¿Estáis listos?
A Study Abroad Survival Guide
University of Rhode Island
Spanish International Engineering Program
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Departure Preparation

Hola y bienvenidos to the URI Spanish IEP Study Abroad Survival Guide! We know how hard you have all worked to make it to this point and so we would like to congratulate you for your efforts thus far. However, there is still much to prepare for before embarking on your journey abroad and we would like to help you breathe a little easier through the process.

This is a guide created by students who have been in your shoes before and have successfully completed their year abroad. Our goal is to outline the general process for you in order to help alleviate some of your stress. We would also like to answer the majority of the questions that you may have regarding your journey. This packet won’t answer all of your questions but thankfully you have many resources at your disposal such as the Spanish IEP (SIEP) Director, Silke Scholz, and the SIEP Student Ambassadors. Most importantly, remember that if we were able to do it, you all can too!

Academic Year

Course Requirements

Although there is no specific requirement as to which particular level of proficiency you all must have before departing, you must have completed SPA 321 (Pre-Internship Spanish) before you leave. Although you can choose which semester you would like to complete this course, it is highly recommended that you complete the course the spring semester before you depart. In addition to learning technical vocabulary, several topics and themes are directly related to your study abroad preparation process.

Are you nervous that your Spanish isn’t at a high enough level to be successful in the coming year? Or do you simply want to get more practice? Attend the Spanish Coffee Hour hosted at the IEP House! Contact Silke Scholz or one of the SIEP Student Ambassadors for the schedule. Spanish Coffee Hour isn’t just people sitting and drinking coffee together (although there is free coffee available), it is a social event designed for practicing your language skills. At the coffee hour you have the opportunity to converse with native speakers and practice your conversational skills before going abroad.

SIEP Paperwork

During the fall semester of your junior year, Silke, the SIEP Coordinator, will contact you to set up a meeting. This preliminary meeting will be used in order to discuss your study abroad options. Below are links to our partner universities websites. Use these to explore your options and begin thinking about where you want to study:

- EINA de la Universidad de Zaragoza (Zaragoza, Spain): [http://eina.unizar.es](http://eina.unizar.es)
www.unizar.es
- Pontificial Catholic University of Valparaiso (Valparaiso, Chile): www.ucv.cl
- Tecnológico de Monterrey (various campuses, Mexico): http://www.itesm.edu/
- TECNUN (San Sebastián, Spain): www.tecnun.es
- Universidad de Cantabria (Santander, Spain): www.unican.es

When investigating, make sure to look at the different programs and courses that are offered at each school. Also investigate if courses are offered on the main campus or at a satellite campus. Generally speaking, TECNUN is the best option for biomedical engineering students and Universidad de Cantabria is the best option for both ocean engineering students and civil engineering students as they offer courses in those specific disciplines. However, you may choose to go wherever you please just as long as you can find an engineering or high level math course that you can get approved for SPA 412 credit.

In December, you must submit to Silke the following SIEP Paperwork:

a) Your motivation letter (a letter in Spanish indicating why you would like to go to that university and how you plan to take advantage of the learning opportunities provided on their campus), and

b) A list of the courses that you would like to take while studying there (this is just the list of courses that you would like to take, at this point you do not need to seek any formal advice or official approvals for them). Please note that you must include at least one engineering or advanced math course in order to obtain credit for Spanish 412, a requirement for your B.A. in Spanish.

The IEP Department works very hard to ensure that you are selected to attend one of your top two choices, however nothing is guaranteed. The program is a direct exchange with our partnering universities. Therefore the number of slots is limited and changes from year to year. To ensure that you attend the university of your choosing, it is highly recommended that you conduct ample research regarding each university and write a persuasive motivation letter as to why you deserve to go to the university you have chosen. Remember that rationale such as “the courses, such as XXX, offered at this university will supplement my education from URI and align with my future career goals” will hold much more weight than “I’d like to go this university because I love that the city has a beach”.

Scholarships

Trust us, you’re going to want to have all of the money you possibly can when you are abroad. Whether it is $20,000 or $20, any amount of scholarship money helps you immensely. Apply to any scholarship in which you are eligible because you never know what may happen! Keep in mind that the majority of scholarship applications require recommendation letters. Make a note of the deadlines and ask for references at least a month in advance. You know how you all hate when professors give large assignments at the last minute? Well professors and other mentors hate that too. You probably will not get the best recommendation letter if the writer is
chugging coffee and rubbing their eyes the night before it’s due. That is, if they agree to write you one at all!

Some scholarships to make a note of:

- **Beatrice S. Demers Foreign Language Fellows Program**: Rhode Island residents and anyone who is a student at a Rhode Island college or university who wishes to pursue foreign language study. Preference will be given to applicants from the University of Rhode Island who meet qualifications.

- **Benjamin A Gilman Scholarship**: The Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program provides awards for U.S. undergraduate students who are receiving Federal Pell Grant funding at a two-year or four-year college or university to participate in study abroad programs worldwide. Awards from $3,000 to $5,000.

Make sure to occasionally check the OIE scholarship website ([http://www.uri.edu/international/scholarships.html](http://www.uri.edu/international/scholarships.html)) and the IEP specific scholarship website ([http://www.uri.edu/iep/scholarships.html](http://www.uri.edu/iep/scholarships.html)) as there are very often new scholarships posted for which you all could be eligible.

**Obtaining a Valid Passport**

If you do not yet have a valid passport, you need to apply for one ([travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov)). If you already have a passport, your passport **MUST** be valid an additional six months after your planned **RETURN** date to the U.S. For example, if you are abroad until August, your passport should be valid until February of the following year. This should be completed during winter break or earlier as it can take several months for all of the paperwork to be processed and for you to receive your passport. You **MUST** have a valid passport to bring to the Consulate in order to obtain your visas.

**Financial Aid**

If you have questions about financial aid during the year abroad, you should contact or make an appointment to see Victor Gaspar in the Office of Enrollment Services: vgaspar@uri.edu.

**University Applications**

Sometime during winter break, you will be told which university you have been selected to attend. However, this does not mean that you have been accepted to this university. In order to be officially accepted into the university and receive an acceptance letter (**NECESSARY** for the visa application) you must complete a short application process usually involving a page requesting your personal information, passport photo, and a copy of your transcript. You all will receive the applications from Silke after your location is finalized.
Immersion Program Applications

If you have been selected to attend a university in Spain, you have the opportunity to attend an immersion program before you begin your semester and not only receive Spanish credit but also have a smoother adjustment to life in Spain! Unfortunately, this opportunity is not available to students who will be traveling to Chile or Mexico because their semesters begin in July and the partnering universities do not offer similar immersion programs.

For students attending Universidad de Cantabria, there are FREE language immersion classes offered at the end of the summer and during the school semester. The courses are free for URI students and are a great way to continue to improve your language skills and meet other foreign exchange students. CUIC is the center for language courses here you can sign up for Spanish classes. You will report here to take the language placement exam. The summer immersion paperwork should be filled out at the end of the semester, or a month in advance at the latest. Remember it will take time for paperwork to arrive in Spain so send it out well in advance. Go to http://www.unican.es/ciuc/cespaniol/ for dates, enrollment forms, and prices for living with a host family. Mention that you are an exchange student coming from University of Rhode Island so they do not charge you for the course.

For students attending TECNUN or the Universidad de Zaragoza, you can attend either a month or two week long program in Jaca. You must pay in order to participate in these, however it is well worth the money. Details for this can be found at https://cursosdeespanol.unizar.es/es/cursos-de-verano-en-jaca.

Visa Process

Although this is probably the least exciting part of this whole guide, it is also the most important. You must make sure that you complete each part of the visa process EXACTLY as the country’s requirements state. If any of your documents are not absolutely perfect, your visa request could potentially be postponed or denied. It is not difficult to complete any particular part of the process, but if you do not stay on top of it and plan ahead, you will definitely find yourself scrambling and stressed at the last minute.

¡Note! Be sure to check the consulate websites before going to be aware of any changes as the visa requirements are subject to change without notice.

Spain

If you are planning to study and/or intern in Spain, as part of your visa application, you will need to present quite a few supporting documents. Some items require time and/or travel to obtain. You should take advantage of the fact that you will be at home and have some free time
during the winter break to obtain (or at least to begin planning when and how to obtain) the necessary documents.

Complete the visa application form and gather any supporting documentation that you do not yet have in your possession. Make three copies of each of your supporting documents and three copies of your completed visa application. Why do you need so many copies? You will need to submit the original documents and visa application and one photocopy to the Spanish Consulate, one copy to the Spanish police or Oficina de Extranjeros upon your arrival in Spain, and you should keep one set of copies for your own records.

¡Note! You will have to surrender your passport at your appointment in order for the Spanish government to process your visa and it can take well over a month for them to return your passport to you.

Full Spanish Visa Application Checklist:


_____ Passport

_____ Additional ID (Driver’s license, Student ID)

_____ 2 passport-size photos, with white background

_____ Acceptance letter from Spanish partner university (from Dr. Echevarría)

_____ Letter from Spanish IEP Director Silke Scholz indicating that you will have a SIEP internship in the spring

_____ Proof of health insurance
   Proof of international health insurance coverage for the duration of your stay in the amount of the equivalent of at least 30,000€ and which includes repatriation coverage.

_____ Proof of sufficient funds for subsistence
   You will need to demonstrate that you have at least 1000 USD per month of your planned stay in order to support yourself. One of the following will suffice:
• Proof of scholarship or aid in the amount of at least 1000 USD per month for room, board and personal expenses during your stay.
• A notarized letter from your parent(s) or guardian(s) assuming full financial responsibility for your room, board and personal expenses in the amount of at least 1000 USD per month of your stay. The recommended text for such a letter is “Certifico por la presente que yo (el padre, la madre, otro, etc.) de (tu nombre) cubriré su estancia en España con 1000 dólares mensuales y que soy responsable de los gastos que ocasionen cualquier emergencia.”
• Proof of personal savings account balance with at least 1000 USD per month of your stay.

_____ Visa fee is $190 for US citizens $79 for other nationalities, paid by money order payable to “Consulado de España”. Fees are not refundable. Citizens of Canada need to email the Consulate to inquire on visa fees (cog.boston@mae.es). Note that fees change often, please go to the Consulate’s website for updated information.

_____ If you are not a US citizen, proof of immigration status
If you have a green card, you need to contact the Office of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services of the Department of Homeland Security in order to verify whether or not you will need to apply for a re-entry permit (due to the length of your stay abroad).
For full details on the visa application process for Spain, see the information below (under “May” or go to the Spanish Consulate’s website and go to the “Visado de Estudios” section for a full description of the requirements.

_____ BCI Criminal Background Check with the Hague Apostille
The certificate should be available through your state’s Bureau of Criminal Identification and the Hague Apostille should be available from your Secretary of State (see your Secretary of State’s website for specific instructions about when and how to obtain the Apostille). You will need to present one certificate for each of the states or cities where you have resided over the past five years. If you are an out-of-state student, you will have to obtain one for Rhode Island and one for your home state. Information for the Rhode Island Bureau of Criminal Identification can be found at http://www.riag.ri.gov/BCI/index.php. You should request the BCI to be issued in Spanish to order to avoid having to pay for a certified translation. Once you have gathered all the required documents you may present them in person at:

   BCI Desk
   150 South Main Street
   Providence, RI

Information on obtaining the Hague Apostille from the Rhode Island Secretary of State can be found at http://sos.ri.gov/business/apostilles/orderapostille/. Once you have gathered the required documents you may present them in person at:
Secretary of State (Hague Apostille)
148 West River Street
Providence, RI

You must do this upon receipt of the Background Check because it can take over six weeks for the State Department to process your request and return the documents to you.

_____ Medical certificate (letter on your physician’s official letterhead certifying s/he has examined you and that you are mentally and physically capable of traveling and studying abroad and that you do not have any contagious or mental illnesses and that you are not a drug addict)

The medical certificate must state EXACTLY: “This medical certificate attests that Mr./ Mrs. ……………………… does not suffer from any illness that would pose a threat to public health according to the International Health Regulations of 2005.”

The medical certificate is only valid for 3 months beginning on the date it was issued.

_____ Three extra copies of all of the above (one for the Consulate, one for you to submit to the Spanish police or to the Oficina de Extranjeros upon your arrival to Spain, and one for yourself).

Chile

_____ Valid Passport

_____ Passport photograph(s) 2x2in (number varies per consulate: 1 NY, 3 Philadelphia, 4 Boston)

_____ FBI Background Check

_____ Letter of Acceptance from Chilean University

_____ Health Certificate

_____ Letter or Certificate of Financial Support (Proof of Financial Means)

_____ Visa Fee of $160.00 USD

➢ In Boston you must make an appointment by phone or email and the application is filled out that day, during your appointment, where you must bring all of the required documents and will have your visa by the time you leave the consulate.

➢ In New York, you must apply online and scan and send all of the required documents. The consulate will then email you saying that they have received your application. The application processing time is approximately one month. They will then send you an email with your appointment time and at that point you must go to the consulate with all of your documents and obtain the visa.
In Philadelphia, you must physically mail your application form and all of the required documents to the consulate. The form can be completed online, but then must be printed and physically mailed.

¡Note! Check the consulate website for the city which you plan on obtaining your visa for a more detailed list of requirements. The visa requirements are subject to change and each city’s consulate has a different process for obtaining your visa.

Chilean Consulate Information

BOSTON
Cónsul Honorario: Sr. Paul Garber
Cónsul Honorario Adscrito: Phillip Garber
1 Bernardo O’Higgins Circle
Brighton, MA 02135
Tel: (617) 232-0416
Fax:(617) 232-0817
Email: conchile.org@comcast.net

New York
Cónsul General: Julio Fiol
Cónsul Adjunto: Sr. Giancarlo Alberti Barrios.
Canciller:Sra. Gladys Saez
Dirección:
866 United Nations Plaza , Suite 601
New York, NY, 10017
Horario de atención al público: 08:30 a 14:00 horas
Teléfonos: (212) 980-3707 / 980-3366/ 355-0612
Fax: (212) 888-5288
E-mail address: consulgeneral@chileny.com; recepcion@chileny.com
Web page: www.chileny.com

Philadelphia
Cónsul Honorario: Sr. Benjamín Leavenworth
Canciller Sra. Gladys Zepeda
Secretaria:
Dirección:
The Bourse Building, 111 S. Independence Mall East, Suite 785,
Philadelphia PA 19106.
Horario de atención al público: 9:00 a 13.00 horas
Teléfonos: (215) 829-9520 / (215) 829-9531
Fax: (215) 829-0594
E-mail address: chfiladelfia@minrel.gov.cl

Mexico
You must go in person to the Consulate in Boston to fill out your application and submit it. Hours: Monday to Friday, 9:00 to 12:30.

Checklist of items to bring with you:

_____ Valid passport

_____ Photocopy of the page of your passport with your personal data, picture and signature

_____ Original letter of acceptance from the Tec de Monterrey or letter of employment from the company you are going to work for. The letter should be recent and state the semester or academic year of study and the name of the program that you are going to enroll in. Important Notice: in the majority of cases the school you are to enroll in should process the student visa directly at the closest National Immigration Institute.

_____ A bank statement from the last 3 months and/or letters of scholarship award or letter of financial support from parents or guardian (living expenses and tuition)

_____ Two (2) color passport sized pictures (no computer print outs)

Please note that you will have to leave your passport at the Consulate and then return the next business day between the hours of 4:00 and 5:00 pm to pick up your visa. For full details, see the Mexican Consulate website. For questions, call the Consulate or send an email to cmxboston@conversent.net.

Office of International Education Paperwork

Equally important to the paperwork required for your visa is the paperwork required by the URI Office of International Education. Outlined below are the different tasks you must complete, however you can also view all of this information and the submission dates at http://www.uri.edu/international/studyabroad/paperwork.html.

¡Note! If documentation listed below is not submitted to the URI Office of International Education by the deadlines, students may not be enrolled for their study abroad program.

1. Submit a copy of your admission letter. Participants should always retain originals.

2. Complete the Office of International Education Abroad Prior Approval Form: The Education Abroad Prior Approval Form assures students that they will receive transfer credit upon successful completion of an approved study abroad and/or exchange program.
Students enrolled in the IEP must submit two Prior Approval Forms. One form containing their engineering courses approved and signed by the Dean of the College of Engineering and one containing their general electives and language courses approved and signed by the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

¡Note! On the Arts and Sciences form make sure to include “IEP Internship” which counts as six credits for SPA 316-317. You should also include one (or multiple courses) which can count for SPA 412 credit (a SIEP graduation requirement). Spanish 412 can be fulfilled with one of your engineering courses that you will take abroad. Make sure to have the engineering course listed on both the arts and sciences prior approval form and the engineering prior approval form. On the arts and sciences form it should be listed with SPA 412 as the URI equivalent.

3. Pay the URI Off-Campus Registration Fee: The Off-Campus Registration (OCS999) Fee is used to register students while on study abroad. This non-refundable fee maintains your matriculation as a full-time student at URI. In addition, it allows you to qualify for financial aid and maintain health insurance coverage during your program abroad, as well as to transfer the credits earned abroad back to URI.

OCS 999 Instructions

- Make checks payable to URI. Be sure to include your name and URI ID number on the memo line of the check ($483 per semester/$255 summer or J-Term - subject to change).
- Bring the OCS Fee to the Office of International Education. This fee will be submitted to Enrollment Services once the Prior-Approval Form has been completed.

4. Proof of enrollment in a Travel Medical Evacuation and Repatriation Plan: The University of Rhode Island requires that Education Abroad participants obtain medical evacuation and repatriation insurance for the duration of the overseas program. You will be expected to enroll in the URI authorized Travel Medical Evacuation and Repatriation Plan if your program provider does not provide travel medical evacuation and repatriation coverage that complies with the URI Office of Risk Management’s regulations. Participants uncertain if their program provider automatically enrolls them in a plan should consult their URI Education Abroad Advisor.

Learn more about the HTH Worldwide Insurance Services coverage, estimated costs, and find a link to the self-enrollment portal via the URI Office of Risk Management's International Travel Insurance page (http://web.uri.edu/riskmanagement/international-travel-insurance/).

A copy of the study abroad participant's ID card or certificate letter from the insurance company must be submitted to the Office of International Education. Documents
presented should include the participant's name and list policy coverage dates that demonstrates enrollment and coverage for the duration of the education abroad program.

5. **Financial Aid:** If using Financial Aid bring the completed form(s) below and along with a copy of a brochure and/or acceptance letter from the study abroad program, which itemizes the costs of the program as well as indicate the start and end dates of the program bring it to Enrollment Services-Financial Aid in Green Hall.

**Summer**

**Travel**

Once you have all of your paperwork squared away, your visa is approved, and you know when you need to arrive at your host destination, you can finally purchase your flight! There are several different ways to purchase affordable plane tickets, especially for students. Some discount and student specific sites that you may not have heard of include:

- [www.studentuniverse.com](http://www.studentuniverse.com)
- [www.statravel.com](http://www.statravel.com)
- [www.momondo.com](http://www.momondo.com)
- [www.cheapoair.com](http://www.cheapoair.com)

Also consider some of the more well known sites such as:

- [www.kayak.com](http://www.kayak.com)
- [www.travelocity.com](http://www.travelocity.com)
- [www.orbitz.com](http://www.orbitz.com)

Flight prices usually depend on the day and time that you travel. For example a 2pm flight on a Saturday will generally be more expensive than an 11pm flight on a Thursday. Search different day/time combinations as well as airports where you plan to depart/arrive as this can play a major factor into the final cost of your plane ticket. Also note the time difference to where you are traveling. For example if you are flying to Spain the time difference is six hours. Therefore if you plan to leave the United States during the evening time, you will have an “overnight flight” and arrive in Spain in the morning.

¡**Note!** It is recommended that you only purchase a one way ticket as the date of your return and location where you will be completing your internship will most likely be unknown at the time of your original ticket purchase.
Spain

There are many different options and routes that you can choose to take in order to reach your final destination. We have described some of the more recommended options below, but if you’re feeling adventurous you’re certainly more than welcome to travel as you please. This is your adventure after all!

To arrive in Santander or San Sebastián, it is recommended to fly with a destination to Bilbao or Madrid airport and take a bus or train to your final destination. To arrive in Zaragoza, it is recommended to fly with a destination to Madrid or Barcelona airports, followed by a bus or train to Zaragoza. To arrive in Jaca for the immersion program, it is recommended to fly with a destination to Madrid or Barcelona airports, followed by a bus or train to Zaragoza and then finally a bus to Jaca.

The recommended site to view bus schedules and purchase tickets is with a company called ALSA at http://www.alsa.es/en/. The recommended site to view train schedules and purchase tickets is with a company called RENFE at http://www.renfe.com/EN/viajeros/. Although you do not have to purchase your bus or train tickets ahead of time online and you can purchase them at the stations,

¡Note! There are often promotion fares for cheaper tickets when you book tickets a bit in advance. Once you’ve booked your flight, check out these sites to see which options would best fit your itinerary.

Make sure that you have enough time between each mode of transportation in case of unexpected delays. If anything does happen, ALSA is generally very accommodating and will substitute your bus ticket for one that leaves later.

Chile

Flight to Santiago:
There is only one main airport to fly into, Arturo Merino Benitez International Airport (SCL). Researching the same discount/student flight ticket websites is a good starting point for purchasing ticket.

Bus from Santiago to Valparaiso
After arriving to Santiago, take a bus "Turbus" from the airport to the 'Pajaritos' bus station or 'Alameda' bus station in central Santiago. From both of these bus stations, you can purchase a bus ticket to the ‘Terminal de Buses’ Valparaíso. Once you arrive in Valparaiso, take a taxi from the bus terminal to accommodation

Note: There are no buses between Santiago and Valparaiso from 11:00 PM - 6 AM. If you arrive to Santiago during these hours, stay in a hostel in Santiago
Mexico

Depending on where your final destination is in Mexico, there are a variety of options for Airports. From Boston, most flights stopover in Texas and then are redirected into Mexico. Mexico City (El Distrito Federal or D.F.) has the largest international airport in Mexico. You can choose to fly into this airport and take a bus to your final destination or choose an airport closer to where you will be staying. For example, if you are planning to live and work in Leon, Guanajuato, you can take a flight directly into Irapuato and catch a taxi (about 30 minutes) into the center of Leon. Most major cities in Mexico have a large airport.

Packing

So what exactly do you need to bring? This is obviously going to be somewhat different for everyone, but overall there is a majority of things that everyone should bring. Before you begin packing, make sure to check the airline site that you are flying with to see their allowances and fees for additional or overweight luggage. As difficult as it sounds, try to only bring things that you absolutely need. You will be able to purchase things such as toiletries, towels, school supplies, etc. As for hand luggage, the rules are generally one carry-on and one “laptop bag/purse.” They are much more lenient with this than with checked bags, so make something like a backpack your “laptop bag” and have a checked bag and a carry-on along with that.

Suggested Packing List:
• Copies (hard/electronic) of all the documents mentioned in the “Visa Process” section
• Passport photos of yourself, these are often required for applications for bus cards, phone contracts, etc.
• Enough cash converted to Euros/Chilean/Mexican pesos to last you the first few days (a couple hundred, but not much more is suggested)
• Apparel (for all occasions!)
  • Professional dress clothes for your internship
  • Region/weather specific clothes
    • San Sebastian/Santander - Rainy, mild temperatures
  • Rain jacket
  • Rain shoes
    • Zaragoza - Dry, hotter/colder temperatures
    • Valparaiso - temperate temperatures
  • Clothes to hit the town! Keep in mind people “dress up” more for many occasions, especially for going out to clubs/bars
• Adaptors
  • Bring several
• Be mindful of wattage capacity for certain items such as hairdryers
• Cheap and fairly easy to find upon arrival as well
• Toiletries – small quantities
• Medicines
• Items you can’t live without and don’t think you’ll find in Spain/Chile/Mexico (hair product, brand of makeup, etc)
• Pictures of family/friends/home
• A camera/camera phone to capture all your future wonderful memories
• Laptop and other electronics
• A purse/bag that makes travel easier (you won’t be an outcast if you have a fanny pack)
• DON’T BOTHER WITH:
  • Large quantities of personal care items/bedding/towels/other house items if you are struggling with space/weight- you can find them easily when you arrive

**Banking and Money**

Talk with your bank about their policies regarding foreign withdrawals and transfers to a foreign account. Will the fees be manageable at least until you can create a bank account? If not, you can create an account with another banking company that has no fees or fewer fees, such as Bank of America. With their account, you can withdraw money from any of their partner ATMs without an ATM fee. Additionally, Bank of America offers a Travel Rewards credit card which you can use anywhere in the world in any currency with no fees. Regardless of which banking or credit card company you decide to use, make sure to notify them of your travel plans so that your transactions will not be denied and you can access your money when you need to.
Year Abroad

Things to do upon arrival

Establish Residency (Obtain NIE)

For students who will be living in Spain, the visa you obtained from the consulate only lasts for 90 days. In order to legally reside in Spain after those 90 days, you must establish your residency and obtain a Número de Identificación de Extranjero (NIE). You only have 90 days to complete this process and so it is recommended that you begin the process as soon as you arrive in the city of your partner institution.

Unfortunately, the process is not exactly equal for all cities within Spain and the details regarding the process often changes from year to year. However, the overall process remains fairly constant. We recommend that you speak with the International Office at your institution and ask them what their protocol is regarding obtaining an NIE. In general, you will first have to go to your city’s Oficina de Extranjeros with all of your paperwork and register as an Extranjero. Then, you will have to go to the Police Station (they will tell you specifically which one at the Oficina de Extranjeros) with all of your paperwork to fill out an application for an NIE and NIE card. Once the paperwork is complete, you will be given a sheet of paper to use as a temporary copy of your NIE until your actual NIE card arrives in approximately 40 days.

Housing

Spain

Students in Spain generally live in shared apartments in Spain. There are not typically campuses with dormitories like we’re accustomed to in the US. Most exchange students stay in a hostel when they arrive to their host city in Spain. This allows you to contact landlords and visit apartments before you agree to rent. It is not recommended to commit to an apartment before your departure; you should go to the city and see it in person. Certainly DO NOT send money to a landlord before you go see the apartment in person. When you arrive in the city you can go to the university to look for apartment ads. Generally there are billboards in the main building with apartment listings or people looking for roommates. You should also go to the international student’s office of your university and tell them you are looking for an apartment.

You can look for and book a hostel before you depart the United States using http://www.hostelworld.com/. This is a good idea if you do not have a living situation setup for your arrival. Hostels are very flexible and will allow you to extend your stay until you find more permanent housing.
For any city in Spain, you can also use the following sites to search for housing:
- www.easypiso.com
- www.milanuncios.com
- www.idealista.com
- www.erasmusu.com

University of Cantabria – Santander

At UNICAN, the ORI (Oficina de Relaciones Internacionales) will provide you of a list of apartments with landlords who have been verified by the university. In Santander there is also a UNICAN listing online for shared apartments (http://accommodationunican.com/acomodo/en/) and for these apartments you must fill out the request form found here (https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1DhlUk6OOPDn4UzUNHnh3tONBrd-cfh8WkEa5lcI8ITU/viewform).

Keep in mind that the majority of the university is spread out over one long street, Avenida de los Castros. The engineering building is the one closest to the beach, if you want the shortest commute to class.

In Santander you also have the option of living with a host family for two weeks. This is an interesting opportunity to improve your language skills and ease the transition to life in the new city while you look for apartments.

For an individual bedroom in a shared apartment (generally between 2-4 people) you can expect to pay between 200 and 350 Euros.

University of Navarra (TECNUN) – San Sebastián

In addition to the housing websites we recommend, you can email (in Spanish) a woman named Eire Iradi at eiradi@tecnun.es recommended by Megan at the end of Spring semester expressing interest in housing. She will email back three housing options and you then chose the one that best fits your idea of what you want for housing. You can send emails back and forth before confirming that the apartment is a good fit.

For an individual bedroom in a shared apartment (generally between 2-4 people) you can expect to pay between 300 and 450 Euros.
University of Zaragoza

In addition to the sites listed, you can check outside/inside of buildings for postings. Two main areas you can live in are Casco Viejo and the center. Casco Viejo is close to Pilar (local attraction) as well as good restaurants, bars, and nightlife. The center is close to main campus and also has good night life, but is farther from the engineering campus than Casco Viejo.

Classes in Zaragoza do not begin until the middle of September, so you will have plenty of time to search around and find a place that fits your needs.

¡Note! For an individual bedroom in a shared apartment (generally between 2-4 people) you can expect to pay between 200 and 350 Euros.

Chile

Once you have arrived in Valparaiso, you can start looking for housing using local ads as well as online at [http://www.compartodepto.cl/](http://www.compartodepto.cl/). This site is fairly easy to navigate and allows you to look at your options and contact the owner to show you the apartment. As mentioned earlier do not commit to anything until you have physically seen the apartment, as some pictures can be deceiving. It is recommended that you find a hostel (www.hostelworld.com) for the first few days and use the time to search for different housing options. During the first few days, it is even possible that you will make friends that could be potential roommates.

You might find people on the site telling you to live in Viña del Mar, a neighboring city that is a twenty minute drive from Valparaiso. Although apartments there are newer, it is recommended that you live in Valparaiso because then you will not have to rely too much on transportation and can walk to school. Also, all the best nightlife for college students is in the center of Valparaiso.

Regarding cost, housing, like many other things, is relatively cheaper than in the States. You can expect to pay around 170,000 Chilean pesos (roughly $300) for an apartment with a large room, shared kitchen, bathroom, and everything included (cable, television, internet, water, etc.).

Mexico

Depending on your study/working arrangement, housing may be already setup through your host university or company. Housing in Mexico is very affordable. If you do not have a
prior arrangement for housing, it is a good idea to ask the university or company for assistance in ascertaining housing. They will know best where to find the safest, quietest and most convenient neighborhoods. You can expect the rent to be relatively inexpensive. A typical apartment rental is about 5,000 Mexican Pesos or $330 USD. Apartment rental prices depend on location in Mexico, neighborhood, amenities, among other factors.

*Communication and Cell Phones*

You’ve just landed and gotten off the plane and the first thing your loved ones expect you to do is notify them that you are in fact still alive and breathing. One way to do this is to bring a device that allows you to connect to wifi. If you have a device that you can connect to wifi, you will be able to Skype and use other apps such as Facebook, Whatsapp, and Viber to communicate. However, only using wifi is a temporary solution. Eventually you will need to get a new number that you can use to communicate in your new country. The sooner that you can do this, the better!

We recommend that if you have a Smartphone (any kind of smartphone), you make sure that it is unlocked with your American phone company and you bring it with you to use and simply purchase a SIM card. If you do not have a smart phone, very basic cell phones can be purchased for cheap. We also recommend that you cancel your American phone plan right before you leave. Even though you will not be using your American number while you are abroad, most (if not all) phone companies will still charge you your monthly fee.

In order to purchase a phone or start a phone plan, you must have your passport with you for legal reasons.

**Spain**

In Spain, most cities have a “Phone House” where you can shop different cell phone providers and plans. Most contracts are usually for a year and require residency cards which you will not have for 3 months, so the best option for students is a prepaid plan. One of the more popular phone companies is Orange, which usually has tremendous prepaid offers such as 1 GB of data per month and unlimited free phone calls within Spain for less than 10 Euros a month. They also have deals for when you travel within Europe, such as 1 Euro a day to have 1 GB of data in a different European country. This is a great option if you plan on traveling throughout Europe, especially if you are traveling alone, and want to have the ability to contact people in an emergency or have access to maps. Other phone companies in Spain include Movistar, Yoigo and Vodafone.

In Spain, practically everyone communicates using Whatsapp, so although most plans do not include messaging, you will be sending Whatsapp messages with data instead of text messages anyways. If you do not have a smart phone to bring with you, you can purchase a very basic phone, and still have the same type of plan detailed above, for about 20 Euros.
**Chile**

The cell phone process in Chile is very similar to that of Spain. The companies Entel and Movistar are very popular for pay as you go phones. If you do not have a smart phone, you can purchase a cheap phone for the Chilean peso equivalent of about $20.

**Mexico**

The two main cell phone companies in Mexico are Telcel and Movistar. Both companies offer flexible and inexpensive plans for your time abroad. Keep in mind, however, that some phones that work in the United States do not work abroad. Each country has its own network and the phone that you use in the United States may not be able to pick up the network’s frequency of another country. Be sure to check your phones compatibility before going to Mexico.

Telcel offers a plan that allows you to “pay as you go”. You need to go to a Telcel location to setup an account. You can then add pesos to your account as needed. This can be done on the Telcel website after you have initially setup your account in a store. With this style plan you have access to the mobile network for web surfing, texting and calling. See the link below for more extensive information on the plans that Telcel offers.


**Banking**

In order to avoid US bank fees (if you have them), we recommend creating a bank account as soon as you are settled in your host country. Generally speaking, you will only need a valid form of identification (passport or NIE) to open an account. However, it is possible that you may be asked to complete a W-9 form or complete/show other paperwork. Therefore you should bring copies of all your documents with you. If you are asked to do this, do not worry as it is simply for security and liability purposes for the bank.

In each city and country there are several different companies you can choose in order to open a bank account. Before deciding which company you would like to use, we recommend that you ask your university or host company if there are any banks they recommend or there are banks with international/student options.

**Orientation**

Before the semester officially starts, each university hosts an orientation program. The International Office of your host university will contact you towards the beginning of the summer with the details and schedule of the orientation. Typically, in addition to introduction games to help you meet other international students, the orientation programs include useful
information specific to the university and city and similar to topics we have discussed in this
document (housing, phones, banks, etc.). You will also be given information regarding how to
register for courses. If you find that the courses offered do not match the ones that you had prior
approved, do not panic. You can get these new courses approved.

The majority of your questions should be answered by the end of your orientation
session. However if you still have other questions, in addition to Silke and the SIEP Student
Ambassadors, you should reach out to the International Office at your host university.

Health and Safety

Each university is located in a city, but all are cities that are relatively safe. However, it is
recommended that you use traveler’s caution and follow normal safety precautions, such as
protecting your wallet and phone while you are out. Always leave your passport in a safe place
and at home, as it is not easy to replace if you lose it. However, make sure to be carrying some
form of ID, license or Número de Identificación de Extranjeros (NIE), in case of an emergency.

• You cannot shop for over the counter medications/ medical supplies in a drugstore like you
can in the US. You go to a pharmacy and describe to the pharmacist what you are looking for
or what your symptoms are. Many of the drugs in Spanish pharmacies are different and some
popular American medications do not exist altogether. You can find ibuprofen for example if
you ask for a painkiller, but you will not find NyQuil, Vicks, or Tums so for this reason I
recommend bringing some medications you typically use over the course of a year. Bring
antacids if you are prone to heartburn or NyQuil if you can’t live without it when you get the
flu.
• For non-hospital visits (non-emergencies) check what healthcare centers are local to you. Most
often you will have to pay a fee upfront and then you will get reimbursed by your insurance
company, so keep receipts
• In general, men and women are more open about their sexuality and nudity. Women should
note it is not uncommon for men to whistle and call you beautiful everywhere, but rest assured
that it goes no further than cat calls. It’s advised to just ignore them or say hi if you like.
• Don’t carry many flashy things like cellphones or nice cameras in your hands, at least until
you get used to the place and find out when/where it’s safe to use them
• There is a high population of dogs (and in Chile and Mexico, stray dogs as well). They are
generally not a threat if they are left unprovoked

Specific to Europe:
• Keep in mind the emergency number in all of Europe is 112, for all medical, fire, and police
emergencies
• Instead of carrying your passport or license on you, once you have obtained your NIE, you
should carry that with you at all times

**Academics**

First, and most importantly, STUDY STUDY STUDY. For the majority of your classes, the grade that you earn on your final exam will be the grade that you earn in the class. In order to have credits transfer back to URI, you must earn a C equivalent at your partner university. For schools in Spain you must earn a 5.0, for PUCV you must earn a 4.0, and for Tec de Monterrey you must earn a 6.0 or a 60 in order to receive course credit. Although these may seem like low scores at first, we can attest that you have to study and work in order to pass. The professors in general are very tough and grade very strictly. It is very uncommon to receive partial credit and you can actually lose points for writing a wrong answer. The professors have no problem failing students without a blink of an eye. This is not shared with you to scare you, but to show you that in order to pass, you must stay on top of your work in order to be successful. If you reach out to professors or students for help, they will take the time to help you and make sure you feel comfortable with the material.

Once you have completed your time at your partner university and seen your grades, you should have copies of your transcripts sent to URI and you should try to obtain a hard copy for yourself as well. In Spain, if you did not pass a course the first time around, you can retake the exam at a later date. If you decide to retake the exam, you should also have your revised transcript sent with your updated grades.

Throughout the course of the semester, you should check your e-campus to make sure you do not have any holds on your account. If you do have a hold, you should contact your academic advisors to have the hold lifted so that Tom Hospod can enroll you in SPA 316-317 for your internship semester.

**Internships**

Undoubtedly you will be stressed about the internship process throughout all of the fall semester. Take a deep breath and count to three. Everything will work out. In order to help ensure that you obtain the internship you desire, make sure that Silke has all the documents she needs to communicate with companies in an efficient manner. Additionally, respond to all emails from Silke and the IEP Department in a PROMPT fashion. They are working to help your career, and how can they do that effectively without your input?

After you’ve obtained an internship, now you can begin the second half of your journey! Whether you are staying in the same host country or traveling to another country, you know that moving won’t be so hard this second time around. You’ll have experience finding apartments, and if you could do it once, you can definitely do it again! Make sure to keep in touch with Silke during your move and regarding your transition.
Before you begin your first days at work, ask the company if there is any paperwork they require. Some companies will ask that you obtain a local Social Security Number, and some won’t. Some companies require that you have a bank account from a particular company, and some don’t care. It’s better that you ask ahead of time and complete it or set up appointments to complete it before you begin working. No one wants to start off their first week panicked because they have a lot of unexpected paperwork to do, especially since you’ll most likely be nervous to begin with!
After Returning

Getting Courses Transferred and Intent to Graduate Forms

This is the first thing you should think about and complete when returning to URI. If you were able to obtain a paper copy, bring your transcript from the semester and also those from the immersion programs if applicable to Silke’s office. Please be courteous and schedule an appointment as she will be very busy sending off the next round of students and beginning their internship process. She will have some papers for you to update and help you make sure you’ve got all you need to graduate. Then you’re going to take those papers (which includes your Intent to Graduate Forms) to both the College of Arts and Sciences and the College of Engineering to have your graduation audit. They’ll take all your papers, review them, and send you a letter back letting you know what’s left to take care of in your final semesters.

The Intent to Graduate Form for the College of Arts and Sciences can be found at http://www.uri.edu/artsci/forms/documents/Intent_to_Graduate3.pdf.

More in-depth instructions regarding the Intent to Graduate process for the College of Engineering can be found at http://egr.uri.edu/students/declare-intent-to-graduate/.

Sharing Your Experiences!

Did you have one of the biggest life changing experiences this past year and wish you could do it all over again? Then why not help out the next generation of IEP students?! They are going to want to hear all about your adventures and ask you lots of advice and questions. You could even be the next person to write a pamphlet like this! See the IEP Coordinator (TI House office) about being a Student Ambassador. You’ll get to talk to prospective IEP students and 3rd year students about to embark on their own journey, and help make the IEP a better program. What better way to remember your time abroad than by giving back to the program that made it possible?

While you’re at it you can keep your Spanish skills sharp by going to Spanish Coffee Hour or even living with international students at the IEP House! The Assistant Director of the IEP Living & Learning Community will send applications to live in IEP housing via email in spring when you are abroad.