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Pueblo Ingles in Spain

I always find it really difficult to find the words to write about experiences that have really had an impact on me. Volunteering for Pueblo Ingles for a week in Spain has been one of those experiences and I've been sitting here, racking my brains trying to find the words to explain it. Maybe it's because I've just spent a week straight speaking with loads of people about loads of topics and have completely exhausted my vocabulary but I think it's more likely that I just really don't know how to describe how good the experience is.

Maybe starting with a who, what, where sort of thing is the way to go. Pueblo Ingles is a company that facilitates week long courses set in a few different venues across Spain. They recruit around 20 Spaniards for the course, most who are sent there by their companies to improve their English for business purposes. Then the same number of English speakers ('Anglos') are accepted as volunteers after applying online. The Anglos have to make their own way to Madrid and pay for their accommodation in the city before and after the program but that's it. Well, except for drinks at the bar but the generous pours and cheap wine keep that bill pretty low.

The days consist of several one hour, one to one, two to two, and telephone conversations with Spaniards, group activities, evening entertainment, and conference calls. During the meals you'll be asked to sit with one other Anglo and two Spaniards at each table and most people try to mix it up for each meal to be able to

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chat to as many people as possible. The days are long - breakfast is at 9am and dinner at 9pm with lots of talking in between and a 2 hour siesta at 3pm.



But that's all the boring stuff! Pueblo Ingles' slogan is 'More Than English' and it really is the perfect description. I loved helping people improve their English but I didn't expect to come away from the experience with so many strong bonds and new friends. Some conversations were a bit forced (where do you work, what's your cat's name etc.) but most grew into very interesting, stimulating and often moving conversations and soon people who were essentially strangers moments before were now confiding in each other and sharing some very personal things.



Because of the nature of the program, the Anglos spend most of their time speaking with Spaniards. It's only at the meals, during siesta (when most people seem to snooze) and after dinner that you'll be able to spend time together. But despite having to speak for most times during the day, the conversation never seems to stop and learning about people from all walks of life is fascinating.



As most of my travels see me staying in backpacker's hostels, it's unlikely that I'd party and have wonderful conversations with such a diverse group of people. From a 70+ year old dancing machine to a 24 year old clown to top Spanish business executives. By the end of Pueblo Ingles, age really was just a number and my impending 30th birthday suddenly doesn't seem so scary because it seems that life really does start at 40! Plus chatting with people from such a huge variety of backgrounds and experiences has opened my mind drastically.

The Spaniards arrived on the first day with fear in their eyes. One Spanish 'victim' told me later that after the initial introduction session she was ready to hop back into her car and head home. By the end of the program though she was glad she didn't as she'd improved her ability so much that she found herself thinking in English. It's these success stories that will keep companies sending their staff but it's the creation of personal connections cultural understanding that, in



my opinion, really make it great.

I'm pretty apprehensive about recommending Pueblo Ingles to too many people as I want to be able to get back into it without too much competition! But if you're already thinking about volunteering for Pueblo Ingles and you truly love meeting new people, talking about everything and anything and really learning about Spain then you really will have one of the best weeks of your life. A love of drinking and dancing won't hurt, either!



By: [Kirsty Henderson](#)
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