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University of
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International Educator

Center for International Education

Fall 2010

“THE RAIN IN SPAIN” DIDN’T DAMPEN SPIRITS IN GRANADA

by John Chaston, Associate Professor of Spanish

Eliza Doolittle may have sung, “The rain in Spain falls mainly on the plain,” but the 24 participants in the Spring 2010 UNH-Granada Study Abroad program will quickly straighten you out on the matter. At least this year, the rain in Spain fell mainly in Granada, our host city nestled in the Sierra Nevada mountains, far from the plains. For the Granada residents this type of rain was a first, but most welcomed since the moisture would be needed for the inevitable long and dry season ahead. This was just an introduction to an entire semester filled with new and memorable experiences. While each participant will have his or her own memorable firsts, I will attempt a composite list that hopefully represents who we are and what we learned. So let our hopelessly incomplete list begin:

Seven Memorable “Firsts” of the Spring 2010 UNH-Granada Experience



UNH students in front of the Puerta de la Justicia

7 We learned that hospitals and emergency room doctors are every bit as competent in Spain as back home. “X-rays show that you have a bad sprain, but nothing is broken,” “We’ll sew up that nasty gash and you’ll be good as new,” “Just relax, this medicine will do the trick (and it’s good you came right here before anaphylactic shock set in because of your allergic reaction to nuts).” All now is well, and the insurance paid for EVERYTHING!

6 After traveling to Valencia to experience Las Fallas, a five-day holiday/celebration in which: (a) fireworks, firecrackers, and just about anything else explosive or burnable fulfills the measure of its creation; (b) hundreds of thousands dress in traditional costumes and parade through the streets to pay homage to and give gifts to the Virgin Mary; and (c) over 500 ‘scenes’ made of wood, Styrofoam, and papier mâché are burned on the last night; we will have

to work at taking our Fourth of July festivities and pyrotechnics seriously.

5 We cheered on the world class Real Madrid soccer team as it defeated Español 3-0, and even though Cristiano Ronaldo was on suspension and we missed him, we did see Kaká, Sergio Ramos, and Gonzálo Higuaín, all World Cup performers for their respective countries (Brazil, Spain, and Argentina) score goals. We also became fans of the Spanish national team in time to revel in its first World Cup title shortly after our return home.

4 Having already been to see 16-time Grammy winner Alejandro Sanz in his concert tour, Paraíso Express, in the Bullring in Córdoba on May 1, we didn't know if we could surpass such an event. But, two weeks later when we caught the internationally famous Sueño de Morfeo concert, one of our own students, Kevin, along with a teenage Spanish girl was invited to join the group on stage to be introduced and serenaded by lead singer Raquel del Rosario. It was definitely a first for Kevin and a highlight for us all. To see a picture of Kevin on stage, go to <http://blogdeelsuenodemorfeo.blogspot.com/search?updated-max=2010-05-16T16%3A19%3A00%2B02%3A00&max-results=7>.

3 The food, while mostly a delight, is sometimes, well, a little scary. Danielle, for example, after eating rabbit for the first time and finding it to be quite delicious hears her host mother ask: "Now, who wants the head?" Without pause her host sister shrieks: "Me! Me! Me!" and upon receiving this special surprise proceeds to dig in and eat with gusto the brains, eyes, and well, you get the idea. Though some of us still would rather that our food not be looking at us while we eat it, we are now convinced that olive oil, garlic, onions, and salt are gastronomical necessities and our palates will continue to long for such treats as real Spanish *churros* with chocolate from Café Fútbol, an endless variety of pastries and breads, and Italian gelato.

2 Up close and in person, Velazquez's *Las Meninas*, Goya's *Second of May* and *Third of May*, Picasso's *Guernica*, and countless other masterpieces became alive to us, and we felt personally part of Spanish history. Equally etched in our consciousness are the cathedrals, monasteries, palaces, mosques, plazas, bridges, gardens, aqueducts, amphitheatres, coliseums, and monuments.

1 The city of Granada and the Alhambra; the Centro de Lenguas Modernas, where we studied; our favorite professor and personal tour guide, Mari Carmen Alonso; our host families; and our new friends, be they in our group or be they Spaniards, top the list. As one of the students said, "I can say with confidence that I have developed new friendships that will continue after I return to the United States."

Seconds anyone?

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