

GET LOST WITH ME

by ALEXA GRAYSON, *Study Abroad*

As I searched for a university to attend, I held onto a wistful thought at the center of my mind: I must go abroad. I wanted to choose a school that would open up doors for me to go wherever I wanted in the world. After 18 years of living in the United States, my wanderlust reached a point of no return. At the start of senior year, when I was convinced I wanted to go to university in the United Kingdom, my mom begged me to choose somewhere in the States. I agreed to visit Northeastern. I recall seeing the Global Experience Office tabling and asking them, “where exactly could one go abroad?” The Ambassador went on to explain 101 different programs and opportunities Northeastern offered. “Okay, fine,” I said to my mother. It was Northeastern or London, and no in between. Once I submitted my early decision application, my life as I knew it would never be the same.

I chose to major in international affairs and human services because I’m passionate about advocacy and social change. I wanted to know that it was an option to work and study internationally and found it essential for me to immerse myself in other cultures. I had an itch to go, go, go, and embark on a journey into the unknown. That’s precisely what my life was like when I studied abroad in Barcelona, Spain from January to late April, so consider this article a flight to all the places I’ve been, spots I’ve seen, and a sneak peak into the mystical beauty of Spain.



Frankly, discovering the little streets, secret passageways, bright street murals, and small boutique pop-up shops was invigorating for me. I spent my first month wandering around like a five-year-old at Disneyland, exploring everything, snapping photos with an eager, youthful smile plastered onto my face 24/7. I was alone a lot at first as I didn’t meet my core group of friends until later into my travels, but I loved it. I had the opportunity to figure out who I was in the context of a whole new city rich in diversity, culture and life.

There was never a dull moment when walking down Passeig de Gracia or grabbing an ice cream cone while walking along Barceloneta beach. The streets came alive with vibrant murals, shops and dazzling architecture. What turned into days and nights of meeting new people at student events early on, turned into a group of 30 of us



together at a beach festival, dancing under the fireworks and being grateful that we had found one another.

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Our next destination on this trip would be Madrid, where I visited a close Northeastern friend of mine. It was incredulous that we went from meeting on the first day of freshman year in line at IV to roaming the streets of Madrid and

basking in the warmth of a Spanish winter. In Madrid, we went to the Palacio Real de Madrid (the Royal Palace of Madrid), ate a lot of churros and embarked on the effervescent exploration of Madrid’s illuminating nightlife.

January soon turned into February, which meant it was Carnival season. If there’s one thing you should know about me is that I love festivals. Carnival was the vibrant, majestic, cultural masterpiece that I had hoped for. I went with a group of other students and hopped on a bus to Sitges, a beach town 45 minutes outside of Barcelona. In Sitges we hung out at the beach until sunset, where hundreds of thousands of us gathered to watch an amalgamation of people in gorgeous, vibrant outfits dancing through the streets. The parade turned into a huge party that us students went to celebrate at afterwards, making new friends and rejoicing in the festivities.



Our next stop was spring break, when I signed up for a trip through the South of Spain, joining 70 other students to experience Andalucía. The first stop was Cordoba, a tiny city with a rich mix of ancient Roman, Moorish and Spanish culture, where we spent the morning eating and shopping. Next, we arrived in Sevilla, home to the Alcazar and flamenco shows. I can't recall a time in my life when I felt as safe as I did in Sevilla, especially as a woman wandering alone. I took myself on a field trip, where I walked among the Moorish streets and admired the stunning architecture.

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After we went to Seville, we made our way to Malaga, which is home to Alcazaba, a palatial fortress built nearly one thousand years ago during the Muslim-ruled Al-Andalus era in Malaga's history. In Malaga, which lies alongside the Mediterranean Sea, I joined some others on my trip for a beautiful catamaran sunset cruise.

From Malaga, we embarked on a day trip to none other than Gibraltar, a British-owned region at the southern tip of Spain, where you could look out and see Morocco distantly from the horizon. In Gibraltar, we hiked and got to see the Barbary Macaques monkeys, one of whom sat on my best friend's shoulders.

In June, I came back to Barcelona to visit my friends I made there and we ended up going back to Sitges for the Pride parade. It was one giant dance party with thousands of people illuminating the beach town.

These stories are only a glimpse into what I was able to experience. Each day was a new adventure — from beach runs, sunset picnics, nights-out, and festivals — studying abroad was the gift that kept on giving. Beyond this, I got the chance to meet students from all over the world and learn about different cultures. Together, who knows? Maybe you'll soon be boarding a flight to see it for yourself.

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