



Tips on Studying Abroad at the Universidad Politécnica de Valencia in Spain

Want to know what it's like to study abroad? Want to know what your peers think? Your fellow Georgia Tech students who have previously gone on this exchange program gave their opinions so that future participants have the inside scoop on their host institution and host country.

Preparation & Getting Started

- I would have gotten many diverse classes approved before going.
- I chose my program because I knew that I really wanted to learn Spanish and to experience a new culture.
- Valencia was the only place that CEE majors could go in Spain, so that's where I went. I in no way regret not being in Barcelona or Madrid. Valencia has a lot to offer including a smaller, more familiar and authentic Spanish city.
- Valencia is definitely not small. It is the 3rd largest city in Spain, so don't worry about running out of things to do or being bored. From the City of Arts and Sciences, the beach, and the historical center it really does stand out as an original and lively city.

Housing

- Use your free time during the 2-week intensive language course to go apartment hunting.
- Use <http://valencia.loquo.com/> to find apartments (similar to Craigslist)
- For maximum cultural immersion, make it a priority to live with Spanish people who will speak Spanish. That is the number-one reason that my Spanish has improved.
- Valencia is pretty cheap compared to Atlanta. I lived in a great, well-located piso that cost just under \$300 a month per inhabitant with gastos (utilities) included.

Best areas to live in:

- MESAELLA: 15 minute walk to campus, central to attractions, and near metro stations
- Plaza Honduras: student entertainment hub, near campus and Tarongers station
- Benimaclet: lots of students and near both red and blue lines.

Worst areas to live in:

- Malva-Rossa and parts of the city along the green line (Neptu to Ayora)
- I lived in an apartment with three other foreign students: a Mexican, an Austrian, and a French guy. The majority of the time we spoke Spanish at home.

Classes

- The intensive language course is one of the best decisions I've made in Spain—it's great for meeting everyone and getting settled into life. You'll only have class until about 1 or 2 everyday for 2 weeks, so the afternoons and weekends are free. Don't be intimidated by your placement in the language course—it helps you improve.
- A 6 out of 10 is the equivalent of a C at GT
- Final exams are worth at least 50% of your grade and not much homework is given.
- Avoid classes taught in Valencian/Catalan
- Make sure to take classes at the appropriate level
- Laboratories at the university are taught in Spanish. I would say in general, it is not necessary to speak Spanish to attend UPV, however it is quite helpful in some situations and it will help you make more of the experience.
- I would recommend the automation and control class and the management course. The automation class was very hands on and I really learned a lot. The management class was interesting and I had a really nice professor. The project course was easy but it required a lot of busy work and I did not learn so much. I would definitely not recommend Thermodynamics unless it is an absolute major requirement, and even then I would think twice about taking it at UPV. The teacher was bad, the class only met a few times so it was impossible to use the class to learn the material, there was NO book, and on top of it all the final was really hard.
- In general I think the academic quality was slightly below GT standards. The Spanish courses were better than the English courses, because the professors do not speak English very well. The professors were pretty nice and approachable.
- At UPV there is generally no homework or assignments except for the labs and the labs don't count towards your final grade, however you are required to go to them and complete the assignments. The majority of your grade is weighted on the final exams, which are very specific and at times do not relate to inherit, core material of the actual class.



Lifestyle

- Spanish people are fun and loud and will give you the best cultural immersion, but even hanging out with people from non-English speaking countries usually means you will talk in Spanish, even if they know English very well.
- Valencia is a great city with lots of wonderful parks to run or ride bikes in, a beautiful center, nice beaches, and lots of very cultural festivals. Most of my social life involved going out with friends, hanging out in parks or on the beach, and traveling around.
- I spent most of my time hanging out with other international students. There were only a few other Americans at my university, while there were several thousand exchange students from all over Europe.
- The students from Valencia are not so interested in getting to know foreign students for two reasons: 1. there are so many exchange students and 2. many of the students from Valencia speak mostly Valenciano. On the other hand, students from other parts of Spain feel the same way in Valencia. Therefore I did make several Spanish friends from Andalucia and Galicia.
- Everyone is very friendly and usually just as scared/nervous/excited as you are, so they are eager to get to know you. I would recommend going to the intensive language courses in Gandia before UPV starts. It is a good way to meet people before you arrive, develop language skills, and receive credit. I did not participate in this, but in many ways I wish that I had.

Definitely go to:

- Plaza Honduras has lots of clubs
- Radio City for its Tuesday night Flamenco shows
- The Toucan (Pollo y Pelleron sp?)



Packing

- Use a good-quality hiking backpack (45 Liter capacity to be carried on planes)
- Button-up shirts for males (no T-shirts)
- Take versatile clothing
- Locals do not wear shorts even though it's hot
- Dark track jacket
- Laptop and flash drive
- A towel (or Packtowl which is very absorbent)
- Just remember that whatever you forget, you can buy when you get there. I did bring toiletries such as a large bottle of shampoo, and would recommend you do the same. I liked this idea because most hygiene products are more expensive in Europe and it will take up space in your suitcase on your way over that will be empty when you return, forcing you to save some space for the things that you will inevitably accumulate while abroad.

Finances

- I had only a checking account/ ATM card. If I did again, I would make sure to have a visa credit card for emergencies.



Cultural Differences

- Valencia is beautiful, with huge parks, a beautiful city center, and a wonderful beach. The weather is nice too, though be forewarned the Spanish have never heard of a/c or heating. There is some kind of party or festival almost every weekend. In the spring, the highlight is the Las Fallas festival. Every neighborhood builds a paper mache statue as tall as the buildings. Throughout the month of March, there are daily fireworks, huge block parties, and big parades. As the grand finale, each neighborhood burns their statue bonfire style. It is amazing....

Food

- Bodega Fila/Labrador on Wednesdays for tapas
- Friend's Doner-Kebab has Turkish style "fast food"
- Café Paris
- Horchata (sweet non-alcoholic drink) & fartons (sweetened bread sticks) at Horchateria del Siglo or at Daniel
- Paella—the best is homemade
- Eating out can be expensive; go to one of the many small café-bars for lunch and you can get a meal for about 10 euros.
- We cooked all of our own or got together with friends and cooked.
- Grocery stores (Mercadona is the most popular) and has prices comparable to the USA. Dining out can get expensive, but is in general cheaper to do so in Valencia than in other European cities.
- There are many options including Toni's which offers, pizza, salad, desert & drink for 3.50 EUR.



Transportation & Travel

- You'll not be able to know the finals schedule before you get here, so plan on your visa (if you haven't gotten it yet) for being the maximum allowable 180 days after your arrival in Spain.
- Visa: Make sure to set up an appointment online ASAP. If you have trouble talking to the people at the consulate, just ask for Ricardo and give them your name and number. He was very helpful and was able to squeeze me in earlier than I had.
- Spain is best experienced by car, so try to befriend someone with a car.
- Spain is very diverse, so it's worth traveling within the country.
- The metro is easier to use than buses.
- I traveled to Morocco, Germany, Austria, Czech Republic, and Italy, as well as, a bit in Spain. Spain is a great country, go see it first! Then if you have time and money, there are a lot of cheap airlines in Europe, and hostels are not too expensive.
- I would use skyscanner.net for within Europe travel and STA for going from the US to Europe
- The train and bus system is very good, but cuts off at 11pm every night.
- There are night buses available, but they do not come very frequently. The metro goes directly to and from the Valencia airport (VLC)
- The buses are usually cheaper and faster than the trains. The bus station is located at the "Túria" yellow line metro stop.

Communication

- I had a cell phone, so my friends and family mostly called me.

Participant Profiles

Please see information of contributing students below. If a blog or website is listed, feel free to take a look! Also, if an e-mail address is listed, you may contact that student if you have any questions about their study abroad experience.

ECE, Spring 2007

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* These comments do not reflect the views of GT's Office of International Education. They are based on students' individual opinions and are, therefore, not necessarily representative of all student experi-