

Hello new aux!

Welcome to the Costa del Sol. I wanted to provide you with some hints and tips for how to navigate your life and school year here. IES Torre Almenara is located in La Cala De Mijas, which is between Málaga and Fuengirola (to the East of La Cala) and Marbella (to the West of La Cala). This is in the province of Málaga in the autonomous community of Andalucía.

### **Arrival**

If possible, I recommend arriving to the area at least 7-10 days before the start of the school year. I came with my partner who is also an “Aux” and we shared an Airbnb in Fuengirola with two other Auxes during that first week, which we found really helpful in pooling resources and acclimating.

### **Phone**

The first thing you’ll want to do is get a SIM card/phone plan. You will need a Spanish phone number to open a bank account, get a TIE and “padron” appointment (more on those below), etc. For a very extensive summary of how to find a phone plan when you arrive, refer to [this great blog post](#) written and posted by a fellow Aux in the area. I’ll continue to refer to posts from her blog throughout the rest of this document.

Initially, I started with a pre-paid plan with Orange, but once I got my paperwork in order and received my TIE card, I moved over to a contract plan so I no longer had to top up in the Orange store every month. I recommend shopping around to different providers, as they sometimes have very different deals at different prices. Wherever there is an Orange store, there’s also probably a Vodafone nearby (across the street from each other in the center of Fuengirola and next to each other in the Miramar mall). I also found that to be the case when looking for internet for our apartment.

Most people here use WhatsApp. You’ll want a phone plan that gives you lots of data, since WhatsApp uses data. Having a lot of data also gives you the ability to use your phone as a mobile hotspot pretty much anywhere, which is really helpful, especially if you’re traveling and want to/need to plan lessons in a place that doesn’t have reliable Wi-Fi.

Also, consider porting your personal phone number from your home country to [Google Voice](#). This will help preserve your number, allow you to continue to receive text messages (this is especially important if you have two-factor authentication on anything), and you’ll continue to get notifications when you receive calls. You can also generally make calls through Google Voice without additional cost.

## **Bank Account**

A bank account is necessary to get paid and to pay your rent. You can attempt to open a Spanish bank account (Santander, BBVA etc.) but I found that opening an online one was much easier. I went with [N26](#), which is an online bank. You can use the virtual card on your phone to take out cash from ATMs in the area. It was a really easy process to open, as long as you have a NIE number. Everyone has a NIE number once they're given a visa, but some people don't have that number printed on the visa in their passport (I was one of them... and it's a pain!). However, there are ways to find out what it is before your TIE appointment. If you don't have your NIE number on your visa, refer to [this blog post](#) to find out the best way to obtain it.

## **Housing**

IES Torre Almenara is located in La Cala De Mijas, which is a pretty small beach town. There are options for housing within the town and many of the teachers from the school live there, but without a car, transportation and things to do are limited.

I recommend you look for a place in Fuengirola, a bigger city with direct train access into Málaga and to Málaga Airport. I take the M-220 bus from Fuengirola to La Cala de Mijas the days when I have school. At the moment, it costs 0.50 euro cents if you obtain a card from this [Tobacco shop](#) in La Cala de Mijas. The bus runs about every 30 minutes, but can be busy and late particularly coming back from La Cala de Mijas, so bring a book to read or something to do while you wait. There is an Avanza Málaga app that gives the live location of the bus, so you can track where it is at.

I used [Idealista](#) to find housing. The majority of postings on Idealista are by "immobiliarias," aka real estate agencies. They seem to run the market when it comes to finding a place to live. Unfortunately, if you go through them, you'll have to pay them a finder's fee, which is usually the equivalent to one month's rent. There are occasionally other options for rooms to rent on Facebook groups like [Fuengirola Friends](#).

I live with my partner in a one-bedroom apartment by the beach about a 15-minute walk from the center of the city. We pay 720 euros a month for rent and water, ~30 euros a month for electricity, and ~35 euros a month for internet. We put a 1,400 euro security deposit down (which we'll hopefully get back in full!) and paid 700 euros to the inmobiliaria (which unfortunately we won't get back).

Depending on if you're sharing a place or not, you should be able to find something that's between 500-700 euros a month for a 1-2 bedroom apartment. If you decide to live in Fuengirola, I'd recommend looking for a place close to the center or anywhere toward the castle, because these locations are closer to where the M-220 bus stops to go to La Cala de Mijas.

## Documents

Once you find your apartment, you'll need to start the process on the following:

- Empadronamiento ("padron") – This must be obtained after you find housing and is one of the pieces of paper that you need to get a TIE. Information on how to obtain it can be found in [this blog post](#).
- TIE Appointment (Tarjeta de Identidad Extranjera) – This must be obtained before your visa from the Spanish Embassy expires. Refer to [this blog post](#) for instructions on how to obtain an appointment. **Make sure you bring multiple copies of all your documentation!**
- TIE pickup – You will need a separate appointment to pick up your TIE card around 40 days after your appointment. TIE pickup appointments can be limited, so you'll need to keep checking until one opens up.

Getting your TIE is absolutely necessary. The entire paperwork process is tedious and might seem overwhelming at first, but I promise... as long as you're organized, you'll figure it out! Follow the instructions on the blog posts referenced above.

## School

You'll be working 12 hours a week. But, you should expect to put in a handful more hours each week for class preparation. The coordinator at school will create your schedule. You should tell them by mid-September if you prefer a day off. I chose Fridays, which has worked well for me.

This year I was in Geography/History, English, and Math classes. I've found every teacher is very different to work with. Some are very proactive and communicative and tell you exactly what they want you to do in class. Others say you can do whatever you want. It's important for you to be proactive via email or WhatsApp to communicate with the teachers on what they would like you to do each week and, also be clear with them if you feel you need more support while teaching.

The classes really vary as well. The kids are HIGH energy. The English levels also vary a lot class by class. The area has a big expat community, especially from the UK, so quite a few students speak fluent English, while others barely understand a word of it. You'll need to cater to that variation when it comes to teaching, and, also, just not take things too personally if some kids seem bored, disruptive, or distracted. Being a 12-16 year old is a weird time in one's life... and you will be teaching right in the thick of it.

## Health Insurance

Through the program, you will be provided health insurance through Adeslas. This is private insurance and gives you access to a wide variety of doctors at (generally) no additional cost. The health insurance card you will use for these appointments will be sent to your school and your

coordinator will give it to you. You can then set up an account online to search for medical providers in the area.

### **Other tips**

I highly recommend coming with some savings. As I mentioned above, it cost us quite a bit of money to get going, between deposits, first month rent, inmobiliaria fees, Airbnb, etc. You likely will not get paid until the very beginning of November, so be mindful of that.

You're living in the south of Spain. It's absolutely beautiful here. Andalucía has some of the best cities, towns, beaches, hiking, etc. in all of Spain. Coming with the mindset of travel is awesome. There are so many great places just a short flight, train ride, bus ride or ferry away. But just a heads up that traveling gets expensive (fast) and tiring. Keep in mind that you'll still need to plan lessons, so factor this into your plans.

Bring a winter coat and some warm pajamas! Although the temperatures never have gone below freezing while I've been here, I have found that January and February are CHILLY, especially in the apartments and in the schools because there isn't heating indoors. Bring some winter clothes or expect to buy some while you're here.

### **Resources**

To stay in touch with fellow local auxes, join this WhatsApp group. We use this chat frequently.:

[Fuengirola Aux Whatsapp group](#)

To stay in touch with the wider Málaga auxes, join this WhatsApp group: [Málaga Auxiliares](#)

Teaching resources: [Auxiliares Lesson Planning Madrid](#)

Blog from fellow aux with helpful information on all sorts of things: [Ultimate Travel Scrapbook](#)

Aux reddit group: [Auxiliares de Conversacion in Spain](#)

Andalucía specific aux Facebook group: [The REAL Auxiliares de Conversación en Andalucía](#)

General aux Facebook group: [Auxiliares de Conversación en España](#)

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