

# Study Abroad



**USAC SPAIN: BILBAO & VALENCIA  
2020**

***Program Guide***

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***Congratulations*** on being accepted to the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire (UWEC) study abroad program in Bilbao or Valencia, offered through the University Studies Abroad Consortium (USAC). Living and studying in a new culture is both an exciting and a challenging experience. Past participants of study abroad report that the many advantages of international study include:

***Gaining new perspectives on a chosen academic field***

***Increasing understanding of different cultures***

***Enhancing personal development***

***Developing different perspectives on U.S. culture***

***Gaining self-confidence and independence***

***Learning skills for the future international job market***

It is up to you to determine how you can best benefit from these possible advantages. This is your adventure!

Use this program-specific guide with the more general resources in your BlugoldsAbroad account, the Study Abroad Handbook, and your USAC Gateway portal. While this guide contains the information available at the time of publication, it is impossible for any single resource to answer all of your questions. Your peer advisor will email information throughout the semester, and we encourage you to do your own research, also, using the web resources listed towards the end of this guide, as well as others that you find. Contact the Center for International Education (CIE) staff or your peer advisor with your specific questions.

Questions only you can answer include:

- 1) What are YOUR goals for this experience? Advancement in a future profession, desire to expand personal and academic horizons, need for a change, and wish to challenge yourself in a new environment?
- 2) How can you best prepare to meet your goals within the context of this program? For example, if one of your goals is truly being immersed in Spanish culture, yet you are going with a group of UW-Eau Claire students, how can you insure that you do not spend too much time with other Americans?

The information in this guide was current at the time of publication, though changes may occur at any time.

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# ACADEMICS

*Additional information on topics such as maintaining program eligibility, registration at UWEC, class attendance, course equivalencies, grades, transcripts and service learning is in the [Academics section of your Study Abroad Handbook](#).*

## **Pre-departure Planning**

Please see the [UWEC-Bilbao, Spain Academics page](#) or the [UWEC-Valencia, Spain Academics page](#) for details on how to plan your courses in Spain.

In addition, there is detailed academic information in the “Credits, Courses & Transcripts” document in your USAC Gateway account.

As part of the USAC admissions process, you completed a preliminary course registration, indicating your course and tour selections, along with two alternative courses in case any courses become unavailable. You can see the form, Course and Tour Registration Form, in your USAC Gateway account. Your courses and/or level of Spanish may change once you arrive at your host university.

## **Credits and Course Load**

### **Summer**

You can enroll in Session I; Session II, or both Sessions. At least one 3-credit course is required in each session in which you enroll.

- Bilbao requires 3-6 credits in Session 1 and 3-4 credits in Session 2.
- Valencia requires 3-5 credits in either session.
- If you are abroad for both sessions, you can earn up to 11 total credits if you enroll in the optional field study.

To receive summer financial aid, you must take at least six credits.

### **Semester**

You are required to take a minimum of 12 credits for the semester and may take a maximum of 18 credits at either location. In Bilbao, Spanish language study is encouraged, but not required. In Valencia, one Spanish language course is required.

### **For all terms:**

- The credits you earn abroad are considered UWEC resident credits.
- The classes you take abroad will count towards the total credits needed for graduation.
- Dropping below full-time status may result in loss of financial aid and/or insurance coverage and **must be approved in advance by the CIE and USAC.**

## **Registration in Spain**

If you are taking language courses, once you arrive in Spain, you will take a placement test and your registration is adjusted accordingly. You won't have much say in when your courses meet, as they are determined by how you place in your placement test. You also won't have multiple time slots to choose from, like you do in the U.S.

## **Add/Drop Courses**

There is a drop-add period and withdrawal deadline set by the Bilbao and Valencia Resident Directors. You will receive these dates from the respective USAC Office in Spain.

## **Withdrawing from USAC Courses**

Your Resident Director in Spain will establish a course withdrawal deadline. If you must drop a course after the drop deadline, but before the withdrawal deadline, a grade of “W” will be reported on your USAC grade report. If you stop attending a class without officially

withdrawing from it, the grade will be reported as an “F.”

## **Classes**

USAC classes in Bilbao are held on the campus of the University of Basque Country; Valencia classes are held on the campus of the Polytechnic University of Valencia. Your classmates will be other USAC and international students.

### **Language classes:**

If you are taking language classes, you will take a placement exam when you arrive at your host university. Intensive language courses are grouped into tracks and are taught sequentially. Summer tracks are made up of two courses, one each session. Semester tracks are three. You don't have to take all three courses in a track: you can take the first two classes, or the first course alone.

If you have already taken the first course in a track, you don't have to take it for credit, but you must audit it to be prepared for the next course in the sequence.

As previously noted, semester students in Valencia are required to take at least one language class.

## **Class/Activity Attendance**

USAC generally allows students one excused absence. Each tardy is considered one half of an absence. If you fail to attend class, this will affect your grade in the course. All exams must be taken as scheduled.

## **Grades**

Courses in the program are graded on the U.S. A-F grading scale. The grades reported on your USAC grade report are the same grades that will appear on your UWEC transcript.

However, while USAC will report your grades using the standing A-F scale, you may see

Spanish university grades on some of your individual work. Spanish universities typically grade students using a scale of 1 to 10. 9 and 10 are generally considered “A” work; 7 & 8 is considered “B” work, etc.

**Note: UWEC students abroad are not allowed to take classes pass/fail. USAC grades are figured into your UWEC GPA and posted to your UWEC transcript. No exceptions will be made.**

## **USAC Grade Report/UWEC Transcript**

Please see the [Academics section of the Study Abroad Handbook](#) for important information if you are **graduating, transferring or applying for a competitive major** such as Nursing or Education at the end of your term abroad.

At the end of the program, USAC prepares a grade report/transcript. If you have any outstanding financial charges, your grade report will be withheld until payment is made.

**If you are asked to complete a transcript release form by USAC, have the transcript sent to the Center for International Education (see Contacts page for full address).** UWEC cannot post grades that were first sent to a student.

USAC will also update your grades on your Gateway account for you to review. Courses, credits, and grades are incorporated into your UWEC transcript.

**Summer:** Grade reports are not available until a few weeks after the summer program ends.

**Semester:** Grade reports are not available until a few months after the program ends.

**For all terms:** Due to this delay, you will initially receive a grade report with “NR” (not reported)



for all courses. This will be changed once your grade report arrives.

### ***The Academic System***

Although you are going to a program for US students, it is important to keep in mind that you are not going to a U.S. classroom abroad. Most courses are taught by Spanish professors, educated within the Spanish system.

**Overview:** Higher education in Europe different from that in the U.S. **Students are expected to learn fairly independently and often work together outside of class to understand or expand upon the materials presented.** There is little time allowed for discussion or classroom participation, and short quizzes and daily or weekly assignments are very uncommon.

**Syllabi:** You will receive a syllabus for each class, but it may not be as detailed as a typical U.S. syllabus. Again, the responsibility falls to you, as the student, to keep up with assignments and due dates.

**Academic Assistance:** If you have questions for professors that cannot be asked during class, you will most likely need to set up a meeting. Spanish professors are not required to hold specific office hours. That said, do not be afraid to ask questions. The professors are more than willing to answer both academic and cultural questions for you.

**Student Services:** Another important difference to note is that “student services” are a relatively unknown concept at Spanish universities. While the USAC office and Resident Directors will be ready to assist you, in general, the university does not have the mission, common to most U.S. institutions, of “student development.” It is there to provide access to academic resources. University students are considered adults who will work their way through the system, asking questions when necessary.

## **MONEY MATTERS**

*UWEC information about making payments, when they are due, withdrawal and refund deadlines, financial aid, general scholarships, budgeting and ways to bring money abroad is in the [Money Matters section of your Study Abroad Handbook](#).*

### ***Cost Estimate***

You can find the most current cost estimate for your program, in easily printable format, on the [CIE Bilbao, Spain \(USAC\) webpage](#) or the [CIE Valencia, Spain \(USAC\) webpage](#). Be sure you are looking at the correct term. The cost estimate includes what you pay to UWEC, what you pay to USAC, and what you pay directly to other vendors.

You will also find an interactive budget sheet in the “Fees and Deadlines” section of the USAC website for each program. These allow you to customize a budget based on optional courses and tours you plan to do, how you plan to travel, etc.

### ***USAC Payments & Refund Policy***

For questions about paying your USAC fees, please contact the USAC accounting person listed in your Gateway account. You can pay with credit card, check, or money order.

In addition to the UWEC refund policy outlined in the “Money Matters” section of the Study Abroad Handbook, USAC has its own financial policies related to payment, cancellations, and changes. Information about the withdrawal deadlines and penalties are in the USAC Program Agreement and USAC Financial Agreement in your Gateway account.

### ***Currency Exchange***

The currency of Spain is the Euro. One Euro has 100 cents. There are 8 Euro coins, ranging in amount from 1 cent to 2 Euros. Coins have different designs in the various countries that use

the Euro. Bills range from €5 to €500 and have a standard design across countries.

You can find current exchange rates at <http://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/>.

### **Cost of Living**

For an idea of what everyday costs you may encounter, check out this website <https://www.numbeo.com/cost-of-living/in/Bilbao>

<https://www.numbeo.com/cost-of-living/in/Valencia>

### **Scholarships**

*In addition to the scholarships listed in your Study Abroad Handbook, this may also apply for Spain students:*

**USAC Scholarships:** USAC offers a variety of scholarships. For information, visit [USAC's Scholarship website](#). You will see optional scholarship applications on your USAC Gateway account when they open. You can apply for all scholarships you are eligible for and can be awarded more than one scholarship.

**Scholarships for UWEC students on USAC Programs:** USAC also offers an Affiliate Scholarship just for UWEC students on a USAC program. You will be considered for this scholarship when you complete the UWEC Study Abroad Foundation Scholarship application. The number of awards varies by term. Amounts vary between \$200 - \$500.

The Department of Languages also has scholarship to support students of Spanish:

**Hilda Belle Oxby Scholarship:** Advanced students of Latin American studies or Spanish, with a cumulative GPA of 3.0 and 3.5 in Spanish are eligible to apply. Contact the Foreign Languages Department for application

details. This scholarship generally has a March deadline.

## **HEALTH & SAFETY**

*General information on these issues, as well as information on CISI insurance, is included in the [Health & Insurance](#) and [Safety Abroad](#) sections of your Study Abroad Handbook.*

### **Health & Vaccinations**

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has vaccination suggestions, how to stay healthy when abroad, and health information specific to Spain. Review the [CDC site for Spain](#).

Due to an increasing measles and mumps cases in Europe, we strongly encourage all students to check their vaccine history to see if they have had the MMR vaccine.

### **Healthcare Medical Facilities**

The USAC resident directors will be able to assist you in identifying an English-speaking doctor or therapist. You will receive more information during orientation on-site.

### **Counseling Services**

Counseling services are available; however, counselors may not speak English.

If you would like to see an English-speaking therapist while abroad, we can work with CISI to try to identify English speaking therapists. Counseling may be via Skype or another similar online format. Start this process before you go, or afterwards, by contacting your UWEC study abroad coordinator.

### **Health Insurance in Spain**

As part of your program fees to USAC you receive health insurance. Your USAC health insurance cards will be handed out at the on-site orientation. This insurance is in addition to



the CISI insurance that you have through the UW system policy. You are not able to opt out of either one, both are required as they have different levels of coverage.

### ***Services for Students with Disabilities***

If you will need any disability accommodations when abroad, it is important to complete your USAC Disability and Health Accommodation Request Form on your USAC Gateway account. While USAC cannot guarantee services, they will do their best to accommodate your needs. When you complete that form, USAC will be in contact with you regarding services they can/cannot provide.

It is also important to look at the level of accessibility in general. To find more information on this topic, please see the Local Laws & Special Circumstances section of the [U.S. State Department Country Information page](#)

### ***Safety in Spain***

Information on crime, specific safety issues, road safety, drug penalties, and terrorist activity in Spain is included in the U.S. State Department's [Spain Country Information website](#). Specific safety in and around Bilbao & Valencia will be discussed during orientation in Eau Claire and in Spain.

**Pick-Pocketing:** Pick-pocketing is common on public transportation and at popular tourist sites, particularly in Madrid and Barcelona. To reduce the risk, do not have your phone or other valuables out in public spaces. An iPhone is a target for pick-pocketers. If you carry a purse, make sure it is across the body and has zippers. Keep your wallet in a front pocket, not a back pocket. Only carry small amounts of cash on you to minimize loss. Using a money belt under your clothing is another way to prevent valuables from being stolen.

**Sexual Assault:** The U.S. Embassy in Spain often receives reports of sexual assaults affecting U.S. citizens. There have been numerous reports alleging sexual assaults against U.S. citizen students by a representative of a tour operator based in Seville, Spain. Exercise the same caution as you would in any unfamiliar area or with unfamiliar people. Be cautious in bars and clubs where alcohol is served, and do not leave your drink unattended or accept a drink from strangers, as they may have slipped drugs into the drink.

In the words of a past participant: *Women need to be fully aware of the tendencies of Spanish men. They are extremely charming and nice when you are talking but may become very aggressive when you reject them.*

**Beach Safety:** Swimming areas at some popular beaches around Spain can have dangerous rip currents. Most beaches lack lifeguards or warnings of unsafe conditions. U.S. citizens have died in Spain due to these dangers. Check out this [website about beach and sea safety in Spain](#). Always check with local authority for current information on local swimming and surf conditions. Here are some tips to follow:

- Do not dive into water of unknown depths.
- Do not swim alone, especially at isolated beaches.
- Avoid the consumption of alcohol while swimming.

### ***Emergency Contacts***

General emergency procedures are described in the Study Abroad Handbook, and the USAC staff is available if difficulties arise. You will receive an emergency contact card with USAC staff information at the Orientation 2; be sure to keep it in your wallet at all times. The information is also on the Contact Names & Addresses page of this guide.

## 911 Equivalent in Spain

If you are in an emergency situation in Spain, you will need to know how to reach the local police, fire, or ambulance services. The local equivalent to the **911 emergency line in Spain is 112**. We suggest you save this number in your cell phone.

## Marijuana

As of this writing, personal use of marijuana on private property is legal in Spain. Membership in “cannabis clubs” has grown because they meet the requirement of private property. However, membership is restricted to Spanish citizens over the age of 21.

**Any form of public use is illegal.** Even carrying it on your person in public can be considered drug trafficking, at the discretion of law enforcement officials. U.S. citizenship offers no protection if you break a Spanish law. There is NOTHING the CIE, USAC, or the U.S. government can do if you are found in violation of Spanish laws.

In addition to legal penalties, you are putting yourself at risk of robbery or assault, or you may get a much more dangerous combination of drugs than you thought you were buying.

## REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

*Passport information is included in the [Travel Resources section of your Study Abroad Handbook](#).*

**If you are not a U.S. citizen, please contact the CIE for more information about the following topics.**

### Visa

A visa is official permission to temporarily reside in another country and is granted by the government of that country.

**Summer:** U.S. citizens, studying in Spain for less than 90 days do NOT need a visa. If you plan to travel in the [Schengen area](#) (much of Western Europe) before or after the program, you CANNOT be in the Schengen area for more than 90 days. Make your travel plans accordingly.

**Semester:** You will need to apply for a visa the semester prior to studying abroad. The CIE will hold an info session to go over the process. USAC will also release detailed information, including webinars and examples, on your Gateway account about how you go about obtaining a visa for Spain. The process can be lengthy, so please plan and respond promptly to any emails about the Spanish visa process.

Although the CIE and USAC will provide information, it is your responsibility to keep up-to-date about student visa requirements for Spain, and to **submit your application documents to USAC by the due date**. Your USAC program coordinator will then do a group visa submission on behalf of all Spain students. If you miss the USAC submission deadline, you will be responsible for making your own appointment and traveling to the Spanish Consulate in Chicago to apply for your visa.

## Visas for Travel to Other Countries

If you plan to travel outside of Spain while abroad, you should verify visa requirements for each country you will visit by contacting the nearest consulate for that country, or your travel agency. Most Western European nations do not require U.S. citizens to have a visa for tourist travel of less than three months.

## PACKING TIPS

*There is general packing information in the [Travel Resources section of your Study Abroad Handbook](#), you will get a suggested packing list for Spain at Orientation 2, and USAC will post a packing list to your Gateway account. In addition, you should know the following:*

## Weather

**Bilbao:** The climate in Bilbao is temperate, with frequent rain from October through May.

Average summer temperatures are in the 70s. In the fall, high 50s and low 60s are common. Winter can see highs in the low 50s, and lows in the 30s. Spring will be moving into the 60s again.

**Valencia:** Valencia, on the other hand, is warm to hot, and mostly dry. For summer, the average high temperatures are usually in the 80s, with lows in the 60s overnight. Daytime highs in the winter are usually in the 60s, with lows in the 40s.

## Clothing

The Spanish dress less casually than the average American. Students generally wear jeans to class, but they dress them up with a nice blazer or sweater, or shirt and nice shoes. Summer dress is less formal, although hoodies and sweatpants are uncommon. Shorts are fine most places, although women must have their shoulders covered and be wearing conservative shorts to enter most churches, whether for a service or as a tourist.

Some students have commented that since they were not in class with Spaniards, it does not really matter what you wear to class. While this is true on one level, if your goal is to fit in as much as possible in Spanish culture, it is worthwhile to make the effort.

It is uncommon in Spain to wear tennis shoes for non-athletic purposes. Some clubs may even deny entrance to individuals wearing tennis shoes or jeans.

## Gifts

You may want to pack some small items as gifts for your host family. A memento from Wisconsin, like a UWEC mug, might be nice. If you are unsure what, if anything, to bring, ask your Peer Advisor for suggestions.

## Converters & Adapters

If you plan to bring a hair dryer, razor or other appliance from the US, you will need to **buy both a voltage converter and a plug adapter**. Another option is to buy the appliances after you arrive.

If you plan to bring your laptop abroad, check the power cord to see acceptable voltage inputs and outputs. If it includes 220 volts, you will only need to use a plug adapter, not a voltage converter.

If you have several US appliances you plan to use abroad, consider bringing a power strip, also. You will still need to have a voltage converter in order to plug it into the wall.

## GETTING TO SPAIN

*There is information on student-oriented travel agencies, instructions for booking a flight, and other travel information in the [Travel Resources section of the Study Abroad Handbook](#)*

*USAC will also posted a detailed “Flight Guide” in the 5-6 Months Before Program Start section of your Gateway account.*

## Travel Arrangements

It is your responsibility to make and pay for travel arrangements to Bilbao or Valencia. Airline tickets are not included in your USAC program fees.

An **optional group flight** is available for this program through a travel agency recommended by USAC. If you choose not to book the group flight, you will need to book your own flight and arrive prior to the mandatory orientation. **There is a \$200 fee for students who miss orientation!** See the USAC Flight Guide for details on both options.

In both cases, pay attention to the group flight dates **as they may not directly align with the program calendar**. Sometimes there is an optional field trip before or after the program, or the return flight is sometimes offered later to allow for travel.

If the group return flight leaves after the program end date, and you do not request a change to leave when the program ends, you will be responsible for finding your own housing until the departure date.

### **USAC Group Flight**

Benefits to booking with the optional group flight:

- Flexible tickets that are refundable and changeable for a fee.
- Flexible payment plan (pay a deposit to hold your seat, then pay the balance 2 weeks prior to departure)
- Select the group return date or select your own date for the same price
- Frosch Student Travel can help book connecting flights to merge with the group flight departure cities.
- Airport pick-up in Costa Rica (there is no USAC staff to chaperone the flight, but group flight participants will be met at the airport by USAC staff, unless you arrive late).

USAC will be in contact with you and information will be on your USAC Gateway account on how to sign up for the group flight.

### **Early Arrivals**

USAC strongly discourages students from arriving early. If you decide to arrive early, you will need to find and pay for your own accommodations. You should not expect to have any assistance upon arrival and should be prepared to deal with any issues on your own.

### **Airport Pick-Up Service**

Please fill out the Flight Form in your Gateway account after you have booked your flight.

Depending on several variables: if you are on the group flight, if there is an optional field trip prior to the beginning of the program, etc., you may be met at the airport in your host city. If not, you will get detailed instructions on how to get to your initial accommodations in the **USAC Arrival Guide**, that will be posted to your Gateway account about two months prior to departure.

### **Late Arrivals-Expected and Unexpected**

If you do not arrive as scheduled for any reason, you will be responsible for arranging and paying for your transfer from the airport. Again, watch for detailed instructions in the USAC Arrival Guide.

**Important reminder:** Write down your host family or apartment address on a piece of paper, in case you need to give it to a cab driver on arrival.

### **Leaving Your Host City**

Return airport transportation is not included in the USAC program cost. It is your responsibility to make arrangements to get to your airport of departure and to pay for the cost of whatever type of transportation you use. Neither your host family nor USAC staff are obliged to take you to the airport.

## **SETTLING IN**

### **Orientation**

When you first arrive in Spain, you will have a mandatory orientation, with topics such cultural differences, appropriate behavior, Spain in general, safety & emergency procedures, and living with host families/. This is also a great chance to get to know the USAC staff.

### **On-Site Support**

USAC provides a resident director and staff to assist students with the transition to Spain.

They will also be coordinating various excursions and activities throughout the term. If any questions or concerns arise, reach out to the onsite staff! It could be anything from how to say something in Spanish to needing to go to the doctor. The USAC staff is there to assist you so please use them as a resource.

## Getting Involved

To meet Spanish students and others in the community, you'll need to get involved in activities. USAC can arrange speaking partners with Spanish natives, and occasionally they receive requests from Spanish families looking for English speakers to tutor their children. There are many options if you like sports: soccer, basketball, ski club, backpacking, and others. There are also theater groups, church groups. Just get out and explore!

## HOUSING

*See the USAC Housing Guide in your Gateway account for additional general information on housing, as well as cancellation policies.*

### Housing Options

You have two options for housing in both Bilbao and Valencia. They may be in the city itself, or, in the case of Bilbao, in Gexto, or for Valencia, in a suburb. They can be anywhere from 15 minutes to an hour from campus. Public transportation is available.

1) Homestays, including some meals, with a family/Spanish host. **If you are a Spanish major or minor and wish to fulfill your language immersion requirement, you MUST live with a host family.**

2) Shared apartments, generally with other USAC participants. No meals/meal plan is included. Note that there are few apartments in Bilbao; most people who chose a shared apartment will live in Gexto.

For a detailed description of what is provided in each type of housing at each site and for each term, see the "Housing Guide" in your USAC Gateway account. Read carefully!

Specific housing assignments are given upon arrival to avoid last minute changes.

### Host Families

Most students opt to live with Spanish hosts for linguistic and cultural reasons. Host households involved in the program come in all shapes and sizes—two parents with several children, a widow and her child, an older couple whose children are on their own, a single woman, etc. Some of them have had students for years; some will be hosting for the first time.

If you choose a homestay, you must commit to staying there for the whole session.

**Family Placement Process:** USAC arranges accommodations with carefully selected host families. On your housing preference form, indicate if you want to be in a family with small children, pets or no pets, smoking or no smoking, etc. **Keep in mind that this is a preference list only.** Family assignments are made by the administrative office in Bilbao and Valencia, based on availability.

**Meals with your host family:** Remember that you are a guest (even if a paying one) in your family's home, and that this is not a hotel situation. **Do not insist on being able to do things as you would in your own home.** This is particularly important when it comes to food customs.

You will receive three meals a day: breakfast, lunch, and dinner. (Lunch may be sent with you as a bagged lunch if it would be difficult for you to return home.) You are most likely used to snacking when you wish, eating on the run, or inviting friends to meals. Be prepared for the following:



**Breakfast:** a quick, small, informal meal. It usually includes coffee or hot chocolate, bread or toast or a little muffin with jam, digestive cookies (kind of like Graham crackers), yogurt, and/or a piece of fruit. Depending on your host family's schedule, you might eat breakfast while they are still sleeping or at work.

**Lunch: (la comida, NOT el almuerzo):** if you are at home for lunch, it will be the biggest meal of the day. It often starts with a salad, stew, soup, or vegetable puree, followed by some type of meat or fish with rice, potatoes, or garbanzo beans. "Dessert" is typically fruit and sometimes yogurt. On special days you might get a pastry, flan, or ice cream.

**Dinner:** a small meal usually served between 8pm and 10pm. Salad, tortilla or a fried egg, croquetas, and slices of cheese and meat are typical. Fruit or yogurt is often served after dinner, also.

### General Food / Meal Etiquette

The refrigerator is often off-limits, and between-meal snacking is less common than it is here. You may get hungry between meals, especially at the beginning. **Snacks are your own responsibility:** go to the supermarket and buy some snacks or fruit that you can carry with you to school. You will usually have a designated area in the kitchen where you can store a bit of your own food.

In general, Spaniards have **good table manners**. Watch how your host family eats, bread is usually the only food that is acceptable to eat with your finger. A fork AND knife are generally used throughout the entire meal. If there is something unfamiliar on your plate (e.g. a whole shrimp), and you have no idea how you are supposed to eat it, just ask!

If you know you will miss a meal, let your family know and ask how you should handle the situation. There are no refunds for missed meals.

### Some food to try

- **Tortilla española:** an egg and potato omelette, eaten hot or cold, sometimes as a sandwich filling.
- **Croquetas:** small, fried patties, cakes, or balls stuffed with meats, vegetables, fish, and/or cheese
- **Lentejas:** lentils
- **Paella:** saffron-flavored rice dish served with meat, seafood, and vegetables in a buttery sauce
- **Potaje:** garbanzo bean and spinach stew - delicious and warming when it is cold outside!
- **Jamón Ibérico/Chorizo:** a "tough" sausage, almost like jerky.
- **Churros con chocolate:** you probably won't get these at home...but they are a great treat at cafes!

This is a good website if you want more information about Spanish food:

[http://spanishfood.about.com/od/discoverspanishfood/a/spain\\_meals.htm](http://spanishfood.about.com/od/discoverspanishfood/a/spain_meals.htm)

**Laundry:** Laundry is included for students staying with the host families. Students are allowed a maximum of one load of laundry per week. Many Spanish families do not own a dryer, so you will need to hang-dry your clothes.

**Utilities:** Electricity, water, and phone calls are very expensive in Europe. Some families impose restrictions on the use of hot water and the telephone. Many families are on a plan where electricity is discounted at night and extra expensive during the day, so ask when you should shower, don't take long, hot showers. Turn off the water when soaping up, brushing teeth, etc. Remember to turn off the lights when you don't need them. Use natural light from windows whenever possible.

### Living with a Family

Get involved as much as you can with your family. They are an important resource for you to learn from and a great resource to help you experience the culture of Spain! You may have an interest in cooking. By taking some mixes or recipes from home, you may easily gain entry into the kitchen, and your host mom may be



thrilled if you show an interest in Spanish cuisine.

Conversation is important in Spanish culture. You can spend hours after a meal chatting and watching television or learning to play Spanish card games.

Remember that you are a guest in your family's home. Offer to do some things around the house, like helping with meals or dishes. Keep your room and other areas of the house that you use tidy. Be aware of noise levels, particularly if you are coming home later at night.

Depending on your specific home situation, you will probably not be *expected* to help with setting or clearing the table for meals. Do it anyway! This is a great opportunity to talk and develop your relationship with your host family. In addition, these small efforts show that you are a considerate and appreciative guest in their home.

Keep in mind that any relationship is a two-way street. **It is as much your responsibility to fit into the family as it is their responsibility to include you in their daily life.** The more you put into the relationship, the more you will receive!

## **Guests**

In Spain, inviting a guest into your home implies a close relationship, it would be more common to gather with friends at a restaurant, while the home is reserved for families.

If you are expecting friends or family members from the U.S., make lodging arrangements for them at a local hostel, apartment or hotel prior to their arrival in Spain. The host family should not be expected to have additional visitors stay in their homes, even for just a few days.

Please be aware that it is not culturally appropriate for you to have your boyfriend or girlfriend spend the night in your room in your host family's house.

## **Financial Agreements**

While USAC screens families carefully to try to ensure that they have cultural interests for participating, **most** households participating do so at least partially for economic reasons. This is only logical, given the disruption that hosting a student causes to family life. It is not easy to welcome a stranger into your home for several weeks or months. The entire family needs to adjust schedules and habits to accommodate a new person. In addition, there are very real costs associated with having another person in the home. Receiving some monetary compensation for this is only fair, and most families would not consider hosting otherwise.

If you stay after the program ends and request to remain at your host family's house, you **must pay** your family for room and board. You should not expect your host family to provide room and board for free. The families need your contribution in order to take care of you.

## **Changing families**

Keep in mind that any relationship is a two-way street. It is as much your responsibility to fit into the family as it is their responsibility to include you in their daily life. USAC expects you to commit to a host family for the full semester.

If you are having problems, please contact the USAC resident director to discuss the situation. UW-Eau Claire is not involved in the actual family placements and changes must be done through USAC. The resident director may be able to offer valuable cultural insight and suggestions for improving the situation. Remember to give the situation some time and to be flexible and open-minded.

## **Shared Apartments**

If you choose a shared apartment, be aware that this is not "student housing". Your apartment mates will be USAC students (or,

more rarely, other international students); your neighbors will be Spaniards, going about their daily lives.

In Bilbao/Gexto, you can request to live with other international students or local people (who may be older and not students). However, if you do this, USAC has no control over/responsibility for the other people living in the apartment. It is solely the landlord's decision. Past participants have noted that many of these students/people smoke.

Apartments come in a variety of shapes and sizes, but all provide basic student necessities. Most apartments are shared by 3-5 students in single rooms with 1-2 shared bathrooms. Apartments may be co-ed. The entire apartment is the responsibility of all living there.

The living room will be furnished. The kitchen will typically have a fridge, cooking utensils, microwave, stovetop and/or oven, table and chairs. There will be a washing machine, but no dryer.

Apartments are not air-conditioned (air-conditioning is rare and expensive throughout Spain).

You will have internet access but will most likely need to use an Ethernet cord to connect.

## COMMUNICATION

*Information on accessing/forwarding your UW-Eau Claire email address and on computer app-based phone services (SKYPE, What's App, Facetime, etc) is in the [Contacts & Communication section of your Study Abroad Handbook](#).*

### Time Difference

Spain is seven hours ahead of Eau Claire. For example, 1:00pm on a Thursday in Eau Claire, it is 8:00pm on Thursday in Spain. To see the current time in Spain visit:

<https://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/spain/madrid>

### Telephone/Internet

All calls in Spain, even local calls, involve a charge. Telephone bills in Spain are not itemized. As such, families will only allow you to use the home phone if you have a pre-paid Spanish calling card. Not all families allow phone use so don't assume that you can use the phone. Ask permission each time you use the telephone. Keep phone calls to a minimum. The USAC resident director will go over phone use during the on-site orientation program.

Most families have Wi-Fi or Ethernet.

### Pay Phones/Calling Cards

Use a pay phone to make calls. There are cabinas or phone booths on just about every block. Having a calling card/ international calling card will make this easier. You can buy phone cards (tarjeta telefónica) to use at almost every kiosko (kiosk). Ask for a "tarjeta telefónica" for "llamadas internacionales." Instructions for these cards are located on the back. You simply insert the phone card into the phone (looks like a credit card slot at an ATM) and make your phone call.

### Cell Phone Information

Cell phones (móviles) have become a near obsession in contemporary Spanish culture (perhaps even more so than in the U.S.!). Some past participants have found it economical and convenient to purchase cell phones for their time abroad; phones were usually around \$40-50, and they just purchased minutes as they needed them. Calling people is incredibly expensive; however, texting is quick and cheap. If you think you might be interested, stop in a cell phone store for more information.

These stores are everywhere and are not difficult to find.

Many students also choose to bring their smartphones with them to Spain and call home over Wi-Fi. If you don't have a smartphone, an iPod touch or tablet works well, too. Most students use Facetime, Skype or WhatsApp.

### **Calling from the U.S.**

**From the U.S. to Spain:** If you want to call someone in Spain before you arrive, you must first dial 011, which is the international dialing code. Next, you dial 34, the country code for Spain, and the rest of the number.

It may be most economical for your family or friends to call you in Spain. Past participants have told us that a great phone card is from <http://www.nobelcom.com/>. The rates are great; the only catch is that it does expire after three months. But, CALL AROUND to set yourself and your family up with the best deal, or you may be surprised at your first bills!

**From Spain to the U.S.:** To "phone home" while you are abroad using a calling card or calling collect, you must dial an access code to get an American operator. There are many forms of phone cards that you can purchase so you will want to look around for the best value.

### **Courteous Communication**

If Skyping/using other communication apps in your room, use headphones, close the door to your room, speak softly, and end the conversation immediately if it is time for a meal.

### **Snail-mail**

You will receive mail at the USAC office in your host city. This address will be provided to you in a USAC Update via your USAC Gateway account. International airmail takes 7-10 days to cross the Atlantic in either direction. Packages usually take at least two weeks and sending from Spain can take longer than receiving in

Spain. Any packages that arrive to Spain are subject to being searched by Spanish custom officials.

### **Communicating in Spanish**

You may have been studying Spanish for years, or maybe you will begin when you are in Spain. In either case, you are now going to apply your language skills in day-to-day life. Here are some things to keep in mind.

**Before You Go:** Start listening to Spanish music, movies, TV in Spanish. Get your ear accustomed to it before you get there! Also, start reading it, beyond what is required for class. Consider changing your phone language to Spanish, reading websites from Spain, finding online newspapers.

**Fluency:** In the words of a past language student, *"I am going to warn you right now: you WILL NOT be fluent after only three-five months in another country. I definitely improved in my reading, writing, listening and speaking, but I did not sound like a native. Don't expect to come home fluent, or you will spend your whole time abroad frustrated with yourself. Take things one day at a time and you will be so impressed with yourself. There were days where I would all of a sudden realize that I was participating in classes that were only in Spanish! It's definitely a great feeling to see how much your Spanish speaking is improving."*

**Speaking:** Speak as much as possible. You have SO MANY OPPORTUNITIES to speak Spanish (since you're living in Spain). There are so many people willing to help you get better:

**Professors:** It's their job to help you improve, so they will correct you in class and will require you to speak often. They are always willing to help explain things or sit down and talk with you about things you don't understand.

**Families:** It is very likely that your family has been hosting American students for a number of years. This means that even when you say the

wrong thing, chances are they will understand you. Don't be afraid to speak with your family at meals, after meals, during down time, at any possibility.

**Other People You Meet:** Natives of Spain **KNOW** that you are not a native speaker even before you open your mouth. In most cases, if you are making an effort to communicate with them, they will be very kind and patient with you. In addition to this, get to know local students. Many of them are studying English and would LOVE to get together and talk. One thing to remember: you need to make the effort to get to know them.

### **Common phrases:**

Here are some words and phrases common in Spain that you may find unfamiliar if you've learned Latin American Spanish:

**Alumno:** (instead of estudiante)

**Naranja:** (for both the fruit and the color orange)

**Patata:** (instead of papa, meaning potato)

**Ordenador:** (instead of computadora)

**Servicio/Aseo:** (bathroom – instead of baño)

**¿Qué tal?** – instead of ¿cómo estás?

**Movil:** - instead of telefono celular

**VOSOTROS:** This is a form that is not covered much in Spanish classes and is more or less that "ya'll" form. Spaniards use this ALL THE TIME but luckily, it is a very easy form to catch onto. The vosotros is used almost always in place of uds. (unless you're in a very formal setting)

**Tio/Tia:** This is a phrase that is used as "dude" and is said to friends

**Vale:** It means "OK" and is used a lot as a filler word

**Venga:** Another filler word. Often Spaniards will say "venga, hasta luego" when they're saying goodbye

**Hasta luego:** "see you later!" which is used when people run into each other on the street, or when they're saying goodbyes. However, they kind of run the words together so it sounds more like "ha-uego"

## TRAVEL WHILE ABROAD

See additional information in the [Travel Resources section of your Study Abroad Handbook](#).

### **Tours and Field Studies**

USAC organizes field trips each semester to familiarize students with their host region in Spain. These bus trips generally take place on weekends and are included in the program fees. The exact dates and sites may change at the discretion of the Resident Director.

### **Optional Excursions**

USAC also plans optional tours and field studies at an additional cost. You can select these options on the Course & Tour Registration Form you filled out as part of your USAC application.

### **Bus**

For travel within Spain, many past participants highly recommend traveling by bus rather than by train. Buses in Spain are clean and nice and are typically faster and less expensive than trains.

### **Train Travel**

Point-to-point tickets are usually less expensive in Spain than using a rail pass. Rooms and food in southern Spain were the cheapest participants found in all of Europe.

You can check train times and routes on <https://www.raileurope.com/> This Web site also lets you know if the train you need *requires* reservations. If it does, be sure to reserve a seat ahead of time so you can take the train you need.

### **Summer Travel Planning**

Summer is high season for tourism. If you are going in the summer and plan to travel before or after the program, make reservations for

transportation, accommodation, etc, well in advance.

## CULTURAL NOTES

### *A Brief History of Spain*

Spain became a part of the Roman Empire in 206 CE. Once the Roman Empire began to weaken, the Visigoths took over the territory of the empire that is now Spain. From then it was a battle of what group ruled over Spain. After the Visigoths, the Muslims, who came up from Africa, took over until, eventually, the Catholics (known as the Spanish) started to take their territory over starting at the north. Granada (south of Spain) was the last territory that became part of what we know as present-day Spain in 1492, during what is known as the Reconquista.

Also, at this time, exploration of the seas was taking place and the Spanish government financed Portuguese navigator Christopher Columbus for his voyage which led to the discovery of America. Spain gained a lot of power and wealth with all the colonies and resources they found in the Americas, first with Cortes in Mexico and then in Peru with Pizarro.

While these voyages across the oceans were taking place, Spain was enforcing a religious persecution of all non-Catholics known as the Inquisition. Spain's status as THE power in Europe was short lived however, when their once invincible Armada was defeated by the English. This defeat was followed by Spanish losses in the Americas with Civil Wars and Revolutions leading to independence in Latin America.

After their loss of the Americas, there was a period of relative stability until revolts in Morocco led to the three- year Spanish Civil War. It ended with Francisco Franco taking power and becoming dictator.

During World War II, Franco was a supporter of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. After Franco's

death, Juan Carlos was proclaimed King and has held that position ever since. Now that Spain is a parliamentary monarchy, they have also joined the EU and have had several prime ministers, including Zapatero and the current Mariano Rajoy.

<http://www.factmonster.com/country/spain.html>

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sp.html>

### **Government**

Spain is a parliamentary monarchy. This means that there is a king, but the official governmental power falls in the hands of the Prime Minister. The current King of Spain is Felipe VI, married to Reina Letizia. The current Prime Minister is Mariano Rajoy. Rajoy was appointed in December 2011 and represents the Partido Popular.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sp.html>

### **Population**

The population of Spain is estimated to be 48,958,159 as of 2017 of which almost 70% are Roman Catholic and 30% are of other religious denomination. The official language of Spain is Spanish Castilian, however the other predominant languages are Catalan, Galician, and Basque.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sp.html>

### **Cultural Basics**

Spanish people are very friendly and open once you get to know them. While in America it is common to smile at strangers on the street, people in Spain tend to keep to themselves unless they know each other.

When you first meet someone, shaking hands with them is usually what you should expect. Once you know a person, girls may say hello and goodbye to each other with a kiss of each cheek (starting with the left) and boys may do a double handshake with the left hand on the forearm.



There are a lot of religious (Roman Catholic) festivities in Spain and as a guest in Spain, it is expected that you respect their traditions and, if you choose, may participate in their celebrations. Spanish people are very laid back and easy going.

People in Spain put a lot of importance on how they dress so, for example, wearing short shorts (girls) or khaki shorts (boys) is not very well viewed by Spaniards and you can expect looks.

<http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/spain-country-profile.html>



# CONTACT NAMES & ADDRESSES

GENERAL UW-EAU CLAIRE & CISI CONTACT INFORMATION IS IN YOUR STUDY ABROAD HANDBOOK.

## ***USAC-Bilbao***

Ibon Zamanillo  
Universidad del País Vasco/ EHU  
Facultad de Economía y Empresa  
c/Elcano, 21 – 2nd Floor  
48008 Bilbao, Vizcaya  
SPAIN  
Office: 011-34-946-014-716  
Cell: 011-34-656-708-962  
[bilbao@usac.edu](mailto:bilbao@usac.edu)

## ***USAC-Valencia***

Sara Elso, Resident Director  
USAC Office  
Edificio Galileo Galilei  
Av. de los Naranjos, s/n  
46022 Valencia, SPAIN  
Tel: 011-34-747-855-709  
Email: [valencia@usac.edu](mailto:valencia@usac.edu)

## ***USAC-Reno Office***

University Studies Abroad Consortium  
MS 0323 / University of Nevada, Reno  
Reno, NV 89557-0323  
Toll free: 1-866-404-USAC (8722)  
Tel: 1-775-784-6569  
Fax: 1-775-784-6010  
Email: [usac@unr.edu](mailto:usac@unr.edu)  
<http://usac.unr.edu/>

Yajaira Esparaza  
Program Advisor  
Email: [Yajaira.esparza@usac.edu](mailto:Yajaira.esparza@usac.edu)

## ***UW-Eau Claire***

Center for International Education  
Cheryl Lochner-Wright  
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E-mail: [lochnecb@uwec.edu](mailto:lochnecb@uwec.edu)

3 Schofield Hall  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire  
Eau Claire, WI 54702  
Phone: (715) 836-4411  
Fax: (715) 836-4948

## ***Consulate General of Spain in Chicago***

180 North Michigan Avenue  
Suite 1500  
Chicago, IL 60601  
Tel.: 312 782-4588  
Email: [cog.chicago.vis@maec.es](mailto:cog.chicago.vis@maec.es)  
<http://www.exteriores.gob.es/consulados/chicago>

## ***U.S. Embassy in Spain***

Serrano 75  
28006 Madrid, Spain  
Tel. 011 34 91 587 2240 (calling from US)  
Tel. 00 34 675 784 440 (calling in Spain)

## WEB RESOURCES: SPAIN

USAC Cities	Spain	Travel
<b>Bilbao: Tourism</b> <a href="https://www.bilbaoturismo.net/BilbaoTurismo/en/tourists">https://www.bilbaoturismo.net/BilbaoTurismo/en/tourists</a>	<b>All About Spain</b> <a href="http://www.red2000.com/spain/index.html">http://www.red2000.com/spain/index.html</a>	<b>ALSA: Bus Information</b> <a href="https://www.alsa.es/">https://www.alsa.es/</a>
<b>Bilbao: Public Transport</b> <a href="https://www.spain.info/en_US/que-quieres/ciudades-pueblos/grandes-ciudades/bilbao/como_moverse_bilbao.html">https://www.spain.info/en_US/que-quieres/ciudades-pueblos/grandes-ciudades/bilbao/como_moverse_bilbao.html</a>	<b>Political Resources: Spain</b> <a href="http://www.politicalresources.net/spain/spain.htm">http://www.politicalresources.net/spain/spain.htm</a>	<b>RENFE: Train Information</b> <a href="http://www.renfe.com/">http://www.renfe.com/</a>
<b>Getxo (where most Bilbao students live)</b> <a href="https://www.getxo.eus/en/turismo/">https://www.getxo.eus/en/turismo/</a>	<b>Lonely Planet--Spain</b> <a href="http://www.lonelyplanet.com/spain">http://www.lonelyplanet.com/spain</a>	<b>MADRID METRO</b> <a href="http://www.metromadrid.es/es/index.html">http://www.metromadrid.es/es/index.html</a>
<b>Getxo to Bilbao: Public Transport</b> <a href="https://www.getxo.eus/en/turismo/descubre-getxo/moverse-por-getxo">https://www.getxo.eus/en/turismo/descubre-getxo/moverse-por-getxo</a>	<b>El Prado, Madrid</b> <a href="http://www.museodelprado.es/">http://www.museodelprado.es/</a>	<b>Tour Through Spain</b> <a href="http://www.tourspain.es/">http://www.tourspain.es/</a>
<b>Valencia: Tourism</b> <a href="https://www.spain.info/en_US/que-quieres/ciudades-pueblos/grandes-ciudades/valencia.html">https://www.spain.info/en_US/que-quieres/ciudades-pueblos/grandes-ciudades/valencia.html</a>	<b>Spanish Language</b> <a href="http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spanish_language">http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spanish_language</a>	<b>Tourist Office of Spain</b> <a href="http://www.spain.info/en_US/">http://www.spain.info/en_US/</a>
<b>Valencia: Public Transport</b> <a href="https://www.spain.info/en_US/que-quieres/ciudades-pueblos/grandes-ciudades/valencia/como_moverse_valencia.html">https://www.spain.info/en_US/que-quieres/ciudades-pueblos/grandes-ciudades/valencia/como_moverse_valencia.html</a>	<b>SPANISH NEWS</b> <a href="http://www.onlinenewspapers.com/spain.htm">http://www.onlinenewspapers.com/spain.htm</a>  <a href="http://www.elpais.es">http://www.elpais.es</a>	<b>Costa Del Sol</b> <a href="http://www.CostaSol.com/">http://www.CostaSol.com/</a>

