

## **Study Abroad Reflective Essay**

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**Seville, Spain**

If I think back to the months leading up to my time abroad, I remember experiencing feelings of excitement and curiosity, which were also accompanied with a hint of anxiety. I was about to spend four months in a new country, with a new family, experiencing a new way of life. Growing up, change has always been something that I look forward to and consider as a new opportunity, but this time it felt so real. Despite this, I was still confident the transition would go smoothly, and although I was sad to leave my friends and family, I was thrilled for this new chapter. Looking back, I remember being driven to make the most out of this experience by making new friends and immersing myself in Spanish culture while also continuing to do my most favorite things in life like taking pictures, being active, and finding good live music. So the day came, I packed up my huge pink suitcase, hugged the salt water and my dogs goodbye, and boarded my 9 hour flight to Seville, Spain where I would live for the next four months.

The first weeks in Spain were a dream. I fell in love with the city, the slow way of life, the way everyone took advantage of daylight and spent hours outside, and especially my host mom. She made everything about living in a new country away from home so easy, welcoming me in with open arms and truly acting as a mother figure. The dinners at midnight took some time getting used to, but so did many things about the Sevillian culture. When I was used to stressing out about work, school, and being on time, living in Sevilla made my life slow down. I still felt just as busy, doing a 20 hour internship, taking 4 classes, and travelling on the weekends, but not the kind of busy that makes you full of stress and anxiety, the kind that keeps you entertained but still leaves room for leisure. I think this might come from the separation of work

and play that is seen in the Spanish lifestyle, when generally this is a blurry line in the US. It made me realize how much of a healthier life I can lead when I prioritize this in my day to day life, which I have tried to do since being back, but it has been tough if I am being perfectly honest! As time went on, I loved the city more, missed my family every day, and continued to fall in love with Seville.

In terms of academics, my classes were enjoyable and interesting, and it helped even more that my professors became some of my good friends, we took weekly walking field trips, and I was learning about things that I was truly interested in like Spanish culture and health care. On top of that, my internship at the local private hospital allowed me to see the healthcare field through a new scope. I got to connect with patients going through hardships while trying to adjust to understanding the Spanish language. I was able to see different areas of the hospital, observing things from well baby checkups to passing out meals at lunch. I loved being able to interact with the nurses, patients, and doctors and learn a little bit from everyone. After my internship experience, I was sure I wanted to work in healthcare, more specifically interacting with patients. With both internship and academic experience in Spain, I learned how to learn fast paced and facilitate a good work life balance, which I still try to do today.

The final weeks of study abroad allowed me to reflect on my experience and soak up every last perfect moment. I was overflowed with culture during the week long Fair, Feria, where each day my host mom would dress us up in the typical feria dress, and send us off to dance Flamenco all night long. Each 30 minute walk to class and tapa was even more special knowing that I didn't have it for much longer. Didn't know I could gain so much life experience, build such good relationships, and have so much fun in just a few short months. I learned that the feeling of being uncomfortable is not always a bad thing, and can be an opportunity for

experience and growth. I will carry these unique experiences in my back pocket moving forward, guiding me through every challenge I face. I will forever be thankful for this experience and will miss my second home forever.