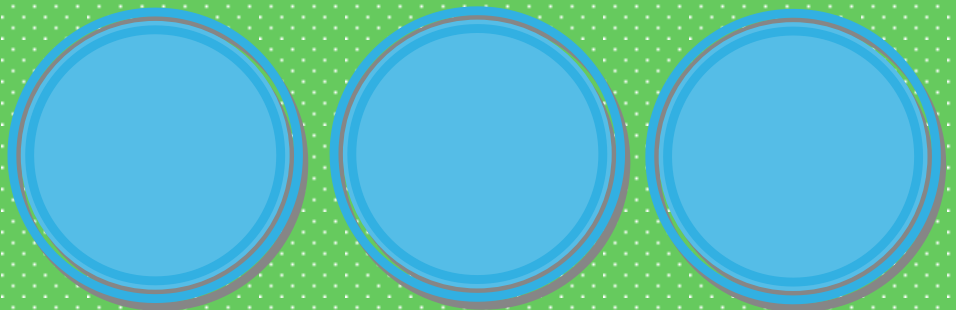


Oviedo

Summer Spanish Language

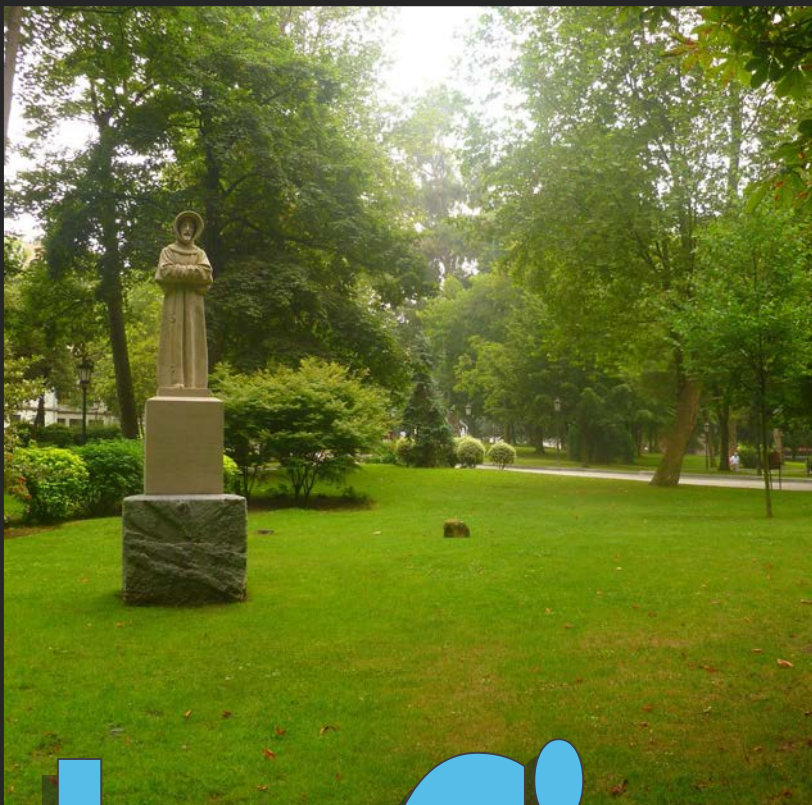
July 2013





← Woody Allen Statue

Campo San Francisco ↓



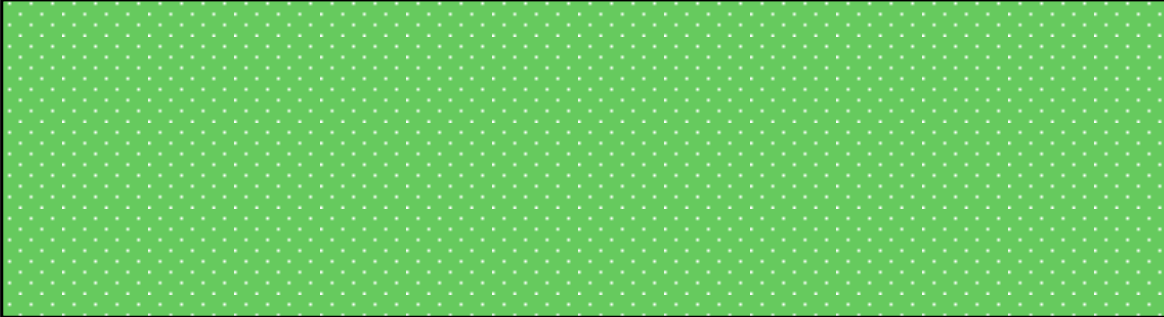
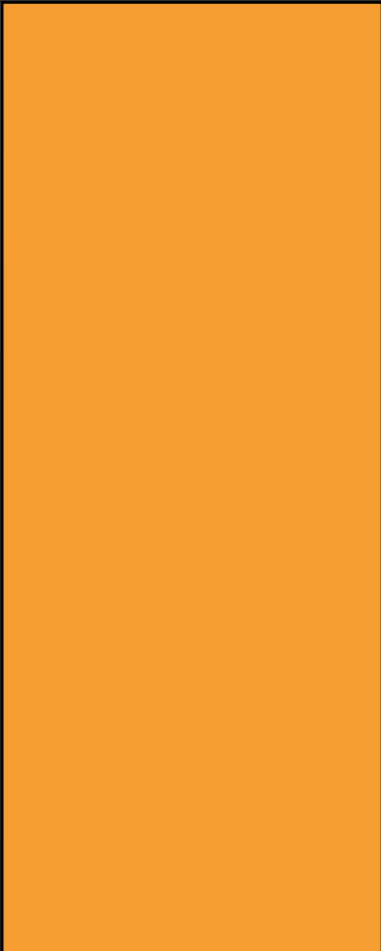
Oviedo is a small city, though it felt big. It is a mix of old and new: old and new architecture, people, traditions, etc. There are always people out and about in the city, walking to the store, meeting friends at cafes, walking their dogs, or shopping. Every neighborhood has its own stores: shops selling fruits and veggies, or breads, or books, or haircuts, and everything in between. Few people speak fluent English, which was challenging, but good for learning Spanish. Oviedo was a great place to spend a month in Spain.

La Ciudad



Oviedo

El Camino de Santiago ↓



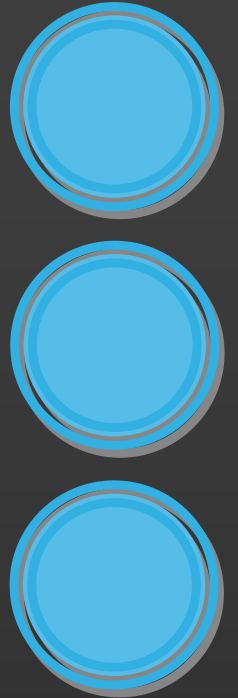
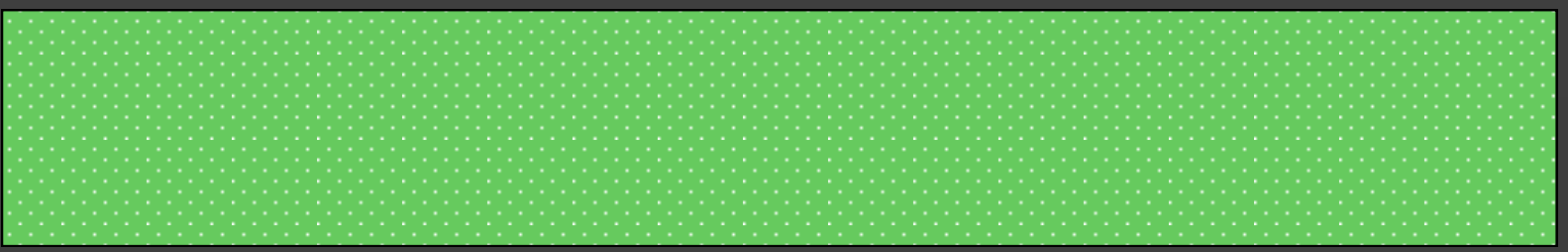
La Universidad



CLASSES

The University of Oviedo is spread across several campuses throughout the city. All of our Spanish classes were on the humanities campus, in La Casa de las Lenguas. Classes were held Monday through Friday, from 9:30 to 2:00. We had students of all levels, from those who had absolutely no Spanish experience, to some who were fluent.

← Casa de las Lenguas



My class in Oviedo was the best Spanish class I think I've ever taken. I enjoyed being in class. I wanted to be the person who was called on to read or answer questions, simply because I wanted to use my Spanish. The teachers were great, and the fact that they didn't speak any English made it even better. It was intimidating at first, and often frustrating, but I think it was better that way. I fell in love with Spanish, and I just wanted to keep learning. The month went by so fast, and I wasn't ready to leave that school and that city where everyone spoke Spanish all the time!





"Guernica" by Picasso ↑

During the last hour of class, we had the option to choose to study one of several modules: Business, Conversation, Art, or Literature. I choose the literature module for the first two weeks, and the art modules during the second two weeks. In literature, we studied the poems of Pablo Neruda. It is amazing to me that I am able to read and analyze poems in Spanish! It was a challenge, but I thought Neruda's poems were beautiful. In art, we studied four famous Spanish painters: El Greco, Velasquez, Goya, and Picasso. I learned a lot about these painters and we even got to see a few of their works in person at the Fine Arts Museum in Oviedo.



"Las Meninas" by Velasquez ↑



Arte

"20" by Pablo Neruda

Puedo escribir los versos más tristes esta noche.

Escribir, por ejemplo: "La noche está estrellada,
y tiritan, azules, los astros, a lo lejos".

El viento de la noche gira en el cielo y canta.

Puedo escribir los versos más tristes esta noche.
Yo la quise, y a veces ella también me quiso.

En las noches como ésta la tuve entre mis brazos.
¡La besé tantas veces bajo el cielo infinito!

Ella me quiso, a veces yo también la quería.
¡Como no haber amado sus grandes ojos fijos!

Puedo escribir los versos más tristes esta noche.
Pensar que no la tengo. Sentir que la he perdido,

Oír la noche inmensa, más inmensa sin ella.
Y el verso cae al alma como al pasto el rocío.

Qué importa que mi amor no pudiera guardarla.
La noche está estrellada y ella no está conmigo.

Eso es todo. A lo lejos alguien canta. A lo lejos.
Mi alma no se contenta con haberla perdido.

Como para acercarla mi mirada la busca.
Mi corazón la busca, y ella no está conmigo.

La misma noche que hace blanquear los mismos árboles.
Nosotros, los de entonces, ya no somos los mismos.

Ya no la quiero, es cierto, pero cuánto la quise!
Mi voz buscaba el viento para tocar su oído.

De otro. Será de otro. Como antes de mis besos.
Su voz, su cuerpo claro. Sus ojos infinitos.

Ya no la quiero, es cierto, pero tal vez la quiero.
Es tan corto el amor, y es tan largo el olvido.

Porque en noches como ésta, la tuve entre mis brazos,
mi alma no se contenta con haberla perdido.

Aunque éste sea el último dolor que ella me causa,
y éstos sean los últimos versos que yo le escribo.



↑ "3 de Mayo" by Goya ↑



↑ "Adoracion de los Pastores"
by El Greco

y Literatura

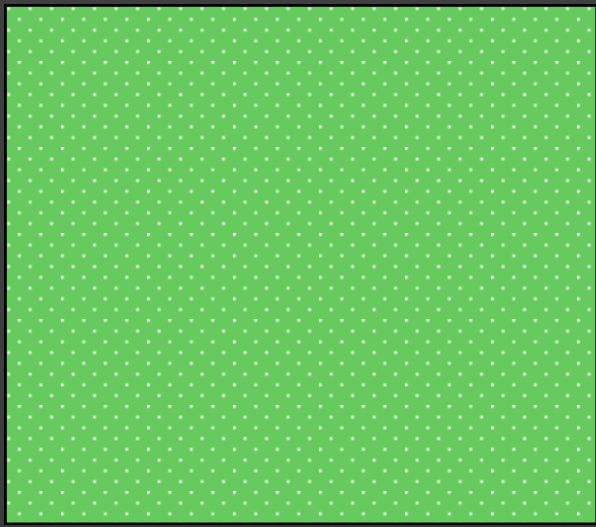
Excursiones



Gijón

↑ Traditional Asturian Architecture





We got several chances to go on excursions to sites in Oviedo and throughout Asturias. They were led by the university or by AHA. We toured the Cathedral, learning all about the architecture and its history. We also took a trip to the Museum of Fine Arts in Oviedo, as well as an Asturias cultural museum in the nearby town of Gijón.



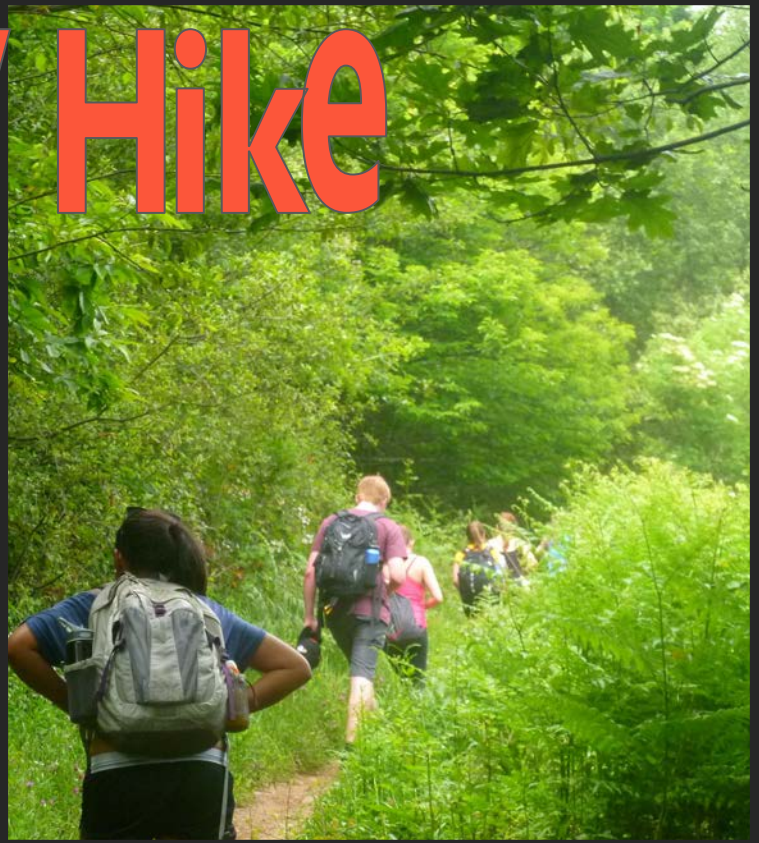
La Cathedral

“Metamorfosis de Ángeles en Mariposposa” by Dalí →



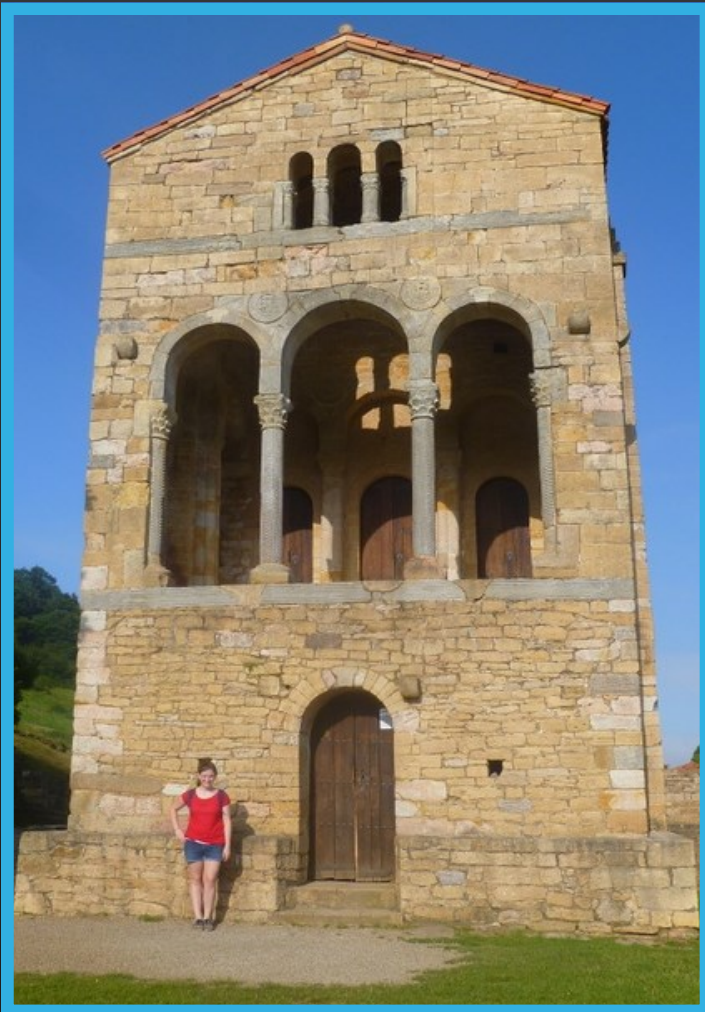
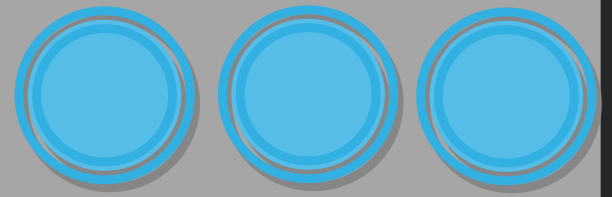
MUSEO de las Bellas Artes

4th Of JULY Hike



↑ Sacred Heart of Jesus Statue

Even though we were in Spain, we had the opportunity to celebrate the 4th of July. The international student group at the university sponsored a hike and barbeque for us. I consider it to be one of the best and worst things I did in Oviedo. Worst because it was probably the toughest hike I've ever done. I don't think any of us was expecting it to be so difficult. But it was still an amazing experience and one of my best memories. On the way up, we passed two of the pre-Romanesque churches that Oviedo is famous for: Santa Maria del Naranco and San Miguel de Lillo. These buildings date back to the 9th century! We also got to see some great views of the city. By the time we got to the top, we were in the clouds. The hike ended at the giant statue of Jesus, which overlooks the city of Oviedo. And at the top, we enjoyed some great barbeque. It was not a bad way to celebrate the 4th of July.

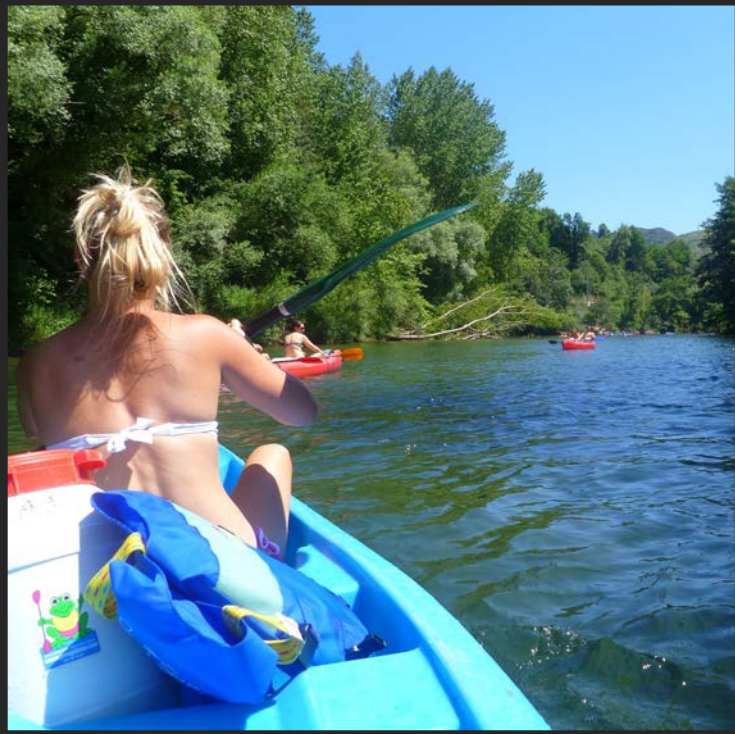


↑ Santa María del Naranco



↑ We made all the way to the top!

Descenso del Sella



Santillanna Del Mar

We took an excursion to Santillanna del Mar, a medieval town in the neighboring state of Cantabria. It is called the town of three lies, because it is not a saint (santo), it is not flat (llana), and it has no sea (mar). It did have amazing old architecture and cobblestone streets. On that same day, we also saw Llanes, a beautiful town on the coast. It had old castles, remnants of the medieval town wall, and several great beaches. The next day was spent kayaking down the Sella River. We started in the mountains of the Picos de Europa national park, and traveled 10 kilometers down the river, with stops for lunch and to jump into the water.



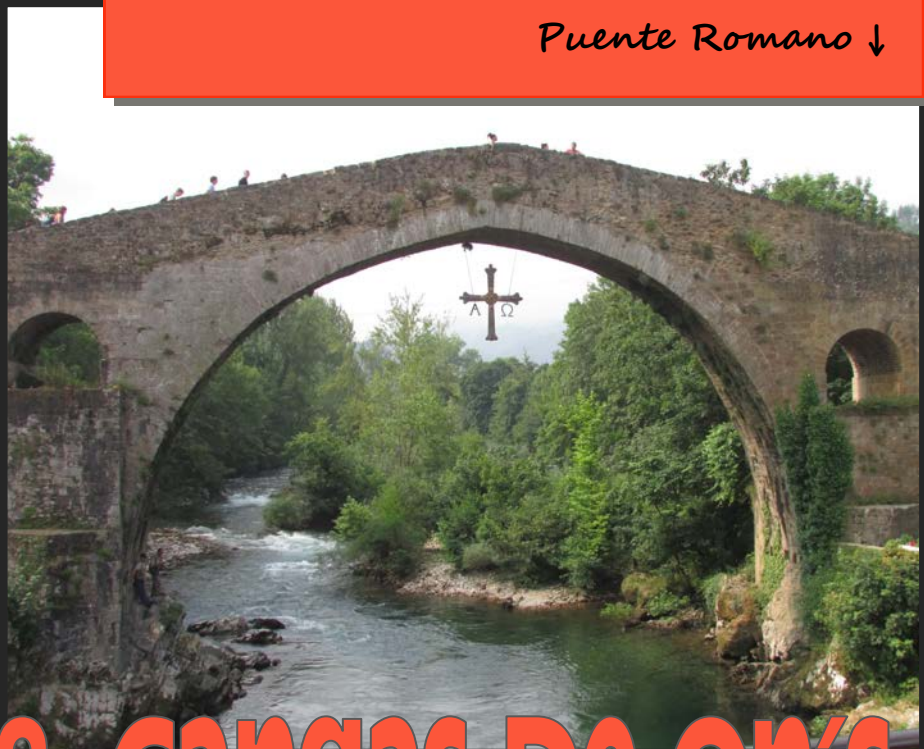
Llanes



↓ Cave of Our Lady of Covadonga, and Cathedral below



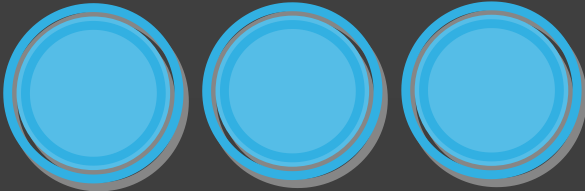
Puente Romano ↓



COVADONGA & Cangas DE ONÍS



Another excursion took us to Cangas de Onís, the first capital of the kingdom of Asturias and the home of the Puente Romano, a medieval bridge. We also took a frightening drive in the bus up a steep, winding, narrow road to Los Lagos, part of the Picos de Europa national park. It was a hike from the parking lot to the lakes, but well worth it. The lakes were beautiful. There were cows wandering around, mingling with the humans. I finally figured out why all the tourist shops sell cow-themed items. There are so many cows in Asturias!



So many cows! →



Finally, we stopped in Covadonga, where it is said that Don Pelayo, the first king of Asturias, saw a vision of the Virgin Mary, and she helped him win the battle against the Arabs. It was the start of the "Reconquista" of Spain. Covadonga is an important historical site in Spain. We walked through the cave to the Marian shrine, drank from the fountain of marriage, and walked through a beautiful Basilica.



LOS LAGOS

Exploring

“What is this place?” I found myself wondering this frequently during my four weeks in Oviedo. Asturias is truly a beautiful place, more so than I could have ever imagined. And I had several opportunities to explore the region, outside of the university-sponsored excursions. One day, we took a bus to the beach at Salinas, and enjoyed a lazy day in the sun. We also visited Llastres, one of the most beautiful little towns I’ve ever seen. It perfectly captured so many of the traits I love about Asturias: white houses with red roofs, quiet, narrow streets, green hills, beautiful beaches, and much more. Each region of Spain has its own unique characteristics, and each is great, I’m sure, but I feel so fortunate to have spent my time in Asturias.

Salinas





Liastres





Asturian Bagpipeer Player ↑



Pouring Sidra ↑



Spanish Churros y Chocolate ↓



"GUYS, WE'RE IN SPAIN.."

One of the other students in my program liked to say this. And while it seems like a simple and obvious statement, I couldn't help but smile every time she did. I was in Spain! Ever since I took my first Spanish class, seven years ago, I have wanted to study in Spain. I wanted to experience the language, the culture, the people, the traditions, the history, the art... I wanted to experience Spain. But for so long, Spain was just a dream, an impossible idea that would probably never actually happen. But then it did. For a whole month, I was in Spain, and Spain was my home. It was the place where I fell in love with Spanish. It is where I had that first terrifying conversation at the train station with the man who didn't speak any English, but where I could understand almost everything he said to me, and where I felt confident that he could understand more-or-less what I said in response. It was where I sometimes found myself thinking faster in Spanish than in English. It was "vale" and festivals and old architecture, public transportation and getting lost, fountains and statues and laundry drying in the windows. It was tapas and siestas and sidra and meeting at La Gorda. It was mountains and hiking into the clouds and the most beautiful coastal town I've ever seen. It was Goya, el Greco, Velasquez, and Picasso. Spain was a place where every day was frustrating and challenging, and where I often found myself missing the ease and the comforts of home. But as I left, I felt myself wondering how a month could go by so fast. It was an unforgettable time. I met a few great people and did some things I never imagined I would do. It was a beautiful, wonderful, and all too brief month that I could never forget. Even now, the thought makes me smile. I was in Spain!

