Spain: Social Movements, Democracy, and Cultural Identity

Country Overview & Packing Guidelines

Spring 2027

Country Overview

GENERAL INFORMATION



Spain is a colorful, beautiful country built on a generous foundation of art, culture, history, and politics. Seville, the program base, is one of Spain´s largest cities with a long multicultural tradition that ties back to the city's creation, intertwined with modern urban development and architecture. This multicultural tradition has various expressions, one of the most known worldwide being the birthplace of flamenco—music, dance, and poetry in a creative fusion of "cante gitano" and Andalusian folk music dating back to the 18th century.

Spain is a diverse country integrated by different contrasting regions that show varying economic and social structures, as well as different languages, and historical, political, and cultural traditions. According to the Spanish constitution, the Spanish nation is the common and indivisible homeland of all Spaniards, which is composed of nationalities and regions to which the constitution recognizes and guarantees the right to self-government. These autonomous regions have a strong historically constituted sense of identity and language and exercise their right to self-government within the limits set forth in the constitution and their autonomous statutes.

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CLIMATE AND GEOGRAPHY

Seville is located in the south of Spain in the largest autonomous community of the country, Andalucía. It is a region where you find other historically relevant cities such as Granada, Cordoba or Malaga, some of which we will visit with the program. The climate is generally very warm with a short cold season, with very little rain, that has contributed to some draught issues in recent years.

Seville: AVERAGE HIGH/LOW TEMPERATURES (°F)

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY
61/44	65/46	71/50	75/54	82/59

SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
88/65	80/60	69/51	63/47

LOCAL CUSTOMS

Spaniards are in general very welcoming. For a foreigner it will be easy to establish a personal rapport with them by showing interest and being friendly. Of course, despite that, it is necessary to take into consideration local cultural customs that might differ from your own. In Spain they like keeping the family close and family life is very important, so expect to be invited to some family and friends' events. Whatever time of the year, the Spanish like to go out and have drinks and tapas as a very common and systematic social way of interaction and keeping in touch with their friends. Social life is very important for them.

There are distinct boundaries between the private and the public often expressed in a different sense of personal space; for example, greetings and goodbyes are expressed, as in other parts of Europe, with two kisses, one on each cheek.

Lack of "political correctness" from the US perspective in referring to people with distinct physical characteristics or behavior use to be quite common but is changing rapidly. All North Americans and Europeans, for instance, are called "guiris," however, this should not be understood as an insult.

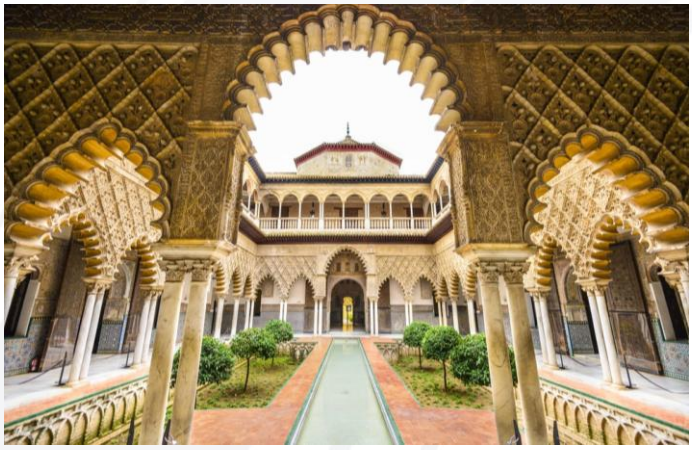
LOCAL DIET

Participating in the local food culture is a central aspect of daily life in country. Special or restricted diets may not always be fully understood by your host family, although they may have previously hosted a student with similar dietary restrictions. By trying to replicate your diet at home you may miss out on an important part of your host culture.

Students are encouraged to participate in the local food culture as a central aspect of daily life. By trying to replicate your diet at home you may miss out on an important part of your host culture.

Due to the unique living and learning community central to all SIT programs, we cannot separate food and eating communally (including with your host family) from the program experience. Please consider local diet seriously when selecting your program of choice. Your admissions counselor is a great resource in better understanding the local diet.

The main meal is lunch; breakfast is usually much lighter than in the States. However, mid-morning the Spanish usually go out to a bar or a café to get a coffee and a tapa. In Spain meals are commonly later than in other countries, lunch being many times way after 2pm and dinner sometimes as late as 9 or 10 pm. In Spain a significant amount of meat is consumed, especially pork and the famous “jamón.”



Note: if you have special dietary needs, including allergies, please inform the office of Student Health, Safety & Wellbeing prior to the start of your program (studenthealth@sit.edu). We will advise you on realistic expectations about avoiding or incorporating certain foods within the program context.

MEAL PLANNING

Homestay: Homestay families generally provide breakfast and dinner during the week and breakfast, lunch, and dinner on the weekend. The estimated cost for meals that are not provided is based on buying groceries and making your own meals for the meals that are not provided during program activities. If you plan on eating out regularly, you should budget more money.

Please remember to budget at least **$286** for your meals not provided during the semester. For a breakdown of your program’s estimated out-of-pocket expenses, please see the table in the **Money** section of this document.

Residential housing: Residential students are responsible for their meals and should plan accordingly. Meal planning becomes an exciting way to explore local markets, try new ingredients, and even cook with fellow students.

The estimated cost for meals during the program is based on the cost of modestly eating out or buying groceries to prepare your own meals, when cooking facilities are available. If you plan on eating out regularly, you should budget more money. Exploring local food is one of the highlights of living abroad, so give yourself room to savor the experience.

Please remember to budget at least **$1,800** for your meals during the semester. For a breakdown of your program's estimated out-of-pocket expenses, please see the table in the **Money** section of this document.

SAFETY, SECURITY, AND HEALTH

Maintaining good health is essential to having a successful study abroad experience.

SIT recommends you do research prior to departure about the health, safety, and security specifics of the country(ies) you plan to visit. Consult the U.S. Department of State website and search their Countries and Areas Archive for international travel information and current travel advisories for each country. Search the Center for Disease Control Traveler's Health page to see travel health notices and vaccine requirements and recommendations for any country(ies) you plan to visit.

SIT recommends doing research ahead of time to stay up to date on It will be critical that you educate yourself about the potential health and safety hazards that may exist in your areas of travel and make informed decisions about what preventative measures to take prior to departure. You should also reference the Health, Access, and Identity information on your program's webpage.

If you have any questions, please reach out to the Student Health, Safety, & Wellbeing Team. Students are thoroughly briefed on safety considerations during in-country orientation and are updated throughout the semester if and when circumstances change. For information regarding safety and security, emergency communications, SIT policies, health and personal property insurance, and general program tips, please read the Safety, Security, and Health document and Student Handbook on your program's predeparture page.

HOUSING

Homestay: As many SIT Study Abroad alumni will tell you, the homestay experience can be one of the most rewarding and most challenging aspects of the program. We hope you will come prepared for the experience and committed to moving beyond cultural immersion as you begin to question, distinguish, and analyze the host culture vis-à-vis your own culture and come to a deeper understanding of both.

Family structures vary in every culture. SIT Study Abroad values the diversity of homestay families, and your family may include a single mother of two small children or a large extended family with many people coming and going all the time.

Additionally, please bear in mind that, in many countries, the idea of what constitutes a “home” may be different from what you expect. You will need to be prepared to adapt to a new life with a new diet, a new schedule, new people, and new priorities, and expectations.



Each program’s homestay coordinator will be responsible for placing students in homestays. These placements are made first based on health concerns, including any allergies or dietary needs, to the extent possible. **Please note: in order to ensure the best fit for students and families, SIT may make final adjustments to homestay placements after student arrival in country. Therefore, SIT will not provide information about your homestay family before you depart for the program.**

We seek to foster increased cross-cultural understanding in students by immersing them in local culture through daily life in a new family and community. Students are expected to assume roles as family members, respecting and following host family norms around communication, visitors, and activities of daily living.

On this program, you will be staying in one homestay if choosing this option. You will stay with a family living in Seville for almost 12 weeks, and the only time you will not be with your host family is during excursions.

Residential housing: Students will stay in shared apartments in a student residence where they will have their own rooms and bathroom and share common spaces. There will be a kitchen for cooking meals, washing machine in unit, air conditioning, and Wi-Fi. During excursions, all students will be housed in shared guesthouses or small hotels/hostels.

OTHER ACCOMMODATIONS

Students should expect to share a room with one or more students during orientation/launch and while on excursions, these are usually in hotels or hostels.

TRANSPORTATION

Seville has very good public transportation. The main means of transportation are city buses, the subway, and the tram. While in the program you will receive a metro card that will work for all the above. To get to the University and SIT office in the center of town you can use the tram, the bus, or the metro station, and usually it's also possible to walk from homestays.

COMMUNICATION

While you may want to be in regular communication with friends and family from home during the term abroad, please bear in mind that different time zones, unreliable phone lines, and changing program activities can complicate communication.

It's important to be clear with family and friends about your availability during the term. Many students recommend making an appointment to call home or to receive a call. You should also consider the impact of constant communication with friends and family at home on your cultural immersion.

Visit our Contact & Communication page for practices on program communication, emergency communication, and home institution communication.

PHONES AND INTERNET

Cell Phone Policy

As part of SIT's commitment to student safety and security, all students are required to have a working cell phone capable of making and receiving both local and international calls, including a data plan so that your phone is operational when you are away from wi-fi. If needed, during orientation SIT staff can assist students in purchasing a local SIM card and acquiring minutes for calls and texting. Failure to maintain a working phone capable of making and receiving calls/texts will be considered a conduct violation and a breach of our student code.

There are several cell phone companies in Spain. The most popular ones are Movistar, Vodafone or Orange. They all offer a rechargeable card system that means that students won't need to have a contract. You can find many stores of these companies in Seville where you can get information about offers and prices. Also, in Spain it's possible to buy credit for E sims for your US cell phone and use it in country on webpages such as Holafly or Airalo. The SIT program center and homestays provide internet access during posted hours, and all homestays have internet access.

MAILINGS

Unlike receiving a package here in the US, receiving a package at your program site is usually **expensive** and **problematic**. Customs agents must inspect all packages and you, as the recipient, are responsible for duty and storage fees. In addition, there are cases of items being lost in the mail or taking so long to reach the recipient that the recipient is nearly back in the US by the time the items are received. For these reasons, sending packages should be done only for emergency situations. Additionally, sending valuables is highly discouraged. Mailing prescription medication abroad is illegal.

For this program, **DHL, FedEx, and UPS services are available in country**. Despite cheaper prices, reliance on the US Postal Service is not advised due to delays and unreliability. When given the option, it's always a good idea to send packages certified and with a tracking number that allows the sender to track the package.

If it is necessary for someone to send you mail, then posted letters and packages should be sent to the address of your accommodation or to our office.

MONEY

In addition to tuition, SIT Study Abroad program fees cover room throughout the program. SIT will cover daily commuting costs, if any, and excursions that are part of the normal program itinerary. During the ISP period, students will receive a stipend for basic expenditures, based on the cost of living at the program base. **Any domestic travel, interpretation services, or supplies necessary for the ISP are the students' responsibility**. Please plan accordingly.

In Spain payment with debit or credit cards is normal, as well as paying with your cellphone. ATMs are very normal, and you have access to them all over the city if you want to access cash.

Check current exchange rates: http://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/

If using a debit and/or credit card, you should contact your bank and/or credit card companies regarding your travel plans. If you don't inform these companies that you will be away, they will often assume the card has been lost or stolen and will put an immediate hold on the card. You should also check on costs of withdrawal, as these costs vary and can sometimes be very expensive. Renewing and receiving reissued credit and debit cards while on the program will be an expensive and highly inconvenient process. Before you leave for your program, please check the expiration dates on your cards to ensure that they will not expire while you are abroad.

It is also very important that you make photocopies of all your debit/credit card information and leave them with someone you trust in case your card(s) is/are lost or stolen.

Following are suggestions for spending money during the program, including estimates for textbooks, ISP/Internship-related expenses, medical expenses, personal spending, and gifts. Individual spending habits vary widely, and **these costs are averages**.

We suggest that you budget between US$3000 to $4000 for out-of-pocket costs not covered by the Tuition and Housing Fees.

To determine where you might fall in this range, please examine your spending habits during a typical semester at your home school and consider any exceptional expenditures you may have on the program. Please carefully consider your personal spending habits when creating your out-of-pocket expense budget. Some items to consider are textbooks, Field Study Project or Internship-related expenses (if applicable) not covered by the program, interpretation services, medical expenses, personal spending, and gifts. Use the average estimates below as a guide to help you plan for out-of-pocket expenses.

Please budget approximately **(homestay option)**:

Personal spending (from past student suggestions):	1500 USD
Meals not provided:	286 USD
Books, printing, supplies:	100 USD
Up-front medical costs:	500 USD
Potential ISP travel expenses:	500 USD
Visa:	160 USD
Estimated total:	**3046 USD**

Please budget approximately **(residential housing option)**:

Personal spending (from past student suggestions):	1500 USD
Meals not provided:	1800 USD
Books, printing, supplies:	100 USD
Up-front medical costs:	500 USD
Potential ISP travel expenses:	500 USD
Visa:	160 USD
Estimated total:	**4,560 USD**

Please note that up-front medical costs can vary widely. Though you are completely covered by SIT's travel insurance Blue Cross Blue Shield, which you can read more about on our Participant Insurance page, you still may need to pay up-front for medical care and then file for reimbursement.

VISITORS AND FREE TIME

SIT strongly discourages and will not provide support for any visitors to students during the term, due to the rigorous nature of the program and the disruption that such visits cause in program flow and group dynamics. Students should be sure that relatives and friends are aware of this policy and that visits are scheduled for dates after the formal conclusion of the program. Students will not be excused from program components to attend to visitors. See the Attendance and Participation Policy.

If a visitor does come while a program is in progress, they must plan their own independent accommodations; SIT Study Abroad homestay families can accommodate only their assigned student and, due to cultural and contractual understandings with SIT, should not be asked to host students' guests.

INDEPENDENT TRAVEL

Please read our full Independent Travel policy for our definition, guidelines and how to access our independent travel notification form. Please note that independent travel is only allowed during program free time and students will not be excused from program activities to travel. SIT is not responsible for any costs of student independent travel including logistics, preparations, cancelation fees, change fees, and any other costs associated with independent travel.

We highly recommend you wait to book any independent travel until AFTER arriving on program and receiving the final academic schedule from your program.

During the program, students follow an intense schedule of classes and field-based learning assignments, even during the ISP. Free time for pursuing an independent interest or hobby during the program will be limited. Your admissions counselor can advise you about particular interests you may have. For example, if you must keep in shape for your next athletic season, or if you play a musical instrument and want to know whether to bring it, we can help you to understand your schedule and any concerns or limitations that may exist.

CODE OF CONDUCT AND POLICIES

SIT maintains a Code of Conduct and clear institutional policies regarding student behavior through a commitment to mutual learning and respect for others. Visit the policy page for detailed policies around academic integrity, alcohol and drug use, anti-harassment and non-discrimination, attendance and participation, credit hours, equal education opportunities, grading, housing, independent travel, prohibited activities, religious holiday observance, sexual harassment and misconduct, and withdrawal among others.

Packing Guidelines

LUGGAGE

Please pack lightly and include only necessary items. You should be able to carry all your luggage significant distances on your own. Try to minimize both the number of bags and weight of your bag(s) since you will likely be acquiring more belongings while abroad. We recommend a small daypack, which will also be useful for short excursions when on the program.



If carrying prescription medications, you should carry a letter from your doctor to prevent any concerns at customs or in transit. (Please see the “General Health Tips” section in the Safety, Security, and Health pre-departure document.)

Please check the current requirements of the Transportation Security Administration (http://www.tsa.gov) as well as those of the airline on which you are flying for domestic and international baggage restrictions.

CLOTHING GUIDELINES

While informal dress is acceptable and common in most settings, it is essential to keep a neat, clean appearance. Jeans with holes, sloppy T-shirts and tank tops are discouraged. It is not necessary to be fashionable, just neat and clean. It is very important to have at least one set of clothes for semi-formal occasions and one set of clothes that can get dirty during excursions.

You will experience a seasonal change during this semester, so be sure to pack accordingly. It is advisable to bring clothes that can be used for both seasons. In all homes and at the university in Seville there is central heating, so layers are recommended, especially during the winter.



COMPUTERS AND OTHER ELECTRONICS

It is recommended that you bring a laptop computer. If you bring a laptop, the computer will be your personal property and responsibility. It is recommended that you insure your computer, smartphone, or other valuables for full coverage in the event of loss or theft (SIT insurance does not cover personal property).

Please see the following website for information about electricity, voltage and electrical adapters. http://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/

GIFTS

As you might imagine, it is best to be prepared with a gift to offer your homestay family, if you have a homestay, in gratitude for their hospitality and as a means to share a part of your culture with them. We suggest one or two gifts that the whole family can enjoy. You may also wish to consider gifts for people outside your homestay family. Try to choose gifts that represent you or the part of the country and/or community you live in. Think about what your city, state, or local artisans produce. Draw upon your personal interests or hobbies for ideas. Pack a couple of small gifts for children, such as small games, bubbles, or a Frisbee. Even if your homestay family does not have small children, chances are that you will engage with children in your homestay community. Once you are on the program and learn more about the local culture, you will discover other ways to thank your family. Remember to bring pictures of your friends and family to share.

Former students have recommended calendars, picture books, postcards, music, or souvenirs from your college bookstore as gifts.

WHAT YOU CAN AND CANNOT OBTAIN IN COUNTRY

Sometimes some specific US brands of medicines or pharmacy products don't exist in Europe and if they are things you need should bring them with you.

ALUMNI CONTACTS

If you have further questions, please contact your admissions counselor and/or ask an alumni contact: https://studyabroad.sit.edu/admissions-aid/application-process/contact-a-former-student/.

Don't miss the Packing List on the next page!

Packing List

These packing guidelines are **based** on suggestions from past students and your academic director.

Packing List sample:

GENERAL

- 1 nice outfit suitable for a social event
- Lightweight clothes including pants, long-sleeved shirts, light T-shirts

- Underwear and socks (10-day supply)
- Warm pajamas or nightgown
- Slippers or flip flops (for use inside house. Flip flops not recommended for use outdoors because of the cobble stone sidewalks and roads.)
- 1 pair comfortable sneakers
- 1 pair sandals
- 1 pair nice shoes
- Rain gear (waterproof jacket, poncho, or umbrella)
- 2–4 pairs pants or jeans
- 1 skirt and/or dress
- 5–6 mixed long and short-sleeved t-shirts
- 2–3 blouses or button-down shirts
- Sweater
- Jacket or fleece
- Scarf
- Bathing suit
- Optional – workout clothes

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

- Passport
- 2 photocopies of your passport stored separately from your actual passport
- Photocopy of visa
- 2 passport photos
- Any relevant vaccine records/documents

HEALTH/TOILETRIES

- Adequate supply of any medications you use regularly
- Small first aid kit (most supplies can be bought here)
- Extra eyeglasses and/or contact lenses
- Sunscreen (at least SPF 30)
- Sunglasses
- Wide-brimmed hat or baseball cap (for sun protection)

OTHER IMPORTANT ITEMS

- Medium-sized day pack (to pack clothes for 3–4 days for excursions)
- Small, quick-drying towel

- Reusable water bottle
- Small luggage lock
- Laptop computer *(please insure it)*
- Students are encouraged to bring a battery-operated carbon monoxide detector