



Parent and Student Handbook

SPAIN

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Introduction

Why Xperitas

Congratulations on choosing to invest in your child's linguistic and intercultural education! By enrolling your child in an Xperitas program, you and your child's teacher have made a conscious decision that your child is interested in being more than just a tourist! Your child's language immersion program will provide numerous opportunities to step outside his/her comfort zone become more self-aware and independent and begin the journey to global citizenship.

To support you and your child in the travel preparation process, Xperitas provides you with educational activities and articles, as well as logistical preparation materials. Logistical preparation is important and will help your child be a smart traveler, but preparing for the cultural immersion aspect is the most essential component to having a successful experience! You chose an Xperitas program for this reason and we hope that you and your child take advantage of all the preparation materials that we provide. With the right preparation and an open mind, your child will be able to adapt to any situation and have the most educational and enriching experience possible.

We hope this handbook will serve as a helpful tool to stay informed throughout your child's preparation process. Please read through the entire handbook and let your child's teacher or the Xperitas staff know if you have questions. In addition to this handbook, you will also receive monthly emails from The Navigator, the parent newsletter; you will be invited to parent meetings by your child's language teacher; and you will also be invited to attend Xperitas' country-specific and Nuts & Bolts webinars.

How to Use the Xperitas Portal:

Logging in

- Click on "My Login" at the top of the homepage of Xperitas.org
- To access your account for the first time, you will need to set a password. Click on the "Forgot your password" link and enter the email address you registered with as your username. You will then receive an email with instructions to set your password.

Login

Username *

Password *

Login

[Forgot your password](#)



Traveler Information

Testdanae (Leader) ⚙️

Sign Out

Personal Information	+
Emergency Contact Information	+
Program Details	+
Program Resources	+
Passport Information	+
Family Stay Application	+
Payments	+
My Travel Fund	+
Group Status	+
Program Checklist	+
Agreements	+

Using your Xperitas Portal

- Please make sure that all information listed in the Personal Information and Emergency Contact tab is correct. To update, click the gear icon by your name and select Edit Profile
- You can access your child's itinerary by clicking on Program Details → View Program Itinerary → Itinerary Details. A new tab will open.
- You can print your itinerary and flight information by clicking on "Print Itinerary" at the top of the page (across from the orange Travel Itinerary header). You will receive an email from Xperitas anytime your child's itinerary has been significantly updated.
- Please submit your child's passport information as soon as you have it, but no later than 90 days before departure (incorrect passport information or passport information that is received late will incur a \$40 fee).

Submitting your Family Stay Materials

- Your child must submit his/her family stay application by Sept 1 for winter programs and Nov 1 for spring and summer programs (if applicable). Requirements are:
 - Dear Host Family Letter (written in the target language)
 - Two photos (one of the participant alone and one with his/her family)
- Expand the Family Stay Application tab.
- Applications must be completed in one sitting.
- Applications received after the deadline will incur a \$40 late fee.



Finances

Payment and Cancellation Schedules

Winter Programs (Dec, Jan, Feb)

Payment Schedule	Amount Due	Cancellation Schedule	Fee Amount
Apr. 15 (Early Bird)	\$500	Non-refundable	\$100
Jun. 15 (Final)		April 1-April 30	\$250
Aug. 15	\$800	May 1 or later	TBD ¹
Sept. 15	\$800	30 Days prior to departure	No refund possible
Oct. 15	Final balance ²		

Spring Programs (Mar, Apr, May)

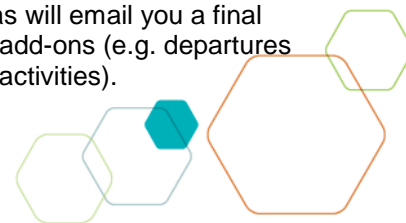
Payment Schedule	Amount Due	Cancellation Schedule	Fee Amount
Jun. 15 (Early Bird)	\$500	Non-refundable	\$100
Oct. 1 (Final)		Oct 15-Nov 14	\$250
Nov. 1	\$800	Nov 15 or later	TBD ¹
Dec. 1	\$800	30 Days prior to departure	No refund possible
Jan. 15	Final balance ²		

Summer Programs (Jun, Jul, Aug)

Payment Schedule	Amount Due	Cancellation Schedule	Fee Amount
Jun. 15 (Early Bird)	\$500	Non-refundable	\$100
Oct. 15 (Final)		Nov 1- Nov. 30	\$250
Nov. 15	\$1000	Dec. 1 or later	TBD ¹
Jan. 15	\$1000	30 Days prior to departure	No refund possible
Mar. 15	Final balance ²		

¹ Cancellations within the “to be determined” phase will be calculated based on a non-refundable \$500 administration fee, plus any expenses incurred at the time Xperitas receives a written notice of cancellation.

² Final Billing: Approximately three weeks before the final payment is due, Xperitas will email you a final billing statement that reflects the balance owed, including any surcharges and/or add-ons (e.g. departures from cities other than those published, small-group supplement, additional group activities).



Payment Process

Payments can be made online with a credit card through the portal. Instructions are sent with enrollment confirmation. Checks or money orders should be made payable to Xperitas and sent to our office. Write the participant's name, school (if applicable) and destination on each payment. Mailed payments must be postmarked by the payment deadline. Xperitas cannot accept postdated checks. All postdated checks will be returned immediately.

Payments		
Payments, Fees, and Credits Applied to Bill		
Payments	+	
Fees	+	
Credits	+	
		SUBMIT A PAYMENT
		Program Price *
		\$2,527.00
		<small>Price is subject to change up to 30 days before last payment is due. Change in price may be due to a small group supplement, special requests, or other changes.</small>
		Total Payments Received to Date
		\$ 0.00
		Amount Owed
		\$2,327.00

Participants are responsible for making all applicable payments according to the schedule for their program (see below). Participants and their parents will receive two payment reminder emails before each payment deadline unless they have already made the payment. Xperitas emails a bill for the final payment only. Payments may be made with a credit card at portal.xperitas.org or by check or money order mailed to Xperitas. A \$40 late fee will be applied to all late payments

Cancellation Process

Cancellations must be submitted in writing (or by email to cancel@xperitas.org) by the participant or participant's parent/guardian directly to Xperitas, clearly indicating the participant's name, school and program destination. Xperitas cannot accept cancellations by phone. \$100 of the \$500 deposit is non-refundable. This is the fee for any cancellations made prior to the final enrollment deadlines. Please see our full cancellation policy on the next page and the cancellation fee schedule below.

Cancellation Policy

Voluntary Cancellations

Voluntary cancellations must be submitted in writing (email is acceptable) by the participant or participant's parent/guardian directly to Xperitas, clearly indicating the participant's name, school, and program destination country. Xperitas cannot accept voluntary cancellations made by phone or requested by the teacher for the student. Cancellations should be emailed to: cancel@xperitas.org.

Medical Cancellations

When a participant cancels due to health reasons prior to departure, Xperitas' regular cancellation policy applies. The cancellation insurance included in the program price is only for medically related causes affecting the participant or a member of the participant's immediate family. The maximum coverage amount (\$1,000) is applied against the incurred loss calculated as of the date Xperitas receives the written cancellation. A physician's statement and signature will be required for any medical claim; Xperitas will provide insurance forms to the participant. For more information, please refer to the complete insurance information on the Xperitas website.



Involuntary cancellations

Xperitas reserves the right to cancel a student for lack of payment or for failure to abide by the standards set by the teacher and/or school. In both cases the standard cancellation fees will apply.

Refunds

Xperitas issues refunds in the form of a check, made out to the student. Refunds may take up to four weeks to process, depending on the payment type. Insurance claims may take longer.

Cancellation Protection Plan

This policy is provided by Xperitas to protect participating students against significant financial loss in case of unforeseeable world events.

Students will receive a full refund* (less a \$500 administration fee) if all of the following events occur, the organizing teacher chooses to cancel the program and the cancellation request is received by Xperitas within two weeks of these events:

1. The U.S. Department of State confirms that there has been a terrorist act against U.S. interests in the U.S., in international airspace or in any country on your Xperitas itinerary;
2. The U.S. Department of State issues an official Travel Warning advising against travel to any region listed on your Xperitas itinerary;
3. The official Travel Warning is issued or in effect within 90 days of your departure. For any cancellation up to 91 days prior to departure, the standard cancellation policy applies.

* If the cancellation occurs after airline ticketing, the ticket (issued in the name of the participant) may constitute a portion of the refund.

My Travel Fund

With this online tool, generous family and friends can quickly and easily submit payments toward a participant's Xperitas program. You can follow the setup instructions and see sample templates online (xperitas.org/pricing-and-fundraising/my-travel-fund), but here's how it works:

1. Xperitas participants write a description of their upcoming program, and upload a picture of themselves or their destination, through their Xperitas portal.
2. Xperitas participants share the My Travel Fund link, along with their Xperitas Reservation ID and their last name, to their family members and friends, through email and/or social media.
3. Donors follow the link and use the participant's Reservation ID and last name to log in to our secure payment portal, where they can view the participant's itinerary, trip description, photo and outstanding balance.
4. Donors follow the simple, on-screen payment instructions and add a custom message of support to submit to participants along with their payment.
5. Both the donor and the participant receive email confirmations of the financial contribution.



Insurance

Limited insurance for minor illness or accidents and trip cancellation insurance is provided for all Xperitas travel program participants. Coverage details and instructions can be found at www.xperitas.org/sites/default/files/2016_core_travel_faqs_for_xperitas.pdf for Language participants

Note: Pre-existing conditions, mental illness and pregnancy are not covered. Xperitas recommends that each traveler's own comprehensive medical insurance be current and include coverage for the destination country.

Printing your Insurance Card

About two weeks before the start of your program, log into www.coretravelinsurance.com and create an ID card customized for your Core™ Travel insurance coverage with Xperitas. Print your card by following these quick and easy steps:

1. Click on the link labeled *log-In* or *Traveler log-in*
2. Enter your first name, last name, date of birth in the corresponding fields. When you get to the field labeled organization, enter *Xperitas*.
3. Click *submit*.
4. Click *Go to your Profile*.
5. Click *Print Insurance Card*.

The emergency assistance provider listed on the card can inform a medical facility about your coverage and limits. The card is wallet-sized so that your child can carry it with him/her during your trip.

Core™ Travel Administrator

For info re: coverage and upgrades:
www.coretravelinsurance.com
administrator@coretravelinsurance.com

Medical Assistance Provider

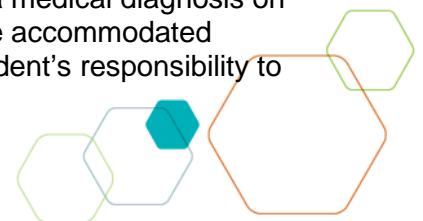
For 24-hour emergency medical assistance
call Europ Assistance:
Tel: 866-690-5111 inside the USA
Tel: 202-659-7776 collect outside the USA
Fax: (301) 907-7417

Medical Conditions & Special Needs

It is important that Xperitas and group leaders are aware of any medical conditions or special needs a participant may have. For this reason we ask participants to indicate on the program application any medical condition of which Xperitas, the program teacher/leader and the host family should be aware.

All allergies, dietary needs, medications, etc., must be managed by the participant. Host families will be notified of medical conditions, but will not necessarily be knowledgeable on how to provide specific care. Students should be comfortable advocating for themselves, explaining their needs and managing their own condition.

Xperitas reserves the right to cancel a participant who does not disclose a medical diagnosis on his/her application or whose medical condition or special needs cannot be accommodated appropriately on the program; regular cancellation fees apply. It is the student's responsibility to



update Xperitas of any changes in his/her medical condition that may occur over the course of the planning process.

Cancellation Insurance

The cancellation insurance included in the program price is for medically related causes only affecting the participant or a member of the participant's immediate family.

The maximum coverage amount (\$1000) is applied against the incurred loss calculated as of the date Xperitas receives the written cancellation. A physician's statement and signature will be required for any medical claim.

Submitting a Claim

You can find claim forms when you log into your account on the Core Travel Insurance website (coretravelinsurance.com).

Please note that your child should be prepared to pay any medical expenses on-site as they occur and then submit a claim to the insurance company later, if necessary. Remember to keep all receipts to be able to provide them later. Individual medical expenses should never be paid by the group leader, the local Family Stay Coordinator or the host family. Please note that there is a \$50 deductible per claim.

Additional Insurance Coverage

Xperitas is pleased to provide participants an opportunity to purchase additional insurance coverage through Core Travel Insurance.

Some participants on Xperitas programs request additional insurance to increase the insurance coverage automatically provided on all Xperitas programs. You are not required to purchase additional insurance, but we want to make it easy if you would like to do so.

Core Travel offers 3 upgrade plans above the standard insurance policy included in the Xperitas program cost. [Click here](#) to review the plans available and learn more about options.

Core Travel is a third party vendor and is completely independent from Xperitas. All payments and questions about coverage and claims should be directed to Core Travel at administrator@coretravelinsurance.com or 518-708-4192.



Country-Specific Logistics

Climate

- The climate in Spain varies depending on the region and time of year. Spring is unpredictable and can be warm, sunny or cool and rainy. Madrid, which is near mountains, may be snowcapped until April or May and can be quite cool until late in the spring.
- Southern Spain is warmer and drier than the north and is likely to be very hot and very dry in the summer. The Mediterranean coast can experience impressive storms in late spring and early summer.
- The northern coast is much rainier year round than the rest of Spain
- In spring, dress in layers to accommodate for the changes in weather and be prepared for cold evenings. In summer plan for hot, sunny weather in much of the country. Take along a light jacket for cool evenings throughout the country and light rain in the North.
- Apply sunscreen regularly as the sun is stronger in Spain than in most of the U.S.

Clothing

- Reference the Xperitas Spain packing list (on page 14) for advice on what to bring.
- Dress is more formal in Spain than in much of the U.S. Young people wear jeans, shorts, t-shirts, sweatshirts, sweaters, sundresses and skirts. It is important to note that girls or boys who have bare shoulders, clothing with offensive sayings, or short shorts may be denied entrance to churches and cathedrals. Lastly it is not common for Spanish people to wear flip flops unless they are going to the beach.
- It may rain unpredictably in the spring, so it's a good idea to bring along a waterproof jacket or rain poncho. Rain in the summer is less likely, particularly in the south but we advise that you bring a light waterproof jacket, poncho or a small umbrella.

Electricity

- Check the electrical voltage requirements of appliances you plan to bring to be sure they run on 230 volts. If not, it's best to leave them at home. You will always need a European adapter.

Money

- Contact your bank to alert them of your travel plans and inquire about any international transaction fees.
- Bring a combination of cash (\$100) and cards. Be sure to bring a debit card with a pin number and a chip to get cash from ATM machines. In general, a *Caja* has cheaper commission fees than a *Banco* when taking out money from an ATM machine in Spain.
- Exchange some dollars for euros (100€-150€) before your departure either at a major airport or at your local U.S. bank. They often need to order euros, so be sure to request them at least a couple of weeks before your departure.



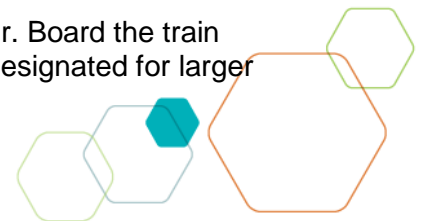
- Be sure to carry your cards and most of your money in your money belt or neck pouch while travelling! While in the country, only walk around with the money that you need and a copy of your passport. The rest can be left in your hotel safe.
- Credit cards are widely accepted and are a very easy way to keep track of your purchases.

Tipping

- Tipping is appreciated, but is not typically as generous as we are used to in the U.S.
- It is customary to leave around 50 cents to 1€ per person at a sit-down restaurant.
- Taxis: cab drivers are not usually tipped unless extra service is provided. (You will probably not ride in any taxis over the course of the program).
- It is not necessary to tip housekeeping at hotels.
- For official guides 10€-15€ for the entire group is sufficient.
- Give bus drivers 10€ per day for the group, perhaps a bit more if the driver is exceptionally courteous.

Transportation

- **Madrid Metro**
 - A onetime ticket costs 1.50€ - 2.00€ depending on where you travel in Zone A. Be prepared when you buy your ticket to know where your final stop is. It is more cost-effective to buy a book of 10 tickets for Metro Zone A (12.20€).
- **Barcelona Metro**
 - A onetime ticket costs 2.15€. It is more cost effective to buy a T-10 card (10 tickets) for 1 zone for 9.95€
- **Metro Guidelines**
 - Debit cards without a smart chip do not work in the ticket machines (so have cash on hand or have a card with a chip)
 - Keep your tickets on hand in an easily accessible pocket so you don't have to rummage through your things inside the metro. To enter the metro put your ticket into the ticket validation machine at the metro entrance. The machine checks the ticket and then marks it on the back with a printed day and time stamp. You then must pull the ticket out of the machine slot and in that instant the turnstile lock is released and you can pass through. Do not throw your ticket away until you exit the metro.
 - Always know your route and carry a metro map with you.
 - While in the metro keep all valuables in front of you and be aware of pick pocketers.
 - Once you are approaching your stop, move towards the exit door and be prepared to exit quickly.
- **The Train**
 - Arrive at least 30-45 minutes before the departure of your train. If you are taking the AVE (high speed train), you will have to go through security. Use the departure screens to find your platform.
 - Check your ticket for you train car number and seat number. Board the train accordingly. Store your luggage overhead or in the areas designated for larger



pieces of luggage. Keep your ticket out and handy because the conductor will be by to check it.

- Get ready to disembark (with your suitcases) at least 15 minutes before your stop and use several exits as a group.

Food

- Breakfast is included daily and all meals are included during the family stay. Any other included meals are noted on your itinerary.
- Travelers can find food for every budget! The “*menu del día*” for lunch for about 10€-15€ is a good option if you’re hungry and want a sit down restaurant. You can buy snacks, *bocadillos*, *tapas*, *empanadas*, etc. at a café, supermarket, open market or bakery. This is usually the cheapest way to go.
- The water in Spain is perfectly safe to drink.
- Mealtimes are much later than in the U.S. and lunch is usually the largest meal of the day. Dinner is very late and very light.

Health & Safety

- Spain is extremely safe, but petty theft such as pickpocketing is common in crowded areas, like the metro, public transportation or busy shopping streets.
- Be sure to keep your passport, most of your money and your cards in your money belt or neck pouch while traveling on the plane and from city to city! Everything should be kept in FRONT of your body. When walking around the city, only bring money for that day and a copy of your passport. A cross-body bag that zips is a good option. Only use a backpack if you carry it in front of you.
- There will be a safe in your hotel room; lock your valuables in it while you are out and about. **DON'T FORGET TO CHECK THE SAFE BEFORE YOU LEAVE THE HOTEL.**
- Always travel in groups of three or more, never alone. Be aware of your surroundings and use common sense.
- Remember that the Xperitas emergency line is available 24/7, but please only call it when you are experiencing a true emergency.
- Review the recommendations for travelers provided by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). See Current Health and Safety Updates for information about current world events and illnesses.
- Keep printed insurance card on you at all times.

Communication

- At least one leader per group will receive a cell phone upon arrival in Spain. Other leaders can purchase a local sim card.
- Free Wi-Fi is widely available at hotels, in cafés, even on buses, and makes it easy to stay in touch via email and text. You can download messaging apps, such as WhatsApp, to communicate with people at home for free while connected to Wi-Fi.
- A great way for the entire group to stay in communication with parents back home is via a blog, private Facebook group or group email.



- Ask your teacher about his/her policy around technology use while on the program.
- Spaniards greet each other with *dos besos*, one on each cheek. Between two men they greet each other with a handshake.
- When entering a room or a store, it is polite and the norm to greet the other people with *buenos días* or *buenas tardes*, which is sometimes shortened to *buenas*. When leaving, don't forget to say *hasta luego*, (which is shortened and sounds like *sta luego*) *ciao* or *adios*.
- During the family stay, you may or may not have access to internet. If you do have internet, please ask your family when it is appropriate to use it and limit your screen time. You will have the contact information of both the local Family Stay Coordinator, as well as your group leader(s).

Family Stay

- If you submitted your family stay applications by the November 1 deadline, you should receive your host family's information about 2 weeks prior to departure.
- Our host families are volunteers, so it is nice to bring them a gift from your home state and a scrapbook or some photos to show them what life is like where you live.
- Your family is excited to meet you! The family stay is a great learning experience, so be sure to keep an open mind, do your best to practice your Spanish language skills and have fun getting to know your family. Limit your screen time.
- Write a thank you note for your hosts after your visit and leave it there on your last day.

Code of Conduct

- Ask your teacher about your school group's specific discipline plan.
- Review the Xperitas Code of Conduct with your child before leaving for Spain (below). It should be signed by parents and students and returned to the group leader.
- Do your best to honor the language commitment!

Xperitas Code of Conduct:

I realize that while on the Xperitas program I am representing my country, my community, my school and my family. I will therefore strive to conduct myself in a manner appropriate to being a good ambassador. I accept and understand the Xperitas Code of Conduct as listed below and pledge myself to honor it.

As an Xperitas Student...

1. I will commit myself to improving my communication skills in the target language and will speak it as much as possible.
2. I will cooperate with my leader(s) and honor rules that they set for me (e.g. curfews, punctuality, sign-out procedures, and behavior in hotels).
3. I will dress and act appropriately at all times and be sensitive to the impression I am conveying in a culture other than my own.
4. I will refrain from acquiring any tattoo or body piercing.



5. I will refrain from the use of use of alcohol, tobacco and drugs; I will not accept or transport any of these.
6. I will refrain from romantic/sexual involvement of any kind and any behavior leading to it.
7. For my own safety I agree not to operate any motorized vehicle or be a passenger on any motorcycle.
8. I will not purchase or carry knives or any other article that may be considered a weapon.

Violation of this Code of Conduct abroad may result in the student being sent home at the parents' expense. You will be notified if such a decision has been made by the leader(s).

Cultural Tips

- It is even common to see babies and small children in restaurants eating with their families until very late at night and into the early morning hours.
- Spaniards can talk very loudly and use a lot of hand gestures– think Mediterranean-style!
- Smoking is much more common in Spain than in the U.S
- In Spain air conditioning is not as common as in the US. Don't be surprised if your host family does not have A/C.
- Be ready to try new foods and always offer to help in the kitchen during your family stay. Enjoy this *sobremesa* time after meals and don't feel rushed to get up from the table and but rather sit back, relax and soak up this cultural experience.
- Overall, just keep an open-mind and try not to refer to stereotypes!

Packing

Traveling light is the best way to travel in Spain. You may also have to carry your luggage up stairs or over cobblestone streets to your lodging. Xperitas recommends packing everything in a small to medium sized suitcase. **Pack a small backpack, purse or messenger bag** in your suitcase or use it as your carry on.

Carry your most important documents in a money belt or neck pouch:

- Passport
- Small amount of cash (50€-100€)
- Credit or debit card
- Travel itinerary with addresses of your hotels, host family and emergency phone numbers

Pack the following in your carry-on:

- camera (phone) and charger or extra batteries
- essential medicines (keep prescriptions in original bottles and carry generic names of all prescriptions)
- Travel Adaptor
- Journal and pens
- toothbrush and toothpaste, moist towelettes, hand sanitizer, and sanitary items (girls)
- a change of clothes



- anything else you would not want to do without in the rare event that your suitcase is delayed and catches up with you a day or two later

Pack the following in your suitcase:

- Bring 4-5 changes of clothes that can be mixed, matched and layered depending on the weather.
- Bring at least one dressy outfit, such as dress pants, blouses, collared shirt, dress, or skirt. Some churches and cathedrals insist on appropriate dress and have been known to turn away tourists wearing tank tops, clothing with offensive language and short shorts
- 1 to 2 pairs of sturdy comfortable shoes, one pair of sandals (summer), one pair of flip flops (for the beach and around the hotel)
- Underwear and socks
- Swimsuit and towel (summer travelers)
- High factor sunscreen and lip protector
- Sunglasses and hat
- Toiletries (shampoo, deodorant, soap, etc. in small containers)
- Gift for your host family
- Photocopy of your passport
- Plastic bag for dirty clothes
- Pack an extra small duffel bag/backpack to bring along for hikes or other activities
- Re-usable water bottle

Things best to leave at home:

- Jewelry
- Hair dryers, curlers and straighteners – they are heavy and only work with a heavy converter
- High heeled or uncomfortable shoes
- Laptop, or other expensive technology

Travel Tips:

- Check with your airline for specific luggage guidelines. Most airlines allow one checked bag for international travel (no larger than 62" linear – sum of height, width and length) and weight ranges from 44-50 pounds.
- In your carry-on, TSA currently only allows liquids or gels in 1 clear, quart-sized bag, with only 3oz bottles or smaller.
- Roll clothes instead of folding – it saves space and helps with wrinkles.
- Pack electronics in your carry-on. Checked luggage gets tossed around, so don't pack anything fragile in there.



Preparing for Cultural Immersion

Critical Thinking Activities

We hope that your child takes some time before departure day to complete some of Xperitas' critical thinking activities. These activities are designed to help students be more introspective and feel ready to cope with new challenges or emotions that may arise while they are traveling. Here is a list of the critical thinking activities that we will reference in The Navigator (the parent newsletter) but that you can also find on our website if you search them by name:

- **Adjusting to the Family Stay:** Sets students up for success by adjusting their expectations so that they go into the experience with an open mind.
- **Understanding your Comfort Zone:** Allows students to reflect on their own lifestyle from an outside perspective and better understand what it will be like to be hosted by a family that might be very different than their own.
- **Family Stay “What If?”:** Has students practice resolving various categories of problems that may arise while they are staying with their host family.
- **Beat Boredom:** Promotes keeping an open mind about boredom and gives suggestions on how boredom can be turned into something positive and productive so that students can make the most of their time abroad.
- **Food is Cultural:** Encourages students to think about culture as it relates to food.
- **Tips for Journaling:** Demonstrates multiple ways to journal and talks about the importance of self-reflection.
- **What to Bring your Host Family:** A helpful activity that helps you brainstorm the perfect cultural gift to bring your host family.

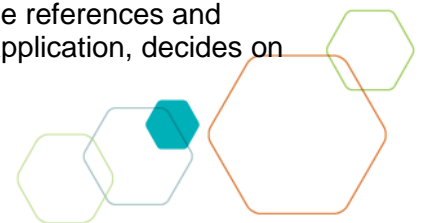
How are Host Families Chosen?

This is a frequently asked question and one that we take very seriously. Understandably, parents of Xperitas students want to be assured that care and consideration are given to the process of finding suitable host families.

In each community where families host our students, Xperitas has a family stay coordinator. This person is often a teacher or someone else in the community who has access to local schools and parent-teacher organizations through which he/she establishes contact and announces the opportunity to host a U.S. teenager. In the great majority of cases our coordinators have been doing this work for a number of years.

It is significant to note that our host families are volunteers. Host families in Latin America receive a small stipend to help cover the cost of food and bottled water but are considered volunteers as well. This is an important distinction from typical room-and-board arrangements whereby some companies hire and pay families to host two or three students. Since our host families are not paid, their primary incentive is a genuine desire to host a U.S. student and to share an enriching cross-cultural experience.

Families who host must complete an application form in which they provide references and information about themselves. The family stay coordinator reviews each application, decides on



the suitability of each family and ensures that sleeping arrangements are appropriate and accommodations are in line with Xperitas standards.

The main criteria for families to host an Xperitas student are that the family has the means to host (the student should be provided meals and have his/her own bed and own room if gender is different from host sibling) and a strong interest in hosting. They are expected to provide a safe and caring environment for the duration of the stay. If the host family does not have a teenager, contact with teenage peers may naturally occur through neighbors, relatives, or friends of the family. It is important to remember that interaction need not be peer-to-peer to create a meaningful bond.

The U.S. student is to be treated as a member of the family, subject to the normal rules of the household. To allow for maximum opportunity to become integrated into the everyday life of the host family, families are not expected to arrange special excursions, and group activities with the other American students are not encouraged during the family stay. The U.S. student is expected to adapt to the family and its daily routine.

Every family is unique and every family stay situation is different. The only expectation should be that the U.S. student will be immersed in the everyday life of a local family. It is important to consider that a typical family can take many forms, such as a traditional nuclear family, a single parent home, empty nesters, etc. Attending school may be an option, but can't be guaranteed.

In the unlikely event that there is cause to move the student to a different host family, it is the student's responsibility to contact the group leader so that an appropriate remedy can be found. If this should occur, the local coordinator will be involved in and will lead the process. The group leader will be made aware and the student's parents notified. As always, the safety and welfare of our students is our top priority.

There is an expectation that the host family will comply with the norms of the program. At the same time, there is an expectation that the student will do his/her part to make the homestay a success by practicing daily courtesies, demonstrating interest in things new and different, engaging in conversation, not retreating to the privacy of his/her room, and not unfairly comparing the host family with his/her family back home or with friends' host families.

Before the group's departure we will communicate to the group leader the following information about the host families: name, address, email (when available), telephone and/or cell phone number, occupations of the parents, and the number of boys and girls in the household, if any, and their respective ages. In some cases the host family may reach out to the U.S. student first, but it is perfectly acceptable for the U.S. student to make the first contact. If a response is not received within a week or two, please contact us so that we can verify the family's contact information.

While no one can offer absolute guarantees about an experience as personal and subjective as this one, we have the utmost confidence in our family stay coordinators. We rely on the goodwill of everyone involved and on their honest, full disclosure when filling out Host Family and Family Stay Applications. The overwhelming majority of our students continue to rate their family stays very positively and many say it was the best, most rewarding part of the program.



Disconnecting from your Home Culture

Thanks to smartphones and widespread WiFi, your child can virtually take all his or her friends and family along on this immersion program! There's only one problem: sharing constant selfies and recounting every detail via social media or messaging can actually inhibit the opportunities for true immersion and growth. There is no doubt that cell phones can be a useful tool while traveling, and many parents like the sense of security and the reassurance of connection that they offer, but when do you encourage your student to disconnect?

As teachers prepare students for their upcoming trip abroad, many of them talk about guidelines regarding cell phones and many of them have a similar plea to parents: allow your child some space to be present in the moment and the culture so that he/she will be able to notice more of the surroundings and be more intentional in observations.

Perhaps the hardest obstacle in disconnecting comes during the family stay, when students are feeling a higher intensity of culture shock and homesickness. Homesick travelers are often tempted to stay plugged in to the world they know at home rather than embracing the experiences during the family stay abroad, but this can sabotage a student's opportunity to meet new friends or connect with host family members. Homesickness can be overwhelming, and it's all too easy to pick up that phone and message home to vent or despair. As a parent, it's impossible to disregard your child's declarations, but how can you tell the difference between discomfort and a serious problem? Encourage your child to put faith and trust in his/her group leader and to empower him or her to call that leader if there is a true problem, as they will be able to take any necessary action.

Not sure what should elicit a call? Here is a fun activity, which was created by an Xperitas teacher, with some examples:

- *If your family only serves cookies and coffee for breakfast... DON'T CALL!*
- *If you are frightened because you've seen a large spider in the bathroom... DON'T CALL!*
- *If a small child from your family keeps sneaking into bed with you at night... CALL!*
- *If you hate tomatoes and your family serves them at every meal... DON'T CALL!*
- *If you miss your teacher... DON'T CALL!*
- *If you are in your bedroom and your host parents are having a loud argument and you are concerned for your safety... CALL!*
- *If you vomit once or twice... DON'T CALL!*
- *If you vomit all day... CALL!*
- *If you are bleeding and a Band-Aid takes care of it... DON'T CALL!*
- *If you are bleeding and there is no way it will stop with a bandage or two... CALL!*
- *If you are left home alone all day... CALL!*
- *If you miss Facebook, TV, your cell phone, or your boyfriend/girlfriend... DON'T CALL!*
- *If you are bored... DON'T CALL!*
- *If you wake up and someone in your family is wearing your clothes... CALL!*
- *If your host dad is walking around the house in boxers and it makes you uncomfortable... CALL!*



- *A little stomach ache or diarrhea... DON'T CALL!*
- *You see blood in your stool or vomit... CALL!*
- *If there is only cold water in the shower... DON'T CALL!*
- *If you don't "like" your family... DON'T CALL!*

Ask yourself is this something I can handle by expressing my concern with my family without my teacher's help? Can I tell them that I don't like avocado, or that I would love to watch soccer, or that I'm really interested in going for a walk in the town center?

If you're wondering how you as a parent can help with this process, consider these guidelines:

- Talk to your son or daughter's language teachers and ask what their standards are for cell phone and social media use and how they are helping prepare students for this challenge.
- Ask your son or daughter's teacher how you can follow the group's progress while in-country. Many teachers organize a group Facebook page or a blog to keep parents updated.
- Have a conversation with your son or daughter about the examples in the activity above and see how they feel as they anticipate the family stay.
- Empower your son or daughter to disconnect, but reassure them that their teachers are the most capable people to help during their trip.
- Encourage them to complain to their journal when they are frustrated; their feelings are real and they can learn from them and grow.
- If you do plan to talk to your child while he/she is on the program, limit communication to only a few minutes and don't expect a daily check in. Don't pressure students to contact you at certain intervals or times, but rather allow them to determine if and when they want to reach out.
- Students should only use the host family's technology if they have permission.

The family stay is the best opportunity for students on brief travel abroad programs to have authentic experiences that help to develop both language and cross-cultural communication skills. Courage, open-mindedness and a sense of adventure will open doors to new lifelong relationships. You and your child will have stories to share and perhaps some new friends abroad if the relationship is nurtured during the family stay. And remember, the real learning won't happen until they are ready to step outside their comfort zone!

Pre-departure Checklist

Your child's language teacher is the liaison between Xperitas and your child's immersion program. He/she should relay all relevant information and guide you through essential pre-departure processes. That being said, you can also look at the checklist below to follow the most important preparation steps:

By the end of November

- My child has submitted the family stay application, complete with host family letter (in the target language) and two photos. Note: only applicable for groups with an Xperitas-arranged family stay.
- I have returned the Medical Questionnaire to Xperitas (only if one is requested of you).
- I have applied for my child's passport (and visa if necessary) or verified that his/her passport will be valid at the time of travel (a valid passport means expiration date is at least 6 months past the



return date). You will be required to submit passport information on the portal and a copy of the photo page at least 90 days before departure.

- I have completed the November payment (spring and summer groups only).
- I have read through the Parent and Student Handbook.

By the end of December

- I have completed the December payment (spring programs only).
- My child has completed some of the Xperitas critical thinking activities.
- I have watched the country-specific webinar.
- I have checked the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) website and scheduled an appointment with a travel doctor if necessary.

45-90 Days before my child's departure

- 90 Days or more before departure**, I have entered passport information on my Xperitas portal and submitted a photocopy of the photo page.
- I have completed my final billing payment and any other payments that are due during this time.
- I have watched the Nuts & Bolts webinar.
- I have confirmed the spelling of my son or daughter's name on the Xperitas portal (as it matches his/her passport) and confirmed his/her birthdate.
- I have completed the Notarized Parental Permission form and submitted a copy to the group leader.
- I have completed the emergency Telephone Chain form with child's teacher and other parents.
- I have looked over the Xperitas Code of Conduct one more time with my child and he/she handed a signed copy to the group leader.

30-45 Days before my child's departure

- My child has completed all of the Xperitas critical thinking activities.
- I have updated Xperitas with any changes in my child's medical information.
- I have checked my bank's options and decided on how to best provide my child with money while abroad.

One month before my child's departure

- I have contacted the airline if my child requires a specific in-flight meal (i.e. gluten allergy).
- I have checked the airline's website for luggage weight and size guidelines, as well as potential checked baggage fees.
- I have reviewed the packing list with my child.
- I have made a copy of my child's passport (and visa if necessary) to pack for the trip
- I have confirmed with my child's teacher what time and where we are to meet on departure day.
- My child understands his/her teacher's expectations for the program.
- I have reviewed the final itinerary and flight information with my child's teacher.
- I have printed out my child's insurance card and packed it.
- I have ensured that my child is in touch regularly with his/her host family (if applicable, your child will receive his/her placement about 2 weeks before departure).

