

European Option Placement Report – Granada

Why did I choose to study European Option?

I have always loved studying languages, since a very young age. I could never really decide between medicine, music and languages so ultimately when it came to UCAS chose to study the one that would most likely make me the most money! Manchester was then my first choice because of the opportunity to still be able to study languages alongside medicine. It was also appealing that you get a one month elective prior to finals and then a four month placement abroad in your fifth year. I also feel that as this is unique to Manchester, it will help me to stand out at future interviews, especially as I would like to work abroad in the future.

European Option fitted into my medical curriculum fairly easily, especially in phase one. In phase two it took a bit more effort to be able to attend classes just as it makes your day pretty long! But you can get through them pretty easily if you think about your four months at the end of medical school!

Life in Granada

Granada is a small city (about 300,000 people) and is the capital of the province of Granada in Andalucia. While small, it has everything you need; lovely people, great nightlife, amazing views and great links to other parts of Andalucia and beyond. You can't walk anywhere in Granada without stumbling upon a street artist, singer or flamenco dancing, especially in the Albaicin!

It has a lot of history, from the Nasrid Dynasty up to the surrendering of the final Muslim ruler to Isabella Catolica in 1492 (la Reconquista). I'd make sure you read up on a bit of the history of Granada (Wikipedia will do!) before coming or in the early weeks you are here; definitely before you visit the Alhambra and Arab Baths.

People

The people of Granada are typically Spanish. They are very forward and friendly and you immediately feel a part of the city and community. Be prepared for the typical 'mañana' attitude... you can wait a while for things to get done, so you do need to be quite relaxed about things! As a girl, what I noticed a lot is that guys are very forward and have no qualms in talking to you or asking you out. Don't feel uncomfortable with saying no, they're just trying their luck and won't even be insulted if you say no straight away.

Areas

El Albaicin

I dare you not to fall in love with the Albaicin. This is located in the old Arabic quarter of the town, located on the hill opposite the Alhambra. The cobbled stones and white washed houses make it typically Spanish and it's easy to get lost in it for an afternoon. There are many squares in it where you can stop to have a drink with a view of the Alhambra. You will feel very fit by the end of staying here if you walk around there every day!

Sacromonte

The home of gypsies and flamenco in Granada. Around 600 years ago gypsies arrived in Granada and moved into the caves of Sacromonte. It's worth going to see a flamenco show while you're in Granada and Sacromonte probably has the most authentic ones.

Realejo

Quite a hippy area, lots of veggie restaurants... make sure you go to the sidreria in Plaza Campo de Principe. Very cheap vintage store on Calle San Matias.

Plaza de Toros

As the name suggests, Plaza de Toros is home of bullfighting and the area is dominated by the beautiful bullring. This area has many less touristy tapas bars and a lot of student accommodation. Really close to the hospital so if you're lucky you might get taken out for lunch by your supervisor.

Where to live

Spanish students tend to live either in Plaza de Toros or Calle San Pedro de Alarcon. Plaza de Toros is about 60 seconds commute to each hospital (although there are talks of moving the hospital to the outskirts of Granada so this might be outdated by the time February 2017 comes round!). It's a bit further from the town centre for nights out as well, about a 20 minute walk but Granada feels very safe at night. San Pedro is bang in the middle of the nightlife, with many bars and pubs along it, but is probably 30 minutes' walk to the hospitals (again, could all change!).

I chose to live between the two areas, just off Plaza Nueva, so I was 20 minutes from the hospital, 10 minutes from clubs, 10 minutes from the Alhambra (if that) and right along Calle Elvira with lots of tapas bars. It cost 300 euros per month plus bills which was a bit higher than average for Granada but was a penthouse flat with a private terrace so more than worth it. Expect to pay around 200 euros at least.

The reality is that Granada is so small that wherever you live, you're not going to be too far from anything. I'd recommend getting an air bnb for your first week or two and getting a feel for all the areas before committing yourself to months in a place you may not like! When you arrive you'll see lots of posters with numbers for free rooms so just take them all and make some calls. Other options are having a look on accommodation websites and the Erasmus facebook pages (see the last page).

Things to do in Granada

Touristy things

Alhambra

This is the unavoidable evidence of the old Arabic influence in Granada and really worth a visit while you're here. It's split into the Generalife, Palacio and Alcazaba and tickets can be split between the three places depending on what you want to see and how the weather is looking.

For February you can usually get tickets on the day but after that it starts to get a bit touristy and it's best to book online in advance:

<http://www.alhambraGranada.org/en/>

Mirador de San Nicolas

One of the best views of the city and Alhambra. Usually lots of stalls selling artisan products and there are always a couple of impromptu flamenco performances while you're there. Make sure you go during the day and during the night to see the difference in the view (below).



Los Banos Arabes

Really good on a Sunday when you're hungover! Four different baths ranging in temperature plus a variety of oils and endless cups of tea. Offer a student price of 28 euros for the baths and a massage and it's a really lovely experience:

<http://granada.hammamandalus.com/en/>

Food

Tapas

Spain is home to tapas but Granada offers the best. Everywhere you go (except a pub) you get a free tapa with your drink and in most places you get to choose. Something you should definitely try while in Granada/Andalucia is Salmorejo – cold tomato and garlic soup – as it's very typical on the area.

Below are some of my favourite places.

El Nido del Bujo – at Plaza de Toros. One of the best tapas restaurants where you feel like you've had a full meal after only one tapa! I'd recommend Aguacate or Ensalada Marisco.

Tabernas Salinas 2 – Croqueteria! Anything you can think of putting in a croquette they have so it's worth going if you're a fan of croquettes like me. Great Sangria too.

Los Buenos Chicos – Italian chef but Spanish food.

La Riviera – Good variety of tapas, you're able to choose your own as well

Babel – international tapas so not particularly Spanish but the food is really tasty!

Om-Kalsum – Moroccan tapas, cool if you fancy something different. Great falafel

Restaurants

Sometimes you might want actual food rather than just tapas, you might still get some free food even if you're having a full meal though!

Tabernas Salinas – my favourite restaurant while I was in Granada. Older sibling to Tabernas Salinas 2 and just round the corner from it.

Bodegas Castenada – Typical Spanish tapas bar with great food (the warm platter is really great). Terrible for veggies!

El Piano – Great vegan/gluten free restaurant. Lots of variety of food.

Hicuri – Veggie restaurant with a good menu del dia

Puerta de Syria – Very cheap, family run tiny restaurant. I'd recommend booking in advance if there are a few of you that want to go.

Muglia – Indian restaurant, tasty food.

Takeaway

Papas Elviras – Really good family run takeaway. Falafel wrap and brownie are the best, but everything tastes great. Not fast food as the lady loves a chat but you get to know her really well.

Nightlife

Nights out are very different in Granada. Most people only head out to a tapas bar or start a botellon at 11 or 12 and then clubs only really start getting busy at 3 or 4ish. Some places offer free entry before 2 so it's worth checking out their facebook pages on the day.

Chupiteria – where everyone tends to go pre night out. Over 100 different shots for a euro each.

El Camborio – club on the way to Sacromonte in the albacin. Amazing view of the Alhambra. Reggaeton is the main music played. Free before 2.

Vogue – 2 floors, one of dance/electronic, the other Rock/Indie so satisfies most people. Doesn't get busy until 4ish so best to go somewhere else first.

Booga – Big variety of music, from reggae, reggaeton and indie, tends to not get busy until 4ish like Vogue.

Mae West – one of the biggest clubs in Granada, main student nights on Tuesday and Wednesday.

El Copera – Quite far out of the city but worth going to if you like electronic music. Similar to Warehouse Project and different DJs each week.

Granero and Campus – I didn't actually go to these as I heard bad reviews of them being full of really young people so didn't bother. Weekly events in both organised by Erasmus groups so probably good to meet people when you initially get to Granada

Festivals

We were lucky to see some of the cultural festivals in Granada while here. The main two were Semana Santa and Dia de Las Cruces but there will be a few while you're there!

Semana Santa – their Easter celebrations. A week long religious festival that they take very seriously and prepare for all year. Be ready for Granada to get busy. I quite liked watching some of the parades (and they're very impressive!) but also liked getting out of the city for a couple of days during that week just to get away from all the people! Other smaller cities are worth visiting during that week to see the differences in celebrations.

Dia de Las Cruces – a non religious festival, this year celebrating women. Many elaborate giant crosses all over the city, especially in Realejo and Albacin.

Things to do close to Granada

Monachil

A small town in the Sierra Nevada where you can do many walks. 2 euros each way to get there on the 181 bus from the river.

Sierra Nevada

The Sierra Nevada is the whole mountain range, but buses from Granada bus station to Sierra Nevada take you to the ski resort. This costs 9euros return. Ski passes cost around 40euros and ski/boot hire about 20euros. Through February the university also puts on a week of ski lessons which is worth looking into if you want to learn.



Beaches!

There are loads of beaches close to Granada. When it starts getting warmer Erasmus groups put on organised trips (see below), but you can also organise it yourself if you want. Here gives options for the best ones to try:

<http://www.granadaspain.co.uk/what-to-do/best-beaches-costa-tropical-granada/>

Trips to do – Best Life Experience, Emycet, ESN

There are loads of Erasmus companies that put on organised trips and evening events. These are worth doing, especially at the beginning when you're meeting people. There is no real difference between them either, it's just which date suits you best! Good trips include the Cadiz Carnival, Fallas de Valencia, Madrid, Lisbon, Seville and Morrocco. They also offer trips to Gibraltar, Ibiza, Sierra Nevada and beach days.

Medicine in Spain

In general

In Spain, students are generally only expected for the morning session (although this can go on until past three so make sure you take a snack!). My normal working hours were 9-2 each day, longer on surgery. Doctors dress a lot more casually here. It's not uncommon for everyone to be wearing jeans or leggings and a t-shirt under their 'bata'... a white coat which you will be expected to wear in Spain.

One of the most obvious differences to the UK is the confidentiality and privacy of consultations. Family often know everything about a patient before the patient does. Examinations are often carried out without much explanation to the patient in front of their family. Doctors and nurses walk freely between consultation rooms. This all takes a bit of getting used to!

Nurses do the majority of any skills on wards/urgencias/surgery. If you have any remaining UPSAs to sign off, ask to go with nurses a couple of mornings and you can easily get two or three done a few times so it's great for practice! Just make sure you explain to patients as often nurses didn't introduce me, which made me a bit uncomfortable.

Finally, doctors generally work 9-3/4ish, unless they are 'en guardia', when they work a full 24 hours. Make sure you ask your tutor when they are doing this... there were a few days when I walked to hospital only to be told that my tutor wasn't there and there were no other tutors I could go with.

Placements

General Surgery

Tutor: Jose-Antonio Jimenez Rios

I'd really recommend general surgery in Granada. I think it's one of the best surgical placements I've had. In the first day I was asked straight away if I would like to scrub in and this was the case for the majority of the four weeks. General surgery includes open and laparoscopic abdominal, thyroid and breast surgery, as well as a few small dermatological and lymph gland biopsies. Be prepared to see a lot of hernia repairs!

Something that would have made the placement better is to go to clinics, which wasn't really given as an option. Surgery can get a bit tedious from 8-2 each day, and quite tiring so if you're in two minds about it, don't put it down.

Urgencias

Tutor: Filomena Alonso

Urgencias is very different from Emergency Medicine. For one, the majority are not very urgent, it's almost like GP. You'll see a lot of back/knee pain and UTIs in consultas, where you spend half your time depending on your tutor. There are some trauma consultas so if you're interested in Trauma and Ortho it can be quite interesting.

This is a really good placement to get any remaining UPSAs signed off but you have to be quite forward about it. Ask to go with nurses!

Internal Medicine

Tutor: Juan Jimenez Alonso

Internal Medicine covers a variety of areas (hypertension and cardiac care, autoimmune, rheumatology etc) and really acts as a door to the hospital. Some of the consultations are for GP style problems, such as hypertension, while others are referred from GPs at a real loss for what could be going on, such as random rheumatological or autoimmune conditions.

When you arrive you will be introduced to Juan Jimenez Alonso and he will ask what you're most interested in. You tend to then be on this placement for the full four weeks. I went for general consultas as you see a wide variety of conditions; while there I saw a possible sarcoidosis, Bechets, hyperhidrosis and lupus, as well as more general medical problems. The one place I would avoid is the ward as the patients don't change very often and other students found it a bit boring after the first week.

ENT

Tutor: Juan Garcia Valdecasas

I think ENT was my favourite placement while I was in Spain. You will fall in love with Juan, who is very friendly, gets you really involved in clinics and also buys you coffee and chats about going skiing or which is the best beach to go to at the weekend. It's very varied, there are paediatric clinics, with a lot of developmental problems, adult clinics with anything from presbycusis to oncology and then audiometry/vestibular tests, as well as surgery. I'd really recommend it, especially if you haven't had much ENT experience.

What I have gained

Language

You will be surprised at how well you cope with your Spanish. I was always pretty close to the bottom of the class so was slightly apprehensive about being on placement here. All my tutors were very understanding and spoke nice and clearly for me. They also introduced me as their English student so patients were aware and also spoke more clearly. Listening and reading wise I feel practically fluent after having been here which is great. I initially felt I'd forgotten a lot of Spanish when I first got here, so my spoken Spanish was a bit broken but within a couple of weeks I had already gained a lot of confidence. Writing this having finished my placement I feel my level has really improved and I have gained a lot from being here.

Skills

Don't expect to learn a lot of medicine while you are here. If you want to you have to be quite motivated to go out of your way to take histories yourself or doing anything practical. However, having done finals you should feel confident in medicine and just being consolidating your learning – what I wanted to do in Spain was make my Spanish better, which I think I succeeded in doing.

Future Plans

Having done this, I now think I have a good level of experience to work abroad and intend to take an F3 year, possibly doing something in Spain but most likely South America. I'd then also like to work with MSF or Red Cross in South America when I'm qualified. Having more confidence in languages will come in useful here.

Practical issues

Getting there

I flew from London as I moved all my stuff home after finals. Flights with BA/Iberia cost about 50-60 pounds if you book them in advance and go from London Heathrow to Granada direct or via Madrid. Other people went from Manchester to Malaga and then got a bus from Malaga Airport to Granada. If you get them in advance they can be as cheap as 30 pounds but then you need to add luggage onto that.

On arriving to Granada airport there is a bus that takes you to the centre for 3 euros or you can get a taxi for 20-25 euros. If you get into Granada bus station, the SN1 takes you to the centre for 1.20.

Getting around

Granada is pretty small so you can walk most places. If you do need to get the bus it's 1.20 euros one way and you have to just check out the bus timetable which looks like a tube map. Taxis are also pretty cheap.

If the hospital does move to the new one, as I mentioned before then it may be worth buying a bike or using the metro (building it now) in order to get there. Otherwise the U3 goes there from the centre.

What to bring

My biggest advice is DO NOT BRING TOO MUCH! Bring about two weeks' worth of clothes and you'll be fine. You'll want to buy things here so leave space in your suitcase! Most important things I would say are toiletries and medicines as both are pretty expensive here, especially ibuprofen and paracetamol. Ana Pilar sells pretty cheap toiletries if you run out.

A white coat is necessary.

Registering

You'll need to register as a student in Granada at the medical faculty before you start. Raul will get in contact with you to tell you where to go.

Money

Be prepared for the Erasmus grant to take some time to come through as it is only given to you once you've filled in your arrival paperwork. I also arranged to get a Post Office card before going abroad as this saves on some costs when withdrawing money/paying by card.

<https://www.postoffice.travelmoneycard.co.uk/web/post-office-travel-money/login>

Phone

I just used my English SIM and relied on messaging by Whatsapp when I had internet/wifi. This worked fine for me and you can always send a text if you are really lost! I maybe spent £20 over my normal contract which was cheaper than getting a Spanish phone. Other options are getting a 3 SIMcard which gives you free roaming, or buying a Spanish SIM.

Language classes

These are worth doing just to consolidate what you've already learnt. Erasmus offers 250 euros for language classes (which you receive on completion of the classes and receipt of a certificate). We did them in a group of three with Granada Language School which was near the hospital. The lessons were based on what we wanted to learn so as well as grammar we learn lots of modern Spanish idioms that you probably wouldn't learn out of a book. Others did them with Centro de Lenguas Modernas which has bigger classes and takes it a bit more seriously.

<http://granadalanguageschool.com/>

<http://www.clm-granada.com/>

Useful websites

Erasmus groups that organise nights out and weekend trips:

<https://www.facebook.com/ErasmusEsnGranada/>

<https://www.facebook.com/ErasmusGranadaTheBestLifeExperience/?fref=ts>

<https://www.facebook.com/Erasmus-Granada-20152016-Emycet-148046515370373/?fref=ts>

Travel:

Buses - <https://www.alsa.es/>

Trains - <http://www.renfe.com/>

Useful contacts

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