

Gira de España



During spring break of 2014, a group of 25 students and three teachers from William Aberhart High School embarked on a journey to visit the cultural capitals of Spain. Our trip to Spain included visiting a total of six cities: Madrid, Avila, Segovia, Salamanca, Toledo and Barcelona. Listed on our itinerary were highlights such as an unforgettable flamenco show, a bull fight and a Spanish cooking class, but our trip proved to be that and more. The trip was a chance to immerse in the culture that is Spain; to see sights, to taste the food, to hear and speak the language and to smell the flavours and to savour the atmosphere.

In the city of Madrid, we had the chance to visit the Escorial Monastery, a historical residence of King Philip. The profound influence of religion was clearly embedded in every major building; each had a specially designed room that was set aside for the sole purpose of prayer or remaining close to their gods.



During our stay in Madrid, we took a day trip to the city of Salamanca, known for its world-renowned university, which coincidentally one of our teacher guides, Mr. Clarke previously attended. The university dates back to 1218 AD, and has numerous campus traditions such as finding a frog with a skull on its head on a stone pillar; those who were able to find the sculpture were blessed with luck with their studies.

On our second day in Madrid, we visited the Prado Museum that holds a prestigious collection of artwork ranging from the likes of Francisco Goya to Diego Velázquez. One of the larger exhibits is focused on Goya's work. Early on in his career, he was commissioned to paint Spanish nobility. After experiencing the effects of the Napoleonic Wars, he began a darker and haunting collection later known as *The Black Paintings*, showcasing his newfound outlook on the evil within

humanity. As we viewed this collection we felt emotionally connected to the hysteria and fear of that time.

"I could spend my entire life there, but still not have seen everything..." – Alexa RB.



On our last night in Madrid, we had the opportunity to sit and relax in a traditional Spanish restaurant and watch one of the biggest football rivalry matches, *El Clásico*, between FC Barcelona and Real Madrid.

"...Being able to watch the game with people in a restaurant in Spain, helped to immerse myself in the national love for football"
–Jesse N.

In Barcelona, one of the sites that we visited was the grand and prestigious *Sagrada Familia* originally designed by Antoni Gaudí 130 years ago, but is still in construction! Upon entering the basilica, you are left astounded from the sheer

height of structure's interior and the copious amount of detail and time involved in crafting the structure. Our trip was not without its hiccups; as our flight back to Canada from Barcelona was interrupted by a ground workers strike in Frankfurt, Germany. As a result, we were detoured via London UK, Ottawa and finally Toronto for an overnight stay before returning back to Calgary.



It cannot be denied that travel broadens our perspectives and enriches our individual education, as well as teaches us life lessons. We each had the opportunity to share fond memories that will last a lifetime with a truly amazing group of friends! A thank you should go to our parents/guardians and to all those who contributed, especially our teacher guides to making this trip possible!

Rebecca Shapiro

Rachel Shutt