

Student's Research Adventure - 2012

Brenna Sullivan in China and Spain



The summer of 2012 brought many adventures, airline miles, unforgettable experiences, and travel across the world... twice. The first two weeks my summer were spent in **Northeast China**, mostly at the [Shenyang Conservatory of Music](#). From the second we made our late night arrival to the Shenyang International Airport, the whirlwind two weeks of travelling and learning commenced. The conservatory welcomed us with open arms, and did nothing but shower us with kindness, gifts, and a very full schedule.



Each day of the two weeks, we were presented with new topics in Chinese music, language, and culture through an array of short "crash courses" in everything Chinese. We were even taught how to make dumplings, correct seating for formal meals, and how to participate in traditional tea ceremonies! During the week, we were kept busy with classes and trips to museums, palaces, and trips to nearby cities such as Dalian and Beijing. While the classes provided insight on the Chinese people and their long history, the most rewarding educational experiences did not happen in the classes; they happened by walking on the streets,

visiting ancient palaces and tombs, running the Great Wall, visiting the Summer Palace and Temple of Heaven and experiencing places most only read about in history books.



These amazing two weeks taught me to value the education I am fortunate to be receiving, how different American Chinese food is from authentic Chinese food, and how complex the language of Mandarin really is! The two weeks I spent in China were very rewarding, and I hope to find myself back there in the future, but the summer adventure did not stop there.



A short two days later, I found my jet-lagged self in **Segovia, Spain** for what would be some of the most challenging weeks of my academic career. For the duration of my 6 weeks in Spain, I studied Spanish at [IE University](#) ^[1] in the beautiful medieval town of Segovia where I lived with a host family and became completely immersed in the culture and language of this captivating place.

While living with my host family, nothing but Spanish was spoken at all times, proving to be a very difficult situation for students who have only studied in the classroom.



As challenging, and frustrating, as it was, there is no better way

to learn the language and customs of the Spanish people than to live with them! The town of Segovia had so much to offer from its rich history starting from the Ancient Roman times. Segovia is home to the longest and most complete section of a Roman Aqueduct from the 1st century, a castle that is the former home to Ferdinand and Isabella, King and Queen of Spain, and many other lesser known sites.



The weeks were full of classwork and homework, but the weekends were for exploring the beautiful country of Spain. While there, I visited the cities of Alcalá, Salamanca, León, Ávila, Valencia, Granada, Toledo, and Madrid and saw many incredible places such as one of the oldest universities in the world, the University of Salamanca, and the birthplace of Cervantes in Alcalá. Overall, these trips allowed me an education far beyond what can be taught in a classroom and gave me knowledge beyond what a book can teach!

[Undergraduate](#)^[2]

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