

Hello! My name is Erick! I am a 4th year Spanish and Chicana/o Studies double major, and I participated in UCLA's Summer Travel Study program in Spain. I was a part of the advanced cohort, so I will be providing my perspective of this program as someone who already came into the program with advanced fluency in Spanish, and some familiarity with the culture. Nonetheless, I hope that my blog faithfully captures the essence of this trip and can provide useful insight for anyone.

The classes the advanced cohort is enrolled in are Spanish 191A with Profesor Carlos Quicoli and Spanish 191B with Profesora Carla Suhr. So Carla and Carlos, it has a great ring to it, right? Both of these classes have a historical component to them, however, Carla's Spanish 191B is more focused on history, meanwhile Span 191A has some history but is mostly concentrated in the linguistics aspects of the class. Classes tend to be held in a conference room at the hotel, from 9:30am-2pm with a 30 min break in between classes. Luckily in Spain the sun does not set until 10 pm, so after class, one still has the whole day ahead for activities and excursions. I highly recommend working on assignments with peers rather than working alone, you get to bond over the same coursework, help each other out, and hold each other accountable. Both classes are manageable, Spanish 191A definitely requires some extra time and dedication from me personally as someone with no linguistics background prior to this program. Carla's class is structured like most humanities classes, with her own engaging and entertaining twists. She is an amazing lecturer, class time always flew by quickly!

Spain, a very different European country compared to the others due to its proximity to its mediterranean weather and diverse influences from Christianity, Judaism, and Islam reflected in the architecture. Additionally, there is a diversity of landscapes with places such as the Sand

Dunes in the Canary Islands can make you feel like you're in a whole different continent, the shopping areas in downtown are reminiscent of French architecture, along with the Moor influenced architecture within Granada. The cities are very walkable, mostly everything within a 15-20 minute walk, additionally the accessible public transportation that passes every 5-8 minutes brought the city closer. A feature that I'll miss and something that Los Angeles could implement to reduce traffic. The cuisine is very tasty with my favorites being sandwiches with jamón ibérico (iberian ham), croquetas de jamón (croquettes filled with ham and cheese), and patatas bravas, which are crispy potatoes drenched in a spicy tomato sauce with sour cream or cream cheese. The wines, specifically el tinto de verano, which is much sweeter, were so refreshing and relaxing after a long exhausting day of being in the heat. The weather gets really warm so it was a lifesaver to bring packets of electrolytes to stay hydrated. Another cultural difference one will encounter in Spain is the Siesta (naptime) which help everyone get through the long days. These normalized naps from 2pm-6pm allows everyone takes a break from their daily routine to rest and, or spend time with their families, most business shut down to accommodate la siesta. The culture in Spain is very social, therefore it is a custom to greet before for anything, and to make eye contact with service workers, etc. The beautiful architecture, natural views, and culture would definitely bring me back again in a hopefully near future.

The most memorable part of my travel study experience was the new friends and memories I made alongside exploring the country. Spending long nights working on homework together, studying for exams, having meals together, and sharing jokes together, all really pushes you to bond on a different level with those people. So much so that ironically I felt homesick after returning back home. A majority of the students in my program were from UCLA, so there was some certainty that I'd eventually bump into each other on campus in the fall and can

schedule a meet up in the future. One of my most memorable memories was getting lost with my professor in Toledo looking for pillow cases of pets in Victorian styled military uniforms, which we thought was the cutest and thought we would be able to find the store by memory. But we ended up getting lost for 10 minutes in peak heat, it was both a silly moment and bonding moment. Although we did not get our pillow cases, we now share that funny experience.

This was definitely one of my most memorable summers, in addition to having a great time I was still able to learn so much about Spain's history, and its diverse cultures all across its provinces. It was great being able to earn credits towards my degree, by participating in this immersive program, being able to visit so many of the locations that I had read about previously, experience a new world, and culture so different yet similar. If I could, I would 100% experience this again.