



iAye, Aye

Ordering a meal. Getting on a bus. Going shopping.

These are all ordinary tasks that seem easy... until you are 5,000 miles away from home, and you find yourself in a foreign place where hardly anyone understands a word that comes from your mouth.

Texas Tech students recently experienced the challenge of completing these tasks and many others while studying agriculture abroad in Seville, Spain in June 2013.

The Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics launched their very first study abroad summer session last year. Both farm and ranch business management and agribusiness marketing classes were offered at the Texas Tech Center in Seville.

The Texas Tech University Center in Seville is located in the southern region of Spain known as Andalusia. The center functions year round and allows students to take courses taught by Texas Tech faculty.

Although these classes are also offered during the regular school year, this summer session added a unique twist. These classes revolved around Spanish and European agricultural methods, and students had numerous opportunities to experience hands-on learning in different sectors of Spanish production and marketing.

Jayci Cave, a junior agricultural communications major from Ackerly, Texas, is one of the students who participated in the program.

"I really enjoyed having the opportunity to study abroad in Spain," Cave explained. "It gave me a whole new outlook on the agricultural industry."

While overseas, Cave and her fellow classmates went on several unique field trips. These trips encompassed a broad range of agriculture. Each tour gave the students an opportunity to see agricultural products processed from beginning to the end-result and everything in between.

The trips included excursions to a vineyard and winery, hog farm and ham (also known in Spain as jamón) production facility, olive grove and olive press factory, and a strawberry farm and packing plant. Many times, the students were guided by native Spaniards who had extensive knowledge of their products and were excited to introduce Spanish agriculture to the group.

"My favorite field trip was when we went to the jamón ibérico facility," Cave said as her stomach growled. "We got to see the pigs from farm to finished product, and we got to taste it at the end. It was amazing!"

Not only did the students experience a whole new sector of international agriculture, they were also immersed in Spanish culture: living with host families, visiting historical sights, and traveling on their own time.

Cave said living with a host family was probably one of the best and most educational experiences of the entire trip. Many families spoke little to no English, which forced the students to adapt quickly and learn how to communicate. They were also fed Spanish cuisine the entire month by their host moms, which took "being full" to a completely new level.

"You definitely can't be a picky eater there," Cave said with a laugh. "I got to try all different kinds of food. Some was traditional and some was just outright weird, but it was good."

Jeff Johnson, Ph.D., a professor who taught the farm and ranch business management class, said the trip was a great success, and the students really benefited from the entire experience. He explained that everything from agriculture to the Spanish culture itself gave the students a one-of-a-kind perspective the average student will never have.

"Many agriculture related industry companies are multinational, so if a student can demonstrate that rather than just a vacation, they actually lived and were involved in the culture, I think they stand a much better chance of getting a job," Johnson said.



Agricultura!

Johnson also said the experience was not only beneficial for the students, but for him, as well. He formed many close relationships with his pupils, which he now cherishes.

“Being in a foreign country, people form close relationships in those types of situations anyways, but it was especially true with the faculty and students,” Johnson stated with a caring smile. “For me, it was very rewarding to be able to work closely with the students.”

This first-ever program in the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics offers students in CASNR a unique and different opportunity. There is great hope that it will grow and continue on for many summers to come.

Maybe after spending a month in Spain, the simple task of ordering a meal in Spanish wouldn't be so hard after all. 🇪🇸



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