

Valencia: a trip to spain creative writing examples

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It started with the bullfighting. I had never been a fan of the sport itself; indeed, I had never really considered it; but there I was, in Valencia, watching the matadors wave their flags at the heads of the bulls. I had never seen anything like it before, and it was an image that will be seared into my brain as demonstrative of my time in Spain for the rest of my life.

There is so much to say about bullfighting. There is a rich history of bullfighting in Spain and Portugal, but everyone seems to have an opinion about it-- by and large, the opinions about bullfighting in the United States aren't good. People say that it's cruel, or that it's inhumane, but seeing the bullfighting itself was beautiful, like a dance. It was not easy to forget that the dance was a potentially deadly one, but that was part of the thrill for the spectator: seeing the bull and the matador in battle was part of the lure of the whole experience.

I looked at Alicia, the dean of students, and she smiled at me and began to explain what I was seeing. I could feel the emotions of the crowd completely and wholly, but I was still unsure of why the emotions were running so high, and why certain things were being done in the arena. She explained to me in a quiet voice that her father had been an advisor to the President, and she had a good understanding of the dance that the matadors were doing with the bulls. I wanted to know more-- I wanted to understand the culture behind the dance of life and death taking place in the ring.

Bullfighting, she explained in her careful way, is very serious. Although there was excitement and emotion in the crowd, there was a sense of solemnity as well, as though the crowd understood the true nature of the things at stake within the arena. Most of those in the audience were older; bullfighting, Alicia explained, is not a sport that appeals to the younger generation. They would

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rather watch football or go to movies; the traditions and the culture that surround bullfighting are slowly dying but for the interest that tourists still have for the art. Indeed, as I looked around the spectators I saw mainly older Spaniards; many of them were bent with age, but their faces were alight with solemn excitement.

“ This is the beginning of the Corrida,” she said to me.

I watched as the President acknowledged the trumpets by pulling out a white handkerchief and waving it in the air.

“ Now begins the faeba del capote,” she said to me. “ Here the matadors will use their capes-- you see them, they are gold and magenta-- to find the strengths and weaknesses of the bulls.”

The matadors moved with sharp, quick movements; they were birds at attention, ready to move in a heartbeat.

“ Every bull,” she continued, “ every bull has a strength and a weakness just like every matador has a strength and a weakness. Not everyone can be strong all the time in all ways; there is always a weakness. The matador must find the bull’s weakness before the bull can find his. This is the faeba del capote.”

As she finished her explanation, the trumpets sounded again, and men on armored horses appeared.

“ These picadors will help weaken the bull for the matador,” she told me, indicating the men on the horses. “ They will debilitate the neck muscles of the bull and test his strength; once the matador is satisfied with the work of the picadors this will end, the tercio de varas. This is the part of the ritual that many outsiders do not understand.” She shook her head. “ This is not to <https://assignbuster.com/valencia-a-trip-to-spain-creative-writing-examples/>

make the bull angry, but to test his strength; to give the matador the chance to know his opponent and to break the hide of the bull. Next, we will have the tercio de banderillas, where the banderillas are placed on the bull to perk him up. The colors of the banderillas are representative of where the ranch is from. The banderillas can be placed by the banderilleros of the matador himself. Three pairs must be placed according to the rules of tauromanquia. A minimum of two pairs must remain for the bull to count.”

“ Then what?” My interest was piqued.

“ Then the bull and the matador will dance,” she smiled. “ Four passes in the territorial dance is considered good; the band will interpret for us. They will play music that tells us what is going on in the arena. The matador respects his opponent; the perfect kill is an attack directly to the heart.”

“ Directly to the heart?”

“ The perfect kill should be where the bull’s head is dropped and its front hooves are close together, thus opening the shoulder blades to reveal a spot where the sword must pierce the heart directly to the aorta region.”

As I watched the bullfighting, I reflected on my time in Spain. I had been all over Spain, living in Valencia and Madrid; seeing a variety of different sights, meeting a plethora of new and different people. But never had Spain seemed so foreign and so alien to me as it did in the Plaza del Toros de Valencia.

So much had led me to this place, as I sat and talked to Alicia about the bullfights on that day. Although my trip in Spain had seemed simultaneously short and long, I was becoming used to the cultural differences I dealt with on a daily basis. I was no longer overwhelmed by the language barrier, nor did I feel the same level of homesickness that I had felt at the beginning of <https://assignbuster.com/valencia-a-trip-to-spain-creative-writing-examples/>

the trip. But sitting in the Plaza del Toros de Valencia on that warm day, I suddenly felt as though I was so far removed from everything I knew that there was no way for me to truly understand.

As Alicia explained to me the different aspects of bullfighting, I intellectually understood the reasons why the traditions existed, but I did not have the emotional or cultural understanding that the people in the crowd that day did. It surprised me that I could feel so separate from a group of people who are the same species; it gave me a new appreciation for the differences in culture that people face and deal with on a daily basis. Without these differences in culture, the homogeneity of humanity would almost certainly become overwhelming; however, how could I ever come to truly understand the people and the place that I had been calling home for so long?

Later, I sat in the cathedral in Valencia. It is an old building, much older than many of the other structures in the newer parts of the city. In the structure, it is easy to see many years of turmoil in the construction of the building; the Cathedral is not a cathedral in the typical sense, as it contains many different architectural elements from many different eras. Although it is considered to be a Gothic cathedral, there are still elements of the early basilica that can be seen peering around Gothic arches and flying buttresses.

As I considered the Cathedral in Valencia, I kept returning to the bullfights.

“ It is a slowly dying art,” Alicia had told me. “ The younger generations are not as concerned with it. Now, most of the people who watch the bullfighting are older, and have been participating in the culture for their whole lives. Parents no longer encourage their children to know anything about the

culture.”

It seemed sad to me, at first, that this vibrant and rich tradition would die out except for novelty’s sake in the near future. It seemed as though this change in Spanish culture would be a significant loss for Spain as a whole, and would detract from the richness of Spanish culture as a whole. But the Cathedral in Valencia made me rethink my views on the changing nature of Spanish culture. Although I found the bullfighting fascinating, I could accept that some found the practice to be barbaric and undesirable-- by any metric, the practice was violent and bloody.

I looked up at the cathedral with its Gothic features, mixed in with Romanesque, Renaissance, and even Neo-classical elements, and I realized that change was necessary for Spanish culture-- for all culture-- to progress forward. The richness of Spanish culture was not maintained by preserving the past, but by expanding and adapting into new types of thought and new traditions.

Coming to Spain was a transformative experience for me, but I felt as though the Spanish knew much more about me than I knew about them. They knew what food I ate and what media I consumed; they understood my day-to-day reality based off the media and information available to them. I, on the other hand, was not inundated with Spanish culture non-stop from a young age. I was forced to learn everything I was to know from the ground up, learning by trial and error in the same way that a child would learn to speak by trial and error. Unlike the Spanish, I was not able to consume massive amounts of media in the Spanish language before coming to the country; I felt distinctly wrong-footed as I realized that although I did not know the Spanish or the Spanish culture, the Spanish knew-- or thought they knew, at any rate-- me

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and my culture.

Whenever I walked around in Valencia, I was struck by how old the city seemed. The architecture seemed to be from another age; in many cases, it was from another age, perfectly preserved by the weather and the care that the government took in maintaining and preserving the past. It is not surprising that traditions like bullfighting remain strong in Valencia; the whole city seems to be built to remind its citizenry of the rich and distinct history that Valencia has.

That is not to say, however, that Valencia is lacking in modernity. It is certainly a place of history and tradition, but the people of Valencia have embraced with open arms the idea of newness as well; the shopping malls and public transportation of downtown Valencia rival those of New York City. It is easy to be immersed in the past in Valencia in the morning, and then suddenly turn a corner and be inundated with shiny newness and modernity in the afternoon.

Valencia's history is rife with scholars in the arts and sciences, and as a result, the City of the Arts and Sciences is some of the most notable and beautiful architecture in the city. The modernity of the buildings are in stark contrast with the old buildings in the ancient parts of the city; this ultra-modern cityscape is one of the more fascinating places to visit in the entire city of Valencia.

Within the City of the Arts and Sciences, there are a variety of museums and other attractions; one of the most beautiful is the arbored walkway that features all the plant life that is native to Valencia and the surrounding areas. Within this walkway, there are also a variety of different sculptures, done by famous artists from around the world. Many of these artists are <https://assignbuster.com/valencia-a-trip-to-spain-creative-writing-examples/>

contemporary artists, which means some of the sculpture within this part of the City of the Arts and Sciences was quite surreal. One of the most famous sculptures is the sculpture of the giant banana, which I found to be amusing, surreal, and somewhat bizarre, but enjoyable nonetheless.

Another fascinating place to visit with the City of Arts and Sciences is the science museum. As a child, I enjoyed the sciences and science museums intensely, and visiting the science museum was like something out of one of my childhood dreams. The museum was entirely interactive, giving children and adults alike an opportunity to explore many different scientific principles, and to just experiment and have fun.

Although pages and pages could be devoted to the City of the Arts and Sciences alone, the last attraction within the City of the Arts and Sciences that should be noted is the open-air oceanographic park. The park is similar in theory to an aquarium, but rather than keeping the animals and other sea creatures in enclosed tanks, many of them are in tanks that allow children and adults to handle them, play with them, and experiment with them. The wonderful thing about all of these exhibitions and attractions are that they allow for true interaction between the public and the attraction; it was wonderful to see tourists and locals alike enjoying the attractions and truly finding joy in all of the things that the city and the attractions had to offer. Outside of Valencia, I also traveled to and lived in Madrid. Although I enjoyed Madrid, Madrid did not have the incredible impact on me that Valencia did. Valencia was a city inundated with past and culture, and Madrid was much more of a metropolitan city, complete with modernity and the impersonal feel that of many of the world's major cities today have.

The things I loved about Madrid are, however, things that can be found in <https://assignbuster.com/valencia-a-trip-to-spain-creative-writing-examples/>

Madrid and nowhere else; it would be intellectually dishonest to claim that Madrid is entirely devoid of culture. In Madrid, I loved El Prado, the art museum that is located in Madrid. According to the Lonely Planet, “ The collection currently comprises around 7, 600 paintings, 1, 000 sculptures, 4, 800 prints and 8, 200 drawings, in addition to a large number of other works of art and historic documents. By 2012 the Museum will be displaying about 1300 works in the main buildings, while around 3, 100 works are on temporary loan to various museums and official institutions. The remainder are in storage” (Ham). It amazed me-- and continues to amaze me-- that an art museum can have so many works by so many masters in its possession that it does not have the space necessary to display them all. In the presence of so much art, I quickly felt overwhelmed, unsure of what to look at or what to feel about what I was seeing; after my experience in the Museo del Prado, I wandered around the city in a daze.

Seeing the Museo del Prado was a turning point in my appreciation for art in my personal life. Although I had been to museums before, going to the museum in Madrid caused me to understand the magnitude of the work that artists did in the past; I came to understand their sacrifices but also the ways in which their different styles and geographical locations affected their work. I came to realize that I truly appreciated Spanish art as a style; the museum had such a large collection of work by Spanish masters both past and present that it was difficult to find something to dislike about the museum. I also enjoyed a visit to the Royal Museum in Madrid, a trip that I did not enjoy as much as the trip to the Museo del Prado. While the Royal Museum in Madrid was certainly full of history, there was not the breadth and depth of art and history that was available for perusal at the Museo del Prado.

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After my experiences in Madrid, I traveled to Segovia, Toledo, Pensicola, and Ibiza. Ibiza and Pensicola were wonderful relaxation opportunities for me; being able to relax at the beach after long weeks of traveling was a welcome relief. I have been to beaches elsewhere in the world, but the beaches in Spain were beautiful beyond what I imagined. When people imagine the perfect beach, they often imagine a white sand beach somewhere in the Caribbean or south Pacific, but the beaches in Spain were unlike any other I had ever seen before.

In Ibiza, the beach was particularly lovely. The cliffs jutted up along the beach, and the buildings that dotted the cliffside were remnants of a time long past. The water that kissed the shore was the turquoise color that I thought only existed in retouched photographs: it seemed too clear and too jewel-like to be real. Upon my arrival in Ibiza, I thought I might have arrived in paradise.

The beaches in Ibiza were similar to the beaches in Southern California in texture and color, but the food that the restaurants on the cliffside made was beyond compare. I have never again eaten anything as delicious or as fresh-tasting as the food in Ibiza; although I have heard that Southern Italy has similar cuisine, I have not experienced it for myself, and would choose to visit Ibiza again for the cuisine alone.

In Pensicola, I visited the castle where Benedict lived, a huge stone fortification that stands over the shoals of Pensacola. It is a forbidding sight, and perhaps it was meant to be; the sight of the fortification must have been enough to scare away any potential invaders. Pensicola's beaches were not as lovely as those in Ibiza, but the town was definitely much slower and much more enjoyable as a relaxation spot than Madrid or Valencia was. After <https://assignbuster.com/valencia-a-trip-to-spain-creative-writing-examples/>

so much time traveling, it was wonderful to be able to relax and enjoy the easier, slower lifestyle in these places.

I would strongly recommend the south of Spain to anyone wishing to get away from the difficulties and the fast-paced style of city living that is so common in the world today. Many people find it difficult to relax and live in the slower-paced coastal towns, but I found that these towns and their townspeople certainly had an understanding of the finer things in life that many people from Madrid and even from Valencia did not. There is something about living on the coast that requires people to live a slower, more relaxed life, particularly in places as beautiful as Pensicola and Ibiza. It was easy for me to fall in love with the culture and the pace of these little coastal cities.

Visiting Spain is an entirely different experience from living in Spain.

Although I did a lot of traveling while I was in Spain, I felt as though I was becoming absorbed into the culture of Spain wherever I went-- and the cultures of Spain were very different depending upon the geographical location.

Allowing myself to become absorbed into the culture of the different places I went allowed me to truly become educated on the different cultures that I was experiencing. I do not claim to be an expert in Spanish culture now-- far from it. Instead, I now feel as though I have a good understanding of just how different and separate my culture is from the Spanish culture, and the ways in which our cultural histories are both similar and divergent. This is a fundamentally important understanding to have; I feel that this understanding is particularly important in the globalized world today.

Living abroad is a truly life-changing experience, and I am thankful that I had <https://assignbuster.com/valencia-a-trip-to-spain-creative-writing-examples/>

the opportunity to experience it. Without this opportunity, my life would have remained less textured and much less three-dimensional; there were things I learned by immersing myself in culture and language that I could never have learned from academic pursuits. Spain opened up whole new worlds of opportunities for me, and this was the epiphany that I had while watching the alien world of bullfighting.

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