

## SE02EP07

### Isabella Aragao

H: Welcome to Noles Abroad, a podcast by Florida State University International Programs, I'm Hannah.

Z: And I'm Zoe and we're your hosts. On this podcast will talk about study abroad from the perspective of the students, faculty, staff and alumni who make it an experience worth sharing. We will also bring you travel tips and fun facts from around the globe.

H: For this episode, we speak with Isabella Aragao, an IP alum who studied abroad her first semester of college in Valencia, Spain. Isabella is a photographer and talked about how photography helped her connect with the local culture and people while in Spain. Isabella also discusses what life lessons she learned from her time in Spain. Let's go to our conversation with Isabella now.

Good morning how are you?

Isabella (I): Hi, I'm good. Thank you so much for having me.

H: Yeah we're so excited to talk to you today. First off can you just introduce yourself?

I: Yeah my name is Isabella Aragao, I am 19 old. As far as my major I'm very much still figuring it out but I'm thinking of doing something within either entrepreneurship or communications with creative writing and I studied abroad, my first semester freshman year in Valencia, Spain during the fall of 2019.

Z: First off, can you tell us how you chose to study abroad in Valencia?

I: Yes so I was very much going through the locations so we have London, Florence, Valencia and Panama and I have to say I have always been fascinated by just British culture and just the English landscape and everything, so I was very much between those two locations. Ultimately I took five years of Spanish in high school, including eighth grade, and I later took AP Spanish and kind of just fell in love with the language and the literature and everything and just very much enjoyed it. So I thought the Valencia location would be the best place for me to develop my speaking abilities and ultimately reach a point of fluency so that was definitely one of the main goals there. I also loved how the city and the people and the culture are very family and food oriented, I am a huge foodie, so I loved getting to know the locals and the local cuisine there and it was an awesome experience.

H: I don't know if you've listened to much of the podcast but we also really enjoy food so it's great to know that you are fellow foodie.

I: Yes.

H: Well we also know that your photographer, so foodie as well as a photographer, can you tell us how that impacted your time while you were abroad?

I: Yeah of course. So just kind of going back to the origins of just where I started, it's funny because nobody ever told me you know to pick up a camera. Nobody was ever like Isabella bring your camera everywhere, make sure you're shooting, like it's very something that's intrinsic to me and just kind of something that I do out of like my own nature. So one of my favorite things to do in Valencia was just to be able to capture like the natural and historic beauty. It's very well preserved and that was something

that I loved a lot about Valencia because I think that when people think of Spain they think of Madrid and Barcelona and while those are two beautiful cities, I love that Valencia is very much preserved and in a sense, the tourists have not gotten there yet and quote, un-quote ruined the city but just what I mean by that is like flocking the city and you know I think a good example of this would be Paris. It's so beautiful but, and it stimulates the economy and everything, but it comes at a certain price. So I love that we're you know promoting Valencia but I also to certain point want to keep it for myself because it's such a beautiful, little hidden gem. I also had so much time photographing the Plaza de la Virgen, which is very close to where we studied. There was this beautiful building next to the cathedral, its like this pale pink, just like gorgeous architecture and that was one of my favorite shoots that I did with my friends there. Just capturing the historic beauty, is very well preserved so that was something that I loved.

Z: That's so awesome that you're able to you know, capture the beauty of Valencia through your camera and just experience it that way. I also love taking photographs abroad and I found that there's like an interesting balance between immersing yourself in the moment and then also like documenting your experiences, so can you just talk about that balance.

I: Yeah so I love this question because it's definitely something that I struggle with and just by connecting with other creatives whether it's photographers or videographers I know that other people definitely struggle with this as well. So I wish that I could say that I found this perfect balance that I can tune into and that's very much something that I'm still working with but it's very much a constant struggle and it's something that I'm very conscious of. You know, there's always that balance of living perfectly in the moment and capturing the moment, which is kind of my job as a photographer, at least that's how I look at it. So something that I try to do is when I'm photographing people, I think that when you photograph a person you got a different image when you connect with that person and get to know them. And so when I was speaking with the locals and just the different people there, I always made sure that I was connecting with them on kind of a higher basis before I took any photos because I think that that's a huge factor that will contribute to just kind of the beauty of the photo, getting the person's personality and a feel for their energy.

Z: What is your favorite subject to photograph, is it people then?

I: Yeah I love combining just, I always say just beautiful people with beautiful locations and landscapes, just combining the two yeah.

H: I love that authenticity that you can get out of a person when you, you know them a little bit before you take their photo. It can definitely kind of loosen people up and be a little more authentic in who they are. So going along with that I love the you've already talked about kind of connecting with locals and with people, can you talk a little bit about what you learned about Valencia or about Spain from looking at it through the lens of your camera?

I: Yeah so definitely continuing to pertain to the people that I got to know through the program and speaking to the locals I think that's something that I was able to see very heavily. And something that I ultimately fell in love with was their kind of slower pace of life. So here America we have this very hustle culture, like very go, go, go and there are many benefits to that, but I also see a lot of drawbacks. So I loved getting to not just see but experience and participate in the Spanish siesta. It was very nice just, kind of sit back and take a break whether if that was something that I would do with my friends and just chill out or just have like an hour to myself. Sometimes I would just sit on the benches and just literally

take in the beauty of Valencia, it's very much a stunning beauty that kind of takes you aback. So that was something that I was able to do and participate in and I saw a lot my photography with this beautiful, slower paced lifestyle that I very much loved.

H: Have you been able, so we hear a lot of students talk about their appreciation of siesta when they're in Valencia, have you like noticed have you been able to incorporate that in your life since you've been back in the states at all?

I: Yeah so absolutely. I think that, you know it's not something unfortunately that I get to every day but I try. I'm a huge, I believe in the power of naps, I love a good nap. So I definitely try to take you know maybe like an hour nap after my lunch or whether it's maybe I don't have time for that so I sit down and read a book or just kind of learn something new, you know spending time in nature, there's a lot of power in just slowing down.

Z: So kind of pivoting from your photography a little bit into something else, were there any lessons that you learned during your study abroad experience that you'll carry with you the rest your life? I guess besides the siesta.

I: Yeah of course. So just through the experience in general I think I learned to main things. The first one being the power of saying yes and how important saying yes to things, of course within safe boundaries you always want to make sure you're comfortable and safe but you know try new things that might make you uncomfortable, this also goes into my second point of seeking discomfort but, try new things, new activities, be with new people that you don't know them but you get to know. My group of friends right now is very much you know the group of friends that I had in Valencia and you know connecting with them is something that's invaluable. So connect with people, try things that that might seem uncomfortable to you because I promise you know good will come out of it, rather you will love the experience or you won't but at least you tried and you had that courage to at least take the first step. And then lastly I would say don't be afraid of independence. If there's something that you want to do and you know, I'm very much I love doing things with people like let's go in a big group but sometimes that's just not possible and you know people have their life, have their classes so there's a lot of power in going and doing things by yourself, experience in the city by yourself. Something that I loved about Valencia I always felt very safe and it was a great place to be just independent and do things on my own and experience the culture by myself so yeah.

H: That's such a great statement like sometimes just going off and doing what you want to do is really important and not letting other people kind of determine what you're going to spend your time doing. Can you give us just one example of like what was one thing that you got to do by yourself that you really appreciated?

I: Yeah so I mean this is kind of a funnier are example of but we have this beautiful sidewalk, totally blanking out and forgetting the name, there used to be this river and they converted it into a beautiful sidewalk where all of the locals walk and run and there's some festivals and just beautiful things pertaining to the culture. I like to run for exercise when I can and you know sometimes people just weren't available so I was like okay I'll just go run by myself and it was awesome. And I was able to experience the amazing just weather and be surrounded by locals and ultimately you know I didn't need anybody to run with me and it is very something that I enjoyed doing on my own.

H: That's great and finally to wrap us up today what advice do you have for other students who might be considering studying abroad?

I: The one thing I will say is that if you have the means and abilities to travel abroad and don't, I just have to be blunt and say that you're definitely missing out on the best experience of your life so please do that. And even if it's gonna be something hard for you to do, I say figure out every mean possible to get yourself abroad because it is, like absolutely will change your life I can almost guarantee you that 100% of people you speak to will say that this was one of if not the best experiences of their life. This is something that I hear literally everybody that I talk to from not just the Valencia program but all of the other ones as well. So do absolutely everything that you can to go abroad. And then lastly I would say, I spent the entire summer as well as my school year working very hard so that I travel you know with my friends and go to new cities. And I say you know just work hard, save your money and once you get there, spend that hard earned cash on experiences and not things or materials because ultimately you know you're in a country with so many new opportunities and these awesome adventures that you can go on and ultimately the most fond memories that I have are those experiences that I went on with beautiful people, and meeting you know the locals and interacting with them so definitely invest in your memories and your moments and not those materials.

Z: Wow that's such great advice. Well, thank you somcuh for talking with us today, we've really enjoyed it!

I: Yeah, absolutely, thank you so much for having me!

H: Before we disembark, let's talk about travel photography!

Photography can be a great way to document your time abroad. Photographs and videos can become some of your most treasured souvenirs that you bring back home with you. From your favorite meal abroad, to the architecture, to the friends and people you meet, photography can serve as a daily journal of all your travel adventures!

Z: Here's a few IP tips on taking better travel photos:

- On the technical side, make sure you have plenty of space on your phone or memory card before you go - you don't want to run out of space during an excursion! Also, be sure to wipe off any fingerprints from your lens.
- Another tip: While abroad, document your entire journey, not just the destination. You'll want to capture the little things, even the mundane. Airports, train stations and buses will be just as fondly remembered when you think about your time abroad as your other adventures.
- Another tip is to go out into the city early in the morning, while it's still just mostly the locals who are out and about. You'll be surprised how quiet the city can be in the mornings, and you'll have good light just after sunrise too. You'll also find good light right before sunset!
- Our final tip: Find what you love to photograph! Experiment with different styles of photography, whether it be street art, architectural photos, or portraits with your friends.

We hope these tips help you better capture your adventures abroad! For a chance to be featured on social media, be sure to share your photos with us by emailing IP-Media@fsu.edu.

<https://www.goverseas.com/blog/tips-for-documenting-your-experience-abroad>  
<https://iphonephotographyschool.com/travel/>

H: If you're interested in seeing travel photos from IP students abroad, be sure to follow us on Instagram @fsuip!

Thanks to all of you for listening, and thanks to Isabella for talking with us!

Z: This podcast is a production of FSU International Programs. The music was composed by John Bartmann. Our logo was designed by Vanessa Guirey. Sound engineering is done by Chris Bret-Harte. Editing, transcription, and research is done by us, Zoë Crook and Hannah Meister.