

Universitas Castellae

STUDENT GUIDE TO STUDYING IN VALLADOLID

OVERVIEW

Why Study in Spain?

Studying abroad is among the very best ways to accomplish your personal and professional goals. To master a language such as Spanish, an extended stay in the “target culture” is highly recommended. For Semester Programs at Universitas Castellae in Valladolid, three years of high-school Spanish or one year of university-level Spanish, a 2.5 or better grade-point average (on a 4-point scale) are required. For Universitas Intensive Programs, the requirement is Spanish 101 or the equivalent.

Should I study in Spain if my Spanish is not currently at a high level?

The quality of your experience in Spain will be enriched if you have some command of the language. But, if your Spanish is just functional, you can significantly improve your language abilities if you are patient and work hard at language acquisition. Certainly you will find that Spanish people will often support you when you make an effort to speak. When you get back to your home country, you will be much more fluent in Spanish than you were before.

PLANNING TO STUDY IN VALLADOLID

How do I apply for study abroad in Valladolid?

- Complete the application form with a statement of purpose, personal and background information, and two reference letters.
- Sign the financial agreement document in the application, which authorizes the college or university accounting office to charge the deposit, or simply submit a deposit at Universitas Castellae’s bank account.

Do I need a visa to study in Spain?

Yes, you must have a student visa for stays lasting longer than 90 days. Send in your applications and fees for the visa to the Spanish Consulate nearest to you (e.g. if you live in the Twin Cities, Minnesota, the nearest consulate is in Chicago) at least three months

before your departure. If you need to renew your visa while you are in Spain, you can do so through Universitas Castellae. Don't forget to have a valid passport.

How are my grades and credits transferred?

Students who complete courses in the Universitas Castellae receive a transcript for the "Spanish Culture and Language Course" and a "Certificate of Attendance", including a formal evaluation of their level and the number of hours taken. Grades are assigned and credits earned in accordance with the U.S. system and your home institution regulation.

HOW TO GET FROM THE U.S. TO VALLADOLID

How do I get to Spain from the United States?

It is your responsibility to reserve and buy a ticket to get to Spain in time for you to attend the opening of the session. If you study in an Institution that already participates in these courses, please contact your study abroad advisor to learn of your travel options. For more information about institutions of participating students, please visit our web page: www.universitascastellae.es

How do I get from the Madrid-Barajas Airport to Valladolid?

Valladolid is two hundred kilometres to the northwest of Madrid. Whatever transportation you take from Madrid to Valladolid, you will need to start by catching a taxi from the Madrid airport. When you take a taxi to either the bus or the train station, ask what the fare will be before you get into the taxi, and ask also for a receipt. The fare to the bus or train station will be about 35 euros, and there is an extra charge for baggage.

The most advisable option from Madrid-Barajas Airport is to take a taxi to the "Estación Sur de Autobuses" (Méndez Álvaro Street y parada de metro). The tickets for the bus can be purchased in the ticket windows opposite the main entrance (where taxis drop off). Look for the name "ALSA" for the correct window for the buses to Valladolid. There is a bus from Madrid to Valladolid each hour until twelve-thirty a.m. Bus fare is about 15 euros, and it takes two hours and fifteen minutes to arrive at Valladolid.

It is also possible to take a train. Train fare is about 18 euros, and there are trains at 8:30 AM, 11:30 AM, 1:30 PM, 2:30 PM, 5:30 PM, 6:30 PM and 8:30 PM. It takes two hours and forty-five minutes to get to Valladolid by train. The Ave, the quickest train line, takes approximately one hour to travel from Madrid to Valladolid. Train schedules can be found online at www.renfe.es. The trains depart from Charmartín.

You can also take the metro from Madrid-Barajas Airport to either the bus or train station, but this is only advisable if you have very little luggage. Single metro tickets cost 2 euros. The bus station is at "Méndez Álvaro" stop and train station is at "Chamartín" stop.

When you get to Valladolid, take a taxi to your family's house or to the Residence (the dormitory). The charge to get from either the train or bus station to where you will be staying will be around 5-10 euros.

In all train and bus stations anywhere in Spain, you should be very careful with your luggage. These stations are sometimes problematic in terms of robberies, so always keep an eye on your things.

ONCE YOU GET THERE: ORIENTATION

How do I contact my host family in Valladolid?

You will receive all the information about your host family before you leave the United States. Universitas Castellae will provide you with the address and the phone number of your host family. Your family may offer to pick you up at the Bus or Train Station, if they know the exact time you are going to arrive. You may also call your family once you arrive at the Valladolid bus station. In any case, it is always recommended that you phone your family before coming to Spain, in order to set a first contact.

How can I make phone calls?

You can buy telephone cards (tarjetas telefónicas) from the newspaper stands (quioscos) and tobacco stores (estancos). They sell for either 6 euros or 12 euros. Phone cards have a free number where you will receive detailed information about how to use them. Professors and staff at *Universitas Castellae* will inform you which options are best. The "Sunset" card for 5€ is the cheapest phone card and your best option.

May I make phone calls from my family residence?

Ordinarily, you shouldn't do this. Phone rates are high in Spain and phone calls made on the same account are not itemized on the monthly phone bill. You should make your calls instead from the public telephones and telephone booths.

LIVING IN VALLADOLID

What are classes like in the Universitas Castellae?

Classes have from six to twelve students, depending on current enrollments. Classes require a significant amount of student participation, as frequent use of the language in student-teacher dialogue is one of the most important characteristics of courses at Universitas Castellae. The professors also use photocopied texts and exercises, as well as specific books published by *Universitas Castellae* (you can buy these books when you are in Valladolid) that the students read right in class and then discuss.

What is the system for evaluating courses and instruction at the Universitas Castellae?

At the end of the term, students are distributed a form that asks them to rate professors, methods and materials, following the same system which is used in the United States. Students also have an opportunity to make a general evaluation of the program on another page that asks them about the quality of accommodations, meals, excursions and other activities.

How can I meet other people in Valladolid?

You will meet many other people in the Universitas Castellae. You will get to know your family and the people they introduce to you. Universitas Castellae plans “intercambios” with selected Spanish students so that you have additional opportunity to practice Spanish with a native speaker, and Universitas also organizes regular mixers in various cafes and social venues during the first weeks of the course.

What else can I do in Spain?

Valladolid offers a full program of recreational and cultural activities (ceramics workshops, theatre, regional dance, concerts, performances, etc.). It hosts the Cinema International Festival (SEMINCI) in October, and it has one of the most impressive Holy Weeks in the world. Also renowned is its “Virgen de San Lorenzo” festivity in September, where you can see bullfights, enjoy food and wine stands on the streets, concerts and many other cultural events. Students often take advantage of the opportunity to travel throughout Spain and Europe on their own during academic breaks and between semesters. Valladolid offers many facilities to travel by bus, train or plane (it has its own airport close to the city) to any part of the country. Valladolid is an important distribution area for people and merchandise in the Northwest of Spain. It is also a connection point with the middle of the country (Madrid), France (through the Basque provinces) and Portugal (Oporto and Lisbon). If you travel by plane, you may fly to Paris, Belgium, Barcelona, London, Palma de Mallorca, and other destinations depending on the season. For more information on any of these options, you can go to the Casa de Cultura, in the calle Torrecilla.

Do I have access to computers?

Yes. Universitas Castellae offers access to a computer lab with many units, word processing programs and electronic mail. Students have an ample schedule for computer use during the day. Also available is a printer for copying important documents. All Universitas classrooms and buildings have WiFi.

What can I do if for some reason my host family and I don't get along?

The staff of the Universitas Castellae will do its best to place you in a family that suits your needs and expectations. If something in your housing situation is not right with you, speak immediately with your host family. If this does not solve the problem, consult with Eva Higuero and she can relocate you with another family if necessary.

What are the Spanish people like?

To give you an idea of general attitudes among the Spanish people, here are some observations, although of course there are exceptions.

Spanish people are generally friendly, helpful, and individualistic. They enjoy conversation and giving advice. They often consider it their duty to correct mistakes. Appearance is important: the Spanish are concerned with clothing. Men usually dress conservatively, avoiding flashy or bright colours. Women try to be stylish and children are dressed as nicely as possible.

The family is very important in Spain. The average family has two children. The father is traditionally the undisputed head of the home, while the mother makes the decisions behind the scenes (and in that sense could be considered the true head of the household). Generally the mother is responsible for caring for the house and the children.

Spain has historically been a Roman Catholic nation and 99% of the people are baptized members of the Church. All aspects of Spanish life are influenced by deep-rooted Catholic traditions, even though these days observation of faith is less obvious than in the past.

What is the food like?

Breakfast is a light repast of coffee or hot chocolate, bread and jam (or pastries called *churros* when one eats breakfast in a café). The most substantial meal is the *comida*, served at about 2:00 p.m., and it includes soup and/or salad, fish, a main dish and fresh fruit. Wine and bread usually accompany this meal. At 9:00 or 10:00 p.m., a less substantial meal, *cena*, is served. When you eat meals at your host family's table, it would be appropriate to try all the food served, even if just a little bit, out of appreciation and consideration for the cooking of your host mother.

What other fun things can I do in Valladolid?

There are soccer games on TV, which become a real social occasion in the bars where many fans tend to crowd and watch the match. Valladolid has at least a team in the First Division in many sports (soccer, basketball, handball...). People often play board games and cards in the bars. You can attend bullfights, which are considered more art and social ritual than sport.

The discussion meetings in cafes and bars are called *tertulias*. People enjoy just walking about, talking and visiting with friends until around midnight.

How can I travel throughout Spain and the rest of Europe?

In Spain, you can take advantage of RENFE, the national train system. Trains and buses connect most of the cities and rural areas in the country. You can buy bus tickets at the Estación de Autobuses or Estación Campo Grande (train station) in Valladolid. To travel through Europe, purchase a Eurorail pass. You also have the chance to reserve tickets by Internet.

Other interesting things about living in Spain

The weather in Valladolid, which is a city situated on a mesa, is dry. Valladolid has cold winters (temperatures can reach 5 degrees Celsius below zero) and hot summers (between 25 and 30 degrees Celsius). If you are planning to come in winter, you should bring warm clothes (November is usually a rainy month, so it would be convenient to have appropriate rainclothes). Spring has a really nice weather, with temperatures between 15 and 20 degrees Celsius; fall is usually colder, although temperatures are usually between 10 and 15 degrees Celsius until November).

Spanish electricity has a different voltage, so if you are going to bring your own electric appliances, you can buy a converter in Spain (they aren't expensive and they work better than United States converters).

Schedules in Spain are different than American. Stores usually open from 10.00 to 14.00 in the morning, and from 17.30 to 20.00 in the afternoon. During the summer, Spanish people usually have "siesta", which is a short nap after the main meal. On Sundays (which is an important celebration day), stores are closed. But, there are some big malls open the whole week. One of the most important department stores is "El Corte Inglés", located close to the Plaza Mayor, in the middle of Valladolid.

Some helpful numbers and addresses

TO TRAVEL THROUGHOUT SPAIN OR ABROAD

RENFE (Trains): 902 240202

Estación de autobuses (Bus Station): 983236308

Aeropuerto (Valladolid Airport): 983 415400

FOR TOURIST INFORMATION

Oficina Municipal de Turismo, Calle Santiago

FOR LIBRARIES

Biblioteca Pública de Valladolid, Plaza de la Trinidad.

Schedule: Monday to Friday from 8:00 to 21:45

Saturday from 8:00 to 14:45

(The Public Library of Valladolid is really close to *Universitas Castellae*; it is the biggest library of Castilla-León. You can access it freely by getting a library user card)