

## Zoe Harvan

### Spain

I live in a very typical American suburb. I have a big, tree-filled backyard, and I have to drive anywhere worth going. When I lived in Spain, however, my life was exactly the opposite. Instead of a suburb, I lived in a top-floor apartment in downtown Pamplona. Instead of a backyard, I had an entire plaza at which I could gaze from the large window of my bedroom. Instead of constantly hopping in the car, I walked wherever I went – or rather, I followed Eva, my host, wherever *she* went.

My ten days in Pamplona, Spain were, I can truthfully say, some of the best days of my life. Thinking of the apartment, the school, and especially the family makes me homesick. My host parents were incredible – they did everything possible to make sure I felt at home with them. Jose, my Spanish “father”, spoke the most English, and he did his best to improve my Spanish. Gloria, my “mother”, communicated with me through broken English and beaming smiles. Eva, my host student, was everything from my sister to my guide. From spending time with her and her friends, I learned just how similar girls are, no matter where they are from. Though my friends spend weekday afternoons doing homework and the Spanish girls spend theirs sipping Coca-Cola’s at cafés, our conversations were strikingly alike. I may have been sitting in a posh European café, thousands of miles from Cleveland, but I could still listen to enthusiastic discussions about Justin Bieber.

Not only did I fall in love with the people, but I was swept away by Pamplona itself. Every night I would look out my window at the illuminated Plaza de Yamagutchi and sigh contentedly, thinking about how lucky I was to be there. I gushed about city life in countless emails to home and relished every walk, whether it was to school or simply to the drugstore. With our American group, we visited Pamplona’s old town, which was stunning in its rustic charm. The highlight of our tours was stepping inside into the center of Pamplona’s famous bull ring and even getting to wave the toreador’s flag. At the center of all the sights I saw and people I met was the Spanish language. This trip has really instilled in me an increased love and appreciation for Spanish, as well as strengthened my desire to become fluent. When I struggled to understand the seemingly high-speed conversations of the Spaniards around me, I simply enjoyed the sound of the language. My English became peppered with Spanish words – I was fluent in “Spanglish”.

The plane ride home was flooded with memories. I would close my eyes to nap and see Iberian ham hanging from the eaves of a tapas bar, or the long beaches of San Sebastian. My ears felt empty without the constant melodies of Spanish, and my heart ached when I thought of my host family waving goodbye at the airport. “Tell your fathers they must come and stay with us,” my host dad had said, insisting that I return with my parents. There is no doubt in my mind that I will.