

**AIFS PRE-DEPARTURE HANDBOOK  
BARCELONA  
NCSAC BARCELONA FALL 2019**



**WELCOME!**

To help you prepare for your upcoming study abroad experience, we have put together this handbook to answer some of your questions about both the program and life in Barcelona. We recommend you do the following:

- Read all the information thoroughly.
- Refer to all websites cited in the handbook.
- Take the handbook with you when you travel.

If your questions are not answered by the handbook, then please do not hesitate to contact AIFS.

**Your contacts at AIFS:**

**In Stamford, Connecticut, for application, billing, flight and general questions:**

**Tel:** (800) 727-2437

**Fax:** (203) 399-5597

**E-mail:** [aifspartnerships@aifs.com](mailto:aifspartnerships@aifs.com)

**In Barcelona, for site-specific questions and roommate requests:**

[spain@aifs.co.uk](mailto:spain@aifs.co.uk)

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## **BEFORE YOU GO!**

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### To Do List:

- Apply for passport
- Apply for a visa if necessary (see page 3 for details)
- Sign up for the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). It is a free service provided by the U.S. Government to U.S. citizens/nationals who are traveling to, or living in, a foreign country: <https://step.state.gov/step/>
- See your physician, and complete the AIFS Medical Exam Form
- Order enough medication to last your entire stay abroad
- Review your airline's baggage allowance guidelines
- Start planning what to pack
- Buy useful guidebook
- Notify your bank if planning to use your credit card abroad so it is not blocked
- Give contact details or a copy of this handbook to parents/guardians

# PREPARING TO LEAVE

## PASSPORT AND VISA INFORMATION

### Passports

All students are required to have a valid passport to participate in a study abroad program. For information about obtaining a new passport or renewing an existing passport, please visit the U.S. Department of State's website at: [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov). Passports must be valid six months after the end of your program.

To check on the status of a passport application, call the National Passport Information Center at (877) 487-2778, or check on the State Department's website.

### Visas

A visa is an endorsement stamped into your passport by a foreign government allowing you to enter that particular country for a specific purpose and period of time. Visas are valid from the date on which they are issued.

Every country has its own immigration policies for students. Please make sure you have fulfilled all the necessary requirements before your departure. When entering other countries, prepare to be asked to explain why you are there, where you are staying and how long you will stay. As a study abroad participant, you have a legitimate reason for entering the country as long as you have obtained the appropriate visa documents.

### Entering Spain

#### U.S. Citizens

Visas are not required for U.S. passport holders staying in Spain for 90 days or less. Thus a visa will not be required for U.S. citizens studying on this program during the standard program dates. Students planning to stay in Spain beyond the standard program return date may exceed the accumulative 90-day limit. U.S. citizens may spend a total of 90 days during any six-month period in the Schengen State as a whole. The State comprises Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland. Students wishing to extend their stay should consider traveling to countries outside the Schengen State including Ireland and the UK. By leaving the Schengen State for one week during the program, students will be allowed an extra week in the Schengen countries at the end of the program. Please note, leaving

## EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

### Contact from U.S.

AIFS has a worldwide communications network and is ready to respond when family or medical emergencies arise. An emergency officer is on duty 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

**If a crisis arises and your family needs to contact you, they should call AIFS at (800) 727-2437. During non-business hours, they will be connected to the AIFS Emergency Answering Service. However, please use this Emergency Answering Service only in a true emergency.**

### Contact in Spain

If a crisis arises and your family needs to contact you at any time during the program, or if you need to reach AIFS staff yourself in an emergency situation please contact the Program Director on the emergency cell phone:

**24 hour emergency cell phone: + 11 34 648 46 40 44**

### Medical Emergency

In case of medical emergency, students should call

AXA Assistance on:

**(855) 327-1411** (calling toll-free from within the U.S.)

**(312) 935-1703** (calling from outside of the U.S., collect calls accepted)

Please quote: Policy **GLM N04983117**

Always remember to inform the staff first about your sickness and to collect the insurance form from the office before going to the doctor or download it from the AIFS portal at [www.aifspartnerships.com](http://www.aifspartnerships.com) [www.aifscustomized.com](http://www.aifscustomized.com).

### Emergency numbers in Spain

Health emergencies	061
All major emergencies	112
Fire	080
Ambulance	118
Local police	092
Emergencies and road accidents	062
Policia Nacional	091
U.S. Embassy in Madrid	91 587 22 40
U.S. Consulate in Barcelona	93 280 22 27
Dental emergencies	93 415 99 22
Drug helpline	91 562 05 20
AIDS Information	900 21 22 22

the Schengen zone briefly will not reset the 90-day allowance.

Students wishing to stay longer than 90 days should obtain a long-stay tourist visa or student visa, depending on which visa your consulate suggests, before departing the U.S. Visit the Embassy of Spain's website at <http://www.spainemb.org> or the Spanish Consulate's San Francisco site at [www.exteriores.gob.es](http://www.exteriores.gob.es) for information.

Students planning to travel after the program ends and visiting any of the Schengen states for a combined trip total of more than 90 days will require a visa.

## LONG STAY VISA

Please submit:

- Passport signed and valid for three months from the last date of stay, plus three photocopies (the consulate will not keep the passport, only the copies).
- Four long-stay visa application forms signed and legibly completed.
- Four recent passport-sized photographs glued to the forms.
- Financial guarantee such as: a formal letter of reference from your bank showing your account numbers and balances, or recent bank, savings or brokerage account statements, plus three copies.
- Proof of medical insurance with coverage valid in Barcelona, plus three copies.
- Police clearance: document obtained from the Police Department of your place of residence in the U.S. stating that you have no criminal record, plus three copies.
- Letter from you certifying that you will not have any paid activity in Barcelona.
- Visa fee (money order only).

**The requirements listed above are a guide only and do change. Check directly with the consulate for your specific requirements.**

Non-U.S. citizens

If you are not a U.S. citizen, it is your responsibility to obtain all necessary documentation:

1. Check to see if your passport is still valid. If it is not, renew it immediately.
2. Contact the embassy in Washington or nearest Consulate of the countries that you plan to visit or travel through (e.g., if you have a connecting flight in England) to

learn if visas are necessary. **Please note that you may require a visa if you are only changing planes in a certain country, even if you will not be exiting the airport.**

3. Apply for all necessary visas at once. In some cases, you may be required to apply for a Schengen visa only, which will cover your entrance to all countries that are part of the Schengen area.

4. If you are a permanent resident of the U.S., take your Resident Alien card abroad with you. You will be asked to show it to the U.S. Immigration Officials upon your return to the U.S.

If you plan to travel to other countries during breaks or at the end of your study abroad program, it is your responsibility to find out what documentation is necessary for those countries.

You will not be able to obtain a visa once you are in Europe. You must obtain all relevant visas prior to your departure from the U.S.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### Useful websites

<http://www.timeout.com/barcelona/student-guide>

<https://www.lonelyplanet.com/spain/barcelona>

[www.spain.info/](http://www.spain.info/)

<http://www.thecolleetourist.com/50-things-every-college-student-needs-to-know-about-barcelona/>

## WHAT TO BRING

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### Pack lightly!

Bring as little as you possibly can. Try not to bring more than one checked suitcase and one weekend bag. If you bring heavy luggage, you will regret it. For the first few days, you will have to carry everything you pack through airports, on buses, up flights of stairs, etc. Do not pack more than you can carry easily. We cannot stress this enough.

Pack everything you plan to bring with you, including your coat, purse, etc., and walk around with all of it for at least 10 minutes. If you can manage everything, you have packed well. If not, re-evaluate the contents of your bags.

You can pack whatever type of clothing makes you feel most comfortable, but be practical. Stick with basics that can be paired together to create several outfits. European students don't necessarily wear different outfits each day, so don't worry about wearing the same thing over and over.

Start planning what you will pack by reading the baggage allowance guidelines and packing list at the end of this handbook.

### Linen

Pillows, sheets and blankets are provided, but you do need to bring your own towels, or purchase them in Barcelona.

### Course Supplies

Bring a good Spanish dictionary with you.. Ask your language professor for a recommendation.

You should purchase any course textbooks before leaving the US- usually your faculty will send a list to your college bookstore. The cost of text books, class supplies etc. has been estimated on page 14.

You will be able to buy school supplies such as paper and notebooks once you get to Barcelona..

## BAGGAGE INFORMATION

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### Baggage Allowances

International airline carriers expect passengers to adhere to their baggage allowance for transatlantic flights. Airlines often charge a penalty fee for overweight or excess baggage. The fees vary from airline to airline, and in some cases airlines will refuse to take excess pieces or overweight luggage.

Check your airline's website directly for information regarding luggage restrictions and baggage allowances.

As baggage allowance policies are set by the airlines and not by AIFS, AIFS accepts no responsibility for changes in airline luggage policy and does not pay for extra/overweight baggage fees under any circumstances.

Remember that:

- Baggage allowances for flights within Europe are often more restrictive than transatlantic flights
- When connecting from transatlantic to intra-European flights or flights within other countries, you are subject to other carrier's baggage allowance restrictions as well
- Airline carriers can alter baggage allowance policies without notice
- Overweight baggage fees are determined by the airline and are solely your responsibility

### European Baggage Regulations

When flying between countries within Europe (e.g., between Barcelona and Paris), baggage allowances are extremely restrictive. This will affect anyone who intends to travel before or after an AIFS study abroad program. We advise you to store any excess, bulky luggage items at the storage facilities located at airports and train stations throughout Europe.

Many budget airlines operate in Europe offering no-frills flights at bargain rates. While most of these airlines have similar baggage allowance guidelines (as detailed below), it is always advisable to check restrictions with individual airlines before you travel. You will be charged a penalty if you exceed these allowances. Again, please note that these are baggage regulations are enforced by the airlines and not by AIFS.

### Checked baggage:

The majority of budget airlines now charge extra to check a bag when you fly. The average charge is €20 each way. Most intra-European flights allow a maximum weight of 20 kg (44 lbs.) for any one item of checked baggage, although on some airlines (such as Ryanair) it can be as low as 15 kg (33 lbs.). Generally, checking heavier bags involves a fee of approximately \$9 per kg.

### Carry-on baggage:

Each passenger can carry one small piece of hand baggage on board. The carry-on bag must not weigh more than 10 kg (22 lbs), and must measure less than 22" by 17.7" by 9.8" in dimension. You must be able to stow it securely on board. A separate purse or personal item may not be allowed- check with your airline.

## Additional Tips

**Be careful what you pack in your carry-on.** Any liquids packed in your carry-on must measure 3 oz. or less per container, and all such containers must fit together in a quart-sized zip-top clear plastic bag that you will remove when going through security. This bag will be screened separately, apart from your luggage, so be sure it is easily accessible. For the most updated information on packing, as well as airport security, visit <http://www.tsa.gov>. Do not lock your carry-on, as your bag may need to be inspected.

**Identify your luggage.** Each piece of luggage, including your carry-on, should be identified with a tag showing your name and address at home and abroad. Also, put a slip of paper with your name and address inside your luggage in case your outer tags come off during handling. Always remove old, incorrect airline tags to avoid confusion. As an extra precaution, you may want to put a ribbon or piece of brightly colored tape on your luggage to help identify it easily in the baggage claim area. If you will be taking the AIFS flight, be sure to use the baggage tags we send you. They make you easier to identify both to the other students on the program and to the AIFS representative meeting you overseas. Airport security advises that you not lock your luggage. Security personnel will remove locks from any bags that require inspection.

**Never leave your bags unattended at the airport.** Keep an eye on your bags at all times. Airlines will not accept luggage that was not packed by its owner, or that was left unguarded.

**Pack a few essentials in your carry-on.** Unfortunately, some students have had to start their study abroad program without their luggage. Just in case the airline should lose your luggage, pack your toothbrush, any medications you need to take, an extra set of underwear, etc., in your carry-on.

If your baggage does go astray en route to your overseas campus, file a claim with the airline upon arrival before you leave the secure area at the airport. Inform your Program Coordinator about the claim; s/he may be able to assist you. Most airlines require that you make your lost luggage claim within four hours after arrival and before you leave the airport.

Be sure that your luggage and its contents are insured against theft or loss. Personal effects insurance coverage is not included in the AIFS program fee but is available for an additional charge. Refer to the AIFS insurance brochure for more details, and be aware of exclusions and per-item limits. Leave expensive and valuable items at home. If you must bring such items with you, make sure they will be covered, either by AIFS's insurance or by your own. If you need to file a claim during the program,

complete the *AIFS Personal Effects Claim Form*, and give it to your program coordinator.

**Only students who purchased the AIFS Personal Effects Insurance Coverage have personal effects insurance coverage and may use the Personal Effects Claim Form.**

## Personal Effects Insurance

Personal effects insurance is offered an option for an additional \$90. Those who purchase it are covered up to \$2,500 with a \$100 deductible per occurrence. Some exclusions apply. Refer to the insurance brochure for additional details.

## MEDICAL AND MEDICATION

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Students are required to have a medical exam and have their physician complete the AIFS Medical Exam form. This form is available on the AIFS portal: [www.aifscustomized.com](http://www.aifscustomized.com).

Return the form no less than two weeks before departure. In addition, make sure your childhood immunizations (measles, mumps, rubella, diphtheria-tetanus, etc.) are up-to-date.

If you take **prescription medications** on a regular basis, you should carry a note from your doctor stating your medical condition, the purpose of the medication, dosage information, and the brand and generic names of the medication. This is especially necessary if you will be carrying insulin, syringes or narcotics. Keep all medications in their original containers with your name clearly printed on the labels. Bring enough of your medication to last your entire stay abroad. Prescriptions written in the U.S. cannot be filled in Spain. It is a long, complicated and often expensive process to ship medicine from the U.S. to Spain and is not recommended. You should pack all prescription medication in your carry-on luggage in case your checked luggage is lost or delayed during the journey.

If you wear eyeglasses or contact lenses, be sure to take an extra pair of glasses and a copy of your prescription with you. It is also helpful to leave an extra prescription with someone at home so they can send you a replacement pair in an emergency. Contact lens wearers will want to bring some care products (solutions, tablets, eye drops, etc.) with them abroad, although they will be able to purchase additional supplies in Spain as needed.

## Toiletries

You will be able to buy all your health and beauty products abroad, you just might not find your favorite brands. Bring the basics you use every day in travel-sized containers to

last the first few days. Also prepare a medical kit with your favorite over-the-counter pain reliever, cold medication, vitamins, etc., which also may not be available abroad.



## ON LOCATION

### TRAVEL TO BARCELONA

#### Flight information/tickets

For students selecting the AIFS Transportation Package, a detailed flight itinerary will be available on the AIFS portal once your flight has been booked. Your electronic ticket information will be sent to your home address via express delivery service approximately one week prior to your departure date (provided all necessary forms and payments have been received by AIFS).

#### Making a return flight date change

For a fee and subject to airline approval and availability, you may try to change your return flight date only (the routing cannot be changed).

Change requests can only be made once you have arrived in Barcelona, and are requested via the AIFS portal. You will be asked to choose three dates and will need to provide credit card details.

There is an airline-imposed change fee of \$350, plus any fare difference.



Parc Güell

#### Arrival in Barcelona with AIFS

Students who are flying with AIFS will be met at the airport upon arrival by AIFS staff. For security reasons, AIFS staff members are not allowed to enter the arrivals area of the airport terminal. Students must collect their own baggage and exit the arrivals area after clearing customs and passport control. A program representative will be waiting

for you outside the arrivals area with a large sign saying "AIFS."

Airports are always very crowded, so please walk slowly when you exit the arrivals area, and keep your eyes open for an AIFS representative holding identification signs. If you don't spot an AIFS staff member at first, don't worry – they will be there in the crowd waiting for you.

Do not attempt to make your own way to your accommodation. If your flight has been delayed, please contact AIFS staff in the U.S. prior to departure by calling (800) 727-2437. Any messages will be passed on to AIFS staff overseas so they know when to expect you.

You will be transported by bus to your accommodation, where you will receive your room assignment.

### **Lost or delayed luggage**

If your luggage has been lost or delayed, do not leave the baggage claim area without filing a lost luggage report with the airline. Make sure you are given a reference and contact number for your claim. When filling in a claim form, give the address of the AIFS Barcelona office:

**Your name**  
AIFS  
c/o don Quijote  
c/ Mallorca 27  
08029 Barcelona  
Spain

Your luggage will be delivered there. As a precaution, AIFS recommends that you pack a carry-on bag with anything you might need in case your luggage is lost (i.e., a change of clothes, medicines, basic toiletries).

If a student loses his/her luggage and has to wait to file a claim in the baggage hall, other students should inform AIFS staff waiting on the other side in the arrivals hall.

Since staff are not allowed into baggage claims and customs, and airlines will not confirm the names of passengers on planes, it is impossible for staff to know if a scheduled student missed their flight or is just waiting to file a lost baggage claim. Therefore, please be sure that another member in the group informs AIFS staff of the names of any student still waiting in the baggage hall.

### **Arrival in Barcelona independently (not with AIFS)**

**Students making their own flight arrangements must complete the Independent Travel Info Form as soon as they have booked their flight.**

If you are making your own flight arrangements, the transfers to and from your accommodations are not included. You will be given directions to your accommodation from the AIFS Staff prior to departure.

**If you are travelling independently you should have at least €150 in cash with you to cover expenses or emergencies.**

### **Changing your flight for own travel students**

If you have made your own flight arrangements please make sure you bring a copy of all of your flight booking details, as AIFS staff cannot assist you with altering your return date or other flight arrangements.

### **Directions from Barcelona airport**

#### **By bus**

A bus called "Aerobús" leaves from T1 and T2 of the airport every 15 minutes, from 5:30 a.m. to 1am, Monday to Sundays and holidays. A one-way ticket costs €6. Tickets can be bought on the bus. The final destination is Plaça de Catalunya, in the center of Barcelona.

#### **By train**

A train leaves T2 at the airport every 30 minutes, from 6 a.m. to 11:40 p.m. It costs €4.50 and takes 40 minutes to get to the center of Barcelona (stations: Sants or Passeig de Gracia).

From each station, you can then take a taxi to the AIFS Student Center. If you prefer to take a taxi from the airport, budget €30-40.

If you are booking your own flights, be sure to complete the Independent Travel Info Form on the AIFS portal and return it to us promptly.

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## **LIFE IN BARCELONA**

### **THE CITY OF BARCELONA**

Spain's second city is everything you could ask for: energetic and diverse, with both mountains and the coast within easy reach. You will see families and friends sitting down to eat at 10:00 p.m. or wandering down deserted streets on a Sunday morning as the city recovers from the fiesta the night before.

One of Europe's most colorful cities, you can spend hours admiring Barcelona's art and architecture. Stroll down the Passeig de Gracia to take in Gaudi's Casa Battlo, pop into the Picasso Museum in El Born, or relax and take in the modern sculptures by the beach at Barceloneta. People-watch over a café con leche in one of the many squares, and finish up by hopping between tapas bars in your preferred *barrio*. And if you still have the energy, make your way to join the throngs heading out to find the dance floor at one of the many *discotecas*.

Barcelona is easily accessible on foot but supported by a modern, efficient and safe bus and underground Metro system. If you want to escape the hustle and bustle of the city, national parks, mountains and beaches are just an easy bus or train ride away. Excellent day trips include Tarragona, south of Barcelona and home to well-preserved Roman ruins, or Girona, a medieval city to the north that offers easy access to the Pyrénées. And don't forget the endless beaches along the Costa Brava and the Costa Dorada.

Barcelona's *mucha marcha* (lively spirit) has to be lived to be appreciated!

### **Time**

Barcelona is 6 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time and 9 hours ahead of Pacific Standard Time.

### **Climate**

The city's location on the shores of the Mediterranean means it enjoys a warm climate and pleasant temperature year round. The average summer temperatures in Barcelona range from 75° to 90°F. Winter gets a little colder with temperatures ranging from 40° to 60°F.

### **Language**

In Barcelona, as in the rest of Catalonia, there are two official languages: Catalan, the language of the region, and Spanish, the official language of Spain. No previous Spanish study is required.

### **Orientation**

On arrival in Barcelona, AIFS will transfer you (included in the program fee) to your accommodation. This will be followed by a detailed Orientation meeting, with information on the practicalities of living in Barcelona, safety and security, local customs and cultural differences. The orientation program has been designed to help you settle in and acclimate to your new environment as quickly and painlessly as possible.

- During your orientation meeting, you will have the opportunity to talk with faculty and will be given general information about Barcelona and the program's cultural and social activities. You will receive an orientation packet that will include practical information about Barcelona as well as a map of the city.

### **Program Coordinator**

Each AIFS campus abroad has staff to oversee the program. The Program Coordinator is responsible for making sure that all aspects of your experience abroad go well, including your housing and cultural activities.

## **CULTURE SHOCK**

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It is normal for students to have some unrealistic expectations about living in a foreign country. Many students have never experienced the culture or visited the country where they plan to study, but they have an illusion of what it will be like. This can come from reading about the country or hearing about the experiences of a friend or family member who visited or studied abroad in the same location. It is important to understand that every person's experience is different, and that reading or hearing about a place is not the same as living there. If you go abroad expecting everything to be a certain way, you will be disappointed. Keep an open mind, and expect the unexpected.

You are prepared to speak another language, but you also need to be prepared for a lifestyle change. Everything about your daily routine is about to change, from the classes, to what time you will eat dinner. Be flexible and open to new things. Don't assume that the U.S. way is the "right" way to do everything. Remember that one of the main reasons for study abroad for most students is to integrate into the culture. You can't integrate if you expect everything to be like it is at home.

Almost every traveler who spends an extended period away from home experiences culture shock to some degree. This is especially true for students on study abroad programs. There are always a few difficult adjustments to make: the language barrier, new educational and teaching styles, different living arrangements and so on.

### **What is culture shock?**

You will encounter many new and sometimes confusing situations while studying abroad. Culture shock is a type of stress that results from trying to cope with these situations using a different language and following different customs. You are outside of your comfort zone and as a result, you may feel frustrated, depressed or even sick.

Most of the stress-causing differences between home and the host culture will be obvious to you right away: disruption of your normal daily routine, the distance between you and family and friends, strange new food, the climate, etc. Other differences between your culture and the host culture are not so obvious but can also cause stress. This can include how people in the host culture make decisions and resolve problems, interaction with your professors, how recreational time is spent, customer service and business practices, and the type of body language people use. Getting used to all this can cause a considerable amount of anxiety.

Since everyone handles things differently, there is no “formula” for dealing with culture shock. It does help to know that it happens to everyone in one way or another. Knowing that you may experience it at some point during your stay abroad, you can take some positive steps to prepare yourself:

- Accept the differences. In order to acclimate, you are going to have to find a way to live with the things that you are not in 100% agreement with about the new culture. This goes for the host country’s attitude towards punctuality and customer service, the food and the educational system. These are some of the things that make up the culture, and they are not going to change because you don’t like them.
- Be patient. You are not going to get used to living abroad in a couple of days or even a couple of weeks. Adjustment takes time.
- Keep an open mind. Relax and accept things as they are. You might end up appreciating the host culture’s way of doing things or at least develop an appreciation for how things are done at home.
- Pay attention to cultural differences. Social customs vary widely from one culture to another, and there is no way to “fit in” until you learn what is (and is not) appropriate behavior. You will learn this by paying attention to the actions of those around you.
- Make good use of your free time. Maybe you were used to a rigid schedule at home and are having a hard time adjusting to a slower pace. See as much of the city and country as you can. You may never have the chance to relax this much again, so enjoy it.
- Get some exercise. If you are used to exercising at home, keep it up while you are abroad. Exercise will help you battle culture shock in a constructive way. Go for a run, or join a gym.

## **HOUSING AND MEALS**

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You have two options for housing and meals during the program in Barcelona. Students can choose between living in a shared apartment with other AIFS students or in a homestay with a Spanish family.

Your accommodation in Spain may be very different to accommodations in the U.S., so try not to compare. Living standards are generally lower in Spain than in the U.S. Space comes at a premium, and you will find that people live and work in much smaller spaces. Spaniards are known for being sociable, and the tradition of tapas typifies the type of socializing that is done outside the home in bars and restaurants.

## **Shared apartments**

Apartment living is ideal for students who like their independence, want to cook for themselves and to experience local city life. Living with up to 5 other AIFS students, you will share a twin room and have access to a communal kitchen, living area and bathroom(s).

Apartments are fully furnished, including washing facilities, bedding and sheets, and are typically located in popular areas such as Eixample, Sagrada Familia and Poble Nou. You will receive your own key.

## **Homestays**

For an additional fee, a homestay option is available. For many students, the homestay experience is possibly the biggest challenge and also the most rewarding aspect of their time abroad. Immersed in the life and culture, it is the best way to learn Spanish, find out about what daily life is really like for a native, and it brings the opportunity to integrate into the local community. Patience, respect and an open mind are essential to making the homestay experience work.

In the homestay option, two students will share a twin room. Students receive two meals per day (typically breakfast and dinner) five days per week, and breakfast on the weekends. Weekly laundry service is provided.

Although the word “family” implies father, mother and children, this is not always the case. AIFS has families of all types who are ready to welcome students into their homes: older couples with grown children; young couples with younger or no children; single, older women and single parents with young children. Homestays will be located within 30 minutes traveling distance of the school.

A considerable amount of time is spent on the housing of each student and it is, therefore, essential that all housing questions on the program online enrollment form be answered honestly and fully, and that you specify any preferred roommates and any special medical conditions. If you feel you did not fully state your needs, please submit any additional information in writing to AIFS. The online enrollment form’s housing questionnaire must be completed fully. The AIFS representative reserves the right to change room assignments during the program. AIFS staff also reserves the right to enter students’ rooms. However, every effort is made to do so in the presence of the students or with the students’ permission.

Students should check in with the AIFS representative on a regular basis and must notify him/her if they are going to be away, even if they will only be away for the night.

Please submit all housing requests in writing to AIFS.

## Roommates

Students wishing to be roommates must each indicate their preference on the AIFS online enrollment form. You must request each other. If you decide that you would like to room with someone after you have completed your online enrollment form, email [spain@aifs.co.uk](mailto:spain@aifs.co.uk), and have your prospective roommate do the same.

## Laundry

In the apartments, you will have washing facilities, but do not expect a dryer in your apartment. In the homestay, the señora will do one load of laundry per week. Electricity is very expensive in Spain, and it is typical to dry your clothes on a clothes line or drying rack.

## Housing Rules

Successful communal living requires consideration for those around you. We would appreciate your cooperation in observing the following rules during your stay in Barcelona.

- Good behavior is a must if everyone is to get along well, not only you with your roommate, but also with other people staying in the apartment building or with your homestay family. Therefore, please do not play music loudly, disturb your roommates when you return late at night, or talk loudly. Barcelona has legal quiet hours that must be adhered to.
- No overnight guests are allowed for security and liability reasons. If you have friends visiting you in Barcelona, the AIFS Program Coordinator will be able to help you find them a place to stay.
- Never leave doors unlocked or windows open. You are responsible for the security of your own belongings and should take all necessary precautions.
- Please keep your room tidy, and do not leave items on the floor.
- Please be aware that any damage, including charges for extra cleaning, will be charged to your damage deposit. Charges in excess of your damage deposit allowance will be billed to your account and payable once you've returned to the U.S.

## Linen

Towels and washcloths are not provided. Bring your own, or buy them when you arrive.

Clean linen (i.e., two sheets, one pillowcase) is provided. Blankets are also provided.

**Apartment** students will have the facilities to wash their linen as needed.

**Homestay students** will have their rooms cleaned and trash bins emptied by the señora. Students should keep their rooms as tidy as possible. Homestay students will have their linen changed once a week.

## Electricity

American appliances run on 110 volts, while Spain uses 230 volts. You can buy transformers to convert the electricity and adapter kits for the different sockets at your local hardware store before you leave. However, we suggest that you do not bring items such as hairdryers, curling irons, hair straighteners, electrical razors, etc. The electrical current abroad is so great that if you try to use them, even with an adapter/converter, they may explode, short out, melt or cause a fire. Adapters are really made for occasional, not daily use so you are better off just buying these items abroad. Remember, you always have the option to share these purchases with your roommate(s).

Generally, most tech items such as laptops/tablets, cell phones, and cameras come with dual voltage converter built in. You should be able to use these items with just a plug adapter. Always be sure to check with the manufacturer before using items abroad.

Utilities in Spain are very expensive. Consequently, Spaniards are very conscious of lights left on when no one is in the room, wasted hot water and unnecessary phone calls. During the winter, hot water is regulated by central heating. Be prepared to wear warm clothes most of the time.

## Do's and don'ts of your accommodation

Do...Remember you will have a roommate. Be considerate and respectful of each other's property and space. You will be sharing a room and the bathroom—don't monopolize!

Do...Be quiet late at night. In your room and if you come home late at night, keep the noise down. You do not have a curfew, but please do not disturb other students or guests who may be sleeping or studying. Neighbors of students in apartments have been known to contact the police about noise!

Don't...Invite guests into your accommodation "after hours." After 10pm, all guests must leave. Students may not invite guests to stay overnight. Students who have overnight visitors may be expelled from the program without a refund.

Don't...leave valuables lying around your room. Apartment students should lock valuables away and always make sure that doors and windows are locked before leaving.

### **Damages**

All students will be billed for any damages or other charges incurred during the program. It is important to keep AIFS informed of any maintenance needs and leave accommodation clean upon departure.

### **Roommates/relations with your fellow students**

Part of the culture shock of studying abroad isn't just living in a new culture, surrounded by a new language, but living with your fellow study abroad participants.

When meeting your fellow students it is important to give each other time and respect. Some people are very gregarious; others are shy. Don't take offense if someone doesn't socialize with you; you may get to know each other later as the program progresses. Respect each other's privacy.

Roommates need to be considerate of each other's needs and habits. Talk with your roommate when you arrive to discuss how you can share the space: who is an early riser, how you want to deal with playing music, when you will study in the room. Try to keep your things on your side of the room and be quiet when you know your roommate is asleep. Noise at night is usually not maliciously intended, but being woken up at night is definitely unpleasant. If someone asks you to keep it down, please accommodate him/her, and don't make him/her ask more than once.

### **Food**



The Mediterranean diet is considered by many to be among the healthiest in the world. Catalan cuisine is based on olive oil, lentils, chick peas, fish, chicken, pork, rice, fresh fruit and vegetables.

Your eating habits and meal schedule may need some adjustment. Breakfast is continental in the strictest sense of the word. It consists of coffee with milk or hot chocolate and muffins or bread. At about 2:30 p.m. the main meal

(comida) of the day is served. It consists of two courses followed by fruit. Dinner ("cena") is a lighter meal served around 9:30 p.m. or so.

Vegetarianism is not the norm in Spain, although you will find some good vegetarian restaurants in Barcelona. Your Program Coordinator can give you a list.

Typical authentic dishes include: "rossejats" (baked dishes), "escudella" (a meat and vegetable stew), "sopa de farigola" (soup with thyme), "trinxat amb rost" (fried, diced vegetables with bacon), "vedella amb bolets" (veal with wild mushrooms), "crema catalana" (a type of crème brûlée) and coca (a flat sponge cake). Popular dishes from other regions include "paella" (saffron flavored rice with seafood), "gazpacho" (cold tomato soup), and "tortilla española" (potato omelet). Whether it is beer, wine or Sangria, alcohol finds its place on most tables in households at meal time.



### **What You Can Expect in Apartments**

Each apartment has a well-equipped kitchen with enough kitchen utensils for all occupants to prepare and eat meals at home (this option is particularly recommended for students with special dietary needs).

### **What You Can Expect in Homestays**

You will be provided with two meals a day mid-week (Breakfast and Dinner), and breakfast on weekends. Meals require some adjustment to your eating habits, especially your schedule. Do not expect American food. Meals are a very important part of any culture, so try everything! If you have dietary requirements, learn how to explain them in Spanish and be prepared to have to repeat yourself.

## LOCAL TRANSPORTATION

### Transports Metropolitans de Barcelona (TMB)

Transportation in the city is operated by TMB.

<http://www.tmb.cat/en/tmb-home>

There are TMB information offices in the foyer of the "Universitat" metro station, open Monday to Friday from 8 a.m. - 8 p.m. There are also offices at the Diagonal, Sants Estació and Sagrada Família metro stations. Apart from rush hour, when it becomes very crowded, the metro is the most efficient way to navigate the city. Metro lines are identified by a number and a color; the direction is shown by the name of the line terminus.

All students are provided with a metro ticket for unlimited use within the central zones of Barcelona for the duration of the program. This is registered against a passport number so students should ensure they always carry a copy of their passport in case they are stopped by inspectors.

Students are responsible for the cost of replacing lost metro passes.

A single ticket (billet senzill) costs €2,20 and must be validated in a machine on the platform before boarding and carried at all times to avoid the €100 penalty. A T-mes (monthly metro pass) costs €54 and allows unlimited journeys during 30 days. The metro runs Monday to Thursday and Sunday, from 5am-12am, Friday until 2am, and on Saturdays there is non-stop service.

Regional rail services and the purple metro line are operated by Ferrocarrils de la Generalitat de Catalunya, or FGC ([www.fgc.catalunya.net](http://www.fgc.catalunya.net)). The FGC line is fully integrated with the rest of the TMB-operated metro system and runs daily until 11:30pm.

### Buses

Buses in the city run from 5:30am-11:30pm. The network is extensive, and almost all services run through Plaça de Catalunya, Plaça Urquinaona or Plaça de la Universitat. There are 16 night bus routes running from 11pm-4:30am to some destinations.

### Train

You can visit the state railway company (RENFE) site at [www.renfe.es](http://www.renfe.es). A funicular railway (half elevator, half rail car) trundles up Montjuïc from the corner of Carrer Nou de la Rambla and Avinguda Parallel to Avinguda Miramar 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily in summer (a single ticket costs €2,15). From the amusement park there is a cable car (telefèric) to Montjuïc Castle which runs daily during the summer, from 12 p.m. - 8 p.m. It costs €6.80 for a single and €9.60 for a round-trip.

## Taxis

There are 11,000 yellow and black registered cabs in the city. As well as being hailed on the street, taxis can be booked in advance (tel: 93 358 1111). The basic charge is €2, which should show on the meter; each kilometer is charged at €0.6. A €1 supplement is charged for each piece of large luggage. Make sure you have cash; bills shouldn't be greater than €50.

## COMMUNICATIONS ABROAD

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### Mail

Please use the AIFS Office address as your mailing address.

#### Your name

c/o don Quijote

c/ Mallorca 27

08029 Barcelona, Spain

You can collect your mail from there, rather than having it sent to your individual apartment addresses- you will not receive a key for the mailbox. You can buy stamps at post offices and "estancos" (tobacco stores). To send packages, you have to go to a post office. Mailboxes are all over the city and are easily recognizable because of their yellow (ordinary mail) and red (urgent mail) colors. Current rates for letters (normal size and a maximum weight of 20 grams) are: Spain, Andorra and Gibraltar €0.60; Europe €1.40; and the rest of the world €1.50. Be sure to deposit mail for the U.S. in the boxes marked "extranjero."

Some packages sent from the U.S. are held upon arrival in the European Union. To reduce the risk of packages getting held, please only send used personal belongings. This may help deter customs authorities from requesting custom fees.

Be advised that mail/packages may arrive after you have left the program. AIFS and the Program Coordinator are not responsible for tracking and returning any mail/packages.

### Making and receiving telephone calls

Instructions on calling the U.S. will be covered during orientation at the start of the program.

- **To call Spain from the U.S.**, dial: 011 34 + number (local land lines in Barcelona generally begin with "93")
- **To call a cell phone in Spain from the U.S.**, dial: 011 34 + number
- **To call the U.S. from Spain**, dial: 00 1 + area code + number

You should try to use internet based services such as Skype, Whatsapp and Facetime to receive calls from the US- these will be free if you are connected to Wifi. Calling US cellphones direct to or from the US may incur high charges. If you choose to purchase a Spanish cellphone then your parents can call you at no cost; costs to call the USA may incur significant charges.

### Cell phones

We recommend that you consider purchasing cell phones in Barcelona. A basic phone that texts and calls will cost approximately 30-50 euros, and you can add credit on a pay-as-you-go basis. Smartphones start around 100 euros.

### Internet and Computers

We strongly recommend that students bring laptops, as they will be useful for writing papers while studying and are good for communicating with staff, other students and family back home. There is wireless Internet provided in the accommodation, though the connection will be slower than it is back home.

Wifi is available at the school between the hours of 9:00am and 7:00pm, Monday through Friday, and there are many Internet cafés in Barcelona for use outside of office hours.

While we recommend/encourage students to bring laptops, please remember that computers can be damaged easily during travel, they must be fitted with the correct adaptor for European electrical outlets, and they can be affected by power fluctuations in Spain. Also, check and make sure you have insurance on your computer. Be aware that if you have selected the AIFS Personal Effects upgrade, the policy only covers electronics up to \$500 per claim.

### MONEY MATTERS

The cost of the AIFS program is fairly comprehensive in what it covers. However, in order to ensure that you budget your personal spending money correctly, it is vital that you understand precisely what is covered in the program cost and what your own responsibility is. Budgets and spending habits vary enormously, but a reasonable amount of spending money is approximately €200 per week, excluding travel. There are a number of excursions offered by AIFS and certainly enough to do in Barcelona to keep you occupied the whole time here, but some students do want to travel to other parts of Europe, and for this you will need more money. Students should also budget for cab fares if they are traveling to or from their residence late at night.

### Currency

Many countries in Europe including Spain use the Euro as their form of currency. Students should check the current

exchange rates before they depart on the program. It is a good idea to have some euro cash with you upon your arrival, so you do not need to go out searching for a bank immediately.

### Local prices (approximate)

#### FOOD/DRINKS

Coffee.....	1,30€
Roll .....	1,50€
Sandwich and a drink.....	5€
Main course in modest restaurant.....	16€
Mineral water.....	1€
Coca Cola .....	3€
Pastry/cake .....	1,50€

#### CLOTHING

Generic jeans .....	50€
Pair of shoes .....	50€

#### MISCELLANEOUS

Haircut (men) .....	15€
Haircut (women).....	30€
Movie ticket.....	8€
Batteries.....	4€
Local transportation.....	2,20€
Laundry.....	10€
Postcard/letter to the U.S. (postage).....	1,50€

#### TOILETRIES

Toothpaste.....	2€
Shampoo.....	4€
Gillette Razors.....	5€
Shaving Foam (200ml).....	3€
Body Lotion (250mls).....	6€
Shampoo/Conditioner 2-in-1 (200m).....	6€
Tampons (12).....	4€
Shower Wash (250ml).....	4€

#### SCHOOL SUPPLIES

Class materials/text books (for the term).....	200€
Field trips (for the term).....	100-200€
Dictionary.....	30€

### ATM cards

ATM cards are the most convenient way to acquire funds while abroad, but they occasionally, without warning, fail to work. Therefore, they should not be relied on as the sole

means of acquiring money. Students should contact their banks about withdrawing foreign currencies from their U.S. accounts. Your Program Coordinator will be able to provide you with reputable ATM locations.

### **Credit cards**

You should also bring a credit card. The most recognized cards in Europe are Visa and MasterCard. Visa is the most widely accepted. You can take a cash advance from your credit cards if you have a PIN number, but in general, this should be used only in an emergency, as interest rates are very high.

### **Pre-paid Money Cards/Visa Travel Money**

Pre-paid cards such as Visa Travel Money or Cash Passport let you pre-load them and then re-load them at any time. They work like regular debit/credit cards in that you need a PIN to withdraw funds. They should be obtained in the U.S. before departure. They are a secure way of using money overseas, and in the event that the pre-paid card is lost or stolen, it can be replaced quickly. Paper travelers' checks are no longer widely used in Europe.

### **Personal checks**

You will not be able to cash personal checks outside of the USA.

### **Wiring money**

The fastest way to get money transferred to you while you are abroad is through [Money Gram](#) or [Western Union-Money in Minutes](#). This can be done at any Western Union or Money Gram office or online with a credit or debit card. Please bear in mind that it is expensive to send money this way, so it should only be used in emergency situations. However, there is no charge to receive funds; all you need is some ID and the reference number (given to the sender of the money) to pick up the money anywhere in the world.

The Program Coordinator will be able to give you the address of the nearest Western Union office should you need it. There are several Western Union offices located throughout Barcelona.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY WHILE ABROAD**

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### **Personal identification**

Be sure to have personal identification with you at all times with the address and telephone number of the AIFS office and the AIFS Emergency Number. We suggest you memorize the address of your accommodation in case you need to give it to a taxi driver. Carry a photocopy of your passport when you are out and about in Barcelona, and take special care to keep the original in a safe place.

### **Medical insurance coverage**

Your program fee includes a comprehensive medical and program fee refund insurance package. The plan covers medical treatment abroad with a \$50 deductible per incident or illness. Please see the AIFS Insurance brochure for information. Should you require medical attention while abroad, the AIFS office can refer you to a local physician. They will also provide you with the necessary insurance forms (also available on the AIFS portal) and help you with filing claims. Please note that you will usually be expected to pay up front (unless admitted) for all medical expenses and to file an insurance claim for reimbursement. Save any doctors' bills if you seek treatment. The AIFS medical insurance plan covers medical bills up to a maximum of \$100,000 for each medically covered illness or accident abroad. An optional medical upgrade is available, increasing your coverage to \$250,000. Optional Personal Effects Coverage is also available. Refer to the AIFS Insurance brochure for details.

Always remember to inform the AIFS staff about your sickness so that they can assist you with appointments and translation if needed..

## **SAFETY TIPS & LEGAL AID**

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The following security measures should be in effect at all times:

- Stay in touch regularly with your family and friends. They can get worried if they don't hear from you.
- Drink wisely. Mature and sensible behavior should prevail in all circumstances where alcohol will be served. Drunkenness is not looked upon as funny or tolerable in other countries. Attitudes towards liquor are different in Europe; moderate drinking is a big part of socializing. Alcohol can impair your judgment—you cannot be alert if you have been drinking. The combination of being a foreigner who doesn't know exactly what is and isn't safe behavior and excessive drinking increases your chances of being victimized by robbery or even physical attack.
- Be careful with your personal belongings. Like most major cities, Barcelona has its fair share of pickpockets, so be especially careful in bars and cafés, street markets, and train or bus stations. Never hang your backpack or purse on the back of a chair in public places; keep it in your lap or on the floor between your feet.

- Don't carry large sums of cash. It is not replaceable if lost or stolen. Only take out what you need for the day.
- Everyone is responsible for his or her own safety, so always walk away from trouble, and keep a low profile. Try and stay informed on the world situation via newspapers, radio, TV and online new sources.
- Be cautious when meeting new people. AIFS policy forbids us from giving out students' addresses and phone numbers under any circumstances. It is wise for you to have the same policy. You should avoid communicating the address and phone number of the AIFS office as well. Take the same precautions you would take at home. Don't give your identity to unknown persons.
- Know where the nearest police station and hospital are and keep emergency numbers handy. Don't go into unsafe areas at any time.
- Be aware of your surroundings. Report suspicious activity or unknown individuals "hanging around" in your building. Be careful of who has access to your home. Visitors should be screened and are not allowed to stay overnight, even friends and family members from the U.S.
- Never accept a package or suitcase from someone you do not know well. Likewise, do not offer to watch someone else's belongings in train stations, airports, or other public places.
- Avoid discussing politics in public. It is important for you to realize that Barcelona has a diverse international population. Please verify all rumors with the AIFS Barcelona staff. The media in Spain and in the U.S. can sometimes dramatize events.
- Don't make jail part of your stay abroad. Stay away from all drugs. Little can be done to help you if you are caught with illegal drugs. It is your responsibility to know the drug laws of the countries you plan to visit. "I didn't know" will not get you out of jail.
- Should you leave Barcelona for the weekend, let the Program Coordinator know where you are going and when you expect to return. Leave a number where you can be reached, if possible.

#### **Websites dealing with security issues**

[www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov) (U.S. Department of State website)

[www.usembassy.state.gov](http://www.usembassy.state.gov)

[www.travel.state.gov/travel\\_warnings.html](http://www.travel.state.gov/travel_warnings.html)

#### **American Consulate General in Barcelona:**

The Consular Section is open to the public Monday-Friday, from 9:00a.m. to 1:00p.m. The Consulate is located in the Sarrà/Sant Gervasi district of Barcelona. By metro: Ferrocarriles de la Generalitat de Catalunya, Reina Elisenda station (last stop of the U-6 line). Or take bus 64 or 22.

For American citizens' inquiries, e-mail:

[consularbarcel@state.gov](mailto:consularbarcel@state.gov)  
[www.embusa.es/emba/voting.html](http://www.embusa.es/emba/voting.html)

Paseo Reina Elisenda de Montcada, 23

08034 Barcelona, España

Tel: (+34) 93 280 22 27

Fax: (+34) 93 280 61 75

#### **Legal Aid**

If you have difficulties with the local authorities abroad, remember that you are subject to local laws. Unfortunately, the assistance that American officials can offer is limited by foreign laws, by U.S. laws, and by geography. The U.S. government has no funds for your legal fees and other related expenses.

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You should consult a consular officer if you find yourself in a dispute that could lead to legal or police action. Although U.S. consular officers cannot serve as attorneys or give legal advice, they can provide lists of local attorneys and help you find adequate legal representation. It should be noted that the consular attorneys' lists, although carefully prepared, are compiled from local bar association lists and responses to questionnaires. Neither the Department of State nor U.S. embassies nor consulates can assume any responsibility for the caliber, competence or professional integrity of the attorney.

Consular officers will do whatever they can to protect your legitimate interests and ensure that you are not discriminated against under local law. However, they CANNOT get you out of jail. If you are arrested, ask permission to notify the consular officer at the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. Under international agreement and practice, you have a right to contact the American Consulate. If your request is denied, keep asking politely and persistently. If unsuccessful, try to have someone get in touch with the consulate for you.

When alerted, American officials will visit you, advise you of your rights according to local laws, and contact your family and friends if you ask them to do so. If your prison facilities are inadequate (as is often the case), consuls can transfer money, food and clothing from your family and friends to the prison authorities. They will try to get relief if you are held

under inhumane or unhealthy conditions or treated less favorably than others in the same situation.

## **STUDENT CONDUCT**

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As part of the enrollment process, all students sign an Agreement and Release form in which they agree to abide by the rules of the program. If these rules are not followed, the student will be asked to leave the program without the possibility of refund.

### **Alcohol and drugs**

Excessive consumption of alcohol and use of illegal drugs is forbidden and will result in immediate dismissal from the program without refund. Students must obey the laws of the host country and AIFS rules.

### **Probation and dismissal**

Students who fail to maintain standards of conduct and academic achievement may be dismissed from the AIFS program without refund. A note to this effect will be placed on the student's permanent record. Students dismissed because of academic or disciplinary standing may forfeit all academic credit. Your professor may fail a student because of excessive unexcused absences, as well as by examination or other evaluation.

In cases of misconduct, a student may be warned, placed on non-academic probation, academically withdrawn or dismissed from the program as the circumstances warrant.

### **Rude, aggressive and offensive behavior**

AIFS will not tolerate rude, aggressive or offensive behavior, or verbal abuse towards AIFS staff, host families or academic staff. Students who do not maintain acceptable standards of behavior may be dismissed from the program without refund.

AIFS has the complete discretion to communicate with a student's home college or university regarding any issue at any time.

## **ACADEMIC LIFE ABROAD**

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While studying abroad, you will encounter some new educational styles. Students are encouraged to work on their own and to use the greatest variety of works possible in their studies. American lecture halls tend to be much larger than classes abroad.

It will be of vital importance to have a good Spanish dictionary. Ask your language professor for a recommendation.

Your home institution will handle all matters pertaining to course selection and credit. Make sure you have discussed your plans with your advisor ahead of time.

Classes are normally held at the AIFS Study Center Monday through Thursday according to the class schedule. Some Fridays in the semester will be used for make-up classes and day trips.

There will be an academic orientation at the start of the program that will cover classroom and course information and any other issues related to the academic aspects of the program.

### **Libraries**

Most students find that the textbooks they bring from the U.S., along with materials given out by faculty, provide them with enough study material.

However, for studying, we recommend you use the Spanish libraries, which will help you integrate into Spanish student life. They typically have only Spanish books, but they are excellent places to study. You can apply for membership, which will give you borrowing rights. Please note, however, that Spanish libraries are not open late, and generally they are closed on weekends.

## **CULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND RECREATION**

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AIFS staff arrange a variety of social and cultural activities including a welcome fiesta, guided tours in Barcelona, excursions to local places of interest and a farewell party.

The Program Coordinator, organizes cultural activities and excursions in and around Barcelona.

These may include:

- City tour
- Gothic Quarter and Cathedral
- Cooking class
- La Sagrada Familia
- Parc Güell
- Montserrat and Sitges
- Girona and Figueres
- Flamenco show
- Boat cruise
- Film night
- Soccer match

*Events are heavily subsidized but will require a supplementary fee.*



### **La Rambla**

La Rambla is not one street, but rather a series of pedestrian avenues stretching from the Monument a Colón on the waterfront to Plaça de Catalunya in the center of the city. Attractions along the way include Gaudí's Park Güell, the Gran Teatre del Liceu, the legendary Café de l'Òpera, the Barri Gòtic and La Boqueria—Barcelona's wonderful, bustling food market. Some of La Rambla's most captivating attractions are its famous street entertainers who delight the crowds with their unique shows.

### **Barri Gòtic**

The maze of streets known as the Barri Gòtic, or Gothic Quarter, contains an exemplary collection of Gothic buildings dating from Catalonia's Golden Age in the 14th and 15th centuries, interspersed with Roman ruins, delightful squares and numerous bars and restaurants. Plaça Sant Jaume, at the heart of the district, is the epicenter of the city's political life.

The square is overlooked on one side by the Renaissance-style Palau de la Generalitat (the location of the Catalan government), and on the other by the Ajuntament (town hall). Nearby, the Palau Real on Plaça del Rei houses the Museu d'Història de la Ciutat.

### **Sagrada Família**

The Expiatory Temple of the Holy Family—Gaudí's unfinished masterpiece and the city's most outlandish landmark. It towers above the grid-like streets of the Eixample. The extraordinary structure has elicited cries of astonishment, awe, amusement and anger from visitors and residents alike, but remains one of the city's most visited attractions.

### **Picasso Museum**

The Picasso Museum reopened in 2000 with two new exhibition spaces that will host temporary exhibitions. The permanent collection is devoted to the artist's early work, including a large number of Rose and Blue period paintings, exhibition posters and childhood sketches. The

delightful collection is housed in two 15th century palaces close to the Parc de la Ciutadella.

### **Sports**

There are several gyms in Barcelona, however, they will seem small and inadequately equipped compared to gyms in the U.S. The seafront is ideal for jogging during the day, but should be avoided after dark. Month passes for a local gym can range from 50€ to 100€. There are also several public swimming pools. Plus, you will get plenty of exercise by walking around the city.

You should be prepared for sports facilities to be less accessible than you are used to back home. The 24-hour gym is an unknown phenomenon in Spain – their gyms usually open around 8 or 9:00am, will have reduced hours on Saturday, and maybe closed on Sunday. Membership will also be more expensive than in the U.S.

Additional information on sports facilities will be provided on-site in Barcelona.

## **TRAVEL AND EXCURSIONS**

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### **By Plane**

Barcelona Airport is located 30 minutes south of the city by train and is home to many airlines just waiting to take you to any destination in Europe. In the last decade, budget airlines have taken over, with no-frills flights available at low fares.

### **By Train or Bus**

Barcelona has a great network of trains and buses that link you to the surrounding area and majority of large Spanish cities. In Spain, traveling by train is usually no quicker than traveling by bus, unless you take the high-speed trains, which are more expensive. Buses are usually significantly cheaper than the train. For travel to other countries, train or bus travel can be long and unnecessarily expensive. If your opportunities to travel are limited, flying is the better value for money and time.

### **Travel within Barcelona**

You will receive a travel pass for the duration of the program to cover trips on the metro and buses within Barcelona. It will be given to you at the start of the program, and the Program Coordinator will explain thoroughly how the system works.



## EUROPEAN TOURIST OFFICES

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A wealth of informative and practical literature may be obtained for free from the member national tourist offices of the European Travel Commission. The tourist office brochures often include maps and information on weather, hotels, restaurants and sports.

Austrian National Tourist Office	<a href="http://www.austria.info">www.austria.info</a>
Belgian National Tourist Office	<a href="http://www.visitbelgium.com">www.visitbelgium.com</a>
British National Tourist Office	<a href="http://www.visitbritain.com">www.visitbritain.com</a>
Czech Tourist Board	<a href="http://www.czechtourism.com">www.czechtourism.com</a>
French Gov't Tourist Office	<a href="http://www.us.franceguide.com">www.us.franceguide.com</a>
German National Tourist Office	<a href="http://www.germany.travel">www.germany.travel</a>
Greek National Tourist Office	<a href="http://www.visitgreece.gr">www.visitgreece.gr</a>
Irish Tourist Board	<a href="http://www.tourismireland.com">www.tourismireland.com</a>
Italian Government Travel Office	<a href="http://www.italia.it">www.italia.it</a>
Board of Tourism, Netherlands	<a href="http://www.holland.com">www.holland.com</a>
Tourist Office of Spain	<a href="http://www.spain.info">www.spain.info</a>
Switzerland Tourism	<a href="http://www.myswitzerland.com">www.myswitzerland.com</a>

## Q & A

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### Will there be field trips?

Yes! Your faculty member may wish to take you out into the city for some class activities, and AIFS can arrange day trips to local areas of interest, as well as walks and other activities as part of the Cultural Calendar. Some events may require a small contribution, but the vast majority are heavily subsidized to keep costs minimal.

### Can I work while in Barcelona?

No, not to earn money. Work permits are difficult to obtain.

### Must I fly with AIFS?

Check the rules of your college program. However, if you purchase the AIFS Transportation Package, you will receive round-trip airport transfers to/from the AIFS Student Center in Barcelona as part of the package. If you make your own flight arrangements, you will be responsible for arranging your own transfer from Barcelona airport to the Student Center/your accommodations in Barcelona, and for any costs involved.

If you will be providing your own transportation, be sure to complete and send back to the AIFS Stamford office the Independent Travel Info Form (available on the AIFS portal at [www.aifscustomized.com](http://www.aifscustomized.com)).

### Can I change my return flight once I am in Barcelona?

For a fee and subject to airline approval and availability, you may try to change your return flight date only (the routing cannot be changed).

Change requests can only be made once you have arrived in Barcelona, and are requested via the AIFS portal. You will be asked to choose three dates and will need to provide credit card details.

There is an airline-imposed change fee of \$350, plus any fare difference.

### Do I get a refund if I change my mind and decide not to go on the program?

Carefully read the AIFS refund policy on the application. When you sign your application, you sign a statement indicating your understanding of the refund policy and your compliance with it.

### How much luggage can I bring?

Airlines have size limits, and they impose a high surcharge for excess weight. Read the information in this Handbook and contact the airline directly for the latest regulations.

# PACKING LIST

Remember:

- Pack lightly
- Check the local climate
- Check the baggage restrictions for each airline you will use
- Sheets, blankets and pillows are provided

## Clothing

Machine washable is best

	Underwear and socks
	Pajamas
	Long-sleeve shirts
	Short-sleeve shirts
	Sweatshirt or Sweater
	Jeans/Khakis
	Shorts
	Belts
	Skirts/Dresses
	Workout clothes
	Jacket
	Nice outfit
	Sandals/Sneakers/Shoes
	Flip flops
	Nice shoes
	Bathing suit
	Beach towel/bath towels
	Gloves/hat/scarf

## Toiletries

Most items can be purchased abroad, so bring travel-sized to get you through the first few days

	Toothbrush/toothpaste
	Deodorant
	Sanitary products
	Contact lens solution
	Extra prescription glasses
	Brush/Comb
	Shaving Razor
	Nail Clippers
	Makeup
	Prescribed medication
	Over-the-counter medication

## Extras

	Adaptor plug/converter
	Earphones/Headphones
	Umbrella
	Chargers
	Backpack
	Alarm clock
	Digital camera
	USB cable
	English/Spanish Dictionary