

## SE04EP04

### From Hawaii to Valencia

#### Keane Tibon

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

Z: And I'm Zoe! And we are 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: On today's episode we talk to Keane Tibon, a First Year Abroad student studying in Valencia, Spain. Keane talks about his decision to attend FSU and do the FYA program, the similarities he has found between Valencia and his home in Hawaii – despite being almost 8,000 miles apart – and the transition to living abroad during the pandemic.

Z: Hi Kean, how are you doing today?

Kean (K): Hi, I'm good thank you for having me.

Z: Yeah absolutely, we're excited to talk to you today. Can you first go ahead and introduce yourself to our listeners?

K: Yeah of course my name is Keane Tibon, I'm from Hawaii and I attend FSU as a First Year Abroad student I'm studying biology right now and I'm studying at Valencia, in Spain.

H: Awesome so you are speaking to us live from Valencia which is really cool. I don't know if we've done that on the podcast yet so far so again thanks for joining us. But so you're from Hawaii, what made you choose FSU and the First Year Abroad program?

K: To be honest, being so far from home FSU wasn't really on my radar during my application process for colleges. But I was looking for schools that would be a good fit for me financially and academically based on my SAT and ACT scores. And I was actually accepted through the Pathway Program so my family did some research and somehow, luckily we stumbled upon the First Year Abroad program. And the reason for enrolling as an FYA student is basically for the in-state tuition waiver that us FYAs, we receive at the end of our term for maintaining certain requirements such as a 3.0 GPA and earning a certain amount of credit hours each semester. And how we thought of it was it's basically a scholarship just for studying abroad which I think is a very rare and amazing opportunity so that's why my family and I chose Florida State University.

H: Yeah that's definitely a great perk that a lot of FYA students certainly consider the program because of that and then you realize there's so many added benefits. But I'm curious, a lot of times when students decide that they're going to do this FYA program, or even FSA, and tell their friends and family that they're going to start their college career in another country and for you even to commit to FSU, like all the way from Hawaii, what did your friends and family or those in your community say when you told them that you were going to do this program?

K: Honestly, they thought it was crazy at first because it's so far away from home. Florida, first off Florida, but now in Valencia I mean I'm 8,000 miles away from home and I'll be 4,000 miles away from home in

Florida. So they thought it was crazy and had a lot of family and friends come up to me and say that I'm brave just for going out of my comfort zone and getting off the islands and just experiencing something that I've never felt.

Z: Yeah that's so cool. I think we hear that a lot that you know study abroad does push you outside of your comfort zone so it's pretty cool that you made that jump and that you'll also be making that jump when you go back to Tallahassee as well so that's pretty exciting.

K: Definitely.

Z: So due to COVID-19 you started your First Year Abroad experience online. Can you talk about what that was like for you and then your transition to moving abroad?

K: Uh yeah unfortunately we were unable to come in August which is when the program was supposed to start but I stayed home for fall and did classes online. I was actually the last FYA student to arrive in Valencia because I had COVID in December and I just kept testing positive until the first week of February. And to be honest transitioning here in Valencia, I was nervous at first to leave home and second just to come to a tightly knit group of students who have been there for a month and all of a sudden I was the new kid. I didn't know anyone before coming, so it was a bit frightening to try to fit in but luckily I was able to become close to everyone in this program quickly with no problem.

H: Great I feel like students who study abroad all kind of like a similar mentality like if you're going to push yourself and do this opportunity there's probably something pretty special about you and so I feel like students do make those really unique bonds and it can happen so quickly, so I'm glad that you had that experience despite arriving late. But starting your fall semester online, what was it like taking those classes by year in Hawaii? Were they asynchronous? Were you able to just do them whatever? Like what was that like being so far away from the other students that were taking those courses?

K: Oh yeah I actually enjoyed being able to study at home online during the fall semester and luckily all the all the classes are asynchronous so I got my recordings and work during the beginning of the week on Mondays and I would just have to finish them by Thursdays or Fridays. And I had a lot of free time during that during that semester so I had time to study, work, and go to the beach, hang out with friends.

H: It's nice to be able to mix a little bit of beach time in between study time, that sounds great. So why did you choose Valencia? What are some of your favorite parts about living there?

K: I actually chose London first but I did switch to Valencia maybe in August, late August or September, I'm not too sure. And I think the main reason for choosing Valencia was to challenge myself as an international student. Say if I were to go to London, it would be easy because everyone speaks English and I'd say that London and America might have similar cultures, so I wanted to challenge myself by studying in a place with a different language and a very diverse culture. And also Valencia is a coastal city, we're just a 10 minute tram ride away from the beach which is nice because it reminds me of being home. But in all seriousness I'm really glad that I chose Valencia because I've come to love the city and its people and I've also made some great friends during my first four months here. And I would say my favorite thing about Valencia are it's buildings. I don't know much about it but I really appreciate architecture. So being able to see these ancient buildings and castles is really cool, it's a great experience here.

Z: That's awesome. So speaking of Valencia little bit more, what are some of the cultural differences and similarities that you've noticed between Hawaii and Valencia?

K: To be honest I haven't seen many significant differences, I'd say they're actually pretty similar because back home people are very social and very kind and that's how I view Valencians here. I've actually felt at home being here because there are so many similarities. Just the culture Spain is an ancient, or the Iberian Peninsula is an ancient land and that's kind of similar to Hawaii because it was an ancient kingdom during their time. So just being able to see another culture's history and experience it first hand like I've experienced Hawaii's first hand and I'd say they're really not that different. But the only things that I would say distinguish them are Hawaii, we don't have this huge city like Valencia, and they do speak a different language here so there's that language barrier and I'd say the foods are very different too, such as a Valencia's notorious paella.

H: So you mentioned that you're studying biology. What types of courses have you been able to take abroad and how are they working towards your major?

K: Oh yeah as a biology major I've been able to knockout the majority of my required courses and general education courses. I think I'm maybe 75% on path for my major. In Valencia you have the options of Biology I and II, with labs. And it's also the same for chemistry. I'm not sure about the other study locations but I'd say that being a STEM major or Biology major it's very doable in Valencia.

H: That's great. I know sometimes students are really concerned about like those first year STEM courses, especially with the labs and things like that. What do you interested in pursuing after your biology major, what is that leading you towards?

K: Right now I'm on a Pre-Nursing pathway. I want to enroll in the College of Nursing and the ultimate goal is to be a nurse anesthetist, so administer the anesthesia, work under an anesthesiologist but if I were to choose a different path I would love to go into chiropractic therapy and open my own practice when I'm older.

H: Awesome you have lots of great options. I'm sure biology will open a lot of doors for you, that's great.

Z: Well our final question is the question that we ask everyone who comes on the podcast and that is just what advice do you have for students who are considering studying abroad?

K: I'd say just do it. Not to copy Nike but, do it. There are no downsides to leaving America and experiencing an entirely different place. But unfortunately my class we didn't have, we don't have the opportunity to travel out of country during our year due to COVID but hopefully for future students COVID will lighten up and hopefully they can get a full international experience. But even in our situation, we've grown to love the city and everything about it. If you're nervous like I was I'd just say step out of your comfort zone. I promise it's the best because it's going to be an eye opening journey for you.

Z: Absolutely we hear that so much that study abroad is an eye opening experience and I'm glad that you're able to stay and enjoy Valencia even though travel is a little bit more restricted right now because there's just so many great places to see in Valencia as well so that's great advice.

K: Yeah and what what's great about it, I feel if we didn't have COVID we wouldn't be able to say that we actually lived in Valencia. For instance, if we were traveling every weekend we would just be staying in Valencia but since we have to stay here, we can actually call ourselves Valencians which is really cool.

H: Yeah that's definitely a pro to the whole situation. You really get to immerse yourself in that community and in that city and really get to know it so, so well. I'm sure that you will know Valencia like the back of your hand by the time that you are ready to leave and not every study abroad student can probably say that because they did travel elsewhere so often so that's great that you were able to really experience the city. Well thank you so much for coming on the podcast today. We really appreciated your time and we have loved hearing your story and we hope that you enjoy the rest of your time in Valencia and you just have the best summer there!

K: Thank you, thanks for having me once again.

Z: Thank you!

Z: Before we disembark, we want to talk about IP's summer video contest!

If you studied abroad in the spring of 2021 or are studying abroad this summer, you can enter our Summer 2021 video contest! Submit a two-to-three-minute video to [IP-Media@fsu.edu](mailto:IP-Media@fsu.edu) by August 18<sup>th</sup> for a chance to win up to \$100!

H: If you need examples of the types of videos we're looking for, be sure to check out our YouTube Channel at [youtube.com/fsuip](https://youtube.com/fsuip). We're looking for videos that showcase life abroad, culture, historic sites, and more! You can find a full list of eligibility, rules, and requirements, judging criteria, tips for creating your video, and more on the Noles Abroad blog: [nolesabroad.international.fsu.edu](https://nolesabroad.international.fsu.edu). We can't wait to see what you create!

Z: Thanks to Keane for talking with us today, and as always thanks for listening!

H: This podcast is a production of FSU International Programs. The music for this podcast was composed by John Bartmann. Our logo was designed by Vanessa Guirey, who also does our sound engineering. Editing, transcription, and research is done by us, Hannah Meister and Zoë Crook.