

News from Nan

TRAVEL

SPAIN 2012

SEPTEMBER 30, 2012 | ANNA



Toledo, Spain - Tajo River

In September 2012 we took a Road Scholar trip to Spain and Morocco. This post covers Spain; another post covers Morocco.

Spain has an extremely interesting history, with strong cultural and linguistic influences from the Romans, Moors, and Jews.

We visited Spain during a major European economic crisis (one that hit Spain particularly hard), but in the major cities we visited it was not much in evidence. Well-dressed people flocked to the city squares during the day and in the evenings, drinking coffee and wine, and eating tapas. Teens flirted and roller-bladed. Kids played soccer and rode bikes and trikes. Mothers and fathers chatted. Some citizens even publicly protested the government austerity programs, but not with great vigor: it was more like a public campout and gabfest.



Don Quixote



Toledo: Alcazar at night



Toledo: Wedding party



Cordoba: Mosque built on a Christian church



Granada: Alhambra



Anna in Granada



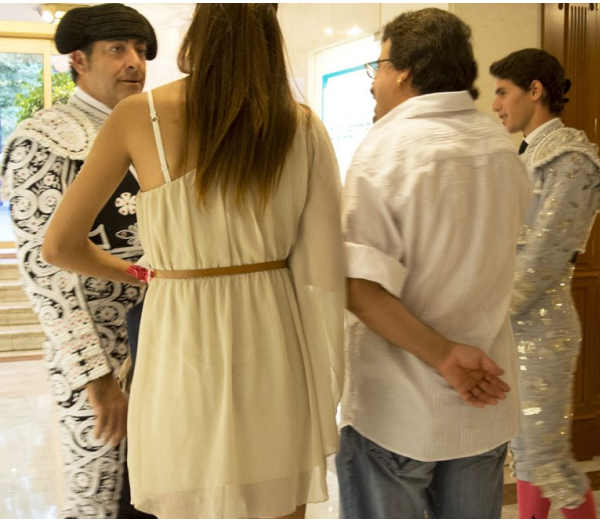
Alhambra tiles



Seville at night



Seville: Guadalquivir River



Seville: Bullfighters



Seville: Selfie



Seville: Cat



Gibraltar: Baelo Claudia Roman ruins



Gibraltar: Macaque Apes

Icons and highlights:

- **Olives.** The part of Southern Spanish countryside that we drove through was dominated by olive groves. We visited an olive museum to learn their history and how they are grown and processed.
- **Don Quixote.** This courtly romantic and eternal optimist is still highly celebrated as representing the essence of the Spanish character, especially in the La Mancha area around Toledo.
- **Ferdinand and Isabella.** In 1492 they not only financed Christopher Columbus' voyage to the New World (an iconic event known by all Americans), they also kicked out the last of the Moors (who arrived in 711) and established the complete dominance of the Catholic Church. We were amazed how many former mosques were simply rebuilt as churches and cathedrals using the same form-factor. The mixture of architectural styles was fascinating.
- **Tapas.** They are becoming even more popular in an era of additional fiscal responsibility. You can snack your way through dinner for less than 10 euros apiece.

- **Colors.** The Spaniards still love the bright colors first introduced by the Moors: orange, green, blue, and red. They look very appropriate in the hot, sunny geography of the Mediterranean South.
- **Bullfighting.** There is a constant stream of news about groups protesting the animal cruelty, but bullfighters are as much a part of the Spanish culture as cowboys are in ours. Several stayed in our hotel the night before a fight (always using the same hotel is one of their superstitious habits, we were told). They were quite magnificent!

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