

Goodbye classroom, hola Spain

SPAIN cont'd from 1

student of Gustave Eiffel of the Eiffel Tower. Because Lisbon is so mountainous, this elevator was built to take passengers to another neighborhood on the top of a hill.

After more than a day in Lisbon, the class caught a morning flight to Barcelona, Spain. The remainder of the day and evening was spent studying the architecture of Antonio Gaudi. El Templo de la Sagrada Familia is Barcelona's most famous landmark. The construction of the cathedral began in 1882, and due to Gaudi's sudden death and the destruction of the plans in a fire, it is still under construction today. The students also took a tour of Gaudi's La Pedrera or Casa Mila. Due to the extreme heat in the summer, this apartment building features rotundas and very artistic chimneys and appendages on the roof for ventilation.

The next day, the class traveled to the small principality of Andorra by bus. Andorra, located on the borders of France and Spain, is known for its scenic views of the Pyrenees Mountains, skiing and shopping. The next morning,

the class flew from Barcelona to Granada. This city's culture is the most Arabic-influenced of Spain and is home of the Alhambra Palace. Professor Vargas-Vila took the class on a walking tour of the city, visiting a mosque, several cathedrals, and a monastery. Along the way, the class experienced intricately designed stone streets, street vendors, and gypsies.

The major focus of Granada is the Alhambra Palace, which dates back to the ninth century. Even in the time of Arab sultans and extremely large harems of women, the palace was equipped with running water for fountains, steam baths and toilets, some of which are still in working order today. At 5:00 the next morning, the class left their hotel in Granada to catch a plane to Madrid, where they boarded a bus to Toledo, Spain. Toledo was once the capital of Spain and is famous for its metal work, especially swords and gold jewelry. The architecture of Toledo ranges from Gothic to Renaissance, sometimes even in the same building. The aptly named Toledo Cathedral took over 250 years to build. During this time, the styles of architecture

had changed, and so there are great structural differences in this building.

The final day of this class trip was spent in Madrid, Spain. A good portion of the day was spent at El Museo de Prado. This art museum houses a large collection of works from artists such as Dali, Picasso and Goya. Since this large museum would take days to tour completely, the class focused mostly on the works of Goya, who was studied in the SPAN130 class. The class departed Madrid on Sunday afternoon, and after a seven hour flight, a six hour time change, and a three hour bus ride home from JFK Airport in New York, Professor Vargas-Vila and the students went to their regularly scheduled classes on Monday morning.

Although the students found the program to be rewarding and educational, only seven were actually able to take advantage of the study abroad course because cost was a major issue. By the time the proposal for the course was approved, enough modifications were required so that the originally discussed fee of \$900 skyrocketed to \$2,495. The fee was due in advance directly to Penn State's travel agent, Celestial Voyages in Great Neck, NY.

This price included airfare, bus charters, guided tours of the Alhambra Palace and the city of Toledo, lodging, breakfasts and dinners. Additional fees were necessary for passports; airline luggage on Spanish domestic flights; public transportation; taxis, soft drinks or bottled water with dinners, as tap water was sometimes unavailable; lunches; entrance fees to museums; tips; entertainment; souvenirs; etc. This program has dwindled my personal college savings account by over \$3,000. Patti Lutz, who participated in the program, said, "It was definitely a set-back for me, financially."



Photo courtesy of Adeline Hiebert/Capital Times

The group in Al Hambra takes a break from sightseeing and learning to put down their backpacks and rest.

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