

Tom Phillips

School: *Escola Pia, Tàrraga, Catalonia.*



St Patrick's Day: what a wonderful day, one of my particular favourite activities was lacing a chocolate cake with healthy portions of Guinness, and serving it to the most 'enthusiastic' group in school.

Everything didn't (as ever!) go quite as planned. One lesson started in the light hearted innocence of colouring in a shamrock, and ended in the finer

theological details of the Holy Trinity and its consequences on Christian worship. Another lesson was lost in the overwhelmingly difficult pronunciation of Irish names in folkta.

I like to think I did at least a little good, though: I banished for one day the less-than-completely-tuneful panpipe renditions of the classics; 'Hey Jude', 'The Sound of Silence' and 'Mamma Mia', and replaced them with the liveliest Irish jig I could find.

Each class in Primaria prepared an emblem to wear on the day. I'm no Trinny and Susannah (insert other knowledgeable fashion person here) but bedecked in their Celtic crosses, leprechaun hats and horsey-pattern things, I thought the kids looked quite cool. I'll let you judge for yourselves.

My vain attempts at festival organising aside, this school has been as enchanting and captivating as Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

The buildings, the relationships between staff, students and parents, and the atmosphere of love and community that flows through these corridors and colonnades have held their magic over me for more than two months now.

It is a pleasure to spend every day working in this historical school, and living with everyone else who has been lucky enough to fall under its spell.

Melissa Selasie Ametewee

School: *Inmaculado Corazón de María, Valencia.*

The school I was placed in during the period I was a Conversational Assistant was amazing. It was a Catholic Primary, Secondary School and Sixth Form based in Valencia.

It was really inspirational to be an asset to the children, students and teachers there because they appreciated my encouragement, motivation and work I supported them with.

Going to the school each day was so surreal, my colleagues/teachers were so helpful and friendly also the children were always excited and enthusiastic to learn Conversational Oral English with

me. It's a great role to have, very rewarding in all kinds of ways, as much as I taught them things they also taught me.

The entire school were completely welcoming and supportive to my mission and duties at the school.

The Host Family I stayed with were so kind and great. I was a bit skeptical at first, living with strangers; however they completely turned around any doubts I may have had.

They welcomed me in their home and treated me like an addition to their family; their hospitality will not be forgotten. I got a lot more out of my experience by living with a host family because I had the opportunity to be completely submerged in the culture and language.

I made good friends with my



colleagues at the school and even though I am no longer at the school, we still maintain contact with each other.

The entire experience I shared with CAPS was fun and interesting. I won't lie and say it wasn't a challenge at times, but I went in with an open-mind and after the programme doors have opened which I didn't expect would be available to me. I'm glad I made the decision to embark on the opportunity!

Molly Reynolds

School: FEDAC St. Andreu - Mare de Déu de la Mercè, Barcelona.



After finishing my studies last year, I was undecided as to what step I wanted to take next. I only knew that I wanted to travel, enjoyed learning languages and that I had my TEFL qualification in hand. When I came across the CAPS program online, it really was ideal and I applied without hesitation...

I have now been living in Barcelona for nearly six months and I am sad to say I only have three left - time really does fly when you're having fun! I have been living in a small town, SantAndreu, only 20 minutes by metro to the centre of Barcelona – I have the best of both worlds.

And have been working in a school, FEDAC SantAndreu, currently just 10 minutes walk from my house. I am with pupils aged 3-16 years old, which at times can be quite challenging (especially remembering all 700 names!) but we're like a big family.

From the first day, I was welcomed with open arms (and biscuits) and I'm definitely proud to say I'm part of the team! I have now been here almost six months and still can't walk around the school without students greeting me around every corner. I'm thoroughly relishing my time here and it will definitely be difficult to leave all these smiley faces!

Before arriving to Barcelona, I was extremely nervous about living with a host family, especially because I haven't lived with my own parents for a couple of years!

Obviously, you receive basic information about each one and can contact them via email, but you are still a little apprehensive until you meet them in person.

Of course everybody will have their own experience, but personally I have had the best host families I

could have asked for! I am currently living with my second host family and soon to move into my third.

Though at first it was difficult to adapt to living with a host family, changing your surroundings and leaving your loved ones, it's surprising how quickly you form close relationships with them and how difficult it is to leave them!

But you have to remember that these families don't receive any money to keep you in their home and it's only a good experience if you make it one!

So get involved with family activities/events, interact with the children, help out with chores around the house and you will definitely be a part of the family.

Previously I had never travelled to Spain, this experience has given me the opportunity to visit various places around this beautiful country and satisfied my wanderlust somewhat... to name a few: Valencia, Vic and even as far north as Andorra! (soon to be on the list, Madrid)

I truly have met the most wonderful people whilst living here... not only families, students and colleagues but fellow CAPS auxiliars (it's always nice to have people who are in the same situation as you, that you can talk to without having to mime!) and Spanish friends I have made.

All making my experience even better!

Being an 'auxiliar' has allowed me to gain vital teaching experience, learn about a different culture and their traditions, improve both Spanish and Catalan languages and all whilst the sun is shining! What more could I ask for?

Hasmukh Kerai

School: *La Salle Manresa, Barcelona.*



I would like to share my time here in La Salle Manresa. It's been an incredible experience and it's difficult to know where to start describing my time here, but here's my attempt.

An uncountable amount of things run through your head on your journey from home town to new town. The organisers do what they can to prepare you for what to expect, and the information they give is very helpful, but you still go from bus to train to plane to bus to train to car not knowing what's in store for you, while still having doubts about whether this is right move to make.

Having never taught before, or lived outside my hometown before, and considering myself a little bit of an introvert, the thought of all these changes was both exciting and terrifying.

Any doubts and fears I had were vanished in moments from the welcoming and friendly manner of everyone here at La Salle Manresa. I was lucky in the sense that La Salle Manresa has been running the CAPS Program successfully for 3-4 years now, which was great as they had a functional structure in place and I was able to ease my way in and get used to everything, and there's a lot to get used to!

Whether it's remembering names, learning Spanish (and inevitably Catalan), getting to know and spend time with your hosts, knowing your way around town, or even knowing your way around the school (!), there's an endless supply of friendly, willing people ready to help you.

The people who can speak English (even if it's a little), generally love the opportunity to practice what they spend hours learning in textbooks, while the

people who can't speak any English at all, generally love the opportunity to teach you some of their language. As for the classes, they are either great fun as you get to know some fantastic kids and take pride from the progress you see in them, or a great challenge that you learn from. Help is always one question away if necessary.

With the very youngest kids, the classes normally involve songs, stories and flashcards. The classes with the older students can vary from playing speaking games, explaining traditions from back home, or having a conversation about a specific topic. Going off curriculum is no problem, and everyone enjoys these sessions even more! When I don't have classes, the Spanish and P.E teachers are more than happy for me to join in their classes for further practice.

Making friends was easier than I thought it would be here, especially as a fan of sports, and received no short of invites to train with various teams in the area. This turned out to be a great way to know locals and make great friends outside of school, and to practice speaking and listening skills in Spanish/Catalan. Manresa, and from my experience the rest of Catalonia too, has a very diverse culture and it would be pretty easy to find a club or group in something you are interested in.

Amidst all of this, an incredibly important factor that makes all of this possible are the host families. I've lived with two different families and both have been fantastic in helping me settle, showing me the Catalan lifestyle and traditions, and showing me around the region. It isn't always a walk in the park, and can sometimes be difficult. However, this is a huge learning experience, and learning to deal with different and difficult situations with your host family are just as important as any experience you will have in the school.

Overall, this has been a huge experience, and as nervous as I was on the first day, I don't regret my decision to come here one bit. I am entirely grateful to both my host families, the program organisers, and La Salle Manresa. All of the fantastic experiences I've had since coming here wouldn't be possible without them.