

*This is where I will write my updates for people in the United States. Ask me anything and I will try to answer it next time.

January 14, 2018: First Few Days

So I have been in Spain for five days now. I am surprised that I like as much of the food as I do. I have had soup, something like an enchilada, lentils and ham, tortilla(the Spanish version, not Mexican) and coffee. I tried coffee and milk twice so far and it was alright with a whole packet of sugar, but still kind of bitter. I wish I liked it more. I have already seen a lot of things, but have only seen maybe a tenth of the city. On my way the school, I see the Catedral de Sevilla, the main river, a plaza a two, and some oddly familiar things like, McDonald's, Dunkin Coffee, Starbucks, and Burger King. There are lots of cafes that almost always smell delicious. I can't wait to try some gelato from a cafe. Friday night I tried a tapa of ham and it was good. The ham was room temperature and some of it was hard to chew, but it was quite good, and I didn't get sick. Also my señora is very nice and has a larger than average apartment. We aren't as restricted with hot water compared to others which is very nice right now when it cold. The people think it is very cold right now and are wearing winter coats and scarves up it is only 45-50 at the coldest, which is hilarious to us Americans.

January 20, 2018

I just finished my first full week of classes. I am taking history of Spain from 1400s to 1600s or so, history of Spain in the 20th century, art (architecture now and paintings later), a volunteering session that hasn't started yet, a Modern Spain class that also hasn't started yet, and I am auditing advanced grammar. I haven't spent more than a half hour everyday on homework which is very nice. There is way more smoking here than the US. Food seems to be cheaper, for example a dollar or two for coffee at a cafe, sweets are cheaper than the US, and my roommate bought two large loaves of bread for about \$1.50. They were also talking about President Trump's first year on the news show my señora, or host, watches. Also, she likes to talk a lot more than I thought she would. Last night we talked about the Romans, universities in Spain, and science. I didn't think that would happen, but I am pleased it did. She was going to take us some Roman ruins today but it is too cold this afternoon, when the high is 65-70 F. I am still walking a lot. We walked about 50 minutes one way to an open house for one of the program coordinators last night. She had a small apartment in a good location. I can see why that area is popular to go to/live in. I have now been to the Torre del Oro and the Real Alcazar. Torre del Oro has a great view. Real Alcazar is a mix of old historical building and a nice park. No too bad, but not quite as good as I thought it was going to be based on how others have talked about it. We also visited La Cartuja which is a monastery and an old ceramic factory. It was very cool and I liked as much or more than the Alcazar. I also saw a rocket near there which was quite surprising, and several parked emergency/governmental helicopters.

January 28, 2018

This Friday we went to Cordoba. The main thing in the city is La Mezquita, which is a mosque built more than a thousand years ago. I thought it was interesting, but I felt that we were rushed through by our art professor because she wanted to point out all of the details we talked about

in class. Afterwards we went to an old castle that had a cool garden. Then we went to a market. The most interesting part were the meat stands. They had several pieces of meat just hanging out in the open and slowly cooking. There were a few pigs that were literally cut in half down the middle and on a stick rotating over a fire. It was nice to go to Cordoba, but I don't plan on going back because there other things I would rather do. I am really glad we are done talking about the La Mezquita and are moving on to talk about architecture in Seville. Oh and on one last note, I was trying to explain race and racism in the United States to my señora last night. That was quite interesting.

February 4, 2018

This week was very laid back for me. It got down to a high of 60 degrees this week and will continue to be about that cold most of this week. I tried a piece of salmon this week and it tasted surprisingly quite like ham. I think I have adjusted to life here finally, but it is harder than I thought being away from everyone in the United States. My señora has given us a few places to go visit when it is cheaper/more convenient. We went to La Macarena, which was a church and yes like the song. Also, they have a giant sale every year from January to the beginning of March and apparently in July and August. Right now it is common for things be half off, sometimes more, sometimes less. There are also many banks, cafes, food stores, and clothing stores. Electronics and clothes are expensive; food tends to be cheaper, at least the typical Spanish food. People don't drive much in the city because public transport is cheaper and easier, but most married people own a car to go the beach in the summer, or take a longer trip on the weekend, or to go outside the city. I really do like the fact everything could want is within a half hour of walking or a short trip on the bike system or metro or bus. If I want, I could go to a five grocery stores with fifteen minutes of walking. Same for clothes stores or cafes. There are also a surprising number of pharmacies, eye doctors/glasses stores, and other doctor/dentist offices. Also most building have businesses on the first floor, maybe the second, and then apartments for the rest of the floors of the building.

February 11, 2018

So this week I tried calamari. I don't want it again. In my art class we are talking about about cathedrals and the Gothic era of architecture, which I like more than the previous section on Islamic architecture. Thursday I am going to Toledo for two days, then Madrid for two days. I might not get an update out until Monday, or last late Sunday. I went to a Sevilla soccer game earlier. It was quite intense and heated for awhile. Sevilla won 1-0. I am also going to finish my travel bookings soon.

February 19, 2018

So I just had a good long weekend. I went to Toledo Spain were we saw many of El Greco's paintings, the Cathedral of Toledo, and the church were Ferdinand and Isabel were going to be buried until the they conquered Granada. I tried mazapán, which was really good, a ham sandwich with an egg on it, tostada, which is bread with toppings like fish or cheese or onions, had some Mexican food, which was better than I thought, and som great crossings for breakfast. In Madrid I went to the art museum where I saw some famous paintings I learned

about, the Royal Palace, and El Escorial. Toblerone is really good too. I really liked this, way more than Córdoba. I still have school work to do, but not much. Oh and I bought a replica sword of Carlos V in Toledo.

February 25, 2018

This week was very calm and relaxing. On Wednesday I went and saw The Black Panther. Apparently Spaniards like watching movies in the original language with subtitles, so that was how I saw it. Also, I have a minor cold and my señora acts like I have a major sickness. We had Hawaiian pizza last night because she thought we would like it. Twice this week we had her friends over and had something to drink and a small snack in her living room. In the region I am in heating is very expensive and so they have small heaters under a table and long table clothes so you sit at the table and put your legs underneath to stay warm. I also met with a Spaniard for about an hour and just talked in Spanish the whole time. It would have been longer but he had to go to the theater. We were told Spaniards talk about politics and sports a lot and think this is true because my señora does a lot in our house and the Spaniard I met asked me about guns in the United States about 10 minutes after I met him. I didn't find out if he likes soccer or not though. We have a free day Wednesday this week but it is supposed to rain, so I don't know I will do. Also I have 3 tests this week.

March 4, 2018

I got a 48/50 on my first test. This week I tried salmon, which wasn't bad, and pestiño and torrijas, which are snack desert type things made around Semana Santa, and they were great but I prefer torrijas. I still can't believe it but I am going to Rome Thursday night and staying through the weekend. I don't when I will have time to write an update so it might not be until Monday or Tuesday or Wednesday. We are also half way done with school. I actually will be back home in two months, but it feels like longer. This was also probably my last weekend in Seville because I have travel plans for every weekend until I leave. This includes going to Rome, Ronda and Malaga, Cadiz, Madrid, Mallorca, Bilbao/San Sebastián, and Barcelona and maybe Girona. Seville is a great old city with lots of history and peculiarities and I like it a lot. I really wish I had more time here to soak in life in Spain and Seville, and I am very fortunate to be able to come here. These next two months are almost certainly going to go too fast, but it's okay because I will get to see so many cool things. I just hope my grades don't suffer too much.

March 14, 2018,

I just had a very long week. I had some more torrijas, which I believe is very similar to french toast, and very delicious. I then went to Rome Thursday through Monday. I saw the typical sites like the Vatican and the Coliseum. I also went in a few other cool churches, like one with an image that looks normal from one spot but looks warped if you move, and one with a ton of gold inside of it that I think might be the predecessor to St. Peter's Basilica. I also saw the Pantheon, Trevi Fountain, Spanish Steps, and a few plazas. I really liked the Trevi Fountain. There was also a gigantic marble monument that is a war memorial/dedication to the first king of Italy that was very impressive and I had never even heard of it being mentioned. And of course, the food in Italy was great. I tried spaghetti carbonara, pizza, lasagna, and calzones. It was all great, but

I wanted to try more things but I didn't have the time. I also tried some wine and I like it much better than beer, but it still had a strong bitter taste as I swallowed it. Italy was still pretty similar to Seville but there were some differences, for example, restaurants usually charge a sit down fee and the Italians seem to eat earlier than the Spanish. Oh, I almost forgot, the gelato was very good as well, with many different flavors. I saw a place with 150 flavors, but the four or five I tried elsewhere were pretty good. I am now definitely over halfway done too which is strange to think about because in six weeks I will be back in the United States.

March 30, 2018

So what a couple of crazy weeks. After getting back from Rome, I continued with class and my volunteering class so I felt I didn't have as much time. We went to Zahara, a white village, and got a great view of a lake and the hills from the top of a castle. Then we went to Ronda and saw incredible views from the top of cliffs, a cool river way down in a mini canyon and the first bullfighting ring in Spain. I also spent all €10 I brought on some sweets for when I get home. Then I had some tests and went to the art museum in Sevilla to look at famous work by Zurbarán and Murillo, who were from or near Sevilla. Then Semana Santa arrived. There were two or three times as many people as normal and during the peak hours I could hardly get back to my house. The floats were very elaborate and impressive, along with all of the coordination and strength required. I went to the Alcazar, which is very nice. Then I went to Madrid. I was surprised at how modern the city center was. They had some great stores, like Nike, Adidas, Corte Ingles, Primark, and soccer team stores, along with a cool restaurant called Museo de Jamón, or Ham Museum, and a museum for the Spanish National Soccer Team. I went back to the Royal Palace, which was much cooler since I wasn't constrained by time and could take in the fanciness and decoration and significance of everything. I also went to the Prado again, which was also cooler since I knew more about some of the painters and the history of their subjects and real events and people that were depicted. Then we went to the Cuatro Torres, which are the tallest building in Spain. I had seen them before but it was very cool to see them up close and walk right next to them. They are building something next to them, but I am not sure what. This coming weekend I am headed north to Bilbao and that area. I only have three weeks of school left and a week where I am going to Barcelona and Mallorca. Once I get my final projects done it will be a nice couple of weeks to relax and see different cities in Spain. I am sad I will miss Easter with everyone. I might go to the beach though.

April 6, 2018

Today I am going to San Sebastian, regarded as one of the best beaches in Spain and in the world. I thought I was going to miss the early bus but I didn't, it was just more expensive than I hoped. Yesterday I explored Bilbao, including the Casco Viejo or Old City and the Guggenheim museum, and Artxanda, which is a hill with great views. Bilbao has a different feel than Seville and Madrid, and the people seem larger here but I could be imagining things. Also, there are less tourists here and very few people speak English, so I am having a good time practicing my Spanish. Today is the first time I have worn shorts since last summer or fall. Last weekend I went to Cadiz on Saturday which was so pretty and laid back. My favorite part of the beach was the part with lots of rocks and it happened to have the least amount of people as well. Tomorrow

I plan to hit some other towns in this metro area but it is supposed to rain, like it frequently does in the northern part of Spain. Next weekend I leave for Barcelona then Mallorca then a town near Huelva. During my time here I have realized just how much we as Americans are always concerned about time and getting things done. In Spain, it is very common to chill at a restaurant for a while after finishing eating, or take an hour or two and get a drink and a small snack with a friend or a few friends. Also they don't care as much as we do about what job they have, as long as they have a job. But in America we tend to have more jobs and are richer but we don't spend as much time with friends and family. It is a different way of life here and I am not sure if many people would want to switch to the other country if given the chance. Another thing is that Spaniards care more about how they look and there are a few times a year where everyone buys a new outfit. They also don't ask the price for things anywhere, they just ask for it then pay and then react to it later, no matter the price. This past week I also went to a bar to watch Sevilla play Bayern Munich in the Champions League. It was a great time except that Sevilla basically scored both of Bayern's goals because a defender tipped the ball and the goalie couldn't switch directions fast enough and so they lost 2-1.

April 18, 2018

So it's been awhile but I have been travelling and getting work done for the end of the semester. After I went to the beach, I went back and spent the rest of the time in Bilbao and going to San Juan that is famous for being a castle in Game of Thrones. Got some great pictures and some explanations to go with them. Then we had a day where we saw the Flamencos dance which was cool, and some time to chill out afterwards where they served beer and chips to everyone, including students. Their nursing home is quite different than ones in the US as well. Then I went to Barcelona and am about to leave. Overall, very good and I would recommend extra time in Barcelona over Madrid unless you really like art or want to go somewhere closer to Madrid. Barcelona has really cool architecture, mainly thanks to Gaudi. La Sagrada Familia was my favorite part and by far the best church I have been inside of in Europe. The soccer stuff is insane here and I wish it wasn't so expensive or I would have bought a shirt. The cathedral is also impressive from the outside but I didn't go in. La Rambla, Plaça Espanya, Plaça Catalunya, and their surrounding areas are all cool as well. Montjuic and near Park Guell have great views of the city and the Mediterranean. I have so much more to say about Barcelona because it is a great city, not to mention the problems I had.