

MADRID

SITE-  
SPECIFIC  
GUIDE



ACADEMIC  
STUDIES  
ABROAD

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# Pre-Departure

Please see our Pre-Departure Guide for All Programs for additional important pre-departure information!

Please add the important numbers to your phone

<p><b>ASA Office in Boston, MA</b> <b>Academic Studies Abroad</b> <b>72 River Park Street, Suite 104</b> <b>Needham, MA 02494</b> <b>Tel: 617-327-9388</b> <b>24-hour Emergency Cell:</b> <b>857-366-6821</b> <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:hello@academicstudies.com">hello@academicstudies.com</a> <b>Web:</b> <a href="http://www.academicstudies.com">www.academicstudies.com</a></p> <p><b>Emergency Local in Spain:</b> 112</p>	<p><b><u>ASA Site Director in Madrid:</u></b> <b>Ana Rosales</b>  <b>Cell Phone : +34 664 01 63 24</b>  <b>If direct dialing from US:</b> <b>011 34 664 01 63 24</b>  <b>From Spain:</b> <b>664 01 63 24</b>  <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:ana@academicstudies.com">ana@academicstudies.com</a></p>
<p><b><u>US Embassy in Spain</u></b> Calle de Serrano, 75 28006 Madrid, Spain +34 91 587 2200</p>	<p><b><u>Spain Emergency Numbers</u></b> (Local numbers, as dialed in Spain) Emergency (like 911 in the US): 112 Police: 092 Fire: 080 Guardia Civil: 062</p>

In an emergency,  
please contact your ASA Site Director immediately.

It is of utmost importance that you notify your Site Director of any problems, issues, or concerns that you encounter while you're abroad.

011 = International Dialing Code

34 = Spain Country Code



# International Dialing Instructions

- To call Spain from the U.S., dial 011 34 and the local number, omitting the first zero of the local number. For example, if the phone number is listed as (+34) 640 219 049, you would dial 011 34 640 219 049.
- To call the U.S. from Spain, dial 001 + area code and number.
- To call a Spanish number within Spain, leave off the int'l code and country code (e.g. 640 219 049).



# Passport & Visa

All students must have a passport that is valid for at least 6 months beyond the day you plan to return to the U.S.  
IF YOU DON'T HAVE A U.S. PASSPORT, PLEASE NOTIFY ASA IMMEDIATELY!

Non-U.S. citizens may have a different visa process than described below, that requires steps to be taken in the U.S. or your home country before you arrive in Spain.

What should I do if I lose my passport? Contact the local police, the U.S. Embassy, and your Site Director immediately. Having a digital or photocopy of your passport on hand will make it MUCH easier to have it replaced.

## Do I need a Student Visa?

If you're traveling on a U.S. passport and your program is under 90 days:

- No visa is required for U.S. passport holders whose program dates are under 90 days.
- Students on an under-90-day program are subject to a maximum 90-day stay, per the Schengen Area tourist permit that allows 90 days during every 180 days (no extensions – you must spend 90 days outside of the Schengen Area before you get another 90 days).
- Under-90-day programs include most Summer sessions and January Term.
- Overstaying the 90-day limit results in fines and flags to your passport impacting future travel.
- Map of Schengen Area countries

If you're traveling on a U.S. passport and your program is longer than 90 days:

- You must obtain a Student Visa from the Consulate General of Spain prior to departure.

VISA ACTIVATION RULES FOR SPAIN: The following applies to STUDENT VISA HOLDERS ONLY:

- Arrival in Spain/Schengen Area:
  - For US passport holders: You MUST enter the Spanish territory DURING your visa's validity period so that your entry is documented. If you wish to arrive in Spain less than 90 days before your visa validity begins, you are advised to ask the Spanish Consulate that issued your visa whether this is allowed. If it is allowed, be aware that you may need to leave the Schengen Area and RE-ENTER Spain DURING your visa's validity period. Check with your Consulate for details and advice. When in doubt, DO NOT arrive before your visa's validity date.
  - For non-US passport holders: Students should familiarize themselves with the necessary entry process if arriving prior to their student visa start date. A Schengen Visa Type C may be necessary. Check with the Spanish Consulate that issued your visa for details and advice. When in doubt, DO NOT arrive before your visa's validity date.
- At the Conclusion of your Program
  - For US passport holders: When your student visa expires, if you still have days left in your 90 days out of 180 rolling days Schengen travel permit, and you wish to travel, you DO need to exit the Schengen Area completely and re-enter to activate Schengen tourist status.
  - For non-US passport holders: Students should familiarize themselves with the necessary departure process if planning to remain in the Schengen Area at the conclusion of their student visa. A Schengen Visa Type C may be necessary. Check with the Spanish Consulate that issued your visa for details and advice. When in doubt, DO NOT stay after your visa's expiration date.
- Failure to comply with above guidelines means your immigration record will show you overstayed your student visa, and you will be heavily fined when attempting to return home at the end of your travels. You may also receive a mark/flag on your passport preventing future travel.
- For students on a +6 months program (academic year), this applies to travel after your residence permit expires (not your student visa).
- To exit the Schengen Area completely, the most convenient and affordable countries to fly to are the UK and Ireland. If traveling to any other non-Schengen countries, check their tourist entry rules.
- Map of Schengen Area countries

If you're reading this and you haven't started your Visa application yet,  
please email us at [hello@academicstudies.com](mailto:hello@academicstudies.com) to get up to speed.

# STEP & ETA

## STEP: Safe Traveler Enrollment Program

STEP registration is MANDATORY to complete before departure. This free service, offered by the US Department of State, enables the DOS to quickly contact US citizens abroad during emergencies, such as natural disaster, civil unrest, or a family emergency. By registering, you also get real time updates about safety, security, health, and weather in country. Click this link to complete your STEP registration before departure: <https://mytravel.state.gov/s/step>

MANDATORY:

IF A US CITIZEN, YOU  
MUST ENROLL IN STEP

## ETA: For visiting & transiting through England, Scotland, Wales & Northern Ireland

### WHO:

For United States (US) passport holders, the ETA is required for anyone traveling through the UK for study, visit, or transit through (layover), via any method of transportation (e.g. plane, train, boat). If you are traveling on a non-US passport, first check to see if you can apply for an ETA [here](#). If your country is not yet approved for the ETA, notify your ASA Program Manager immediately (617-327-9388) for next steps.

### WHAT:

The [Electronic Travel Authorization \(ETA\)](#) is a permission to travel for those who do not currently need to obtain a visa or do not have a United Kingdom (England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland) immigration status. **The ETA is valid for two (2) years from date of issue, or until passport expires, whichever is sooner.** It is valid for multiple journeys and must be valid for the entirety of your stay. It cannot be extended.

The ETA is digitally linked to your passport. There is no physical component. While you are not required to show a paper copy, we highly recommend saving a screenshot and/or printing your ETA approval email and adding it to your acceptance documents for your records. You are required to send a copy of your ETA approval email to your ASA Program Manager. To see how to apply, read on.

### HOW:

Students apply for the ETA electronically via the [UK ETA app](#)

#### Application Steps:

1. Watch the short "Getting Started: Applying for the UK ETA" video.
2. Gather information for the ETA application (contact information, physical valid U.S. passport in hand, recent photo or headshot, method of payment). Your flight itinerary is not required to apply.
3. Follow the instructions on the app or the UK GOV website. We recommend applying and getting approval at least 1 week prior to arrival in the UK.
4. Once received, SAVE your UK ETA approval email as a pdf or jpeg. Be sure that it is legible and email a copy to your ASA Program Manager. This is a critical step, as we must ensure you are complying with immigration requirements.

# EES: Europe's Biometric Entry/Exit System

On October 12, 2025, the European Union's borders went digital. A new system called EES (European Entry/Exit System) will log border crossings for some travelers by collecting a passport scan, a photo of your face, and your fingerprints. This system replaces passport stamps with biometrics (fingerprints).

Large airports like Paris, Frankfurt, and Amsterdam installed the new technology first; full rollout is expected by April 2026.

## Who WILL NOT have to use EES?

Travelers entering the European Union for the first time since 10/12/2025 or traveling during a long-stay visa obtained prior to departure, when the travel is during the visa's validity. A Student Visa is a type of long-stay visa. (NOTE: US passport holders traveling before your long-stay visa begins or after it expires, you WILL have to use EES - see below)

## Who WILL have to use EES?

- US passport holders traveling in the European Union before their long-stay visa starts, or after it expires
- Travelers from the US, Canada, and other NON-EU countries WHO DO NOT HAVE A LONG-STAY VISA. This includes US passport holders going on an under-90-day program. If you are one of these travelers, you MUST track your travel dates to ensure you don't exceed the 90-day limit. Overstaying can result in fines, deportation, or being banned from future travel.

*If you're not a US citizen and want to know if you can travel in the European Union outside your visa validity dates, please contact ASA.*

The first time you use EES will take the longest, as you'll need to complete your initial registration – you'll register your passport and get your photo and fingerprints taken. After that, it should go quicker because you're in the system, and can use the "EES READY" lanes. When using an EES READY lane, they'll verify your photo and passport using your data already stored in the system. Your EES registration lasts up to 3 years.

*NOTE: EES is different from the ETIAS visa waiver program that's due to start in 2026.*

Reference Links – Please read:

- <https://travel-europe.europa.eu/en/ees>
- <https://www.cnn.com/2025/10/10/travel/eu-entry-exit-system-explained>

# Budgeting for Study Abroad

The EURO (€) became the official currency of Spain in 1999. Bills come in denominations of €5, €10, €20, €50, €100, €200, and €500. Coins come in denominations of €2, €1, 50 cents, 20 cents, 10 cents, 5 cents, and 1 cent.

Exchange rates fluctuate, so check <http://www.xe.com/ucc/convert.cgi> for today's exchange rate.

## How much money should I bring?

US\$250-300 per week of your stay

*Please note that these are general guidelines based on what past students have reported spending. Some students spend less and others more. The above figures do not allow for traveling every weekend, eating out a lot, or shopping every day. Included in this amount is local transportation, spending money, personal expenses, daily lunch and 1 dinner per week, meals on excursions, grocery shopping, some laundry, etc.*

## What expenses should I budget for?

Please note: *Housing, medical insurance, and all other ASA services are not included during the break between semesters or terms.* \* = Accounted for in weekly money recommendation above.

1. **Books and materials for your classes** Budget US\$350 per semester
2. **Local Transportation\*** Budget US\$500 per semester. Local transportation includes getting around town during your free time, getting to and from where your group is meeting to depart for an excursion and getting home after an excursion. This will include paying for bus and taxi fares.
3. **Cell phone** Budget US\$400 per semester
4. **Spending money / Personal expenses\*** Entertainment, shopping, souvenirs, dining out, haircuts, toothpaste, etc.
5. **Meals\*** Students living in homestays will have breakfast and dinner provided
6. **Transportation back to the airport at the end of the program** Budget US\$40
7. **Have at least \$1,000 in savings for emergencies**

# Arrival

What should I do when I get off the plane at Madrid airport?

## 01 Passport Control/Immigration

After you de-plane, you will go through Passport Control (also called Immigration) where you will present your passport and visa documents. You **must** get your passport stamped in order to document your first entry into Spain. Not getting your passport stamped could cause problems with your visa! You may not automatically receive a stamp, so you may have to ASK to have your passport stamped.

### HELPFUL TIPS

Address for delivery of delayed luggage:

Your Name  
Local Address

ASA will provide your local address in your housing assignment email, about 2 weeks before departure.

## 02 Baggage Claim

After Passport Control and Customs, follow signs to baggage claim. Delayed baggage must be reported to your airline's lost luggage counter before exiting the baggage claim area. After claiming your bags, exit into the airport lobby and look for an ASA sign or a sign with your name on it. Your ASA Site Director or one of our drivers will be waiting for you in the airport lobby. NOTE: They cannot meet you in baggage claim!

## 03 Transport to Housing

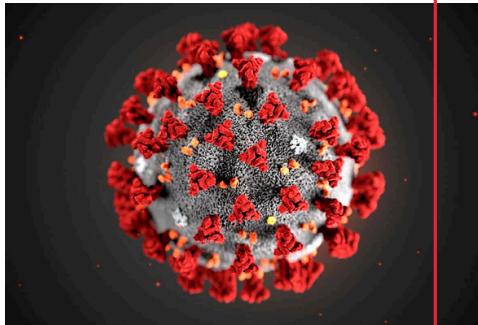
Once you've found an ASA staff member or driver, we'll take you to your program housing.

### If my flight is delayed, will you still pick me up at the airport?

If you will not be arriving as scheduled, it is YOUR responsibility to notify the emergency contact person indicated on your Last-Minute Checklist. They will let you know if you will still be picked up at the airport. We will make every effort to pick you up.

# Academics

## Universidad de Nebrija – Madrid Princesa campus



### COVID-19

Your host university may have COVID-19 protocols you must follow, such as sanitizing your desk after class, not congregating indoors, wearing a mask, sanitizing hands, and others. Please follow accordingly.



### US vs Spain

More class participation	Lecture/low interactivity
Grade accumulation	Final exam determines grade
More structure	Less structure



### Teaching Style

Remember that the Spanish university you will attend is a foreign institution with Spanish instructors who will employ very different teaching methods than those you are accustomed to. TRY NOT TO GET FRUSTRATED. It may take a week or so to get used to the teaching style. Remember that you are learning more than you can document just by attending this program. Do not hesitate to seek assistance if you are having problems adjusting to the university environment.

Please note: Calendar is subject to change.

All Orientation meetings are mandatory.

At the following [link](#), you can see the Academic Calendar for your program.

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## Studying at a Spanish University

Studying at a Spanish university is very different from studying at an American college or university. Overall, the courses are much less structured. In some cases there may be no textbook assigned to the course, and few or no homework assignments will be given. It cannot be overemphasized that in Spain the student is expected to research and study the subject outside the classroom without instruction or guidance from the professor. Study the day's material with classmates, seek Spanish and international students to discuss the course material, and practice speaking, reading and writing in Spanish. For the most part, you will not be told to do these things by your Spanish professor – it is up to you to supplement the classroom learning with these activities if you want to get the most from the experience. Embrace the opportunity to study in a foreign environment.

## Expectations of Learning Spanish

With respect to learning to speak Spanish, one of the most frequently asked questions is, "Will I be able to speak the language after studying in Spain for a semester?"

As with all learning, the answer will largely depend on you.

Although your university offers many opportunities to immerse yourself in the language, it is usually unrealistic for any beginner student to think they will be proficient in Spanish after only one semester abroad. Please keep in mind that language acquisition varies by the individual. Studying hard and making an effort to speak in Spanish, even if it's difficult, will take you far. It takes many months, even years depending on the student, to develop a true fluency in Spanish.

Note that if you truly have the desire and drive to learn the language, you will be far more successful than a student who simply does the required amount necessary for their courses. Beyond your language classes, you absolutely must use the language in your everyday life if you indeed hope to master it, rather than limiting your speaking to the classroom. It is highly recommended to take advantage of your new environment to make friends, acquaintances, and immerse yourself in Spanish student life.

Tip for maximized daily learning: We recommend that you carry a small pocket dictionary at all times.



# Academics

## Grades

You must check with your home institution to ensure you understand:

- The minimum grade you need to earn to receive transfer credit. Typically you need to earn a C or C+, but this can vary by institution. *Check with your home institution to ensure you understand their requirements!*
- Will your grades impact your GPA? Every institution handles this differently! Some institutions transfer in study abroad grades and it impacts your gpa. Some transfer in the grades and it doesn't impact your gpa. Others transfer in study abroad grades as pass/fail. Be sure you understand how your institution handles this.

You must check with your host institution or ASA Site Director upon arrival to ensure you understand:

- The deadline to change or drop classes. Classes dropped after your host institution's add/drop deadline will appear on your final transcript with a failing grade.
- What is your host institution's attendance policy? Absences from class will affect your grade and can result in a failing grade. Many institutions only allow a couple of absences a semester and only for valid reasons such as medical. Travel or family/friend visit is NOT ever an excused absence.

Below, you can find a suggested grade equivalency chart for your host institution. Be sure you read the statement in Italics below the chart!

### UNIVERSIDAD NEBRIJA

Spanish Grade	10 or M.H./Matricula de Honor	9-10	7-8.9	5-6.9	0-4.9
Suggested US Grade*	A+	A	B	C	F

*\*These are suggested grade equivalencies provided by the host institution and are SUBJECT TO CHANGE. Your home institution may use a different set of equivalencies. Your HOME INSTITUTION will ultimately determine your final grade and credit equivalencies.*

## Adjusting to Life in Spain

Over the years, we have learned which aspects of Spanish culture are the most surprising to American students. This information is intended to ease your adjustment to Spanish life. Instead of judging Spanish culture according to your own, please try to accept Spanish culture for what it is, as being different from yours. Students who make an effort to adjust are usually the ones who learn the most and enjoy the fascinating experience of living in a different country!

**Keep an open mind** – In all respects, things in Spain and other European countries will rarely happen exactly the way you expect them to. For practical matters (standing in line, filling out forms, registering or waiting for various things), many things take longer or require extra steps that would be considered superfluous in the U.S. Realize that you must be flexible and patient in order to get the most out of your study abroad experience.

**Be respectful of the local culture** – Please remember that you are a guest in another country and should respect their culture. As a study abroad student, you have the responsibility of making an effort to adopt their traditions and language. Sometimes Americans are labeled with a reputation for being inflexible, ignorant of other cultures, and failing to adapt to the host country's environment. Although this reputation is not always justified, it is important to try to follow the social cues around you. For example, if you are in a public place that is relatively quiet, avoid speaking loudly. If you go into a local grocery store and notice that customers do not handle the produce themselves but instead make a request to the shop assistant, do the same. You will find that people are very gracious when they see that you are behaving in a way that respects their social values and customs.

**How can I meet Spanish people?** – Spaniards can be guarded and reserved at first. As with many Europeans constantly surrounded by foreigners, they may not seem friendly at first, but give them a chance. It helps a LOT if you try to speak Spanish with them, rather than English. One of the best ways to make friends is to participate in an intercambio, or language exchange, where you will help a Spanish student practice their English and they will help you practice your Spanish. Ask your Site Director if you're interested in this.

**Try to blend in, try to speak Spanish and try new things** – Trying to adapt to Spanish culture and learn the language will help Spaniards feel you're more approachable. While it is wonderful to be proud of your home country, it's not a good idea to "flaunt" this in other countries by wearing clothes or accessories with the American flag, American sports teams, or fraternities/sororities.

Spaniards are less likely to approach a large group of Americans, so if you go out in a small group you will seem more approachable. Local students normally socialize at night in the bars and discotecas. Carrying a lighter may open up opportunities to meet people, since many Spaniards smoke. As with any learning experience, you will encounter people who do not understand you and whom you will not understand. This is part of the experience, and the only way for you to overcome the language barrier is to make an active effort to learn the language. Frustration is a natural emotion, but try not to let it overwhelm you. Your communication skills will improve daily if you make the effort!

## Cultural Differences

1. **Smoking** is very common in Spain – more common than in the U.S. and certainly more visible. Smoking used to be allowed everywhere, but now all restaurants have to have a nonsmoking section, although it's not certain that Spanish people will actually abide by it!
2. **Personal space** is a different concept in Spain than it is in the U.S. Spaniards generally allow less personal space during social interactions and on public transportation than Americans do, and some students find this a bit uncomfortable at first. You may feel that Spaniards stand too close to you when conversing, waiting in line, or on the bus or subway. Most students learn to adjust to this during their stay. Please note that inappropriate contact is NOT normal or acceptable. Listen to your instincts and speak up if you feel someone is purposefully invading your personal space or is touching you in an inappropriate manner.
3. **Urgency and time** are different concepts, too. What you think is urgent may not be considered urgent by the Spanish. Do not expect to be successful by making demands of people – it will not help you get what you want, and it may only make them less willing to help you. If someone tells you they'll get you a document tomorrow, it may not actually happen tomorrow. When meeting up socially with Spanish people, lateness is the norm – they are more relaxed about things like this. If the plan is for 6pm, they may not show up until 6:30. However, punctuality is expected for academic and business matters.
4. **Homes, rooms, and cars are smaller** than in the U.S. This is true everywhere in Europe. People in Europe are accustomed to having less living space, and therefore, less "stuff". Most people who live in European cities live in flats or apartments and not single-family homes. Therefore, you should expect to live in an apartment while you're abroad, and the rooms will probably be smaller than you're used to. Storage space will be limited; you won't find large closets. Also, cars are usually smaller, and you won't see too many civilians driving SUVs or large trucks.
5. **Walking everywhere and using public transportation** are a way of life in European cities. You can expect to take the subway and/or bus, and/or walk to and from class every day. You'll find the public transportation in Spain to be clean, efficient, and reasonably priced. During ASA's orientation after you arrive, our Site Director will show everyone how to use the system and buy passes. Bring comfortable shoes! You will be walking MUCH more on a daily basis than you probably ever have before!
6. **Customer service** is not the same as what you're used to. The customer is not always right! And, you'll need to be more assertive when shopping, eating out, or waiting in line. You may feel that store employees or cashiers are not attentive. You may need to flag someone down in order to be helped or to pay for something. This is especially true at restaurants. You'll notice right away that service is not the same as in the US! There are 2 reasons for this: 1) Tips comprise a very small part of their wages. 2) Mealtime in Spain is something to be savored and not rushed, so the wait staff is trained not to bother you! It is not unusual for Spaniards to take 4 hours to eat lunch out at a restaurant. The reality is that Americans often feel ignored by the wait staff at Spanish restaurants, and food and drink service may take longer than you're used to. In order to be served or seated in Spanish restaurant, you must speak up – politely. You'll also need to be patient. They may not even check on you at any point to ask if everything is ok. Again, there is a good reason for this! By not checking in with you or bringing you the check, the wait staff is trying not to bother you so you can enjoy yourself and not feel rushed! When you're ready for the check, you'll need to flag them down. It is not the norm in Spain to take home leftovers or ask for a "doggie bag" – mainly because the serving sizes are smaller than in the U.S.

## Cultural Differences

7. **Waiting in line** can seem disorganized. The way Spaniards form queues (for example, at a bakery counter) is something that few Americans fully grasp! A lot of times you will find that there is no organized queue – people may stand scattered around or clustered together, but not in an actual line. Spaniards simply remember whose turn is next and then come forward when it's their turn. Simply remember your place in the queue and speak up right away when it's your turn. You may find that Spaniards will try to cut in line in front of you, especially if you don't step right up when it's your turn. This happens often while boarding a plane – they may go straight to the front of the boarding line, in front of others who have been queuing up.

8. **Differences in meals and food.** American breakfast (eggs, bacon, pancakes etc.) is not the norm. Eggs and bacon are not breakfast foods in Spain. Spanish breakfast is what Americans would call a light "continental" breakfast – the typical Spaniard has a breakfast of toast and jam with coffee or tea. You can buy cereal and milk at the supermarket, of course. Lunch is the biggest meal of the day and is taken anywhere from 1-3:30pm. 4-hour restaurant lunches are not uncommon for Spaniards. With lunch, you usually get 2 courses (such as pasta + chicken) and dessert (usually fruit, yogurt, or pudding). Dinner is lighter than lunch and is eaten anywhere from 8-10pm. For dinner you usually get 1 course (such as tortilla de patatas) and fruit or yogurt. Bread is usually served with both lunch and dinner. However, butter is not served with bread in Spain (so please don't ask for it). You may not be able to find American food products like peanut butter, chocolate chips, Reese's, pancakes, and maple syrup – especially in smaller cities and towns. The larger supermarkets like El Corte Inglés have a selection of foreign foods, but they will probably be expensive. The main differences between the typical Spanish diet and the American diet are the following: Vegetables are eaten a lot less in Spain. Maybe one meal a day might have vegetables, or maybe not. They eat more pork, cured meats, and fried foods. They eat a lot less beef than Americans do – the quality of beef is not as good in Spain, and it is very expensive. Breakfast is very light compared to American breakfast. Pasta sauce is typically the plain, storebought kind (unless you go to an Italian restaurant). A "sandwich" in Spain is on loaf bread and has a smaller amount of filling than Americans are used to. A "bocadillo" is a sub-style sandwich served on baguette style bread – these are bread-heavy and very light on the fillings.

9. **Guests in the home are rare** – Spaniards generally socialize outside the home.

10. **Business opening/operating hours.** Many shops and businesses close during the afternoon (for lunch) between 1pm and 4pm. Many are closed on Saturday afternoons and all day on Sundays. Big department stores, such as El Corte Inglés, are open from 10am to 8pm most days of the week. In larger cities you may find some 24-hours stores. In tourist areas in the summer, stores may stay open later or open 7 days a week. As for pharmacies, normal pharmacy hours are 10am to 2pm and 4:30pm to 8pm. In addition, at least some pharmacies are required to remain open 24 hours a day, on a rotating basis.

11. **Restaurant hours** are varied, with the norm being 1:30 to 4pm for lunch and 8:30 to 11 or 11:30pm for dinner. In the summer, these hours are often expanded, with many establishments offering continuous service and still others serving food into the wee hours of the night. Cafeterías/bars are usually open all day, closing late at night.

## Cultural Differences

12. **Alcohol.** Spaniards enjoy drinking socially, but they do it responsibly, and it's normally not the focus of the social experience. They also enjoy alcohol on special occasions and holidays in moderation. Spaniards generally do not drink to get drunk and frown upon those who do. It is considered to be very poor taste to be obviously drunk. Normally the only drunk people you'll see in a bar or discoteca are foreigners. Excessive drinking or drunken behavior is not acceptable, and ASA considers it reason for dismissal.

13. **Tipping.** A 10% tip is customary at restaurants. At a cafetería, just leave whatever small change left over after paying the bill (round up) ► For taxi rides, a 5% tip is sufficient (and never tip a driver who overcharges you!). ► Porters are always found at hotels, airports, and train stations. You should tip 1 Euro per piece of luggage. ► It is not necessary to tip bartenders per drink.

14. **Comments on appearance.** In Spain it's generally not considered intrusive or offensive to comment on another person's appearance. This can be uncomfortable for Americans. Spaniards may comment on your body, weight, clothes, hairstyle, etc. If someone makes a comment like this to you, try not to take offense. But if it bothers you, communicate your feelings about it as best you can, and don't hesitate to talk to your ASA Site Director for guidance or support.

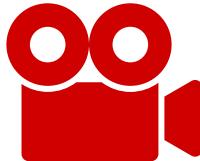
15. **It's rude to interrupt...or is it?** You may notice that when Spaniards talk, they interrupt each other (or you) a lot! This is completely normal and isn't considered rude. It can be hard for Americans to get used to this, so do your best to adjust and don't be afraid to jump right into a lively conversation!



# Housing in Madrid

## Housing in Homestay

ASA will email your host family housing assignment approximately 2 weeks before your program start date. Daily breakfast & dinner and laundry once a week are included.



Watch this [short video](#) about what it's like to live with a host family!

## ASA Code of Conduct

All students must abide by the ASA Code of Conduct. Violating the Code of Conduct may lead to expulsion from your housing and/or from the ASA program. Any student removed from housing will be responsible for finding his/her own housing and will not receive a refund.

## Drug/Alcohol Policy

Drug use and alcohol abuse AT ANY TIME, ANYWHERE WHILE THE PROGRAM IS IN SESSION is strictly prohibited and may lead to you being removed from your housing and/or the program. Being drunk is considered abuse of alcohol.

## Guest Policy

Guests in the Spanish home are rare. You must always ask permission before you bring a friend over to study. It is considered rude to bring people over without asking. Your family will be upset if you bring people over without asking, especially while they aren't at home. Overnight guests are not allowed.

Spanish families are very closely knit. Spaniards generally socialize outside the home and entertain in their homes less frequently than Americans do. Any guests that Spaniards do entertain at home usually include very close friends or family only.



# Housing in Homestay

## Tips & Rules for Living with a Host Family

1. Always say hello ("Buenos días," "Buenas tardes," etc.) when entering the home. Always say goodbye ("Hasta luego," "Hasta mañana," etc.) when leaving. It is considered rude not to.
2. Turn out all lights/appliances EVERY TIME you leave a room. Don't be surprised if your señora follows you around, turning the lights off behind you. There's a reason for this – electricity, water and heating are very expensive in Spain.
3. Keep showers to 10 minutes or less. Water is very expensive in Spain. Don't be surprised if your señora starts knocking on the door if you've been in the shower for more than 10 minutes.
4. Keep your room tidy. Remember, you are living in someone's home, not a hotel. If you don't pick up your room, your señora may do it for you! If you don't want someone else touching your things, keep your room tidy.
5. Never go barefoot in a Spanish home—always wear slippers or flip-flops inside the house. It is considered rude to walk around barefoot in a Spanish home. Spaniards usually change into slippers or soft-soled house shoes immediately upon getting home – one reason is that most floors are hard surface, so hard sole shoes will create surprisingly loud noises in your downstairs neighbors' apartment!
6. It is considered rude/in poor taste to hang out in your pajamas in the common areas of the home or lounge on the couch all day.
7. You are expected to take your meals at the same time as your host family. You may not ask your señora to serve you meals at a different time. If you don't like something she serves you, be honest but kind in saying so. If you tell her you like it, she'll probably make it again! If you really like something, be sure to compliment her.
8. Please let them know if you are going to miss a meal so they don't waste food.
9. Although you won't have a curfew, you MUST be quiet and courteous when leaving or returning home late at night. Noises (especially voices and shoes with heels) echo loudly in the elevator, stairwells and on the hard surface floors in your flat.
10. Please be considerate in letting your host family know when you're leaving and when you plan to return, especially if you're staying somewhere else overnight. If you're not at home when they get up in the morning and you didn't tell them you're staying elsewhere, they will worry and maybe even call ASA!
11. Never bring guests to your host family's residence without getting their permission first. Your host family will be upset if they find you have brought friends over without their permission, especially if the family is not home.
12. You may NOT have alcohol in your room. If alcohol is found in your room, your host has the right to throw it out, and you may face disciplinary action from ASA.
13. OVERNIGHT GUESTS OF ANY KIND ARE NOT ALLOWED, WHATSOEVER, AT ANY TIME.
14. Do not take food from the kitchen without your host family's permission.
15. Living with a host family means you WILL NOT have the option to cook your own meals. You MAY NOT use the kitchen unless you get permission from your host first. You may, however, store snacks in the kitchen if you wish.
16. You MAY NOT use your host's washing machine. 1 load of laundry per week included with your homestay, which will be done by your host. If you have more laundry that needs to be washed beyond the 1 load per week, or if you simply want to wash your own clothes, you can take them to a dry cleaner or laundromat.
17. You may not use the telephone in your home unless your family gives you permission. Outgoing calls are never allowed (very expensive), but you may be allowed to receive calls.
18. Please take care to not lose your keys, or you will have pay to replace the locks, which is expensive.
19. A small gift every once in a while, such as bringing home dessert or flowers, is always appreciated.

# Housing in Homestay

## Meals & Spanish Food

**Differences in meals:** Do not expect a big, American breakfast. Bacon and eggs are not breakfast foods in Spain. Spanish breakfast is what Americans would call a light “continental” breakfast, such as toast and jam with coffee or tea. Some hosts will occasionally serve cereal with milk, or cookies, but toast is the most common.

**The milk is going to taste different to you.** The vast majority of Spaniards buy “ultra high temperature” milk that comes in boxes, which is shelf stable and is not found in the refrigerated section. This is a different kind of milk than you’re used to, and most Americans are surprised by it. There are a few reasons why Spaniards drink this. Refrigerators are smaller in Spain and the boxes fit better. UHT milk is sterilized so some may think it’s safer. It lasts longer than fresh milk, so it saves money.

**Lunch is the biggest meal of the day and is taken at anywhere from 1-3:30pm.** With lunch, you usually get 2 courses (such as pasta + chicken) and dessert (usually fruit or yogurt). Dinner is lighter than lunch and is eaten anywhere from 8-10pm. For dinner you usually get 1 course (such as tortilla de patatas) and fruit or yogurt. Bread is usually served with both lunch and dinner. However, butter is not served with bread in Spain, so please don’t ask for butter. Between-meal snacks and drinks like soda or juice are not provided by your host family. However, it’s usually ok if you want to buy these for yourself and store them in the fridge (just ask).

**The main differences between the typical Spanish diet and the American diet are the following:**

Vegetables are eaten less often in Spain. Maybe one meal a day might have vegetables, or maybe none. They eat more pork, cured meats, and fried foods. They eat a lot less beef than Americans do. The quality of beef is not as good in Spain, and it is very expensive. Breakfast is very light. Pasta sauce is typically the plain, store-bought kind (unless you go to an Italian restaurant).

**As a guest in your host’s home, you will be expected to conform to the family’s mealtimes—not the other way around.** It is not ok to request to have your meals at a different time than the family does. Exception: If your class schedule is such that you cannot make it home for lunch, you can ask your señora to make you a bag lunch, which will probably be a bocadillo (a sandwich on baguette style bread) and a piece of fruit. NOTE: Sandwiches in Spain have less filling (meat) and are more bread-heavy than Americans are used to!

**What kind of food will the host family make for me?**

Spanish food is not the same as Mexican food. It’s quite different, and usually not spicy. Spaniards eat what is called a Mediterranean diet. Their staples are chicken, pork and sausages, fish and seafood, eggs, olive oil, rice and lentil dishes, and bread. Spaniards fry or sauté much of their food in olive oil and, although fruit, yogurt, or pudding is served as dessert at almost every meal, vegetables may not be served at every meal. A tortilla in Spain is actually an omelet made with eggs and potatoes (and sometimes onions). Paella is a famous Spanish dish of rice cooked in saffron, meat, seafood, and some vegetables. When you first arrive at your host family, your señora is going to want to know what you like to eat. Please be honest with her about your likes and dislikes, and let her know if you have any food allergies. Señoras take pride in their cooking, so be sure to compliment a meal if you really like it. In typical Spanish fashion, your señora may try to serve you seconds or thirds. Hold your ground if you really do not want more; tell her the food is delicious, but that you’re very full. You must let your señora know ahead of time if you will not be home for a meal so food is not wasted. If there is something you cannot or won’t eat, please let your señora know in a courteous manner so she won’t keep serving it. Please try to be conscious about not wasting food. Your señora will appreciate it! ¡Buen provecho!

# Housing in Homestay

## FAQs

### Do I need to have COVID-19 vaccine to live with a host family in Madrid?

It is not a requirement, but the Spanish host families would like to know your vaccine status to help make an informed decision when agreeing to house a student for the term.

### When will I find out who I'm living with?

We will email you your housing assignment about 2 weeks before your program starts.

### Where will I be living, and how are host families selected?

The host families' residences are in safe areas of the city and as close to your university as possible. However, some families are located further from school than others. We carefully vet all of the host families, and many have hosted students for years. Living arrangements and composition of each family varies. Most families live in a flat, as single-family houses are uncommon in urban areas in Spain. The term "family" should not be interpreted too narrowly. Some host families are traditional families with a father, mother, and children, while others may consist of a widow whose children still live at home, or no longer live at home. Increasingly, about 50% of the host families are childless couples or divorced women with children who enjoy having a student living with them. Host families come from a cross-section of society; they belong to no particular professional or social milieu. Past ASA students have found that speaking Spanish at home is the single greatest factor in increasing their facility with the language!

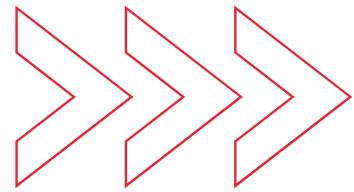
### How will I get to class?

In Madrid, most students take the Metro (subway) or bus to get to class, but some also walk. In Madrid, the average commute is 45 minutes. During ASA's orientation after you arrive, our Site Director will show everyone how to use the public transportation system and buy passes. Although Spain is a safe country, we recommend that you take taxis after 10:00 pm.

### What happens if I don't like my host family?

First, it's important to give yourself a chance to adjust and get to know them. Your Site Director will be in contact with you throughout your stay to ensure that you are happy with your living arrangements. If you raise any concerns, the Site Director will speak with the host family and hopefully resolve the issue. Many times, a concern can be a cultural misunderstanding or a communication problem that is easily resolved. If we are unable to settle an issue between a host family and a student, we'll move you to a new family right away.

# Everyday Life



## Weather

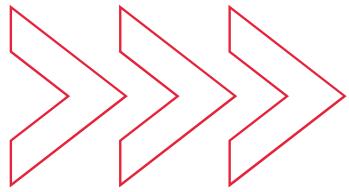
**Summer:** It is important to take precautions against the heat during Summer months. The South of Spain especially can be very, very hot. Always wear lightweight clothing and drink lots of water. The recommended clothing for Summer is sandals, t-shirts or light blouses, skirts/shorts, and sunglasses. Try to wear light colored clothing that will not absorb so much of the heat.

**Fall/Winter:** For late Fall and Winter months, be sure to bring a warm coat and clothes you can layer. European homes aren't heated as well as American homes, so pack accordingly, including warm pajamas and socks, and things you can layer. Students have reported that although the winter weather was not very cold, it felt colder because the heating was different. Layering your clothes will help.

Average temperatures are as follows:

Months	Temperature
Jan - Feb	55-57° F
March - April	61-67° F
May - June	74-77° F
July - Aug	84° F
Sept - Oct	69-77° F
Nov - Dec	45-60° F

# Everyday Life



## Local Transportation

### Subway: "Metro"

Madrid has an inexpensive and efficient subway system called the "Metro". You will undoubtedly use public transportation during your stay to get around. During ASA's orientation after you arrive, your ASA Site Director will show everyone how to use the public transportation system and buy passes.

### Bus

Madrid has inexpensive and efficient public buses. Some students use the bus instead of, or combined with, the Subway. Your ASA Site Director can advise you on the best way to get to/from your host institution after you arrive.

### Taxi

When taking a taxi in a foreign country, it is very important to follow these guidelines:

- If you're out after 10pm, take a taxi home. It is well worth it to spend a small amount of money to make sure you get home safely! Better yet, share a taxi with friends.
- Madrid taxis are white with a red stripe on the side. In certain cases there may be a flat rate (i.e. to the airport), but most will charge by the meter. Beware of "independent" drivers who may offer you a ride. Taxis will always charge a surcharge (1-2 euros) for leaving the airport or train station, and for each piece of luggage. Make sure that the taxi has a meter inside that is working.
- Uber is also widely available in Spain and Europe.

### Rideshare

Uber is widely available in Spain and Europe.

### Trains

Spain has an extensive railroad system and comfortable trains. Spain's national rail network is known as RENFE. The AVE ("ah-vay") is a high-speed train that is more expensive but gets you back and forth faster.

### HELPFUL TIP

Bring comfortable shoes!

You will be walking MUCH more on a daily basis than you probably ever have before!

# Everyday Life

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## How to dress

Neatness is a Spanish virtue. You should expect to dress a bit more formally in Spain and you must be aware that you are not on a U.S. college campus. Also, Spaniards tend to wear more dark/neutral colors (black, gray, beige, brown). If you bring clothes in these colors, you will not only blend in better, but you'll save space in your suitcase because you can mix and match using fewer pieces.

Example: You may walk into a local bar wearing flip-flops and a college T-shirt and ask for a can of coca-cola at 10:00 a.m. Immediately, you will notice that you are the only one in the bar with open-toed shoes, a short sleeved shirt, no jacket and drinking a Coke. The rest of the patrons of the bar will be "dressed up" wearing jackets, pants, closed-toe shoes or boots and ordering a coffee.

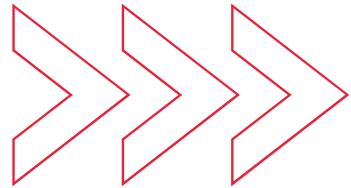
While people may, of course, dress as they prefer in Spain, keep in mind that it is easy to stick out as a foreigner because of your clothing. Spaniards simply tend to have a more formal way of dressing than is typical of American college students.

Spaniards do not go out in public in sweats, stretch pants, yoga pants, or flip flops, unless they are on their way to the gym. Flip flops are typically only worn at the beach. Pajamas are never to be worn outside your home/apartment.

Many churches and cathedrals do not allow people to enter unless their legs and shoulders are covered, even in summer months, so keep this in mind while traveling or while on a program field trip/excursion.

Many cities in Europe have cobblestone streets, which are notoriously uneven and hard to walk on. Do not attempt to walk on cobblestone in heels (even a low heel), especially if the streets are slippery from rain. Students HAVE sprained their ankles this way and spent the semester on crutches. Broken heels and straps are common, too. Also, it's difficult to roll your suitcases on the cobblestone, and it can break the wheels. You may have to carry them, so try not to pack too heavy. Watch out for broken suitcase wheels from the cobblestone. Happens all the time...some students have had to buy brand new luggage.

# Staying In Touch



## Cell Phones

For information about cell phones abroad, please see the [ASA PRE-DEPARTURE GUIDE FOR ALL PROGRAMS](#)

## Time Difference

The following are the number of hours BEHIND Spain each region is:

Pacific	Mountain	Central	Eastern
9 hours	8 hours	7 hours	6 hours

For date and time around the world, to help schedule meetings, sunrise and sunset, use the [Time and Date](#) website.

## Computers & Internet

*Should I bring a laptop?* Yes. You'll have free Wi-Fi at your host university and your program housing. Some professors provide digital course materials, so you'll definitely want your laptop.

## Holidays

The following are the public holidays in Spain.

Most companies and shops are closed on these days:

January 1: New Year's Day

January 6- Epiphany (This is the day when Spaniards exchange Christmas gifts.)

March 19- St. Joseph's

Late March or early April- Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter (Holy Week)

May 1- Labor Day

Late May or early June- Corpus Christi

July 25- Feast of Santiago

August 15- Feast of the Assumption

October 12- Día de la Hispanidad

November 1- All Saints Day

December 6- Constitution Day

December 8- Immaculate Conception Day

December 25- Christmas Day