

## **THINGS TO BE AWARE OF**

**Telephone:** None of the families allow students to make long distance calls. Use public telephone for this purpose or arrange to receive calls at a certain time. **Spain is 6 hours ahead of the USA.** When it is noon here, it is 6:00 p.m. in Spain. Best time to receive long distance calls is 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. Spain time. (9:00 to 10:00 a.m. US time).

Another great option is to have a calling card (MCI, AT & T). There are several choices available. Please look into possible options ahead of time. Each company has its own access codes that must be used from Spain. Therefore participants are encouraged to contact their long distance company before departing for Spain.

To direct dial a number in Madrid from the United States dial **011- 34-91- number**

**Locals calls are charged by the minute. PLEASE BE BRIEF.**

**Madrid transportation:** The subway system (el Metro) is shown in most city maps. You can buy a bono card for 10 rides. You can get a map at any Metro station.

You may choose to take a public bus as well. Busses board through the front door and should be signaled if you want to get on or off, as they do not necessarily stop at every point. You can buy a bono card for 10 rides.

Madrid taxis are all licensed. They are white with a red stripe and a roof rack and they are metered. You will be charged extra for waiting or baggage. A trip to or from Barajas airport to downtown Madrid is about 3000 pesetas. There is an additional charge for holidays and between the 11 p.m. and 6 a.m. Tips are optional and in any case less than 10%.

**For medical emergencies:** English speaking doctors and medical personal are available at the Unidad Médica Angloamericana, Conde de Aranda 1, 28001 Madrid. Tel. 91-435-1823. Make sure to take along your medical insurance information to be refunded when submitting your claim in the United States.

**All students are requested to purchase an International student identification card. This card includes medical insurance while studying abroad.**

Electricity is very expensive in Spain. Please take brief showers no more than once a day and turn off all the lights when not in use.

**Money matters:** The American Express Office is located at Plaza de las Cortes, 2. Tel. 91-429-47-75. Your best choice is to have a major credit card with you (Visa, Master Card, American Express, although Visa is most popular). Please remember to bring with you your PIN number (separately from the credit card) so that you may have access to money when needed.

**Spain** is situated in south Western Europe. It occupies the Iberian Peninsula and is bathed by the Mediterranean Sea, the Atlantic Ocean and the Cantabrian Sea. It also includes the Balearic Islands in the Mediterranean, the Canary Islands in the Atlantic and the cities of Ceuta and Melilla. Its total surface area is 504,788 sq. kms.

**Languages:** Castilian Spanish throughout the country: Catalan, Valencian, Basque (Euskera) and Galician in those respective Autonomous Communities.

**Population:** 39,887,240 Inhabitants.

**Religion:** The Spanish Constitution guarantees religious freedom.

**Electricity:** 220 volts AC.

**Measurement System:** Decimal Metric System

**Passports/Visas:** To enter Spain it is necessary to show a valid passport or another document adhering to international conventions and reciprocity criteria that verifies the identity of the traveler. For citizens of Andorra, Austria, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Switzerland and of those countries belonging to the European Economic Community, the presentation of a national identification document is sufficient. For nationals of certain countries, and in function of the duration of the visit, a visa is required. In case of doubt, consultation at any Spanish Consulate is advisable.

**Customs:** Travelers entering Spain may transport a series of personal items (such as personal jewelry, cameras, viewfinders, musical instruments, portable video and sound equipment, athletic gear, camping articles, etc.) without having to pay customs charges. Upon request, Spanish customs officials will issue receipts to justify the entry into the country of any item. For certain articles, such as cigarettes, cigars, perfume, wines and liquor, maximum limits have been established, with customs fees required on surpassing quantities. There is no limit to the amount of pesetas (Bank of Spain notes) tourists may bring into Spain. Also permitted is the entry of checks or vouchers issued against foreign accounts in convertible pesetas, as are travelers checks, with no limits. Foreign currency can also be brought into Spain with no limits, both bank notes and coins, providing they are of legal issue.

**Currency:** The Spanish currency is the euro.

**Currency Exchange:** All bank branch offices offer foreign currency exchange services, as do a considerable number of hotels and many travel agencies. Most hotels and restaurants and many commercial establishments also accept the most popular international credit cards and travelers checks. The most recognized credit card is Visa.

**Hours:** Perhaps because of the benign climate and the long hours of sunshine in Spain, Spaniards tend to get up later in the morning and stay out later at night than the rest of their European neighbors. Shops and businesses are usually opened from 9 or 9:30 am to 1:30 pm

and from 4:30 or 5 pm to 8 or 8:30 pm though it has become more and more common for businesses to stay open through the traditional "siesta" hours.

Business establishments are usually closed for a day and half per week, most often Saturday afternoon and Sunday, while many shops close only on Sunday. In tourist areas, in summer, business hours are often expanded to 10 or 11 pm with stores open 7 days a week.

Restaurant hours are quite varied, with the norm being from 1:30 to 3:30 pm for lunch and from 8:30 to 11 or 11:30 pm for dinner. In summer, these hours are often expanded, with many establishments offering continuous service and still other serving food into the small hours of the night. Bars are usually open all day and close late at night.

In general, the night life in Spain is quite intense, and the bars and discotheques stay open long past midnight. In summer, they often stay open past 3 or 4 am. In big cities like Madrid and Barcelona, for example, there are many places that stay open until dawn, even in winter.

**Pharmacies:** Pharmacy hours are established by each town's City Hall, though such establishments are generally open from 9.30 am to 2 pm and from 4:30 to 8:00 pm.

Besides this set schedule, however, a series of pharmacies are required to remain open on an "on call" basis as well. All pharmaceutical dispensaries provide a list of addresses of the establishments that are "on call" with the nearest ones clearly indicated. This list is also printed in the daily newspapers.

**Banks:** Bank offices are open for business from 8.30 am to 2:30 pm Monday through Saturday, except in the summer months when they are closed on Saturday. Some branch offices are open in the afternoon.

**Tipping:** Tipping is a great tradition in Spain. While practically all establishments currently include a surcharge for service it is still common to leave something of a tip. This custom, common in bars and restaurants, has extended to hotel porters, theatre ushers and taxi drivers, though in none of these cases is it obligatory nor will anyone recriminate a client for not tipping.

**Dress:** There are no special norms in Spain with respect to dress. From a practical point of view, it is advisable for those who come from colder countries to remember that in many of the coastal areas the winter weather is characterized by its temperate nature. For this reason, it is always a good idea to consult the weather forecast pertaining to the respective area of interest beforehand. With the exception of specific places, very warm clothing is usually not necessary.

On a related matter, perhaps because the night life is such a great part of Spanish culture, it is not necessary to dress formally for dinner or the theatre, though this naturally depends on specific cases and the variety of ambiances and personal circumstances involved.