

My journey to Spain was a complete success. This Globetrotter Grant and those who created it have helped to fuel my love for travel. My love for travel is only made possible by its accessibility. I focused on creating a travel experience that didn't cost too much. And it quickly became evident that seeing the world is not dependent on the size of your bank account. Seeing the world depends on how crafty you are when using it. Do not be mistaken; traveling on a budget is a daunting challenge. Traveling 12,000 miles and spending seven days in a foreign country is no easy feat on a budget of \$2000. By following a few simple rules I not only traveled those 12,000 miles, but I even extended it to another 700. I saw two countries instead of one. I spent ten days abroad instead of just a week. We live in an unprecedented age of mobility. By adhering to the following rules, one can find that the world is actually ours for the taking. What follows are the beginner guidelines to being a global graduate.

**Rule #1. Be Resourceful.**

For those who travel, this concept is the one that reigns above all. My first instinct when it came to this trip was to contact anyone and everyone I knew that lived, worked, or had traveled abroad for advice. The most valuable asset in travel is not yen, pounds, Euros or pesos -- it is undoubtedly advice. Those who have traveled not only know but also are often willing to share their insight. Ask aunts, uncles, parents, friends, co-workers, even strangers (practically anyone who will listen.) There are gems out there and people who have discovered them. You can find real pieces of quality advice -- you just have to be willing to do the research.

Fortunately, my own resources are abundant. I'm surrounded by those who have traveled and lived abroad. My sister is a current resident of London, England. After she decided to join me on my trip (she's an inveterate wanderer who embraces the British mentality that one should always take an opportunity to travel) she suggested I split my time abroad between London and Spain. Could I get to two countries instead of only one? Could I accomplish this on the same budget? I can. My own experience as an inhabitant of London taught me that travel to and from London is absurdly cheap. After some mild Googling -- another excellent source for travel advice -- I came to find that this change in plans was feasible.

Booking the flight is always the most precarious task of a trip. Inputting credit card numbers for international flights is intimidating. Airline prices are rapidly increasing. Willingly surrendering a third of my budget was no fun task, but a necessary evil. I searched all discount travel sites and compared them with the price of the airline. I found that Student Universe was offering the same flights at much lower prices. (A college education really does pay off) However, my original plan to travel in May did not seem possible. Prices were \$1300+ and I knew that I needed to find something cheaper. And I did.

This brings me to my next rule. **Rule #2. Be Flexible.** As in life, as in travel, things very rarely go as planned. This is especially true when it comes to traveling. When you are trying to cut costs, you must be willing to take the road less traveled. With a small budget, if you're looking to fund big plans you need to look past the obvious routes. The easy route is not only lighted, paved and lined with arrows, but is accompanied by service fees, additional charges, tolls, and taxes. . Advice from friends and co-workers led me to decide that Valencia, Spain was to be my final

destination. As beautiful a city as Barcelona or Madrid, Valencia is half the price. Also, I came to find that traveling in July reduced airline prices dramatically. I found the flight that was priced right, I input those Visa numbers, I added my passport information, and the countdown until my trip began.

Touching down in London brought a comfortable familiarity I associate with this city. The sights, the sounds, the smells are all entirely British, and I found them breathtaking. Exiting Heathrow airport by descending an escalator and stepping onto a train, reminded me of yet another vital travel principle. When visiting a foreign city it is best not to act foreign. This is **Rule #3- Be local**. As the saying goes, "when in Rome ..." People living in the city you are visiting spend each day moving about, eating, and experiencing their home city, and they do so on the cheap. Ask advice from locals, read guidebooks, talk to a cab driver, or the guy sitting next to you on the bus. They know this city better than you ever will, and will most likely be happy to point you in the right direction. Most people love being a tour guide.



I spent my six days in London submerged in the British lifestyle. I got up early, made myself tea, ate Cadbury Digestives, took the tube into town, wandered the streets, grabbed a pint at a pub, watched European football, and caught the last tube home to lay on the couch and watch witty British television. The beauty of being a tourist in London is the price – it's free. Nearly every landmark or museum is free of charge. You can take a picture in front of Big Ben, sit on the lions at Trafalgar square, watch the changing of the guard in front of Buckingham Palace, read a book in Hyde Park, or walk the length of the Thames for as much as it costs for London Paper to read in commute. Even the London paper is free. My time in London came and went in a flash, and before I knew it I was packing a carry-on book bag for Valencia.



Our Ryan Air flight to Valencia was less the \$90 USD, round trip. Yes, you read that correctly. Granted the seats aren't very comfortable, the interior is dated, there is no in-flight entertainment, and the staff wasn't exactly friendly, but for the price tag it's amazing. We got there intact, and that's what's important. Walking out of the plane and onto the tarmac one is immediately hit by the heat of the Spanish sun. Once passports are checked and customs is cleared, we wandered



out of the airport in search of adventure. After getting lost and retracing our steps, we finally found the bus into Valencia with the help of a security guard. I told you, seeking advice is key. Once we checked into our hostel, we headed off to into the city. Map in hand we checked off a couple of must-see spots and set off for them. We spent the day exploring the city on foot, seeing





beautiful churches, some dating back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. We stopped by the local farmers markets to pick up some oranges (Valencia of course is known for them) and fresh strawberries. We spent some time at the “Ciudad de las Artes y las Ciencias,” a newly constructed area of the city with a modern structure and astounding architecture.

Finally we ended up the one place I was most looking forward to.... La playa (the beach).

After hours of wandering, we were ready to follow the next and most important rule of travel. **Rule #4. Relax and Have Fun.** One thing many people seem to forget when on vacation is the very action the word implies -- to vacate. Leave your worries and cares at home.



Travel is not meant to be a chore or burden. Travel is not meant to be rushed or calculated. It does not always involve scheduling or timelines. Travel is about going with the flow, it’s about stopping and smelling the roses, and in our case, drinking what’s made from the roses -- the sangria. We spent the next two days doing just that. Laying on the beach, playing in the water, and soaking up the sun. When it was over, we packed up our beach towels and headed into the city to catch the bus back to the airport. Relaxed, rejuvenated, our skin a little on the crispy side. We boarded our flight back to



London, my sister returned to reality in London, and I came back to my life in Los Angeles.



So, now the real test. Did I reach the goal of the trip? Did I achieve the benchmark of my success? **The final trip budget.**

Return flight from LA to London.....	\$858.45
London Tube Pass (1 week).....	\$46.70
London Housing (Sister’s Flat).....	FREE
Pints, Pubs, and Pastries (London Food).....	\$185.58
Return Flight from London to Spain.....	\$88.66
Hotel in Valencia (3 nights).....	\$45.83
Bus tickets (3 days).....	\$30.93
<u>Paella, Sangria, Oranges, etc (Spain grub).....</u>	<u>\$132.66</u>
Personal (beach chairs, souvenirs, admission).....	\$462.75
Total Trip Cost	\$1,851.56
Remaining Budget	(\$148.44)

I returned to Los Angeles under budget. I returned to Los Angeles overjoyed. The numbers don't lie. And neither do the smiles and the memories. I'd say this trip was a once a lifetime kind of experience, but that would be a mistake. The beautiful thing about this kind of travel is that it's not an experience reserved for solely one moment. These opportunities are out there. To take advantage of them is a choice, not a consequence of luck or circumstance. We all have a child-like innocence that encourages us to seek out new things, explore new places, and have new experiences. As we progress in our lives we no longer allow ourselves to indulge those feelings. My goal, my message, is for those people that are still in pursuit of that freedom. This message is for those who seek that change. For those who spend their days in the same cubicle, riding the same bus, doing the work, having the same conversations, and spending every day nearly identical to the last. At some point you must accept that adventures never happen for those who aren't seeking them. You must take it upon yourself to find them.