

# VALENCIA



## PROGRAM INFORMATION HANDBOOK

### Summer



University at Albany  
State University of New York



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As the time to depart quickly approaches, you will find you have a million things to do. You have an overwhelming amount of paperwork to fill out, materials to read, and details to take care of. **Your first step should be to read this handbook.** It will be your guide before, during, and perhaps after your time in Spain.

**Pay particular attention to the sections on Registration and Housing.**

If you have any questions during your preparations, please call **Renée Lucier DeCelle** at the Albany office: **(518) 591-8170**. We will do our best to help you complete all of the necessary forms and answer any questions for you. ¡Buena Suerte!

### **\*\*\*IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS\*\*\***

An optional group flight will be arranged for this program. It usually departs from a NYC-area airport (JFK or Newark). A representative from Valencia will meet the group flight and take you by bus to Valencia. **If you plan on taking the group flight, reserve your seat with the TRAVEL AGENT IMMEDIATELY!**

**All students should plan to be in Madrid on the date the group flight arrives. This is considered the beginning date of the program, and orientation will begin that day.** If you are traveling beforehand, be sure to give yourself enough time to get to Madrid by the arrival date. The night in Madrid and the trip to Valencia with the group is part of your program fee – so plan to take advantage! If you are making your own flight arrangements, be sure to contact Renée Lucier DeCelle in Albany before you leave to let us know whether you plan to meet the group at the airport in Madrid, at the hostel in Madrid, or in Valencia.

**U.S. citizens do NOT need a student visa to participate on the Valencia SUMMER program.** You do need a passport, which you should get right away.

This handbook and the General Information Handbook contain very important information that you will need before, during, and after your time in Spain.

## IMPORTANT NUMBERS & ADDRESSES

The program is administered by coordinators in Albany and in Valencia. Your main contacts will be **Cesar Ribas** at the AIP Office in Valencia or **Renée Lucier DeCelle** at the University at Albany. Someone from the AIP office is on call every day and will have a cell phone so you will be able to reach them. All members of the AIP staff speak English so you will not have a problem explaining your situation or asking for help. If you should need to contact Albany, we are available from 8:30 to 5:00, Monday through Friday; during the summer our hours are 8:30 to 4:00. You can also leave a voice mail or e-mail message at any time.

**NOTE:** 011 is the international code for direct dialing overseas from the States; 34 is the country code for Spain; and 96 is the city code for Valencia. Anyone calling from the States will need to know this.

### **Albany Coordinator:**

Ms. Renée Lucier DeCelle, Assistant Director  
Office of International Education, Science Library G-40  
University at Albany, SUNY  
Telephone: (518) 591-8170  
e-mail: [rlucier@uamail.albany.edu](mailto:rlucier@uamail.albany.edu)  
University at Albany web site:  
Office of International Education web site:  
(for registration and other important info)

Fax: (518) 591-8171  
office e-mail: [studyabroad@albany.edu](mailto:studyabroad@albany.edu)  
[www.albany.edu](http://www.albany.edu)  
[www.albany.edu/studyabroad](http://www.albany.edu/studyabroad)

### **Resident Director in Valencia:**

Cesar Ribas  
AIP Language Institute  
C/ El bachiller, 7  
46010 Valencia  
Telephone:  
Fax:

011-34-96-339-1566  
011-34-96-360-0014

### **AIP's emergency cell phone:**

**011-34-667 400210** (Miguel Angel)

### **Send Mail To:**

Your Name  
c/o AIP Language Institute  
c/El bachiller, 7  
46010 Valencia, Spain

### **Numbers in Madrid:**

#### **United States Embassy**

Serrano, 75

91-577-4000

#### **American Express**

Plaza de las Cortes, 2

91-572-0303

#### **British-American Medical Unit**

Plaza Marques de Salamanca, número 9, bajo

91-431-2229

91-435-1595

## **SPAIN**

### **The Country**

Many think of Spain as the country of flamenco dancers and bullfights, siestas and sangria, a slow-paced place filled with sun-kissed, smiling people. It is all this and much, much more. It is a modern country filled with contrasts and diversity. Booming and bustling cities with tall office buildings and extensive metros are surrounded by small agricultural towns with narrow, winding streets. While walking along a busy city boulevard, you can turn a corner and find a quiet plaza where two old men sit, play cards, and drink their afternoon coffee. Spain has 17 distinct provinces and its people speak 5 different languages. It is a country with a unique blend of old and new. And it is the perfect place to experience Spanish culture and to develop Spanish language skills.

### **Valencia**

Located on the coast of Spain, Valencia is the third largest city of Spain and the capital of the province known as the Comunitat Valenciana. It is a city with much to offer. Surrounded by beaches, Valencia is known throughout Spain as a relaxing tourist destination. It also boasts a rich cultural heritage mixed with modern industry and trade. The city's architecture reflects its historical ties to the Romans, Visigoths, Moors, and others, with more modern areas nearer to the coast. The maritime districts such as Cabanyal and Nazaret, which in earlier times were independent villages, are now part of the city. Thanks to the warm Mediterranean climate, the beaches are open from April to October. The Turia river also flows through Valencia. For the past 20 years, the old river bed has been dry and has now been converted into a beautiful park.

In Valencia you will find theaters, museums, art galleries, sporting facilities, and an exciting nightlife. In fact, within Spain, the San Pio Fine Art Museum in Valencia is considered second only to the Prado in Madrid. There are also museums of modern art and of prehistory, as well as many other sites of interest. And you also will discover that Valencia is home to two major universities: the Polytechnic University of Valencia, hosting over 35,000 students, and the University of Valencia, with over 80,000 students. Valencia is definitely a vibrant city with plenty to keep you busy!

## **THE PROGRAM**

The University at Albany program in Valencia, held at the **AIP Language Institute**, is designed for American students who want to develop their Spanish language skills and learn about Spanish life. Students will be admitted at all levels of Spanish language skills (beginner-advanced), creating a diverse environment in which to learn.

Although language classes at all levels are taught in Spanish, other classes might be taught in English (beginning and intermediate) or Spanish (more advanced). The program's curriculum is designed to provide an intensive exposure to Spanish grammar and language along with a comprehensive overview of Spanish culture, including arts, history and literature. At the same time you will experience Spanish life firsthand living with local families. In addition, classes are small, which encourages open discussion and provides ample opportunities for individual attention.

### **The AIP Language Institute**

The Albany program offers courses at the **AIP Language Institute**, which was founded by the Advisers for International Programs in Spain (AIP) in order to offer meaningful programs that combine proper academic instruction with meaningful cultural activities that truly enhance the study abroad language and cultural curriculum of our students. It is important to remember that the AIP Language Institute is not a Spanish university but rather an institute for foreign students. Therefore, you will not be taking classes

with Spanish students since most participants on our program do not have sufficiently advanced language skills to take all courses in Spanish. The instructors at AIP come from a variety of international and Spanish universities. As a result, our students benefit from their work in different academic and methodological fields, offering diverse perspectives and ideologies from which to learn about Spain and its people and language.

The Institute is located in the heart of Valencia and boasts a modern building (with handicap accessibility), computer services for students, and a variety of student services, including organized cultural and social events. You will find everything you need close to the Institute: banks, bookstores, and many cafes and restaurants. Although you will not be taking classes with Spaniards, Spanish professors will teach your courses. AIP also offers English courses for Spaniards, which allows our students to interact with native speakers. In addition there is a Language Partners Program that allows Spaniards and Americans to get together to practice their language skills. Through this program, participants can meet Spanish students who want to practice their English and learn about American culture, while they in turn can practice Spanish and learn about Spanish culture – and hopefully make some friends!

### **Our Resident Director**

The AIP Language Institute and its staff will serve as your support system once you arrive in Valencia. The Institute is easy to get to from around the city and you should feel free to stop by whenever you would like. Of course you will have your classes there; but you will also be able to use the facilities whenever the offices are open.

Also remember that the staff at AIP is available to help you with anything – however big or small. Cesar Ribas, along with the rest of the AIP staff, will arrange your classes, coordinate housing, and offer general help and advice in dealing with academic and non-academic matters. Cesar is a native of Valencia and has traveled extensively in the States; his energy and knowledge of Valencia is a great asset to our program. It is important to keep the staff in Valencia informed of how you are adjusting to life in Valencia. If you have a problem or concern, please let them know immediately.

### **FLIGHT INFORMATION**

The UAlbany Office of International Education has arranged a group flight at as low a cost as possible. The flight is with a major airline and departs the day before the beginning of the program. (See the ‘Program Dates’ section of the UAlbany study abroad website at [www.albany.edu/studyabroad](http://www.albany.edu/studyabroad) under Programs-Spain-Valencia AIP-Summer-Program Dates.) Plan to wear something purple or tie a purple ribbon to your carry-on bag in order to identify yourself as part of the Albany group flight. This will make it easier to find each other in the airport. AIP’s activities guide will meet the group at the airport in Madrid. Participation in the group flight is optional, but students who do not join the group flight will not be met at the airport, unless their flight coincides with that of the group. They will also be responsible for their own transportation to the group hotel in Madrid. (This cost cannot be reimbursed later.) This allows all students to join the group on the bus to Valencia when the group leaves Madrid. Please contact UAlbany for details about the hotel if you are not on the group flight. Whatever your flight arrangements may be, you **must** let Albany know your flight plans as soon as possible.

If you do make your own flight arrangements, **you must arrive in Valencia no later than the start of orientation.** If you arrive earlier than the group flight, your host family may not be ready to receive you. You must inform Albany as soon as possible if this is the case, so we can make arrangements with your family if possible. UAlbany will not pay for any extra time spent with your family before the official start of the program. Also, the host families expect you to move out no later

than the last day of the program. If you wish to stay with your host family beyond that date, you will have to make arrangements after you arrive in Spain.

## ARRIVAL IN MADRID

**When you arrive in Madrid, make sure your passport is stamped at Immigration.** If you travel to Madrid with the group, AIP staff will meet you at the airport after you clear immigration and customs and take you to the group's hostel in Madrid. Look for someone holding a small sign saying "SUNY" on it. The AIP representative who is meeting you will also have a list of who is supposed to be on the flight and will make sure you are all there before leaving.

Again, if you choose not to take the group flight, you can try to meet the group at the airport in Madrid. If you come to Valencia on your own, you will not be met at the airport or train station and will have to make your own way to your host family. UAlbany should be able to obtain the name and address of your host family just before you leave for Spain. You may be able to go to your host family directly from the train station or you can go to the AIP Language Institute first. If your family is not ready to take you, you will have to find temporary housing on your own. To repeat, UAlbany is not responsible for any housing costs prior to the start of the program (arrival of the group flight).

## Program Charge

The program charge collected by the Office of International Education in Albany is used to pay your homestay fees, support excursions and certain cultural and social activities, and cover your on-site support. Your first group trip will be the night in Madrid and the bus ride from Madrid to Valencia when you arrive. In general, the program charge will cover transportation, AIP staff supervisors, local guides, and entrance fees for excursions. Meals will often be included as well. You will get more specific information about each excursion from AIP. Please note, if you should decide not to participate in the activities which are included in your program charge, you will not be reimbursed.

In addition there are trips that are sponsored by AIP but not included in the program fee. These are "optional excursions" to different cities, such as Barcelona, Sevilla, and even Ibiza, at student rates. These are usually very economical and a lot of fun! You will receive more information about the optional excursions during the on-site orientation in Valencia.

## REGISTRATION

Registration is very important! Please read these instructions carefully. **Remember, you must register at your home campus as well as abroad.** Ask for specifics at your home study abroad office.

### At Home

If you have not done so yet, you should **immediately** discuss your plans with your home campus. Your **study abroad office** and your **academic adviser** need to be aware of your plans to study in Spain. They can advise you as to what steps you need to take to register at your home campus for your study abroad credits. Registration instructions for Albany students are included in Albany's General Information Handbook.

### Preliminary Approval of Courses

Before departing from your home campus, you should discuss the courses you plan to take in Spain and obtain preliminary approval from your academic adviser. UAlbany students should have their **Preliminary Approval of Courses** form (found at [www.albany.edu/studyabroad](http://www.albany.edu/studyabroad) under Current

Participants-Forms) signed by their academic advisers after discussing their plans. This gives some assurance that the courses you take overseas will be accepted by your home university.

Non-UAlbany students should check with their home campus to determine if there is a similar form they need to fill out. All courses you take in Spain will appear on your UAlbany transcript at the end of the program; your home campus will make its own determination about equivalencies.

## **In Valencia**

Registration in Valencia is very easy! Since you will be enrolling in courses that have been established just for our students, you don't have to worry about schedule conflicts or about being closed out of them! Your language course level will be determined with the help of the staff in Valencia and by the results of a **placement test**, which you will take once you arrive. If there are questions about your placement, AIP can always email UAlbany or your home campus for clarification. See the information on course offerings for more information about your options.

### **Overseas Enrollment Report (OER)**

**All students** are required to complete and return a **signed** Overseas Enrollment Report (OER) to Albany. AIP will distribute and collect the OER from each student on the UAlbany program and send the forms to UAlbany together. Students should keep a copy of their course descriptions and syllabi in case they need to submit them to their home campus upon returning.

### **Registration Checklist**

1. Meet with your academic adviser at your home campus before you go. Make sure you understand what you need to do on your home campus to successfully complete your studies overseas.
2. UAlbany students should complete and return their Preliminary Approval of Courses form to the UAlbany Office of International Education before departing. Non-UAlbany students should complete any similar paperwork for their home campus.
3. After registering for courses in Valencia, complete a copy of the Overseas Enrollment Report (please include what language level you were placed in).

## **COURSE OFFERINGS**

The University at Albany's summer program at the AIP Language Institute in Valencia offers courses designed specifically for our students. This program is designed for students at all language levels. Classes are taught at the AIP Language Institute. Class enrollment is limited to participants on the UAlbany program. This allows us to keep the classes small in order to encourage open discussions and provide opportunities for individual assistance.

The courses we offer are meant to give students an intensive course in Spanish language, including grammar, composition and conversation. In addition, students choose one of three optional courses (Culture, Literature, or Cinema), with the hope that students will be better able to understand the culture in which they are living. All language courses are taught in Spanish to allow maximum contact with the language. The Culture and Literature optional courses are taught in either Spanish OR English (separate class for each language). The Cinema class is taught in English and all films have English subtitles. Optional classes must have a minimum of four students to be offered.

For students at the beginning level, please do not panic when you begin to hear Spanish! Your instructors understand that you are beginning level students and will take that into consideration when teaching. Also, be sure to ask questions when necessary - don't be shy! If you find you are having an especially difficult time, talk to your professors; they can help where possible. Try forming

a study group with other students in your class or ask your family for help. Remember; you're not in this alone. The more effort you put in, the quicker you will learn the language and feel comfortable in your new home.

The program yields a total of 6 credits. The Spanish department on the UAlbany campus has determined equivalents for **UAlbany** students on this program. Non-UAlbany students should consult with their advisers at their own school before departing for a determination of the level of credits they will receive. Please see the enclosed course descriptions and equivalents for more details.

## AWARDING CREDITS

As mentioned above, all coursework will result in 6 credits of Spanish at the appropriate level. The staff at AIP will forward your grade report to UAlbany at the end of the summer, while you receive a certificate of attendance (which does NOT count as a transcript). These courses are converted into U.S. credits, and a UAlbany Transcript Supplement is created. If you are a UAlbany student or a non-SUNY student, your official transcript can then be issued. If you are a student at another SUNY campus, the Transcript Supplement will be sent to your home campus where it will be attached to your record there. Just as on most U.S. campuses, if there are any holds in Valencia or with the Office of International Education here at Albany, your grades will not be released. Please be sure to clear up any holds as soon as possible.

## ACADEMIC LIFE

### Classes

Your professors realize you are not a native speaker of Spanish, so they are prepared to give you the necessary background to understand the subject areas, as well as the Spanish academic system and expectations. However, you are expected to behave as Spanish university students would - as responsible, mature adults. You are expected to come to class prepared and pay attention in class. **Attendance is required, as is punctuality.** (You will fail if you cut class!) This is not negotiable. Professors take their jobs seriously and take offense when you do not respect them or their courses. However, if treated with respect, they will be more than willing to help you whenever possible. Keep this in mind and behave accordingly.

You will have classes during the morning or afternoon on Monday through Thursday. You'll have every Friday free to travel as you wish. However, Valencia is a great place to be during the summer – so be sure to stick around and enjoy it a little!

**Reminder:** This is an academic program. It is very tempting upon your arrival in Valencia to go to the beach, travel, and skip classes. You will **fail** if you do so. This is a short, six-week program and attendance is mandatory. There are no exceptions. The attendance policy will be reviewed in detail at the beginning of the semester – FOLLOW IT.

### Computer Access

Please be forewarned: access to computers is somewhat limited in Spain. The AIP Language Institute has some computers available for student use. Although you should be able to use these computers to type your papers, **you will most likely not be able to access your email whenever you want from AIP's computers.** However, AIP does have wireless internet access as well as regular internet hook ups for laptops, should you decide to bring one with you. There are also internet cafés around the city that provide email and internet access.

As for laptops, the voltage is different in Spain and you will need a converter/adapter. Keep in mind that you cannot use a modem over your host family's phone, as telephone services are very expensive in Spain. At your host family's home, your laptop can be used for word processing only.

Please be patient with the computer resources at AIP. This is typical of Spanish life - please make every effort to adjust!

We hope that e-mail will help all of us communicate at a lower cost. However, if you use e-mail, do not make it your whole life. You are in Spain to experience Spain, not catch up on what you're missing at home. Regardless, don't expect to spend hours using e-mail - access will be somewhat limited.

## Mail

Your family and friends should send your mail or packages to the AIP office at:

Your Name  
c/o AIP Language Institute  
C/ El bachiller, 7  
46010 Valencia, Spain

AIP will advise you about how to receive packages, since often they must be picked up at the post office. You can send packages home and buy stamps at the local post office. There are also *estancos*, which are stores that sell tobacco, stamps, and other necessary items. All mailboxes are yellow with a red stripe. A letter or postcard sent to the U.S. from Spain takes about a week to arrive. Aerograms are also available, which are less expensive but cannot contain enclosures.

## HOUSING

### Homestays

Housing for students on UAlbany's program is provided through a homestay program arranged by AIP with two students per family. The homestay provides a comfortable environment during the first weeks of adjustment to a new place and a new culture. It is an opportunity to converse in Spanish daily and experience a part of Spanish life that can not be appreciated in any other way. Therefore, our host families are not required to speak English to you (in fact, we prefer that they didn't!).

Please complete the Housing Request Form promptly and thoughtfully; you will be placed with another student and with a family based on your answers. We hope to obtain notification of the names and phone numbers of your host families shortly before your departure. Please be patient and wait for us to email you, which we will do as soon as we have any information. Be sure to check your email regularly prior to departure.

As mentioned, our students are housed two per family. That allows you to have some company when going to and from classes, when working out "Spanish family" challenges, and when communicating with the family. However, if you would prefer to be the only student housed with a family, you can request to be placed alone. You will incur a minor extra fee for this privilege. Please contact Albany for details about pricing. In addition, you must make your request on your Housing Request Form before you depart. Keep in mind that if there is an uneven number of male and/or female students on the program, a participant may be randomly chosen to be placed as the only student in a host family at no extra charge.

**Note:** Students who wish to be the only student living with a particular family can request this arrangement. However, there is an **additional cost** for this type of accommodation. Please see the Housing Request Form for details. **If you request to be the only student in a house, you will be billed extra for this privilege.**

## **Independence**

A concern of many American students is the fear that living with a family means losing independence. Although you will need to spend time with the family to form a successful relationship, you will find ample time to go out in the evenings and to travel on weekends. All families realize you are university students and treat you as adults and expect you to act like independent adults. In general, students are well satisfied with the amount of liberty they have in a host family situation. You will have a key and can come and go as you please. Always be courteous! Mealtimes are important; since meals are usually when the family gathers to discuss their day and touch base. This is a time to get to know your family and also to learn about Spanish culture and current events. Your host family has been told that mealtimes will be established according to the family's own preferences, so you have to show up on time. Be sure you give your family ample notice for meals missed or travel plans. You are allowed one quick shower or bath a day. Your families may not be aware of the American custom of having friends over to visit with you in your room as this is contrary to Spanish customs. It is possible that visitors of the **same sex** will be allowed to visit you in your room. Wait to see what your family thinks before bringing a friend home and always ask permission first. Do **not** expect visitors of the opposite sex to be allowed in your room or the house in general.

## **Family Life**

Living with a Spanish family will provide you with many insights into Spanish values, customs, and life experiences. All host families are screened by AIP staff and have a written agreement with AIP, as will you. In addition students, AIP, and Albany evaluate all families at the end of each term. The families will come from many walks of life and will have varying degrees of education. Some will be professionals; others may work in government jobs or in industry. Some may have children growing up in the household; but, more likely, they will be adults whose children have moved out or señoras who live alone. Usually other members of the extended family live close by and are frequently present. We hope that host families are entering into the program because they enjoy the company of American students. We know that they also do so because of the economic advantage of the room and board income. However, they are expected to welcome you into their family; they should talk to you and include you in their lives, which will help you learn a lot. Enjoy the differences you will encounter. They will enrich your overall experience.

You will find that the quality of the relationship between students and hosts varies greatly from individual to individual. Not all families are as welcoming as you might hope. In some cases, you may be considered only a boarder - some students want that. Regardless of your situation, you should not be surprised to find that you do not have the full run of the house, kitchen privileges, unlimited snacks, and meals you are accustomed to. Please remember that this is their home. They may want certain areas they can go for privacy. Nevertheless, you should be fed well and you should feel safe in your surroundings. In other cases, the family becomes very close to the student and a life-long friendship develops. If you do become a "member of the family", be prepared to go to family events even when you might have wished to travel. This is really a privilege and a compliment to you that they want to include you. In all cases, your señora will greatly appreciate your willingness to discuss with her how she would like you to handle such everyday matters as kitchen privileges, bathroom use, missing a meal, or coming home very late.

Most students have enjoyed their families, but not everyone is pleased. This is also "part of the experience", although not always the best part. The program makes a conscious effort to weed out families who are rated unsatisfactory by students; but sometimes what one student complains about is what another student wants: little children, a certain degree of independence, etc. **The quality of the relationship depends greatly on your efforts to get to know the family and adapt to their customs.** Your acceptance in the household very often depends on your own desire to learn by observing and adapting to the Spanish way of life. If you are struggling to express yourself in

Spanish, your patience and perseverance will pay off in time with a warm relationship. You may also try really hard to get to know them and still not feel that your efforts are appreciated. Occasionally, students have complained that they had little contact with their family. Spaniards have a great deal of respect for the liberties of all persons and some families may be unsure if they are "bothering" the students by trying to converse with them. If you feel that this is happening to you, discuss it with AIP right away and they can work this out with your family if you wish. Every family is different. If your placement is not what you would have wished, talk to the staff at AIP and see what can be done.

You will see that in the family everyone always makes a point of greeting others when they return home, wake up in the morning, or simply walk into a room with others present. When you come out for breakfast, your *señora* will typically ask "¿Qué tal has dormido?" She probably will ask about your day when you return. There are also ritual *abrazos* and *besos* when people greet each other. When leaving a room occupied by others, a *con permiso* is required. The degree of closeness you experience with the family depends in part on personalities and interests. Usually family members are the ones who will give you much of the practical information you need; they will show you how to get to the Institute and teach you how to use public transportation. Most students rely on their families when they encounter problems. Home is also a place to study. You will want to keep this relationship as open and friendly as possible. Here are some things you can do to get things off to a good start:

1. Bring a gift for the family when you arrive. Candy, a knick-knack, or any other hostess gift is appropriate. Former participants recommend bringing something from your home state or region, such as music or unique crafts or a special packaged food (no raw ingredients that can't clear customs). Also remember later on to bring an occasional gift to the family when you travel.
2. Accompany the *señora* to the market. It is fascinating to see how the everyday shopping takes place. You can show her foods you like or want to try, and she will appreciate your interest.
3. Plan to spend your first weekends at home (i.e. not traveling), except, of course, if a trip is planned expressly for the Albany group as part of orientation. Stay close to home and get to know the family. Sunday dinner is usually a major family event and often includes extended family. Chances are other members of the family will be eager to meet you; and you will want to know the family. Contacts made through the family can be very important for meeting other Spaniards.
4. If possible, accept the family's first invitations to join them for an occasion or to go on an excursion. Then they will know you are genuinely interested in them and that you appreciate their efforts to welcome you and include you.
5. It is also a good idea to bring along pictures of your own family, home, dog, whatever! People will be curious about them, and they are also great ice-breakers. Even if you feel tongue-tied about some topics, you know that you can talk about these. And, you can't be wrong! You'll want to have these pictures along anyway.

### The House

Typically the families live in urban apartments scattered around Valencia. **Very few** are within walking distance of the Language Institute; but, public transportation (buses and metro) is very easy to use. The family should provide you with a set of keys, and let you come and go as you wish. Always remember to let them know where you'll be and when you'll return - simple courtesy will make your stay that much more pleasant.

Spaniards' concept of living space is different than ours. Their apartments are usually much smaller than what we are used to. You should expect to have a small to medium bedroom that you might share with a roommate. It will have a table or desk for studying and adequate storage space for your belongings. You will notice that most Spanish homes are kept immaculately clean. You are expected to keep your own room neat. Even normally messy people must be neat in Spain. Keep your things picked up. If you do not keep things really neat, your *señora* will probably "organize"

your things some day while you are out. She is not trying to invade your privacy; in her mind, it's just part of her job as your *señora*. The family may have a maid; it is appropriate for you to maintain a cordial but somewhat formal relationship with a maid.

### **Food**

You will have full board: all of your meals will be provided by the family. Your *señora* will very likely prepare all of them, although you may be given some small tasks such as setting the table. You should not expect to have the use of the kitchen in the home of your host family, although you may have some access to it. Mealtimes are not the same in Spain as they are in the U.S. - Spaniards eat their biggest meal at around 2:00 in the afternoon. The adjustment to Spanish food may or may not be difficult for you as well. In general the Spanish diet is less varied than the American diet. Olive oil and garlic are a part of just about every meal. The most common method of cooking is frying in olive oil, but it is not by definition greasy. We recommend that you try all the foods offered. Previous participants have stressed the need to try everything - you'll probably be pleasantly surprised. If there are items that you really dislike or cannot learn to like, it is better to state so openly and politely. As mentioned, Spaniards enjoy fried foods, and you will probably need to eat them even if you would prefer some other method of preparation. Chicken, rice, and fish are plentiful. Breakfast frequently consists of bread and *café con leche*; supper is often a *tortilla* (potato omelet) with bread and salad, eaten around 10:00 at night. The *comida* is usually eaten around 2:00 in the afternoon and is the large meal of the day.

Obviously, if you have allergies or religious reasons for not eating specific foods, you must make those things known in advance. Be sure to mention them on the housing request form before family placements are determined. Students who are vegetarians might have some problems. Be specific on your housing form and reiterate your needs once you get settled in with your family. Some families will be very receptive and will be able to come up with a variety of tasty vegetarian meals; others will not. Be patient and help them learn by preparing meals with them. All students should try to get as involved as possible. This could mean fixing your favorite American meal with your family. It helps you share your own culture, and you get to eat something you know you like!

Food storage is sometimes not what we're used to. Some things that are not refrigerated will probably make you nervous, but you can eat them. Milk is processed in such a way that it does not need to be refrigerated. To Americans, this is very odd. However, it is completely safe. (Just don't expect to get an ice-cold glass of milk anywhere!) As a side note, bring Imodium or some other antidiarrheal product. All travelers run the risk of a reaction to new foods and eating schedules - this is not food poisoning!

### **Laundry**

The family will provide laundry service for you. Laundry may be done quite frequently or only once a week. Spaniards probably do laundry differently than you are used to. This does not mean that they do it wrong. However, keep this in mind when you pack. Please be sure not to bring your favorite outfit that requires special care. Plan accordingly. Bedding and towels will be provided by the family.

### **Utilities**

**The family will expect you to be very careful with electricity and hot water.** Some students feel that these restrictions are unwarranted, but utilities are expensive and you must conserve energy. Ask for instructions about how utilities are to be used. In some Spanish homes, the hot water heater is sometimes not left on, and there will be special arrangements to turn it on for each shower. You will be expected to **always** turn out lights when you leave a room, to use only one light in your bedroom - desk or overhead, not both - and to use electric appliances sparingly. The current in Spain is 220V or 125V (in the USA it is 110V), and outlets are different (they are round). Therefore, we suggest that you limit what electrical appliances you bring (and bring a converter) or buy whatever you need when you arrive in Spain. A reliable travel alarm clock (battery operated) is an

absolute necessity. Check with your host family about the details of everyday living and remember to respect their wishes. If you feel that there is a true problem with hot water or other utilities, talk with the on-site staff at AIP.

### **Phones & Long Distance Calling**

In the homestay program, students are allowed to **receive** phone calls. Calls should be limited to a few minutes once a day, usually just to arrange to meet friends. It is customary to make phone calls from public phones on the street (there are lots of them). In most homes, you will not be allowed to make calls. If you find you can make calls, consider yourself lucky and keep them very short. Spaniards do not use the phone like we do because charges for private phones are very high.

**Long distance phone calls cannot be charged on the family phone.** Long distance costs will vary according to which plan you have. If possible, establish a time with your family and friends when they can reach you at home and give them the number of your house phone. Calling card services are available in Spain also. Some are very inexpensive! The card cannot be used from private homes - do not try to use it from your family's phone. (First, it probably won't work; second, the señora might not understand how it works and might think she will be charged. This will cause a lot of unnecessary tension, so just don't even try.) Be sure to get the access numbers for AT&T and MCI before you depart. Telephone services change so rapidly these days that other services may be available to you through your own long-distance carrier or another service. Inform yourself.

### **Cell Phones**

Cell phones, or *moviles*, are everywhere! Many people use cell phones in place of regular phones in their homes because they are much cheaper. However, because you will only be there for six weeks, this might not be the best solution for you. The staff at AIP might be able to give you basic information on carriers and choices, but the real research and final decision is up to you.

### **Payment for the Homestay**

UAlbany will bill you for the Program Charge, which covers your housing and meals for this program. If you are using financial aid to pay for study abroad and it has not come in before your departure date, make sure that you have made all the proper arrangements for Albany to be paid before you leave. Give power of attorney to someone you trust (such as a parent) who can handle your financial aid while you are overseas. **UALBANY CANNOT HANDLE ANY DETAILS CONCERNING YOUR FINANCIAL AID AFTER YOU DEPART. YOU MUST MAKE ARRANGEMENTS BEFORE YOU LEAVE.** Unless you are staying on with your host family beyond the end of the program, you will not be paying your family directly. **Students and their host families should not be involved in financial matters** under normal circumstances. **Please avoid these situations.**

### **Conflict Resolution**

AIP has had a great deal of experience matching students and families. Hopefully, you will be placed with a family that meets your expectations. However, no matter how great the match between student and family, there are issues that arise. Your unconscious assumptions about the right way to do the simplest, most common everyday things can cause misunderstandings. Ask. Try to resolve any minor issue yourself. If you have more serious problems or are unable to resolve an issue on your own, see the AIP staff. Someone from AIP will talk to the family, try to find out what is going on, and help you clear the air. **Please deal respectfully with AIP and with your host family.**

We contract with your host families for the entire length of the program, beginning the day the group flight arrives and ending the Saturday after classes end. If you choose to travel during this period or

eat out with friends or visiting family, you will NOT be reimbursed for missed meals, etc. Your family will be paid as usual for the entire program period.

We expect that most housing issues will be resolved promptly. It is possible to change families if there is a serious mismatch. In such a case, you should **not** take matters into your own hands. You should be aware that changes made without AIP approval will not be paid for. We do not want you to remain in housing that you find unsafe and will intervene immediately to resolve the problem so that everyone is satisfied and you are safe. Albany can help if you feel your needs are not being met. However, keep in mind that UAlbany is in constant contact with the directors in Valencia. We know whenever there is a problem and work directly with AIP to find a solution. Therefore, use them as a resource – they are there to take care of you.

## HEALTH CARE

### Medical Insurance & Treatment

The SUNY health and emergency insurance policy for overseas study is mandatory for all participants in the Spain program. You must have the SUNY health insurance in effect, unless you have received a waiver from UAlbany's health office. You will only be approved for a waiver if you submit the documentation required by the health insurance office. You cannot get a refund later because you had your own coverage or you didn't get sick. **If you do not pay for the insurance when billed or submit the paperwork to have it waived, it will be paid on your behalf, and there will be an automatic hold on all your records until that bill is paid.** This will hold up the release of your grades, so please **pay attention to this**. Please refer to the General Information Handbook for a description of the coverage and to the Estimate of Costs sheet for the approximate cost. Useful information about the SUNY health insurance policy (including info on English-speaking doctors abroad) can be found at [www.hthstudents.com](http://www.hthstudents.com). When you receive the bill for this insurance, check the dates of coverage **carefully**. If you are planning to remain in Europe after the end of the program, you may wish to have coverage for a longer period. You must indicate your preferred dates of coverage when you return your form to UAlbany's insurance office.

Even if you receive a waiver out of the SUNY health insurance, all participants on UAlbany programs are required to have the **MEDEX** portion of the SUNY policy because it gives you essential emergency insurance coverage. MEDEX automatically provides accident and hospitalization insurance anywhere outside the United States and emergency evacuation and repatriation benefits.

Only UAlbany's Student Health Insurance Office has the authority to give you a waiver. You must contact them with questions about exemptions or other issues at (518) 591-8170. Please see the General Information Handbook for additional information.

In Spain, you will be expected to pay for treatment at the time you receive it and then seek reimbursement from the insurance company. **This is important.** The system is NOT like an HMO here in the U.S., rather, you pay first and get reimbursed later. Therefore, be sure you have an emergency reserve of two hundred dollars or more throughout your trip. Get a receipt so that you can file a claim with the insurance company. You can find instructions for filing insurance claims at [www.hthstudents.com](http://www.hthstudents.com). **The Office of International Education cannot process insurance claims.**

If you need medical treatment in Spain, you should first contact AIP for referral to program-approved physicians. They will be able to help you get health care should you require it in a non-emergency situation. The **Unidad Medica** is open from 9am-9pm and has English-speaking doctors. If it is an emergency, you will have a phone number of someone on the AIP staff. Contact

that person immediately. If for some reason that person isn't available, your host family will help. AIP will provide you with information for medical care during your orientation in Valencia.

You should also know that in Spain pharmacists are able to prescribe "minor" medications such as antibiotics, without a prescription from a doctor. In other words, some drugs that require prescriptions in the States may be available over the counter. Be careful about this. If you know you can take a certain medication for an illness you have had previously, you can go to the pharmacy to request that medicine and it may be available. However, it is always best to consult a trained medical doctor before taking any medication.

If you take a medication regularly and will need to do so while in Spain, bring along the amount you will need to last the duration of your stay in Spain. **Always bring medicines in their original containers.** Also bring along the prescription in case you need to have it refilled. If you wear contact lenses, bring extra pairs and a supply of your favorite wetting solution. Bring your glasses as well. No inoculations are required for travel to Spain; but be sure your tetanus immunity is up to date and check with a physician to see if other inoculations are recommended.

### **Other Health Issues**

Smoking is very common in Spain; there is no way to avoid it in normal social situations (over 50% of the Spanish population smokes). There are families in which no one smokes. Many young people are choosing not to smoke, and older people are choosing to quit. So, although you may find yourself in smoky conditions (bars are very smoky), don't take up the habit just to fit in.

You should also take appropriate precautions if you are sexually active. We are **not** encouraging you to be or to become active (in fact, we are trying to **discourage** it); but, if you are, be sure to bring proper protection with you. What you ordinarily find in every drugstore here may not be available there. Remember, even in Spain, diseases are transmitted and women get pregnant all over the world. Furthermore, aside from the health risk, your activities or the intentions of others are easily misconstrued in other cultures. Americans are sometimes courted for reasons unrelated to their personal qualities. **We urge extreme caution in intimate relationships.** Further, we point out that being abroad often heightens feelings of liberation. Many people have the feeling of being an entirely different person when they live in another culture and speak another language all the time. This can lead to lapses in judgment. Be aware and take care of yourself. Also, do not expect your host family to be receptive to the idea of visitors of the opposite sex in your room. They will not be! It may be possible for a guest to join you at a meal if you make arrangements with your host family in advance (you may or may not be asked to pay for the meal). But expect that your social activities will take place outside of the home.

### **DRUGS & ALCOHOL**

Once you leave the U.S., you are subject to the laws of the country you enter. If you are involved in any illegal activities, including drug-related ones, **WE CANNOT HELP YOU! Any American citizen charged with violation of Spanish laws related to drug possession or sale can expect NO assistance from the University or the United States Consulate.** Do not engage in foolish and/or dangerous activities. **Use your best judgment and remove yourself from any potentially dangerous situations.**

Alcohol in Europe is a more difficult matter to deal with. Alcohol is more a part of every day life than in the US, therefore **Spaniards have a much different attitude about drinking.** You might drink more alcohol with your meals than you have in the past (although most host families drink water with their meals, not wine). You will see that some Spaniards like to meet out for a *copita* in the

afternoon or evening. Many bars are family places where people in the neighborhood (including children) meet to talk and visit, not at all like the bars you are used to. There are also clubs, which are similar to clubs in the US.

Although Spaniards drink, they generally do not drink to get drunk. In fact, Spaniards find drunkenness to be offensive; they don't like loud, drunk Americans. You are also much more at risk if you have been drinking - by becoming an easy target for less desirable people and by impairing your judgment. You will have to make decisions for yourself, but be sure that alcohol does not interfere with your studies. Outside of school, you will probably find yourself in many situations involving alcohol. If you do not wish to drink alcohol, it is always possible to buy *agua mineral (con gas* or *sin gas*, as you prefer) or another non-alcoholic beverages like coffee or juice. Do not exceed what you know to be prudent.

## MONEY MANAGEMENT

### WHAT'S A EURO?

In January 2002, Europe changed its currency to the Euro, so instead of the Spanish peseta, you will have an exciting new currency to deal with! Keep in mind that Spaniards may still be talking about prices in pesetas – so it is still a good idea to familiarize yourself with very large numbers in Spanish (since 1 US dollar = 188 pesetas). Since program staff will meet you upon arrival in Madrid (if you take the group flight), you will not need money immediately. Therefore, you do not have to change dollars into euros before your trip, but if you do, don't change much!

It is difficult to estimate how much money you will need in Spain as everyone lives differently. You are likely to spend \$50-\$75 per week eating out and going out. Students usually carry from \$20 to \$40 on them when in town and extra money in travelers' checks when out of town. Try to estimate how much you'll travel, how often you'll go out, how much you want to spend on yourself and gifts; your actual costs will depend on these things. Keep in mind that the possibility of the dollar decreasing in value is always present. If possible, plan to bring a little more money than you think you will need and budget it carefully from the beginning.

However much money you decide to bring, converting dollars to any other currency almost always entails fees. These fees are usually a percentage of the amount of money you are converting and can be as much as 20% if a bank has a minimum charge regardless of the amount of money you are changing. Therefore, explore your options and comparison-shop in Spain when you do need to change money.

There are various ways to finance your stay in Valencia, all of which are not listed here. **It is not a good idea to bring many dollars in cash.** The bank rate exchange for euros is often worse for cash than for traveler's checks; it is also much more dangerous to travel with cash. Cash is not insured, so if you lose it, it's gone. Traveler's checks, however, can be replaced. Sometimes a small amount of dollars is advisable to pay for travel incidentals and immediate expenses you may have upon return to the U.S. (telephone, taxi, bus, for example). Before leaving the U.S. it is wise to get a few euros (\$50's worth) at your local bank or at the international airport from which you are departing. That way you will not have to worry about changing money immediately upon your arrival in Valencia. We do not recommend bringing a large amount of euros since the dollar/euro rate is very poor in the U.S. and at the airport. A bank will be open the following weekday or Saturday to exchange more money when you need to.

In general, most students have found it easiest to have a small amount of cash in euros (for immediate incidentals), as well as some cash in dollars to exchange after arrival in Spain. ATM

cards and/or credit cards seem to work well for most daily expenses and offer the best exchange rate. Travelers' checks are a good back-up, since they are insured and replaceable.

**NOTE:** Until you have figured out what things really cost and see how much money you will need for your trips and other plans, spend your money cautiously. Almost anything you want to buy the first week will still be available for sale in a week! Take your time! Remember you will want to have money available throughout your stay. Also, be careful about using coins, since they can be very valuable. Euro coins can be worth anywhere from one-tenth of a euro to 20 euros each. Be sure you know what you are giving out.

### **ATM Cards**

Many students like to use their ATM card as a source of daily money while abroad and highly recommend this form of money retrieval for its convenience. ATM cards are widely used, as long as they have the NYCE or CIRRUS marks. Cash machines are quite prevalent, but be sure that your ATM card will work overseas -- some do not or may entail high transaction fees for withdrawals. Check with your bank to see what fees will be charged if you do use your ATM card overseas. Be aware so as to avoid any unpleasant surprises! In Valencia, there are lots of ATM locations. You never know what you will encounter in other areas though; therefore, you may want to have some money in the form of traveler's checks for those times when you are traveling and you cannot use the ATM card.

### **Traveler's Checks**

Traveler's checks are the safest way to bring money for your stay in Valencia, but they are not the most convenient. You may want to purchase them in denominations of \$50 to \$100 for some travel and other expenses. We don't suggest you buy traveler's checks in Euros; the rate is usually not favorable.

All traveler's checks are signed twice: once at the time of purchase and again at the time of use. Therefore, traveler's checks cannot safely be sent to you since your parents cannot sign a check to be used by you because unsigned checks are really cash to whoever first signs them. Therefore, buy them before you leave. Whenever you buy traveler's checks, make several copies of the serial numbers and keep copies in a separate place, including with someone in the United States. If they are lost or stolen, you will have a much easier time getting them replaced if you know the numbers. (But if you don't, they are still insured and will be replaced eventually.) You will need your passport to change traveler's checks.

### **Credit Cards**

In Europe, the most widely used card is Visa; MasterCard is also common. Your card can be used in the same types of establishments as in the U.S. These cards can be used with ATM machines, but call your credit card company before your trip to find out if your particular card will allow you to do this overseas. A note on using your credit card for cash: It is possible, but not always practical. In addition to a basic fee for the service, you are also actually taking a loan on your card. If you hit an emergency situation and withdraw some money, make sure that someone at home can receive your bills promptly and pay them or this will cost you a fortune in interest charges. Generally, the interest on loans accumulates from the day they are made, not from the billing date: there is no grace period! Once again, talk to the bank that issued your card to find out exactly how you will be charged and how to protect yourself from massive fees.

The American Express card is not widely accepted, although it is becoming more popular. However, the Amex card can still be very useful to you overseas. With an Amex card and your personal checkbook, you can go to an American Express office and withdraw money directly from your checking account in the U.S. - your card serves as I.D. This service is available in any city where there is an Amex office. In emergencies this works well, since money can be deposited into your

account at home, and you can withdraw it all over Europe. You should call Amex for additional information.

### **Personal Checks**

**Your personal checks are not negotiable in Spain**, unless you have an American Express card. Please do not ask AIP to cash them for you! If you have an American Express card, you can cash checks at the AMEX office.

### **Sending Money from the States**

If you do not have a major credit card and you must receive money periodically from home, there is a convenient way that doesn't involve checks or long waits, but there may be substantial fees involved. Money can be sent via the **American Express Moneygram Service** - even if you do not have an American Express account. There is a fee that varies according to the amount of money sent, but you can have the money you need in 10 minutes in Madrid, Barcelona, or Marbella; and this service is available 24 hours a day. The person sending the money must go to a proper service center in the U.S., directly deposit the amount to be sent (you can use most credit cards), and make sure that it is sent via a branch of the Banco Popular in Valencia. Western Union can also be used to transfer money speedily to Spain and other countries as well. They also charge a fee for this service. If you plan to transfer money, do a little comparison shopping before you leave.

### **Paying Bills in the US**

Insofar as payment of bills in the U.S. is concerned, contact the Financial Aid Office at your home campus if there are any special arrangements to be made. Some financial aid matters can be done for you if your family has **power of attorney** to execute your financial aid checks and other documents as necessary. We strongly suggest you grant P.O.A. to someone you trust. Otherwise things have to be mailed to you in Spain for signature, which can significantly delay your receipt of money. In emergency situations, see the on-site staff if there is a money matter that needs immediate resolution; however, don't look to them for banking services.

## **SAFETY**

### **Personal Safety**

You should always tell your family in the States what you are doing. Contact them as soon as possible after your arrival; tell them you are safe and tell them how they can contact you. Make some sort of plan to keep in contact with them on a regular basis.

Theft of documents, money, and jewelry is an increasing problem for international travelers. Students have reported thefts on the streets and in the subways. Be attentive. In Valencia, you should find a place at your residence to keep valuables when not needed for business transactions. You can carry a photocopy of your passport rather than the original. However, **you will need your actual passport to change traveler's checks**. Do not bring any jewelry of great sentimental or monetary value. Chain necklaces, rings, and bracelets may be snatched from you.

It is a good idea to carry as little money as possible and to carry any large amounts of money where they cannot easily be seen. **Your back pocket is not a good place! Neither is your backpack**, since it can easily be unzipped. A money belt worn inside your clothing is recommended when you travel. These can be purchased where luggage is sold. Purses with inside zippered compartments offer some protection against pickpockets. Be aware of your luggage and other belongings at all times. Don't make yourself an easy target for theft. (Old women who approach you to sell you flowers or read your palm may also be pickpockets. And, although it is a terrible stereotype and not always true, be careful of gypsies. They are often dangerous. Use caution!)

## **Especially for Women** (but everyone should read this!)

Women can generally feel safe living and traveling in Spain, but should take normal precautions. It is a good idea to travel with a friend, and one should be careful and not go out alone at night.

**Unwanted attention on the streets of Valencia is a problem that virtually every American woman faces.** A barrage of verbal comments, known as *piropos*, can follow you as you simply walk down the street. People may call out from passing cars. The comments can be obscene or complimentary. The attention does not mean you will be physically accosted in any way. It is best to simply ignore the comments and develop a tough skin. No one has said that this is easy to do. When you don't react, they probably will not continue. Students often report that they find dealing with this attention to be unpleasant and stressful. They have not suggested any way to resolve this other than to be aware of it and try to ignore it. If you hear "*¿Qué quiere, mi corazón?*", you are probably just being asked politely what you want. Don't overreact - there really are lots of nice people who just want to talk to you. You'll hear this question in stores, taxis, and other public places.

In the United States women generally expect to be "just friends" with men they know. In Spain, being just friends is less likely. Women formerly on the program report that the men they knew generally were looking for more intimate relationships. In pursuing a woman who interests them, Spanish men can be extraordinarily attentive; their approach can be hard to resist. When it comes to American women they may be operating on the stereotyped assumption that "American women are easy"; they may want a fling with a person who will conveniently be gone in six weeks. This does not mean that all Spanish men are like this; there are examples of good relationships that do develop. We simply recommend using caution and good judgment. Also, have your host family meet anyone you feel you are getting serious about; they know how to read other Spaniards and can advise you.

## **Safety When Traveling**

The following steps should be taken to help ensure your security while in Spain or traveling abroad.

1. Make 2 photocopies of your passport and keep them in separate places. While in Valencia, carry a **COPY** of your passport and visa. Leave the originals at home unless you are planning to exchange money. If you are traveling overnight or a long distance, take it with you. If you are crossing into another country, even Portugal, you will definitely need your passport. Again, keep your passport, valuables, and money in a pouch under your clothes. Make copies of the serial numbers of your traveler's checks' and credit card numbers and keep them in a separate place.
2. Make copies of your travelers' checks' serial numbers and credit card numbers and keep them in a separate place.
3. Do not wear valuable earrings, necklaces, watches, or other jewelry in public places.
4. Travel with a hidden money belt around your waist and use it to carry your passport, money, and traveler's checks. In cheap hotels, sleep with the belt on.
5. Don't bring anything you can't afford or stand to lose.
6. Do not leave your backpack or luggage unattended. Do not accept packages from strangers; do not carry anything for strangers, especially across a border. Do not keep anything valuable in an exposed section of your backpack. They are easily unzipped without your notice.
7. Be aware of the movements of other people around you, especially in a crowd.
8. Use extreme caution in selecting friends. This is difficult but important. Be especially respectful of your host family's opinion of anyone you are spending a lot of time with. They are accustomed to interpreting intentions in ways you are unable to.
9. Use caution in accepting drinks at a bar from "friends." We don't want to make you paranoid, but people can be drugged and robbed. Be careful about drinking too much; some people have been followed home after a late night out. Use common sense!
10. Be cautious in revealing information about yourself and other participants in the program.

11. When you get lost (and you will, at some point), avoid having a look of distress on your face. Walk confidently and go into a store to ask for directions.
12. Use traveler's checks or bankcards (ATM cards); do not change larger amounts of money than needed for a given period. In countries where there are several types of currency and/or black markets, do not engage in illegal activities.

### **Common Causes of Problems**

We have asked past participants to identify Spanish behavior that bothered them and American behavior that bothered Spaniards. Here is what they report:

- While it is necessary to be forward to meet people, being too forward can be misinterpreted as aggression or flirtation.
- All women should expect to hear comments made about them, and should ignore them (easier said than done, of course). Spaniards are surprised that this bothers us.
- The "Ugly American" is a stereotype. This is a fact. They think we are loud and criticize us if we stick together too much.
- Stores and businesses are closed at lunchtime, which is somewhere around 1 to 2 o'clock. They reopen later. Restaurants are very busy at lunchtime. Plan accordingly.

### **Safety during a World Conflict**

Your safety during any conflict situation is very important. We will do everything to ensure that you are protected. If there is increased world tension, "home" in your host family's house is a secure place. It is also important to dress discreetly at all times... no college sweatshirts, etc. Here are suggestions for safety when the risk of terrorism or conflict is present.

- Be as inconspicuous as possible. Avoid areas frequented by Americans such as bars and fast-food restaurants, U.S. banks, etc. Avoid using American logos on your clothes and belongings.
- Keep in close touch with the program office. If you have not registered with the U.S. Embassy or Consulate, do so immediately. Make sure people know where you are.
- Report suspicious persons or events to the police.
- Remain in your residence if advised to do so.
- Don't be careless with information about students or events.
- Watch bags and luggage carefully. Again, do not agree to carry, look after, or store any package, parcel, or suitcase for anyone.
- Never agree to drive a car for someone else, especially across national borders.
- In trains and airports, do not hang around ticket offices or airline counters. Go quickly to your train or the lounges beyond the passport controls.

## **KEEPING IN TOUCH**

### **Mail**

**Students receive their mail in care of the program at the AIP Language Institute rather than at the home of their host family.** You should plan to receive all your mail at this address throughout your stay. In the event that you change families, your mail will always reach you. Your family and friends should send your mail or packages to the AIP office at the following address:

Your Name  
c/o AIP  
c/El Bachiller, 7  
46010 Valencia

AIP will advise you about what to do about receiving packages. Usually they are not delivered and you must pick them up at the post office yourself. You can send packages home and buy stamps at the local post office. There are also *estancos*, which are stores that sell tobacco, stamps, and other necessary items. Packages can be weighed there too. An estanco is easily spotted by the red sign with a T on it. All mailboxes are yellow with a red stripe. A letter or postcard to the U.S. takes a week or two to reach its destination. **Aerograms** are also available. They are less expensive to send but cannot contain enclosures. Local postage in Spain varies with the destination; anyone at the post office or estanco can tell you how much your letter will cost. The staff at AIP will give you details during the on-site orientation.

### **E-mail**

Please be forewarned: access to computers is somewhat limited in Spain. The AIP Language Institute has some computers available for student use. Although you should be able to use these computers to type your papers, **you will most likely not be able to access your email whenever you want from AIP's computers**. However, AIP does have wireless internet access as well as regular internet hook ups for laptops, should you decide to bring one with you. There are also internet cafés around the city that provide email and internet access.

As for laptops, the voltage is different in Spain and you will need a converter/adaptor. Keep in mind that you cannot use a modem over your host family's phone, as telephone services are very expensive in Spain. You will not be able to access the internet from your laptop at your host family's house. At home, your laptop can be used for word processing only.

Please advise UAlbany if you change your email address so that we can contact you if necessary. More information about computer access will be available when you arrive in Valencia. Please be patient with the computer resources at AIP. This is typical of Spanish life - please make every effort to adjust!

We hope that e-mail will help all of us communicate at a lower cost. However, if you use e-mail, do not make it your whole life. You are in Spain to experience Spain, not catch up on what you're missing at home. Regardless, don't expect to spend hours using e-mail - access will be somewhat limited.

## **SOCIAL LIFE**

### **Meeting Spaniards**

We asked prior participants to tell us how they met Spaniards. Students recommend **intercambios** (conversation partners) very highly, which AIP may be able to set up. (Since the program is only six weeks, it might be more difficult to find a partner for the summer.) Students also suggested going to cafes and bars to meet Spaniards. However, try to avoid going out as a huge group of Americans; this will only intimidate Spaniards. If your host family has children of the appropriate age, you can meet other Spaniards through them. Being open, friendly, and not going out in large groups seems to help. The process can be difficult at times, but don't give up. Once you arrive, we suggest you ask Spaniards where the best places are to have fun. A word of caution here: Be careful when approaching strangers...there are some bad people in all parts of the world. Always have a buddy with you!

Always keep in mind that you are a guest in Spain, and that you are representing the US. Don't give Spaniards any more reasons to believe the "ugly American" stereotype. Be respectful of the people and customs of Spain at all times. Spaniards will appreciate this and be more willing to meet you and become friends.

## Going Out

The amount of money an individual spends for recreation depends on personal interests and tastes. Think about your safety **constantly!** AIP can advise you if there are areas you should avoid. Pay attention to what they say - after all they live there! If you go out to a club or bar with a group of friends and enter into a conversation with a stranger, you might not be able to walk away as easily as you'd hope. For this reason, it is safer to be in a small group than by yourself. On the other hand, don't go with a big group of friends and just speak English; this will immediately identify you as an easy target. This is yet another reason to try to use Spanish at all times. When you travel to other cities in Spain or Europe, always find out about any areas you should avoid before you wander around. Safety is critical!

## Restaurants

There are many informal cafeterias that serve restaurant-type meals where people have coffee and snacks, or *platos combinados*, a quick meal with various things on the same plate (more or less American style). One of the pleasures of traveling is trying as many restaurants as you can afford. Since it would be impossible to name even half of the good ones, and since the "good ones" may change from year to year, we leave the discoveries to you.

## Theaters and Movies

Valencia has a great arts environment! The average price of a movie ticket varies, depending on the film being shown. A new movie shown for the first time (an *estreno*) will cost the most. Many cinemas sell reserved seat tickets only, and even in those that don't, you pay more or less for your ticket depending on where in the theater you want to sit. Do not be disappointed if you do not understand everything that you see in a play or movie or on television for that matter. It will take some time to develop the background experience that often is required for fuller comprehension. This is especially true for television programs, including news broadcasts of items of local interest. Even when you do not understand it all, the experience is still worthwhile.

## Beaches

Valencia is on the coast of Spain and the beaches are right there! The metropolitan beaches are "Las Arenas" and "La Malvarrosa" and they are accessible by city buses. The bus will bring you close to the beach from AIP in about 10 minutes. There is a beautiful boardwalk-type area that offers wonderful restaurants and cafes and bars where you can sit and view the ocean. You can also swim and participate in water sports. Enjoy it as much as you can! The AIP staff can give you advice on other possible sports activities. Because the universities are closed during the summer, the facilities might be limited, but there should be some opportunities.

## Shopping

The shopping in Valencia is great! They have a typical mall, but the real fun is in town. There are shops along the winding streets - and you can find just about anything you want. Expect to greet and be greeted by the staff in a small store. And don't do all your shopping the first day! Give yourself time to learn how stores work and to compare prices and quality. Valencia also has a beautiful *mercado* (market) where you can buy fresh fruits and vegetables and other foods. For Americans, shopping in an open market is usually a new and very interesting experience. You will find that Spaniards have a much different way of taking their place in line in markets. Usually everyone mills around in front of the counter. They do not stand in a nice straight line. However, you will hear the question "¿Quién es el último?" asked, and its answer, "Soy yo." That way everyone knows who's next. Learn to ask this question yourself.

## Transportation

Since you will most likely be using public transportation to get to school and to explore different neighborhoods in the city for restaurants, shopping, and museums, you will want to do this as economically as possible. AIP will advise you about this, but you should most likely purchase an **abono**, a monthly ticket that entitles the bearer to unlimited usage of buses. Wait until you see how

much you use public transportation before you decide which kind (monthly, a certain number of rides, etc.) to purchase. There are different bus companies that cover different areas. Local bus service (suburbs) is part of the CVT (yellow buses). EMT (red buses) is the main means of public transportation within the city. For travel to other destinations, all buses leave from the bus station, Avda. Menéndez Pidal, 13 (phone 370-9500). There are a variety of possible tickets – ask AIP for help and advice.

**The metro** system has lines that connect different places in the city with the villages that surround Valencia. To benefit from lower rates, you need to buy an underground card sold in any of the underground's stations. **Subways** and **buses** do not run 24 hours a day in Spain. Plan accordingly and expect to take taxis.

**Taxis** are metered. You want the meter to run so that the driver doesn't make up a price; the expression is *bajar la bandera*. When the counter is started, you are immediately charged the minimum charge. There is a night supplement and an extra charge for train station pick-ups, airport travel, and luggage. The AIP staff will advise you of the actual cost of a taxi during orientation. Tips are optional and in any event small. You can talk to taxi drivers, but if the conversation is too personal, cut them off. There are many radio-dispatched taxis. Although there is an extra charge, it may be worth it if you are not on a main street where many empty cabs are passing. AIP can tell you how to find their numbers.

## **GENERAL EXPECTATIONS**

### **Your Behavior**

We expect you to be honorable representatives of the United States and its culture. You will find that you will be held personally responsible for the policies of the Presidents and will be expected to know all about them and this country, even if you were only a kid during their presidencies. You will be amazed at how much more some Spaniards know about our history than you do! You should be as well informed as possible about world events in order to participate successfully in such discussions. You soon will discover that the world does not do everything the way we do. This is usually "interesting", but may not be to your liking. You will be more surprised by the small things than by the major differences. Keep your eyes and ears open, and ask about anything you feel you need information about. If you have been given instructions but really did not understand them, ask again. **It is easy to fall into the trap of faking comprehension**, but it is not useful to either side if you do not really understand.

Depending on your own personal background, you may also encounter curiosity or hostility. Be as mature in these matters as you can. If there are problems with your host family because of your ethnicity (there should not be!), see the AIP staff for help. You may have some concerns about religious pressures from your host family. This most likely will not be a problem. Although almost everyone in Spain is Roman Catholic, many are not practicing. In many families, only members of the older generation still attend church regularly. If you are not Catholic, your host family will probably not know much at all about your religion. They may be curious; they may not. It is up to you to decide how much you wish to share on the topic.

### **Social Customs**

You will also notice that Spaniards use both the *vosotros* and *Uds.* forms in their relationships. *Ud.* is used with professors, people to whom you should show respect, strangers, and elderly members of the family. *Vosotros* is used with friends and people you are more casual with. You should familiarize yourself with the *vosotros* form and its uses.

Spaniards do most of their socializing in the streets and at bars or cafés. They rarely entertain in their homes. If you are invited to a party or to accompany a group, you can accept or not as you wish. You should give a clear signal of your intentions; don't accept and then fail to show up. Women should be cautious of invitations from men. Use your best judgement and don't put yourself in any uncomfortable situations. If you want to invite your family out or want to get together to just talk with someone, invite them for a *cafecito*.

Spanish time will take some getting used to. "Let's meet at 8:00" could mean 8:00, 8:30, or even later. On the other hand, if you have an appointment with a doctor or any other professional, you must arrive on time, even if you are kept waiting for a long time. This goes for classes as well. Expect buses to run on schedule if you are going on a trip, even if they don't.

### **Students' Advice**

In a recent survey, students had the following suggestions regarding local customs and American behavior that irritated Spaniards they encountered. These should help you fit in a little better. Some of these are repeats from previous information, but they are important enough to mention again.

- Americans are often thought to be loud, obnoxious, and demanding, so try not to be.
- Realize that breakfast and dinner will be smaller meals, but that at mid-day the meal will be large.
- Siesta is real and you'll learn to love it.
- The majority of people you encounter will not speak English. This is good!
- Spaniards are often late and it is not considered rude. Also, don't expect quick service as the lifestyle is more "laid back".
- The first week or so can be frustrating, but things will get better.
- Be sure to dress nicely when you go out.
- Your host family will do your laundry, but may only do one small load per week for you, so if you like to wear a million different outfits a day, rethink this habit. Also, detergents may be harsher than the ones you use. Don't bring anything you really love unless you plan to have it dry-cleaned (expensive).

Here are some more suggestions:

- Valencia is active all the time. It's a city but not impersonal. People are very helpful and friendly. Travel is easy and cheap, especially by bus. The nightlife is amazing. You can usually feel comfortable in Valencia, but you should watch out for situations where your pocket can be picked and avoid areas you are told to avoid!
- You need to be fashion conscious. If you dress only for comfort, your wardrobe will draw comments. Spaniards tend to have fewer, but nicer, outfits. You can wear whatever you want, but should think jeans without holes for casual wear. And don't worry about wearing the same thing too much. You'll fit right in!
- Most bars do not have a cover charge (clubs do). You'll probably have bottled water or wine, either of which will be cheaper than soda.
- Be prepared for BESOS - in some situations, everyone is going to be kissing everyone (a kiss on each cheek) and you are going to have to get used to this. Even when you first meet people who are friends of a friend, they will give you besos. Also be aware that the distance between people who are just standing and talking is closer than the usual American distance and may make you feel uncomfortable at the outset. Don't feel invaded! This is just the Spanish idea of personal space. You will get used to it and not even notice it after a short time.

## **STUDENT TRAVEL**

Most students want to travel while they are abroad. It is a great way to get to know the country where you are studying and other surrounding areas as well. However, travel anywhere has its issues. Please keep the following in mind when traveling abroad, no matter where you're going.

### **General Hints**

AIP will help you understand the best ways to travel from Valencia. There are a lot of decisions to be made and many different sources of information. Your host family and the staff at AIP are good sources for information on travel. From Valencia, you will be able to travel directly to many other sites in Spain.

If you plan to stay in hostels or pensiones, which you are likely to do on short trips around Spain, find out first if they will give you a key because some hostels have curfews after which they lock the doors. You may want to bring a sleeping bag to use, but you do not need to bring any bedding or towels for your homestay. Following the suggestions in *Let's Go* is okay - it's usually reliable - but every other American is reading the same book and showing up at the same places. Ask Spaniards your own age where to go in Spain. There are some wonderful villages and unknown locations that you might otherwise miss.

**International Student Identification Card:** This card is **optional**. You can purchase an ISIC card on-line at [www.isic.org](http://www.isic.org). A student ID is helpful while traveling, since it may enable you to get discounts on certain modes of transportation, entrance to museums, etc. Some hotels and stores also offer discounts if you show your ISIC card.

**Guidebooks:** It is usually wise (more interesting and more economical) to travel with a student or tourist guidebook. We recommend *Let's Go: Europe or Spain* and the Lonely Planet series. Guidebooks will also tell you about the weather and lots of other useful matters.

### **A few additional tips:**

- While traveling, **ALWAYS** keep track of your passport and valuables. Passports have been lost and stolen because of carelessness. Be careful not to leave these things unguarded in youth hostels or train/bus stations.
- Travel as lightly as possible. A heavy knapsack or suitcase will only make any problems you may have worse.
- Even in summer, be prepared for colder weather and rain (especially in Northern Europe).
- Don't be afraid to show your student card and ask for a discount. You can save a lot of money on entrance fees.
- **YOUR WHEREABOUTS SHOULD NEVER BE A SECRET!** Make sure that others know where you are going and when you expect to return.

### **Travel in Spain**

Travel within Spain can be fast, cheap, and easy. It can also be slow, expensive, and difficult. Before deciding, think about what is most important to you: your time? your budget? your anxiety level? Make your choice based on what you need for that particular trip. Also, feel free to talk to the staff at AIP to get some tips on travel. Use them and your Spanish family and friends to find out about possible destinations; there are many great places to visit in Spain that only native Spaniards would know about.

**Train:** In Spain, travel by train requires somewhat more patience than in the rest of Europe, since trains are usually slow. They are classified as follows:

- **Talgo** - The best, most comfortable, quickest, and, of course, most expensive Spanish train. All major cities are Talgo stops. Even in second class you'll be comfortable.
- **Inter City** - The next best train.

- **Express** - In spite of its name, not a very rapid train. This is Spain's local train, which stops at all the little stations along the way.
- **Rápido** - Once again, the name has no relation to reality. It travels slowly and stops at all major points.

While traveling throughout Europe by train, you seldom need to reserve a seat. However, within Spain or on Spanish trains, a reservation is almost always required (even if you have a Eurail pass). You should be able to make reservations at the terminal in Valencia. There are special rates for young people on some trains on some days. You can obtain a *tarjeta joven* that gets you a 40% discount only on blue days. (There is a color-coded calendar that identifies these days.) This is a good way to save some money, but it requires some advance planning.

**Bus:** There is good bus transportation in Spain from Valencia to most other cities. Sometimes it is almost as comfortable and as quick as the train, so when you plan your travels, look into both possibilities.

**Car:** Cars can be rented in Spain, but normally you must be either 23 or 25 years of age to rent one. Because of the obvious danger of accidents and police problems in some countries, the University at Albany program **does not** recommend renting cars. You will have to check with the various rental agencies to find out about prices and regulations, but in general, insurance rates, upkeep, tolls, and gasoline are **very expensive** in all of Europe. Further, other drivers may be unpredictable.

**Hitchhiking:** Because of the obvious dangers, **the University at Albany program cannot approve of hitchhiking as a means of travel.** It is very common, and of course, it's the cheapest way of traveling. However, it is not worth the potential dangers!

## Travel in Europe

Traveling within Europe can be a great experience; it depends on the choices you make. Talk to your friends and the staff at AIP to get some ideas about the best way to travel internationally.

**Train:** Within Europe, trains are the most frequently used means of transportation for students. They are the most economical and faithful mode of travel you will find. In most of Europe, trains are very good, comfortable, and punctual. While traveling, however, be sure to check the stop names written on the sides of each **car**, not just the train in general. Many trains split up or add cars along the way; if you're not careful, you may find yourself a long way from your original destination. Most trains have both first class and second class sections. Second class is less expensive and usually comfortable. If you cross international borders while on a train, expect to surrender your passport to an official. You will get it back before your destination.

Railroad Passes are available for travel throughout Europe. Many American students buy the **Eurail Pass** (for 1st class) or the **Student Rail Pass** (for 2nd class); tickets are good for unlimited travel in 13 European countries. A Eurail Pass can be purchased for varying lengths of time from fifteen days to two months. Train passes can be quite costly. There are also new bus passes on the market that may be less expensive. Contact a student travel agent for details.

**Hitchhiking:** Once again, because of the obvious dangers, **the Albany program cannot approve of hitchhiking as a means of travel.** It is not worth the potential dangers!

**Plane:** Airplane travel within Europe is very comfortable and rapid and has recently become very affordable. Although more expensive than travel by train, student flights often cost 1/2 to 1/3 of commercial fares.

## WHAT TO BRING

## Valencia

The weather in Valencia during the summer is glorious! Like all of Spain, it gets very hot. However, the beach is right there for you to cool off and the ocean breezes will keep you going. Buildings in Spain do not usually have air conditioning (although your classrooms will!). Remember: it's hot!

## Other Parts of Spain

If you plan to travel throughout Spain, keep in mind that each region has a distinct climate. To the north you will find cooler areas with more rainfall and several spectacular mountain chains run through the northern part of the country. In the south the climate is very hot and dry in the summer. Remember that Spain is very much a developed nation, with consumer goods similar to those found here. If you forget something, you can always buy it in Spain.

## Planning Your Wardrobe

Because it is hot, please bring light clothes. (Also because of the heat you will begin to understand that the siesta is absolutely necessary!) You should bring a nice outfit, jeans if you plan to travel north (probably too hot to wear them in Valencia); skirts and nice shorts and tops (rather than cut-offs and tiny tank tops). No matter what we advise you to pack, you will find some things are necessary and others aren't. It will depend on what you do and how you live. You will want to be able to blend into your surroundings at times, and your clothing can make a difference. Therefore, it is wise to come prepared with clothes for all occasions. You will see that dressing appropriately is more important than having a lot of variety. Although laundry services are provided as part of the homestay program, the laundry may not always be done exactly the way you would hope. It is prudent to wash all new garments before you take them with you, just to be on the safe side. Furthermore, do not take your favorite things if they cannot withstand unpredictable happenings.

Toilet articles and medicines comparable to those in the U.S. are easily available. If you anticipate needing a certain prescription medicine, you may be more comfortable bringing a supply with you. Carry copies of prescriptions you use regularly, including eyeglasses and contacts. You may not be able to get exactly what you want or need abroad. On the other hand, do not bring enormous amounts of day-to-day products unless you absolutely must have your favorites (feminine products fall into this category – they probably will not have your usual brand). Such products can be purchased easily and quite inexpensively in Spain.

## Packing

**Pack lightly!** Remember you're only going for 6 weeks - not the entire year! If you can't carry your luggage around the block without undue fatigue, repack, because no one is going to carry it for you. If you don't already have the luggage you intend to use on your trip, check out bags with wheels or a wheeled carrier. **You may have to carry them up the stairs to your homestay** if there is no elevator in the building. If you plan to travel extensively while in Europe, take along a smaller bag to hold just enough for those trips. This backpack or another similar piece of luggage can be used as a carry-on on the flight over. The basic guideline is, "Don't pack more than you want to carry yourself." Students who have been to Spain recommend the following:

- Guide book of Spain (*Let's Go Spain* or *Lonely Planet*)
- English/Spanish dictionary
- Pictures of your family, friends, home town, and university
- Small gifts for your host family and new friends
- Batteries (expensive in Spain)
- Battery-operated alarm clock (a must!)
- Camera
- A light sweater or jacket in case there are cool evenings

- Umbrella
- Sneakers or comfortable shoes
- Bathing suit, sunglasses, and sunscreen
- Journal (a great way to keep track of your adventures)
- I-pod
- Feminine products (if you have a brand preference)
- Zip lock baggies for traveling
- Dressy clothes (one outfit at least)
- Hairdryer (although I suggest you buy one when you get over there)
- Some sort of small purse or pouch to put around your neck so that you can keep valuables on your person. This should be something that you might wear under your clothes.
- Chapstick! (Spain is much dryer than here and a good substitute is hard to find.)

**NOTE: Your host family will provide bedding and towels so you do not need to bring any with you.**

## CULTURE SHOCK AND OTHER NEW FEELINGS

Here are some **strategies** that previous participants found useful during their time abroad. The first thing to bear in mind is that you are going to be a foreigner. Your hope is that people will be "nice" to you and most will. However, people vary in their reactions to those who don't seem to know what to do and how to ask for information. Usually, they try to speak slowly. (Or sometimes more loudly! Be prepared: they are not yelling at you, rather they are trying to help you understand.) They also try to be helpful by giving directions, by being friendly overall, and perhaps by introducing you to another person. Others may get frustrated and irritated at the person who does not understand; sometimes they get annoyed at having to repeat themselves. After a certain period of time, they think that you should *know* certain things by now, and they don't want to help any more. Try to be understanding of other people's positions. Just as they need to be patient with you, you should be patient with them.

When you first arrive in Spain, there will be a certain "grace period." You won't know how to do the simplest things, such as how to mail a letter or take a bus, and you sometimes say the wrong thing without meaning to. People will have to show you how to turn on the water; they will have to tell you what you're eating; they'll have to try to figure out your wants and make their own wishes known. Take advantage of this good will as long as it lasts! Soon enough you will be expected to be independent.

Secondly, bear in mind that you may be subject to some mood swings that may be mild or severe. It is normal to feel euphoric when you first arrive. A few weeks in, it is normal to feel down and to wonder why everything is so "backwards" in the new country. Since you are trying to use a foreign language as well, it is common to think that you will never master it and that you have wasted many years in trying to learn it. Then comes a period of adjustment, both cultural and linguistic. By the end of your stay, you are likely to experience a strong wish to return home and remain in Spain simultaneously. After you come home, there is a further adjustment as you try to reconcile what you have experienced with what you have missed by being away. Don't be surprised at feeling culture shock upon coming home - it can actually be harder sometimes to adjust to life back in the U.S. You have been experiencing a completely different lifestyle for an extended period of time. There are definitely things about the United States that you will seemingly notice for the first time. This is normal and you'll readjust soon.

The third thing to be aware of is the feeling of having no constraints, of being invulnerable. **Be careful!!** You are away from your own culture, yet unaware of the unwritten rules of behavior in

Spain. Don't allow this feeling of liberation to lead to serious lapses in judgment. If you violate actual laws, you can end up in jail. While you will have to talk to strangers in order to function, you must still use caution and good judgment in forming relationships. And while you are perhaps unaware of risks to your personal safety, they may be there. You must remain alert. Remember, the same dangers exist in Spain (and all of Europe) as here. In cases where you do not have complete mastery of the language, there could be more dangers! Do not do anything you would not do at home, on campus, or in a big city like New York. Again, **always be careful and use good judgment!**

## LEARNING AND USING SPANISH

Using a foreign language for a long period of time is fun but exhausting. Until you have developed an efficient listening strategy, you may pay too much attention to individual words. Relax! About two weeks in, exhaustion hits if you really have forced yourself to speak nothing but Spanish. Then you get over it. Obviously, you will be using English in your classes that are taught in English. It's outside of class that you must think about. Allowing yourself to speak English frequently will not help you learn Spanish, so try to avoid doing so. It's hard to do this when English is so much easier for you, but if enough of you have this goal in mind, you will be able to maintain the use of Spanish in many situations. If you can, speak to AIP staff in Spanish. If you can't, of course you should use English!

Everyone says they are going to Spain to "become fluent." Here's how to do it: when you get stuck, (it's bound to happen), learn to "talk around" the vocabulary you do not know, because you will never know all the words in Spanish any more than you know all the words in English. Then, wait for someone to suggest the right word for what you have just tried to describe. People usually do this. Then, ask what the word they have just suggested means, and they tell you. You'll have to figure out if that is the right word, unless you recognize it as a word you already knew. Depending on how they explain their word to you, you will probably also have to look up the word in your dictionary to see what it means. Your language growth will occur because of this whole procedure, so welcome it and learn to do it. Eventually, the new words stick, but often not the first time! This is normal, so don't feel discouraged or embarrassed that you have to ask what something is called a million times.

Remember too that you control what you say; what you cannot control is how others speak to you. So even though you feel sheepish, you must ask if you do not know what you have been told. Also, don't be afraid to ask someone to slow down. Some Spaniards speak very fast. And, just like in English, there are many different accents and in Valencia, there is even another language that will sound something like French/something like Spanish to you: it's actually neither. **Warning:** You will become fluent in Spanish by using this method, but you may also cement your mistakes. It is important to pay attention to what you learn in class so that you are **accurate** as well as fluent. Having said all this, recognize that speaking English once in a while with a native speaker can be "refreshing"; you can permit yourself an occasional treat without serious qualms (remember: occasional).

Another way you will develop your language skills is by eavesdropping. If you hear something that you don't understand very well, you may be able to have your host family explain it to you later. You can also benefit a lot from watching TV. But remember, if you tuned into the middle of an English language soap opera that had been running for ten years, even though you would understand all the words, you would not understand the situation or the relationships. So be kind to yourself -- you're not going to "get" them in Spanish if you can't even get them in English. Try the world news,

movies, dubbed U.S. shows, and documentaries first, or watch a show with someone who has seen the series before and can get you up to speed.

## OTHER RESOURCES

Here are some additional resources. I can't vouch for them all, but they seemed worth a look. Happy hunting!

### Web Sites:

#### Spain/Valencia

[www.valnetro.com/](http://www.valnetro.com/)  
[www.upv.es/cv/valintro.html](http://www.upv.es/cv/valintro.html)  
[www.elpais.es/](http://www.elpais.es/)  
[www.ozemail.com.au/~spain/valenci.htm](http://www.ozemail.com.au/~spain/valenci.htm)

#### Spain/Madrid

[www.city.net/countries/spain/](http://www.city.net/countries/spain/)  
[www.SiSpain.org/](http://www.SiSpain.org/)  
[www.comadrid.es/](http://www.comadrid.es/)

### Travel

[www.webofculture.com/edu/gestures.html](http://www.webofculture.com/edu/gestures.html)  
[www.eurotrip.com/](http://www.eurotrip.com/)  
[www.hostels.com/](http://www.hostels.com/)  
[www.ricksteves.com/ccinfo/sp.htm](http://www.ricksteves.com/ccinfo/sp.htm)

### Books

There are many, many books on Spain.

**Lonely Planet Spain**, John Noble (Editor)

**Discovering Spain: An Uncommon Guide**, Penelope Casas

**The Cambridge Companion to Modern Spanish Culture**, David T. Gies (Editor)

**Culture Shock: Spain (Culture Shock Series)**, Marie Louise Graff

**Spain: The Root and the Flower: An Interpretation of Spain and the Spanish People**, John A. Crow

**The Spanish Labyrinth: An Account of the Social/Political Background of the Civil War**, Gerald Brenan

**Travelers' Tales: Spain**, Lucy McCauley