to take care of. Please read carefully!

ONLINE ACCOUNT

All students studying with Spanish Studies Abroad have an online account. To access your account, go to www.spanishstudies.org and click the “Login” link at the top of the page. You will then be prompted to enter your username and password. If you have forgotten your password, you may request a new one on the login page.

PRE-DEPARTURE STEPS

In order to finalize your acceptance in a Spanish Studies Abroad program, you must submit the following items via your online account as soon as possible. All pre-departure items will be due within two weeks of the application deadline.

- Academic Pledge and Program Conditions & Release Statements
- Passport Information and Copy
- Course Selection
- Housing Questionnaire
- Health Statement Form
- Havana Health Insurance Form

Essay for Universidad de La Habana
Letter of Recommendation (from a different professor outside the Spanish department)
Program Deposit (due within 10 days of acceptance)
Arrival Information
Digital Photo
Spanish Studies Abroad Website/ Online Application Survey (optional)

PASSPORT

To travel to Cuba you need a valid passport. For U.S. citizens, the most convenient place to apply for a passport is at your local post office. **If you do not yet have a passport, apply for one immediately!** It can take up to 4-6 weeks to receive your passport. If the start of your program is less than 90 days away and you have not yet applied for your visa (see below), you will have to pay for expedited service of your passport. Expedited service still takes about 2-3 weeks. The U.S. State Department's website provides details on passports and current processing times [here](#). You may also inquire via telephone at (877) 487-2778. Students who are not U.S. citizens should contact the appropriate government agency in their home country for passport information.

Students who already have a passport should verify that it will be valid through the program dates and for at least six months after the Spanish Studies Abroad program concludes. To ensure that the passport is valid, it must also be signed on the page that is beside the page with your picture and personal information.

You should NOT be carrying your passport around with you in Havana. We recommend that you bring a photocopy of your passport which you can keep in your wallet just in case you need it.

VISA

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Short-term program students will obtain their tourist visa at the airport from which they depart (depending on the departure airport's requirements).

Semester students will need to prepare their visa application materials as soon as possible. Students must complete the attached [Cuba Visa Application Form](#) and mail it along with all visa materials to the Spanish Studies Abroad office in Amherst, MA. The \$70 (subject to change) visa fee plus \$30 (subject to change) administrative fee will be added to your online account. You can login and click on "View/Pay Bill" in order to pay the fee. **We will not send your application to the Cuban Embassy without this fee being paid in full.**

The Resident Director will provide the University of La Habana (UH) with your name, your arrival/departure dates, your passport number, and your address in Cuba. UH will assign a radio number to each of you and inform the Cuban Embassy. Once the Resident Director in Cuba lets us know that the radio numbers have been issued, we will send your applications as a group to the Cuban Embassy. Once they have been processed, the Cuban Embassy will mail them to Spanish Studies Abroad. We will then mail them to each student individually. **If you will not be at your home address during the time when your student visa will arrive, you must make alternative arrangements to receive it.**

When you arrive in Cuba, the immigration officer will stamp your visa with the date of your entry into Cuba. **Keep the visa stub with your passport since you will have to present it when leaving the country.**

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BANK ACCOUNTS AND MONEY

Credit or Debit cards issued by U.S. banks cannot be used in Cuba, and banks cannot transfer funds from the U.S. to Cuba.

If you are the only signer on your bank account we suggest you add a co-signer to it for your time in Cuba. You will most likely not be able to access your online banking account. If you use your online bank account for financial aid disbursement, etc., then you definitely want to have a cosigner on the account who can authorize transfers, etc. while you are in Cuba.

The best way to take money to Cuba is in cash. You must bring enough cash with you to Cuba to last you the full term. Cash must be brought in bills ONLY in the amounts of \$50's and \$100's in order to be exchanged for Cuban currency. There are issues exchanging smaller bills. Furthermore, Cuban banks and other places that exchange money are sticklers for the condition of U.S. dollars that are being exchanged. Most will **not** accept any bills that have rips, markings, or other damage. Please keep this in mind. When you do go to the bank, look closely at all the bills to **make sure they are in excellent condition**--practically crisp new, if possible. You should exchange \$150 USD in the airport when you arrive in Havana.

There are two official forms of currency in Cuba:

The peso, or "CUP", or *la moneda nacional*



The convertible peso, or CUC



A useful trick: If the bill has a face on it, it is moneda nacional, if not, it is CUC.

CUC has a 1:1 equivalency to the U.S. dollar (USD). CUC is primarily used for touristic expenses, while CUP is used for everyday purchases by the locals (small businesses such as farmers' markets and street vendors). CUP may be bought at exchange bureaus called "CADECA" (short for *la Moneda y el Cambio*), or some hotels such as the Habana Libre will exchange money even if you are not a guest there. You cannot change from foreign currency into CUP; you must convert from CUC.

Note: For carrying cash to Cuba, we recommend using a hidden money belt that can be worn invisibly under a shirt or pants. Usually hidden money belts don't need to be removed when going through airport security. For more information on security, see page 16-17.

It is possible to have money wired to Cuba through Western Union, but Spanish Studies Abroad encourages you to only use this option in case of an emergency. There may be a limit on the amount of money that you can receive and a significant fee charged for each transaction. Please see their [website](#) for updated details on limits and fees. In the event of an emergency, money can be wired to you through the U.S. Embassy.

BUDGETING FOR YOUR TRIP

The program recommends budgeting a minimum of \$2,400 USD (including flight costs) for a semester-long program, maybe up to \$3,600 USD depending on your spending habits. Plan accordingly. While some restaurants are highly priced by U.S. standards, meals and snacks from street vendors are very cheap. For a few dollars you can buy small pizzas and *caf e*—a filling meal of rice, beans, and meat with a little salad garnish boxed to go. Licensed *caf es* (privately-run restaurants) can be expensive: for example, US\$8 - \$12 for a large, good lunch. A lunch can cost you as little as the equivalent of \$2.

As you make Cuban friends and go out to enjoy Havana together, keep in mind that you will most likely pick up the tab. This is not because they are taking advantage of you, but because they cannot afford most CUC purchases. The average Cuban earns 24 CUC (\$24 USD) per month. You might want to budget \$150-\$200 for social activities with Cuban friends.

Below you will find a detailed estimate, which explains how to budget for personal expenses and other costs not covered by your Spanish Studies Abroad program fees. These figures are general guidelines and may be different for each person's budget and lifestyle in Cuba.

	<u>Semester</u>	<u>Short-Term</u>
Books	\$50	\$20
Bus/Taxi transportation	100	30
Every-day & going out expenses	1,100	300

Meals-Lunches	950	300
Visa Expense	100	100
Flight	800	800
<u>Miscellaneous</u>	<u>500</u>	<u>100</u>
Total	3600	1650

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INCOME TAXES

U.S. residents who are abroad during the spring semester will need to make arrangements for filing federal and state income taxes. Individuals who are temporarily living abroad can request an extension on the deadline for filing their federal income tax return. This extension is generally until June 15. Please note that if money is owed to the government and an extension is filed, interest will be charged on the amount if it is not received by April 15. For more information on federal income tax laws and regulations, please consult the IRS official web page www.irs.gov or call (800) 829-1040. Individuals should contact their state government for regulations information on extending state taxes.

POWER OF ATTORNEY

If your signature will be needed for any official or legal document while in Cuba, you should make the necessary arrangements for a “power of attorney” to be held by parents, guardians, or another appropriate person to act on your behalf. This can be done by writing out in detail the specific duties that this person will have, (i.e. signing a check; corresponding with the school or university about financial or academic matters; or obtaining medical records and information, in case of an emergency). This letter should then be notarized so that it is legal and official. Public notaries are available at many banks, post offices, public libraries, and town halls.

ABSENTEE VOTING

Voting is a privilege and right for all U.S. citizens. If you are a U.S. citizen and will be abroad during an election, Spanish Studies Abroad urges you to take advantage of this right by voting via absentee ballot. **You should apply to do this at least two weeks before you leave home.** U.S. citizens can get more information, as well as the forms needed to apply for the absentee ballot, by visiting the Federal Voting Assistance Program website at www.fvap.gov. Be sure to also call the local city clerk’s office of the city where you are registered to vote.

facebook COMMUNITY PAGES

While you may have already “liked” the [Spanish Studies Abroad Facebook page](#), students should also plan to join the location-specific page for [Spanish Studies Abroad Havana](#). This page is for alumni, current students, and prospective students, so it will be a great resource to you as you begin to prepare for your program and meet fellow Havana students. Prior to the start of the program, the Cubans who participate in the Speaking Partners Program will also be invited to join the page. This will help Spanish Studies Abroad students to meet their Speaking Partners before the beginning of the program. For all program-related questions for Spanish Studies staff, please email info@spanishstudies.org.

PRE-DEPARTURE WEB CHAT

Students accepted into a Spanish Studies Abroad Havana program will be invited to participate in an online accepted students chat before their departure. During this chat, students will be able to ask Spanish Studies Abroad staff and the Havana Resident Director specific questions about study abroad in Havana. Dates and information on how to join the chat will be sent via email closer to the chat date.

DEPARTURE NEWSLETTER

Spanish Studies Abroad students receive a Departure Newsletter by email several weeks prior to the program start date. The newsletter contains important travel and arrival information, such as the orientation address, emergency contact information (also included in this handbook), the address for Spanish Studies Abroad in Havana, taxi and baggage tips, and

contact information for fellow participants. **Make sure to bring a copy with you during your travels!**

Emergencies and Emergency Contact Information

In the U.S.

Spanish Studies Abroad
446 Main Street
Amherst, Massachusetts 01002-2314
{Zj@13 256 0011
_M@13 256 1968
°_{Zx'an} xyZk Zx Zl Vt jbb Z@13 687 7069
info@spanishstudies.org

In Havana, Cuba

Calle O #210 Apto.1 Entre 23 y 25 Vedado, La Habana,
Cuba
{Zj@13 256 0011
°_{Zx'an} xyZk Zx Zl Vt jbb Z@13 687 7069
Resident Director: Rocio Haro
cuba.spanishstudies@gmail.com

Note: For the Havana numbers given above, the (011-53) code at the beginning of the number is only necessary to add for making an international call from the U.S. to Cuba. If calling within Cuba, you can skip the code and just dial the eight-digit phone number. **If calling to the U.S. from Cuba, add the code "119+1" before dialing the normal U.S. ten-digit number.**

Other Emergency Numbers for Cuba

Fire Department: 105
Police Department: 106
Drug Hotline: 103

Should an emergency arise, U.S. family members may leave a message for students on the Resident Director’s cell phone at (011 53) 5841-2920 in Havana, or at our U.S. office telephone, (413) 256-0011. When the offices are closed, there is an answering machine connected to these numbers, which will record your messages and give you additional emergency contact numbers. The Resident Director’s Office in Havana is open Monday through Friday from 9:00am - 3:00pm local time. The US office is open Monday through Friday from 9:00am - 5:00pm EST.

Before going abroad, be sure to [register online](#) with the government's **Smart Traveller Enrollment Program (STEP)**. It is a free service for U.S. citizens to enroll their trip with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate abroad, so that you can receive information about safety conditions and emergencies, and help the Embassy get in touch with you in case of an emergency.

In the unlikely event of an emergency, please be sure to check these web pages. Up-to-date information on Emergency Procedures and Security can be found on our website at www.spanishstudies.org/safety or at the [Department of State website](http://www.state.gov).

Health and Wellness

HEALTH INSURANCE

Spanish Studies Abroad obtains medical insurance coverage for all semester students during their stay in Cuba through Asistur. The insurance covers all doctor visits and procedures at a medical clinic designated for international visitors. There is no extra charge for the insurance policy as it is already included in the program fees. **You must return your insurance form on time to the Amherst office in order to begin the process to obtain full coverage upon arrival in Havana. If you fail to return your form as requested, coverage will be delayed.**

Coverage includes

- | | |
|---|----------|
| 1. Medical expenses for illness and accidents | \$25,000 |
|---|----------|

- 2. Repatriation and transport \$25,000
- 3. Death \$7,000
- 4. Sickness/ Wounds. \$7,000

24-hour Alarm Center

Tel. (537) 866-8527
 (537) 866-8339
 (537) 867-1315

E-mail: asisten@asistur.cu; seguros@asistur.cu

Be aware that if you require treatment for any pre-existing condition, you will be required to pay for such medical services in cash and then file a claim for reimbursement by your insurance company when you return home.

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Although Spanish Studies Abroad provides medical insurance while in Cuba, if you have medical insurance at home, it is a good idea to take along one or two claims forms. These would be used if you need treatment for a pre-existing medical or psychological condition, medical attention while traveling outside of Cuba, or if you encounter health issues while traveling outside of the Spanish Studies program dates. **Please note that you are only covered through Spanish Studies Abroad for the dates of the program and within Cuba**, so you should also plan to bring claims forms if you are traveling before or after the program, or to any other country. If you have dental insurance at home, you should also bring some dental insurance claims forms with you, in case you need dental treatment while you are abroad. Always carry your insurance card with you.

If you are under medical or psychological treatment at home, you should speak with your doctor about the possible effects of study abroad and cultural change on your condition. If you have any pre-existing medical or psychological conditions, you should bring a copy of your medical records, in case you need treatment in Cuba.

It is important to note that eating disorders are considered medical conditions and must be reported on your health statement. **Withholding medical information could result in your dismissal from the program.**

EMERGENCY MEDICAL HELP

Medical attention is available at an excellent clinic for foreigners (Clínica Cira García, tel. 537-24-2811 through 14). You may also be treated at a number of other facilities throughout the city and of course in an emergency, you will be seen at the closest possible clinic or hospital. Cuba's standards of medical science and practice are recognized as the highest in Latin America.

If you need to go to the clinic, inform the staff in Havana. They will accompany you in the case of an emergency or if you are unfamiliar with the procedures of the clinic. For non-urgent needs, there is a pharmacy on the corner of 23rd and I.

There are a few accessible hospitals:

Cira Garcia Hospital for Foreigners
 Calle 18 #4304
 Tel. 204-0330 and 2811-1828

Policlínico Vedado
 Calle 15 y 18, Vedado

Hospitals near the university:

Calixto García

Sala Borges (non-emergencies)

PRESCRIPTIONS

If you take any prescription medication, be sure to bring enough for your entire stay*. Contact your health professional and insurance company several weeks before leaving; some medication requests require several weeks to be fully processed. These should be in their original containers: that is, labeled with your name and the name of the prescription drug. In case that you are unable to acquire enough for the entire stay, or just in case your medication is lost, you should take a written prescription for replacement of the drugs. The prescription should bear the generic name (chemical composition) of the drug, NOT the brand name, since medicines purchased in other countries usually have different brand names; though this prescription may not be enough at pharmacies, it will help a Cuban doctor make a valid prescription. Keep in mind that not all medications are available in Cuba.

*** Spanish Studies Abroad strongly discourages students from having medications mailed to Cuba.**

If you wear contacts, you should bring enough for the entire stay plus extras, and if you wear glasses you should bring an extra pair.

INJECTIONS

If you require regular medical injections, you should bring syringes with you from home. The cost of having injections administered by a healthcare professional is not covered by your Spanish Studies Abroad insurance, so be prepared for that expense. In order to get your injections at a clinic in Havana, your doctor at home must write you a letter with the following information:

- Directions on how to administer the injection
- How often the medication is administered
- Generic name of the medication
- Components of the medication
- Exact dosage of medication needed and any other relevant information for administering the injection
- Any possible side effects
- Any other relevant information for administering the injection

Send a copy of this letter to the U.S. office of Spanish Studies Abroad, and take another copy to Havana. **Again, you must have a written prescription and/or letter from your doctor to get through airport security with your injection materials.**

HEALTH INFORMATION FOR TRAVELERS TO CUBA

Please check the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [website](#) for up-to-date information on required vaccinations and tips on staying healthy while in Cuba.

DRINKING WATER

The water supply in Cuba has been known to contain ~~bad~~ a parasite which if ingested can cause diarrhea, loose or watery stool, stomach cramps, gas, malaise and upset stomach. Vomiting, chills, headache, and fever may also occur. Symptoms generally begin 1-2 weeks after being infected and may last 2-6 weeks, sometimes longer. We firmly recommend that you drink water that has been treated against giardia.

There are several forms of water that you can drink safely:

Bottled water which you may purchase in a variety of Cuban stores for about US \$1-2 a liter. Your host families will provide bottled or filtered water for you.

Water that has been boiled for a minimum of one full minute. (please note that you will not have access to the means to boil your own water).

Some host families have water filters in their home and you can drink readily from this.

FITNESS

There are no gym facilities on campus, although there is a track and field stadium there. There are no swimming pools, so if students are interested in swimming they will have to go to a hotel that has a pool. There is a gym on the corner of 15th and E within a 5-minute walk for the students. Membership costs \$20 per month. It is safe to run in the city, but in the morning, between 6:00- 8:00 am. It becomes very hot after 9:00 am. We do not recommend running at night in Havana.

MACHISMO

One of the biggest challenges for American female students in Cuba is the issue of machismo. In the Caribbean the way

many men view and interact with women, especially foreign women, is very different than what you may be used to in the United States. We recommend that you read about machismo and about Caribbean culture before arriving in the country. Communicating with Spanish Studies Abroad Havana alumni is the best resource in preparing to deal with machismo in Cuba.

Forms of Machismo

Cat-calling is one way men show their “appreciation” for beauty. It is also an invitation to communicate. Men will make comments about your height, weight, hair, etc. Ignore them and keep walking.

“Are you married” is a normal question for men to ask in the Caribbean, and it is not considered offensive, but it might make you bristle, especially after you have heard it a number of times.

A typical pattern of behavior is when a man passes a woman walking in the opposite direction on the street. He will turn around and ogle her from behind.

Cuban men are often charming and witty. If you choose to have a relationship with someone, it will move very fast, and don’t be surprised if marriage is on the table fairly quickly.

The biggest challenge in combating machismo is that it is so deeply ingrained into the Cuban subconscious that even Cuban women have come to accept it. The following anecdote perfectly illustrates this. For an assignment a past Spanish Studies Abroad student asked her Universidad de La Habana professor for her opinion on the catcalls and other comments made by men on the streets. The professor’s candid response surprised the student. She (the professor) said that as a woman, it would be a blow to her self-esteem if she DID NOT receive any catcalls or comments from men on the streets. This, naturally, contradicts what many of us believe in the U.S., but it is important to understand this mechanism as a part of Cuban culture. Recognizing this structure is a crucial part of developing a coping strategy to deal with it.

Actions to Take

The best thing to do if you are the subject of a man’s unwanted attention is to ignore him and keep on walking to where you are going. If they see you idling around, they will spend more time with you. In the event that he follows you, go to the nearest restaurant or hotel. There you can either inform the hotel staff of your situation or you can call the Resident Director or Assistant Resident Director.

If you are engaging a man in conversation, you could use it as an opportunity to get him to think about his values. Men are looking for how you react. You can ask, “Why are you interested in me?” Don’t be too friendly, and try to engage them at an intellectual level. “Do you have a girlfriend? Are you married?” If yes, tell them you don’t play like that. Work on understanding what values they have. “Would you want your kids to behave like that?”

When you go out, especially at night, do not go out alone. Ask another Spanish Studies Abroad student, a Cuban intercambio student, or a host family member to accompany you.

Resources

[Policies, Passion, and Pressure: FMC, Cenesex, and NGO’s Attempting To Address Machismo and Sexuality in Cuba](#)

Spanish Studies Abroad monthly *En el Mundo*. This forum is led every month by the Assistant Resident Director and is meant to provide students with a space to share and discuss encounters with machismo.

Sexual Assault Support and Help for Americans Abroad (SASHAA) www.sashaa.org

Spanish Studies Abroad works with a psychologist for private consultations

The U.S. Embassy

Centro Nacional de Educación Sexual (CENESEX) www.cenesex.org

Videos

Machismo in Cuba: "Los machistas" and gender equality (in Spanish; no subtitles)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=toool5q_Dvk

El machismo del cubano (in Spanish; no subtitles)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5MXnSpjq_f4

Mariela Castro: el machismo y la mujer cubana (in Spanish; no subtitles)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fBzdzk2cA58>

Macho: The Deep Roots of Machismo in Latin America (in English)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yQ0Jao5aZ_Q

Cuban Movie ?Z{M/n XZ AZzYm

Academics with Spanish Studies Abroad and Universidad de La Habana

UNIVERSIDAD DE LA HABANA

Founded in 1728, the Universidad de La Habana has become one of the most important symbols of Cuban culture, philosophy, and history, establishing a strong connection between student political activity on campus and the course of history that the country has followed. This is especially true regarding Fidel Castro, who was a student here.

The Universidad de La Habana has 15 colleges (_M/j{MZY) at its main Havana campus. These are divided into three fields: Natural Sciences, Social Sciences and Humanities and Economic Sciences.

The student body of the Universidad de La Habana is very active in politics and very well informed about what is going on in the country and in the world. The Federación Estudiantil Universitaria (FEU), or University Federation of Students is a very prolific organization that played an especially prominent role in the 1950s. It was founded in 1922 by Julio Antonio Mella, a student, who led students to take control of several buildings on campus and demand university reforms and free higher education among other things. Since then the FEU has become a prominent part of the university and you shouldn't be surprised if you see FEU banners waving in locations around Havana.

You will have two options for a semester of study:

Spanish Studies program - allows students to take courses taught by Cuban faculty with a focus on language and culture. You will be able to take courses with other international students who are in Cuba like you to perfect their Spanish. We recommend that you have completed at least one semester of intermediate college level Spanish or the equivalent.

Integrated Studies program - this program offers you the opportunity to take classes with Cuban students. You will need to have a very good level of Spanish for this option. The prerequisite of this program is to have at least two semesters of advanced college-level Spanish or the equivalent prior to applying.

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At BI bZyXVM' XZ' 1M) NMMIM(ULH) classes are organized for the Spanish Studies Abroad program at the Facultad de Español para no Hispanohablantes (FENHI) and taught by professors from several faculties.

Students enrolled in the Integrated Program take their courses at either the Facultad de Artes y Letras and/or the Facultad de Filosofía e Historia. Classes in the facultades of Physics, Chemistry, Biology or Law may be taken if petitioned one month prior to SSA's application deadline.

Students may also do Independent Research Projects (IRP's) but the application deadline is also one month prior to SSA's program deadline.

Shortly before the short-term or semester program begins, all students have to take a language placement exam (Z. MZ Zl : XZl bZj). This determines your level of Spanish proficiency and what class you should take. If you are planning to earn credit for an Advanced Spanish class and you place into Intermediate-level Spanish, inform the Resident Director and your school immediately.

The Spanish Studies Abroad program places emphasis on reasoned discussion among students and professors during about half of each class period. Keep in mind that a good portion of your grade is determined by how often you participate in classes.

Semester students must enroll in 16 credits per semester according to ULH guidelines. There is no possibility to earn more credit at ULH. Universidad de La Habana does not allow students to audit or sit in on classes as a non-participant.

CREDIT

Most semester courses at FENHI are worth four (4) credits each. However, if you are enrolling in the Integrated Studies Program you must be aware that the Cuban credit system is a bit different. In the United States 1 contact hour equals 50 minutes, but in Cuba 1 contact hour equals 45 minutes. Spanish Studies Abroad uses a formula to convert Cuban contact hours to their US equivalents. While you do not have to know the details of this procedure you SHOULD know how much credit a Cuban course will translate to in your university. The standard equivalent of contact hours in the US is 45 hours equals 3 credits.

Universidad de La Habana Hours	US Contact Hours Equivalent	US Credit
80 hours	72 hours	5
60-64 hours	57 hours	4
56 hours	50 hours	3
48 hours	43 hours	3
45 hours	40.5 hours	3
40 hours	36 hours	2
30-32 hours	29 hours	2

If you have questions, ask your RD, but you must remember that you have to enroll in the US equivalent of 16 credits worth of classes during your semester in Cuba.

BOOKS FOR CLASSES

During the first couple weeks of classes you will receive a piece of paper from the Registrar. Take this paper to the bookstore to obtain the appropriate books for your classes. You do not need to pay for your books; you are borrowing them for the semester and you must return them before you leave for the US. Since other students after you will be using the books, please do not write on them or deface them in any way.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES, STUDY VISITS AND EXCURSIONS

Classes are scheduled in the mornings and afternoons. Some study visits will take place during class time, other complementary course activities will be scheduled outside of regular class meeting times. Sometimes students and teachers can arrange tutorials, where the student meets privately with a professor. **Class attendance and class-related activities are mandatory.** Students are allowed five (5) absences during the semester. Any more absences than that and you will fail the class. You will receive a tentative schedule of classes, study visits and excursions during the orientation. Each semester has a two-week window called “shopping” during which time students may add or drop classes.

SPRING SEMESTER SCHEDULE-FACULTAD DE ARTES Y LETRAS

Each spring the Facultad de Artes y Letras arranges to have its students volunteer at the International Book Fair at La Cabaña fortress. Almost all students, except for seniors, take part in this program and as a result many classes at the Facultad de Artes y Letras do not begin until the end of February. If a class you enroll in is affected in any way by this program, let the RD (Resident Director) know immediately. The RD will work with the Universidad de La Habana to make sure that lost contact hours are made up during the semester.

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SPANISH-ONLY POLICY

When you submit your Pre-Departure materials, you sign a Spanish-only contract, promising to speak only Spanish while you are on the program. We take our Spanish-Only Policy very seriously and you should, too. Let's be perfectly honest: it's a waste of time and money if you go to Cuba and speak English with your friends on the program. Make an effort, not just in class, but in the street, in your home—everywhere you go in Cuba. It's the only way to make your Spanish Studies Abroad program the experience you want it to be. **Incidents of breaching the Spanish-Only Policy may be reported to the student's home campus and may reflect negatively on the student's grades.** To reference the Spanish-Only Policy as well

as the Academic Pledge and the Program Conditions & Release Statement that you signed, please refer to the last few pages in this handbook.

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COURSE REGISTRATION

The preliminary Course Selection form you submit with your Pre-Departure materials will be the first step in selecting your classes for the program. As per the requirements of Universidad de La Habana, all students must register for a total of 16 credits. A few factors may change your original course selection:

- If you have not met the prerequisites for a class you have chosen
- If the class you want is already full
- If you have too many or too few credits and need to alter your schedule accordingly
- If a particular course is canceled due to under-enrollment
- If your performance on the placement exam in Havana indicates a need for a change

Any changes that you would like to make to your course registration once your Course Selection form has been received must be sent via email to info@spanishstudies.org after you consult with your home university academic advisor. Once in Havana, there will be a short Add/Drop period during which you may change your schedule on a space-available basis.

COURSE WITHDRAWAL POLICY

Students may add or drop integrated university courses without penalty (course does not show up on the transcript) during the Add/Drop Period of the Integrated Studies Program only. The Add/Drop Period lasts for two weeks after the start of the university calendar. Universidad de La Habana frowns on any student who attempts to withdraw from a class after the add/drop period. If a student is able to withdraw after the add/drop period, the course will appear on the host university transcript for the class in question with either a **2 (Suspense)** or a **0 for (No Credits Received)**. A "W" for "Withdrawal" will appear on their @Mlbya @| XZy" UnM transcript.

PROGRAM TRANSFER POLICY

Please be aware that students who transfer programs (i.e. from Integrated to Spanish Studies) for any reason, must follow the calendar of their new program. Regardless of the original program that a student chose, housing through Spanish Studies Abroad expires on the date of the new program. Students will be responsible for adjusting travel arrangements and paying any associated fees that may arise due to the program transfer. This policy applies to students transferring programs either before or after their departure date.

Students that switch from the Integrated Studies program to any non-integrated program, as a consequence of dropping their university course, will receive reimbursement for only the housing portion of their program costs and only if such change occurs during the established Add/Drop Period. If the change occurs after the Add/Drop Period has ended, students will not receive any reimbursement. Whether reimbursement is received or not, students that have transferred to a different program must depart on the new program's established end date.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Spanish Studies Abroad holds students to the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated. This includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism, fabrication, and cheating. Any student who is academically dishonest will face disciplinary sanctions, which may range from a failing grade on the assignment to dismissal from the program. **Incidents of academic dishonesty may be reported to the student's home campus.**

TRANSCRIPTS

The U.S. office of Spanish Studies Abroad issues academic transcripts at the end of each program. Your official transcript will be mailed to the address you provided in your application and a student copy will be emailed to you at your home address.

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Spanish Studies Abroad transcripts show course numbers and titles, the number of contact hours and credits, and the grades for all coursework undertaken on the program, internships completed through Spanish Studies Abroad, and course work completed at Universidad de La Habana. Grades and credits are reported according to the semester-hour system.

Spanish Studies Abroad courses may not be taken on a pass/fail basis. Petitions to change a course from traditional grading to pass-fail must be addressed to the Registrar of the student’s home institution.

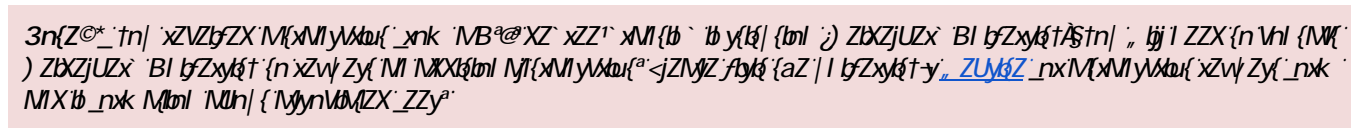
If you participate in the Integrated Studies program, you will receive a transcript from Universidad de La Habana accompanied by a Spanish Studies Abroad transcript to serve as a translation into the U.S. college credit and grading system. This process takes much longer than it would at a U.S. university. Often it will be a couple of months before ULH transcripts are even mailed to the U.S. office.

As a general rule, students should have all courses, internships and outside studies approved for transfer credit by their home institution before the start of a program. This can normally be arranged through your study abroad advisor or registrar at your home institution.

Additional Transcript Requests

Once the program ends you will receive an official transcript sent to the designated recipient on your Home School Approval Form and you will be emailed a student copy. If you need an official transcript in the future, there is a fee of \$10. If you’d like to order multiple transcripts at once, each additional transcript in the batch will cost an additional \$5. You may either choose to pay by check made payable to The Center for Cross-Cultural Study, Inc. or complete a credit card authorization form that is available on our website here: <https://www.spanishstudies.org/transcripts.html>. If the receiving institution requires a copy of the Universidad de La Habana transcript from Cuba, the student is responsible for international postage. You should submit the Spanish Studies Abroad Transcript Request Form to Spanish Studies Abroad with the following information:

- Your name and the program you attended
- Your birth date
- Your current contact information, including email address and phone number
- The name and address of the person/institution to whom/where you would like the transcript sent

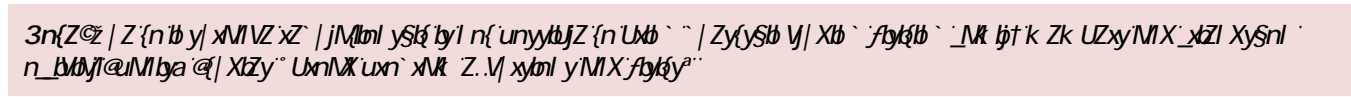


GROUP MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES

Group meetings are held periodically for Spanish Studies Abroad students and staff. These meetings give you the opportunity to discuss any questions or concerns that arise, as well as to share experiences and information. Meetings are also held before all Spanish Studies sponsored excursions for pre-trip orientation.

In addition to group meetings, Spanish Studies Abroad sponsors a number of mandatory activities throughout the course of the program. Some of these activities include:

- Weekly cultural site visits to museums, monuments, etc.
- Day or overnight trips to cities to surrounding areas in Cuba (day trip to Las Terrazas, an overnight trip to Viñales and Pinar del Río and a weekend trip to Santiago de Cuba).



SPEAKING PARTNERS PROGRAM

Students will be paired up with Speaking Partners to practice their Spanish. Spanish Studies Abroad can put American and Cuban students in touch with each other via email before the start date of the program as to help prepare for the upcoming

term.

Travel and Visits from Family

IMPORTANT: You cannot travel outside of Havana without your passport AND visa. If the owner of a casa particular outside of Havana notices that you do not have a visa with your passport, he/she will take you to the local Immigration office, where you will have to explain why you do not have it. Avoid the hassle and inconvenience by always travelling with your passport and student visa.

There will be an overnight trip to another province during your program in Cuba. Your program calendar can be found here on our website: <https://www.spanishstudies.org/program-dates-fees.html>. Students may also want to plan their own independent travel on the free weekends. If you would like to travel to other regions of the island, you have a few options for transportation: rent a car, fly, take a train, or take either the Viazul buses (paid in CUC) or the Astro buses (in moneda nacional), which are the cheapest and slowest with the longest wait-lists of all these options.

Flying is a good option for going to Santiago de Cuba because it is so far. The trains are another possibility and can be paid for in Cuban pesos, but again, you will have to endure long lines to get a ticket.

Obviously renting a car gives you the most flexibility to go where you want, when you want, but it is expensive (approximately 60 CUC per day, plus gas). We must stress that if you do choose to rent a car, that you use extreme precaution and exercise safe driving practices. You should strictly avoid driving on the highway at night as it is highly dangerous. For traveling to towns closer to Havana, our students have also hired a taxi or a private car owner to take them for a day trip. Be sure to negotiate the cost beforehand.

Keep in mind that attendance at all classes is required. Students that opt to take independent trips outside of Havana are expected to use free days for such activities and not plan trips on days when classes are in session.

IMPORTANT: Students are required to leave full contact information with the Resident Director when they travel outside of Havana, indicating destination, mode of transportation, and lodging arrangements.

Travel agencies on la Rampa:

Cubatur and Havanatur below H.Habana Libre on 23rd

Airlines on la Rampa for domestic flights (C/23 y P):

Cubana de Aviación (Tel. 33-4949)

Aero Caribbean. (Tel. 33-5936). (Sample one way fares: Santiago de Cuba 135 CUC, Isla de la Juventud 60 CUC)

Car rental:

Beware of extra charges, for example, being charged for the full tank of gas you start with

Buses:

Transtur, Calle 21, e/N y O, next to Hotel Capri. Tel. 33-4038.

Havanautos, Tel. 24-0646

Viazul, the only bus company for reliable, fast service to cities throughout Cuba; Avenida 26 y Zoológico, Nuevo Vedado. Tel. 81-1108, 81-5652 or 81-14. Website: <http://www.viazul.com/>.

Places to Stay in Havana

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR VISITING FRIENDS AND FAMILY

Spanish Studies Abroad policies prohibit visiting families and friends from staying with you in your homestay. However, we have compiled a list of bed and breakfast homes not far from where you live where your friends and family can stay. If you have friends and family who are planning to visit you in Cuba, we suggest you make the reservations at least one month in advance.

Casa Blanca Calle 13, No. 917, e/ 6 y 8, Vedado http://cadr1.tripod.com	Tel. 53-7-833-5697 Email: CBL917@hotmail.com
Carmen Lorenzo Ave. de los Presidentes (Calle G) #102 6 th Floor, Apt. #6-B (next to Hotel President and you can log onto Wi-Fi from this connection)	Tel. 53-7-832-0894 Cell phone: 53-5264-4267 Email: reserva@habanacasaparticular.com
Abalidia Feliz Pedro y Lidia Rosa Calle 15 between E and F, #456, Vedado http://www.abalidia.com	Tel. 53-7-832-6223 E-mail: lucianardi@yahoo.it
Juan Emilio Daudinot Calle 17 #606 (altos) between B and C, Vedado	Tel. 53-7-837-7593
Rent a Room Rolando Conde Calle 23, Edificio 655, Apto. 101 10 th floor between D and E	Tel. 53-7-833-3792 Cell phone: 53-5295-6351 Email: casacuba35@yahoo.es
Mayra Lavigne Fernandez Room for rent on the Malecón Calle 1ra, #252, Apt. # 53, 5 th Floor, between Paseo and A, Vedado Offers a beautiful view of the sea!	Tel. 53-7-833-8201 Cell phone: 53-5390-1045
Alejandro Báez Delgado Calle 1ra, #252, Apt. # 161, 16 th floor Between Paseo and A, Vedado Great view of the sea and close to Hotel Melia Cohiba and stores (Galeria Paseo)	Tel. 53-7-832-6285 Cell phone: 53-5289-8361 Email: reginamtnez@infomed.sld.cu info@alejandro.cubarentaroom.com

f M M < M M / j M Z y are also some of the cheapest places to stay while traveling in Cuba. The cost is about 40-60 CUC to rent a room for a night. Included in the cost are a private room with a lock, bathroom, fan and occasionally included are breakfast and access to the kitchen. (You will know a *f M M < M M / j M* by the triangular symbol on the door).

Packing Suggestions

FASHION

June will be very hot (upper 80s and 90s) with high levels of humidity, and the winter months will be cooler (70s). Prepare for both ranges of temperature. Breezes blow in Havana throughout the year, and the rainy season (May – October) tapers off as winter approaches. Always remember that the sun can be quite intense and come prepared for that probability. Havana is an urban city, not a beach resort, so choose clothing that will work with an urban environment. Clothing is casual for going to classes at the university. Lightweight semi-dressy or dressy clothes are appropriate for an evening out at a special restaurant or a nightclub. Rain gear should be lightweight and comfortable to use in the hot weather. Cubans tend to work hard to dress up every day and may be offended by non-Cubans who present themselves in dirty or unkempt clothing. Do not pack overly fancy/expensive clothing or jewelry, as these items are not commonly worn.

CLOTHING

Casual lightweight clothing	Hat
1-2 dressy or semi-dressy outfits	Bathing suit
Enough underwear for a week	Sneakers or running shoes
Comfortable walking shoes	Rain Jacket
	Lightweight pajamas

Here's a video called "[How to Dress in Cuba](#)" that perfectly describes what Cubanos generally wear.

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OTHER ITEMS

This Handbook and your Havana Cultural Guide	Backpack (or bookbag)
Spanish Studies Departure Newsletter (sent via email a few weeks prior to departure)	Any cosmetics/products you use
Travel books (try Lonely Planet or Rough Guides)	Medicines for cold and upset stomach
Spanish-English dictionary and grammar book	Vitamins
USB device for storing assignments and printing purposes	Pictures of family, friends, and home
Beach towel	Prescription medications , if needed*
Washcloths, if desired	Sunscreen (SPF 25 and higher - It's SUNNY.)
Camera	Umbrella
	Watch
	Gift(s) for your host family

*** If you take any prescription medication or wear contacts, be sure to bring enough for your entire stay. Refer to "Prescriptions" under the "Health Insurance and Medical Care" section of this handbook.**

SECURITY AND PERSONAL CARE

We suggest taking a suitcase that locks so you can keep valuable items secure at all times. This would be the place to keep your passport*, airline tickets, traveler's checks, extra cash, and anything else of value that you don't want to leave lying around. You should also know that your things might get moved around when your family cleans your room. Remember that this is their job; they are not trying to get into your belongings.

If you bring a laptop, you may want to get a cable lock for it as well. We also suggest that you take only a minimum of valuables, leaving at home most of your credit cards, ID or membership cards and other items that are hard to replace.

*** You should NOT be carrying your passport around with you in Cuba. We recommend that you bring a photocopy of your passport which you can keep in your wallet just in case you need it.**

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Over the counter products we take for granted, such as contact lens supplies and tampons, are not generally available in Cuba. Please take such necessary items with you. Favorite brands of personal care items such as deodorant and shampoo are not likely to be available either, although acceptable substitutes can sometimes be found. You should take any items of

this type that you cannot do without. You may want to bring along some toilet paper handi packs for when you go out.

PLUG-IN APPLIANCES

Any electrical appliances used in the US may be used in Cuba. Most but not all electricity in Cuba is 110 volts, and the outlets and plugs are also the same shape as in the U.S. Because both 110v- and 220v-currents are used in Cuba, and because the different outlets within a given room might provide either voltage, always ask about the voltage before you plug in any apparatus. **If you plug a 110v appliance into a 220v outlet it will be permanently damaged.**

Necessary items

Visa issued to you by Cuban Government A suitcase with a good lock School backpack This Student Handbook
Course syllabi All required course readings A Spanish-English dictionary Plain paper and notebooks White out,
tape, pens, pencils, highlighter Battery-powered alarm clock Casual clothes 1-2 dressy or semi-dressy outfits
Enough underwear for a week Comfortable walking shoes Hat, bathing suit, sunscreen 1 beach towel 2-3
memory sticks Medicines*, first aid kit, vitamins

* Take a sufficient supply of any prescription or other medicine you use for your entire stay in Cuba. You should pack a small, personal **first-aid kit** which includes: medication for upset stomach, diarrhea, headaches; also include rubbing alcohol, Band-Aids, antibiotic ointment, antihistamines, anti-itch medication, sunblock, etc. If you use an inhaler, make sure you take enough with you for the time you will be in Cuba. They are extremely expensive and hard to find.

Suggested Items

Camera, extra memory card Sneakers or running shoes Washcloth, nail brush and clippers Shampoo, cosmetics
An umbrella or rain poncho Earplugs Flashlight Bug spray Snacks (granola or power bars, nuts, etc.) A few
zip-lock bags Pocket Kleenex Hand sanitizer Handi-pack toilet paper for public restrooms Lap-top computer/
printer Water bottle Pictures of family and friends Cuba Handbook (2 *nnl* handbook)

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Courtesy Gifts

Even basic supplies are rationed and always in short supply. You might want to donate pencils to a school or offer soaps to a clinic or family. You will undoubtedly make Cuban friends or be invited to homes. In such instances, any of the following will always be appreciated: Pocket Spanish-English dictionaries, books in English or Spanish (non-political and non-religious proselytizing, please), notebooks, pencils and pens, CD's, mixtapes, over-the-counter medicine, vitamins, toys, fancy soaps, shampoos, cosmetics, baseball caps, T-shirts, sunglasses, reading glasses and used clothing and shoes.

Course Readings and Syllabi

You will be provided with a syllabus when you arrive in Havana. Course syllabi are not as readily available in Cuba as they are in the US so it might be difficult to obtain a copy.

WHAT NOT TO BRING

- Books and pamphlets that preach a political or religious creed, other than for your personal use
- More than you will need for your stay in Cuba
- Expensive jewelry and other valuable belongings

Housing

The best advice we can give you in order to take the most out of your housing situations would be: **Communication.**

You will live with host families during your term in Cuba. They will provide you with daily breakfast and dinner. For lunches, you can explore Havana on your own! Your homestays are located about a 25-minute walk from Universidad de La Habana, where your classes will take place. Lodging is composed of double rooms with private bath, air conditioning, refrigerator. It

is important, however, to understand that the living conditions in a developing country are neither luxurious nor fully functioning. Therefore be prepared for minor inconveniences such as occasional cold showers or low water pressure, a noisy air-conditioning unit or a malfunctioning television. **It is important to remember that these minor inconveniences are an integral part of “the Cuban experience” and can be rich in their educational value.**

For legal and safety reasons, students are required to live in Spanish Studies Abroad housing for the duration of the program. Contracting private housing is not permitted of students enrolled in programs taking place under the auspices of Universidad de La Habana and may be illegal as well. Students entering into a housing agreement are therefore committed to living in the homestay for the duration of their Spanish Studies Abroad program.

You will find that your Cuban family will become like another family for you. They not only welcome you into their homes, they are there to support you in your Havana living experience; tell them if you need something.

The arrangement that Spanish Studies Abroad has with the Cuban families is for them to provide you with a home, meals, support and company during your time in Cuba. Please do not abuse this trust by inviting friends from other study abroad programs to eat meals at your home stay. If a student from another program regularly eats meals at your homestay, Spanish Studies Abroad will bill you for that.

HOUSING RULES

No overnight guests

No drugs or alcohol. Any consumption of drugs may result in arrest and expulsion from the program and the country.

Be respectful of your host family. Have on slippers or shoes when you walk around the house; do not walk around barefoot.

Be fully clothed when walking around the house. Do not wear only a towel if you just got out of the shower. Keep in mind that Cubans are a very sociable and friendly people and they often make unannounced visits, so be sure to be dressed in a decent fashion.

You may use the phone to make local and national calls, but for international calls, please go to an ETECSA center and purchase a calling card. If your family or friends would like to call you be sure to coordinate with them on a time and date.

Do not make international phone calls from your Home Stay. Remember, telephone minutes pass very rapidly and calls can become quite expensive.

Remember that it can be very expensive for Cubans to receive phone calls. If a Cuban receives a phone call on their cell phone from someone using a landline, THEY are charged for the phone call. If you are going to call someone, make sure you use a cell phone. You will also notice that many Cubans communicate via text messaging. Keep in mind that Cubans are allotted 300 phone minutes a month. If usage exceeds that figure, then the families will have to pay a bill. Be sensitive to this as you use the phone in their home.

HOUSING NORMS FOR STUDENTS AND HOST FAMILIES

To ensure a correct and cordial relationship between the host(s), students, and Spanish Studies Abroad, a series of norms and recommendations have been designed. There are minimum conditions designed for all homes in general; it is normal for personality differences to exist between the host(s) and student and there will also be certain differences between one home and another. If you have a doubt, don't understand a certain norm, or would like to make a comment regarding housing, be sure to consult with the Spanish Studies staff in Havana immediately.

YOUR BEDROOM WILL HAVE:

A bed

Closet

Night table

THE BATHROOM WILL HAVE:

Toilet

Sink

Shower

Towels

LAUNDRY:

Once a week; no more than 12 items at a time

MEALS:

Breakfast

Dinner

TELEPHONE:

No telephone in room

DOCTOR:

If a student doesn't feel well and needs a doctor or medication, the following options apply:

A doctor contracted by Spanish Studies Abroad can visit you at your homestay. It will be your responsibility to pay for the doctor visit (\$25).

A Spanish Studies Abroad staff member will accompany you to Cira Garcia hospital. No cost is involved as the Asistur insurance will cover the cost of your doctor consultation.

HOUSING CHANGES:

If unresolvable differences should arise between the student and the household, the student should speak with the Resident Director and also send an email explaining his/her situation and the reasons for requesting a housing change. The Resident director will move the student as soon as possible within 10 days of the decision. Once the host family is informed of the change, we ask that they not discuss this subject with the student to avoid any discomfort.

If the host family desires that the student be moved, the Resident Director will be notified ten days in advance. In the event that the Resident Director must move the student because some or any housing requirements have not been fulfilled, Spanish Studies maintains the right to move the student without previous notice to the household.

In case of any indication of sexual harassment or inappropriate behavior on the part of the host family members, Spanish Studies will move the student(s) to a different home immediately and with no previous warning. Spanish Studies will also stop working with a host family where an issue like this arises. Should there be any case of sexual harassment or inappropriate behavior on the part of the student, Spanish Studies will deal with such issues on a case-by-case basis, moving the student to a different home immediately and terminating enrollment in the program, as necessary.

MISCELLANEOUS:

The student should respect the schedules and customs of his/her host family.

If the student decides not to spend a night in the home, he or she should communicate this to the host family.

The host family will not discuss financial matters related to housing, as this is very uncomfortable for everyone.

If the host family finds it necessary to be absent overnight or on a weekend for any reason they must inform the Spanish Studies staff. Both the Spanish Studies staff and the student must agree to this.

There should be a pleasant environment in the house, where the student feels comfortable and welcome.

The host family should pay special attention not to invite any visitors to the home that could cause an uneasy or unsafe situation for the student(s).

Should the student not leave the home on the program end date, Spanish Studies Abroad is not responsible for paying the host family for extra day(s).

The student may not take his/her friends to the home without previous permission from the host family.

The student may not have guests staying overnight.

If the student's house keys get lost or stolen, for fear that the missing keys may be used to rob the home, the host family may ask the student to pay for a new lock.

The student cannot use articles like towels, sheets, etc. outside the household.

The student's room may not be rented out during weekends or school breaks even if the student is not present.

The house may not have a charcoal, coal-dust, gas, or similar type of heater.

Special Dietary Needs: Vegetarians, Vegans, and Gluten-Free

Meals in Cuba can be repetitive with lots of pork and rice, and very few vegetables. We recommend that all our students be careful about their health, but vegetarians and vegans especially should make sure they are getting enough food and protein. We suggest bringing multivitamins with you, as well as granola or power bars, peanut butter or other supplementary snacks. Ask the Resident Director about any vegetarian restaurants in Havana. While Cubans are starting to offer more vegetarian options, the availability of restaurants that specialize in vegetarian cuisine is not like what it is in the U.S.

Students requiring a gluten-free diet should inform Spanish Studies Abroad right away, so that the Resident Director may search for an appropriate homestay that can serve such meals. Gluten-free foods are not as readily available in Cuba as they are in the United States.

You must let Spanish Studies Abroad know about any dietary restrictions or food allergies. You can do that by including this information on your housing and health forms, emailing info@spanishstudies.org, or calling (413) 256-0011. Please send us a list/description of what you can eat so that we can meet with the host family and prepare for your arrival.

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Public Transportation

Transportation is one of the island nation's greatest problems. The lack of vehicles and the shortage of fuel contribute to difficulty in getting around. As a result, public bus traffic in the capital or elsewhere is extremely crowded and involves waits of an hour or two at busy times. For the average Cuban, it can take days of waiting at a bus terminal to obtain a seat on an interprovincial bus. Trains have similar problems. In light of these difficult conditions, the Spanish Studies Abroad program charts buses through a travel service to provide reliable transportation for group excursions and study visits.

For getting around Havana, you may choose to walk or use taxis. If you have a surplus of time and a shortage of money, you can navigate your way on the metropolitan buses for only 1 peso (moneda nacional) though there are no printed route maps or schedules. Beware of pickpockets when riding in a *^ / M / M^o*r any other bus!

When you don't have the time to spare, there are a variety of taxi services that provide prompt and cheap service. There are three types of taxis, though only one kind of taxi that is officially authorized to carry foreigners. The various "tourist" taxi companies use modern cars in good condition and use meters to calculate the fare. Beware that the rate that is charged on the meter is higher for luxury taxis like Mercedes Benz cars, and lower for smaller cars. Several companies also offer "microbuses" seating up to 14 people for a fee that ranges between 15-20 CUC to any location within 15 kilometers.

Private taxis, or *Un{Zny;Mn WJZXk On{b M^a* usually the old, 1950s American cars, will stop for passengers along predetermined highly-traveled routes, and pick up as many passengers as will fit. Once you manage to stop a *Un{Zn*, you ask the driver if he is going in your general direction (choosing a main street near your destination) and if he is, then he will let you in. The fare is always 10 monedas nacionales per person regardless of the distance. Be aware that if the final destination is in Miramar the price might be 20 moneda nacional. You can pay with CUC if need be.

The third type of taxis are the government-owned black and yellow *1M^o* cars. They charge fares in CUC.

Keeping in Touch with Family and Friends

MAIL AND PACKAGES

The ordinary mail between the U.S. and Cuba takes about one month for delivery, sometimes longer, and is very unreliable. Only letters and other documents can be sent through the mail. No packages are accepted.

There is a post office (*f nxxZny*) not far from the university. Go down the main stairs of the university and proceed down San Lázaro Street. Go the first street light and to your right; across the street is the *f nxxZny*.

TELEPHONE

You will be provided a cell phone to use during your time in Cuba; this will be used to communicate with the Resident Director, your host family, and friends. Please pay close attention to the following rules for usage.

If you go one (1) month without putting credit on your cell phone, the line may be cut and we will no longer be able to use it. **Please put something into your account EVERY month.** You should make it a habit to check your cell phone credit at least every 2-3 days.

Spanish Studies Abroad does not subsidize student use of the cell phones. Students are responsible for keeping their credit up to date.

You may purchase credit (it will look like the card below) for your phone at any hotel, ETECSA or Cubacel.



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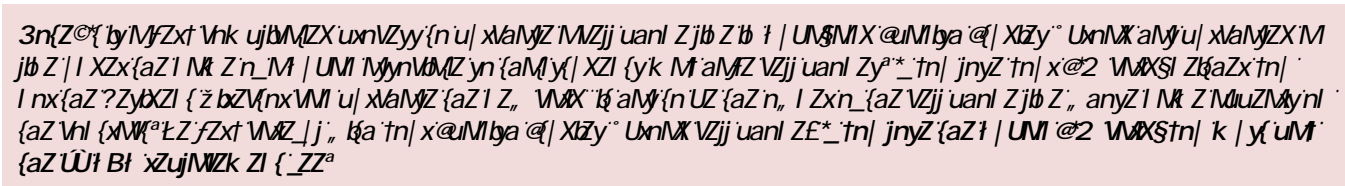
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Every month Cubacel has an offer (usually announced by a SMS message to people’s cell phones) in which during a three-day period customers are encouraged to purchase credit for their cell phones. During this period Cubacel will double the amount of credit that appears on the person’s cell phone. For example if 20 CUC are paid toward your account during the days of the offer, 40 CUC will be credited. However, this offer is only valid if the payment is made from outside of Cuba. This means that your family, relatives or friends have to make the payment to your account from the US.

There are many websites for making payments for your cell phone from the US. We use and recommend [Ding](#) (previously known as “ezetop”). It is a simple process; refer someone at home to the following instructions:

1. Go to www.ding.com, select “Cuba” from the country list and click “Send- top-up”
2. Select “Phone top-up”
3. Enter the Cuban cell phone number (after the country code for Cuba, +53)
4. Select the operator “Cubacel”
5. Select top up amount (how much money you want to add to the cell phone)
6. You will then be prompted to sign up for a Ding account in order to process the payment. The account is free.

We suggest that you budget \$50-\$60 USD for your cell phone use during the first couple of weeks in Cuba.



INTERNET

Host families very rarely have internet access. Students also will have limited access to email and the Internet through the

University; however, technical problems and maintenance delays make the system unreliable. Furthermore, access to some websites (Facebook, Gmail, etc.) may be blocked between the hours of 10:00am-8:00pm daily. Internet access is very limited and expensive in Cuba. See [this helpful blog post](#) dedicated to internet use in Cuba.

We recommend that students go to the major hotels in Havana in order to access their wifi.

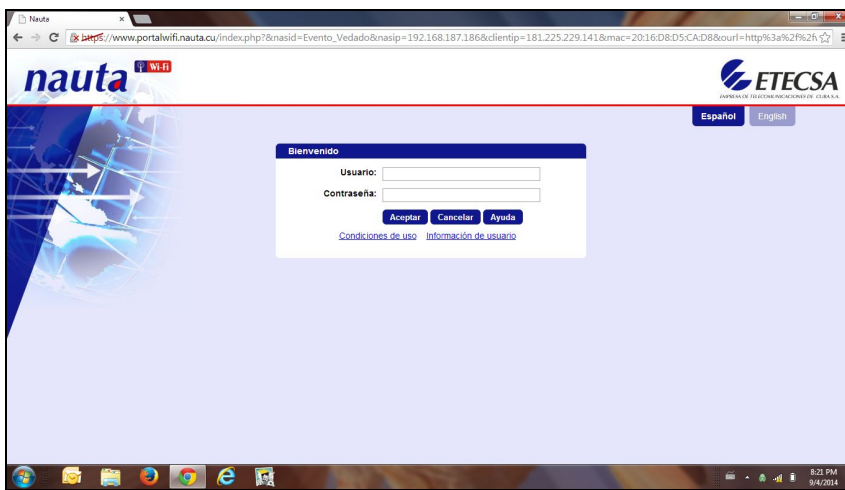
Internet access is available at a cost of between 2 CUC and 5 CUC per hour. At places like Hotel Nacional and Havana Libre, expect to pay 10 CUC for one hour of Internet time. You can usually access the Internet through cards sold by ETECSA.

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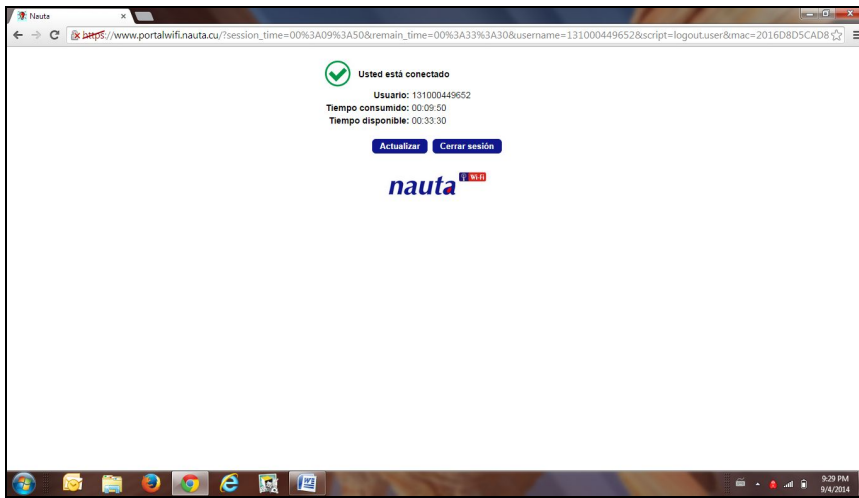
Other things to keep in mind if you are accessing the Internet at a hotel:

Be respectful: Many people choose to work on their laptop in the bar area of a hotel because of the convenience of having a table and a chair. You are free to do this, but be respectful of the bar and order something while you use the Internet there, such as a coffee or soda. Chairs and tables can sometimes be scarce in hotel lobbies. If you go to the hotel with friends do not dominate the space. It is a disservice to the hotel and its guests if three or four students are using their laptops at the tables, especially if they are not purchasing anything from the bar. Keep in mind that sometimes hotel guests might want to sit at a table and have a drink or eat a meal. By taking all of the available tables and chairs you deny them the chance to sit down and you deprive the bar of business.

Logging off: Many people assume that once they terminate their Wifi connection that they are logged out and can return to use the remaining minutes on their Internet card at a later date. This is not true. When you decide to log off of the Internet type this into your URL: <http://1.1.1.1/>. This will take you to the Nauta Wifi Portal, where you can click on the button to end your session.

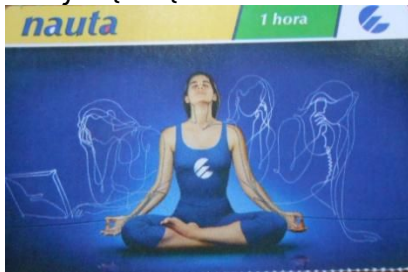


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EMM

EMAIL

If you have a Gmail account, you might want to download the [Gmail Offline application](#). This is useful in that it allows you to compose messages offline and store them in the Outbox, so that when you reconnect to the Internet they are sent. This will save you a lot of time and money if you aren't composing your emails when connected to the internet!

If your university uses the Google email application, you may find that your access to it is blocked in Cuba. We recommend a couple of solutions to avoid this:

- 1) Set up your university gmail account to forward incoming e-mail to your PERSONAL gmail account or other e-mail address.
- 2) Mask your IP address while in Cuba. Go to <http://www.privateinternetaccess.com> and download the program for \$39.95 (one year of access). This way you can log into Gmail as if you are accessing it from London or elsewhere. Remember, you must disconnect from this program in order to completely log off the Internet.

Universidad de La Habana will assign you an e-mail address for you to use while you are in Cuba. You should make it a habit to check this frequently since FEU, the university student group, sends invitations to social activities, movies, lectures, concerts, etc. The e-mail address you receive will follow this model: username@ffh.uh.cu. Remember that on campus the Wi-Fi connection will be slow and access to Facebook, Gmail, etc., will be blocked for certain hours.

VIDEO CALLS AND SMARTPHONE APPS

If you have an iPhone or Android, you might want to download some helpful applications. Skype and Facetime usually do not work in Cuba. You may be able to make video calls with another app called [IMO](#). You can try messaging home over wifi with the app [WhatsApp](#). [Havana Good Time](#) is an app that will provide you with updated lists of events, activities, concerts and restaurants in Havana.

COMPUTERS

In the main library of the university, there are a limited number of computers for writing. There are some computers in the Facultad de Filosofía e Historia as well. Almost all computers at the university have an array of program applications, such as MS Word and MS Excel. Computers may be very slow.

We recommend that if you have your own laptop, you should take it with you. Take special care in keeping your laptop safe and locked. At the university you can have your laptop configured to the campus Wi-Fi. You should also bring a flash drive. Some places have three-pronged outlets while others do not. It is best to bring along with you a two-pronged converter. Keep in mind that it is very rare to find places to fix Apple products in Cuba should your Macbook have issues.

It can be expensive to print documents, make photocopies, or scan something. Hotel Nacional offers printing services but the rate is about 50 centavos per page. Ask the Resident Director about other places to print. Paper is in very short supply and expensive. Keeping in mind that a ream of paper weighs about 5 pounds, you may want to consider packing some plain paper (size 8 1/2" x 11") in your luggage, for your own writing and to share with Cuban students upon your departure.

Attachments you receive by e-mail may be unreadable on the university's computer. Save them onto a flash drive and review them later on your laptop. In Cuba flash drives are a premium and software is used to convert large files into smaller sized documents such as cmd.exe. They will still be readable, but you cannot forward them by e-mail or convert them into other formats on the Internet. You must open each document on your laptop and save it in the format you want.

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Billing Details

Spanish Studies Abroad is affiliated with over 70 colleges and universities. For most affiliated schools, payment is made to Spanish Studies directly by the school. However, billing arrangements vary between universities, so we ask that you pay close attention to the information received with your acceptance letter and in the View/Pay Bill section of your online account.

PAYMENT OF FEES

The non-refundable deposit is due within 10 days of your acceptance to the program. In cases where the school is sending payment directly to Spanish Studies Abroad, you should ask your college or university to discuss this with Spanish Studies Abroad directly.

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Payment must be received by the U.S. office of Spanish Studies Abroad no later than the due dates listed in your online account. Any payment submitted after its due date will be subject to late fees. You will not be admitted to Spanish Studies Abroad housing or classes until all payments have been received. Special arrangements are made only in exceptional cases and may include interest rates and service charges. Your transcript will not be released until all financial obligations you incurred during the school term have been satisfied, including payment for unreturned library books and program cell phone usage.

If you anticipate that you will have financial aid to use toward your program payment, please contact the U.S. office of Spanish Studies Abroad regarding the necessary paperwork to defer your final program payment due date.

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FINANCIAL AID

You must speak with the financial aid office at your home university regarding the school's policies for the transfer of financial aid for study abroad. If financial aid will transfer, there are some forms that must be completed in order to coordinate the transfer of funds and the deferment of the final payment due date if aid will be disbursed after that time. The non-refundable deposit due date may not be deferred, even if the amount will be covered by financial aid.

The Spanish Studies Abroad Financial Aid Deferment Form, included in your online acceptance packet, should be submitted to your home university's financial aid office to be completed and returned to the U.S. office of Spanish Studies Abroad before your program final payment due date. You will also need to make sure that the financial office is able to coordinate with Spanish Studies Abroad regarding any forms that they need completed by Spanish Studies Abroad to transfer financial aid, such as a Consortium Agreement.

Scholarships

SPANISH STUDIES ABROAD SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The Spanish Studies Abroad Scholarship Program is open to all students enrolled in all of our Havana programs. We offer four \$1,500 scholarships for semester programs, five \$500 scholarships for summer programs, and one \$500 scholarship for the January Term among all of our locations. Students may apply for only one of the two scholarship options: The Spanish Studies Abroad Merit-Based Scholarship or the Spanish Studies Abroad Diversity Scholarship.

Award recipients are chosen based on the submission of one original essay in English. For more information about the scholarship program and to download the application, visit www.spanishstudies.org/scholarships.

While all eligible students are encouraged to apply, the Spanish Studies Abroad Scholarship Program is very competitive and only a handful of awards are made per term. Students will be notified of scholarship awards before leaving for their programs abroad. A check is sent to the student's permanent home address after arrival in Havana and is not used toward payment of program fees at Spanish Studies Abroad.

VIDEOGRAPHER GRANT

Spanish Studies Abroad will award a \$50 grant to ten students each semester and summer who are willing to create a brief video sharing their enthusiasm about study abroad prior to their program start date, as well as a second video upon return from their study abroad program. For more information about this opportunity, visit www.spanishstudies.org/scholarships.

SPANISH STUDIES ABROAD ALUMNI SCHOLARSHIP FUND

The Spanish Studies Abroad Alumni Scholar Fund was developed in 2004 and designed to benefit returning students wishing to embark on an additional cross-cultural adventure with Spanish Studies Abroad. Spanish Studies now offers all alumni students a stipend to apply towards another Spanish Studies Abroad experience in Spain, Argentina, Puerto Rico, or Cuba. Please note that **all Spanish Studies Alumni who choose to attend an additional program with Spanish Studies Abroad will automatically receive the Alumni Scholarship**. Alumni who receive an Alumni Scholarship are also eligible to apply for the Spanish Studies Abroad Scholarship Program. Alumni scholarships are as follows:

Semester: \$500
7 Week Summer Term: \$200
January Term: \$100

OUTSIDE SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

For a list of other study abroad scholarship opportunities not offered through Spanish Studies Abroad, please refer to our [Scholarships Page](#).

Possible Additional Fees

TRANSCRIPT FEES

Students whose home college or university requires a transcript from a U.S. degree-granting institution may obtain academic credit and a transcript from our School of Record, Heidelberg University in Tiffin, Ohio; an additional fee of \$250 is charged by Heidelberg for this service. If the student has requested this transcript service due to a home institution requirement, a request form is included with the Spanish Studies Abroad acceptance packet and must be returned to Spanish Studies Abroad before the start of the program. In order to facilitate the issuing of the transcript the student may be billed by Spanish Studies Abroad on behalf of Heidelberg University for the additional fee. Spanish Studies Abroad will then pay Heidelberg University for issuing the transcript.

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Refunds

If you decide not to attend a Spanish Studies Abroad program after you have been accepted, please send us written notification immediately. You can inform us of your decision via email at info@spanishstudies.org

Withdrawal from the program between the final payment due date and 30 days before the start of the program has a penalty of 25% of the program fee. Withdrawal from the program within 1-29 days before the start of the program has a penalty of 25% of the room and board fee and 100% of the tuition, study tours, orientation, and general education fees. There is no refund for any portion of the program fees on or after the program start date.

Please note that these penalties are in addition to the deposit, which is non-refundable.

There is no withdrawal from room and board arrangements with Spanish Studies Abroad during the course of a program. Spanish Studies Abroad will change unsatisfactory lodgings but will not refund any portion of room and board fees after a student's arrival at a home. If the student finds his or her housing to be unsatisfactory, he or she should contact the Spanish Studies staff immediately; Spanish Studies will determine if a housing change is warranted.

Academic Pledge and Program Conditions & Release

In the following pages, please find a copy of the documents you signed as part of the Spanish Studies Abroad application.

ACADEMIC PLEDGE

Spanish Studies Abroad Code of Conduct

Studying abroad requires a significant commitment to personal responsibility. While on a Spanish Studies Abroad program you are, in effect, a cultural ambassador for your home country, a representative of your home institution, and a member of your adoptive community.

In addition to the Program Conditions and Release Statement that all students sign as part of the application process to Spanish Studies Abroad, you also agree to apply the same standards of conduct and academic integrity while abroad as you would at your home institution. These standards include, but are not limited to:

1. Following honest academic standards and maintaining your commitment to academic growth.
2. Strict adherence to host country laws and customs.
3. Respect for your host families and fellow program participants.
4. Respect for Spanish Studies Abroad property, professors and staff.
5. General personal and academic practices in line with those outlined by your home institution.

Spanish-Only Policy

The Spanish-Only Language Policy is fundamental to the educational philosophy of Spanish Studies Abroad. It is a tool that promotes cultural integration and active learning, where students put into practice what they are learning. This is the best way to develop both fluency in Spanish and a deeper understanding of the Spanish culture. The benefits of adhering to the Spanish-Only Policy, no matter your initial language level, are great:

You will improve your ability to understand and express yourself in Spanish.

As fluency increases, you will gain a greater awareness of the local culture as you develop relationships with your host family, professors, and friends.

You will experience a greater feeling of accomplishment in your integration, while demonstrating a higher level of respect towards the local culture.

Living abroad provides an opportunity for total immersion in the language and culture-- but only if each and every student actively seeks out this experience. The immersion experience begins NOW, as you get to know your fellow students on the Spanish Studies Abroad program. You may find that living only in Spanish is awkward and even somewhat isolating at first, but years of experience have proven that it is the best way to improve your language ability. While each student makes an individual commitment to using only Spanish, this is also a collective effort that contributes to the progress of every student. To help you get the most out of your experience in Seville, Alicante, Barcelona, Córdoba, San Juan, and/or Havana, you and all of your fellow students attending programs with Spanish Studies Abroad are required to adhere to the Spanish-Only Policy.

Students are expected to use Spanish in all written and verbal communications while abroad. Students are NOT expected to speak in Spanish when they are faced with an emergency, when speaking with U.S. family members, and on occasions when it is absolutely necessary to use English. However, speaking English in the presence of other Spanish Studies students is considered a violation of the policy and must be avoided at all times-- for example, if you receive a call from your parents when you are near fellow students, you should lower your voice and step out of earshot.

Academic Pledge

1. In signing this Language Pledge, I agree to use Spanish as my sole language of communication while participating in Spanish Studies Abroad programs. I understand that failure to comply with this Pledge will result in a 5 point deduction from the final grade of the mandatory course required of that program and may also result in expulsion from the program without receiving a refund or academic credit.
2. I have read and understood the Language Pledge and Contract, and agree to the conditions.

Student's name: _____

Student's signature: _____ Date _____

PROGRAM CONDITIONS AND RELEASE STATEMENT

I hereby release and discharge The Center for Cross-Cultural Study Inc. and its agents, employees, and representatives from all suits, claims, or liability of any nature arising out of or related to my participation in a CC-CS/Spanish Studies Abroad program including, without limitation, claims for personal injury or property damage.

As a program participant, I authorize CC-CS to share details of my program with my family, my home institution in the U.S., and my host institution, as needed. I also authorize CC-CS to share details of my academic record, such as my home university transcript, with my host institution abroad. Furthermore, I authorize CC-CS to provide my home institution with a transcript of the coursework I complete as a CC-CS participant. I understand that if I am rendered ineligible for a program after my initial acceptance, I am not entitled to any refund from CC-CS. I acknowledge that it is my responsibility to maintain the minimum eligibility requirements from the point of my acceptance until the commencement of my program.

I release all materials from my experience abroad to be used by CC-CS and its affiliates exclusively for promotional reasons. This includes, but is not limited to, photo, print, video, digital mediums and social media posts or pictures. I understand that I can be removed or dismissed from the CC-CS programs at any time, either prior to or after departure, for violating Code of Conduct and other published CC-CS policies.

In the event that a program participant becomes incompetent for any reason, including (but not limited to) injury, accident, mental illness, disease, or loss of consciousness, he/she appoints CC-CS as his/her guardian, and authorizes CC-CS to take any action which it deems appropriate under the circumstances, including (but not limited to) arranging for medical or psychiatric treatment, administering prescription drugs, or transporting him/her to the United States.

[Note: If applicant is under 18 years of age, a parent or legal guardian must sign the following declaration and RELEASE]

I, the undersigned [father] [mother] [guardian] of

a minor, do hereby consent to [his] [her] participation in the CC-CS program and do forever RELEASE, acquit, discharge, and covenant to hold harmless The Center for Cross-Cultural Study, Inc. and The Center for Cross-Cultural Study, S.L. and its officers, agents and employees from any and all actions,

causes of action, and claims on account of, or in any way growing out of, directly or indirectly, all known and unknown personal injuries or property damage which I may now or hereafter have as the parent or guardian of said minor, and also all claims or right of action for damages which said minor has or hereafter may acquire, either before or after [he] [she] has reached [his] [her] majority resulting from participation in any CC-CS programs.