

## Living and Studying Abroad in Spain

By Holly Shaver

I had always dreamed of traveling and study abroad gave me the opportunity to live out my dreams. After my trip to Costa Rica was canceled freshman year due to the pandemic I wasn't sure if I would have a chance to study abroad during my college career. Luckily, international travel opened back up and I jumped at the opportunity. While I am proud student in the college of agriculture I really wanted to push myself out of my comfort zone. I chose to study abroad for a



semester in Toledo, Spain in program co-sponsored with the University of Minnesota. I chose this specific program because it allowed me to immerse myself in Spanish culture while learning the language and earning credits toward my minor in Spanish. Also, upon doing some google research I fell in love with the tiny, medieval town that is Toledo (see photo).

Due to doing a co-sponsored program my study abroad experience was much different than a typical exchange program. I went to class and lived in the same building, which was a renovated 16<sup>th</sup> century convent we shared with the music conservatory. I went to school with around 40 other students from 3 countries and 6 universities. The school also had a full staff that were extremely helpful and always available to ask questions to. The program cost included 3 meals a day in the school's cafeteria and several group excursions throughout the semester.





One of these trips we took to Granada and Cordoba, cities located in southwestern Spain in the Andalusia region. We toured Alhambra, an Islamic fortress known for its beauty and architecture. The program directors always lined up a private tour for us, so these trips were very educational and enriching.

My biggest piece of advice for studying abroad is to take advantage of tours offered. This might sound like obvious advice, but my favorite experiences from studying abroad were during tour groups I participated in. I would often travel solo on the weekends and these groups were a great way to meet people from all over the world and experience things you otherwise wouldn't get the chance to. For example, I visited the island of Tenerife located west of Africa during one of my final weeks abroad. I decided last minute to sign up for an ATV adventure tour where we rode ATVs up the side of a volcano and toured the park surrounding the volcano. This was one of my favorite experiences of the trip. I also did several food tours in different cities; they were often a cheap way to see the city while trying lots of amazing food.



My study abroad trips was one of the best things I could have done to grow professionally and personally. Not only did it allow me to continue building my skills and network, but I learned a lot about myself along the way. I highly recommend studying abroad you never know where it might lead you!