

Carved dragons and demons adorn the gallery of the Convento de las Dueñas (main picture)

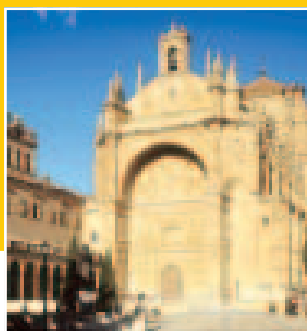
offer,” confirms Maria Garcia Merchan, Assistant Manager at Abaco Instituto Hispanico de Salamanca. Martin adds that, at night the streets are full of people. “[Salamanca] is a non-sleeping city. There is something to do at any time.”

One of the most popular ways to spend an evening is to go out to some of the many bars in the city and enjoy wine, beer and *pinchos* (small dishes of typical food), according to Bernamont. She adds, “There are also several discos and clubs, which are especially popular with young people, open till late at night.”

Pleite adds, “It is really awesome [for students] that they can meet all their friends

in the morning at famous burger places like Leonardos, to have their first breakfast and speak about the fun they had during the night.”

Another draw of Salamanca is its fine food. “The exquisite cuisine is very rich and very famous in Spain for [offering] some of the finest dishes available,” says Garcia Merchan. Salamanca is particularly famous for its meats including the Guijuelo-cured ham, its chorizos and other spicy sausages. And sampling the local culinary delicacies does not have to be expensive. “You can get beverages with tapas



Convento de San Esteban

Christopher Columbus is reputed to have stayed in the Convento de San Esteban, which is situated at the end of the Gran Vía. Inside the church is a magnificent altar piece by Jose de Churriguera

for only [a few] euros,” says Pleite.

Despite the lively student scene, Salamanca is a city for all ages. “It is popular with young people for its cosmopolitan at-

mosphere and lively nightlife, and with older people for its rich cultural, artistic and historical heritage,” confirms Bernamont.

Outside of the city of Salamanca there is also plenty to discover. “There are many small villages with a lot to see and day trips out to the countryside are very popular with the students,” reports Garcia Merchan. “[At] our institute we try to provide students with

Agent viewpoint

"Salamanca is a fantastic city! It has one of the oldest universities in Spain and has a long tradition of receiving students from different parts of Spain and also from other countries. Salamanca is known as a region where people speak a very pure Spanish, 'castillano'. The cultural offerings of Salamanca are very good. In spite of its size (only 170,000 inhabitants), the town is very lively, especially at night. It is also a good surprise that everything in the town is within walking distance."

Madelene Englund, Avista Sprakreformedlarna, Sweden

"There is a good variety of high quality Spanish schools in Salamanca and it is also a university town with a perfect nightlife, nice atmosphere and a lot of young people. Students enjoy meeting the friendly people and discovering the city's unique architecture. The negative points [for some students] are that there is no beach or airport, and the city is [relatively] small."

Arne Schmager, Vamos Sprachreisen, Germany

"Students who want to experience the Spanish student life choose Salamanca. Some students

also think it's a good thing that Salamanca is a smaller city, which means that it's less anonymous and it's easier to get to know both Spanish students and students from all over the world. At the same time, they have Madrid only two hours away. However, Salamanca is not one of the most popular cities for Swedish students. Most Swedish students want to go to a city by the sea. They want to take a break from the Swedish cold climate and want to experience the sun, the heat and the ocean."

Sofia Henningsson, SI-Sprakresor & Spanska Institutet, Sweden

a variety of typical Spanish activities such as trips out to tapas bars, Spanish cooking lessons, bull fights and trips around Spain."

In addition, not far from Salamanca, is Ciudad Rodrigo, which hosts an annual bull run in February. "Students enjoy the opportunity of being able to run with the bulls and also to sit and watch the spectacle from the safety of the stands," says Garcia Merchan.

Like most places in Spain, Salamanca plays host to a number of festivals. "In September, the Ferias and Fiestas de San Mateo are spectacular. For two weeks there is a fully organised programme of concerts, parades, exhibitions, bullfights and markets," says Martin.

These *ferias* are popular with students "because they are really Spanish and show you different aspects of Spanish life", according to Asun.

Surrounding the city are the Sierra de Francia and the Sierra de Gredos (mountains), and Martin says, "In winter you can ski, just 45 minutes from Salamanca." The city is also well placed for trips to Madrid, which is only 200 kilometres away, and Portugal can be reached by train within an hour.



Colegio de Anaya

Built on the original site of a palace owned by the Bishop of Seville, this impressive neoclassical building houses the university's faculty of modern languages and features an impressive staircase

For language students Salamanca has a particular attraction. "The people of Salamanca speak the purest Spanish," claims Martin, "which makes the city very popular for learning this language."

With so much to offer, it is not surprising that Salamanca is increasingly being discovered by

language travellers. Already, says Garcia Merchan, "Over 50 per cent of students come on the recommendation of friends or family who have studied with us before." □

PHOTOGRAPHS: TUPESPAÑA