

Spanish Immersion – Salamanca

by Chris Oversluizen, Green Bay High School (2017)

Hola! I'm Chris and this is a little bit about my experience in the Salamanca immersion programme. I've been teaching Spanish now for 3 years and prior to going on the trip I had completed the TPLT professional development course. Following on from this, at the graduation, it was highly suggested to me that I apply for the immersion scholarship, and not really knowing all too much what to expect I applied for it and was given the opportunity to spend 2 weeks in Spain to broaden my knowledge of Spanish culture and language. Looking back I can say without a doubt that it was well worth doing and was an incredible experience I will look back upon fondly for many years to come.



The course consisted of several parts. Firstly, 4 hours worth of classes per day. Do not worry if your Spanish is not great; there are many different classes which cater for all levels. We had a group of teachers with varying levels ranging from native speakers to self taught. We did a placement test on our induction day and I found the courses particularly enjoyable and suited my level perfectly. The teachers were really professional and knowledgeable. I ended up buying a book one of mine had written. All my teachers came along to our get together at the end of the course and were very open and approachable. For me the highlight of my classes were the culture classes I enrolled in and learned all about Spanish culture which helped me understand a lot of what was happening around me. Spanish culture is truly a unique culture worth being experienced.

The next part of the scholarship included cultural activities ranging from various tours around the university and its rich history to cooking classes where we prepared typical dishes of the region and country. During the middle weekend we went on 2 different field trips. One to Toledo and another to Alba de Tormes, a little down about 30mins out of Salamanca. This was a real highlight for me and our tour was coined as earth and spirit. We visited a tile and brick making farm, witnessed up close and personal a unique style of pottery and we got right in the midst of a festival precious to the town's people.

Our days were incredibly full on and coupled with the extreme heat were quite tiring, and yet so enjoyable and filled with unique experiences. In our first week we stayed with host families who took care of us while we were being accustomed to a totally different life and then in the second week, after being familiarized with Salamanca more, we all lodged in a university residence. This was really nice and one of my absolute favourite parts of the trip was meeting and spending time with an incredible bunch of teachers talking, laughing and of course having tapas in the town square in the evening while the sun shone until late. I have taken back many memories and have been inspired to adopt my learnings and experience into my own classes to enrich the learning of my students.