

familiar with its features. In Ourense, we have located a fee free ATM of a Credit Union: Caixa Rural. Address: Avenida de la Habana, 4.

4. When using an ATM in Spain, consider withdrawing money during banking business hours (9:00-14:00hrs). If anything happens while at the ATM, there will be someone inside the bank/credit union to assist you. Some financial institutions do also open now one or two afternoons during weekdays. If you plan on doing some travel over the weekend or holidays, get some cash a day or two before. Although ATMs are always operative, banks are closed during weekends and holidays. Finally, attention to personal safety when using ATMs, some have doors with locks, some are on the actual street. Always be aware of your surroundings.
5. The option of getting “cash-back” when you purchase items, such as groceries, in grocery stores or chain stores does not exist in Spain. In the absence of a bank account, the easiest and most common method that gives you access to your money is by using a debit/credit card at an ATM.
6. Make sure you have easy access to the phone number of your bank/credit union and your Credit/debit card company in case you need to report a lost or stolen card, or any issues derived from the use of cards. Consider the 6hrs time difference.

Many situations can happen with credit/debit cards, do contact us if you see yourself in need of assistance. We are local and we have plenty of experience internationally, we know where to go and what to do, and we will be happy to assist you.

Transportation

Open a map of Spain (Googlemaps is fairly accurate), and become familiar with the names of cities, location of cities, and location of train stations and airports that you will be using. There is no airport in Ourense, but very well connected train and bus stations. We strongly recommend using the train to come to Ourense, either from Madrid, Barcelona, Santiago or Vigo. Most of the information here pertains the use of this means of transportation. When taking the train, your final destination is Ourense (not Ourense San Francisco). Also, download maps to be used offline from Googlemaps.

The National Spanish Railway Company is Renfe. We recommend checking the website and learn about what is available and when before your arrival to Spain. At the website, choose your language option and check schedules, fares and itinerary information. The on-line website runs promotions regularly with better fares compared to the ticket offices on-site, making it cheaper to purchase train tickets on-line than at the train stations (either at the booth with a staff member or from an automated ticket vending-machines). Most major train stations in Spanish cities offer a variety of services such as cafeteria (with wifi), lockers (consignas), restroom facilities and waiting areas, making your waiting time more amenable. www.renfe.com

In case of doubt, ask at the corresponding Customer Service and/or Information desks/kiosks available at Airports and Train Stations. They are likely to speak some English.

Tips for transportation

1. Upon landing in Spain, you will be tired despite of the excitement of having arrived, and you still need to travel to Ourense. If you have done your homework, you will know how much time you have available before your next move. You may prefer to relax a little bit at the Airport before continuing your journey to Ourense, or at the main train station while trying to use their wifi service for your needs.
2. If your original flight gets rerouted to a different airport (in Spain, or elsewhere), see if the airline can take you to Santiago de Compostela Airport as your final destination. Then, follow instructions on #3b below, on how to get to Ourense. If you decide to come to Ourense right away after landing, continue reading #3. If you cannot (delays, lateness) or if you have other plans, go to #4.
3. **Do not** purchase your Renfe Train ticket to Ourense before your flight lands in Spain. Your flight might get delayed or rerouted, and remember that upon landing, you still have to exit the plane, make it through immigration, claim your luggage, pass customs, and move through the airport towards ground transportation areas, and/or an information stand. You will lose your train-ticket fare if you do not make it on time to the train station. **But**, if you are going to stay in Europe or Spain a few days before going to Ourense, save some money and purchase your train tickets beforehand online. Train tickets are available up to 60 days in advance for up to 40% in savings.

Flying to Santiago, Vigo or Porto (northern Portugal) is normally not faster, or cheaper. These are secondary airports and you are likely to be waiting for hours (layover) in a major airport before boarding a flight to either of these smaller cities. We strongly recommend landing in Madrid and then taking the long-distance train to Ourense. Still, depending on the time of the year, you might be able to find good deals.

- a) Landing in Madrid Airport. Your train station of reference in Madrid is “Madrid-Chamartin”, which is about 15km from the airport. Check a map online. All trains from Madrid to the north and northwest of Spain (Galicia and Ourense) depart from this station. Options to get to Madrid-Chamartin Train station from Madrid Airport are: Commuter Trains, Taxi, Bus or Metro. We strongly recommend Commuter Trains.

After landing and when you are cleared through Immigration, claimed your luggage and passed Airport customs, you need to go to Terminal 4. The Renfe Ticket Office and Vending Machines are at the Basement level/Lower level of this terminal. There is also a free shuttle that connects the airport terminals.

You need 2 tickets: a Commuter train ticket (“Cercanías”) from the Airport to Madrid Chamartin Train Station and a long-distance ticket from Madrid Chamartin to Ourense (not Ourense San Francisco). Ourense is where your host family resides. If you have purchased the long-distance ticket, Madrid-Ourense online beforehand, take a picture/screenshot of the ticket. While at any Train station, you can go to the vending machines and print this train ticket with the “localizador” number on top of the ticket, or you can go to the Renfe Office counter and ask them to print a ticket for you. Then, get also your 2nd ticket for the short segment: Madrid Airport-Madrid Chamartin Renfe Train station with the Commuter Trains service (=“Cercanías”). Ask at the Renfe Office counter for assistance to get this paper ticket.

Frequency and travel time between Madrid Airport and Madrid-Chamartin Renfe Train station by Commuter Train (=“Cercanías”): every 25 minutes for a trip of about 20-30 minutes. Frequency and travel time between Madrid-Chamartin Renfe Train station and Ourense Train station: 5-6 trains per day and about 4h30 minutes. These trains have a cafeteria and restrooms: drinks are very affordable in the train, but food items tend to be pricey and lack options. Tip: purchase food at Madrid Chamartin Station and enjoy it while waiting for the train or take it to-go and enjoy while in the train. Finally, Madrid-Chamartin Renfe Train station has lockers for all luggage sizes.

Cost.

Commuter Trains (about €5) are free with the purchase of a “long distance” train ticket. But you still need to get a paper ticket from the Vending Machines or the desk. The cost for the long-distance train is about €45 for a one-way same-day ticket when purchased at the Airport Renfe Train ticket offices. The cost is the same regardless of which station you purchase in person. The fare might be lower online even though this difference is minimal if the purchase takes place on the same day of travel. If you buy in person, use your student ID to get a Tarjeta Joven (“Young Card/Pass”) that might allow you to receive discounts with Renfe. Train tickets can also be purchased and printed in vending machines at the Train stations. If you use this option the price is the same as in the ticketing office.

Taxi service is also available from Madrid Airport to downtown Madrid for about €30 flat rate. Public Bus service is also available for about €6. Metro is available for about €6, but it is inconvenient when traveling with large suitcases, and it makes frequent stops at metro stations. Check online for more information on any of these options.

Finally, Ourense is not the last stop of that train route so you will not see the name “Ourense” on the information boards at Madrid-Chamartin Train station. Rely on the information on your paper ticket that specifies the train number and the time of departure and match it with the same information on the Boards to find out the departure Platform number, and/or ask at the corresponding Customer Service and Information Desks/Offices. They are likely to speak English.

- b) Landing in Santiago de Compostela Airport. You need to go to the Train station in Santiago de Compostela. Take the city-bus or a taxi. The bus stops every 30 minutes in front of the Airport Terminal; travel time is about 30 minutes, costs about €3 one-way. The bus has a stop in front of the Train station building. Taxi is also available for about €20 flat rate.

In downtown Santiago, the bus first passes close to the Renfe Train station “Estación de Ferrocarril” making a stop at a nearby street. Then, the bus heads uphill to downtown, going back to the Renfe Train station (“Estación de Ferrocarril”) where it makes a stop in front of the station Terminal/Main Hall. At the Renfe Train Ticket office, or from the vending machines get your information and tickets to Ourense. Travel time is about 40 minutes and costs about €17 one-way for the best/fastest trains. Other trains, less regular, slower and of lower quality are about €10 and need about 90 minutes.

If you find yourself with time and some energy, venture towards old-town Santiago UNESCO World Heritage Site to enjoy the views, the walk, and relax. The Renfe Train station in Santiago de Compostela does not have lockers (consignas).

- c) Landing in Vigo Airport. You need to go to the Train station in Vigo. Take the city- bus or a taxi. Travel time is about 30 minutes. We recommend the taxi to get to one of the two Renfe train stations of Vigo: Urzaiz or Guixar. At the Renfe Train Ticket office, or vending machines get your information and tickets to Ourense. Travel times and fares depend on the type of train and range from 90 minutes to 2 hours and €10-15 for one-way. Check online beforehand to see which train station you need.
4. If you have decided to not come to Ourense right away upon landing and relax/rest for a few days in Madrid, Santiago de Compostela (or somewhere else), or because there are no more trains/buses available that day, follow these indications.

You can book your lodging from the USA or anywhere online: sites such as booking.com, or hotel.com, Airbnb, etc offer many lodging options based on your preferences.

Tips for Madrid

Find lodging around Madrid-Atocha Train station. This station has lockers for all luggage sizes. The day of your final travel by train to Ourense, you can get on another Commuting Train at Madrid-Atocha Renfe station to Madrid-Chamartin Renfe train station easily. The area of Atocha station is a cultural mecca: museums, parks, monuments, coffee-shops, restaurants... and easy transportation to other parts of the city for shopping, sites, etc

Tips for Santiago de Compostela. Finding lodging in downtown Santiago is easy. There are many hostels and hotels that cater to the thousands of pilgrims that walk the “Camino de Santiago” every month, travelers and tourists alike.

For more details on transportation about Madrid and Santiago go back to #3.

5. “Jet lag”: try to get used to the local time as soon as possible. One way to help is by not sleeping until it is nighttime at your local destination. Stay hydrated drinking water and natural juices. Stay away from caffeinated drinks (coffee, tea, sodas) and alcoholic beverages since they increase dehydration. This applies to all your transportation segments (plane, bus, train) until you get to your final destination.
6. Allow plenty of time between travel segments and to commute to/from train stations. If time is in your side, you will be less stressed.
7. Plenty of resources are available for you from information desks and customer service representatives at airports, train stations, and other professionals who are likely to speak English to a certain degree of quality. Also, other travelers such as yourself can be very helpful. In case of doubt, ask for help!

When you know your final arrangements, please contact your local provider via LINE/email to offer an update of your traveling schedule, mainly, your arrival time to Ourense, so that your host-family or your local provider can welcome you at the train or bus station.