

Vegan While Abroad

By Rachel Ann Crawford

Let's talk about the V-word... Veganism. Veganism is the practice of abstaining from the use of animal products, particularly in diet. What makes veganism different from vegetarianism is vegans omit animal byproducts (milk, eggs, etc.) from one's diet, thus refraining from animal products entirely.

A lifestyle like this can definitely lead to a lot of complications when eating out of one's home, mostly if one is studying abroad. I myself was a bit scared about the idea of trying to make veganism work while living in a country like Spain. Spain is known for its rich culinary cuisine like paella and jamón; these and many others are heavy in non-plant-based ingredients. Though I knew that veganism was almost non-existent in Spain, I was not going to let that ruin my experience. And so far, my experience AND diet have not been ruined.

What is great about study abroad is your program does its best to accommodate your lifestyle. When you fill out your housing forms, many programs (including mine at ICS) will ask you your dietary restrictions so that your host family can cook for you. Gina De los Santos, ICS's Housing Director, even went as far as to contact me about my degree of sensitivity toward said products. Once I informed her of my severity, she immediately told me that she would accommodate me in any way. She even paired me with my roommate, Sam who, is a vegetarian.



After arriving in Seville, my host mother was basically in the know on what to cook. At the start, we both thought that her food was going to be... well... underwhelming. But every single meal has been an absolute surprise. My roommate and I have really been amazed at how good her cooking has been. What's even cooler is that while we eat lunch she will sit down with her pen and miniature notepad to watch a cooking show with us, so she can recreate that day's dish. She will watch it and tell us in Spanish that she would take this ingredient out or would use this ingredient instead to make it vegan. It is



pretty cool, or in español: *es muy guay*.

As for *tapas* my roommate and I have become very attached to *patitas fritas*, which are basically Spain's version of French fries (only better). Though for me I have come to love *espinacas con garbanzos* (spinach and garbanzo beans). Whenever we go out to eat those two items are always on my mind. Spain also has ratatouille (yes, just like the movie) and sautéed mushrooms that can be ordered as a tapa or as a meal ,as well. Also, a lot of study abroad courses offer cooking classes. Thankfully, my program has been really accommodating toward me and

my roommate. The program even made a veggie paella dish for us to cook so we weren't left out of the class. It's things like these that make study abroad even better. Furthermore, if you are a vegan or vegetarian traveler doing some research and just asking the waiter or program to adjust to your preferences will go a long way. Just always remember, you are doing something that most people can only dream about. Enjoy yourself even when the food gets tough!