

Welcome to Sevilla!

**By Taylor Gibbs
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The weeks leading up to coming to Sevilla were mildly stressful but also super exciting. I was constantly reading articles about Sevilla, Spain, and other places that I plan on visiting. I was also making a packing list, checking that it all made it into my suitcase, and then redoing the whole thing when it weighed too much.

My cat, Lily, also enjoyed helping me pack. Everyone was asking me if I was nervous and a little bit of me was, but for the most part, I was just ecstatic to be coming to Europe for the first time which has been a lifetime dream of mine. It wasn't until about a week before I left that I started to mildly freak out. What was I getting myself into? Going halfway across the world to a country that speaks a language I barely know. Also, I didn't know anyone else who was going to this program, so I would be completely alone. Still, I knew that this was something I wanted to do and the only reason I was freaking out was because it was a new experience. After a

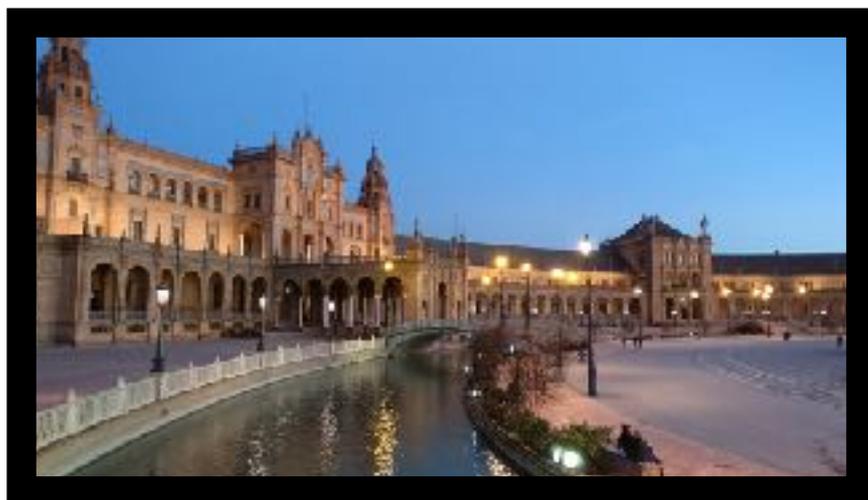


thoroughly stressful 20+ hours of traveling, I finally made it to Sevilla and was greeted by Lisa Dolan, Director of Student Affairs at the ICS. It was nice to see a friendly face that was there to make sure I made it to my family okay. My first encounter with the Andalusian Spanish was with the taxi driver. He didn't try to talk to me but did take a call during the drive and I was immediately overwhelmed because I could not understand a single word he said. This was going to be a lot harder than I thought.

The door to my host family's apartment was waiting open for me when I arrived, and I was greeted with the traditional Spanish greeting by my house mother. Thankfully my roommate was already there and was able to help me understand my house mother since she speaks no English. The rest of the day I pretty much spent in my room unpacking, mostly because I was too nervous to try out my Spanish skills.

The next day started Welcome Week, a week full of fun activities the school puts on to welcome all of the students to Spain. All the students met at the school and we had a short Orientation on Spain and what to expect and we also took a Spanish placement test.

After that, we started the fun activities of eating yummy Spanish food and meeting the other students. I soon found out that quite a few students were from Missouri as well and it allowed me to make instant connections with people. After the little party, a few students and I decided to go and explore before we had to be back to our host families for lunch. El Parque Maria Luisa is only a minute or two from the school and so it was the first thing we happened upon. The beautiful palm trees were one of the first things that called our attention. Up ahead we saw the beautiful tower of a building piercing the sky and so we went to check it out and were greeted by the huge, magnificent building that is La Plaza de España.



I feel like coming upon this building was my first encounter with Spain I was expecting. Its beautiful structure simply made me speechless. The rest of welcome week was filled with so many activities. We toured the center of Sevilla, watched belly dancing and Flamenco, ate delicious Spanish food like tapas and churros, and even took a river cruise down the Guadalquivir river. It was time spent getting to know new friends, a new city, and a new culture. Every moment was well spent. Even though our feet hurt a little by the end of the week the time spent was definitely well worth it!

