



INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE

NAME

TYLER CLARK

FROM

USA

TO

SPAIN

DURATION

SEMESTER



0123456789



# Translating the Culture and Language of Spain

Tyler Clark's interest peaked when he visited Valparaiso University in Indiana for the first time, and the campus tour guide mentioned the university's study abroad programs. "Would I be able to study abroad?" he asked the study abroad office that day to which the reply came, "Well, when would you like to?"

A year after enrolling in Valparaiso, Tyler, who has cerebral palsy, changed his major to Spanish in hopes of becoming an international interpreter. Studying abroad would let him know whether or not he enjoyed living abroad and also if he could improve his language skills.

"Will all my scholarships transfer?" Tyler asked at that point, since he has the Lilly Endowment scholarship that covers tuition to an Indiana college. He also applied and received the Benjamin A. Gilman international scholarship for study abroad from the U.S. Department of State, geared toward undergraduates with Pell grants and from diverse backgrounds.

"If you want to go abroad," the study abroad advisor confirmed, "all of your scholarships will pretty much cover everything." The choice was made.

In the spring semester of his junior year, Tyler lived with a host family and attended the Centro de Español como Lengua Extranjera (Center of Spanish as a Foreign Language) in Zaragoza, Spain. He was the only male, only one of two Americans, and the only student with a disability, in the class of nine. The other students were from Ghana and China and classes were held every day from 9 am to 1:30 pm.

"It was a little overwhelming for me at first, because all the other students had known each other from a previous course, so I was the odd one out."

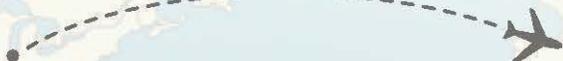
He also experienced homesickness, and getting on social media with people back home didn't make it any better. Then, his host family introduced him to a couple of their friends and they took excursions – a castle, a movie, his host mother's home village. Tyler also learned the Spaniards are very friendly and accommodating, and that if they are trying to help, he recognized "it's something they do for anyone else."

He also started hanging out with the other students in a cooking class, in cafés after class, and then in exploring other cities in Spain. And, he volunteered twice a week with a local student for a Spanish-English conversation exchange.

"Verb tenses were complicated at first, but going to Spain and hearing my professor and my host family use them in every day speech, I learned when to use them."

Although Tyler uses arm crutches and leg braces when he goes longer distances or across uneven surfaces, he adjusted easily to his 30-minute walk to class every day as it was similar to what he did to get to work at home. Only one time he didn't realize it had rained the previous night; his crutch slipped on the wet sidewalk, cutting his lip as he fell into the street.

"These two Spaniards saw me fall and immediately ran up to me and helped me up, then one rushed to their car and got a band aid for me. They said 'Do you want a ride anywhere?'"





He had let his host family know in advance that he had cerebral palsy, and may need some assistance occasionally. His host mother cooked all his meals, did all his laundry, and even cleaned his room a few times.

Tyler would feel bad about not doing chores, and ask “Do I need to do anything for you in return?” His host mother would reply, “No I’m just treating you like I would my own son.” Yet, there were other times when she would try to help and he would say, “No it’s okay, I can do that, no problem.”

On a Valencia trip, his determination showed when climbing a tower with over 250 stone spiral stairs in a narrow passage. He admits he had to cling to the wall if someone needed to pass, but stayed the course and made it to the top. He also traveled some on his own, through a tour from London to France, Switzerland, and back to Spain. Tyler’s host family was worried: “Are you sure you want to travel alone?” He wasn’t sure, but he did it, and fully enjoyed it too.

His Spanish skills, as Tyler had hoped, improved too. His Spanish advisor from Valparaiso noted the change at the end of the semester and told Tyler, “You speak so fluidly now. You were nervous back in January and we had to force you to talk. Now you use all these expressions and I understand you perfectly.”

Tyler is still on his career path to become an interpreter; he may look back one day and point to study abroad as the pivotal moment that solidified it all.



## Read about Tyler’s experience in his blog

[gilmanprogram.wordpress.com/category/tyler-in-spain](http://gilmanprogram.wordpress.com/category/tyler-in-spain)



**Fact: In the 2013-14 academic year, 146 Gilman Scholarship recipients identified as having a disability and traveled to many diverse locations!**