

# Here's my Study Abroad Story

## Jaison Kimura CIEE Language and Culture Alicante, Spain

**Major:** Economics-Accounting with Master's in Finance

**Program:** In my study abroad program, we took classes at the CIEE building next to the local university. Although some students took classes at the university, the majority of my peers took all of their classes at the CIEE offices. We took two classes that focused on speaking and writing Spanish and then chose our elective classes that could range in subject from Spain in the EU to Spanish Cinema. Most of the students in my program lived in homestays in the city that were about a 30-minute bus ride away from the university. However, a handful of students chose to live next to the university in student housing. I personally thought living in the homestays offered a much better location because I lived in the middle of the city which was closer to the nightlife and also closer to the beach. Together as a program, we had a few coordinated day trips to local towns, but we also had weekend trips to Madrid and Granada.



**Typical Day:** Every day I would typically leave my house at 8:15 am to meet up with my friend who lived in the apartment building next to me. We would walk to our bus stop and take a 30 min bus ride to the CIEE center. Monday through Thursday, I had classes that started at 9:00 am. On Mondays and Wednesdays, I would get out of class early at 11:00 am, so I usually took the bus to the local soccer field and played soccer until 2:00 pm because lunch was served around 2:30 pm at my house. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, I finished my classes around 2:30 pm, so I would go home right after class to eat lunch. After lunch, depending on the weather, I would either take a short *siesta* or walk down to the beach with some friends. After the beach, my friends and I would go to a café and do some homework or just go home before dinner was served at 9:30 pm.

**Highlights:** For me, the greatest highlights were the beach, being able to play soccer every day and the people in my program. Alicante is traditionally a vacation spot for many Europeans and I quickly realized why after spring break when it really started getting warm. Living walking distance to the beach was something I had never experienced before. Soccer is an enormous part of my life and having a field close to my homestay had a huge impact on my abroad experience. I built relationships with the local Spaniards I played with every other day. However, the biggest impact on my semester came from the friends I met in my program. It seemed like almost everyone in my program genuinely enjoyed each other's company.

**Challenges:** The biggest challenge for me was adjusting to the Spanish lifestyle and schedule. It is very different from my daily schedule in the US. In Spain I would barely have any breakfast, eat a huge lunch late in the afternoon, and then eat a late dinner around 9:00 pm or 10:00 pm. In the US, I usually have a big breakfast, always eat lunch before 1:00 pm, and eat dinner before 8:00 pm. It was difficult to shift my schedule the first few weeks, but after a while it felt normal.

**Advice:** If you plan on traveling through Europe a lot, do most of it in the first half of the semester or Spring Break. I say this because once you get back from spring break, Alicante is sunny and 80 degrees every day. At the end of the semester, you're going to want to be in Alicante to soak up as much of the city as you can before you have to leave. Traveling is very easy from Alicante. Also Spring Break is at least two weeks long so plan your trips in advance.

