

5 Tips for Surviving Your First Month Abroad

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My name is Charlotte, and I'm a sophomore currently studying abroad in Granada, Spain. Along with about 23 other UNH students, I am taking part in the UNH-managed [Granada Program](#), offered through [COLA's Center for Study Abroad](#). I will be sharing some of my experiences and observations of Spanish culture throughout the semester here on [UNH Tales](#)... Stay tuned!

As of February 13, I have officially been in Spain for one month. At this point, it's starting to feel "real" that I'm living here and not just on a long vacation! The first month abroad has brought many adjustments, a few challenges, and plenty of incredible experiences. There is something to be said for the immense growth that studying abroad forces you to endure. In just a month, I have learned so much.



There are definitely some attitudes you have to adopt in order to survive when you're thrown into such a drastically new and different situation. Here are my five tips for getting through your first month abroad:

1. Be flexible.

Almost always, things don't turn out how you think they will (this holds true for life in general!). A situation might exceed your expectations ... or it might not, but, either way, be prepared for things not to turn out exactly how you expect. It's natural to have ideas about how things might go, but don't get too hung up on whether things are exactly how you thought they would be. The study abroad experience comes with many

presupposed ideas about societal and cultural experiences. Some things I've found to be better than expected, while others have been simply different! Either way, it's been important for me to be flexible.

2. Be able to laugh at yourself.

There will be times when you absolutely cannot understand a single word that someone says (in the language that you've been studying for five years), and there will be times when you and your friends humiliate yourselves by stuttering your way through ordering coffee. The most important thing is to be able to laugh it off and not take yourself too seriously! In general, the people here in Spain are very nice and are just happy that you are attempting to speak their language. I think this holds true in every foreign country.



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3. Say “yes” as much as possible.

Even if you got barely any sleep the night before or just want a lazy morning in bed, the adventures that await you during the day will most likely be worth pushing through the sleepiness. I’ve forced myself out of bed a few different times to set off on outings with my host family, and, although I was reluctant at the time, it always turned out to be worth it. Whether they took me on a hike with beautiful views or showed me around a nearby coastal beach town, I never regretted forgoing a lazy day around the house for a new adventure.

4. But don’t forget to take care of yourself!

Despite the fact that you should turn down as few adventures as possible, it is equally as important to prioritize your health. This means getting enough sleep and remembering to rest during the day. A lot of people in our group have become run down and ill, so there is definitely a danger of getting sick when you don’t get enough sleep and are constantly on the go. You have to work to find a balance between taking care of yourself and getting out and doing things.



5. Don't compare.

Everyone's study abroad experience is going to be different. It is easy to fall into a habit of comparing your experiences to those of others, whether it's friends who are abroad at the same time as you, friends who have studied abroad in the past or even others within your group. Don't beat yourself up if you're having a bad day and everyone else seems to be having the time of their lives — everyone has their moments!

If you're studying abroad currently, these tips might resonate with you. I think they are good things to keep in mind for life in general! The first month studying abroad is kind of like being a freshman in college again — you're thrown into an entirely new situation and you need to adapt and make friends quickly. In any case, but especially during a new and different life experience, these practices are good to keep in mind.

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