

Host Families

There are many advantages to living with a host family, including practicing the language, learning customs, eating typical Spanish meals, getting advice on life in the city and of course having laundry service. The disadvantages include less independence and privacy because of a meal schedule, rules regarding use of the house and perhaps acceptable times for coming back after a night out.

A few things about living with a Spanish family:

- Expect things to be different and enjoy it! You are experiencing a different culture.
- Telephone: Even local phone calls cost money in Spain so we ask that the students do not use the family's phone to make calls (or at least ask if they need to make a really quick call once in a while and perhaps offer to pay for it). World Endeavors includes a free cell phone rental with free incoming calls for every participant.
- Laundry: The families have been advised that they need to do the student's laundry at least once or twice a week. The students should ask their families where to deposit dirty clothes that need washing. Also, most families do not have dryers so the clothes are hung out to dry. Thus the students should plan on extra time to get their clothes back. Please also be aware that the water is harder here so in the past some students have found that their jeans get worn down a bit faster here (or come back very stiff from the wash).
- Keys: All the families have been advised that they need to give the students a key to the apartment. We ask that students be considerate if returning home very late at night and to be sure to lock the doors if they're the last ones in. Make sure you let your host family know if you are not going to make it home! (Not at five in the morning, though!)
- Meals: 3 meals daily are included. Be sure to communicate your likes and dislikes concerning food to your host family. If you decide to spend the weekend away, don't forget to let your family know. If the family is the one going away for the weekend, they should leave some food (or prepared meals) in the refrigerator for the student. Otherwise don't help yourself to food in the fridge without your host family's permission (it is there to prepare your meals). Please also advise your host family if you will not be home for lunch or dinner and if you'll be needing a sandwich. Host mothers often worry that the student is not eating well and will fall ill if s/he starts skipping meals and/or eat at odd hours. Please try to adjust and respect your host family's eating schedule.
 - a) Breakfast: This is normally toast, butter and marmalade and coffee, if you want cereal you can ask for it. It's normal in Spain to go to a bar for breakfast, you can get toast and marmalade or ham. Try out "tostada de jamón serrano" It's delicious! Please remember the coffee in Spain is very strong. If you want to order a coffee in a bar then we suggest you ask for a "café americano".
 - b) Lunch: Make sure you know what time you need to be home for lunch, your family will be waiting for you very hungry! It's normal at lunchtime for the whole family and you to be sitting together eating the biggest meal you will have of the day.
 - c) Dinner is a light meal, usually something quick and easy like soup, an omelette or salad and is normally served between 8 and 10 pm.
 - d) Snacks: Snacking is something that is not as common in Spain as it is in the U.S./Canada. Please be respectful of your host family's kitchen area and ask before taking food. Host "mothers" (especially if they work and/or have children) plan their meals and shop accordingly for the week. If you have guests over, please remember that your host family is the host, so don't help yourself or allow your guest to help themselves to food in the fridge (it is there to prepare your meals).

- Guests: As Spaniards go out more, they tend to meet their friends in bars/cafés instead of inviting them over to their homes. Remember you are living in somebody's home. Don't invite all your new friends to hang out with your host family. They will not be impressed! If you want to invite someone over, please check with your family first (and definitely talk to them in advance if it's an overnight guest). This applies to girlfriends/boyfriends as well. If you would like to have a friend over for lunch or dinner, the invitation should come from the host family. Please also be respectful of the family's space. For example, in Spanish culture, it would be considered very rude for a student's friend (especially one not known well to the host family) to go to the living room, lie down on the couch and start reading a book or watching TV. *This actually happened once (it was the girlfriend who just assumed her boyfriend's host family was her family too even though she hardly knew them) and our coordinators received a phone call from a shocked host family...*
- Please use the water sparingly / responsibly. Don't leave taps running or spend hours in the shower! Electricity is also expensive in Europe so please be sure to turn off the lights when you leave your room.

To conclude, open communication is the best way to avoid problems. You'll see after a while that each family is different. Some are much more open and easy going, others are a bit more set in their ways. It is so important to remember that you are living in another country/culture and to b