

# Letters to Home

## Students Learn Big-City Life

By COLLEEN JENKINS  
Staff Writer

### Day

LONDON — A school day in England means more than stuffy classrooms and afternoons in the library.

Museums, plays, art galleries and strolls through royal parks also enrich the classroom lessons UNC students experience in England.

"Our coursework here is supposed to be related to the environment we're experiencing," said Grant Young, a UNC junior from Davenport, Iowa. "It's nice to have that kind of broad focus to everything we're studying."

With classes confined to four week-days, students can find the time to enjoy London's metropolitan scene. And classes meet only once a week for a two-hour period.

And it's what the UNC students see when they aren't in class that might provide a culture shock.

Jennifer Springsteen was a little surprised when the Christian meeting she was attending in London ended and someone asked who wanted to head to the pub for a beer.

This unexpected question gave Springsteen, a sophomore from Raleigh studying abroad in London, a glimpse at the different aspects of British culture.

"There's just a different attitude about drinking in general (in London)," she said. "In the U.S. it seems like most college students who drink do it to an extreme, and here it's more like people (drink) some and some don't."

Springsteen and the other 28 students in the London Honors program this semester have spent the past three months deciphering aspects of the British culture. Part of that learning has been adjusting to the English stereotypes of Americans.

"(Londoners) kind of snicker at Americans," said Huong Ngo, a UNC junior from Raleigh. "Some of it is because of the American culture that makes its way over here."

And although most would assume language is another shared aspect of the two cultures, abroad, students soon realized that British English is quite distinctive.

Ursula Dimmling, a UNC sophomore from Charlotte, found that speaking the same language did not guarantee perfect communication when she went out with a native.

"I always had to ask him to repeat himself," Dimmling said. "He had these different phrases like 'dodgy.' We spent a lot of time defining youthful language that's different from ours."

Dimmling soon learned that the British's "dodgy" was the equivalent of the American term "sketchy."

Some students in England expressed surprise at the way sex is portrayed in the media across the Atlantic Ocean.

"They're more sexually open," Ngo said, referring to commercials and advertisements that are acceptable to the British public but would never fly with most audiences back home.

The British might be more explicit when it comes to the media, but Londoners become far more reserved when it comes to smiling or making eye contact with strangers.

"At home, you walk down the street and say 'hi' to strangers, but you don't do that here," said Jessica Tate, a UNC sophomore from Charlotte.

But even when the UNC students managed to come to conclusions about the British, they said it was hard to generalize the culture as a whole since London seemed to include people from every corner of the globe.

"Everyone says it's an international city, and I think that's pretty true," Ngo said. "There's a better mix of ethnicities."

### Night

UNC students studying abroad in London might gripe about the gloomy weather and the body odor on the crowded Tube, but when it comes to city's nightlife, they say they have little room to complain.

"There's always something to do," said Thomas Stroud, a UNC junior from Greenville. "There's never a dull moment."

This semester has brought more than spring formals or Thursday nights on Franklin Street. Instead, UNC students' social calendars have been dotted with West End plays, discos and English pubs.

"Nightlife has been a really big part of our experience," said Shannon Snypp, a UNC sophomore from Atlanta. "London has really great clubs, bars and pubs."

Melissa Pendergrass, a sophomore from Chapel Hill, said one of the best parts of the London social scene was having the chance to meet people from all over the world.

The program's participants said London's nightlife characteristics were slightly different from what they were used to at home.

"The people you meet (at pubs) are older," Snypp said. "You don't have as much in common with them because they're out there in the working world. The conversations are different."

And because the pubs close before midnight, night owls have to move on to bars and clubs for continued entertainment.

"The big discos have a lot of loud music," Stroud said. "They're always thumping, and there are all sorts of freaky people."

"It's very entertaining. It's more dancing and less drinking because there's so much dancing, and it's so crowded you can hardly walk."

Pendergrass and other students said they worried that with so much variety in London, they might get bored once they come back to Chapel Hill.

Snypp said, "Chapel Hill's a college town, so every time you go out, you see the same people, but here you meet people from all over the world."

The Features Editor can be reached at [features@unc.edu](mailto:features@unc.edu).

## Spaniards Show UNC Good Time

Between harder classes and wilder parties, students in the Year in Sevilla program must adjust to the culture.

By BRIAN BEDSWORTH  
Staff Writer

### Day

SEVILLA, Spain — A college student in Spain would feel pretty good if he or she scored a nine on the final exam in an important class.

The 10-point grading scale is just one of the adjustments students from UNC and other American colleges have to make when studying in the land of Cervantes and Picasso.

"Even if you get an eight, the teacher is very proud," said Wayne Martin, director of the International Center for Cultural Studies of Sevilla.

The center works with UNC's Year in Sevilla program to provide students with an opportunity to learn Spanish in the historical setting of Spanish culture.

Since 1972, UNC has sent hundreds of students to live and learn in Sevilla, the capital of Andalusia, Spain's sunny southern region.

The Year at Sevilla program includes three levels, ranging from American-style classes taught by Spanish professors to total academic immersion in the University of Sevilla.

And while American students might notice some similarities in the curriculum to that of their schools back home, they quickly realize there are some major differences in daily school life.

"For me, the biggest difference is that Spanish students live at home with their parents until they get married or turn 30," said Alison Peaper, a junior from Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts.

Most American students studying in Sevilla live with Spanish families. And while living at "home" is a major adjustment from the independence of dorm or apartment life, some say it offers more insight into the culture.

"If it was in America, I would hate living at home," said Laura Destro, a UNC sophomore studying in Sevilla. "But I really like my Spanish family, and it's a great way to improve my Spanish."

Spanish students generally enjoy more independence in the classroom than their American counterparts. Larger classes, less attention from professors and lax attendance rules mean students have to be more self-reliant.

"It's possible to do well (in a



PHOTO COURTESY OF BRIAN BEDSWORTH

UNC students who are studying in Sevilla this semester take a break from their classes by sitting at the School of Tourism's outside cafe.

Spanish university), but if you're just an average student, it's very difficult," said Evelyn Dominguez, a Spanish language teacher at the university who also taught in Chapel Hill for a year.

Unfortunately for students, their final exams are often the only grade taken for a class.

"There's not much homework or busy-work," said Rebecca Walker, who graduated from UNC last year and is now a program assistant. "And it's harder to pass classes here."

### Night

Spaniards are kind of like KISS. They like to rock 'n' roll all night and party every day. Well, almost.

The world-renowned fiestas and festivals of Spain don't happen every day. But the nightlife, especially in the big cities, does go beyond the 2 a.m. last call UNC students obey.

At 5 a.m. on a Saturday, one might find the average student in bed in Chapel Hill, sleeping off last night's frat party. But in Sevilla, the most popular "discotecas" are just getting rowdy. And in Madrid, some clubs don't even open until 5 a.m.

Sevilla's nightlife doesn't have the hectic pace of Madrid's, but it has plenty to keep a student away from the books and on the streets all night and a good part of the next day.

The city's warm, dry climate provides a perfect setting for an outdoor fiesta. Every Thursday, Friday and Saturday night, thousands of young people take to the streets in order to "ir de marcha" (to go out partying).

The average night begins at 11 p.m. or midnight and often starts with something called a "botellon" in the streets of El Centro (downtown).

A botellon is a way to get together with friends to talk, relax, meet people and get to that just right point, Ruiz said.

It's also a way for Sevilla's youth to enjoy Spain's looser drinking laws and cheap alcohol, en masse. Thousands of revelers crowd the Plaza del Salvador, and other plazas throughout the city, each night of the weekend to enjoy the festivities and free-flowing liquor.

The fact that it's in the streets makes it more social, said Ashley Halleran, a junior from the University of Michigan. "Everyone's out there to have a good time and meet new people."

But not everybody is so enthusiastic about the weekly fiestas.

"People go to botellon to drink — and only to drink," said Eduardo Martinez, a third-year student at the University of Sevilla. "A lot of times (the partiers) get to the point where they're not so nice."

Martinez said he and those who didn't like the wild botellons started the night out in the Plaza de Alfalfa or the barrio de El Arenal at a "tapas" bar.

Tapas are small portions of food served with a drink, that can serve as a snack or a meal. Anything can be a tapa, such as "caja de lomo" (pork slices) and the popular "cola de torro" (bull's tail).

Most people stay in their respective plazas or tapas bars until about 2 a.m. or 3 a.m., which is when the night really begins.

The gypsy shouts and frantic strumming of flamenco music draws people to the bars of the Triana neighborhood, where spontaneous "sevillanas," local folk dances, often erupt in crowds of locals and tourists.

But more people choose to groove to the techno-pop beats and flashy lights of Sevilla's dance clubs.

"The discotecas here are the tightest," Halleran said. "You can dance for six hours, and you can't do that in the States!"

A mixture of Latino, European and American dance pop moves the sweaty crowds in the clubs of the Centro and Nervion neighborhoods and moves them all night long. The sun is up before many partiers even leave the discotecas.

"We'll be leaving clubs at 5 or 6 in the morning, and there's still a line of people coming in," said UNC sophomore Bobby Sapp.

But a true night of partying in Sevilla isn't over until breakfast the following morning. As people stumble out of the discotecas, many head for a cafe or bakery for "churros con chocolate," a kind of fried dough stick served with thick hot chocolate.

Only after this, does the night really end and people go to sleep — only to get up and do it all again the next night.

The Features Editor can be reached at [features@unc.edu](mailto:features@unc.edu).



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The Admiralty Arch is near London's Trafalgar Square. UNC offers study abroad programs to England for the fall, spring and summer.

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