

Inpatient Pulmonology
Leon, Spain

Matt Mendez
maxxmad@yahoo.com

I chose this elective because it was the only place I knew anyone in Spain (through family friends). I had 6 years of Spanish in high school, college, and med school. It was helpful, but the language is still the most difficult challenge. It would be good to stay with a family that at least speaks some English (most Europeans 25 and younger have a good handle of the English language) as it helps with translation. It would also be helpful to practice some Spanish (workbooks or television or similar practice) before you leave, although I didn't have time for that.

The largest cultural shock was the meal times; people eat at 7am/3pm/10pm, which is difficult to get used to. But, like the time change, everyone usually adapts. The hospital experience was difficult because I couldn't keep up with the language during rounds. You really need to be fluent to participate in the medical parts of rotation. But if you are in an outpatient setting it's not nearly as intense. I actually spent some time in an outpatient setting, but this can become boring after a while as it's not very invasive medicine (people come in for every ache and pain). I would suggest several different mini rotations if going to a place like Spain to maximize your experiences.