

SE02EP10

Rahul Ramdev

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 we'll talk about study abroad from the perspective of the students, faculty, staff, and alumni who make it an experience worth sharing. We'll also bring you travel tips and fun facts from around the globe.

Z: For this episode, we talk to FSU Valencia alum, Rahul Ramdev, about his experience spending his first semester of college abroad. Rahul talks about how he overcame his nervousness about the program and how he developed great relationships with the study center staff and faculty. Let's jump to our conversation to hear Rahul's advice on how to make your host city feel like home.

Z: Hi Rahul, so thank you so much for taking the time to meet with us today we're excited to have you on the podcast. First off, can you just introduce yourself to our listeners just tell us you know your major where you studied abroad your name all of that?

Rahul (R): Absolutely so my name is Rahul Ramdev. I studied abroad in Valencia Spain and I'm currently in business management right now that is my major.

H: Awesome and can you tell us what made you decide to study abroad and what was that decision making process like for you?

R: So actually, it wasn't entirely my decision. My parents actually were the ones who encouraged me to go I was actually a little bit nervous. You know I kind of I was thinking like what if it's not going to be the same, I might not have the same you know experience but I am so glad that my parents you know kind of pushed me into going to study abroad because it seriously without a doubt was probably the best four months of my life you know just that semester.

Z: That's so awesome. I had the same experience when I studied abroad. I was kind of nervous and I didn't really want to go and my mom really pushed me to do it and then it ended up being amazing so that's definitely awesome. So before going to Valencia I'm curious like did you know anyone else that was going abroad well?

R: So actually my experience of studying abroad actually started a little bit earlier, I was actually at the IPre-Depart. And I actually have to give a lot of credit to one of your IP Ambassadors, Brooke Brennan, because she you know she really put herself out there and really interacted with the students really well and specifically me like I was asking plenty of questions to her and she gave me you know plenty of responses. I mean, I asked her you know from where to go, to who to know, who to meet you know and if it wasn't for her, my relationship with Ignacio probably wouldn't have been as good as it today I mean so I really give her a lot of credit. And then as well I met plenty of other students at the IPre-Depart just before we left so I mean you know we all exchange contact information we texted a little bit but once we got there we got to know each other so much more.

Z: We always say that you know it's great way to meet new people. Sometimes when you go abroad that you end up having some of the best friends that you find during your study abroad experience.

R: Most definitely. I mean, I hang out with the people from my study abroad more than anyone else and I mean I have plenty of friends you know it was it was just such a fantastic experience you know.

H: That's so great to hear. So you mentioned Ignacio and for those who have been listening or those who have studied abroad with FSU know from Season One we interviewed our Valencia study center director Ignacio Messana and so I'm wondering can you talk a little bit more about your relationship with Ignacio? Like he's the director of the study center but you mentioned him by first name so what is that like?

R: Oh my God. I mean my relationship with Ignacio like it was, I was just so happy to have such a close relationship with him. I mean it was in part because I tried to because you know Brooke, she told me you know like you know he loves playing soccer that was it, I was sold. Like I love playing soccer, he loves it you know she he plays with the students every Tuesday at 12:00 o'clock right outside Garnet and from there like I just got, I didn't even have him as a teacher, but I still we both got really close. There is actually on a few occasions we went to go watch Valencia soccer games at a restaurant and one time we went with a very big group of people and we actually went to a Champions League game, a really important one, that was a fantastic experience. But I think the one thing that I will never forget Ignacio doing is one day, he knew that I was always in the study center, and he called Jose who is at the front desk and he asked like he asked if I was there basically 'cause I saw Jose kind of peeked his head around the corner and he was like "Sí, esta aquí" which is like "Yes he's here" and then he said Jose told me to come on to the phone, I pick up the phone Ignacio was like "Rahul, you there? Make sure you get your work done, I need you to play on my soccer team for a little bit." You know so he let me play on his team, so I walked it wasn't too far away, I walked over and I played with him. And probably the proudest moment of my life, he was literally like a father figure for me like over there, 'cause I scored one goal and it was really nice and really important and all I heard was just Ignacio screaming my name from the sideline and he was like the best like the most excitement I've felt you know. Apart from my relationship with him, he loves to do his job and he does a really, really fantastic job at you know just organizing everything, getting students together, you know even being a teacher. I mean all my friends who are in his class just they love him.

H: That's awesome. We love our study center staff and we love that they do become that support system for students as they go abroad because it can be scary, like a lot of students are nervous, and being in a new country being in a new place but having people where that is their home and they're like ready and excited to welcome you and introduce you to their city and to their love of soccer and things like that, it's just so cool that students get that experience with the director of an international study center and being able to keep in touch with them long term it's just really great to see that students had that experience.

Z: So kind of going along with that we are curious to know how did the study center staff there make you feel more at home while you're abroad? And just you know the study center itself living in Valencia like how did you find home while abroad?

R: You know as soon as I landed I felt at home right away. You know I was very nervous you know going into it, it was my freshman year, my first semester of college and I was going to a different country, I was like this is crazy. But as soon as I landed I just got so much good like the greatest support from you know the PAs and all of the stuff. Immediately like once I got there I started developing like fantastic relationships with my teachers. BJ, Dr. BJ, you know he was a he was a big fan of soccer too you know big U of A fan so me and him developed a great relationship and then all this stuff I mean going from different teachers like Professor Gerber, I didn't even have him, but he was he was also so kind. Everyone

just tries to help different students, even if they don't know them, in every way possible. I mean an example of professor Gerber, I'm pretty sure it was like in the first or second week everybody went to go see a performance of the flamenco dance and you were supposed to sign up and I didn't sign up, me and like two or three other students completely forgot about it, and I really wanted to go see it and he said you know what just come with us and then you know hopefully will find some extra space and you know everything worked out. There was just so much kindness to go around. And then apart from that the staff members, I mean like from the front desk people to Paola or Alicia in the front office, I mean everybody just tries to help you and it like there is no way that you can't get help over there. You have everything at your disposal, everyone is, I want to go back, I want to go back, that's all I can say right now.

H: So for students who are listening to you talk about how amazing the study center staff is, how great Valencia is, what would be your top three tips for how to best prepare to study abroad? If they're listening to and they're like I want to do that like what would you tell people, how can they prepare to study abroad?

R: Okay for preparing I would say just get ready to get out of your comfort zone I know personally a lot of my friends who went over there, they had never they had never like been abroad they've never been outside of the US. Now I was born in Italy, I've been all around the world but Valencia was completely different like it was it was in a good way, in a fantastic way. Because you know I traveled with my family but now you're by yourself, you're actually you're going to be an adult, and you have to make smart decisions so don't do anything stupid. Don't you know go out by yourself in a in a place that you don't know, you could get lost. Most importantly I would say, something that I didn't do, is go to the programs that the study center offers you. Like I actually missed out on so many opportunities to you know go to I think it was Andalusia or some other places and also you know just the small things like going on a trip to go get paella, you know I really wish that I did those things like out in the field, but I like to sleep so I missed out you know. Honestly so it was just such a bad decision on my part. And the number one thing that I would say is get ready to travel. I know one or two people that traveled every single weekend and they made the most out of their experience over there. You know I didn't love like leaving Valencia, I mean I liked going places you know I went to Majorca, I went to Morocco, Madrid, fantastic trips the best but I don't think that I could leave Valencia every single weekend because I loved it too much. It was just such a great such a great experience and also one more thing be prepared to develop relationships outside of the program because I actually met up with plenty of people who worked in restaurants around the corner or coffee houses and just knowing people there, it kind of it makes you feel a little bit more mature. That's what I would say, it helps you grow up.

Z: That's such good advice I love that you talked about you know meeting people out and about in the city and how much you love Valencia because that's something that we say a lot during study abroad is that you'll feel kind of like a local, you know you'll get to meet those people and be immersed in the experience.

R: Absolutely I mean like I still Mario or Marius, he works at House, which is right under Seminole, I still text him today. And Ignacio too, like I called Ignacio the other day we were supposed to watch the soccer game together like I was going to put it up on the TV and everything but we didn't get to do that but I mean it's the it's the thought that counts

Z: Absolutely so earlier you mentioned a few professors that you had so we're wondering like what were your favorite courses that you took while Valencia and what did you enjoy about them?

R: I just myself, I love Spanish so I took Spanish with Dr. No and he's a great teacher he's probably a little bit he's tough but it it's for your own good, like it'll help you. I think Ms. K for English, that class was just so fantastic and the same for BJ I mean what I loved about those classes was for BJ specifically we would learn about the things that we were seeing just in our classroom. I mean the Roman docks are literally right under your feet, and that's just something that I love so much about the study center over there. And then for Ms. K specifically, just her interaction with the students and you know taking us outside of the classroom and going and seeing what we're learning about like in the city of Valencia. It was just you know, it's the best way to learn ,you're actually immersed in what you're learning.

H: That's great, that's something we hear from students a lot about like using the city as the classroom and it's really getting the more like 1:1 attention from your professors, really getting to know them as people as well as educators and so that's really great to hear that you had those great experiences in your classes. Okay our final question, this is the question that we ask everyone that we interview on this podcast so finally, what advice do you have for students who are considering study abroad?

R: I would say, I mean get ready for the best four months of your life. What I would say to advise you guys I mean, you're going to have a great time but this is something that I learned from actually Brooke, she told me to finish all my work first and then if you're going to go out to dinner, if you're going to go out with friends, if you're going to travel, that's basically your play time so make sure you do your work first and then and then go and have fun, enjoy the city.

H: Amazing, that's what it's all about. It's study abroad so you gotta do the studying part but also you have to enjoy it and just soak it all in while you're there. So thank you so much Rahul, this was amazing you have really great advice, great perspective to share with students and thank you so much for sharing your time with us.

R: Thank you guys for having me.

H: Before we disembark we just want to reflect on the last two seasons of this podcast. It is unreal to me that we've done this for a full two seasons. We've talked to 20 people, interviewed them about their experiences studying abroad, working in study abroad, how study abroad is impacted their careers, just so many great stories, its been awesome.

Z: Yes, its been such a great journey hearing about everyone's experiences. I'm so grateful for everyone that has come on our podcast and been willing to talk about their experiences, we've just had so many different perspectives but we've also noticed a theme you know with some of our listeners in saying that study abroad was one of the best experiences of their life so that's really rewarding as well, I think.

H: It's great to be reminded of that, I think selfishly personally, doing this work, working in study abroad and just constantly having this reminder that what we do is big, like it matters to people and it makes huge impacts on students. I mean there is higher ed theory and there's lots of studies that say study abroad is a high impact practice, that it has a huge impact on students not only on their lives, but their collegiate careers and things like that so I think it's just awesome that we get to not only work in study abroad but we get this little reminder every once in awhile that what we do really matters.

Z: Absolutely, it's so incredible to see and be a part of really, something that big.

H: Absolutely, its just so funny to me thinking back at the very beginning of the summer you know we all started working from home, everyone was a little bit cooped up and we had this thought for a little while, it was a bit of a joke like “what if we did a podcast? What if International Programs had a podcast?” and then we took that kind of pent up energy, we weren’t necessarily doing all the normal things that we do and we were like lets channel this into a podcast, its time to do this and I am so glad that we did.

Z: And we did it! Definity with a few hiccups, we’ve had some technical issues that we’ve had to work out and you know other things like that but I’m really, yah it’s been so fun and we’ve learned a lot about sound and interviewing and all sorts of things that we didn’t know before.

H: Yah, huge shout out to our sound engineer, Chris Bret-Harte for swooping in season two and dramatically improving our sound so if our listeners noticed that, huge shout out to Chris. But yah, we’ve learned don’t do interviews at 10am because our neighbors are mowing their lawn, don’t do interviews at 3 o’clock in the afternoon because its’ going to rain, yah it’s been a fun, a fun experience.

Z: It’s been great, what an adventure and I’m excited for season three, it’s going to be really cool, really fun so if anyone out there listening has any ideas, let us know and if you want to be interviewed also we would love to hear from you and hear about your story. I’m excited. To highlight more alumni, more students, more faculty, just yah keep hearing those amazing stories.

H: Yah, definitely send us your stories ideas, we cannot wait to hear them in season three so stay tuned!

H: 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, Hannah Meister and Zoë Crook.