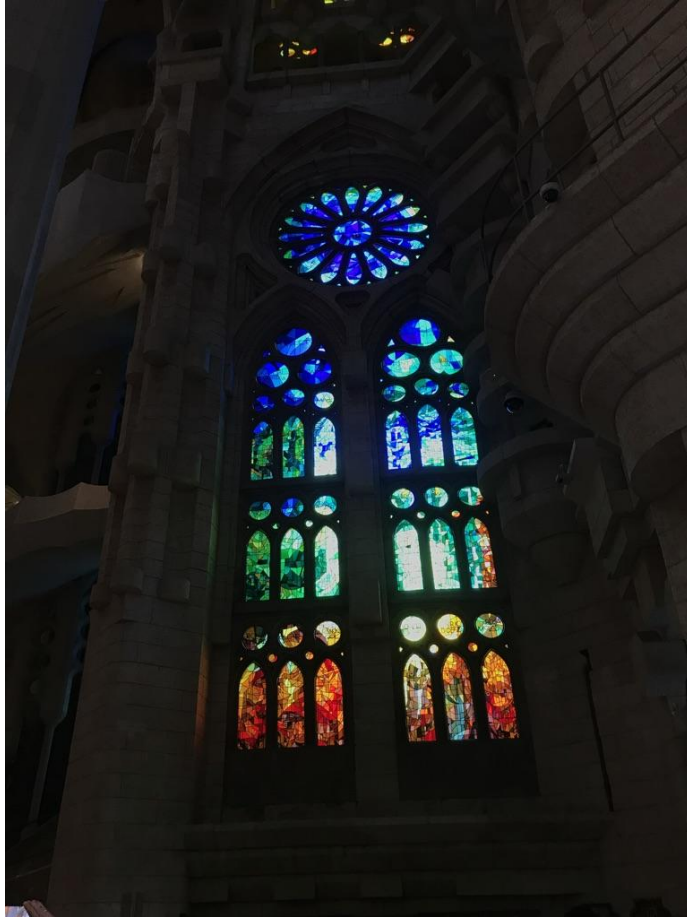


From excursions for tapas with my class to enjoying the panoramic views from the Alhambra to walking through the pristine Parque Retiro, the Granada travel study program was an inundation of culture. Having recently returned home, it is nostalgic to recall my 5 weeks in Spain that were filled with wonderful memories and fascinating academic experiences.

After arriving in Barcelona, our journey began. We spent a total of one week in Barcelona and Madrid and 4 weeks in the southern part of Spain—Andalucia—in Granada. It was fascinating to be exposed to the vastly different culture and dialect that exists just within Spain: Spain is incredibly diverse in terms of people, language, and customs. For example, in Barcelona, part of Catalonia, many people speak Catalan whereas in Andalucia, people speak mainly Spanish but with distinct pronunciation of different sounds.

Our trip was packed with both excursions to different cities in Spain, but also a great deal of museums, churches/cathedrals, and other historic sites. In Barcelona, this included the magical Sagrada Familia and the captivating Pedrera. La Sagrada Familia, a basilica, consists of huge stained glass windows and lofty ceilings. Light streams in and dances throughout the halls, a stark contrast to so many Gothic and Baroque religious sites. We also began classes in Barcelona, and it was wonderful that my history courses intertwined with the sites we visited – the presence of lasting history in Spain is very prevalent.





La Sagrada Familia in Barcelona. Photos cannot accurately represent how the light filters through the walls and windows!

In Madrid, we were fortunate to visit two museums: El Prado and El Museo Reina Sofía. Both of these museums included notable pieces of art such as El 3 de Mayo by Goya and Guernica by Picasso. Later on in my course work, we studied these pieces of art and connected them to the historical movements that provoked them. We also had some free time in Madrid to explore, which ended up being one of my favorite days in Spain! My classmates and I ventured to el barrio de las letras, a street in Madrid that commemorates Spanish authors and their works. On the streets, visitors can see different quotes from literary works, and different plaques line the buildings noting which authors lived in each building. This was a lively area filled with more

locals than tourists, plenty of tapas restaurants, and live music.



A quote from *Don Quijote* inscribed in the sidewalk of Madrid, barrio de las letras

We ended our time in Madrid by exploring Parque Retiro, a huge greenspace filled with statues, fountains, a "crystal palace" and even a mini lake. And of course, we had to get some fresh churros con chocolate. After Madrid, we moved on to Granada in the South of Spain.





Once in Granada, we settled into a more consistent routine of class, meals, and exploration of our surroundings. Granada is normally a university city, filled with the thousands of students that attend the University of Granada. However, they were gone for vacation, and Granada was quite quiet. Additionally, we quickly learned about the amazing work life balance that many Spaniards follow and live by. In July and August, most businesses close for a month. In fact, it is required that Spaniards take a vacation. Further, Spaniards observe siesta. During the hours of approximately 2-7pm, many businesses also close. During this time us students would work on homework or rest, as it was so hot outside!

In Granada, we were able to visit the Alhambra, a historical Moorish palace. The Alhambra contained incredible scenic points, a beautiful garden, and a rich history of its construction. Here, we learned about the clever construction of rooms to appear as optical illusions, and the importance of water features. As we walked through Generalife, the large gardens, the sun began to lower and the entire Albaicín gleamed in front of us. It was a fantastic sight to see right in our Granada backyard!



During our weekends we were able to take excursions to nearby cities, and during the following weeks we explored Granada in greater detail. We attended a flamenco show and flamenco lessons, celebrated birthdays in our classes with cake from the local panadería, and were able to connect with our professors every afternoon for office hours and help with assignments.

My 5 weeks in Spain were an incredible way to experience a new culture and country while also completing my Spanish minor and improving my language capabilities, and I am so glad I was able to attend. I can't wait to return to Spain to explore more!



The beautiful waters of Nerja!



A weekend program excursion to Córdoba.



The incredible Plaza de España in the morning light.