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First Semester Reflection

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First Semester Reflection



Cliff Overlook, Benidorm

I cannot believe that today marks my three-month mark, aka my one-third-done-with-the-program milestone.

I have only nine days left in Alicante this semester. Just two weeks before I leave for Christmas vacation. I can't help but wonder, where has the time gone??

I guess time flies when you're studying abroad, and while in the beginning I felt a little suffocated by how much time I had away from my family, I now realize how little nine months is in the scheme of things.

Of course I miss my family and my friends, but to sum up the semester, *there is nowhere I would rather be but right here; right now*. Of course it will not be easy to spend Christmas morning away from my family, but at the same time, *I will be spending Christmas with a Dutch family*, indulging in everything that has to offer. How many times in my life will I be able to do that?? I have to soak it in.

To reflect on these three months, I look back on just a few of my fondest memories.

Parc Guell, Barcelona (Nov)

There is nothing quite like seeing a site that you have imagined your whole life. I first learned about the park in *Cheetah Girls 2* (haha), and since coming to Spain, I have just fallen more in love with art and Gaudi. So, in this park, overlooking an amazing city and running my fingers over the beautiful mosaics, I had one of the most blissful feelings I have ever felt in my life. If it weren't for our appointment at the Sagrada Familia I would have never left.

Church Courtyard, Benidorm (Sept)

On one spontaneous day off from school, my friend Jordan and I wanted to get out of town and see something new. We had never been to Benidorm and it is one of those must-see places according to a lot of people. It is quite a tourism capital for its beautiful beaches contrasting the high rise casinos right across the street. We just went - without a plan or anything (and if you know me, you may realize how unlike me that is...) and found this beautiful church with an even more beautiful water overlook carved into the cliff. Even on the stormy day, the cliff was a once in a lifetime view.

Night overlook of The Alhambra (Oct)

Red wine flowing with dinner, plenty of great company, and an excellent tour guide; A recipe for an overwhelming feeling of joy as the group turned the corner to see a lit Alhambra, one of the most visited landmarks in the world; A building with so much history and detail that the tour lasts nearly four hours. Seeing that building for the first time was so beautiful, I was almost moved to tears.

And last that I'm reflecting on today, but certainly not least, ***Thanksgiving Away From Home*** (Nov)

I was not expecting to have nearly as good of a day as I did. I normally spend the day sleeping in, helping my mom, snacking and then enjoying the traditional cuisine. However, this year I woke up early, went to class, did not enjoy the food as it was slightly *off*, and then hung out with friends. It is not a day that I reflect on fondly because it was perfect. I think fondly of it because it wasn't perfect and I was still ok. It gave me hope that I will survive the holiday season without my family because it means that I get to spend this year in Spain *living in the right here right now*.

Ahhh... what great memories. And still so much more to come. Next week, I am headed to Berlin, Brussels, and Budapest before a week of finals, then Lisbon and Amsterdam. I am elated and excited to continue sharing my journey with you as I roll into a brand new semester, which will change everything!

Maura