As I flew into Barcelona and soared over the Spanish landscape, I found myself gobsmacked at Spain's resemblance to California. From its dry hills and forests to its golden coastlines, it already felt a little like home. Despite its stark resemblance, I had no idea just how much beauty I would soon find in Spain's unique intricacies.

Out of any other place in the world, Spain always topped my list of dream destinations I sought to travel to. Due to a love for Spain instilled in me by my coursework as I've pursued a Spanish major at UCLA, being able to be immersed in Spanish culture and language for over a month was a dream come true. Barcelona stuck out to me for having the most exquisite architecture and diverse culinary cuisine. Out of all the cities we traveled to, it felt the most cosmopolitan in nature. I arrived a week prior to the start of the program, and I recommend other students to do the same if they have the opportunity. It allowed me to have enough time to explore the outskirts of Barcelona, and ground myself in the rapid change of environment I was experiencing before classes started. It was also nice to sleep in as late as I desired as I coped with the 9 hour time difference.

Once my initial week was over, I traveled to the Barcelona Airport to welcome in my best friend Maddie. She was kind enough to join me on this Travel Study Program after some conversations the prior Fall quarter, and we were lucky enough to be able to room together for all 6 weeks. I soon after met the rest of my UCLA cohort, and after our orientation, I told everyone about a pizzería I had found the prior week called MaraMaia. They served the most delicious pizza I had ever laid eyes on, so much so that I told the owners I would tell my friends all about it. Little did I know I would return with 15 other students that night, and we were welcomed with open arms (quite literally!). We raved about that place for the rest of the summer, so much so that Maddie and I returned two more times before we departed our stay in Barcelona. It was only the start of our travels, and Spain had already pizzaed my heart.

One of my favorite memories in Spain was when we traveled to Sevilla for a weekend trip together as a program. Sevilla is known for being sweltering in July, but we were extremely lucky to have stayed during an abnormally cool weekend (around 80 degrees on average).
We were lodged in the Hotel Becquer, which was located smack dab in the middle of the center of Sevilla's downtown. They served the best breakfast, with options ranging from fresh honeycomb, to different flavored olive oils and a multitude of aged cheeses. Another amazing amenity they offered were free bicycles that any guest could check out for a two hour interval to ride around the city at your leisure. Maddie and I jumped at the opportunity to make the most of this service, and reserved two bikes for the bright and early time of 8 am. While still wiping the sleep from our eyes, we began to ride through the streets towards the Río Gudalquivar. The feeling of the crisp morning air in our hair as we rode over the Puente de San Telmo felt like pure bliss. We stopped midway at a churrería to try churros españoles for the first time together, and I even got to practice my Spanish with an elderly local man seated at the table next to ours. Above

all, Sevilla was my absolute favorite city in Spain, and I dearly hope I can return in the near future. I also hope that future students arrive at such an optimal time as we did, but no matter the case, Sevilla is sure to delight.

Granada was our final destination where we stayed for the majority of the 4 remaining weeks of the trip. It had a far sleepier vibe than the other cities which we stayed at, but a charm which could never be emulated. From flamenco shows, to uphill walks through the beautiful white walls of the Albaicín, to breathtaking views of the Alhambra at the Mirador de San Nicolas, it was nothing short of fascinating. If you're a fan of kebab shops, then Granada will be your best friend. You could spend each night in the city trying a new kebab shop and never run out. Not only are the prices cheap, but they often stay open until as late as 1 or 2 am. Our favorite restaurant was a Venezuelan place near the hotel called Yanomami, and the entire cohort frequented here as a group due to their affordable yet delicious arepas. They also had the most refreshing batidos de maracuyá that never failed to beat the heat. Los Italianos was everyone's go-to gelato place, but our personal favorite nighttime getaway was the Bohemia Jazz Café. Here we enjoyed milkshakes and other beverages over the hottest chisme, or we simply journaled and did homework as a way to decompress from a long hot day. They also had live jazz music after 10 PM, which always set the mood perfectly. If there's one piece of advice I could give for a stay in Granada, it would be that a bus card is your best friend. While you can walk anywhere with ease, there is nothing better than hopping on an air conditioned bus when the midday sun is strongest. Granada was also a bus ride away (through ALSA, not the Granada bus lines) from multiple beach towns. Our favorite was Nerja (about an hour away) and Málaga (two hours away), whose airport we traveled to in order to return home.

As I sat on my return flight to California, I can only describe the feeling I had to be bittersweet. While I was sad to say goodbye, Spain left an impression on me that I will carry for a lifetime. Without the Travel Study program and the scholarship I so generously received from the Spanish and Portuguese Department, I would have never had the privilege to embark on this journey. Whenever I look back, my time in Spain will forever be the hallmark of summer.


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