



# Cultural Guide

FOR STUDENTS STUDYING IN  
BARCELONA



SPANISH  
STUDIES  
ABROAD

The Center for Cross-Cultural Study



# Learn the Language...

## Travel the Land...

## Live the Life

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# Know Before You Go: A Survival Guide to Barcelona, Spain

As part of your cross-cultural experience, you will encounter different cultural attitudes and behaviors while you are abroad. This is a guide to help you better understand the cultural norms of where you will be studying, as well as to offer useful information about the city and country. The Handbook relates to Spanish Studies Abroad policies and program related information, and it is equally important to review that information as well. Think of this as an insider's guide to help you quickly and effectively acclimate to your new city and become a *barcelonés/barcelonesa* in no time. ¡Buena suerte y buen viaje!

## Country Profile: Spain

At the end of your program, you'll know more about Spain than you ever could have expected. The following information will give you some idea about Spanish life before you go. Further up-to-date details on Spain and other European countries can be found on the website of the U.S. Department of State at <http://travel.state.gov>.

### BRIEF HISTORY OF SPAIN

The Iberian Peninsula has been settled for millennia and is home to some of Europe's most impressive Paleolithic cultural sites including the famous caves at Altamira that contain spectacular paintings dating from about 25,000 to 15,000 years ago. The Basque people, Europe's oldest surviving ethnic group, are also the first identifiable people of the peninsula.

Beginning in the 9<sup>th</sup> century BC, Phoenicians, Greeks, and Celts entered the region. The Romans followed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC and established the Roman province of *Iberia*, laying the groundwork for Spain's present language, religion, and laws. The Visigoths arrived in the fifth century AD after the collapse of the Roman Empire. Then in the year 711, North African Mauri people sailed across the Mediterranean Sea, swept into Andalusia, and within a few years captured most of the peninsula. *La Reconquista* — the centuries long efforts to drive out the Mauri — lasted until 1492 with the defeat of the last Mauritanian armies in Granada by Spanish forces under King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella. By 1512, the unification of present-day Spain was complete.

During the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Spain became the most powerful nation in Europe, due to the immense wealth derived from its colonization of the Americas. This period was also marked by what would be known as the Spanish Inquisition, a religious tribunal within the Spanish government that sought to maintain the supremacy of the Roman Catholic Church by repressing and expelling non-Catholics. The Inquisition would last until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

A series of long, costly wars and revolts, capped by the defeat by the English of the "Invincible Armada" in 1588, began a steady decline of Spanish power in Europe. Controversy over succession to the throne consumed the country during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, leading to an occupation by France during the Napoleonic era in the early 1800s, and led to a series of armed conflicts throughout much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the revolt and independence of most of Spain's colonies in the Western Hemisphere: three wars over the succession issue; the brief ousting of the monarchy and establishment of the First Republic (1873-74); and, finally, the Spanish-American War (1898), in which Spain lost some of its last colonial possessions – Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines – to the United States. A period of dictatorial rule (1923-31) ended with the establishment of the Second Spanish Republic. It was dominated by increasing political polarization, culminating in the leftist Popular Front electoral victory in 1936. Pressures from all sides, coupled with growing and unchecked violence, led to the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in July 1936.



Following the victory of his nationalist forces in 1939, General Francisco Franco assumed power and would rule as a dictator for the next 36 years. Spain was officially neutral during World War II but followed a pro-Axis policy. Therefore, the victorious Allies isolated Spain at the beginning of the postwar period, and the country did not join the United Nations until 1955. In 1959, under an International Monetary Fund stabilization plan, the country began liberalizing trade and foreign direct investment.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Spain was transformed into a modern, industrial economy with a thriving tourism sector. Its economic expansion led to improved income distribution and helped develop a large middle class. Upon the death of General Franco in November 1975, Franco's personally designated heir, Prince Juan Carlos de Borbón, assumed the titles of King and Commander-in-Chief. The new King Juan Carlos replaced Franco's last Prime Minister with Adolfo Suarez in July 1976. Suarez's administration moved to enact a series of laws to liberalize the new regime and Spain's first democratic elections since 1936 were held on June 15, 1977. Prime Minister Suarez's *Unión de Centro Democrático* (UCD), a moderate center-right coalition, won the largest bloc of seats in the *Cortes*. Under Suarez, the government drafted a democratic constitution that was overwhelmingly approved by voters in a national referendum in 1978.

## COUNTRY OVERVIEW

A member of the European Union since 1986, Spain is a highly developed and stable democracy with a modern economy. Additional information on the country may be obtained from the Tourist Office of Spain online at [www.okspain.org](http://www.okspain.org).

**Capital:** Madrid

**Population:** 47 million

**Religions:** Roman Catholic (predominant), some Protestant and Muslim communities

**Native Languages:** Spanish (official) 74%, Catalán/Valenciano 17%, Galician 7%, Basque 2%.

### Principal Government Officials

**Felipe VI** - King of Spain, Commander-in-Chief of the Spanish Armed Forces (Rey de España, Capitán General de las Fuerzas Armadas de España)

**Pedro Sánchez** - President of the Government (Presidente del Gobierno)

**Santiago Cabanas Ansorena** - Ambassador of Spain to the United States (Embajador de España en los Estados Unidos)

### Government & Legislature

The Kingdom of Spain is a parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy in which the King is recognized as Head of State. The current monarch, His Majesty Felipe II, although technically holding considerable political and military authority, in reality is largely ceremonial and he mostly serves as a cultural figurehead for the nation. Most of his powers have been devolved to the Spanish national parliament. The leader of parliament is styled as the President of the Government, a position comparable to the office of Prime Minister in other countries. As a democratically elected official, the President of the Government exercises actual political authority

The bicameral national parliament of Spain, the *Cortes Generales*, consists of a 350-seat Congress of Deputies (*Congreso de los Diputados*) and a 208-seat Senate (*Senado*). Senators are elected to represent Spain's various regions, while Deputies are elected to represent parliamentary districts based on population. Spanish law dictates that elections must be held at least once every four years. However, elections in Spain are not set on fixed dates, so voters sometimes go to the polls after less than four years. Voting in the country is open to all Spanish citizens aged 18 or older.

### Political Parties

Major National Parties: Spain has a multi-party system at both the national and regional level. Nationally, there are five dominant political parties: Podemos (left-wing), PSOE (center-left), Ciudadanos (center-right), Partido Popular (center-right to right-wing) and Vox (right-wing to far-right).

The current makeup makes it difficult for any other formation or coalition to achieve an electoral majority in the bicameral *Cortes Generales*. Regional parties can be strong in autonomous communities like Catalonia and the Basque Country and are often essential for national government coalitions.

## **Local Government & Administration**

The Kingdom of Spain is divided into 17 Autonomous Communities (*Comunidades Autónomas*) which cover the Iberian Peninsula and the Canary Islands, as well as two Autonomous Cities (*Ciudades Autónomas*) of Ceuta and Melilla on continental North Africa. Each of these autonomous regions elects its own government and administers a variety of areas including public education and universities, local transportation and highways, social services, health care, economic development, and public safety. Several of the *comunidades autónomas* are further divided into provinces which denote historical geographic areas.

## **Educational System**

About 70% of Spain's student population attends public schools or universities. The remainder attend private schools or universities, most of which are operated by the Catholic Church. Compulsory education begins with primary school or general basic education for ages 6-14. It is free in public schools and in many private schools, most of which receive government subsidies. After graduation, students attend either a secondary school offering a general high school diploma or a school of professional education (corresponding to grades 9-12 in North America) offering a vocational training program.

## **Economy**

Spain's accession to the European Community, now European Union (EU), in January 1986 required the country to open its economy, modernize its industrial base, improve infrastructure, and revise economic legislation to conform to EU guidelines. In doing so, Spain increased gross domestic product (GDP) growth, reduced the public debt to GDP ratio, reduced unemployment from 23% to 15% in 3 years, and reduced inflation to under 3%. The fundamental challenges remaining for Spain include reducing the public sector deficit, decreasing unemployment further, reforming labor laws and investment regulations, lowering inflation, and raising per capita GDP.

Following peak growth years in the late 1980s, the Spanish economy entered into recession in mid-1992. The economy recovered during the first Aznar administration (1996-2000), driven by a return of consumer confidence and increased private consumption, although growth has slowed in recent years. Unemployment remains a problem at 12.6% (Jul 2022) but this still represents a significant improvement from previous levels. Devaluations of the peseta (currency used before the introduction of the euro in 2002) during the 1990s made Spanish exports more competitive, but the strength of the euro has raised recent concerns that Spanish exports are being priced out of the range of foreign buyers. However, this has been offset by the facilitation of trade among the euro nations.

## **People**

The citizens of modern-day Spain are overwhelmingly (88%) ethnic Spaniards whose mixed ancestry dates back to the Mauri people of the Middle Ages, the Romans, and pre-Roman Iberian people. Approximately 12% of the country's population consists of foreign-born residents including temporary residents from across the European Union and a growing community of immigrants from North Africa, Latin America, and Eastern Europe. With the exception of the highly populous inland city of Madrid, Spain's population is concentrated along the country's nearly 5,000 kilometer (3,100 mile) coastline.

Most Spaniards (90%) nominally belong to the Roman Catholic Church, though roughly two-thirds of them report that they are non-practicing. The Spanish Constitution of 1978 disestablished the Roman Catholic Church as the official state religion, while recognizing the role it plays in Spanish society.

## **Language**

The Spanish language is the country's official language and is the native tongue of the vast majority of Spaniards. Much like how the English language originated in England – a region of what is today Great Britain – the Spanish language originated in the early Middle Ages in Castile, a region of central Spain. For this reason, the language is sometimes referred to by its alternative name, Castilian or *castellano*.

In several regions of Spain, other native languages are spoken alongside Spanish. Notably, the Basque language is famously spoken in the north by roughly one-third of the population of the País Vasco and neighboring Navarra. In northwestern Spain, most residents of the autonomous community of Galicia speak Galician or *galego*, a dialect of Portuguese. The Catalán language is widespread along Spain's northeastern Mediterranean coast, in the autonomous communities of Catalonia and the Balearic Islands. Catalán is also spoken in parts of the Valencia region where the local dialect is commonly referred to by the term *valenciano*. Most speakers of these various languages can also speak Spanish

fluently as a second language. Likewise, many Castilian-speaking Spaniards learn these regional languages in the local public school systems.

The Spanish language in Spain is marked by the use of the *vosotros* for the plural second-person familiar conjugation. Another unique aspect is the pronunciation of the letters “z” and “ci” with a “th” sound. When traveling in the country, you will learn that there are a wide variety of different regional accents and colloquialisms, just like in your home country and in your native language.

## **BARCELONA OVERVIEW**

Barcelona is one of the world’s leading tourist, economic, trade, and cultural centers. Its influence on commerce, education, entertainment, media, fashion, science, and the arts makes it one of the world’s major global cities.

**Province:** Barcelona

**Autonomous Community:** Catalonia

**Population:** 1,621,537 (2<sup>nd</sup> largest city in Spain)

**Land Size:** 803 km<sup>2</sup> (310 sq mi)

**Languages:** Spanish, Catalán

### **History**

When relating to the history of Barcelona, it is better to think in terms of the whole of the Catalonia Province. In 1479, the death of Enrique IV of Castille brought Isabel I (1479-504) to the throne and due to her previous marriage to Ferdinand II (1479-1516) of Aragón, there was the beginnings of what is known today as Spain. Of the two thrones it is possible that the most important of the crowns at the time was the Kingdom of Aragón which included the region of *Cataluña*.

The period in which the town was founded is buried in history but it is known that in the Bronze Age there was a “Laietani” tribe in the *Cataluña* region. Hasdrubal Barca, the son-in-law of the famous Hannibal, created a Carthaginian settlement here and gave it the name of “Barca” or “Barcino”. The Romans, after its capture in 133 BC, renamed the place as “Colonia Favencia Julia Augusta Paterna Bacino”. In the 4th century the Romans improved its defenses by building thick town walls which later proved insufficient against the Visigoth forces of Ataulf in 415 AD took the city and named it “Barcinoma”.

In the Roman occupation of the Iberian Peninsula, the capital of one of the three areas was the City of Tarragona, lying on the coast and to the south of Barcelona. However, in the 5th Century when the Visigoths replaced the Romans they moved their capital to the present Barcelona. History informs us that the inhabitants’ individual identity and their own language became initially established around the year 801 when the Emperor Charlemagne’s son King Louis captured northern Catalonia. In 874, a new Frankish King Charles “the Bald” granted independence to Count Wilfred “the Hairy”, who created the County of Barcelona which bordered to the west and south on a collection of autonomous groups of Mauri States. In 1118, the King Alfonso I of the new kingdom of Aragón took Zaragoza to make it his capital. Later his niece Petronilla was married to Count Ramón Berenguer IV ruler of the Catalán Province thus making one large Kingdom of Aragón. Within decades the power base of Aragón moved from Zaragoza to Barcelona. The fiercely independent attitude of *Catalán* subjects is emphasized by the extraordinary and unique “oath of allegiance” given to their Kings. The literal translation is:

*“We, who are as good as you, swear to you who are no better than we, to accept you as our king and sovereign lord, providing you observe all our liberties and laws; but, if not, not”*

During the 12th Century to the end of the 14th Century the Catalans based in Barcelona controlled and commercially exploited an empire that included the Balearic Islands, Sicily, Malta, Sardinia, most of Greece, and a minor segment of France. Also, their maritime control was so great that most of the Mediterranean trade was regulated by them. In fact, King Jaime I in 1259 compiled and established Europe’s first maritime code, “Llibre del Consulat del Mar.” In the early 14th Century the fighting and marine qualities of the people of *Cataluña* was legendary throughout the Mediterranean with the most opulent city in all of the peninsular with a large shipbuilding industry and its boats sailing to places such as the Black

Sea and down as far as Senegal on the west coast of Africa. In 1391 there was a recorded massacre of the Jewish citizens of the city.

Although the Kingdoms of Castille and Aragón were brought together under the rule of Fernando and Isabel, they were governed through two independent systems. In Castille the system of "Cortes" (parliament) and the nobles were strongly influenced by the throne, whilst in Aragón, towns such as Barcelona and Valencia governed themselves through their own parliaments. The Aragón right of self-determination had to be respected! A man of the times was an Aragón cardinal by the name of Pedro de Luna. He somehow arranged to be elected as Pope Benedict XIII, but his teachings were soon thought to be "anti-pope". When requested to abdicate in 1409, he refused and had to be forcibly removed, retiring to Peñiscola and subsequent obscurity.

The beginning of the 15th Century brought a complete change to the fortunes of the Catalán which now covered an area that included the regions of Barcelona, Zaragoza and Valencia. Causes for their collapse were many and included bad financial speculation, plague, the Genoese competition, unsettled home rule, and importantly, the skillful manipulations of the developing Genoese traders. The heirs to the now crown of Castile, Aragón and *Cataluña*, were intent on raising more taxes to furnish their vast imperial building needs and conveniently ignoring the oncoming bankruptcy of their State. It is recorded that Queen Isabel specifically issued a codicil in her will prohibiting Catalán merchants from trading with the "New World", as their American conquests were known. It was in the royal court in Barcelona in 1492 that the explorer Christopher Columbus first returned from his famous voyage announcing his discovery of the "new world".

The situation in *Cataluña* in the early 1600s was such that the people were rebelling against the power of Felipe IV and the constant battles between Spain and France and also seeking once more their independence. In 1652 rebellion broke out between the crown and *Cataluña* as it is referred to as the *Guerra de Segadors* (Reapers' War 1640-1652). At first King Louis XIII of France sent troops to support Barcelona, but later made a Treaty with Spain that handed *Cataluña* back to Felipe IV with the exception of the northeast corner which was ceded to France.

The rule of Carlos II of Spain (1665-1700), heralded a period of disliked taxation brought about by the King's favorite, the Count-Duke of Olivares. The Catalán took the law into their own right and after a long series of uprisings, eventually murdered the Castilian Viceroy, the Count of Santa Coloma, and placed themselves under the protection of France in 1640. King Louis XIII of France was named as the new Count of Barcelona. Castille reacted by sending a force which was defeated by a French-Catalán army on Montjuich in Barcelona. It took twelve years for the Catalán to find that they were no better off with the Bourbon Kings, and returned back to the fold.

The first Bourbon King, Felipe V of Spain (1700-1724), decided shortly after taking the throne to exercise his power and change the medieval style of government much to the dislike of all of his subjects. Barcelona decided to mistakenly support the claims of Archduke Charles against the Bourbon pretender King Philip V in the War of Spanish Succession (1701-1713). When the English abandoned the cause by making peace with France in 1711, the Catalans continued in their independent struggle until all was lost in 1714 and they eventually surrendered their capital of Barcelona. Barcelona fell to the army of the king in the same year and the King vowed revenge. Destroying a large section of the city and its inhabitants, he had a large fortress built called *La Ciudadela* to remind the citizens who was their ruler. In 1778 the crown gave permission for *Cataluña* to trade with the American colonies which once more brought wealth back to Barcelona.

More or less accepting their fate, the upper classes of the Catalán quickly realized that past independence was closely allied with financial security and set about rebuilding their industries and eventually making Cataluña once again the center of industrial power in Spain. It is interesting to note that when the French invaded Spain in 1808, and also during the Spanish War of Independence (1808-1813) that followed, the Catalans lent their full support to the return of the House of Bourbon.

In 1874, a Catalán by the name of General Prim declared with his followers that Spain was to be a Republic. He quickly lost support and the Second Carlist War commenced. This was short lived and a compromise was reached between the battling parties when General Martinez Campos placed the Bourbons back on the throne as his puppets in 1876. A settlement between the two sides was drawn up and when basically translated it allowed each side to share the power alternatively. During the next three decades the country blossomed economically and culturally. At this time Barcelona had the good fortune to have as its city mayor Francisco de Paula Rius i Taulet whose forward thinking ideas created the Barcelona Great Exposition in 1888, having removed all trace of the hated fortress *La Ciutadella* constructed under Felipe

V. Each region, the Catalans, the Basques and the Andalusians, all developed their own industry and commerce and found political freedom - Liberals, Nationalists, Republicans, Socialists, Communists, and the party of the Anarchist CNT.

Political freedom became particularly important for the Catalans from the 1860s onward. Powerful poems by such as Jacinto Verdaguer and Joan Maragall inspired the ordinary people with strong nationalistic feelings and embraced most political barriers. The effect was twofold, an impressive new and long period of artistic creativity and at the same time emotional and industrial unrest. The latter was so strong that it became an opportune example to the rest of Europe. Extremes manifested themselves in all areas including education, religion, and workplace. Riots became commonplace and anti-church demonstrations occurred in 1835, 1909 and in the 1920s. These riots were far from peaceful and blood was often shed to the point of death. The revolt of 7 days in 1909 has been recorded as the *Setmana Trágica*, with over 100 buildings badly damaged and over 100 people dead. Barcelona in the 1920s was known as one of the most radical and bloody places in Europe and acquired the nickname "Barcelona – anarchism's rose of fire". At the height of unrest the industry owners hired assassins to murder troublesome Union leaders. Meanwhile, the population of the city had expanded from a mere 110,000 in the beginning of the 1800s to over a million by 1930 due to the demand for labor in its industrial expansion.

When Alfonso XIII (1902-1931) was forced to abdicate in 1931, *Cataluña* decided to declare itself as a Republic in the "nonexistent" Federation of Iberia. This desire for independence of Madrid encouraged other cities and helped to create the ungovernable state of Spain which in 1936 led to the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). Barcelona and the Catalans became the font of the Republicans' cause. When the Nationalist leader General Godeu arrived from Mallorca the Republicans were already armed and in control of their city. He was arrested and later shot. In the beginning period of the war the POUM (Workers Marxist Unification party), ruled the town with a severe hard hand. In 1937 disagreement between extremist factions led to a three day killing spree in the streets which left over 1,500 dead. Later Barcelona was to be ruled by the Republicans in the Generalitat and the political party CNT with Lluís Companys at the head. There are countless books available which recount the many atrocities that were committed during this period. Someone had the crazy idea to pour quantities of petrol over the famous stone *Sagrada Família* by Gaudi, happily for history this proved a dismal failure! The author George Orwell recorded in 1936 that Barcelona had taken an extreme Republican stand with everyone becoming a part of a classless society in which even doctors and lawyers wore overalls to hide their identity. At the end of the war in 1939 with the fall of Barcelona to General Franco's Nationalist forces many thousands of its inhabitants escaped at great speed to exile in France. The General immediately banned the Catalán language from schools, its books, and even its traditional dance called *Sardana*. To replenish the drop in population Franco found an answer to another problem. The unemployed rural families from Andalucía were moved to *Cataluña* to fill this gap but the success of this idea is still in doubt as many of the new immigrants adopted a typical Catalanian political craving for independence.

Once again the powerful Barcelona families applied their skills and it was not too long before their industries were once more up and running creating many jobs and not only attracting back its previous labor force but also a new wave of immigrants. Much as the strong dictatorial power of General Franco (1939-1975) tried to suppress the Catalán, the strength of their craving for self-independence was never extinguished. Shortly after the death of the General the inhabitants of *Cataluña* restored their language and their own culture, as well as the rule through the Generalitat. In 1992 the city was the host for the Summer Olympics which was also used by the city mayor Pasqual Maragall to reorganize the city districts and clear up many of the unwanted sections. Today, Barcelona is as we know it, a city vibrant with its traditions, contrasts, passion and endeavor.

The Catalán language is spoken by some six million people and should not be taken as a dialect of the Spanish language. It has its own grammar, which can be complicated, its own spelling, and when spoken it gives the impression of being a cocktail of Spanish, Portuguese, French and French-Provençal. Officially the Province of *Cataluña* is bilingual but many signs, including most street directions, are only displayed in the Catalán language. For more information, visit [www.spain-barcelona.com](http://www.spain-barcelona.com).

### **Economy**

The mainstay of the Barcelona community's economic life is based on cultural commitment to manufacturing. Barcelona's reputation as a world center for art, architecture and design is growing yearly with a plethora of cultural activities on offer. Besides the highly developed economy and rich culture, Barcelona also has high quality education. It is the seat of several universities and many other educational institutions.



Barcelona is Spain's foremost center of industry, both heavy (iron, steel, copper) and light (especially textiles). Traditional industries range from shipbuilding to skilled handicrafts. Textiles, machinery, automobiles, locomotives, airplanes, and electrical equipment are the chief manufactures. International banking and finance are also important. Additionally many Spanish publishing houses are concentrated here. Tourism first became important in the late 1950s. Barcelona today is a very popular destination. So popular that it is getting really hard to find hotels to stay during official vacations or international fairs. But because of such a boom, a lot of hotels in Barcelona have been built and they offer comfort, quality and great value for the money, ideal for leisure and business travelers.

Barcelona, as the capital of the autonomous region of Catalonia, accounts for more than a quarter of Spain's GDP. The growth of the economy has been the driving force behind Barcelona's physical expansion and the region benefits from a large local market of some four million people.

Barcelona has a highly diversified economic structure, in contrast with other major cities that are heavily reliant on one or two sub-sectors. One of the major economic features of Barcelona is the high relative weight of its industrial base, which greatly exceeds the average of other European metropolitan areas. Barcelona built its industrial might on its centuries-old status as one of Europe's most important ports, a status it maintains today, with container traffic hitting record levels in recent years. Madrid might be the political and financial capital of Spain, but Barcelona holds sway as its most culturally and industrially vibrant city. Barcelona has highly specialized industrial sectors that are competitive and focused on exports, including the automotive, consumer electronics, chemical and pharmaceutical, food and energy industries.

### **People**

Although Barcelona has undergone a process of de-densification since the 1970s, with large-scale emigration to surrounding towns, it has never ceased to be an important destination for immigrants from other parts of Spain throughout the 20th century, and more recently from abroad, mainly the European Union, Latin America and North Africa.

The general patterns of immigration can be seen in the figures of place of birth. In 2000, 58% of the population was born in Barcelona, 8% in the rest of Cataluña, 27% in the rest of Spain, and 7% abroad. Of these, the most important donor regions are Latin America and North Africa. Of the Latin American immigrants, more than half (56%) come from Ecuador, Peru and Colombia, and there are significantly more women than men, a reflection of the destination of many of the migrants in domestic work.

## **Practical Information**

The following section includes some additional information and tips to help further prepare you for your time abroad and lessen any confusion you may have on simple tasks such as making calls, handling money, and knowing what to expect from the weather. Reading these tips could save you that extra headache or frustrating moment.

### **Making Phone Calls**

Most students find that the easiest to call home is through Zoom, WhatsApp, FaceTime, etc. Whichever way you choose to communicate, if you want to stay connected on-the-go, it's recommended to get a Spanish SIM card, as WiFi might be hard to find outside your home and university. If your phone is unlocked, you can find cheap prepaid SIM cards at any phone shop. The most common prepaid provider is Vodafone, more information on their packages can be found here: [www.vodafone.es/c/particulares/es/productos](http://www.vodafone.es/c/particulares/es/productos). Once you buy your *prepago*, you are able to top up your package each month through a pay as you go concept. The cost will be between 10-15€ per month, depending on the package of your choice. If your phone is not unlocked, then it might be easiest to get a cheap new phone that is open to all SIMs for the duration of your stay. This can be purchased at home or once you arrive to Spain. Ask at your local phone shop, what the best option for you is!

If your family needs to know how to call your landline or cell phone number in Spain, or if you need to be able to reach them from a regular phone, here is some calling advice below.

The major calling codes you will need to be aware of:

- Spain's country code is +34
- Barcelona's area code is +93

## Landlines

Spanish landline phone numbers total nine digits: a two or three-digit area code and a six or seven-digit phone number beginning with the digit 9 (or sometimes 8) but excluding 90 and 80.

This is what a landline number in Barcelona will look like:

Area Code	Phone Number
93	xxx-xxxx

To make a call from landline to landline in Barcelona, simply dial the 7-digit phone number. If you need to call a landline somewhere else in Spain, you will need to dial the 9-digit Area Code + Phone Number.

If your friends or family need to call a landline from North America, they should follow these instructions:

Exit Code	Country Code	Area Code	Phone Number
011	34	93	xxx-xxxx

## Mobile Numbers

Spanish mobile phone numbers are assigned a 3-digit mobile code based on the provider and usually begin with the digit 6 (or sometimes 7), followed by 6 digits.

This is what a mobile phone number will look like:

Mobile Code	Phone Number
6xx	xxx-xxx

When making a call to or from a Spanish mobile phone the same rules apply as in North America. You must dial the 9digit Area/Mobile Code + Phone Number.

## Calling North America

As we said before, Zoom, WhatsApp, FaceTime, etc. will probably be the easiest and cheapest way to call North America from Spain. They will provide instructions on how to place these calls.

If you ever need to call a North American phone directly from Spain, follow these instructions:

Exit Code	Country Code	Area Code	Phone Number
00	1	xxx	xxx-xxxx

## EMERGENCY NUMBERS WITHIN SPAIN:

General Emergency – 112

## U.S. Embassy

Embassy: Calle Serrano 75, 28006

Madrid Mailing address: PSC 61, APO AE 09642

Telephone: [34] (91) 587-2200 FAX: [34] (91) 587-2303

## **Consulate(s) general: Barcelona**

U.S. Consulate General Barcelona

Paseo Reina Elisenda de Montcada, 23

08034 Barcelona, España

Tel. (+34) 93 280 22 27

Fax (+34) 93 280 61 75

E-mail: [Consularbarcel@state.gov](mailto:Consularbarcel@state.gov) (for questions regarding American Citizens Services only) Office hours: 9:00am – 1:00pm

## **HOW TO HANDLE MONEY IN BARCELONA**

The currency of Spain is the Euro, which is commonly represented using the sign €. The best way to deal with spending money in Spain is to use a combination of a credit card, an ATM/debit card to get cash, and then keeping some traveler's checks on hand in case of emergencies. A few notes on each:

### **Credit Cards\***

Major credit cards (like Visa and MasterCard, primarily) are widely accepted in Spain, although not as widespread as in North America. You can use them for purchases at most stores and at nicer restaurants, but be aware that some small restaurants, shops, pharmacies, and bars will accept cash only. It is better not to depend on cash advances from your credit card for spending money.

### **ATM/Debit Cards\***

If you have an ATM/debit card, it can be used just the way you would use your credit card. It can also be used at most Spanish ATMs all over the city to obtain local currency. Any card that is on the Plus or Cirrus network will work at Spanish ATMs; check the back of your card to be sure that those symbols are listed. Please note that your PIN must be **four digits long** so if yours is not, you will have to change it before you go to Spain. Sometimes there are additional fees, which might make you want to rethink how frequently you will withdraw money while in Spain. Also be aware that you may not be able to see your balance on the Spanish ATM. Make sure you can either check your balance on-line or have someone check it for you at home.

In addition to any transaction fees that your home bank may charge, Spanish ATMs can charge fees as well, so be sure to pay attention. There are numerous ATMs located throughout Barcelona, including a Caixa Catalunya ATM on the Pompeu Fabra University campus. In the past, students have found the lowest rates at the following ATMs: Banco Cam, Bancaja, and BBVA.

### ***\*Note on Credit and ATM/Debit Cards***

Some banks/credit card companies block international transactions for security purposes so make sure you inform your bank/credit card company that you will be living overseas and the length of your stay. You should also inquire at your bank about any additional charges you might encounter when using your ATM card or Credit Card abroad. If the fees seem unreasonable, you may want to shop around to see if there is another company/bank that you want to set up an account with before you go abroad.

If you lose your debit/credit card while you are in Spain and they won't send it directly to Spain, you should have the new card sent to your home address in the US/Canada. Once received, it should be mailed to you via an express mail service (DHL or FedEx) so that you will have the replacement card in about 5 business days.

### **Traveler's Checks**

Traveler's checks, although not as common as they used to be, are good to keep on hand in case you lose your credit card or debit card. You can cash them at several places, including banks, the airport, and any number of currency exchange windows in the touristy parts of town. Keep in mind that you will be charged a commission. To avoid a higher commission, purchase travelers checks in Euros instead of dollars.

One of the advantages of traveler's checks is that if they get stolen, they will be replaced by the issuing company. Read the instructions provided with your traveler's checks very carefully for more about this. Also, if your credit/debit card is lost, stolen or demagnetized, your bank may not have a quick and efficient way of replacing it while you are out of the country.

That is why it is best to have a back-up of traveler's checks in a safe place in your home. It's probably a good idea to bring \$300-\$500 in the form of traveler's checks. If you cash one or several traveler's checks at the same time, you will be charged only once so it is in your best interest to cash as many traveler's checks as you can at the same time, but do not cash traveler's checks for more than \$1,300 at one time, as the commission will be much higher. Also if you end up not using them while overseas, you can always cash them back in when you return home.

If you need to receive money while you're in Spain, there are a few ways to do that. By far the easiest is if your parents or someone at home can simply deposit money into your bank account for you to withdraw at the ATM. Some banks even allow free transfers from one account to another if you both have the same bank. Aside from that, however, you can have money wired to you through Western Union, which has locations on La Rambla, Calle Carme, Calle Lepant, and Travessera de les Corts, or through MoneyGram.

### **Tipping**

With regard to tipping in Spain, they typically don't do it. Sometimes people will leave some change to round to the nearest Euro at a restaurant, but that's about it.

### **International Student Identity Card**

It is highly recommended to apply for an International Student Identity Card (ISIC). This card double as an international Student ID and offers discounts for cultural and tourist activities, gyms, hotels and hostels, train, bus and flight tickets, restaurants and many more. The card costs between 4 and 25USD, depending on your country of origin. Some universities, banks and phone providers are able to issue an ISIC card for free! You can apply for the card online or at an ISIC office near you. For more information on ISIC discounts and how to apply visit [www.isic.org](http://www.isic.org)

### **WEATHER IN BARCELONA**

Barcelona and its metropolitan area have a Subtropical-Mediterranean climate with mild, humid winters and warm, humid summers.

#### **Winter**

Winters in Barcelona are mild. December, January and February are the coldest months, with average temperatures around 14 °C (57 °F) during the day and 5 °C (41 °F) at night. Slight frost at night is more common on the hills around the city and in the depths of the metropolitan area (far from the sea). Frost during the day never happens in the city and metropolitan area. In winter the predominating temperature during the day is 10–17 °C (50–63 °F), only yearly for about four days temperatures are recorded below 10 °C (50 °F).

#### **Summer**

Generally, the "summer" / "holiday" season lasts about six months, from May to October. July and August are the warmest months, with average temperatures around 27–30 °C (81–86 °F) during the day and 20-24 °C (68-75 °F) at night. In June and September the average temperature is around 25 °C (77 °F) during the day and 15 °C (59 °F) at night, however in May and October the average temperature is around 21 °C (70 °F) during the day and 13 °C (55 °F) at night. Heats with temperature above 32 °C (90 °F) usually only happen in August.

#### **Transitional Months**

Two months – April and November – are transitional, sometimes temperature exceeds 20 °C (68 °F), with average temperature of 17–18 °C (63–64 °F) during the day and 8–9 °C (46–48 °F) at night.

During the months of May and June, the temperature will slowly climb back up to around 30°C (86 °F). The sun will be hot, especially during *siesta*, but the air will be dry. July and August are the hottest months of the year, with average daily temperatures as high as 30°C. Keep cool, drink lots of water, and take advantage of the hours of *siesta* to stay in your nice, cool home.

## **Being a North American Abroad**

Before you travel abroad to a new and unknown place, it is helpful to be aware of the different stereotypes and predispositions that Spaniards may have about you as a North American. North Americans and other foreigners in general may have a bad reputation in parts of the world. They can be perceived as demanding, noisy, not speaking the local



language and expecting everyone else to speak theirs—and that doesn't even begin to cover whether people in other nations agree with your home government's policies and actions. It is important to recognize that these stereotypes exist, but it is also your job to represent your country in a positive light and try to demonstrate that not every North American fits the above stereotypes. Below are some helpful tips to think about before you go abroad so that you can come across as knowledgeable and culturally aware.

- Educate yourself about Spain, Barcelona (*Cataluña*) and the culture there - This guide is a resource to assist you with learning background information and the cultural norms of the country, but you can also read books and go online to find out additional information before you go.
- Read basic factual and historical information on your host country - Be prepared for questions that Spaniards may ask you about the United States or Canada such as basic history, politics, and current events.
- Learn about current events in Spain - It is also helpful to be aware of what is currently going on in the country in regards to the economy, politics, news, etc. Remember, Spain is part of the European Union, so it wouldn't hurt to know a little bit about that as well.
- Keep an open mind, sometimes things in Europe work differently from North America. It's part of the experience!

### **Culture Shock**

Culture shock is a natural and common feeling that many students may experience when they study abroad. Basically, it is a feeling of being overwhelmed and confused by how unfamiliar your new surroundings seem. Although it might feel unconquerable when you experience it, you'll get through it as everyone does. Culture shock is generally broken down into a number of stages:

1. *Honeymoon Phase*: You arrive in Spain and you think, "This is great! Everything is new and exciting and I love it here!" You're having tours of the city, you're meeting new people, getting to understand the language more easily; everything is going really well and you're so glad you decided to study abroad.
2. *Hostile Phase*: After the excitement of being in Barcelona starts to wear off, you may start to feel negative and frustrated with adjusting to the culture. You might feel like it takes forever to get anything done, you can't talk to your parents as much as you like, you're tired of all the new foods, locations, daily routines, and having to speak Spanish all the time. You might even start to wonder why you ever decided to study abroad in the first place.
3. *Understanding/Sense of Humor Phase*: After a while, you accept the cultural differences that surround you, and things start to feel okay again. As you get to be more familiar with the Spanish culture and lifestyle, you start to appreciate it more and become more confident in your surroundings. You are able to laugh at the misunderstandings that once made you so angry.
4. *Integration Phase*: You become accustomed to the good and bad aspects of Spanish culture and you incorporate them into your own life. Spanish lifestyle becomes part of your lifestyle; you like afternoon *siesta*, you love olive oil on your toast, you feel comfortable and happy in Barcelona. This phase will last for the rest of your time abroad.
5. *Re-entry Shock*: When you go home again, you will experience another type of culture shock. You find that things at home have changed and that you have changed too. You don't know any of the songs on the radio or the phrases people are using. You may feel frustrated by others' lack of knowledge about issues that affect the country you've grown to love. You will miss your daily life in Spain and worry that you're talking too much about your experiences abroad.
6. *Reintegration Phase*: You will get comfortable at home again soon; you'll be happy to see your family and friends, and you'll always remember your time in Barcelona. You'll be able to express to people what was so meaningful about your experience and will be able to take the lessons you've learned abroad with you as you go on in life. You'll find that you are a changed person, more mature, more experienced, and with great memories of Spain.

If you feel like your culture shock is overwhelming you to the point where you need to talk to somebody about it, please speak directly with the Resident Director. Our Barcelona staff is very supportive and always available to help you get through any difficulties you may experience while you're abroad.

## Gender Roles

Although it is quickly changing (check out [this article](#)), you may notice that in Spain men and women still tend to carry out traditional gender roles sometimes. In your Spanish home, it wouldn't be uncommon to see that oftentimes your host mother does all of the cooking and cleaning; and it may appear that men in the family take that for granted.

### The *Piropo* (cat-calling)

You will likely encounter a cultural phenomenon called the *piropo* (something like a catcall). What this means is that, if you are a woman, you may get shouted at on the streets of Spain. "*Eh, guapa, ven aquí...*" It is almost always harmless, but it can make you feel uncomfortable nonetheless. The best way to deal with a man who shouts a *piropo* to you is to just ignore him and keep on walking. **Remember that *piropos* are only annoying shouts. Physical contact and/or incessant harassment is never okay and is not acceptable no matter where you are.**

Things to remember when it comes to *piropos*:

- Some are worse than others but all are annoying.
- Forget your manners; it is best not to make eye contact and smile at strangers on the street, especially to strange men yelling at you on the street.
- Keep on walking and don't respond. If the person is persistent, say "*Déjame en paz*" or something similar.
- Unfortunately it still forms part of the culture, so the men might not think that what they're doing is offensive.
- If a *piropo* turns into physical contact or you experience any other uncomfortable incident, talk with Spanish Studies staff; always feel free to call the emergency number.

## LGBTQ+ Students Abroad

Spain is often considered to be very friendly towards LGBTQ+ individuals. Federal laws have been enacted to protect the rights of LGBTQ+ citizens and same-sex marriage has been legal throughout Spain since 2005. Many Spaniards view homosexuality with a sense of passive indifference; if you are respectful towards them, they will respect and accept you.

LGBTQ+ communities and some social scenes are present in several of the country's major cities, including Seville, Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, and other locations.

Still, it is worth noting that LGBTQ+ acceptance is a relatively new concept in Spanish society. Some traditional conservative values do exist, particularly among the older generations and among those residing in rural areas of the country. If you identify yourself as gay or lesbian and you intend to share this fact with others while studying abroad, be prepared to answer occasional frank questions from your Spanish peers. Spaniards can sometimes be very direct and so these types of questions are simply their way of expressing interest and meeting their curiosity. Note that *Eixample Esquerra* is a particularly LGBTQ+ -friendly district in Barcelona.

When talking with others about your sexuality, it is up to you to decide whom to tell and when to tell them. The Resident Director, as well as our staff in both Spain and the United States, is always available to answer your questions and concerns, so you can feel comfortable speaking with them on this subject. Whether or not you identify as LGBTQ+ , recognize that there may be gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender students on your Spanish Studies program and in your classes in Barcelona. It is important to be respectful and to approach this reality with an open mind.

We hope that the following resources (courtesy of IES Abroad) can be a useful guide:

[LGBTQ+ Travel Information](#)(Department of State)

[Sexual Orientation Maps](#)(International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association)

[LGBTQ+ Study Abroad Guide](#)(Goabroad.com)

[Trans Legal Mapping Report](#)(International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association)

## Religious Diversity

The religious make up of Spain reflects its ethnic homogeneity. Spain is 84% Roman Catholic, however, a sizable portion of Spaniards are non-practicing Catholics. Although the Roman Catholic tradition has helped form modern-day Spanish values, you will find that many Spaniards do not adhere strictly to the policies set forth by the Catholic Church.

If you are following religious traditions different from Roman Catholicism, it is important to explain to your host family and Spanish friends what the tradition means to you. Keep an open mind about people's reactions to your religious beliefs; it is possible that they've never met someone with your religious persuasion before. If you are respectful of other people's spirituality, they will be respectful of yours.

Communities of religious minorities can be found in metropolitan centers. For example, there is a synagogue and Jewish Center located on *Calle Amigó* in Barcelona. It is possible to become involved in any religious community while studying abroad, just ask our staff and they'll point you in the right direction!

### **Race and Ethnicity in Barcelona**

A former Spanish Studies student was once asked by a Spanish friend about her ethnic background. She went into detail about all the different countries her ancestors had come from. The Spanish friend responded: "That's the difference between us. When I think about my heritage, I see Romans and Arabs." Spanish society is fairly homogeneous—or at least they like to think of it that way. Spaniards are Europeans and generally, they do not use terms like "Latino" to refer to themselves.

Barcelona is a major cosmopolitan city and one of the most diverse cities in Europe, with a large number of tourists and international students residing there at any given time. In recent years, Barcelona has seen an increase in its foreign population, with about 12% of its inhabitants being foreign born. The majority of the immigrant populations come from Central and South America, other EU countries, Asia and Northern Africa. You will find that most people of color in Barcelona are from South America, Pakistan, China and Northern Africa. As is the case in most European countries, Spain is slowly adjusting to the impact of immigration on society. Black and Asian students especially may find that they feel very different in Spain. You may get stared at in the streets or asked ignorant questions. You'll overhear some of the frustrating racial stereotypes that are built into the Spanish language (the term "*trabajo de negros*" is often used for physical work, while "*trabajo de chinos*" is used to describe detail-oriented work; Muslims of all backgrounds are often referred to as *moros*, referring to the Moors of modern day Morocco who controlled parts of the Iberian Peninsula during the Middle Ages).

Just as women should ignore strange men who shout and stare at them, as a racial minority in Spain, it is not your responsibility to change the views of the whole country. Comments and rude behavior from strangers do not merit a response on your part; on the other hand, we don't want you to pretend that nothing has happened. One way to get through the discomfort you might feel is to talk about it. If you feel uncomfortable in any situation or if you just need to talk about your feelings, contact the Resident Director, and let her know what is going on. Crossing cultural boundaries always involves some degree of social discomfort, at some point or another. Students of color have told us that while they have encountered isolated instances of racial prejudice in Spain, these incidents did not make their overall study abroad experience any less enjoyable.

### **Comments from African-American Students**

Students of African ancestry sometimes ask if they will face unique challenges in Spain. We thank the following alumni for their comments directed to fellow African-American students:

"While in [Spain] there were several instances when locals spoke to me in Arabic or French on the street. I thought that it was interesting to blend in as a local. Although you may encounter negative stereotypes for these groups of people living in Spain, it can also enrich your cultural awareness during your time abroad." *Holley Quisenberry, Heidelberg University*

"Compared to the United States, some cities in Spain are not as culturally diverse. You might receive stares or certain looks from people, perhaps out of curiosity because of physical appearance. Whatever the case may be, don't let these things hinder you. In the beginning, you may be annoyed, but try to turn the situation around by speaking to them, or just ignore it." *Erecka Matthews, Xavier University-New Orleans.*

"Remember to purchase all of your hair care and hygiene products before you come to Spain. Although there are different varieties, not all of them are offered here." *Felicia Jamison, Mercer University.*

### **Safety**

As a visitor in another country, it is always a good idea to not draw attention to yourself, but it is especially helpful not to draw attention to yourself as a foreigner. Many Spaniards perceive North Americans to be affluent, so you may feel that

you're treated differently. At the same time, travelers of all nationalities are targets of petty theft. To avoid being labeled as a typical tourist, there are a few rules you should follow:

1. Don't speak English loudly in the streets. This can easily attract pickpockets and scam artists, and could get you in even more trouble late at night—especially if you are in a less safe area of a city.
2. Don't walk with your phone in hand. If you have to check a map, go to the side of the street and check while standing. Walking while staring at your phone identifies you as a tourist and makes you an easy target of theft.
3. Don't walk by yourself at night. Just as in any large city, nighttime is when many thieves will try to target tourists who are heading back to their hotels. Either walk with a friend or take a taxi any time you are out late. Any restaurant or club will call one for you.
4. Don't wear clothes that will instantly identify you as a tourist (e.g. Athleisure, flip flops, baseball caps).
5. Don't invite thieves by wearing expensive jewelry or by visibly carrying cameras, cell phones, or electronic music players. In Spain it is common knowledge not to take out your wallet on the street. Also, if you are at a restaurant, never put your purse on the back of your chair or on the floor where it can be easily snatched up. Try to keep it in your lap or somewhere where you can keep a close eye on it. Also, don't leave your phone on a restaurant table in more touristy areas, even if you're sitting at the table, always keep it in a pocket or purse.
6. Don't leave your belongings unattended—no wallets placed on bars, no purses left at your table, no jackets left on the backs of chairs, and don't leave anything on the ground next to you.
7. Be extra cautious while using public transport (subway, bus, train) and hold on close to your belongings. Backpacks and purses are easy targets, so make sure to have your zippers somewhere where you can see them. It is best to keep them in front of you.
8. If you're walking alone: walk confidently! Thieves and scam artists will most likely look for victims who are distracted, look insecure or hesitant. So even if you don't feel like showing confidence, especially if you're in an area you feel less safe in, fake it 'til you make it.

Students unaccustomed to city life will learn to be more cautious when walking the streets of Barcelona. Spain is a safe country, but while living in Barcelona, you should still follow the same safety precautions you would in any big city in North America, and basic common sense should rule your actions. Although petty theft is the most common type of crime in the city, this does not mean that you are immune from any other type of dangerous situation. According to the [travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1024.html#crime) website information on Spain "In Barcelona, the largest number of incidents reported also occurred in major tourist areas—on Las Ramblas, Barcelona's El Prat Airport, Sants train station, Metro stations, in the Sagrada Familia Area, in the Gothic Quarter, in Park Güell, in Plaza Real, and along Barcelona's beaches. There have been a number of thefts reported at the Port Olympic Area and nearby beaches." ([http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_1024.html#crime](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1024.html#crime)).

If an emergency situation does arise remember to call 112 and please contact the Resident Director immediately.

## **Travel the Land...**

You may be used to having a car, but obviously while abroad you will not have one, and generally people in Spain tend to use the public transportation system, as well as intercity buses, *tranvía* (streetcar), metro and trains, more than in the United States.

### **Getting around the city**

You will most likely walk or take the bus or metro to the university from your homestay. Public transportation in Barcelona runs quite frequently and makes it easy to get around the city. In Barcelona things are rather close together, so it is also easy to walk around the city center. There are also bicycles for rent, or if you are in a rush, taxis are plentiful.



Public transport is often the most efficient way to get you from A to B. In Barcelona, you can find busses, the metro, trams and the train services Ferrocarrils de la Generalitat de Catalunya (FGC) and Rodalies de Catalunya. All of these can be used with your *Àrea de Barcelona*-ticket. Tickets can be bought online, at T-mobilitat kiosks and at ticket machines in any metro and major bus stops. Train tickets can be bought online or at train stations. To access the metro, you have to scan your ticket when entering the station. Busses and trams need validation as soon as you step inside, you will find little machines to “stamp” your ticket close to the entrances. When using the train, you will also need to scan your ticket as you enter the station. Hold on to your train ticket, as you will need to scan it again to leave the station at your destination!

The metro and *tranvía* run until midnight on weekdays. Fridays and Saturdays have longer operating hours, the metro even runs all night on Saturday! Busses run all day and night, but bear in mind that the schedule of the *Nitbus* will differ and busses run less frequently. The best way to figure out your route is through Google Maps. It provides you with the quickest way to get to your destination and shows any delays and alternative routes.

Individual ticket 2.40€, T-Día ticket (one-day) 10,50€, T-10 ticket (ten rides) 11,35€, T-Usual (unlimited rides or 30 days) 40,00€; T-Jove (3 months and unlimited rides for youth <25) 80€. Depending on how much you plan to use public transportation, the Usual or T-Jove will give you more “bang for your buck.” For information about the public transportation system, visit <http://www.tmb.cat/en/home>.

## Getting around Spain

The best way to visit other cities in Spain is either by bus or the train. Both run frequently from the center of Barcelona. The trains are a great way to experience the countryside and are very comfortable and punctual. The buses tend to be less expensive and a great alternative for shorter distances. There are three stations serving Barcelona that head to different parts of Spain: Estació de Sants Bus & Train Station, Estació del Nord Bus Station and Estació de França. You will want to be sure which one you need to go to before you head off.

**Bus** – Estación del Nord. You can find information about bus tickets and schedules, and other information about getting around Europe/Barcelona. <http://www.barcelonanord.com> **Train** – [www.renfe.es](http://www.renfe.es)

## Getting around Europe

Since all of Europe is only about half the size of the continental US it is very easy to see many different places during your time in Spain. The train is always a popular option since they often have overnight options for longer trips as well as discounts for those under 26. Train stations are generally located in the city center making travel easy once you have arrived at your destination. The trains also serve smaller cities and towns that may not be easily accessed by planes. If you want to conquer Europe by train or bus you can use the App *trainline*, that gives you the option to view and book any train or long distance bus connection in Europe. Long distance busses, though usually less comfortable, are often a much cheaper option to travel. The major bus operator in Europe is *Flixbus*. If you applied for an *ISIC* International Student Identity Card you receive a -10% discount on all *Flixbus*-bookings. In southwestern Europe *alsa* and *Blablabus* are also common bus companies that run mostly through the southern parts of Spain, France and Portugal. Keep in mind that even though trains and busses are a safe, sustainable and mostly comfortable option of transport, medium and long distance tickets can get expensive, especially during holidays and tourist seasons. Try and book your tickets as far in advance as possible!

Air transportation is an option since Barcelona is served by a major airport. You will find that airlines like RyanAir, Vueling, EasyJet and WizzAir provide very inexpensive and direct flights to many destinations around Europe. Just keep in mind that they may charge for bags and other things that will not be included, and sometimes tend to cancel flights with short notice. The best and cheapest way to book flights is through Skyscanner or Google Flights.

- Ryan Air – [www.ryanair.com](http://www.ryanair.com)
- Vueling – [www.vueling.com](http://www.vueling.com)
- Easy Jet – [www.easyjet.com](http://www.easyjet.com)
- [WizzAir - www.wizzair.com](http://www.wizzair.com)
- Skyscanner - [www.skyscanner.com](http://www.skyscanner.com)

## In and Around Barcelona

**Sagrada Família** – The masterpiece of Antoni Gaudí stands in the middle of the city. Gaudí began work on the Sagrada Família in 1883 and continued devoting his last years working on it. He died in 1926. Although the church is unfinished, it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is the most visited landmark in Barcelona. The intricate façade on the outside, and beautiful designs on the inside are not to be missed!

**La Rambla** – Barcelona's most famous street, your trip to the city will not be complete without exploring Las Ramblas. With the wide array of shopping, restaurants, street vendors and performers, the area is always buzzing with excitement – day and night.

**Parc Güell** – Antoni Gaudí designed a one-of-a-kind park right in Barcelona. The park has a beautiful view overlooking the city with an assortment of bright and colorful flowers, plants and tiling. Other Gaudí attractions include La Pedrera (Casa Milá), Casa Batlló, Casa Vicens and Casa Calvet, along with several monuments and fountains in many parks throughout Barcelona. You won't want to miss them!

**Montjuïc** – If you like history and want to explore one of Catalunya's oldest fortresses, this makes for a great visit. You can take a cable car from the beach to the castle, hike to the top to see the tremendous views, or watch an outdoor movie at Sala Montjuïc in the summertime! It is recommended to visit during the daytime. Also, while you're there, be sure to visit the Museu Nacional d'Arte de Catalunya (MNAC).

**Tibidabo** – Barcelona's highest point is home to the city's historic amusement park and church of the Sacred Heart. From the top of Tibidabo you can see breathtaking views of the whole city, tour the Temple *Expiatori del Sagrat Cor*, and enjoy one of the many rides in the amusement park that dates back to 1909.

**Museums** – If you like museums, there are many to enjoy in Barcelona. You will want to make time for the Museu Picasso, La Sagrada Família Museum, La Pedrera, Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA), Museu Futbol Club Barcelona de Camp Nou, Barcelona Center of Contemporary Culture (CCCB), Moco Museum for modern and contemporary art, Museu d'Història de Catalunya, and Maritime Museum.

**Historic Sites** – You will most likely see these during your orientation or other study visits, however not to miss are: Barri Gòtic (Gothic Quarters), La Seu Cathedral, La Boqueria and Arc de Triomf.

**Beaches** – Right on the Mediterranean Sea, Barcelona has some of the most famous beaches in Europe and a beach season lasting from March 15<sup>th</sup> – November 15<sup>th</sup>. Barceloneta, Nova Icaria, Bogatell, Mar Bella and Sant Sebastià are a few of the major beaches in the city that you won't want to miss. However, be sure to keep an eye on your belongings, as pick-pocketing is common in these areas.

## Day/Weekend Trips from Barcelona

**Montserrat** – Hiking and the famous Monastery & choir boys

**Costa Brava and Figueres** – the beaches of the Costa Brava and Salvador Dalí Museum

**Tarragona** – Roman ruins and large amusement park, Port Aventura

**Sitges** – A small, LGBT+-friendly town south of Barcelona with gorgeous beaches

There is plenty more information about where to visit on our Facebook page:

[www.facebook.com/SpanishStudiesBarcelona](https://www.facebook.com/SpanishStudiesBarcelona).

## Live the Life...

You will probably find that your daily life in Barcelona is not too different from your daily life in North America. You will spend most of your time studying, hanging out with friends, exploring the city and participating in extracurricular activities

that interest you. Although the lives of college students in Spain and North America are fairly similar, here are some differences that you should be aware of.

### **Meeting Spanish Friends**

Spanish people are friendly, open, and generally eager to meet new people. However, you will need to make an effort to introduce yourself to them. You will have many opportunities in Barcelona to meet Spanish friends. Some of the best ways are through the Speaking Partners program (a conversation exchange with a Spaniard), Spanish Studies fiestas, or just by going out to the places on campus and in the city where Spanish students hang out. Also, if you are taking courses with Spanish students at a local university, be sure to talk to students in your classes and hang out on campus as much as possible. They may not approach you, so you might have to step out of your comfort zone and reach out to them.

There may or may not be people your age in your home-stay. Make an effort to get to know everyone in the family, including friends and relatives who may visit. Talk to them as much as possible; they are there to help you and you might feel more comfortable making mistakes with them than with your peers. As part of the program you will be assigned a Speaking Partner; try to meet with this person on a regular basis, as he or she will introduce you to friends and show you their favorite spots around the city. If it is not working out and you are not able to meet up very often, inquire about a new Speaking Partner.

### **How to Dress in Spain**

In general, you may find that most Spanish people tend to dress up a little more than what you might be used to at home. Whereas it is very common on a North American college campus to run quick errands or even go to class in sweatpants or pajamas, Spaniards 'get dressed' any time they leave the house. You will see some young men wearing t-shirts or soccer jerseys, but you'll also see a lot of people in nice pants and formal shoes. People do also wear nice fitting jeans and often combine this with trendy athletic footwear (e.g. vans or converse). The type of shoes you wear to the gym is not the kind of shoes you will see out. Most people get very dressed up when going out at night, and you will probably want to, as well. In fact, certain *díscotecas* have strict dress codes and will not allow people that do not meet the standards (e.g. no sneakers, shorts, baggy pants, etc.)

If your goal is to fit in among your Spanish peers, avoid wearing yoga pants and flip flops definitely don't wear baseball caps or athletic-looking sweat suits. Don't be surprised if people stare at you if you have any of these things on – they can tell you're American. Nice, fitted clothing is what most Spaniards wear, and that is a sure way to blend in as best you can. Of course, as with anywhere in the world, you'll find some people who dress a little differently, maybe more "punk", more alternative or more sporty. The main thing that you may want to avoid is dressing too casual (e.g. in shorts, sweatpants, and sneakers or flip-flops every day), at least until you get a better idea of how comfortable you are in your new environment and with your new friends.

## **University Life**

### ***Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB)***

Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB) courses meet on the UAB campus of Sant Pau (World Heritage modernist building). UAB academic activity is also done on the campus of Cerdanyola del Valles, Sabadell, Manresa, Terrassa and Sant Cugat del Vallès.

The University is home to 37.166 students and offers 105 undergraduate degrees, 328 postgraduate programs and 90 doctoral programs. UAB is the second best university in Spain, according to the 2022 QS World University Rankings. You will find that UAB has most of the conveniences and aesthetics that are found on a traditional North American campus such as beautiful landscaping, modern architecture, open grassy quads, cafeterias, cafes, banks, convenience stores, book stores, libraries, athletic facilities, computer labs, wireless internet, and museums.

Classes have a similar feel to language and content courses in North America with a smaller student-instructor ratio and an interactive atmosphere. Given that these courses are offered to all non-native Spanish speakers, you will find many students in your classes who are not from North America. Integrated courses with Spaniards tend to meet in larger lecture halls and are typically more instructor-centered with less student interaction.

## **Universitat Pompeu Fabra (UPF)**

*Universitat Pompeu Fabra* (UPF) is centrally located in Barcelona with three campuses (Ciudadella campus, Mar campus, Poble Nou campus) between Las Ramblas and Marina Avenue. Founded in 1990, UPF is one of the top universities in Spain. The university is home to 11,200 students who participate in 19 undergraduate programs and 46 postgraduate programs. You will find that UPF has most of the conveniences and aesthetics that are found on a traditional North American campus such as beautiful landscaping, modern architecture, open grassy quads, cafeterias, cafes, banks, convenience stores, book stores, libraries, athletic facilities, computer labs, wireless internet, and museums.

Most courses meet on the UPF main campus (Campus de la Ciudadella). International Studies courses are taken through UPF's Study Abroad Program and have a similar feel to language and content courses in North America with a smaller student-instructor ratio and an interactive atmosphere. Given that these courses are offered to all non-native Spanish speakers, you will find many students in your classes who are not from North America. Integrated courses with Spaniards tend to meet in larger lecture halls and are typically more instructor-centered with less student interaction.

## **ELISAVA**

Elisava, the Design and Engineering Faculty of Universitat de Vic - Universitat Central de Catalunya (UVic-UCC) is the fourth best Catalan university and sixth in Spain. It's located in the heart of Barcelona on *Las Ramblas* and hosts over 20,000 students a year from around the world, so you can expect to have quite the multicultural experience on this campus! ELISAVA offers specialized courses in the fields of design, engineering and communication entirely in English. There are endless [facilities](#) on campus such as a medialab, electronics and interactions lab, and motion capture room (MOCAP).

## **Housing**

Typically Spanish university students live at home, in a student residence (privately run, not a university building), or a private apartment with other students. With Spanish Studies Abroad in Barcelona, you will live in a home-stay with a local family.

Homes in Spain tend to be smaller on average than a typical North American home. Many Spaniards live in flats (apartment-style homes) or small houses with very little yard space, especially in and around cities and large towns. Very few Spaniards live in large detached homes with sprawling yards.

In a home-stay, oftentimes "families" may not be the traditional family students expect. Your family could be a widow or single woman, an older couple whose children have grown, two sisters living together, or it could be a family with children your age and younger. Many of these families will take in students as a form of extra income. Regardless, they are all friendly, kind people who have been interviewed and whose houses have been inspected before we agree to have them provide a home for our students.

Energy costs are high in Spain, so you may notice your host family turning off the lights if you leave them on and they may ask you to take a shorter shower. Be respectful of these differences and do as your host family does—be conservative with water, heat, and electricity.

## **The Dorm**

Your program will be staying in a private residency, or *residencia*. This is a unique opportunity for Americans to live and make friends with Spanish-speakers their own age.

*Residencias* (student residences) are private companies unaffiliated with any school or university. The universities in Spain do not have dorms available for their students. When possible, Spanish students typically live at home with family members. The students in the *Residencias* are a mixture of Spanish Studies students, Spanish students from the surrounding area, and international students from Latin America and Europe. This makes for a global atmosphere that's conducive to language learning and cultural exchange. Students generally live in a double room.

For your program, the *residencia* you will be staying at is: Residencia Onix

<https://www.residenciaonix.com/en/>

When you arrive, you will be asked to complete some check-in forms. This includes a room condition checklist, which will be turned back in to the *residencia* staff. Once you get to your room, take note of everything that is there, and the condition it is in. This will help ensure that you have everything you need for your stay, and avoid



any issues when you move out at the end of your semester.

## Mealtimes and Food

Your host family will provide you with three meals per day: *desayuno*, *comida* or *almuerzo*, and *cena*. Here is what you can expect from Spanish meals:

### Desayuno

This is not a major meal in Spain. You get up in the morning, and have a small amount of food – probably just toast – and either coffee or hot chocolate/chocolate milk. You would be hard pressed to find a Spanish person who has ever eaten eggs for breakfast instead of lunch, and pancakes are unheard of (although pancake mix and maple syrup as a gift can make you a hit with your hosts for the entire stay)!

Coffee (*café*) is served many ways: *solo* (black, more like espresso), *cortado* (just a hint of milk), *con leche* (half milk, half coffee; like a latte), or as *leche manchada* (lots of milk, very little coffee).

The other morning beverage of choice is “*Cola Cao*,” a powdered chocolate milk mix that can be served hot or cold—and it’s really tasty.

Toast will be served with olive oil, butter, margarine, or jam. The bread will most likely be fresh from the neighborhood bakery, not store-bought sliced bread. You might also see small muffins or croissants for breakfast.

Some of you may be used to eating a large breakfast every morning and will have to adjust to the Spanish *desayuno*. It’s normal for Spaniards to have a mid-morning snack around 10:30 am, but if you’re looking for a big English/American breakfast, check out *Milk Bar & Bistro* (Carrer d’En Gignàs, 21). They serve pancakes, eggs, French toast and other familiar breakfast foods that can cure a case of homesickness. You can also shop at *Taste of America* (Carrer de Balmes, 322) for pancake mix, maple syrup, cereal and other breakfast favorites.

### Comida

*Comida*, or *almuerzo*, is the biggest and most important meal of the day. It is generally eaten between 2:00 and 4:00 PM and consists of two dishes. One is usually vegetables or a soup and the other may be some sort of meat, fish, or eggs usually with fried potatoes or a salad. You will also most likely have either fruit or yogurt for dessert. During this time, most businesses will be closed, but you can find just about every restaurant in the city buzzing with customers.

### Cena

*Cena* is another small meal, although more substantial than breakfast. It is generally served between 9:00 and 10:00 PM and usually includes a bowl of soup and then fish, a Spanish *tortilla*, or possibly a sandwich or *bocadillo*. Don’t be surprised if your host mother serves leftovers during this meal, especially if there is a lot left over from *comida* the day before. On weekends it is typical for large groups of friends to go out for tapas around this time. Each person orders one tapa and shares it with the group; depending on the restaurant, a *bocadillo* may also be served with the meal.

## What you might expect from Spanish food:

Spaniards tend to rely heavily on locally raised and grown food which helps explain the differences in regional Spanish cuisine and the seasonal availability of certain foods. Although this may restrict your diet in certain ways, the food you eat will probably be fresher than what you are used to in North America, given that it has not traveled very far to get to your table! Seafood is used a lot in Spanish cuisine, especially since Barcelona is right on the Mediterranean.

You can expect to have ***pan con tomate*** served with a lot of your meals, which is a thick slice of bread with a tomato, olive oil, garlic and salt. Be cautious while dining out, as this does not come free with the rest of the meal! Spanish food will probably seem strange to you at first. You’ve probably never eaten fried eggs and hot dogs together in your life, let alone for lunch. You may get a little nervous when you see the deep fryer in your host family’s kitchen. Your salads may be made of just iceberg lettuce with tuna, olive oil and vinegar, or a tomato and raw onion salad. Trust us: it will grow on you. Sooner than you know you’ll be back home and having some major cravings for a *bocadillo de jamón serrano* or a few *churros*.

You can't expect to get the same things you'd have at home. For example, most households won't have a jar of peanut-butter sitting in their cupboard. Most Spanish families drink water at lunch and dinner—usually tap water, which may have been chilled in the refrigerator. If there is yogurt in the refrigerator, it's probably for dessert at lunch or dinner, so don't take it for a snack without asking first! In fact, always ask your host family's permission before taking anything for a snack.

There are a number of foods that will become a part of your daily life in Barcelona. Below you will find a description of some of the most important foods you may have while in Spain, but many you'll have to discover once you arrive. Don't worry: it will be a pleasant surprise.

**Tapas-** *Tapas* could be anything- this is a way of eating rather than a type of food. *Tapas* are small servings of food. You'll typically have them at a party or out at a restaurant with friends, when you just want to have a bite to eat while socializing. You'll get to try all sorts of things at once.

**Jamón serrano-** *Jamón* is a very important food in Spain. You will probably be surprised at how much ham there is in Spanish cuisine. The favorite ham product in Spain is *jamón serrano*, a salted, cured ham that is sliced thin and is typically served either on its own, with cheese or in a *bocadillo*. *Jamón serrano* is often compared to prosciutto. It is such a big part of life there that you will see it everywhere. You'll probably see a leg of *jamón* in your kitchen; you'll certainly see one in grocery stores, bars and restaurants around the city. They even have *jamón* flavored potato chips!

**Tortilla** (*tortilla española* or *tortilla de patatas*) - This is one of the favorite and most common dishes in Spain. It is, for all intents and purposes, an omelet, but not the type of omelet you are accustomed to. This *tortilla* is chock full of fried potatoes (sometimes onions or another vegetable as well), and very thick and dense. It is served everywhere and for everything. You can get it in little pieces for *tapas* at a party, it will be served in big wedges at your place of residence for a meal, or it can even be sliced up and stuck between two halves of a baguette for a sandwich or *bocadillo*.

**Bocadillo-** A *bocadillo* is a sandwich served on a baguette. It usually only has one filling, which can be ham or pork, sausage, tuna, cheese, *tortilla*, and a few other items, depending on where you go. A *bocadillo* may be served with mayonnaise, ketchup, or spicy *salsa brava*. Most *bocadillos* in Barcelona will have the olive oil, garlic and tomato smear on the bread along with the filling that you choose.

**Paella-** One of the most popular dishes in the coastal region consisting of rice, vegetables, and either meat or seafood. In Barcelona, a regional variation of *paella* is made with *fidueá*, which is a type of noodle. This dish is usually meant to be shared with a large group of people, but can be ordered individually while dining out.

**Botifarra-** a type of sausage used in many Catalán dishes. It is often grilled and served with white beans and aioli in a dish called *botifarra amb mongetes*.

**Crema Catalana-** a Crème brûlée-type custard with caramelized sugar, cinnamon and orange or lemon zest.

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

Although this is rapidly changing, there are relatively few people restricting animal products in Spain compared to the United States. As you can see from the description of the importance of ham and other pork products, Spanish culture is not particularly veggie-friendly. It is possible, however, to be a vegetarian or vegan in Spain; especially in a large city like Barcelona!

As a vegetarian or vegan, you should be very careful in restaurants and make sure that dishes that are seemingly vegetarian don't have ham in it. Some people in Spain don't even consider fish or chicken as real "meat", so it's better to play it safe and tell your host-family and waiters exactly what you are not able to eat. The same goes for students who have gluten/lactose intolerances - although you might think there's no way that certain dishes have bread/lactose products in them, think again; Spanish people love adding bread and/or cream to soups and other dishes to add flavor and texture. Two commonly used sauces, *salsa brava* and *salsa de calçots* are traditionally vegan, but be careful with the olives! Almost any olive without a pit will be filled with anchovies. If you don't eat fish, be sure to ask for olives *con hueso*.

This goes for any olives in drink or food. Again, always specify your allergies when dining out as well as to your host-family to avoid any digestive issues.

Most supermarkets carry your typical veggie and gluten/lactose-free products such as Hummus, milk and yoghurt substitutes, Tofu and other protein alternatives, all sorts of legumes, frozen goods, sweets and many more. While there's less options in small supermarkets, you can be sure to have a great variety of your diets products at *Aldi*, *Lidl* and *Carrefour*. *Veritas* and *Ametller Origen* are stores focused on organic, vegan and vegetarian, and health-related foods. Though they can be more expensive than your everyday *supermercado* you can be sure to find whatever you need. Another option is to shop at the small Asian markets, as they have a great deal of vegetarian, vegan, lactose free and rice/legume-based products.

Most restaurants will have decent vegetarian options for lunch and dinner, but as a vegan or gluten-free person you might have to lower your expectations, especially at typical Spanish eateries. A few classically Spanish and animal-free options are *pan con tomate*, *paella de verduras*, *pimientos de padrón* (fried green peppers with sea salt), *patatas bravas* (deep-fried potatoes, if you're vegan make sure to ask for *salsa a parte* as one of the sauces could be mayonnaise), *escalivada* (eggplant and red pepper in olive oil) and various salads. As for coffee you're in luck, it is very common to find soy or even oat milk in Spanish cafés, just make sure to ask for your *café con leche de soja/avena*!

Barcelona is a cosmopolitan city and home to cuisines from all around the world. You can find plenty of non-spanish restaurants offering amazing options that suit your diet, just like in North America. A handy guide is the web application or App *Happy Cow*, which lists anything food related that offers vegetarian or vegan options. You can find great cafés, ice cream shops, bakeries, and restaurants on *Happy Cow*. As in most cities, it is easier to find vegetarian, vegan and gluten-free based eateries in the trendier parts of town. Take a walk through Poble Sec, Gràcia or El Born and you will find yourself surrounded by suitable delicacies! And of course, don't forget to ask the Resident Director for their recommendations - they are experts in everything Barcelona, after all!

If you plan to change your diet and begin eating fish, meat, or dairy, you should start incorporating these foods into your diet before you leave, so that you will not be sick at the start of your program in Barcelona. You must let us know about any dietary restrictions or food allergies so that we can find appropriate housing for you. You can do this by emailing [info@spanishstudies.org](mailto:info@spanishstudies.org) or calling (413) 256-0011.

**NOTE: Some dietary accommodations may require an additional fee.**

For more information on being a vegetarian or vegan in Spain, visit this link:  
[http://www.spainexpat.com/spain/information/the\\_vegetarians\\_survival\\_guide\\_to\\_spain](http://www.spainexpat.com/spain/information/the_vegetarians_survival_guide_to_spain)

### **Siesta**

Every day after *la comida* people usually take a *siesta*. You've heard of *siesta* before, but you may not be familiar with what it really means. We generally take it to mean "nap." Really, *siesta* is a time to rest. It generally starts around 4:00 PM—when most shops begin to close—and can last until 7:00 PM. It can be very disconcerting to find out that there is little to do during *siesta*. Almost all the shops (except for the big shopping centers) are closed. Depending on your class schedule, you will go home for lunch with your family, after which they may sleep or watch TV. You really have no choice but to relax, read or study, go for walks, or possibly go meet friends for a *café* or *cerveza* toward the end of the *siesta* period. If your class schedule does not permit you to return home for lunch, your *señora* will pack you a lunch to enjoy while relaxing wherever you like. This is another aspect of Spanish life that will probably throw you off at first. But, as with the food, you'll probably be desperate for a *siesta* when you head back to college for the next semester!

### **Shopping**

As mentioned before, some shops begin to close down around 3:30/4:00 P.M. every afternoon so that the employees can go home for *la comida* and *siesta*. Most stores will begin to reopen around 4:00 or 5:00 PM and will stay open until around 9:00 PM. In the city center, large shops and department stores usually remain open all day. Most small/private shops are generally open Monday through Saturday and are closed on Sunday. Just like during *siesta*, almost every business will be closed on Sundays, so plan your days accordingly.

Shopping in Spain is very specialized; you buy medicines at the pharmacy, and only the pharmacy. You buy shampoo or feminine hygiene products at the grocery store. If you need your watch fixed, you go to the watch store; if you need an alarm clock, you go to the electronics store, etc. The only large department store you'll find in Barcelona is *El Corte Inglés*. They have everything from CDs to clothes to sporting goods to groceries. They tend to be more expensive than other stores, so you might be better off finding the small specialty shops and making your purchases that way. You will also get a lot of individual attention at all Spanish stores. You should greet the store employees when you go in, and say "*hasta luego*" when you leave. If you need something specific, the easiest and most common thing to do is simply walk into the store and ask the employee for what you need. Browsing on your own is not something people usually do, except at large clothing stores like Zara or H&M.

Here are a few helpful hints on where to look for what you need:

I need to get...	Go to...
School supplies (notebooks, folders, pens...) Stamps Cold Medicine Batteries ( <i>pilas</i> ), headphones ( <i>auriculares</i> ), etc. Memory cards Condoms	Una papelería Correos o un estanco/una tabacalera Una farmacia Una tienda de productos electrónicos  Un estanco/una tabacalera, una tienda de Fotografía Una farmacia o un supermercado

### Social Activities

We want you to have fun in Barcelona; your social life is a big part of your education abroad. However, you are expected to meet all your academic responsibilities. Make sure you don't let hanging out with friends interfere with your school work. There are a number of ways to get involved socially in Barcelona such as going out at night, hanging out during the day or evenings, and various organized social activities. Below are a few suggestions:

**Barceloneta** is home to the closest beach to the city. You can find many ice cream and gelato shops, restaurants and tourist shops along the beach. At nighttime many of the restaurants that align the beach turn into *discotecas* that provide an upbeat and exciting nightlife that carries on well into the morning hours.

**Las Ramblas** is the busiest street in Barcelona. It is known for its tourist attractions, street performers, restaurants, and shopping. Be sure to check out La Boquería, the city's biggest market. *\*\*This area is known for pick-pocketing, so please make sure to be aware of your belongings at all times. Don't walk around with your phone in your back pocket, ignore strangers that try to approach you, and don't call attention to any expensive electronics or jewelry that you may have.*

**Barrio Gótico** is a great neighborhood to wander around aimlessly to see the beautiful architecture. It is known for its artsy bars and cafes, and the Seu Cathedral is located right in the heart of the Gothic Quarter.

**El Born** is the city's oldest neighborhood and is a beautiful sight aside from the activities there. It is great for people watching and makes for the perfect location for a stroll on a nice sunny day. Stop in the Chocolate Museum for a tour and quick snack while exploring El Born.

**El Raval** has an entirely different feel than the rest of the city. It holds many cultural attractions, including numerous museums, and a diverse array of restaurants. Check out London Bar for a taste of history as Hemmingway, Picasso and Miró used to frequent this bar.

**Eixample** is dedicated to Antoni Gaudí and his masterpieces. Passieg de Gracia is one of the most enchanting boulevards in Europe, and is lined with Gaudí's architectural legacy. Sagrada Familia is the highlight of this neighborhood and is the most visited site in Barcelona.

**Gràcia** is known for its youthfulness and hip feeling, especially around Plaça del Sol. The main attraction of Gracia is Parc Güell, another one of Antoni Gaudí's masterpieces. Bring a picnic lunch and stroll through the interesting park filled with colorful mosaic tiles, gingerbread looking houses and bright gardens.

**Montjuïc** contains two of the most popular museums in Barcelona, a castle, the Magic Fountain, and the Olympic Stadium. Needless to say, there is much to be seen in this neighborhood filled with culture and history.

**Tibidabo** is filled with activities. Head up to Mount Tibidabo to visit the city's only amusement park.

If you're more athletically inclined or if you just like to stay in shape, there are plenty of opportunities to do so. You can run or walk in the city, parks or beaches, or you can join a gym. There are also different sports teams and clubs that you may be able to join. (VivaGym, BCN Fitness, Fit2u, McFit...) You can ask about these options at orientation.

Students taking courses at the local universities may be able to join clubs and activities on campus. Be prepared to present your student ID card (from the university) to sign up. Also keep your eyes open for activities advertised on campus and ask classmates what sorts of extracurricular activities they take part in. This will be a great way to get involved in activities with Spanish university students and take advantage of your enrollment there.

Besides going out to bars and clubs at night, there are many other things to see and do in Barcelona. For example, there are several movie theaters and *filmotecas* (small film clubs) where you can see new Spanish movies, as well as some of the latest American films dubbed in Spanish. Movie tickets typically cost around \$10. There are also opportunities to see theater, classical music performances, and opera, though these are probably a bit more costly. If you decide to pick up a new or old hobby, there are many courses related to art, dance, sports, and anything you can imagine. Maybe your university offers some fun extracurriculars too!

If you're interested in history and architecture, you can check out one of the many walking tours. Most of them work based on tipping, so they are rather cheap. Through Apps like *GuruWalk* you can find walking tours focused on certain styles of architecture, historical periods and events or different *barrios*.

You will find that Spaniards often like to go out and have a coffee or drink at a *café*. There are many *café*s with outdoor seating where you can enjoy the nice weather, especially along the beaches in the city. As a foodie you have plenty of restaurants to enjoy in Barcelona. Check out Carrer de Blai in Poble Sec, the area around Mercat de Santa Caterina or the *plaça* in front of the Centre de Cultura i Memòria in El Born, or head up to Gràcia for great culinary experiences.

If you want to join different exchange events, there is plenty to be found online. Have a look at the website of *Barcelona International Social*, a group of locals and expats meeting a couple of times a week for fun activities and language exchanges ([www.barcelonainternationalsocial.com](http://www.barcelonainternationalsocial.com)). Many other group events can be found on Facebook or *meetup* ([www.meetup.com](http://www.meetup.com))! Especially *meetup* is commonly used to find a group to join on hikes, daytrips, yoga, drinks or dinner.

For events going on in the city, Spanish Studies Abroad does a great job of keeping our students informed via email, Facebook, etc. Students in the past have found it helpful to use Facebook ([www.facebook.com/SpanishStudiesBarcelona](https://www.facebook.com/SpanishStudiesBarcelona)) as a planning tool, as calling and texting will probably be more expensive in Barcelona than in the US.

## Learn the Language...

### Speaking Spanish/Catalán In Barcelona

Spain is divided into various administrative regions known as *comunidades autónomas*. The city of Barcelona is found in the central coastal region of Northeast Spain known as the *Comunidad Autónoma de Cataluña*, along with the cities of Tarragona to the south and Girona to the north.

Many residents of Barcelona use both the *Spanish* and *Catalán* languages as their primary means of communication. Nevertheless, all residents of Barcelona will speak and understand Spanish so you should not have any trouble understanding or being understood. It is also important to note that due to the large and diverse immigrant population in Barcelona, you will probably hear many different Spanish accents and vocabularies. There are also many expatriates, tourists, and international students so it won't be unusual to hear English spoken around this international city as well, especially along La Rambla.

In the city and at your campus, you will see all signs written in *Catalán* and Spanish, as public law requires that all signs on public buildings be in both languages. You may notice some magazines, restaurant menus and other media available in



this language. *Catalán* looks and sounds rather similar to Spanish, so its presence in the city should not cause you any difficulty. But you will want to begin to familiarize yourself with common signs in *Catalán* such as *Plaça* (Plaza), *Carrer* (Calle) and *Avinguda* (Avenida).

### Vosotros

Contrary to what you have been taught in high school Spanish, in Spain they absolutely use “*vosotros*” for second person plural. Learn *vosotros* before you go to Spain, so you’ll have an easier time getting used to it once you start hearing it every day. Here is a quick refresher:

Tense	-AR VERBS	-ER VERBS	-IR VERBS
Present Indicative	-áis <i>[Vosotros] habláis siempre.</i>	-éis <i>[Vosotros] coméis mucho.</i>	-ís <i>[Vosotros] pedís mucho.</i>
Preterit	-asteis <i>[Vosotros] llegasteis tarde.</i>	-isteis <i>[Vosotros] pudisteis venir.</i>	-isteis <i>[Vosotros] dirigisteis bien.</i>
Imperfect	-abais <i>[Vosotros] contabais historias.</i>	-íais <i>[Vosotros] movíais mucho.</i>	-íais <i>[Vosotros] dormíais siempre..</i>
Present Subjunctive	-éis <i>Espero que mandéis la carta mañana.</i>	-áis <i>Quizá leáis el libro hoy.</i>	-áis <i>Es preciso que vengáis a tiempo.</i>
Imperative	-ad (afirmativo) <i>Mandad esta carta.</i> <i>No mandéis esta carta.</i>	-ed (afirmativo) <i>Leed este libro.</i> <i>No leáis este libro.</i>	-id (afirmativo) <i>Venid a verme.</i> <i>No vengáis hoy.</i>

There are obviously more tenses and verb forms to be studied, so get out your old grammar books! This should give you a start in the right direction.

### Helpful vocabulary and expressions

- **Ir/Salir de fiesta (or movida/juerga/farra)** – to go out and party and have a good time
- **Pasarlo bien/pipa/guay** – to have a good time.
- **Picar** – to have a snack
- **Ir de tapeo** – go out for tapas
- **Guay** – cool
- **Una pasada/una gozada** – a super cool experience
- **Estar pachucho** – to be somewhat sick or ill
- **Ser un coñazo** – to be dull and boring (both people and things - this is pretty informal so make sure you use only with friends)
- **Vale** – ok or “I agree”
- **Tío/Tía** – casual expression used by young people, mostly girls use “Tía” with other girls and boys use “Tío” with other boys, kind of like “dude”.

People also can add “-ito/illo” and “-ita/illa” to the ends of their words.

### Suggested Reading/Viewing/Listening

To try and get an idea of what life might be like in Spain, it’s a good idea to do a little research. Here’s a listing of some recommended online resources, books, movies, and CDs. If you can’t find them elsewhere, most of these titles are available at Amazon.com or Netflix. You should also ask your Spanish professor or any friends who might have just returned from studying in Spain if they have any other suggestions for you.

## Current Events

- El País ([www.elpais.com](http://www.elpais.com)), Spain's most widely distributed newspaper

## Reference Books

- Lonely Planet Guides: Lonely Planet: Spain. And Barcelona City Guide
- Margarita Gorrissen, Barron's Foreign Language Guides: Mastering Spanish Grammar
- Christopher & Theodore Kendris, Barron's Foreign Language Guides: 501 Spanish Verbs Conjugated
- Whereabouts Press: Spain: A Traveler's Literary Companion

## Books

- Alberto Méndez, Los girasoles ciegos.
- Dulce Chacón, La voz dormida.
- Ernest Hemingway, The Sun Also Rises.
- Federico García Lorca, Collected Poems.
- Giles Tremlett, Ghosts of Spain.
- Jason Webster, Duende: A Journey into the Heart of Flamenco.
- Javier Cercas, Soldados de Salamina.
- John A. Crow, Spain: The Root and the Flower.
- John Hooper, The New Spaniards.
- Penelope Casas, Tapas: the Little Dishes of Spain.
- Washington Irving, Tales of the Alhambra.
- Carlos Ruiz Zafon, Shadow of the Wind
- María Dueñas, El tiempo entre costuras

## Spanish Movies

- *Llenos de Gracias*, Directed by Roberto Bueso(2022)
- *Érase Una Vez en Euskadi*, Directed by Manu Gómez (2021)
- *Mientras Dure La Guerra*, Directed by Alejandro Amenábar (2019)
- *La Llamada*, Directed by Javier Ambrossi y Javier Calvo (2017)
- *Ochos Apellidos Vascos*, Directed by Emilio Martínez-Lázaro (2014)
- *Tres Bodas De Más*, Directed by Javier Ruiz Caldera (2013)
- *Biutiful*, Directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu, 2010.
- *El orfanato*, Directed by Juan Antonio de Bayona, 2007.
- *El laberinto del fauno (Pan's Labyrinth)*, Directed by Guillermo Del Toro, 2006.
- *Volver*, Directed by Pedro Almodóvar, 2006.
- *L'auberge Espagnole*, Directed by Cédric Klapisch (French film but based in Barcelona)
- *Todo sobre mi madre*, Directed by Pedro Almodóvar, 1999.

## Music (Artists originally from Spain)

- Rosalía (urban/flamenco)
- C. Tangana (reggaeton/urban)
- Viva Suecia (rock)
- Vetusta Morla (rock/indie)
- Califato ¾ (urban flamenco)
- Rigoberta Bandini
- La Bien Querida
- La Maravillosa Orquesta Del Alcohol (La M.O.D.A.)
- Los Planetas
- Lori Meyers
- Xoel Lopez

- La Pegatina
- Guitarricadela fuente
- Melendi

**Series**

- *Las Chicas Del Cable*
- *Merlí*
- *Valeria*
- *La Casa De Papel*
- *El Gran Hotel*
- *El Ministerio Del Tiempo*
- *Paquita Salas*
- *El Internado*
- *Aquí No Hay Quién Viva*
- *El Tiempo Que Te Doy*

**Conversion Charts**

**Measurements:**

Length		Volume		Weight	
English	Metric	English	Metric	English	Metric
1 in.	2.54 cm	1 fl oz.	30 ml	1 oz.	28 g
1 ft.	30 cm	1 pt.	0.47 l	1 lb.	0.45 kg
1 yd.	0.9 m	1 qt.	0.95 l		
1 mi.	1.6 km	1 gal.	4.5 l		
0.4 in	1 cm	0.03 fl oz.	1 ml	0.035 oz.	1 g
3.3 ft.	1 m	2.1 pt.	1 l	2.2 lb	1 kg
1.1 yd	1 m	1.06 qt.	1 l		
0.6 mi.	1 km	0.26 gal	1 l		

**Temperature:**

