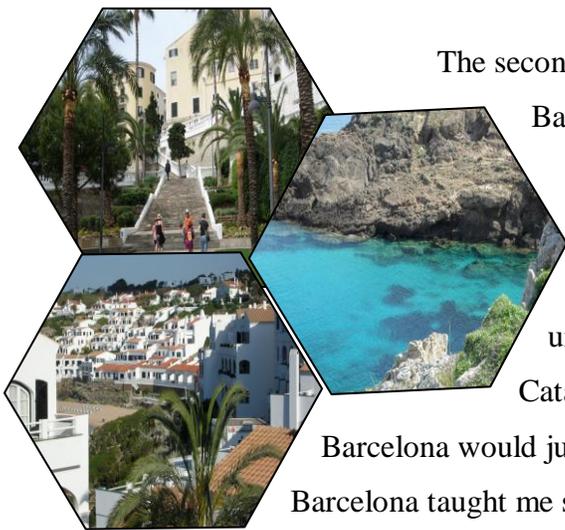


# My trip to Spain

By: Vernice Grajeda



Going abroad was one of the easiest yet hardest decisions to make. I wanted so much to experience and immerse myself in a whole new culture but I also wanted all the securities I have here at home. To sum it up, going abroad was the greatest decision I could have made. Where to begin! There are so many words I can use to describe my trip to Spain and not enough space to place them. My journey to Spain began on May 27<sup>th</sup> when I departed from California. This was my first trip away from home and without family. I arrived in Barcelona that Friday and spent a day in the city because the first part of my trip was spent in the Balearic Islands, on the island of Menorca. My week in Menorca was amazing; the Mediterranean is incredible, the beaches back home do not compare with what I experienced there. The atmosphere of the island is very relaxing. People go about their day in a tranquil manner but the capital Mao is just as busy and bustling as Los Angeles. The people I met were always extremely nice and fascinated that I was from the U.S. and yet I was fascinated by them because they lived on one of the most beautiful islands in the Mediterranean. The food, culture and the sites of Menorca were beyond belief.



The second part of my trip brought me back to the beautiful city of Barcelona. The city, the people, the architecture, the history were all amazing. While in Barcelona I took part in two language programs. I was originally only going to take Spanish classes but then I found out that a few of the universities were offering summer intensive courses in Catalan. I knew that having the opportunity to study Catalan in Barcelona would just add to my whole experience. Studying and living in Barcelona taught me so much about myself as it did about a new culture. I spent my time visiting all the typical tourist spots as well as those hidden locations that only the locals

know about. Visiting the Picasso Museum, the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Montjuic and the Monasterio de Montserrat were marvelous and books do not do these places justice. One of my favorite things that I loved about Barcelona was the architecture. Barcelona is home to one of my favorite Architects, Gaudi. Visiting Casa Milá, Casa Batlló, Parc Güell and La Sagrada Familia were incredible works of art that I will never forget.



My trip also brought me to visit other cities such as Madrid, Toledo, Valencia, and Girona. Traveling from city to city was beautiful; the sights that I was able to see from the train were breathtaking. In Madrid I visited the Royal Palace, Parliament and the amazing El Prado Museum. Walking through El Prado Museum was my favorite part of my excursion to Madrid, being able to see in person the art work that until then I had only learned about in my classes was unbelievable. My favorite city besides Barcelona was Toledo. From the moment I got off the train, the scenery was astonishing. The city's history was inscribed throughout its scenery. The cathedrals and the small alleys that led to hidden treasures were just like I imagined. Valencia and Girona were beautiful and each city had its own unique beauty to it. Valencia was very nice and tranquil and full of beautiful architecture and quite modern whereas Girona was small but full of history around the Old City, visiting the Jewish Museum helped me understand the city's past.



My two months in Barcelona were incredible and one of the greatest things throughout my time there were the many political demonstrations that took place on the streets and the many political changes that took place in the city's government. As a political science major, watching



change happen all around me and watching how people reacted to this was an added bonus to my trip. Another added bonus during my stay in Barcelona was being in Spain for the World Cup. When Spain won the soccer World Cup, the city, the country; went wild. It was off to the streets and bars to celebrate each victory the national team won. Being in Barcelona when Spain won was unbelievable, the celebration that occurred was fun and exciting; it was something I had never experienced before.

Going abroad for the summer was the greatest thing I could have ever done. Not only did I get a better understanding of a culture that is so near and dear to my heart but I became more independent. I did things I have never even done here at home, such as going out around the city by myself and traveling to different “states.” The friends and memories that were made over my two month trip are things I will never forget and I am so grateful to all of those who made my trip to Barcelona possible.

