

FIELD HOCKEY ATHLETE

There are many factors to consider when looking at study abroad options, but being a student athlete throws many more questions into the mix (e.g., where will I work out, will my absence effect my playing time, etc.). One of the main reasons I chose Davidson was the ability to study abroad throughout the school year as a student athlete, a privilege that many D1 Field Hockey programs do not allow. However, as the time to go abroad rapidly approached, I couldn't imagine being away from my teammates for an entire semester. So, I decided that a summer abroad was the best option for me. This way I did not have to miss our spring season, the team bonding, and one of my last semesters as a collegiate athlete.

I decided to study in Valencia, Spain in the summer. My program was for one month, [and] I took two courses. I lived with a host mother and one other participant from my program. As a student athlete, this was the perfect time in the year for me to go abroad. My spring season was complete, and I had a couple of weeks to relax before having to focus on my team's summer workout routine. When I arrived in Spain, I joined a gym that was located on the same block as the school, and the membership fee was roughly \$30 a month. The gym provided everything I needed to stay strong, and there were a lot of soccer fields around the city where I could run sprints to keep up my endurance.

Furthermore, my host mom cooked all my meals Monday through Friday and was very accommodating with dietary restrictions or providing foods that we requested. Spaniards include a lot of carbohydrates in their diet, but because I was always working out, that did not bother me at all. One day I asked my host mom if we could have more greens in the diet, and she was very quick to adapt and included more spinach and cucumbers in our meals. (If you do not speak up and ask, your host families will never know about your situation. Just ask and they are more than willing to help.)

During my time abroad, I did not get a cell phone plan because I wanted to disconnect from home and immerse myself in the culture. However, my field hockey team has an email chain and group text where we can always send messages and hear from each other no matter what people are doing or where they are traveling. I loved reading the emails and texts from my teammates while abroad, and I also sent them some updates from Spain whenever I got the chance. I never felt out of the loop or like I was missing something important going on with my team.

If another student athlete asked me if they should go abroad, I would absolutely encourage them to do so but also ask them to think about what they are willing to miss. You only get four years to be a student athlete, and it wasn't worth it for me to miss an entire semester. A summer abroad was a great alternative to missing the off season and a great way to see the world without jeopardizing my playing time.