

# Spain - June 2005

## Transformation of a Country from a Cloistered Third-World Dictatorship to a Booming High-tech European Democracy

Friday - We arrived in Madrid International Airport after an uneventful flight, excited to see the development that has occurred in the last 25 years. With my Fodor's guidebook in my travel bag, we take the metro to our only hotel reservation, the Hostel Cerveo in downtown Madrid. Our room is not yet ready so we drop off our bags and head to La Plaza Mayor, The Greater Plaza.



The plaza is surrounded by an arcade of small shops and apartments. In the center they were preparing for a show. In olden times, it was host to heretic burnings, royal marriages, bullfights and masked balls.

The equestrian statue is that of Felipe III, the 17th century king of Spain who brought Spain into the Golden Age.

We returned to our hotel for a siesta, not only necessary after our trip, but also still a fine custom of Spain and then head off to the Prado, Spain's finest artistic collection of classical works. We walked down Calle de Cervantes, where the most popular Spanish writer worked, down the narrow streets to the Fuente de Neptuno.



On the way, the Madrid Stock Exchange, known as the Bolsa de Madrid. The Prado contains king's collection of paintings and sculptures from the 15th to 17th centuries. Though others are displayed, the principal works of Goya, Velasquez and El Greco are featured here.

The original Prado is being renovated so its works are now housed nearby in a modern building.

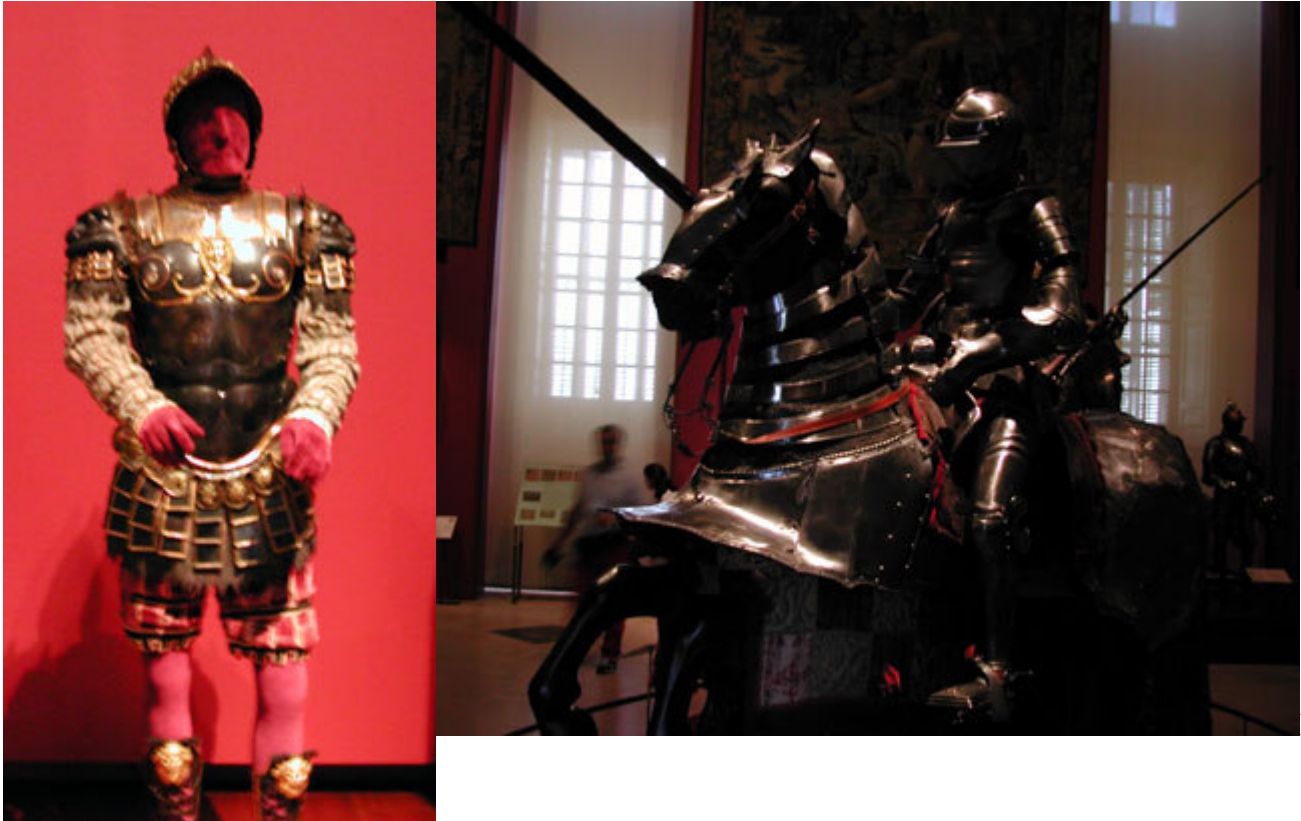
Dinner is much later in Spain than in America so we were right on time at 8:30 when we went to an open air cafe, Casa Mingo whose specialty is roasted chicken and hard cider.

Saturday - We got tickets to a double-decker tour bus and sat on the top getting a view and highlights of "Modern Madrid." The plazas, monuments, shops and banks that make Madrid the economic center of Spain. We rode the Metro out to the Plaza de Toros to get



tickets for the bullfight that evening. We saved \$75 by going to the Plaza instead of getting them downtown. We then went to visit the Palacio Real, the Royal Palace.





In the palace, the Royal Armory displays knights in shining armor and atop their faithful stead. The figures demonstrate battle, games and ceremonial armor and weapons.



The room of the palace include an opulent dining room with a table to serve 120 guests, the throne and one of many beautiful ceilings.





The bullfight starts at 7 p.m. with the players parading around the ring. Men on horseback, groundskeepers, and minor toreadors each have their role in this magnificent and dramatic event.



First the assistants encourage the bull to run around the ring, hence the name, Corrida de Toros, that is Running of Bulls. Then the horseman stabs the bull between the shoulders with his lance. The horse wears armor under the padding to protect it because the bull charges the horse and lifts it with its horns. We saw a horse go down with the horseman on top. The assistants all run out to distract the bull and to get him to move back to the center of the ring.



Then they put three pairs of barbs into the bull's back. Finally, the toreador comes out. In a ballet-type performance, he directs the bull to run right next to him. Sometimes he turns his back on the bull and walks away without even looking over his shoulder.

Finally, the toreador stabs the bull between the shoulders (here he is drawing back his sword). In the best all of the way in, in one blow. The and direct the bull to turn back and forth, damage in a very short time so that the bull The horses then drag him away and the up the blood to ready the arena for the next events in an evening. We saw two bulls unfit and were removed. They kept their makes the call, they send out six brown and on their necks. The brown and white bulls center and after a while, they all walk out together.



the shoulders (here he performs it goes assistants come out causing internal becomes dead meat. groundskeepers clean event. There are six who were considered lives. When the judge white bulls with bells join the toro in the





Sunday - I got some incorrect advice about a church service in English. We arrived there to find a high school that was quite completely closed as it was Sunday morning. So I asked an elderly gentleman where there was a church and he directed me here. This was a special service, the church was filled with doting parents and grandparents, for it was the children's first communion. Each communicant said some words, the sermon was directed to them and they each received the bread. Only the priest drinks the wine. After the children were done, the congregation took communion amidst modern singing. I was able to follow along in the song program lead by choir and guitar, no organ.

Monday - Segovia - After picking up our car (a French car, a Magane) at the airport, we traveled northwest of Madrid to the state of Castile y Leon, an area known for its mountains of stone. Breathtaking Segovia is known for its medieval castles and decorative stonework. At the entrance to the town is the Roman Aqueduct, probably one of the oldest things one can see, aside from the Great Wall in China. This aqueduct was made near the end of the first century while the apostles were finishing the New Testament.



This statue is seen in the center of the aqueduct. I doubt its from the first century, but this is the greatest telephoto that my little camera

can produce. Below the statue is a place for an inscription, however only the holes for



the bronze letters remains. The blocks are held together with neither mortar nor clamps but the aqueduct is still standing almost 2,000 years later.

Begun in 1525, this Gothic church on the left is undergoing some renovation at the top. It is the most prominent building in the Plaza Mayor and is the country's last great examples of the Gothic style. The bodies of the architect and builder are interred inside. Around the plaza are numerous tourist shops and the tourist information center. The photo below is the town hall built in the 17th century.



We went down the street (quite literally) to the castle, Alcazar. Fodor's calls the castle a sham as it was restored in the late 1800's so its barely 100 years old. The picture would be of the new building, not representative of the era, so it is omitted. Rather, from this vantage point a lovely view of the Segovian countryside is available.



To the left of center is Vera Cruz, a 12-sided church, built in 1208 and unique in its design. One can climb the bell tower but not on Mondays when it is closed. Cattle and sheep are the principle products of this area but you can see the plowed field in just right of the center. A river runs in the foreground producing the large trees and provides irrigation for the surrounding area.





To the left is the monastery of Santa Cruz that is now used as the University of Sec. Note the stonework on the door of this Gothic building with plateresque and Renaissance touches.

We continued our walk around the town back to the aqueduct. You may recall I said in the beginning that Segovia was breathtaking. Judy lost her breath as we walked around the town but we enjoyed rests at the various stone benches placed near the road.



Segovia at sunset, the sun sets rather late here. We took this photo from our room before retiring for the night.



Tuesday - Valle de los Caidos - Valley of the Fallen - Jane Camman recommended that we visit this place between Segovia and Salamanca, just north of Madrid. This massive monument to fascism's victory over democracy in the 1936-39 Spanish Civil War (Catholicism over Communism to some) is Generalissimo Franco's final resting place. The cross is so large, 500 feet high, that it is easily seen from the highway between Madrid and Segovia, many miles away. Franco directed its building with the forced labor of the Republican prisoners and was dedicated to those who had fallen during the three-year Civil War. Granite is common in the Segovia area of Spain and is displayed here in the 500 foot high cross. A cable car takes one up to the cross atop the mountain where these gigantic figurines are made of granite blocks cemented in place.



The figures represent the four gospel writers, Matthew, Mark, Luke & John. Above them are the four virtues, Fortitude, Justice, Prudence and Temperance.



Below the cross is a Basilica. Over the door you see this statue of Christ. Inside there are tapestries depicting the Apocalypse as told in Revelation. We got a book of photos of the tapestries and their explanations. I can't wait to get home and read Revelation again now that I have the illustrations to go with it.

Most importantly, General Franco, himself is buried here, in the Basilica.







In the town nearby is El Escorial, the Royal Monastery of St. Lawrence. Felipe II built this great granite monastery in 21 years beginning 1563 as a final resting place for his father, Carlos V. He filled the place with treasures that compare well with the Prado in their grandure while he ruled the largest empire the world has even seen, (Spain controlled most of the New World during this time) knowing all the while that a marble coffin awaited him in the pantheon deep below. Indeed, one of the most striking displays is the mausoleum in which all but three of Spain's kings are laid. There are five or six stacks of these tombs with three empty for kings yet to die. Can you imagine a crypt with the presidents of the United States all laid out together?



I thought we'd spend a few hours here but instead spent the whole day. Such is the beauty of a no schedule trip as we have arranged. Hence we called our hotel in Salamanca and told them we would arrive late. We continued on by car, stopping at a tavern for tapas and coffee and arrive in Salamanca around 8 p.m. After a stroll around the town, we had Menu del Día, a typical Spanish meal of roast pork and salad.

Wednesday - Salamanca - One of the most ornately decorated convents in Spain is located here. Below is an example of the delicately carved goul who is one of thousands who guard the center garden area.







On our way to Santiago del Camposela, we stopped at Villafranca del Bierzo for the night. This medieval town is dominated by a massive and still-occupied fortress.





We also walked by St. Francis church on our way to have tapas, a Spanish tradition of bread and meat or cheese with beer, wine or Coke Light. We ordered tapas for two and sampled various meats, sausages and cheese with bread. This was a quaint little town on the way. The Parador hotel, the government owned chain particularly for upper class foreigners where we stayed was well-appointed but had little else to offer but the largest bathroom we had yet experienced. So far I've made reservations before leaving the last town. Our next stop, Santiago, is somewhat in from the sea. I'd like to stay in one of the quaint seaside towns so I plan to check at the tourist information station in the downtown plaza for lodging on the outskirts. This is the way we traveled in Italy. If it works out well, I'll continue but Judy has been pleased by the least expensive places recommended by Fodor's.

Thursday - Santiago de Compostela - My friend, Grant Beadle, encouraged us to visit Galicia, a place unknown to most US visitors. Indeed, it is our experience that this area is rarely visited by US tourists and only occasionally by British ones. The area gives insights to Spain that many miss. This, the alleged resting place for the apostle St. James was one of the most important Christian sites in the world in the Middle Ages. Making the difficult pilgrimage to this remote corner of Spain assured the faithful of a place in heaven. The most charming aspect of this university town is the Cathedral to which hundreds of thousands of pilgrims have made their way. While waiting for lunch today we talked with two ladies from Montréal who had walked 300 kilometers in 10 days to make their way here.







Above left is the view of the central altar in the Cathedral. To its right is the actual remains of St. James who was beheaded by Herod in 44 AD, placed in a stone boat, navigated by God, received by a horseman and the remains unearthed in 813 were placed here in this mausoleum for the saints to behold.

The St. James statue to the left has an area of smooth white near the bottom, where countless travelers have placed their hand. We stood in a short line to do so.

We walked around the city, bought some postage stamps and arranged our hotel for the evening.

We then got the car and began our journey along the beaches of northwest, a system of bays, winding roads and beaches from Noio (Noah) via Muros then through the mountains with many windmills breeding electrical power, down to the seaside town of Malpica, where we spent the night.



This shows the seaside town where we stayed. Our hostel was right in the middle. We were offered the choice of two rooms but Judy chose the larger without the ocean view. You will see the sand arising to the stores, restaurants and apartment buildings beyond which contain a rocky coast. We thought we might catch some rays in the late morning and perhaps stay two nights as the hotel will cost less than €30 for each night. It was so cold that we had to wear our jackets and

have the heat on that night. We decided not to stay because it was going to be too cold to be on the beach.







Friday - Malpica - Alas, the temperature is about 68 and the sky is overcast, so we decide to go to A Coruña, one of Spain's busiest ports. Above left you see the city skyline. We are walking up a ramp to the one of the city's features, the oldest operating lighthouse in the world. On the right is the seascape that the lighthouse guards. This area is called the Coast of Death because so many lost their ships and their lives on the rocky coast. The lighthouse was erected in AD 98 by the roman emperor Trajan who was born in Spain. Little remains of the original structure except some inscribed foundation stones. The lighthouse was rebuilt in the 18th century, hence its rather modern appearance.



Lugo - Galicia's oldest provincial capital - We stopped here on our way east to see this town's feature landmarks: a 1.5 mile Roman wall surrounds, the city, this statue of Maria Pita, the heroine who saved Lugo from the British and the Roman Baths. Below the statue is a plate, "Liberty" and a flame. The story is that this Maria Pita watched her husband be killed in the war, so she took his lance and killed the British soldier who did it and encouraged the other ladies of the town to take up arms against the Brits resulting in the town's liberty. Were it not for Maria, perhaps all of Spain would be speaking English. Across the way is the City Hall shown below.





The cathedral from the inside and the outside, including the Roman Wall. One can walk on top of this wall, all around the city. Numerous people were walking when we were, about 2 p.m. I'll bet there are many running earlier in the day. The original wall was erected in 265. Of course, populations since then modified the wall and its gates but it remains a legacy of the Roman Society that, at one time, controlled Spain as well as much of the known western world.

Finally, the Roman Baths, now part of a hotel, this remarkable area was built in 15 BC. It is now reserved as a World Heritage. What you see here is the bath and wardrobes used for the participant's clothing. Men and women had either separate facilities or separate schedules. The hot springs continue to provide hot water, rich in minerals for clients of the hotel.



Saturday - Oviedo - We came to see the monuments outside of town, but they were closed. The cathedral in the center of town was also closed but we got a photo. Mostly we went from Galicia to Santillana del Mar with a break in the day. In Santilla, we had our siesta and then dinner in the old town. Fodor's Choice town because the pedestrian streets paved with ornate cobblestones are flanked by medieval buildings just as it would have been in old-time Spain.



Sunday - Bilbao - The newest home of the Guggenheim Museum. Fodor's Choice place on which they go on and on. I now know why I haven't been to the Guggenheim in New York. The best part was the building itself. Built of titanium plates and glass, it is an architectural masterpiece. The next best thing was the audio-guide that was included in admission. It had explanations about the building and the works therein. The first floor was reception. There were places for exhibitions but none were available. On the second floor was a very good collection of Aztec and other Mexican native pieces with excellent explanations, it seemed strange to have gone from the US to Spain to study Mexican culture. On the third floor was the modern art exhibition. I was pleased to have the audio-guide so that

now, for the first time, I would understand modern art. Alas, like the "king's new clothes" it was a mystery to me why anyone would want such a thing in their living room.



Following the Guggenheim we went to the Bilbao Maritime Museum where the internationally renowned Titanic exhibition was being presented. It was truly splendid, giving you insights into the building of the ship, its operation, the mishap and the mistakes that were made in the lifeboat operation. The ship was originally designed to have enough lifeboats for everyone on board however such encroached on the promenade deck, so the number of boats was reduced so that the first class passengers could walk on the highest deck. They said that first class passage, in today's Euro would be about €82,000 or more than \$100,000. I told Judy that we would be going second class. For third class or steerage, a person would have had to save for about two years for their passage. The exhibition was very well done. The permanent exhibition was of greater interest to the person interested in this town as it showed the development of the harbor over the past seven centuries.

After the museum, we went for a walk in the central park. We had enough cathedrals so we skipped the old town. There was a special fair in the park, sponsored by a product that children would use that we never identified. As you see red hats at the bottom, most of the participants had these red hats, many had red shirts also. There were clowns, jugglers and performers on stilts like this, there was music, food, rides and such so many people were enjoying the perfect weather and the festivities.

While in Bilbao, I made a reservation for a hotel room at the information office. The young lady gave me a booklet and showed me where the hotel was. When I got there, I realized that the hotel was not where we expected it to be but in another county. I had made a reservation that we had to cancel. Now it was after six and we had no reservation, nor information. We just stopped the car on the highway when we saw a bed symbol. The first four stops were disappointments, either they did not have a room or there was no bath. Finally, after some prayer, we stopped at a beautiful hotel for €50, about \$63 that even had a gymnasium. Judy



said she'd run on the treadmill while I lifted weights in the morning. What an answer to prayer, Judy's for a good place and mine for a cheap one!



Monday - Pamplona is known worldwide for its "running of the bulls." Each day from July 6-14 in the festival of San Fermín, a skyrocket is launched at 7 a.m. and the bulls are released from their corrals. They stampede down the street pictured below to the Plaza de Toros for the bullfight.

Nearby, this city hall is unique because of the figurines on the top. See detail below:





Ernest Hemingway made the town and the running of the bulls famous in his novel, The Sun Also Rises. A statue commemorates him and the street nearby is also named for him.

We have been seeking a gold bull charm for Judy's travel charm bracelet. We found it here though it was not easy. Ask her about it. We continued to Trola for the evening, just outside of the National Park we will visit tomorrow.

Tuesday - Parque Nacional Ordesa y Monte Perdido - We got up early for the drive to the top of the canyon and had breakfast. We had prayed that someone would be there, either the tour guide we had talked with or another, to take us to the top but alas, it was not to be. We were told it was a three-hour walk, so we began walking



the same route that the bus took. After an hour and one-half, I got tired of walking and decided to return. We had plenty of time to enjoy the clear, low-oxygen air and see the plants change as we walked. We talked about our trip up Kilimanjaro, 20 years ago.

Here are a few of the sites we saw:



The path shown is the one we walked, back and forth up the mountain.





These are the Pyrenees, the famous mountains that separate Spain from France.

Enroute to Barcelona, we stopped in a town on the way to Barcelona to make our hotel reservation. We arrived at 4 but the tourist information office was closed for siesta until 4:30. I asked about internet access as I recall there is a Barcelona tourist information site. We were referred to the public library. After we found it, we asked the librarian if we could use the internet. She said it was only for members of the library with library cards but I pleaded and

she relented. We were the first ones there when it opened and no one was waiting. Within 1/2 hour I had found the site, selected a hotel that was close to the subway, had a parking place and was the least expensive, €83 per night, average for the three days. I made the reservation on line and we were set. I knew that Barcelona hotels were expensive and this is a 4 star hotel, not the kind we regularly use. We drove into Barcelona around 8 p.m. when it is broad daylight and rush hour. Surely, this is the most difficult city to drive in the world. The streets are not well marked, even from the roundabouts and many are one way. Shortly after our arrival, a policeman pulled us over. I told Judy that I didn't want to speak Spanish to a policeman and she should mind her speed. We couldn't figure out what the problem was. He asked for Judy's driver's license so we gave him both her US and International licenses. He also asked for the car registration so we gave him our rental papers. He had a conference with another officer and decided to give us a warning. We had made a turn from the main street into the service road at the wrong place. It would have been a €90 fine. I pointed to our map to ask him where the hotel was, as we were obviously lost. I should have asked him to lead us there as this would have made it much safer for Barcelona's motorcyclists as we continued our search. They drive like "madmen."

Our hotel was on a one-way street and we had some trouble finding the street that would take us below the hotel so that we could drive in front of it. Parking is €16 per day, wow! We finally got into the hotel with the car and settled down for the night. It was after 11 p.m. when we got to our room. We had not had dinner, but Judy only wanted a shower and a bed.

Wednesday - Barcelona - Our first stop was the Rambla area, near the port. This statue of Christopher Columbus greets sailors as they enter the harbor. Columbus came to Barcelona to give Ferdinand and Isabella the good news that he had found the West Indies. Later went to the steps where the ceremony was purported to have happened.

Barcelona is a city of contrasts. Across from the ancient Columbus monument is a new harbor mall in a modern architectural style.

Within the facility is a three-dimensional IMAX theater and an aquarium.

We decided to buy a tourist bus ticket for the balance of our two days as our Fodor's guide shows the modern area as quite spread out. It would be better explored on the bus than foot.



This street is characteristic of the many pedestrian walkways in the old section of Barcelona. This area dates back to the Roman times, some 200 BC. We saw part of the wall and aqueduct from that era.







The Gothic Cathedral de la Seu was built between 1298 and 1450. It is amazing that they built such tall buildings then and that buildings this old are still standing. Outside the cathedral there were beggars and street musicians. We sat outside and enjoyed the music of an accordion player and a guitarist before we entered. On the way out, a young lady was playing an odd looking instrument that looked like an autoharp, but she was striking the strings with special hammers. She played it very well.

We also saw the Picasso Museum that held many of his earlier works. He was a fine artist, in my view, before he went "crazy" and developed his blue and cubic painting methods. Though not known for it, he was also a sculptor and made ceramics. I thought a ceramic plate he made with a fish in relief was a "neat" idea.

We spent a long time at the Museum of Catalan History. Catalonia is the province in which Barcelona is located. This museum traced the accomplishments of mankind from pre-historic, 450,000 BC times up to the modern era. We learned a lot about the Spanish culture and when comparing to ours we could better understand why a person might be a Catalan first and a Spaniard second. This

is the result of the kingdoms and governmental relationships that developed in the second millennium. In contrast, we became the United States when relatively similar colonies joined together to fight a common enemy, the King of England. Spain never had such a situation and has never joined together to defend itself. Hence, its arrangement of fairly autonomous provinces under a common flag, each with its own language though Castilian Spanish is the official language for interstate commerce and other national business. Can you imagine learning a new language when you moved from Maryland to Texas? Incredible it seems to us homogenized Americans.

They mentioned in this museum that in 1900, the United States took away Spain's last three colonies, The Philippines, Cuba and Puerto Rico. Cuba became independent at the time, The Philippines and Puerto Rico became US protectorates.



Thursday, June 9 - Barcelona: We went up to Montjuïc to see the castle and the panoramic views of the city. (The mountain photo was taken from the bus, please ignore the white lines.)





In the center, the Sagrada Familia, Gaudi's cathedral that will ultimately be one meter shorter than the mountain that we are on. He thought that no man-made object should exceed one that God made. Behind us the sea port





The waterfall begins at the top of the mountain. This man was playing medleys of Simon & Garfunkle and Moody Blues songs, just right for the audience. We enjoyed his music before continuing down the hill. At the Olympic stadium, this is the diving pool. Somewhat obscured are the seats that appear in the lower left of the photo for the many spectators of the Olympics.



We continued on to Parc de la Ciutadella, an open park containing the zoo but also a place to relax and view some other architecture. We enjoyed watching the ducks in the lake and this waterfall designed by Gaudi's predecessor. The protégé Antoni Gaudi made the rocks while he was a student.

The Sagrada Familia is the most famous place in Barcelona and Gaudi's most famous work. It was started in 1882 while he was living and is not expected to be completed until 2050. The sheer size of this cathedral is overwhelming.







Above left, the Arch of Triumph commemorating the 1229 conquest of the Moors. On the right, Casa de les Punxes (House of Spikes) is a cluster of six conical towers ending in impossibly sharp needles has private apartments, some of which are built into the conical towers: Three levels of circular rooms connected by spiral stairways. Can you imagine living in such a place, right in the Moderne district of Barcelona with people photographing your house daily. Better not walk around undressed. My telephone lens gets a better view of the artwork at the top than I can with my eye.

As we were walking over to the Laundromat we saw this man on stilts juggling for the entertainment of the cars waiting at this busy intersection. Believe it or not, he stooped down to collect coins from the cars when the light was ready to change, without dismounting from the stilts.



Friday - Barcelona: I referred to Fodor's for the sights that we had yet to see and decided that our last day would be the North Rambla. We would easily reach it on the subway. We enjoyed the incredible sights of this open air market called Boqueria.

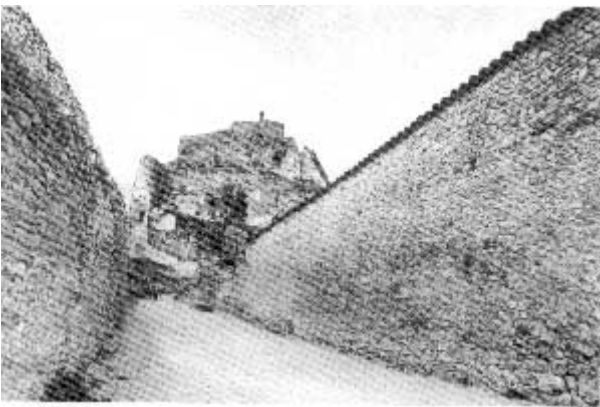
We went on to the medieval hospital, Antic Hospital de la Santa Creu. Here is a full-size statue of St. Paul and a wall showing the events of his life in painted ceramic tile. It is really quite neat, you can recall the various stories you remember from the Bible as you look at the pictures on the wall.







We now travel south to Tarragona, a rather neat place for lunch with its Roman ruins. On the left is a Roman wall, on the right, the Roman Amphitheater. While we were lunching, we met some British folks who we asked for directions. While we were eating and chatting, I asked when the British were going to start driving on the right side. The chap explained that they do drive on the correct side, that being the left. It all started by in the days of stagecoaches and with most people being right handed they would wear their pistol on their right side. If they were to meet a highway man about to rob them, they would be prepared no matter which side of the street he was on, even if there was a blockade in the middle as one could draw one's gun and shoot without having to shoot across the stagecoach. Now you know, "the rest of the story" and you heard it here first.



Saturday - The walled town of Morella: is in the mountains west of the highway from Barcelona to València. In 1088 El Cid scaled the walls of this castle and defeated the occupying Moors. We went up to the castle and took these photos of the scenery.





You can see from these photos how high the castle is, above is the plaza de toros, the bull ring in the foreground. To the left a view from the other side. Though the area is dry, the surrounding mountains are beautiful in its own right. The castle has been restored so that it appears somewhat like it was used in the 11th century.



This photo shows how the castle is built right into the rock.





In the nearby cathedral, the unusual aspect is this spiral marble staircase up to the choir that is decorated with pictures of Jesus' nativity and other Bible stories. The railing to the choir shows statues of Christ in the center flanked by the twelve apostles.





Sunday: Valencia to Mazarrón - Last night was a hectic attempt to find our hotel in Valencia and this morning we set out for a wildlife park. We missed the way and I decided that we'd continue on to Cartagena. We met a



couple in the bus in Barcelona who welcomed us to their home there, if just for a drink. I called and left messages but wasn't able to reach them until we had passed the area. It would have been fun to compare notes about our trip to Barcelona, much as we had done 20 years ago with a family we met in Kenya.

We tired of driving so we stayed in a hotel in Mazarrón for the night. It is a beautiful beachside resort as the photo on the left shows our view of the Mediterranean Sea. I went into the water in front of our hotel which was quite cold (for me). After I while I walked down the beach toward this large land mass and found that the water near it was much warmer. Numerous families were playing in the water so I waded out past my knees and enjoyed the water. The beach has large smooth stones, though there were those laying out, it was not very comfortable. I sat on a bench and read my book in the sun.

Monday & Tuesday - Majácar: We enjoyed a night at a friend's house in the vicinity. I laid out in the sun on the rooftop porch that afternoon and had a good Italian dinner that night. The next day I realized that I didn't have my passport. I checked my travel bag and my luggage, the car, everything, no passport. I realized that the last hotel I stayed at must still have it so I called and indeed they did. It was about a two-hour drive so while Judy enjoyed the beach, I drove back to Mazarrón and picked it up. I'm losing my mind in my old age.

Wednesday - Guidix: Few Americans visit here but we met our first American friends at the pool of this cave town. On the way to the very popular Granada, this

town where people live in caves was mentioned in our Fodor's book. We are actually staying in a cave carved out of this mountain. Our car is parked just outside our cave. We kept looking for the Flintstones and the Rubbles, but we never did see them or their car. How about that for the inside of a cave. This place was considerably more comfortable than many of the places we stayed. The inside is a constant 72 degrees, even when the outside temperature is the upper 90s.

We went to the market and bought hamburger, bacon, eggs, bread, the makings for salad and spaghetti so that we could eat at home for a change. The watermelon was very good so we got some of that and some bing cherries that Judy particularly likes. Our cave has a complete kitchen with range and refrigerator so we were in hog heaven. You can see part of the bedroom as you look at the dining area. The kitchen area is quite large and there is an alcove with the refrigerator and a pantry. There is a large hallway leading to a good size bathroom. Except for the bathroom you will notice that doorways have hand-woven tapestries rather than doors. They were really quite pretty against the white walls.





The man on the left is making pottery, they do a lot of that in this town. The woman above was kind enough to show us her wares though she did not have anything we wanted. She asked us if we would like to see her house and we said fine. Of course she had a dish out for tips, which we gladly gave her. Here she is in her kitchen. She lives in one of the caves with her husband and two children. The children's room was quite cool, about 65 I'd estimate so she always has blankets on the beds. Judy wanted to have a picture of this lady because of her pink hair, which is not uncommon here. This

lady's hair matched her shirt.

We visited the pottery shop where this man's Dad has a pottery museum and a nearby cave museum showing the antique implements used in various trades.

Thursday & Friday- Granada: El Alhambra

We got a map and searched for our hotel however the roads never seemed to go in the direction we wanted. After much frustration, I hopped into a cab and told him to go to the Hotel Ninfa and that my wife would follow. As we had no police escort, this was the next best thing. He quickly found our hotel, but I know that we would have never been able to get there by car by reading the map myself. The cab driver ran a red light and went on a one way street, the wrong way, Judy dutifully following. Judy checked in while I looked for a parking place. My first circuit around the neighborhood was not successful but the second one found a space 2 1/2 feet longer than the car. Remembering my experience at the University of Pittsburgh, I artfully maneuvered the vehicle into place with room left over. Now the man behind me would have to wait for the man behind him to move his car, but the last one had its flashers on so I thought he wouldn't have to wait for long.

We then took a cab uphill to the Alhambra for our entry ticket was scheduled for 1:30 p.m. The Alhambra is perhaps the eighth man-made wonder of the world, the carvings and mosaics are overwhelming. Following are a few of our photos.











Notice in the above center picture the private courtyards in the elaborate houses in the foreground.





We really enjoyed the gardens and the Islamic palaces but the temperature was almost 100 so we looked forward to siesta when it was over. I recall drinking and drinking but never feeling thirst-quenched because of the very low humidity.

That evening: We got tickets from the hotel for the Flamenco dancing. They would pick us up at the Plaza Nueva, a few blocks from here and return us after the show. After a stop at the scenic view point to look at the town and the Alhambra, lit up by flood lights, we continued to the cave that was the home of the gypsies that would perform for us. It appeared to be one family, Papa ran the place, Mama was in charge of dancing, she had two children who definitely looked like sisters and a third very pretty one and perhaps a son, who played the guitar. We enjoyed the show and took these photos:





This is the best looking of the troupe, she could clap her hands and move.





On the left, the guitarist, in the center, Judy tries her hand after the dancer came over and insisted she join her and on the right, the other sister who danced with great intensity.

Friday we took the bus tour and got some sun, saw the city center sights and relaxed.



Saturday - Gibraltar, an English enclave at the southern end of the Iberian peninsula is a unique place to say the least. The British pound is the primary currency, English is the official language, double-decker busses and red telephone booths are commonly found here. In deference to the 80% of the visitors who are here for a day, virtually all stores, gas stations, busses and taxis are as comfortable with the Euro as the pound Sterling. We followed Fodor's suggestion and parked our car in Spain and walked across the border showing our American passports that were not even opened. Though diesel was sold at more than 20% discount, we decided it was not worth the long wait to bring the car in through

customs to save the \$3 for the half-tank of fuel we needed.



Left is the Pillar of Hercules, one of two places that the ancients believed were the ends of the earth. The view toward Africa from the north side of the Strait of Gibraltar. Morocco is about 14 miles to the south, it is



not actually visible due to the haze. Our driver said that it had been hazy the past few days, even in the morning.





Left is a photo from within St. Michael's Cave, the natural caves that formed within the rock. The tail-less monkeys that were introduced from Africa are quite at home here with the visitors. These beggars are found outside the souvenir shop outside the cave. Tradition says that as long as the Rock has these monkeys, it will remain under the control of the crown, hence they are highly respected, maintained and preserved.



This ape is nursing its young who must be only a few days old as you may see the umbilical cord (about the size of a pipe)



cleaner) is still attached.



Also on the rock are the tunnels that the British carved out for the Great Siege from 1779-82. These industrious works allowed the British to defend the Rock from the Spanish and control it continuously since that time. In 1967 Franco closed the land border to Gibraltar and the Spanish people had 48 hours to abandon their homes and return to the mainland. The border was not re-opened until after his death, in 1985. There is still a political dispute over the payment of pensions of the Spanish workers.



This is a view of the Spanish Costa del Sol from the Rock. It shows the unprecedented development of this area of Spain, the Ft. Lauderdale of the coast.

Sunday - Sevilla: This is the place that is famous for so many things we know of Spain, even though they are not places to visit. The tale of Don Quixote began here as its creator, Miguel de Cervantes, languished in a debtor's prison here. Tirso de Molina's Don Juan seduced Seville's mansions, and Rossini's barber, Figaro, was married in the Barrio de Santa Cruz. Here it was at the old tobacco factory where Bizet's sultry Carmen first met Don José. Columbus sailed from the port here in 1492 prepared to fall off the end of the earth if necessary to find an alternate route to India.



We start our city tour here, at the Cathedral, the largest Gothic cathedral in the world, the fourth largest Christian church in the world,

after St. Peter's in Rome, St. Paul's in London and a new one in Ivory Coast. The people of Seville were thought to have said,

"Let's build a church so large that we shall be held to be insane."



Inside you see these four

statues carrying a casket over the tomb of some significant soul.



There were more silver pieces than one could count, numerous chapels with paintings





and sculptures and a gold covered altarpiece that words cannot describe nor camera properly capture.



We had the opportunity to climb up to the bell tower and take photos of the bells, the detail of the Gothic towers, and the cityscape.



This photo from the bell tower shows the most famous Plaza de Toros in the world. To be a great matador, you must fight bulls here in Seville at this, one of the oldest and liveliest plazas in Spain. It was built between 1760 and 1763. Our US history is so short, this was built shortly before the revolutionary war!





This famous tower, the Tower of Gold, was built by the Moors in 1220 and when a chain was stretched from it to a similar tower on the other side, the river to the port was closed. In 1248, Admiral Ramón de Bonifaz broke through the barrier, and thus Ferdinand III captured Seville.



Monday - Córdoba is known for its Moorish mosque. This was turned into a church following Ferdinand's conquest of the city and its 1,000 years of age show a unique blend of the Moorish/Arab decoration melded with the Christian religious motif.

As noted in the picture to the left, the inside is a multitude of column with Moorish designs surrounding Catholic chapels depicting the heroics of the saints.



Here you can see the Moorish mosaics that surround a door and a closer view of the decorative columns.

Prior to 1492 when the Jews were expelled, Moors, Spanish and Jews all lived together in this community in peace. We visited the only remaining synagogue from the 15th century but it was closed on Mondays.

The Jewish neighborhood has very rich houses with interior courtyards, in the Moorish style and represents the community as it had always been with narrow streets and shopping districts.

The temperature grows very hot in mid-day so after lunch we returned to our hotel for

siesta, the Spanish way is the best.



Tuesday - Baeza: On our way from Córdoba to Toledo, we stopped at two Fodor's Choice towns that were on our way with just a little detour. Baeza and Úbeda. Úbeda was all torn up with construction and everyone had their hands out for some Euros so we didn't really do much there. On the other hand, Baeza had the charm that Fodor's had identified. At the cathedral, we saw many of the side chapels, but this one caught my eye with the Last Supper, the "Sacrada Cena," done in mannequins. The town center had a plaza that was like a marble soccer field and just beyond it was a playground with many school children about Abbie's age playing and swinging.

We had breakfast there in the center and then lunch in a little town outside of Úbeda. I have eaten gazpacho as the first course throughout our travel in Andalusia, the large southern province of Spain because the temperatures have been so high. It is about 100 degrees each day here at noon, much higher than normal as the television says. The cold tomato-based soup is so good with fresh tomatoes, cucumbers and croutons added, table-side. It cools off your insides before the second course. In the Spanish tradition, we take our main meal at about 230 p.m. and select the menu del día



whenever we can. It includes an appetizer or salad, the main course which is beef, pork or fish, bread, drink and dessert for 8 to 12 euros. That is about \$10-15.

We checked into our hotel about 5 p.m. this evening, a pot luck that was a good one in the center of Spain on the way to Toledo. After watching English CNN for a while, Judy changed the channels and stopped at a bullfight. Having watched the bullfight in Madrid, she asked why we didn't watch the one in Sevilla, the world-famous place for bullfights. The answer was that we weren't there on a weekend. Generally, the bullfights are on Sunday. The amazing thing is that she would like to see it again. We watched the television bullfight and got much better views than we had in the Madrid Plaza de Toros. Having reviewed the website detailing just how it worked, we were experienced bullfight watchers.

We saw a very good fight where the matador controlled the bull very well: every time he shook the cape, the bull charged; he brought the bull very close during the running time. When the final plunge time took place, he placed the sword well causing it to go all the way in. To do this, the matador must thrust the sword while the bull's feet are moving forward, opening the space between the shoulder blades. This was indeed an excellent corrida, the matador was awarded both ears and the crowd went wild waving their handkerchiefs.



.Wednesday - Toledo: Our last town is a town of castles and walls. This is a restored castle across the river from the old, historical town.



This Roman bridge goes from the old town to the castle above.



We walked out of the center city to the Hospital de Tavera. Though no longer a hospital, it houses some El Greco paintings. They wanted a fee to see the pieces so we asked some young ladies if it was good or not worth it. They all agreed that it was well worthwhile so we bought our tickets. We were treated to a personal tour of the museum by a lady who spoke Spanish in a manner that I could readily understand and interpret for Judy. There was a couple with us, who was able to help when I couldn't quite understand. Though we could not take pictures in the museum, we found the El Grecos very interesting and the number of original works dating from the 16th century outstanding. This museum was established by the family of the Cardinal who presided there. Thereafter we went to the hospital's chapel where this altarpiece presides. It was orchestrated by El Greco, a family friend of the Cardinal. The cardinal was quite vain and did not want his picture painted while he was living. We saw the mask that was made of his face following his death and which was the source of all such paintings that were made following his death.



This very lucky photo was taken during our ride on the tourist train, while in motion. It shows the road on which the tram operated, the Roman bridge linking it to the old town hill and above that the Alcázar, the fortress, the most obvious structure in a photo of the city from any angle.



Another, in-motion photo of the city showing the Cathedral as the centerpiece.

We hope you enjoyed this vicarious journey with us.