

MADRID



STUDENT INFORMATION HANDBOOK

University at Albany
State University of New York



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Introduction

As the time to depart quickly approaches, you will find you have a million things to do. You have an overwhelming amount of paperwork to complete, materials to read, and details to take care of before you can leave on your trip. Your first step should be to read this handbook. It will be your guide before, during, and perhaps after, your time in Spain.

This is a very exciting time in your life and your semester abroad is sure to be one of the greatest experiences you will ever have! **Start it right by thoroughly reading this packet and returning the proper forms as soon as possible.** Pay particular attention to the sections on Visas, Registration, and Housing. Use the checklist in your acceptance packet to help you keep track of all of the paperwork.

If you have any questions while you are preparing for your trip, please call the Albany Office of International Education at **(518) 591-8170**. ¡Buena Suerte!

IMPORTANT REMINDERS

Classes are held Mondays through Thursdays, which allows for travel on the weekends.

The arrival and return dates are based on the group flight. **All students must be in Madrid on the date the group flight arrives.** This is considered the beginning date of the program. If you are traveling beforehand, be sure to give yourself enough time to get to Madrid by the arrival date. Students may remain in Spain after the end of the program.

This handbook and the General Information Handbook contain very important information that you will need before, during, and after your time in Spain - please read them carefully!

ADVISER'S SPECIAL REMARKS

In your packet, you will find an Adviser's Checklist that will guide you through the paperwork for this program. We know it's pretty overwhelming. Some items are so time sensitive that they are mentioned again and again.

- (1) You need a **student visa** for this program.
- (2) You need a valid **passport** before you can get a visa. Apply immediately if you don't have one.
- (3) You must turn in your response form, \$200 deposit, health insurance waiver request form (if requesting a waiver out of the SUNY insurance), and your **housing request** form to Albany immediately.
- (4) The Spanish Consulate takes its time to produce the visa and Albany has no means of speeding it up or granting exceptions. It is your responsibility to apply for your visa on your own. See the Visa Application Instructions for details.
- (5) You also will need a **ticket** to fly to Spain! We recommend that you try to travel with the group. As long as you do your paperwork on time, you should be able to purchase a seat on the group flight with reasonable confidence.

We must receive all forms as soon as possible in order to send them to Madrid by the necessary deadlines. This includes the photos! While we can fax over other paperwork, we can't fax photos. The Director in Madrid must have your forms and photos as soon as possible so she can set up your housing, determine class availability, and process ID paperwork for you. Please keep this in mind and return your forms and photos quickly.

ABOUT THOSE PHOTOS: HOW MANY???

You will notice you need to send Albany a total of two (2) photos: one for our files and one for your housing form. Please send them ALL together.

You will also need two (2) additional photos for the Spanish Consulate when you apply for a visa.

You will also need photos for a passport if you do not have one yet.

You will need another 6 photos for administrative purposes in Spain (library card, metro pass, etc). These can easily be obtained AFTER you arrive in Madrid.

WHAT'S A EURO?

As of January 2002, Europe changed its currency to the Euro, so instead of the Spanish peseta, you will have an exciting new currency to deal with! Keep in mind that Spaniards may still be talking about prices in pesetas – so it is still a good idea to familiarize yourself with very large numbers in Spanish (since 1 US dollar = 180 pesetas). Since you will be met by program staff when you arrive if you take the group flight and will not need money immediately, you do not have to change dollars before your trip, but if you do, don't change much!

IMPORTANT NUMBERS & ADDRESSES

Albany Coordinator:

Renée Lucier DeCelle, Assistant Director
Office of International Education, Science Library G 40
University at Albany, SUNY
1400 Washington Avenue
Albany, NY 12222

Phone: (518) 591-8170

Fax: (518) 591-8171

E-mail: rlucier@uamail.albany.edu

University at Albany web site:

Office of International Programs web site:

studyabroad@albany.edu

www.albany.edu

www.albany.edu/studyabroad

(for registration and other important info)

In Madrid:

Dr. Carlos Vela-Bueno suy.cvela@iie.es
UAlbany Madrid Program Director/Academic Adviser

Catherine Knight c.knight.sunymadrid@gmail.com
UAlbany Madrid Program Assistant

Instituto Internacional
Miguel Angel 8
28010 Madrid, Spain

Office Phone:

Office Fax:

Emergency cell phone:

From the US:

011-34-91-308-1677

011-34-91-319-4144

011-34-678-556-943

Within Spain:

(91) 308-1677

(91) 319-4144

678-556-943

United States Embassy
Serrano, 75
Madrid 28006
SPAIN

011-34-91-577-4000

(91) 577-4000

American Express
Plaza de las Cortes, 2
Madrid 28014
SPAIN

011-34-902-37-56-37

902-37-56-37

British-American Medical Unit
Conde de Aranda 1 Metro : Serrano or Retiro
SPAIN

011-34-91-435-1823

(91) 435-1823

Hospital La Princesa

Calle Diego de Leon 62

Metro: Diego de Leon or Lista

NOTE: 011 is the international code for direct dialing overseas from the States, 34 is the country code for Spain, and 91 is the city code for Madrid. Anyone calling from the States will need to know this.

SPAIN

The Country

Many think of Spain as the country of flamenco dancers and bullfights, siestas and sangria, a slow-paced place filled with sun-kissed, smiling people. It is all this and much, much more. It is a modern country filled with contrasts and diversity. Booming and bustling cities with tall office buildings and extensive metros are surrounded by small agricultural towns with narrow, winding streets. While walking along a busy city boulevard, you can turn a corner and find a quiet plaza where two old men sit, play cards, and drink their afternoon coffee. Spain has 17 distinct provinces and its people speak 5 different languages. It is a country with a unique blend of old and new. And it is the perfect place to experience Spanish culture and to develop Spanish language skills.

The City

Located in the center of Spain, Madrid is the capital city. Ancient architecture, quaint cafés, the elegant Plaza Mayor, and the historic Royal Palace almost make you forget this city is a modern center of economic and cultural development. In Madrid there is something for everyone - first class museums, sporting events, concerts, films, and theater productions fill *madrileños* days and nights. Although there is always time to take a stroll down one of Madrid's beautiful tree-lined avenues or through the famous Retiro Park or to stop for a *copita* with friends and family.

For a change of pace, there are several fascinating cities very near Madrid: Toledo, a showcase of Christian, Jewish, and Arabic heritage; El Escorial, Phillip II's extraordinary monastery palace; and Avila and Segovia, medieval cities with spectacular castles and cathedrals. Each is easy to reach by train or by bus.

THE PROGRAM

The University at Albany, in conjunction with the University at Buffalo, has administered the program in Madrid since 1970, making it a well-established American university program. Students study Spain's cultural heritage and recent modernization through coursework at the Instituto Internacional. Interaction with Spaniards through *intercambios*, along with the cultural excursions and field trips will enhance the learning experience.

The Albany program is designed for American students with advanced Spanish language skills who want to develop a higher level of fluency. Classes are taught in Spanish by Spanish professors. Therefore, to be admitted to the Albany program all students must have completed at least five semesters of college-level Spanish or have equivalent experience. Classes feature a selection of upper division undergraduate courses in language, literature, art, history, and culture. Smaller class sizes encourage open discussion and provide ample opportunities for individual attention.

The Instituto Internacional

University at Albany classes in Madrid are held at the **Instituto Internacional**, located on Calle Miguel Angel, 8. This is a prestigious private institute that was founded in the middle of the nineteenth century to promote relations between the U.S. and Spain. Other American universities also hold classes in the Institute, including Boston University and Syracuse University.

The Instituto Internacional is **not** a Spanish university. As part of an American group, you will have to take steps to mix with native Spanish speakers. The Instituto arranges *intercambios*, which is a language partner program (see the section on *intercambios* in this handbook). These are great opportunities to meet Spaniards, so do at least one. There are also many cultural activities sponsored by the Instituto. Take advantage of as many of these as you can! They are another great way to meet Spaniards. In addition, you can belong to

several student organizations for international and Spanish students. Through these groups, you can participate in many social activities and even go on planned trips throughout Spain and Europe.

Our Resident Director and Staff

The UAlbany Madrid Program Director/Academic Adviser, Dr. Carlos Vela-Bueno, is a native of Madrid and has spent a number of years teaching at the university level in the United States, including a period of time at SUNY Stony Brook. He arranges classes, supervises independent study projects, and serves as an academic adviser. He also holds office hours throughout the week during which students can get extra help with their coursework.

The UAlbany Madrid Program Assistant, Catherine Knight, was born in the United States, studied in Madrid (on the UAlbany program!), and now lives permanently in Madrid. Her residency in Spain combined with her study abroad experience as an American student gives her a unique perspective that is a great help to our students in acclimating to their new life. Catherine assists Dr. Vela in all aspects of the program, offers general help and advice, helps to plan the events covered by the activity fee, and deals with most non-academic matters.

Academic Calendar

The academic calendar in Madrid is planned to coincide with schools in the States. Therefore, you should not have a problem participating on our program and returning to your home campus for the following semester.

Students should remember classes are held Monday through Thursday, which allows for travel on the weekends. Please plan accordingly. (Although it should be evident, you should **NOT** plan to travel when classes are in session. Absences from class are taken seriously and will not be allowed for travel. Please see the section on “Life at the Instituto Internacional”.)

VISAS

All American students studying in Spain **MUST** get a student visa. This is very different than a tourist visa. You must apply for your student visa at the Spanish Consulate that serves your home state. This process can be complicated. Therefore, we have given very specific instructions in a separate packet in this acceptance pack. Please read the materials VERY carefully and follow instructions exactly.

FLIGHT INFORMATION

The Albany Office of International Education will arrange a group flight at as low a cost as possible. The flight is with a major airline and departs the day before the beginning of the program. (The **Flight Information Form** is either included in your acceptance packet or may arrive later if flight arrangements had not yet been finalized by the time of mailing.) In order to identify yourself as part of the Albany group flight, wear something purple or an article of clothing with the University at Albany name on it. This will make it easier to find each other in the airport. The group flight is a good chance for you to become better acquainted with the other members of the group. Also, the Madrid Program Staff will meet the group at the airport in Madrid. Students then take a bus to the Institute where their host families meet them and take them home. Participation in the group flight is optional, but students who do not join the group flight will not be met at the airport, unless their flight coincides with that of the group. If you are not with the group, you will have to find your own way to your family.

Most students find it easier to go with the group; but you may make travel plans on your own if you wish. If you make your own arrangements, **plan your arrival for no later than the start of orientation, and be sure to inform us of your travel plans.** If you arrive earlier than the group flight, your host family may not be ready to receive you. You must inform Albany as soon as possible if this is the case, so we can make arrangements with your family if possible. Any extra time spent with your family before the official start of the program will not be paid by Albany. All students should also realize that the host families will expect you

to move out no later than the Saturday after the end of final exams. Staying on with your host family beyond that date is something you will have to arrange with your family once you are in Spain. Whichever flight you take, you **must** let Albany know your flight plans as soon as possible.

ARRIVAL IN MADRID

When you arrive in Madrid, make sure your passport is stamped at Immigration. If you travel to Madrid with the group, Madrid Program Staff will meet you at the airport after you clear immigration and customs and have transportation ready to take you to the Institute. Look for someone holding a small sign saying "SUNY" on it. Whoever is meeting you will also have a list of who is supposed to be on the flight and will make sure you are all there before leaving. You will meet your families at the Institute and go home from there. You can expect to meet the group the next day to begin orientation. You will receive a list of students' names and their family assignments shortly before you leave. (You might want to send your host family a letter or picture before you go to introduce yourself, but this is up to you.)

If you choose to come to Madrid on your own, you will not be met at the airport or train station and must find your own transportation to your host family. Albany should be able to obtain the name and address of your host family before you leave for Spain; you may be able to go there directly from the airport. If you arrive before the official start of the program, your family might not be ready to take you and you will have to find temporary housing on your own.

COURSE REGISTRATION

Registration is very important! Please read these instructions carefully. **Remember, you must register at your home campus as well as abroad.** Ask for specifics at your home study abroad office.

At Home

If you have not yet done so, you should **immediately** discuss your study abroad plans with your home campus. Your **study abroad office** and your **academic adviser** need to be aware of your plans to study in Spain. They can advise you as to what steps you need to take to register at your home campus for study abroad credits. Registration instructions for Albany students are included in Albany's General Information Handbook.

Preliminary Approval of Courses

Prior to departure from your home campus, you should plan what kind of courses you will take and obtain preliminary approval from your academic adviser (see list later in this section). Albany students should have their **Preliminary Approval of Courses** form (found in your acceptance pack) signed by their academic advisers (major and minor advisors) after discussing their plans. **This form will not guarantee that you will get the classes you want, because Albany cannot control last minute changes in Spain.** However, this gives you some assurance that the work you do overseas will be accepted when you come back.

Non-Albany students should check with their home campus to determine if there is a similar form they need to fill out. All courses you take in Spain will appear on your Albany transcript at the end of the program; your home campus will make its own determination about credits and equivalencies.

In Madrid

Registration Card

You will meet with the Academic Adviser in Madrid on registration day and fill out a registration card. This is very simple paperwork. In order for registration to be finalized, you will need your social security number as well as 6 pictures. These should be passport-type pictures, which you can obtain either before you leave or after your arrival in Madrid. (Pictures from photo booths are fine – but pictures your friends take on weekends are not!) **Any changes in your official registration must first be approved by the Academic Adviser and then recorded on the card. This is not negotiable!** If you make any changes, either in an Albany course or a

cross-registered course in another American program, you **must** discuss the details with the Academic Adviser and get appropriate approval.

Add/Drop Procedures

You have only one week to add classes. Classes may be dropped no later than the week following your first exam; check with the Director for an exact date. **There are no exceptions to this rule.** You are responsible for consulting with the Director prior to dropping a course and for seeing that approved changes are recorded on your registration card. Your final transcript from the University at Albany will reflect the number of credits you *complete*, even though your initial registration may show a different number.

Overseas Enrollment Report (OER)

All students are required to complete and return a **signed** Overseas Enrollment Report (OER) to Albany. This form is found in your acceptance pack - **take it with you to Madrid!** You should send Albany the form after registration and as soon as you are sure of what courses you are taking. The Resident Director or the Academic Adviser in Madrid will most likely send the whole group's forms to Albany for you. **Albany students must attach course descriptions and syllabi to their OER when they return it to Albany.** Other students should keep a copy of their course descriptions and syllabi in case they need to submit them to their home campus upon returning. The materials could help you get credit for certain courses. **This is especially important if you enroll in a non-Albany course (another American or Spanish university course).**

Registration Checklist

1. Meet with your academic adviser at your home campus before you go. Make sure you understand what you need to do on your home campus to successfully complete your studies overseas.
2. Albany students should complete and return their Preliminary Approval of Courses Form to the Albany Office of International Education before departing. Non-Albany students should complete any similar paperwork for their home campus.
3. Make sure you verify and finalize any adds or drops in Madrid by the deadline given and update your registration card accordingly.
4. After you finish registering for courses in Madrid, complete a copy of your Overseas Enrollment Report. Send it to the Albany Office of International Education along with course descriptions and syllabi.

Program Charges

Part of the Program Charge that is collected by the Office of International Education in Albany is used to support excursions, cultural programs at the Institute, and certain activities provided by the program. The program charge funds a one-day cultural excursion at the start of each semester, an overnight excursion, group parties, and various cultural programs. For the excursions, the charge normally covers transportation, hotel with breakfast, faculty supervisors, local guides, and entrance fees. Lunches and dinners are usually not included. The exact activities will depend on the value of the dollar and the number of students in the program. The UAlbany Madrid Program Director will give you details on these trips and activities at the beginning of the semester. Please note, if you should decide not to participate in the activities included in your program charge, you will not be reimbursed.

Note: One thing that students have noticed in the past is that some of the other programs within the Institute offer more excursions than Albany or a few extra benefits. When you hear about this, please remember that those programs also cost **much** more than Albany's program. Cost is an important part of the Albany program. We try to keep it affordable while offering as many benefits as possible. Our belief is that you can travel as you wish with the money you save by participating with Albany. Just make sure you use the resources we offer and you'll have plenty of opportunities!

Extending Participation in the Program

Students accepted for only one semester who later decide to stay for the academic year must notify the UAlbany Madrid Program Director as early in the semester as possible. You must also send a letter of intent to the Albany Study Abroad office and discuss your plans with your home campus as soon as possible. Your

acceptance for a second semester is contingent on approval by the on-site director, the Albany program advisor, and your home campus.

If you do participate for a second semester, you are responsible for the payment of second semester fees. Separate bills will be sent to your home address by the end of the first semester. Non-Albany students should also contact their home campus to make proper financial arrangements. Complete instructions for extending your stay are found in Albany's General Information Handbook.

Perhaps the most important issue pertaining to extending your participation on our Spain program is ensuring that you have a valid student visa in order to stay. If you are even remotely considering staying for two semesters, notify Albany immediately and plan to apply for an academic year Spanish student visa instead of a visa for a single semester. It is usually impossible to extend a single semester visa once you are overseas.

COURSE OFFERINGS

The Albany program is designed for American students who want to develop a higher level of fluency in Spanish. Classes are taught in Spanish, by Spanish professors. Therefore, all students admitted to our program should have completed a minimum of five semesters of college-level Spanish (one course above the intermediate level) or have equivalent experience. Some students will have more preparation than others; so we try to offer coursework suitable to all our students. This semester's course offerings are included in your acceptance pack to help you and your academic adviser plan your schedule. **There are no specific courses required by the program itself.** You should consult with your adviser and make tentative choices before you leave.

Most Albany courses are worth 3 SUNY credits each. Since students often ask what these courses are equivalent to, possible Albany equivalents are provided in the course offerings booklet in your acceptance pack. These are not promises. Some courses have more than one possible equivalent, and some courses have titles similar to courses you may have already taken. In the case of the latter, you should receive credit based on the content of the course rather than its title. Therefore, if the syllabus is different, you should still receive credit for the course. Be sure to keep your syllabi for that reason.

Independent Study

Any student can develop a course contract with the UAlbany Madrid Program Director for an independent study project within the areas of Literature, Art, and Civilization. This type of course is truly independent: the Director helps identify a topic, recommends readings, and sets assignments. Some supervision is then provided. However, students are expected to work independently to complete the course as designed with the Director. Usually only one such course a semester will be permitted. The number of credits depends on the scope of the project. Alternatively, depending on your home campus' rules for planning and receiving credit for independent projects, you might be able to register for study abroad and also register for an independent study at your home campus in another field, such as history or music. You would then complete a project in Spain, **which would be supervised and graded by a professor at your home campus.** Our UAlbany Madrid Program Director would **not** evaluate this work, but might be able to offer you advice on which library or other resources to use. This option is probably not possible for those students whose home campus requires that they take a leave of absence in order to study overseas. You should discuss this option **with your home campus before** departing the States and notify Albany of your plans so we can inform the director in Madrid.

Intercambios

We offer conversational exchanges in which you would meet with a Spaniard throughout the semester to practice Spanish and English. These intercambios are arranged through the Institute. They are arranged with Spanish professionals who need English practice for their careers and/or with Spanish university students, who do not begin classes until October. Therefore, for the fall semester, the intercambios are not available until October at the earliest. The UAlbany Madrid Program Director will give you details at the beginning of the semester. If you sign up for an intercambio through Albany and attend at least 6 meetings, you can receive

1 credit for the experience. Alternatively, you can sign up for a one-on-one intercambio through the English department at the Instituto.

Cross-Registration within the Institute

Albany students are sometimes allowed to register in courses offered by the other American universities at the Instituto, including Boston University, New York University (NYU), and Middlebury University. The Boston University program is located at the Instituto with SUNY, while the Middlebury and NYU programs are at nearby institutes. These courses are available to students on the Albany program on a space available basis only. **You are not guaranteed a spot in any of these classes.** Your admission to these courses depends on the other universities' final enrollment numbers, which will not be known until you arrive in Madrid.

Therefore, if you want to take a non-Albany class, be sure to keep an alternative in mind in case the course is closed. Albany participants are limited to two non-Albany classes per semester. The registration for or changes in these courses **MUST** be processed through UAlbany's Madrid Program Director. **There are no exceptions.** Please discuss any and all plans dealing with other universities with the Director **before** you take action.

Direct Enrollment

In some cases, you might have the opportunity to sit in on classes at one of the local universities in Madrid as an independent study that is supervised by our UAlbany Madrid Program Director. Permission for this is given on a case by case basis. This program option is most appropriate for students with strong Spanish language skills who wish to experience true Spanish university life. If you are interested in this option, you must discuss it with Renée Lucier DeCelle in Albany **before** you depart for Spain.

Internships

There are extensive internships opportunities associated with this program, including teaching practicum positions in which our students assist in teaching English in local public schools. Also, a small local travel agency often takes one intern per semester to serve as a receptionist. Additional internships may be arranged during the summer as a follow-on to our program. Contact Albany for details.

There are also a wide variety of part-time internships in available in Madrid through EUSA, an international internship provider. Please visit the UAlbany website at www.albany.edu/studyabroad for details about this opportunity!

CREDITS

You will be expected to register for a full load of courses, from 12 to 15 credits. Albany considers 12 credits to be the minimum for full-time status; but, students planning to graduate in four years must take 15 credits to stay on schedule. You are allowed to take up to 18 credits in Madrid. Independent studies for credit are available for all students. Check with your home campus for any other requirements regarding minimum credits overseas. **Students are cautioned not to drop below full-time status (12 credits) or their financial aid may be affected.**

Students from campuses where the typical course load is four classes per semester may find that they need to complete 16 credits in order to remain on schedule. If so, they might want to consider completing a one-credit paper or other independent project related to one of their courses and should devise an approved study plan with the Academic Adviser as early as possible.

Awarding Credits

The Director in Madrid forwards your Spanish transcript to Albany at the end of the semester. These courses are converted into American credits, and an Albany transcript is created. Just as on most U.S. campuses, if there are any holds in Madrid or at Albany, your grades will not be released. Please be sure to clear up any holds as soon as possible. Keep in mind that grades from overseas are not sent until at least a month or two after the end of the semester. Therefore, there will be a delay in processing the Albany transcript.

LIFE AT THE INSTITUTO INTERNACIONAL

Classes

As mentioned before, classes are taught in Spanish, by Spanish professors. The instructors realize you are not a native speaker of Spanish and may make some concessions; however, you are expected to behave like Spanish university students - responsible, mature adults. Do not expect your classes to be conducted in the typical American style you are accustomed to. Past participants have told us that professors get frustrated or angry with American students who come to class unprepared or who do not pay attention in class. **All professors expect you to be there and attendance is required, as is punctuality.** (You will fail if you cut class.) They take their jobs seriously and take offense if you do not respect them or their course. However, if you treat them with respect, they will be more than willing to help you whenever possible. Keep this in mind and behave accordingly. Professors demand hard work and expect a great deal of commitment. In general, students enjoy good relationships with the faculty in Madrid. Faculty members are not usually available for office hours, but they are available after class. In addition, the UAlbany Madrid Program Director holds weekly office hours during which students can ask questions about classes or get help with papers.

Students frequently ask about the level of difficulty of courses. It is difficult to generalize. Just as in the United States, some professors are more demanding than others. Since each professor is different, some courses are more challenging than others. Even if your courses are not more difficult than what you are accustomed to, they may seem more challenging because your reading skills are not as sharp in Spanish as they are in English. Give yourself enough time to complete assignments and don't be afraid to ask for help.

One big difference for some students is the exam/paper schedule and format. While in the States you may be accustomed to several smaller exams and tests throughout the semester, the norm in Spain is one mid-term exam or paper and one final exam or paper. Also the exams tend to be essay form, with one or two questions and the papers are expected to draw on all the material covered in class. For this reason you should attend all classes, pay attention, and participate. As mentioned, the instructors do realize you are not a native Spaniard and have modified their techniques somewhat to our system. However, be prepared for differences.

The size of most classes is usually small to medium, depending on the final size of the Albany group. Classes are held Monday morning through Thursday, giving you Friday through Sunday to travel. Like most institutions in Spain, the International Institute respects the typical long Spanish lunch hour when the large meal of the day is usually served. Evening classes may be given if we have more courses than usual.

Note: No food or drink of any kind is permitted in the classrooms or hallways of the Institute. Food may only be consumed in the cafeteria.

Computer Access

At the Instituto, Albany has three laptops and one printer for our students; which are available whenever the SUNY office is open. The computers do have internet access, but please use your computer time wisely - it is limited! **Please be forewarned: there are times when you will not be able to get on a computer.** Watch the traffic and figure out when there are the fewest students and try to use the computers at that time.

The Institute has installed hookups with internet access for laptops and also has wireless internet in the building. **You are highly encouraged to bring your own laptop computer.** However, the voltage is different in Spain; therefore, you will need a converter. Converters can also be purchased in Spain – but it is perhaps cheaper and easier to buy a converter before you leave. Be careful to get the exact kind you need. If you do bring a laptop, you may be limited in the amount of time you can use it at home. You will not be able to access the internet from your laptop at your host family's house. Also, your host family will be concerned about their electricity bill if you are constantly on the computer. Please use your best judgment and be considerate of your host family.

Note: Again, computer access is limited. Therefore, you will need to limit your use and lower your expectations. In Spain it is a luxury to have a computer. The relatively few computers that we have available at the Institute are considered extraordinary by Spanish standards. If necessary, there are *cybercafes* where you can pay a minimal amount to use their computers. Recently, cybercafes have been multiplying all over

the city and usage fees have been decreasing. Some cafés around Madrid offer free wireless hook-ups for the internet. The staff in Madrid can give you details.

E-mail

Make sure you give our office your email address so that we can send important information easily.

We hope that e-mail will help all of us communicate at a lower cost. However, if you use e-mail, do not make it your whole life. You are in Spain to experience Spain, not catch up on what you're missing at home. Regardless, don't expect to spend hours using e-mail - access will be limited and many other students will be waiting to use it as well.

Mail

You will receive your mail at the Instituto, not at the home of your host family. All students will have their mail sent to the office; it will be sorted; and then you will be able to get it. Please give your mailing address to everyone who needs it as follows:

**Your name
SUNY Program
Instituto Internacional
Miguel Angel, 8
Madrid 28010**

You should plan to receive all your mail at this address throughout your stay. It is usually more reliable to receive mail at the Institute than at your home address and, in the event that you change families, your mail will always reach you. If your host family suggests that you receive mail at their address, you may do so if you like.

The main post office in Madrid, the Palacio de Comunicaciones, is located at the Plaza de Cibeles (metro Banco de España, bus 27 or 14). There are other post offices throughout Madrid and they have yellow awnings with a sign reading '*Correos*'.

Estancos are stores that sell tobacco, stamps, metro passes, and other necessary items. They are usually less crowded and more numerous than post offices. An *estanco* is easily spotted by a red sign with a T on it. All mailboxes are yellow with a red stripe and say '*Correos*'. It takes a week or two for a letter or postcard to reach the U.S. from Spain. **Aerograms** are also available. They are less expensive than letters but cannot contain enclosures. Local postage in Spain varies with the destination; anyone at the post office or *estanco* can tell you how much your letter will cost.

Books & the Library

The amount you spend on books depends on your interest in and willingness to buy books. There is a library in the Instituto that contains some of the texts and reference books needed for your classes. Access to the library and borrowing privileges are somewhat restricted. The actual hours of operation will be announced during orientation in Madrid. In the library at the Institute, you may also find reserve materials for certain classes. Most students prefer to buy their own texts, most of which can be bought in inexpensive paperback editions. The Director can advise you as to where you should purchase books or other materials required for your courses. Students also may use the local Spanish libraries for research and as a place to study and meet Spaniards. However, be aware that most Spanish libraries have limited access and closed stacks.

You can make photocopies at several locations close to the Institute, but it can take some time. Occasionally a professor will ask you to purchase copied materials from one of the local shops as well. Be sure to find out which one you need to go to. Unlike universities in the States, Spanish universities do not have one local bookstore and copy store that everyone uses. Therefore, don't expect to be able to go to one place for everything or the same place for certain things all the time. One store might have history books but not an art book you need; and you'll definitely have to go to a *papelaria* for your paper and supplies; the *libreria* doesn't carry those things. Ask the Director for advice to help save time; but remember some things are just different and you should relax and enjoy the experience.

HOUSING

ALL STUDENTS: The housing form must be submitted to Albany before your visa paperwork can be prepared. Do not delay!

Homestays

Housing for Albany students is provided through a homestay program arranged by the staff in Madrid. All students living in Spain for the first time are **strongly** encouraged to participate in the homestay program at least for their first semester. Most students will be placed in a family with another student from our program. In addition some families might have a student from another program, either an American or another international student. The homestay provides three meals a day, laundry services, and a comfortable environment during the first weeks of adjustment to a new place and a new culture. It is a great opportunity to converse in Spanish daily and experience a part of Spanish life that can be appreciated no other way.

Please see your advisor's checklist in your acceptance packet for instructions as to how to complete the Madrid Housing Request Form. All students must specify their housing arrangements prior to the start of the program. Please complete the form promptly and thoughtfully; you will be placed in a homestay based on your answers. The completed questionnaires are sent to Madrid and used to select homestays that can provide appropriate accommodations. We do the best we can, but we cannot always accommodate your requests and preferences. If you have heard of a particular family from a past participant, you may request placement with that family. If you want to live with another program participant, let us know and we will try our best to place you together. All of your requests will receive serious consideration in conjunction with all other factors that determine placement. Sometimes we receive multiple requests for a family, so not everyone can be accommodated. Sometimes, the family is no longer taking students. We will try our best! We hope to obtain notification of the names and phone numbers of your host families just prior to your departure. Please be patient and wait for us to email you, which we will do as soon as we have any information. Again, make sure Albany has your email address!

Other Housing Options

You also have the option of making your own housing arrangements. **Albany cannot help you do this; therefore, this choice is not recommended.** If you elect to make your own housing arrangements, a portion of your Program Charge will be deducted from your total. **You MUST make this choice before departing for Spain. I cannot stress this enough!** Host families do not appreciate losing their students midway into a semester since there is no way to find another student to replace them. Therefore, this is not an option! You **must** indicate your preference on the Housing Questionnaire that you send to Albany before leaving. After one semester, a student staying on for a second semester may elect to move out of the host family, even if that student had previously indicated an intention to stay with a host family for the entire year. In this case, the staff in Madrid must be notified well in advance.

Before deciding against a homestay situation, you should be aware that there are no international student dorms in Madrid. Therefore, you cannot simply sign up for a dorm room and move in when school starts. Instead, you would have to arrive before the rest of the group and search for an apartment on your own. This can be very challenging for students who have never been to Madrid; however, the few students who have chosen this option in the past have said it is not impossible. Remember that renting an apartment in Madrid entails everything included in renting an apartment here: signing a lease, setting up utilities, paying a deposit, dealing with the landlord, figuring out where to do your laundry and shopping. Although this experience can be very rewarding, it is also very stressful – especially when all business, including the lease, is conducted in Spanish. And, again, Albany cannot help you with this process. Therefore, make this choice carefully!

Independence

A concern of many American students is the fear that living with a host family means losing independence. However, this is not the case. All students have keys to their homes and can come and go as they please. You will not be given a curfew or told that you must follow a certain schedule. The families realize you are college students who are used to having independence. Nonetheless, you must always use common courtesy when dealing with the family. Although you do not have to be home for every lunch and dinner, please let your

family know ahead of time. They will be expecting you and it is rude to just not show up or to call one hour before the time you would eat. Be respectful and you will find you have all the freedom you need.

Nevertheless, you will find it is hard to feel independent when you need advice on the simplest things: how to get on a bus, turn on hot water, mail a letter...and it is hard for a host family to know how much "help" you want or need. Over time, your needs will also change. Try to be patient as your relationship develops. (For people that arrange their own housing, you will also feel helpless at times, maybe even more so than those in families due to the huge task you have of finding accommodations. Keep at it though - you will find that you will be up and running in no time!)

Although you need to spend time with your host family to form a successful relationship, you will find ample time to go out in the evenings and to travel on weekends. As mentioned, homestay families realize you are university students and treat you as adults and expect you to act like independent adults. In general, students are satisfied with the amount of liberty they have in a host family situation. Again, mealtimes are important; since the family gathers to discuss their day and touch base. This is a time to get to know your family and also to learn about Spanish culture and current events. Your host family has been told that mealtimes will be established according to the family's own preferences, so you must show up on time (there will be a long mid-day break between classes to allow time for meals). Be sure to give ample notice for meals missed or travel plans. A few other rules host families have been given: you are allowed one quick shower (10 minutes) or bath a day and you are allowed to receive phone calls (discussed later). In accordance with Spanish customs, however, visitors will probably not be allowed to visit you in your room. Occasionally, students are given permission to have visitors of the same sex in their room. You should see how your *señora* feels about this type of situation. **Definitely**, do not expect visitors of the opposite sex to be allowed in your room or the house in general.

Family Life

Living with a Spanish family will provide you with many insights into Spanish values, customs, and life experiences. Most of the families have previously hosted American boarders, and all are screened by our staff in Madrid and Albany. The families come from many walks of life and will have varying degrees of education. Some are professionals; others work for the Spanish government or in industries. Very few have young children in the household; most are adults whose children have left or *señoras* who live alone. Sometimes members of the extended family live close by and are occasionally present. Please keep in mind that entry into another person's home is difficult in Spain – even among Spaniards. It is not their custom to invite friends in to socialize. Therefore, the general openness of the American household does not generally exist in Spain. With this in mind, we hope that host families are entering into the program because they enjoy the company of American students. We know that they also do so because of the economic advantage of the room and board income. However, they are expected to welcome you into their home; they should talk to you and include you in their lives, which will help you learn a lot.

It is important that you realize that "family" does not mean the same as you expect to see in the States. Most host families will NOT have a mother, father, kids, and a dog. This is just not the type of family that has time or extra room to take in a student. In fact, most students live with widows who may have an older son or daughter living with them or perhaps other international student boarders. There are some more traditional families; however, you cannot expect to be placed with one. Students find that when they do live with non-traditional families, they often have a greater opportunity to learn about the differences between our two cultures. Also, some students have found that they receive more attention in non-traditional families; just as in the States, raising children takes a lot of time and energy, leaving little for a foreign student. At any rate, please be prepared to adjust your idea of "family", even if only for a semester. Enjoy the differences you will encounter - they will just enrich your overall experience.

Overall, you will find that the quality of the relationship between students and hosts varies greatly from individual to individual. In some cases, you may be considered only a boarder - some students want that. In other cases, you may be invited to join family gatherings. Regardless of your situation, you should not be surprised to find that you do not have the full run of the house, kitchen privileges, unlimited snacks, and meals you are accustomed to. Please remember that this is their home. They may want certain areas they can go for privacy. Nevertheless, you should be fed adequately and you should feel safe in your surroundings. If

you do become a "member of the family", be prepared to go to family events even when you might have wished to travel. This is really a privilege and a compliment to you that they want to include you. Do not feel bad if this is not your situation – again, it is an exception to the norm. In all cases, your *señora* will greatly appreciate your willingness to discuss with her how she would like you to handle such everyday matters as kitchen privileges, bathroom use, missing a meal, or coming home very late.

Most students have enjoyed their homestays, but not everyone is pleased all the time. This is also "part of the experience", although not always the best part. The program makes a conscious effort to weed out families who are rated unsatisfactory by students; but sometimes what one student complains about is what another student wants: other international students in the house, a higher degree of independence, etc. **The quality of the relationship depends greatly on your efforts to get to know the family and adapt to their customs.** Your acceptance in the household very often depends on your own desire to learn by observing and adapting to the Spanish way of life. If you are struggling to express yourself in Spanish, your patience and perseverance will pay off in time with a warm relationship. You may also try really hard to get to know them and still not feel that your efforts are appreciated. Every family is different. Regardless, all families consider students to be adults, but they do have rules. We expect you to follow these rules. In addition, we expect them to follow certain rules set by Albany. You will be given a copy of the rules during your orientation in Madrid to help you in case you are confused about something the family might be doing. Please be considerate and thoughtful of the fact that it is their house, television, etc. You will probably have at least one housemate, who might possibly be a student from a different program. If you are not satisfied with your placement, talk to the Housing Coordinator/Resident Director and see what can be done.

You will see that in the family everyone always makes a point of greeting each other when they return home, wake up in the morning, or simply walk into a room with others present. When you come out for breakfast, your *señora* will typically ask "*¿Qué tal has dormido?*" She probably will ask about your day when you return. There are also ritual *abrazos* and *besos* when people greet each other. When they leave a room occupied by others, a *con permiso* is required. The degree of closeness you experience with the family depends in part on personalities and interests. Usually family members are the ones who will give you much of the practical information you need; they will take you to the Institute and teach you how to use public transportation. Most students rely on their families if they encounter problems. Home is also a place to study. You will want to keep this relationship as open and friendly as possible. Here are some things you can do to get things off to a good start:

1. Bring a gift for the family when you arrive. Candy, a knick-knack, or any other small gift is appropriate. Former participants recommend bringing something from your home state or region, such as music or unique crafts or a special packaged food (no raw ingredients that can't clear customs). Also remember later on to bring an occasional gift to the family when you travel. (Albany does not know any details about the host families, as we are not involved in their selection, so our advice here is rather general. Therefore, if you call us for specific ideas for gifts, we'll have nothing new to tell you. Just keep it generic until you get to know your family, then you can buy them something more specific.)
2. Accompany the *señora* to the market. It is fascinating to see how the everyday shopping takes place. You can show her foods you like or want to try, and she will appreciate your interest.
3. Plan to spend your first few weekends at home (i.e. not traveling), except of course if a trip is planned expressly for the Albany group as part of orientation. Stay close to home and get to know the family. Sunday dinner is usually a major family event and often includes extended family. Chances are other members of the family will be eager to meet you; and you will want to know the family. Contacts made through the family can be very important for meeting other Spaniards.
4. If possible, accept the family's first invitations to join them for an occasion or to go on an excursion. Then they will know that you are genuinely interested in them and that you appreciate their efforts to welcome and include you.
5. It is also a good idea to bring along pictures of your own family, home, dog, whatever! People will be curious about them, and they are great ice-breakers. Even if you feel tongue-tied about some topics, you know that you can talk about these. And, you can't be wrong! You'll want to have some pictures along anyway.

The House

Typically the families live in urban apartments scattered around Madrid. **Very few** are within walking distance of the Institute; but, public transportation in Madrid is very easy to use. A 20 or 30 minute ride on the metro is considered short - keep this in mind and enjoy the ride. The family should provide you with a set of keys, and let you come and go as you wish. Always remember to let them know when you'll return - simple courtesy will make your stay that much more pleasant.

Spaniards' concept of living space is different than ours. Their apartments are usually much smaller than what we are used to. You should expect to have a small bedroom with a table or desk for studying and adequate storage space for your belongings. You will notice that most Spanish homes are kept immaculately clean. You are expected to keep your own room neat. Keep your things picked up. If you do not keep things really neat, your *señora* will probably "organize" your things one day while you are out. She is not trying to invade your privacy; in her mind, it's just part of her job as your *señora*.

The family may have a maid and the house may be cleaned several times a week. Laundry may also be done frequently. It is appropriate for you to maintain a cordial but somewhat formal relationship with a maid.

Food

All of your meals will be provided by the family. The adjustment to Spanish food may or may not be difficult for you. In general the Spanish diet is less varied than the American diet – please keep this in mind and try to adjust. Olive oil and garlic are a part of just about every meal. We recommend that you try all the foods offered. Previous participants have stressed the need to try everything - you'll probably be pleasantly surprised. If there are items that you really dislike or cannot learn to like, it is better to state so openly (and politely). As mentioned, Spaniards enjoy fried foods, and you will probably need to eat them even if you would prefer some other method of preparation. Chicken, rice, and fish are plentiful. Breakfast frequently consists of bread and *café con leche*; supper is often a *tortilla* (potato omelet) with bread and salad, eaten around 10:00 at night. The *comida* is usually eaten around 2:00 in the afternoon and is the large meal of the day. Because there is such a space between breakfast and lunch, students often eat a snack mid-morning. In fact this is a custom for most Spaniards as well. (This snack is not provided by the family – just a suggestion as to how to survive until 2:00!)

Obviously, if you have allergies or religious reasons for not eating specific foods, you must make those things known in advance. Be sure to mention them on the housing questionnaire you will be completing before family placements are determined. Be specific on your housing form and reiterate your needs once you get settled in with your family. Students who are vegetarians might have some problems. Again, be sure to specify on the housing form **exactly** what you won't eat. For example, don't just write 'no meat' – as many Spaniards may interpret that as 'no beef' and would still expect you to eat pork, fish, chicken, etc. Some families will be very receptive and will be able to come up with a variety of tasty vegetarian meals; others will not. There are very few Spanish families that understand how to prepare a vegetarian diet. Be patient and help them learn by preparing meals with them. All students should try to get as involved as possible. This could mean fixing your favorite American meal with your family. It helps you share your own culture, and you get to eat something you know you like!

Many *señoras* take pride in feeding their families well and pampering their husbands and children. If you are thin or pale, your *señora* might try to fatten you up or feed you to give you more color (you'll probably hear *come más* often). This protectiveness and fussing over you may seem hard to get used to after living independently in college. We encourage you to be cheerful and enjoy it, knowing that you can still be independent in many ways. This desire to fatten you up is balanced by horror at the prospect of being eaten out of house and home. If you feel you are not being fed enough, speak to the Resident Director or Housing Coordinator. If you simply don't like what you are being fed, find a mature way to deal with it.

Food storage is sometimes not what we're used to. Milk is processed in such a way that it does not need to be refrigerated before opening. To Americans, this is very odd. However, it is completely safe. (Just don't expect to get an ice-cold glass of milk anywhere!) If you have real concerns about the safety of your food, please discuss it with the UAlbany Madrid Program staff; they can tell you if it's safe or talk to your *señora* if it's not. As a side note, bring Immodium or some other antidiarrheal product. Many travelers react at some point to a new, unfamiliar cuisine. This is not food poisoning, just a jolt to your system.

Phones & Long Distance Calling

In the homestay program, students are allowed to **receive** phone calls. Calls should be limited to a few minutes once a day, usually just to arrange to meet friends. It is customary to make phone calls from public phones on the street (there are lots of them). In most homes, you will not be allowed to make calls. If you find you can make calls, consider yourself lucky and keep them very short. Spaniards do not use the phone as often or for as long as we do because charges for private phones are very high.

Long distance phone calls cannot be charged on the family phone. Long distance costs will vary according to which plan you have. If possible, establish a time with your family and friends when they can reach you at home and give them the number of your house phone. Calling card services are available in Spain also. Some are very inexpensive! Calling cards should not be used from your senora's home. (First, it probably won't work from a private phone; second, your señora might not understand how it works and might think she will be charged. This will cause a lot of unnecessary tension, so just don't try.) Be sure to get the access numbers for AT&T and MCI before you depart. Telephone services change rapidly, so other services may be available to you through your own long-distance carrier or another service. Inform yourself.

Cell Phones

Cell phones, or *movils*, are everywhere! Many people use cell phones in place of regular phones in their homes because they are much cheaper. You can get specific details when you arrive in Madrid. More and more students find this is an inexpensive way to receive and make calls while in Spain. Since you will most likely be unable to make calls from your home, and phone booths are inconvenient and sometimes hard to find, students seem to find the cell phone worth the extra money it might cost. There are too many cell phone providers to name here. This is a decision that you can make once you arrive in Madrid and see how often you need to use the phone. Keep in mind, you can survive with pay phones. The staff on site might be able to give you basic information on carriers and choices, but the real research and final decision is up to you.

Laundry

The family will provide laundry service for you. Laundry may be done quite frequently or only once a week. Spaniards probably do laundry differently than you are used to. This does not mean that they do it wrong. However, keep this in mind when you pack. Please do not bring your favorite outfit if it requires special care. Plan accordingly. If you are staying with a family, you do not need to bring any bedding or towels, as they will be provided.

Utilities

The family will expect you to be very careful with electricity, telephones, and hot water. Some students feel that these restrictions are unwarranted, but utilities are expensive and you must do your best to conserve energy.

You might need to ask for instructions about how utilities are to be used. In some Spanish homes, the hot water heater may not be left on, and there will be special arrangements to turn it on for each shower. You will be expected to **always** turn out the lights when you leave a room, to use only one light in your bedroom - desk or overhead, not both - and to use electric appliances sparingly. The current in Spain is 220V or 125V (in the USA it is 110V), and outlets are different (they are round). We suggest that you limit what electrical appliances you bring. Better yet - buy whatever you need when you arrive in Spain. A reliable travel alarm clock (battery operated) is an absolute necessity. Check with your host family about the details of everyday living and remember to respect their wishes. Again, if you feel there is a true problem with hot water or utilities, then talk to the on-site staff. They can explain why it is that way or try to fix it for you.

Payment for the Homestay

If you have elected the homestay option, your housing will be paid through the Resident Director. It is important for you to know that the **program** pays the monthly rent directly to the families. Other than delivering the housing check at the start of the month, **students and their host families should not be involved in financial matters** under normal circumstances. Unless you have been advised that there are expenses that you must pay for directly, there should not be exchanges of money between you and your host family. **Please avoid these situations.** If you do find yourself owing your family money due to unusual

circumstances, your family will probably tell you to leave the money on a table or in some other designated place.

Please remember that we contract your families for the entire semester, beginning the day the group flight arrives and ending the Saturday after final exams. Therefore, if you choose to travel during the semester or eat out a lot while friends or family are visiting, you will NOT be reimbursed for missed meals, etc. Your family will be paid as usual for the entire month.

Students staying for the **academic year** should realize that their housing is **not** paid for the time between the semesters. You should make arrangements with your family if you plan to stay with them during this time. Albany will not provide any funds to the families during that time. For **spring semester** students, host families are paid only half the normal amount for the days during spring break since we assume that you will be traveling during the break. The partial payment is to reserve your room. If you will not be away the whole break, please be aware that you must notify your senora and pay the other half of her payment for each day you will be there.

If you are using financial aid to pay for study abroad, make sure that you have made all the proper arrangements before your departure. Give power of attorney to someone you trust (such as a parent) who can handle your financial aid while you are overseas. **ALBANY CANNOT HANDLE ANY DETAILS CONCERNING YOUR FINANCIAL AID AFTER YOU DEPART. YOU MUST MAKE ARRANGEMENTS BEFORE YOU LEAVE.** Students who are using financial aid should realize that we send money to Spain on your behalf at the start of semester. Therefore, this office pays for your housing before you leave. However, you **MUST** have your financial aid sent to us to cover those charges or a financial hold will be placed on your account until the debt is paid.

Conflict Resolution

The UAlbany Madrid Program staff have had a great deal of experience matching students and families. Hopefully, you will be placed with a family that meets your expectations. However, no matter how great the match between student and family, there are issues that arise. Your unconscious assumptions about the right way to do the simplest, most common everyday things can cause misunderstandings. Try to resolve any minor issues yourself. If you have more serious problems or are unable to resolve an issue on your own, see the UAlbany Madrid Program staff; they'll talk to the family, try to find out what is going on, and help you clear the air. If problems persist and the staff in Madrid can't resolve them, let us know in Albany. **Please deal respectfully with the staff in Madrid and with your host family.** This is the best way to resolve an issue.

Although we have generally been able to resolve housing issues promptly, it is possible to change families if there is a serious mismatch. In such a case, you should **not** take matters into your own hands. You should be aware that changes made without approval will not be paid for. Albany can help if you feel your needs are not being met. We do not want you to remain in housing that you find unsafe and will intervene immediately. But, as with everything, bring your issue to the UAlbany Madrid Program staff first.

HEALTH CARE

Medical Insurance & Treatment

The SUNY health and emergency insurance policy for overseas study is mandatory for all participants in the Spain program. You must have the SUNY health insurance in effect, unless you have received a waiver from Albany's health office. You will only get the waiver if you submit the documentation required by the health insurance office. You cannot get a refund later because you had your own coverage or you didn't get sick. **If you do not pay for the insurance when billed or submit the paperwork to have it waived, it will be paid on your behalf, and there will be an automatic hold on all your records until that bill is paid.** This will hold up the release of your grades, so please **pay attention to this.** Please refer to the General Information Handbook for a description of the coverage and to the Estimate of Costs sheet for the approximate cost. Useful information about the SUNY health insurance policy (including info on English-speaking doctors abroad) can be found at www.hthstudents.com. When you receive the bill for this insurance, check the dates of coverage **carefully**. If you are planning to remain in Europe after the end of the program, you may wish to

have coverage for a longer period. You must indicate your preferred dates of coverage when you return your form to Albany's insurance office.

Even if you receive a waiver for the health insurance, all participants on Albany programs are required to have the **MEDEX** portion of the SUNY policy because it gives you essential emergency insurance coverage. MEDEX automatically provides accident and hospitalization insurance anywhere outside the United States and emergency evacuation and repatriation benefits.

Only Albany's Student Health Insurance Office has the authority to give you an exemption, and you will be billed automatically by the health office. You must contact them with questions about exemptions or other issues at (518) 591-8170. Please see the blue General Information Handbook for additional information.

In Spain you will be expected to pay for treatment at the time you receive it and then seek reimbursement from the insurance company. **This is important.** The system is NOT like an HMO here in the States, rather, you pay first and get reimbursed later. Therefore, be sure you have an emergency reserve of two hundred dollars or more throughout your trip. Get a receipt so that you can file a claim with the insurance company. The regular SUNY office will give you an insurance claim form when your policy is paid, along with instructions for filing. The Office of International Education has nothing to do with this, so please do not send us claims. Your insurance also will cover you for emergency repatriation, which we hope will not be necessary. Please be sure to inform the UAlbany Madrid Program Director if you become ill for an extended period of time. If it's an emergency and the Program Director isn't available, your host family will help.

If you need medical treatment, you should first contact the UAlbany Madrid Program Director for referral to the program-approved physicians. He will be able to help you get health care should you require it in a non-emergency situation. The service you are likely to be referred to is **Interclinic** (c/ Claudio Coello, 117 - Metro: Nunez de Balboa). This is a private clinic with English-speaking doctors. By appointment only, telephone: 91 576-9901. The charge is approximately 40 euros. Check with the Director to confirm these details before you go for treatment. For any health emergency 24 hours/day, **Hospital La Princesa** is available on Calle Diego de Leon 62 (metro Diego de Leon or Lista). Proceed directly to the Emergency Room (URGENCIAS). This hospital has excellent and extremely professional staff members. Some may speak English. If you must go to the Emergency Room, be sure to have your passport and your International Student ID Card (ISIC) with you. **Emergency services are free ONLY with your ISIC card.** You can buy an ISIC card on-line before you leave (www.isic.org) or after you arrive in Spain.

You should also know that in Spain pharmacists are able to prescribe "minor" medications such as antibiotics without a prescription from a doctor. In other words, some drugs that require prescriptions in the States may be available over the counter. Be careful about this. If you know you can take a certain medication for an illness you have had previously, you can go to the pharmacy and request that medicine. You may or may not be able to get it that way. However, it is always best to consult with a trained medical doctor before taking any drugs.

If you take a medication regularly and will need to do so while in Spain, bring along the amount you will need to last the duration of your stay in Spain. **Always bring medicines in their original containers.** Also bring along the prescription in case you need to have it refilled. If you wear contact lenses, think about bringing a second pair and a year's supply of your favorite wetting solution. Bring your glasses as well. No inoculations are required for travel to Spain. However, be sure your tetanus immunity is up to date and check with a physician to see if other inoculations are recommended.

Other Health Issues

Smoking is very common in Spain; there is no way to avoid it in normal social situations. Even though over 50% of the Spanish population smoke, the attitude toward smoking seems to be changing. There are families in which no one smokes. Many young people are choosing not to smoke, and older people are choosing to quit. Although you may find yourself in smoky conditions (bars are very smoky), you do not have to take up the habit to fit in.

You should also take appropriate precautions if you are sexually active. Albany is **not** encouraging you to be or to become active (in fact, we are trying to **discourage** it); but, if you are, be sure to bring proper protection with you. Furthermore, aside from the health risk, your activities or the intentions of others are easily misconstrued in other cultures. Americans are sometimes courted for reasons unrelated to their personal qualities. **We urge extreme caution in intimate relationships.** Further, we point out that being abroad often heightens feelings of liberation. Many people have the feeling of being an entirely different person when they live in another culture and speak another language all the time. This can lead to lapses in judgment. Be aware of yourself as a person whose integrity you are responsible for protecting. Also, do not expect your host family to be receptive to the idea of visitors of the opposite sex in your room. They will not be! It may be possible for a guest to join you at a meal if you make arrangements with your host family in advance. But expect that your social activities will take place outside of the home.

DRUGS & ALCOHOL

We all know that drugs and alcohol are not harmless substances. Illegal drugs may subject you to imprisonment abroad. Once you leave the U.S., you are subject to the laws of the country you enter. **WE CANNOT HELP YOU! Any American citizen charged with violation of Spanish laws related to drug possession or sale can expect no assistance from the University or the American Consulate.** Do not engage in foolish and/or dangerous activities.

In addition to the legal concerns surrounding drug use, you must strongly consider the safety issues involved. Although you may think you are not at risk and that you can handle yourself in any situation, this is just not the reality of studying overseas. You do not know the culture. You do not know how to read Spaniards. You do not know who is dangerous and who is not. **Do not under any circumstances put yourself at risk by participating in drug-related activities.** Use your best judgment and remove yourself from any potentially dangerous situations.

Alcohol is a more difficult matter to deal with. Alcohol is more a part of every day life than it is here and, as such, Spaniards have a much different attitude about drinking. Spaniards might drink a glass of wine with their meals or meet out for a *copita* in the afternoon or evening. But Spaniards do not drink to excess as we often see on American college campuses. Many bars are family places where people in the neighborhood (including children) meet to talk and visit, not at all like the bars you are used to. There are also clubs, which are primarily for dancing not drinking, even though alcohol is available. In fact, Spaniards find drunkenness to be offensive; they don't like loud, drunk Americans. And, if you have been drinking, you are much more at risk, by becoming an easy target for less desirable people and by impairing your judgment.

You will have to decide what to do for yourself, but be sure that alcohol does not interfere with your studies. Outside of school, you will probably find yourself in many alcohol-linked situations. If you do not wish to drink alcohol, it is always possible to buy *agua mineral* (*con gas* or *sin gas*, as you prefer) or another non-alcoholic drink like coffee or juice. Do not exceed what you yourself know to be prudent. Keep this in mind and behave accordingly.

MONEY MANAGEMENT

It is difficult to estimate how much money you will need in Spain as everyone lives differently. Even if you are staying with a family, you are likely to spend \$400 to \$500 per month eating out, going out, and traveling. The estimates given in the Estimate of Costs sheet are minimal and are based on the average student who travels occasionally. **You are likely to spend at least \$500 per month or more if you travel, for a total of about \$3,000 per semester.** Remember the cost of living in Madrid and other parts of Europe can be high. Previous participants have said they carried from \$20 to \$40 on them and extra money in travelers' checks when out of Madrid. Try to estimate how often you plan to travel and go out, as well as how much you expect to spend on gifts and personal items. Keep in mind that, although the dollar has been stronger of late, the possibility of the dollar going down is always present. If possible, plan to bring a little more money than you think you will need and budget it carefully from the beginning.

However much money you decide to bring, converting dollars to any other currency almost always entails fees. These fees are usually a percentage of the amount of money you are converting and can be as much as 20% if a bank has a minimum charge regardless of the amount of money you are changing. Therefore, it is important to explore your options, and to comparison-shop in Spain when you do need to change money. You are always watching two numbers: the rate (how many euros you will get for each dollar) and the fees (the basic charge for performing the transaction). Banks and *cambios* ("stores" where they exchange money - usually for high fees) post their rates, but what you see is generally what they are selling dollars for. You are selling the bank your dollars, so you must find out at what rate they are buying dollars. You will probably have to go in and ask.

There are various ways to finance your stay in Madrid, all of which are not listed here. **It is not a good idea to bring many dollars in cash.** The bank rate of exchange for euros is often worse for cash than for travelers' checks; it is also much more dangerous to travel with cash. Cash is not insured, so if you lose it, it's gone. Travelers' checks, however, can be replaced - but they are not always convenient to use. Sometimes a small number of dollars is advisable to pay for travel incidentals and immediate expenses upon return to the U.S. (telephone, taxi, bus, for example).

Before leaving the U.S. it is wise to get a few euros (\$50's worth) at your local bank or at the international airport from which you are departing (assuming it is open; they usually are open most of the day, every day of the week). That way you will not have to worry about changing money immediately upon your arrival in Madrid. We do not recommend that you bring a large amount of euros since the dollar/euro rate is very poor in the U.S. and at the airport. A bank will be open the following weekday or Saturday in Madrid so you can exchange more money to euros when you need to. In general, most students have found it easiest to have a small amount of cash in euros (for immediate incidentals), as well as some cash in dollars to exchange after arrival in Spain. ATM cards and/or credit cards work well for most daily expenses and offer the best exchange rate. However, you must be sure to contact your bank before you leave to tell them that you will be traveling overseas to make sure that your particular card will work and to inquire about fees for non-network use, etc. Some banks even have security measures that would actually cancel your card if you use it overseas, because they assume that your card has been stolen. **So, be sure to contact your bank!** Travelers' checks are a good back-up, since they are insured and replaceable.

NOTE: Until you have figured out what things really cost and see how much money you will need for your trips and other plans, spend your money cautiously. Almost anything you want to buy the first week will still be available for sale in a month! Take your time! Remember you will want to have some money available to you throughout your stay. Also, be careful about using coins, since they can be very valuable. Euro coins can be worth anywhere from one-tenth of a euro to 20 euros each.

ATM Cards

Many students like to use their ATM card as a source of daily money in Spain and highly recommend this form of money retrieval for its convenience. ATM cards are widely used now, as long as they have the NYCE or CIRRUS marks. Cash machines are quite prevalent, but you must be sure that your ATM card will work overseas -- some do not or there may be very high transaction fees for withdrawals. Check with your home bank to see what type of fee will be charged if you do use your ATM card overseas. Be sure you know what the charges will be so as to avoid any unpleasant surprises! You will also need to notify the security department that you will be using your card overseas to avoid having the card cancelled due to suspicion that the card was stolen. In Madrid, there are lots of ATM locations. You never know what you will encounter in other areas though; therefore, you may want to have some money in the form of travelers' checks for those times when you are traveling and you cannot use an ATM card.

Travelers' checks

Travelers' checks are the safest way to bring money overseas, but they are not the most convenient. You may want to purchase them in denominations of \$50 to \$100 for some travel and other expenses. We don't suggest you buy travelers' checks in euros; the rate is usually not favorable.

All travelers' checks are signed twice: once at the time of purchase and again at the time of use. Therefore, travelers' checks cannot safely be sent to you since your parents cannot sign a check to be used by you, and unsigned checks are really cash for whoever first signs them. Therefore, buy them before you leave. Whenever you buy travelers' checks, make several copies of the serial numbers and keep copies in a separate place, including with someone in the United States. If they are lost or stolen, you will have a much easier time replacing them if you know the numbers. (But if you don't, they are still insured and will be replaced eventually.) You will need your passport to change travelers' checks.

Credit Cards

In Europe, the most widely used card is Visa; but MasterCard is also common. Your card can be used in the same types of establishments as in the U.S. These cards can be used with ATM machines, but you should call your credit card company before your trip to find out if your particular card will allow you to do this overseas. A note on using your credit card for cash: It is possible, but not always practical. In addition to whatever basic fee there is for that service, you are also actually taking a loan on your card. If you have an emergency situation and withdraw some money, make sure that someone at home can receive your bills promptly and pay them or this will cost you a fortune in interest charges. Generally, the interest on loans accumulates from the day they are made, not from the billing date: there is no grace period! Once again, talk to the bank that issued your card to find out exactly how you will be charged and how to protect yourself from massive fees. You will also need to notify the security department that you will be using your card overseas to avoid having the card cancelled due to suspicion that the card was stolen.

The American Express card is not widely accepted, although it is becoming more popular. However, the Amex card can still be very useful overseas. With an Amex card and your personal checkbook, you can go to an American Express office and withdraw money directly from your checking account in the U.S. - your card serves as ID. This service is available anywhere there is an Amex office. In emergencies this works well since money can be deposited into your account at home, and you can withdraw it all over Europe. You should call Amex for additional information.

Bank Accounts

Due to Spanish banking regulations, opening a Spanish bank account normally is not recommended. Checks deposited in U.S. dollars may take 6 to 8 weeks to clear. **Therefore, your personal checks are not negotiable in Spain.** Please do not ask the staff in Madrid to cash them for you! (You can cash checks at the AMEX office if you have an American Express card.)

Sending Money from the States

If you must receive money periodically from home, and you do not have a major credit card, there is a convenient way that doesn't involve checks or long waits, but there may be substantial fees involved. Money can be sent via **American Express's Moneygram Service** - even if you do not have an American Express account. There is a fee that varies according to the amount of money sent, but you can have the money you need in 10 minutes in Madrid, Barcelona, or Marbella; and this service is available 24 hours a day. All that is required is that the person sending the money go to a proper service center in the U.S., directly deposit the amount to be sent (you can use most credit cards), and make sure that it is sent to the American Express office in **Madrid**. Western Union can also be used to transfer money speedily to Spain and other countries as well. They also charge a fee for this service. If you intend to transfer money, do a little comparison shopping before you leave.

Paying Bills At Home

Insofar as payment of bills in the U.S. is concerned, contact the Financial Aid Office at your home campus if there are any special arrangements to be made. Some financial aid matters can be done for you if your family has **power of attorney** to execute your checks and other documents as necessary. We strongly suggest you grant P.O.A. to someone you trust. Otherwise things have to be mailed to you in Spain for signature. This can significantly delay your receipt of aid money and may result in late fees. In emergency situations, see the on-site staff if there is a money matter that needs immediate resolution; however, don't look to them for banking services.

SAFETY

Personal Safety

Always tell your family in the States what you are doing. Contact them upon your arrival; tell them you are safe and how they can contact you. Make some sort of plan to keep in contact with them on a regular basis.

Theft of documents, money, and jewelry is an increasing problem for international travelers. Students have reported thefts on the streets and in the subways. Be attentive. In Madrid you should find a place at your residence to keep valuables when not needed for business transactions. You can carry a photocopy of your passport rather than the original. However, **you will need your actual passport to change travelers' checks.** Do not bring any jewelry of great sentimental or monetary value. Chain necklaces, rings, and bracelets may be snatched from you. Some people wear their necklaces tucked inside a shirt so they can't be seen when on the street.

It is a good idea to carry as little money as possible and to carry any large amounts of money where they cannot easily be seen. **Your back pocket is not a good place! Neither is your backpack,** since it can easily be unzipped. A money belt worn inside your clothing is recommended, especially when you travel. These can be purchased where luggage is sold. Purses with inside zippered compartments offer some protection against pick pockets. Be aware of your luggage and other belongings at all times. Don't make yourself an easy target for theft. (Old women who approach you to sell you flowers or read your palm may also be pickpockets. And, although it is a terrible stereotype and not always true, be careful of gypsies. They are often dangerous. Use caution!)

Especially for Women (but everyone should read this!)

Women can generally feel safe living and traveling in Spain, but should take normal precautions. It is a good idea to travel with a friend, and one should be careful and not go out alone at night.

Unwanted attention on the streets of Madrid is a problem that virtually every American woman faces.

A barrage of verbal comments, known as *piropos*, can follow you as you simply walk down the street. People may call out from passing cars. The comments may be very obscene or complimentary. The attention does not mean you will be physically accosted in any way. It is best to simply ignore the comments and develop a tough skin. No one has said that this is easy to do. When you don't react, they probably will not continue. Students often report that they find dealing with this attention to be unpleasant and stressful. They have not suggested any way to resolve this other than to be aware of it and try to ignore it.

If you hear "*¿Qué quiere, mi corazón?*", you are probably just being asked politely what you want. Don't overreact - there really are lots of nice people who just want to talk to you. You'll hear this question in stores, taxis, and other public places.

In the United States women generally expect to be "just friends" with men they know. In Spain being just friends is less likely. Women formerly on the program report that the men they knew generally were looking for more intimate relationships. In pursuing a woman who interests them, Spanish men can be extraordinarily attentive; their approach can be hard to resist. When it comes to American women they may be operating on the stereotyped assumption that "American women are easy"; or they may want a fling with a person who will conveniently be gone in six months. This does not mean that all Spanish men are like this; there are examples of good relationships that do develop. We simply recommend taking time to get to know people and using caution and good judgment. Also, have your host family meet anyone you feel you are getting serious about; they know how to read other Spaniards and can advise you.

Safety When Traveling

When traveling any place outside the United States, we recommend that you be very careful to avoid petty theft and pick pockets. The following steps may help ensure your security while in Spain or traveling abroad.

1. Make 2 photocopies of your passport and keep them in separate places. While in Madrid, carry a **COPY** of your passport and visa. Leave the originals at home unless you are planning to exchange money. If you are traveling overnight or a long distance, take it with you. If you are crossing into another country, even Portugal, you will definitely need your passport. Again, keep your passport,

valuables, and money in a pouch under your clothes. If traveling, do not trust that you can leave your things unattended. It only takes a second for someone to come and take your bags and valuables – it has happened.

2. Make copies of your travelers' checks' serial numbers and credit card numbers and keep them in a separate place.
3. Do not wear valuable earrings, necklaces, watches, or other jewelry in public places.
4. Travel with a hidden money belt around your waist and use it to carry your passport, money, and travelers' checks. In cheap hotels, sleep with the belt on.
5. Don't bring anything you can't afford or stand to lose.
6. Do not leave your backpack or luggage unattended. Do not accept packages from strangers; do not carry anything for strangers, especially across a border. Do not keep anything valuable in an exposed section of your backpack. They are easily unzipped without your notice.
7. Be aware of the movements of other people around you, especially in a crowd.
8. Use extreme caution in selecting friends. This is difficult but important. Be especially respectful of your host family's opinion of anyone you are spending a lot of time with. They are accustomed to interpreting intentions in ways you are unable to.
9. Use caution in accepting drinks at a bar from "friends." We don't want to make you paranoid, but people can be drugged and robbed. Be careful about drinking too much; some people have been followed home after a late night out. Use common sense!
10. Be cautious in revealing information about yourself and about other participants in the program.
11. When you get lost (and you will, at some point), avoid having a look of distress on your face. Walk confidently and go into a store to ask for directions.
12. Use travelers' checks or bankcards (ATM cards); do not change larger amounts of money than you need for a given period. In countries where there are several types of currency and/or black markets, do not engage in illegal activities.

Common Causes of Problems

We have asked past participants to identify Spanish behavior that bothered them and American behavior that bothered Spaniards. Here is what they report:

- While it is necessary to be forward to meet people, being too forward can be misinterpreted as aggression or flirtation.
- All women should expect to hear comments made about them, and should ignore them (easier said than done, of course). Spaniards are surprised that we are bothered by this.
- The "Ugly American" is a stereotype. This is a fact. They think we are loud and criticize us if we stick together too much. See the section on how to meet locals.
- Stores and businesses are closed at lunchtime, which is reportedly somewhere in the 1 to 2 range. They reopen later. Restaurants are very busy at lunchtime. Plan accordingly.

Safety during a World Conflict

Your safety during any conflict situation is very important. We will do everything to ensure that you will be protected. Several years ago, when the war in Iraq broke out, many students and their families were of course concerned about their personal safety. At the Instituto, particular measures were taken: special identifying documents were issued to students and staff. **THERE WERE NO PROBLEMS!** If there were to be increased tension again, you should also know that "home" in your host family's house is a very secure place. It is also important to dress discreetly at all times... no college sweatshirts, etc.

This office also issued a security alert that contained suggestions to decrease the risk of terrorism. The recommendations are listed here:

- Be as inconspicuous as possible. Avoid areas frequented by Americans such as bars and fast-food restaurants, U.S. banks, etc. Avoid using American logos on your clothes and belongings.
- Keep in close touch with the program office. If you have not registered with the U.S. Embassy or Consulate, do so immediately. Make sure someone always knows where you are.
- Report suspicious persons or events to the police.
- Remain in your residence if advised to do so.
- Don't be careless with information about students or events.

- Watch bags and luggage carefully. Again, do not agree to carry, look after, or store any package, parcel, or suitcase for anyone.
- Never agree to drive a car for someone else, especially across national borders.
- In trains and airports, do not hang around ticket offices or airline counters. Go quickly to your train or the lounges beyond the passport controls.

SOCIAL LIFE

Meeting Spaniards

We asked prior participants to tell us how they met Spaniards. Students recommend **intercambios** very highly, which the UAlbany Madrid Program Director helps to set up. They also suggest going to cafes and bars; or if your host family has children of the appropriate age, you can meet other Spaniards through them. Some students went places with other Americans; but they just went with one person and tried to speak Spanish while together (not always easy - but try!). They also met people on trips and excursions. Being open, friendly, and not in large groups seemed to help. Was it easy? The answers cover all bases: "difficult; medium; you must be outgoing; fairly easy; very easy, especially after a little sangria..." Students say to not feel intimidated because the Spaniards really *do* want to meet Americans, just be yourself and be willing to experience different things.

Always keep in mind that you are a guest in Spain and that you are representing the U.S. Don't give Spaniards any more reasons to believe the "ugly American" stereotype. Be respectful of the people and customs of Spain at all times. Spaniards will appreciate this and be more willing to meet you and become friends.

Going Out

The amount of money an individual spends for recreation depends on personal interests and tastes. Think about your safety **constantly!** Please remember that Madrid is a big city, just like New York. Some students have said that the **Plaza de Chueca, Fuencaral, and the metro should be avoided late at night.** Go in a group if you plan to be out late, and expect to spend some money on taxis, both for safety and because public transportation doesn't run all night. Others have mentioned that you should not go into parks with large amounts of money; beware of men in nightclubs who may be very aggressive; and avoid walking alone or in "all-girl" groups on Friday and Saturday nights near Sol or Gran Via metro stops. Also **avoid being alone at Moncloa and Puerta del Sol at night.**

If you go out to a club or bar with a group of friends and enter into a conversation with a stranger, you may not be able to ditch this person by the methods you are accustomed to. For example, after you go to the bathroom, you will be expected to return to the same person or he/she might be waiting for you to come out of the bathroom. For this reason, it is safer to be in a small group than by yourself. On the other hand, don't go with your friends and just speak English with them; this will immediately identify you as an easy target. This is yet another reason to use Spanish at all times. Spaniards tend to find groups of Americans speaking English to be annoying.

Restaurants

There are several types of restaurants in Madrid with a great variety of price ranges. One of the pleasures of traveling is trying as many as you can afford. Since it would be impossible to name even half of the good ones, and since the "good ones" may change from year to year, we leave the discoveries to you.

Theaters and Movies

Madrid is a city of many theaters. You may be able to find *vales* for half-price *entradas* from time to time. During each theater season many modern and classical Spanish plays are performed, along with translations of dramas from other countries. Most major films can be seen dubbed in Spanish. There are also several *Art y Ensayo* cinemas that present films in their original language with subtitles. The average price of a movie ticket varies, depending on the film being shown. A new movie shown for the first time in Madrid

(*an estreno*) will cost more. Many cinemas sell reserved seats only and the price of your *entrada* varies depending on where in the theater you want to sit.

A listing of nearly all of the entertainment in Madrid is published weekly in the *Guía del Ocio* that comes out on Sundays and gives information for the following week (check the date before purchasing). This guide is sold at *kioskos* (newsstands) throughout the city.

Museums and Monuments

The museums and monuments of Madrid are too numerous to list here, but upon your arrival in Madrid you can obtain a complete list. We will only mention a few of the more interesting ones (in our opinion). You'll want to explore and see those that most interest you. Most charge a small entrance fee, although in many cases a Spanish student ID will enable you to enter for free.

- **Museo del Prado:** located on the Paseo del Prado in central Madrid. It is a must for any visitor to the city; one of the best collections in the world of Spanish, Venetian, and Flemish art.
- **Palacio Real:** Calle Bailen. Another must see while you are there.
- **Museo Arqueológico Nacional:** Calle Serrano, 13. An interesting collection of artifacts from the pre-history and early history of Spain and other parts of the world. Here you will also find an excellent reproduction of the famous prehistoric cave paintings at Altamira (Santander).
- **Convento de las Descalzas Reales:** Plaza de las Descalzas, 3. Sixteenth-century convent with an interesting museum.
- **Museo Lazaro Galdiano:** Calle Serrano, 122. One man's collection of paintings, sculpture, armor, coins, and curiosities, housed in his mansion.
- **Museo de América:** Avenida de los Reyes Católicos, 6. Pre-Columbian and Spanish art from America.
- **La Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando:** Calle de Alcalá, 13. Large collection of paintings.
- **El Museo Thyssen:** Plaza de Neptuno. Large collection of paintings through the ages.
- **Museo de Sorolla:** Paseo General Martínez Campos, 37. Very close to the Institute, artist's home with collection of Impressionist paintings.
- **Centro de Arte Reina Sofía/Museo de Arte Contemporáneo:** Santa Isabel, 52. Latest international exhibitions.
- **Plaza Mayor:** the center of old Madrid, with lots of *ambiente*. Plan to visit this and all the important plazas on your walks through the city.

Music

During most of the year, both the **Spanish Orquesta Nacional** and the **Orquesta de RTV** (radio and television) give a weekly concert in Madrid. Many other Spanish and foreign groups also come here to perform - watch the newspapers to find out about special concerts. Each student will want to explore the city to find his or her own kind of music, be it popular American music, jazz, classical, folk, South American, or flamenco. All of these can be found in Madrid. There are often music festivals in other parts of Spain - in Granada, Toledo, Cuenca, etc. These will be announced and are worth attending. Madrid has also become an important stop for modern rock groups on European tour; and the Jazz Festival in Madrid held every autumn is becoming more and more popular. Live music, in general, is becoming more and more common in Madrid. Pubs and cafés with live music are springing up all over as Madrid grows increasingly more important as an international cultural center.

Sports Facilities

If you are interested in joining a gym in Madrid, the SUNY office can suggest a few that are located close to the Instituto. During the winter months, skiing in Spain is quite good. Many students enjoy weekend trips to the nearby Sierra de Guadarrama, where there are several ski resorts (Navacerrada, Cotos, Valdeski, etc.). Skis, boots, and other necessary equipment can be rented there at reasonable prices. Students interested in more extreme skiing may want to spend a vacation in either the Pyrenees in northern Spain or the southern Sierra Nevada, the highest mountains in Spain.

Shopping

Department Stores

There are several department stores in Madrid where you can buy anything you need. The biggest chain is **El Corte Inglés**. Although most small businesses still follow the traditional commercial schedules, the large department stores are open continuously from 10:00 a.m. until 9:00 p.m. without closing for lunch break. Expect to greet and be greeted by the staff in a small store when you enter and leave. And don't do all your shopping the first day! Give yourself time to compare prices and quality. Most things you see one day will be available later.

The Rastro

The **Rastro** is one of the most exciting places in Madrid where you can buy everything from souvenirs to the kitchen sink. It is a giant flea market that covers an entire neighborhood. The best time to arrive is about 9:30 or 10:00 on a Sunday morning. At that time, the vendors are just setting up shop, and you can walk around freely. By 11:00, things really get going, and the crowds pour in. The Rastro is located near Metro Tirso de Molina. If you take your purse, hold on to it! There are all kinds of pickpockets there. It's a good idea to check prices at all the booths before buying, because prices vary. You can try to bargain with the vendors – they might give you a break on the price if you try hard enough.

Markets/Supermarkets

Many foods are pretty much the same as in the U.S., but canned goods and prepackaged foods are more expensive. Many people prefer to shop in an open market and buy everything fresh. For Americans, shopping in an open market is usually a new and very interesting experience – check it out. You will find that Spaniards have a much different way of taking their place in line in markets. Usually everyone mills around in front of the counter, rather than standing in a nice straight line. However, you will hear the question "*¿Quién es el último?*" asked, and the answer, "*Soy yo.*" That way everyone knows who's next. Learn to ask and answer this question.

Transportation

Most students rely heavily on public transportation in Madrid. Some of the families that provide homestays live far from the Institute. Additionally, you will want to explore different neighborhoods in the city for restaurants, shopping, and museums. Most participants have found **abonos** to be the most economical way to finance daily transportation. Abonos are monthly tickets that entitle the bearer to unlimited usage of the metro and buses. You also can buy single and multiple ride tickets. During orientation, you will learn about current prices and how to obtain one. You should wait about two weeks to see how much you use each mode of transportation before you decide which to purchase. **Subways** and **buses** do not run 24 hours a day in Spain. Buses begin service at 6 a.m. and end service at midnight. The subway stops service at 1:30 a.m.; some exits close earlier. Plan accordingly and expect to take taxis.

Taxis are metered. You want the meter to run so that the driver doesn't make up a price; the expression is *bajar la bandera*. When the counter is started, you are immediately charged the minimum charge. There is a night supplement and an extra charge for train station pick-ups, airport travel, and luggage. If you have problems with the driver, ask for the rate sheet. Tips are optional and in any event small: one euro or less. If you have luggage, you will be charged for it too, and you might also tip beyond that. There are many radio-dispatched taxis. Although there is an extra charge, it may be worth it if you are not on a main street where many empty cabs are passing. Phone numbers can be found in the weekly *Guía del Ocio* that you can pick up at a kiosk.

Transportation to and from the airport is available as well. There are several choices; metro, taxi, bus, and vans. The metro is cheap and easy, but may not be a good option if you have lots of luggage. Taxis to the Instituto and the surrounding area should cost about 15 euros. Bus service leaves from Plaza Colón and stops at Avenida de America as well; during the day, buses leave every 15 minutes. However, the areas where it drops you off are not safe late at night and other transportation is recommended. Vans, a new choice, are recommended for students who are going to the airport in a group. The Director can give you details on each of these options.

GENERAL EXPECTATIONS

Your Behavior

We expect you to be honorable representatives of the United States and its culture. You will find that you will be held personally responsible for the policies of Presidents Obama, Bush, Clinton, Bush, and Reagan - perhaps even George Washington - and will be expected to know all about them and this country, even if you were a kid during their presidencies. You will be amazed at how much more some Spaniards know about our history than you do! You should be as well informed as you possibly can be about world events to participate successfully in such discussions.

You soon will also discover that the world does not do everything the way we do. This is usually "interesting", but sometimes not to your liking. You will be more surprised by the small things than by major differences. Keep your eyes and ears open, and ask about anything you feel you need information about. If you have been given instructions but really did not understand them, ask again. **It is easy to fall into the trap of faking comprehension**, but it is not useful to either side if you do not really understand.

Depending on your own personal background, you may also encounter curiosity or hostility. Be as mature in these matters as you can. If there are problems with your host family because of your ethnicity (there should not be!), see the program's staff for help. Those of you who are of Hispanic heritage may find your host family relationship to be different than it is for other students. Since each relationship is different, we cannot predict what yours will be like. Generally, we find that whenever students go to a country where they can be expected to know how to behave because of their ethnic background, the host country nationals sometimes react quite differently to them than they do to more 'typical foreigners' who are allowed more leeway in their behavior.

You may have some concerns about religious pressures from your host family. However, this most likely will not be a problem. Although almost everyone in Spain is Roman Catholic, many are not practicing. In many families only the older generation (the abuelas) still attend church regularly. If you are not Catholic, your host family will probably not know much at all about your religion. They may be curious; they may not. It is up to you to decide how much you wish to share on the topic. The office in Spain posts a list of places of worship of all denominations that you can freely consult.

Social Customs

You will also notice that Spaniards use both the vosotros and Uds. forms in their relationships. Ud. is used with your professors, people to whom you should show respect, strangers, usually your señora, and elderly members of the family. Vosotros is used with friends and people you are more casual with. You should familiarize yourself with the vosotros form and its uses.

Spaniards do most of their socializing in the streets and at bars or cafés. They rarely entertain in their homes. If you are invited to a party or to accompany a group, you can accept or not as you wish. You should give a clear signal of your intentions; don't accept and then fail to show up. Women should be cautious of invitations from men. Use your best judgment and don't put yourself in any uncomfortable situations. If you want to invite your family out or want to get together to just talk with someone, invite them for a *cafecito*.

Spanish time will take some getting used to. "Let's meet at 8:00" could mean 8:00, 8:30, or even later. On the other hand, if you have an appointment with a doctor or any official type, you must arrive on time, even if you are kept waiting for a long time. This goes for classes as well. Expect buses to run on schedule if you are going on a trip, even if they don't.

Students' Advice

In a recent survey, students had the following suggestions regarding local customs and American behavior that irritated the Spaniards they encountered. These should help you fit in a little better. Some of these are repeats from previous information, but they are important enough to mention again.

- Americans are often thought to be loud, obnoxious, and demanding, so try not to be.
- Realize that breakfast and dinner will be smaller meals, but that at mid-day the meal will be large.
- Siesta is real and you'll learn to love it.
- Most people speak English and will try to do so. Make a special effort to speak Spanish.

- Spaniards are often late and it is not considered rude. Also, don't expect quick service as the lifestyle is more "laid back".
- The first week or so can be frustrating, but things will get better.
- Be sure to dress nicely when you go out.
- Your host family will do your laundry, but may only do one small load per week for you, so if you like to wear a million different outfits a day, rethink this habit. Also, detergents may be harsher than the ones you use. Don't bring anything you really love unless you plan to have it dry-cleaned (which is expensive).

Here are some more suggestions:

- Madrid is active all the time. It's a city but not impersonal. People are very helpful and friendly. Travel is easy and cheap, especially by bus. The nightlife is amazing. You can usually feel comfortable in Madrid, but you should watch out for situations where your pocket can be picked and avoid areas you are told to avoid!
- You need to be fashion conscious. If you dress only for comfort, your wardrobe will draw comments. Spaniards have fewer, but nicer, outfits. You can wear whatever you want, but should think jeans without holes for casual wear. And don't worry about wearing the same thing too much. You'll fit right in!
- Most bars do not have a cover charge (clubs do). You'll probably have bottled water or wine, either of which will be cheaper than soda.
- Be prepared for BESOS - in some situations, everyone is going to be kissing everyone (a kiss on each cheek) and you are going to have to get used to this. Even when you first meet people who are friends of a friend, they will give you besos. Also be aware that the distance between people who are just standing and talking is closer than the usual American distance and may make you feel uncomfortable at the outset. Don't feel invaded! This is just the Spanish idea of personal space. You will get used to it and not even notice it after a short time.

STUDENT TRAVEL

Most students want to travel while they are abroad. It is a great way to get to know the country where you are studying and other surrounding areas. However, travel anywhere has its issues. Please keep the following in mind when traveling abroad, no matter where you're going.

General Hints: There are a lot of decisions to be made and many different sources of information. Your families, Spanish friends, and the staff at the Instituto are all good sources for information on travel. For general travel information, go to **T.I.V.E.**, the student travel office located at Fernando el Católico, 88 (metro Moncloa or bus 16 or 61; phone 543-7412). It is part of the Instituto de la Juventud and is used by Spaniards and foreigners alike. There you can find out about student rates on trains, planes, and boats, along with excursion and lodging information. Recently students have also had good experiences with two other student travel organizations: **Mundo Joven** and **Euroflash**. Both organize student tour groups and provide opportunities to meet Spanish young people. **Melia** is also a good company to deal with, although you may not receive special student prices. Your parents might enjoy a Melia tour, if they come to visit.

If you plan to stay in hostels or *pensiones*, which you are likely to do on short trips around Spain, find out first if they will give you a key because many hostels/*pensiones* have curfews after which they lock the doors. You may want to bring a sleeping bag to use, but you do not need to bring any bedding for your homestay. You can follow the suggestions in *Let's Go* - it's usually reliable - but every other American is reading the same book and showing up at the same places. Ask Spaniards your own age where to go in Spain. There are some wonderful villages and unknown locations that you might otherwise miss.

International Student Identification Card: This card is **optional** but highly recommended for Madrid program participants because it allows students free emergency room care – see the section in this handbook on 'Health Care'. A student ID is helpful while traveling, since it may enable you to get discounts on certain modes of transportation, entrance to museums, etc. Some hotels and stores also offer discounts if you show your ISIC card. You can purchase an ISIC card on-line at www.isic.org

Youth Hostel Card: You can buy this card at the T.I.V.E. office. It will enable you to find fairly cheap lodgings easily during your travels through Europe. Note: Youth hostels and *pensiones* usually don't have towels for their guests.

Guidebooks: It is usually wise (more interesting and more economical) to travel with a student or tourist guidebook. We recommend either *Europe on \$5 or \$10 a Day*, by Arthur Frommer, or *Let's Go: Europe or Spain*, published by the Harvard Student Travel Association. Guidebooks will also tell you about the weather and lots of other useful matters.

A few additional tips:

- While traveling, **ALWAYS** keep track of your passport and valuables. Passports have been lost and stolen because of carelessness. Be careful not to leave these things unguarded in youth hostels or train/bus stations.
- Travel as lightly as possible. A heavy knapsack or suitcase will only make any problems you may have worse.
- Even in summer, be prepared for cold weather and rain (especially in Northern Europe).
- Don't be afraid to show your student card and ask for a discount. You can save a lot of money on entrance fees.
- **YOUR WHEREABOUTS SHOULD NEVER BE A SECRET!** Make sure that others know where you are going and when you expect to return.

Travel in Spain

Travel within Spain can be fast, cheap, and easy. It can also be slow, expensive, and difficult. Fortunately, there are choices. Before deciding, think about what is most important to you: your time? your budget? your anxiety level? Make your choice based on what you need for that particular trip. Also, feel free to talk to the staff at the Instituto to get some tips on travel. Use them and your Spanish family and friends to find out about possible destinations; there are many great places to visit in Spain that only native Spaniards would know about.

Train: In Spain, travel by train requires somewhat more patience than in the rest of Europe, since trains are usually slow. They are classified as follows:

- **Talgo** - The best, most comfortable, quickest, and, of course, most expensive Spanish train. All major cities are Talgo stops. Even in second class you'll be comfortable. If you are using a student rail pass, it will be necessary to pay a supplementary fee.
- **AVE** - High speed train connecting Madrid, Cordoba, and Sevilla.
- **Inter City** - The next best train.
- **Express** - In spite of its name, not a very rapid train. This is Spain's local train, which stops at all the little stations along the way.
- **Rápido** - Once again, the name has no relation to reality. It travels slowly and stops at all major points.

While traveling throughout Europe by train, you seldom need to reserve a seat. However, within Spain or on Spanish trains, a reservation is almost always required (even if you have a Eurail pass). There are three main terminals where you can make train reservations: Atocha, Chamartín, and Nuevos Ministerios.

There are special rates for young people on some trains on some days. You can obtain a *tarjeta joven* that gets you a 40% discount only on blue days. (There is a color-coded calendar that identifies these days.) This is a good way to save some money, but it requires some advanced planning.

Another possible option that has become more popular is to purchase an **Interail Card**. Since you must live in Spain for six months before you are allowed to purchase an Interail, this is not a practical solution for students planning only one semester abroad. In order to purchase an Interail, you must prove that you are a student in Spain, not an American tourist, and you must be less than 26 years old. The card can be purchased at RENFE (a Spanish railroad company) and costs about \$220 for one month of travel or \$400 for two

months. When this card is purchased in Spain, tickets for travel in Spain cost half price. Travel in other European countries is free, except for supplemental costs, such as those for express trains.

Bus: There is good bus transportation in Spain from Madrid to most other cities. Sometimes it is almost as comfortable and as quick as the train, so when planning your travels, look into both possibilities. Also check out bus passes that are similar to Eurail Passes. One student claimed that within Spain, it is probably better to travel by bus than train unless you are willing to spend the extra money for the high-speed trains. Buses go everywhere and trains can be slow. Eurail passes and other special tickets have lots of restrictions. Beaches, by the way, are about 6 hours from Madrid to the east or south. In general, you will find that travel is easy after your first trip.

Car: Cars can be rented in Spain, but normally you must be either 23 or 25 years of age to rent one. Because of the obvious danger of accidents and police problems in some countries, the SUNY program does not recommend renting cars. You will have to check with the various rental agencies to find out about prices and regulations, but in general, insurance rates, upkeep, and gasoline are **very expensive** in all of Europe. Other drivers may be unpredictable as well. Although many Spanish highways are now very convenient and safe, the tolls are astronomical! Other than new highways, European roads are often curvy and are usually in poor condition, so that you cannot travel as quickly as in the United States. Traffic regulations and road signs are different and must be learned before driving in Europe. If you still choose to rent a car, the rates are likely to be cheaper if you call from the United States and make the reservation there. You will need an **International Driving Permit**. This permit can be obtained from the AAA in the United States by submitting two photographs, a fee, and a valid American driver's license. Once in Spain, you can obtain one through the American Embassy.

Hitchhiking: Because of the obvious dangers, **the Albany program does not approve of hitchhiking as a means of travel.** It is a very common, and of course, the cheapest way of traveling. Many students prefer it to any other. However, it is not worth the potential dangers! Women should never hitchhike alone.

Travel in Europe

Again, traveling within Europe can be a great experience; it depends on the choices you make. Talk to your friends and the staff at the Instituto to get some ideas about the best way to travel internationally.

Train: Within Europe, trains are the most frequently used means of transportation for students. They are an economical and faithful mode of travel. In most of Europe, trains are very good, comfortable, and punctual. While traveling, however, be sure to check the stop names written on the sides of each **car**, not just the train in general. Many trains split up or add cars along the way; if you're not careful, you may find yourself a long way from your original destination. Most trains have both first class and second class sections. Second class is less expensive and usually comfortable.

Railroad Passes are available for travel throughout Europe. Some students buy the **Eurail Pass** (for 1st class) or the **Student Rail Pass** (for 2nd class). Tickets are good for travel in 13 European countries and can be purchased for varying lengths of time from fifteen days to two months. The passes themselves can be costly so check your options before buying one. There is also a European InterRail Pass that you can get at RENFE. Recently, students have found that it is cheaper to buy tickets once you arrive in Spain. In addition you have more flexibility regarding when you can travel. Look into your options before deciding.

Hitchhiking: Again, because of the obvious dangers, **the Albany program does not approve of hitchhiking as a means of travel.** It is not worth the potential dangers!

Plane: Airplane travel within Europe is very comfortable and rapid and recently has become very affordable. There are many trips throughout Europe and Spain planned by FOROCIO or Funiversal that you can take advantage of once you arrive. This is probably the least expensive way to travel. Look into these trips and also check out student discounts at any local travel agent in Madrid. You should be able to find some bargains on airfare.

Note: If you plan to travel extensively, perhaps during a long break, it is wise to call the country's embassy to insure that no other documents, aside from your passport, are needed to travel to that country. You may be

unpleasantly surprised to find you need an extra letter or even a visa to enter a certain country. And, most importantly, always bring your passport – you cannot cross international borders without it. You must have the original, not a photocopy. If you do not have the proper papers, you will be asked to get off the train at the border. (It has happened, trust me!) So be prepared before you go.

WHAT TO BRING

The weather in Madrid is similar to the weather in New York, with four seasons and varying weather during each. It does get cold in Madrid in winter, although not as cold as Albany, and a heavy coat is necessary. Buildings are not heated as warmly as in the United States so warm shirts and sweaters that can be layered, as well as warm socks, a bathrobe, house slippers, and gloves, are very useful. Spring is a beautiful time of year in Madrid; you will need to dress as you would in New York. A jacket, raincoat, umbrella, and shoes that can withstand rain are all recommended. If you plan to travel throughout Spain, keep in mind that each region has a distinct climate. To the north you will find cooler areas with more rainfall; several spectacular mountain chains run through the northern part of the country; and all are worth a visit. In the south the climate is hot and dry in the warmer months and moderate and mild in the cooler months. Andalusia has weather similar to the southwest United States and is a great place to go in the spring. Just remember that Spain is very much a developed nation, with consumer goods similar to those found here. If you forget something, you can always buy it in Spain.

No matter what we advise you to pack, you will find some things are necessary and others aren't. It will depend on what you do and how you live. You will want to be able to blend into your surroundings, and your clothing can make a difference. Therefore, it is wise to come prepared with clothes for all occasions. You will see that dressing appropriately is more important than having a lot of variety. In general, Spaniards dress up to go out and have a few nice outfits rather than twenty casual ones. But you will still need your jeans, as they are in fashion, and sweats to relax around the house. Clothing prices in Spain are higher than in the US, and the quality is variable. You might find some nice outfits to buy there, but will probably want to depend on what you already have.

Although laundry services are provided as part of the homestay program, the laundry may not always be done exactly the way you would hope. It is prudent to wash all new garments before you take them with you, just to be on the safe side. Furthermore, do not take your favorite, favorite things if they cannot withstand unpredictable events. If you are staying with a family, you do not need to bring bedding and towels, as they will be provided for you. However, you may want to buy a small towel after you arrive if you plan to stay in hostels, where towels are usually not provided.

Toilet articles and medicines comparable to those in the U.S. are easily available. If you anticipate needing a certain prescription medicine, you may be more comfortable bringing a supply with you. Carry copies of prescriptions you use regularly, including eyeglasses and contacts. You may not be able to get exactly what you want or need abroad. On the other hand, do not bring enormous amounts of day-to-day products unless you absolutely must have your favorites. Such products can be purchased easily and quite inexpensively in Spain.

Packing

Pack lightly! If you can't carry your luggage around the block without undue fatigue; **REPACK** because no one is going to carry it for you. If you don't already have the luggage you intend to use on your trip, check out bags with wheels or some type of wheeled carrier, since two large suitcases can be very hard to move. **You may have to carry them up the stairs to your homestay** if there is no elevator in the building. If you plan to travel extensively while in Europe, take along a backpack or smaller bag to hold just enough for those trips. This backpack can be used as a carry-on when you fly over. Again, Spaniards don't have a different outfit for every day of the month, so you won't need one either. And remember - you can buy just about anything you need in Spain. Students who have been to Madrid recommend the following:

- Guide book of Spain (*Let's Go Spain* or *Streetwise Madrid* - a must!!)
- English/Spanish dictionary
- Pictures of your family, friends, home town, and university
- Small gifts for your host family and new friends

- Batteries (expensive in Spain)
- Battery-operated alarm clock (a must!)
- Camera and film/memory (expensive in Spain)
- Sweatshirts, sweaters, or a light jacket of some sort for cool evenings, plus a warm jacket
- Umbrella
- Sneakers or comfortable shoes
- Sunglasses and sunscreen
- Journal (a great way to keep track of your adventures)
- I-pod
- Feminine products (if you have a brand preference)
- Zip lock baggies for traveling
- Dressy clothes (one outfit, anyway, to be on the safe side; see the discussion above about what is generally appropriate)
- Hairdryer (but note comments on using electricity in someone's house)
- Some sort of small purse or pouch to put around your neck so that you can keep valuables on your person. This should be something that you might wear under your clothes.
- Chapstick and moisturizer (Spain is much dryer than here and a good substitute is hard to find.)
- Slippers – you can't walk barefoot around the house in Spain

CULTURE SHOCK AND OTHER NEW FEELINGS

Here are some **strategies** that previous participants found useful during their time abroad. The first thing to bear in mind is that you are going to be a foreigner. Your hope is that people will be "nice" to you and most will. However, people vary in their reactions to those who don't seem to know what to do and how to ask for information. Usually, they try to speak slowly. (Or sometimes more loudly! Be prepared: they are not yelling at you, rather they are trying to help you understand.) They also try giving directions, being friendly overall, and perhaps introducing you to another person. Others may get frustrated and irritated at the person who does not understand; sometimes they get annoyed at having to repeat themselves. After a certain period of time, they think that you should *know* certain things by now, and they don't want to help any more. Try to be understanding of other people's positions. Just as they need to be patient with you, you should be patient with them.

When you first arrive in Spain, there will be a certain "grace period." You won't know how to do the simplest things, such as how to mail a letter or take a bus, and you will sometimes say the wrong thing without meaning to. People will have to show you how to turn on the water; they will have to tell you what you're eating; they'll have to try to figure out your wants and make their own wishes known. Take advantage of this good will as long as it lasts! Soon enough you will be expected to be independent.

The second thing to bear in mind is that you will be subject to some mood swings that may be mild or severe. It is normal to feel euphoric when you first arrive. A few weeks in, it is normal to feel down and to wonder why everything is so "backwards" in whatever country you are in. Since you are trying to use a foreign language as well, it is common to think that you will never master it and that you have wasted many years in trying to learn it. Then comes a period of adjustment, both cultural and linguistic. By the end of your stay, you are likely to experience a strong wish to go home and remain in Spain simultaneously. After you come home, there is a further adjustment as you try to reconcile what you have experienced with what you have missed by being away. Don't be surprised at feeling culture shock upon coming home - it can actually be harder sometimes to adjust to life back in the U.S. You have been experiencing a completely different lifestyle for an extended period of time. There are definitely things about the United States that you will seemingly notice for the first time. This is normal and you'll readjust soon enough.

The third thing to be aware of is the feeling of having no constraints, of being invulnerable. **Be careful!!** You are away from your own culture, yet unaware of the unwritten rules of behavior in Spain. This liberation can lead to serious lapses in judgment if you do not watch yourself. If you violate actual laws, it can also lead to jail. While you will have to talk to strangers in order to function, you must still use caution and good

judgment in forming relationships. And while you are perhaps unaware of possible risks to your personal safety, they may still exist. You must remain alert. Remember, the same dangers exist in Spain (and all of Europe) as here. In cases where you do not have complete mastery of the language, there could be more dangers! Do not do anything you would not do at home, on campus, or in a big city like New York. Again, **always be careful and use good judgment!**

PERFECTING THE LANGUAGE

Using a foreign language for a long period of time is fun but exhausting. Until you have developed an efficient listening strategy, you pay too much attention to individual words. Relax! About two weeks in, exhaustion hits if you really have forced yourself to speak nothing but Spanish. Then you get over it. Allowing yourself to speak English frequently will not help you learn Spanish, so try to avoid doing so. It's hard to do this with a room full of English speakers; but if enough of you have this goal in mind, you will be able to maintain the use of Spanish almost all the time. The director and assistant expect to be spoken to only in Spanish. However, if there is something you must say and you can't say it in Spanish, of course you should use English. Both are fluent in English.

Everyone says they are going to Spain to "become fluent." Here's how to do it: when you get stuck, which is bound to happen, first, you learn to "talk around" the vocabulary you do not know, because you will never know all the words in Spanish any more than you know all the words in English. Then, you wait for someone to suggest the right word for what you have just tried to describe. People usually do this. Then you end up asking what the word they have just suggested means, and they tell you. Then you have to figure out if that is the right word, unless you recognize it as a word you already knew. Depending on how they explain their word to you, you will probably also have to look up the word in your dictionary to see what it means. Your language growth will occur because of this whole procedure, so welcome it and learn to do it. Eventually, the new words stick, but often not the first time! This is normal, so don't feel discouraged or embarrassed that you have to ask what something is called a million times.

Even if you feel sheepish, you must ask if you do not know what you have been told. Also, don't be afraid to ask someone to slow down. Some Spaniards speak very fast. And, just like in English, there are many different accents even within Madrid, and especially in the southern and northern regions of the country. **Warning:** You will become fluent by using this method, but you may also cement your mistakes. It is important to pay attention to what you learn in class so that you are **accurate** as well as fluent. Having said all this, recognize that speaking English once in a while with a native speaker can be "refreshing"; you can permit yourself an occasional treat without serious qualms (remember: occasional).

Another way you will develop your language skills is by eavesdropping. If you hear something that you don't understand very well, you may be able to have your host family explain it to you later. You can also benefit a lot from watching TV. But remember, if you tune into the middle of a soap opera that has been running for ten years, even though you may understand all the words, you would not understand the situation or the relationships. So be kind to yourself -- you're not going to "get" them in Spanish if you can't even get them in English. Try the world news, movies, dubbed U.S. shows, and documentaries first, or watch a show with someone who has seen the series before and can get you up to speed.

OTHER RESOURCES

Here are some additional resources that I've read about or others have mentioned. I can't vouch for them all, but they seemed worth a look. Happy hunting!

Web Sites

Spain/Madrid

www.city.net/countries/spain/
www.SiSpain.org/
www.elpais.es/

Travel

www.webofculture.com/edu/gestures.html
www.eurotrip.com/
www.hostels.com/

Books

There are many, many books on Spain and Madrid.

Lonely Planet Spain, John Noble (Editor)

Discovering Spain: An Uncommon Guide, Penelope Casas

Streetwise Madrid, Michael Brown

Travelers' Tales: Spain, Lucy McCauley

Homage to Catalonia, George Orwell

The Cambridge Companion to Modern Spanish Culture, David T. Gies (Editor)

Culture Shock: Spain, Marie Louise Graff

The New Spaniards, John Hooper

Spain: The Root and the Flower: An Interpretation of Spain and the Spanish People, John A. Crow

The Spanish Civil War, Gabriele Ranzato

The Odyssey of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade: Americans in the Spanish Civil War, Peter Carroll

The Spanish Inquisition, Henry Kamen