

# Buenos días, Sevilla!

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Within a mere 13 days, the ICS Spring 2017 students have moved into our host homes and have started our lives here in Seville. We have experienced the most incredible welcome weekend, completed our first week of school, and have had our first weekend free to explore the city for ourselves. I am one of the lucky students here at ICS to experience such an incredible first week and a half of fun, learning, and immersion into such a rich and lovable culture.



Las Setas (The Flat-topped Mushrooms), a must see in the middle of Seville. An amazing sculpture and walkway looking over the whole city with a 360 degree view.

When I arrived at the airport at 8 A.M. in Madrid to catch my flight to Seville, I didn't know what to think. It was hard to navigate a new airport so early in the morning. I had slept for one hour on the plane and my adrenaline was the only thing keeping me going until I arrived at my host home. The minute I walked into my host home, I fell in love with Seville. It was really that

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simple. My host mother gave me a kiss on both cheeks and was so happy to see me. I knew I was home. All the students were settling in and we all unpacked our suitcases. I met my amazing roommate and we rested up for our first day of orientation the following morning.



My usual breakfast every morning. Not pictured: my cup of coffee.

Orientation definitely helped me get on the right track to fitting in with the Spanish culture. I learned what to expect for the next three and a half months of my stay. The entire week after orientation was truly magical. The school has taken us to so many places already; I can't believe we haven't even covered a fraction of what Seville has to offer.

There were definitely a few highlights throughout the first weekend here. The Flamenco show at the Museum of Flamenco Dance was by far my favorite part of my short stay in Seville so far. These Flamenco dancers, singers, and musicians, were some of the most talented people I have had the pleasure to see on stage. All the seats were so close you could see and hear every detail of these beautiful artists! There was both a woman and a man as the dancers for this one hour show. The concentration and intentions of these dancers were inspirational. I want to try every day, in whatever I may be doing, to put in as much work and love as these dancers did during the show. The male dancer had put water in his hair and when he swung his head while dancing, the water sprayed in a beautiful crown above his head. Everyone watching was mesmerized by this magic as well as the beautiful clothing on stage. Before I came to Spain, I never appreciated Flamenco as much as I do now. I am so excited to start my Flamenco dance classes at ICS to be able to prepare for dancing at the **FERIA**.



The beautiful and talented **MARIA**. She blew me away.

If my life hadn't already felt like paradise enough, the first week of school went by and at the end of classes on Thursday, the school took us on a boat ride along the Guadalquivir River. The students were divided into 3 different party boats and we plugged in our phones to listen to our favorite music. The river was so beautiful at night with the reflections of the city. It was like the water and glistening lights were singing a song just for us. The music was loud, the weather was perfect, and our boat driver moved the tables so we had plenty of room to dance. I loved everyone on my boat and we had such an amazing time showing each other our music, from Spanish to EDM (Electronic Dance Music). We were able to enjoy life on the river for a little over an hour and I will never forget dancing to my heart's content on a boat, in a river in Spain, with friends that I know I'll keep forever.

It may just sound like life has been one big party for the students at ICS, and to be honest, it kind of has been. But we also came here to study, I know, it's hard to believe that we can focus while being in the beautiful Seville. Thankfully, we're blessed with professors and faculty that make us feel right where we belong, who teach us things about the world that I will never forget. The classes at ICS range from business, to Culture and Society of Spain, to Spanish on all levels. Some students are even given the chance to learn at the University of Seville, right down the street. At this school, students who already speak Spanish very sufficiently are able to learn subjects such as math with other locals and Spanish speakers. As for me, I am in Intermediate Spanish at the ICS. I love the class size! I am able to focus and really learn day by day real life phrases and grammar that are relevant to what I need to learn in order to sound a little less American than I do now. I am learning to speak like a real Spanish local! In the first week I

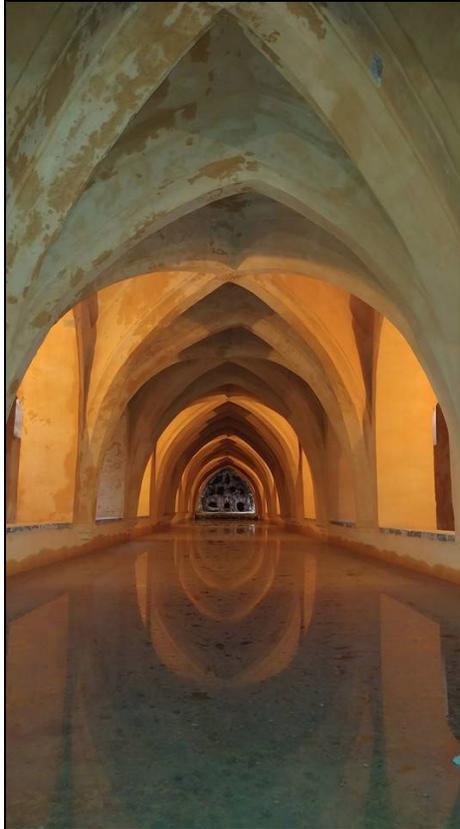
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learned so much with my professor, Luiz. A lot of my best friends from the school are in my class so it's awesome that I get to learn with them during the day and then go out with them at night. The nightlife in Seville is unlike anything I have ever seen. People here are quite the night owls, which definitely fits in with my schedule. I love how lively the streets are and how much people honor quality time with friends and family in Spain. Before going out for our night on the town, my friends and I had to explore some of the most amazing restaurants. When someone you know comes to Spain for the first time, have them try the local, homemade food like the kind my host mother makes. It's to die for. After that, tell them they have to go to Maccheroni and Co. to get the most amazing Italian food in Seville. I know it sounds ridiculous to get Italian food here in SPAIN, but after a couple weeks of an incredibly healthy diet, it was time to get some nice, oily carbs in my system. All the restaurants in the center of Seville are outstanding and no one can look past the coffee shops--even the Dunkin' Donuts here is better!



Me and my girls!

To end an amazing [almost] two weeks in Seville, **ESPANA**, the ICS students and faculty took our first cultural Friday visit to the castle of **ALCAZAR**. We saw what the art of Spain really has to offer the whole world and people from all cultures. We were in the very room that Isabel and Ferdinand birthed their first child. We stood in the royal gardens, explored the living quarters, and admired the sacred spiritual places of the people who stood there before us. We learned that the reason why this castle is important is due to the "gaspacho" of art styles within the premises. There are Roman, Christian, Moorish, Arab, and Jewish influences within the quarters. The beloved Judy Cotter showed us around and told us that this mixture of art is called Mudejar. Seeing a wall with Moorish architecture and art above with Gothic arches right underneath is a truly breathtaking view. I am so excited for our other cultural visits to see the beauties of the land of Spain, my new second home.



Bathhouses in the **ALCAZAR**. Rather than fasting or doing out-of-body religious experiences, the people who lived in **ALCAZAR** honored beautiful gardens and luxuries instead. I'm in!



A handful of the group on our trip to **ALCAZAR**. My new favorite people.

As you can tell, I am absolutely exhausted from our first [almost] two weeks here!!! I could not be more happy and anxious to see how the next 3 months pan out. I am excited to know myself

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and the world a little better than before. I am so excited to be able to blog about the students' experiences in Seville! We will have so many stories and so much excitement to share in the next coming weeks. My life has already been enhanced immensely and I hear it only gets better from here. Welcome to the ICS blog, and please stay tuned for next week's post! Carpe Diem!