

TRIP TO SPAIN

Beth and The Jeffs

13/15-19/20 March 2010

Saturday, 13 March 2010

Although there was some initial anxiety about Amtrak issues that would require The Jeffs to meet up with Beth in Cordoba on Monday, in fact no one got to Cordoba Sunday. Instead, we all spent a pleasant night sleeping in Terminal 7 at JFK. We learned how to negotiate the voucher system and regulate lighting for our comfort.

Sunday, 14 March 2010

After we decided to bag the whole trip, British Airways offered us a flight tonight, so we took the train into The City and walked around a bit. It was drizzly and we were not mentally prepared to tour, but it was better than Terminal 7. After multiple delays, our flight #174 March 13 finally left early on 15 March.

Monday, 15 March 2010

Due to our late departure, we missed the day in Madrid and eventually got to our lovely Hotel Triana with one of our three bags. After tasty chicken dinner at the Puerto Rican Restaurant, Mr. Martens and Ms. Lapin were stylishly attired in Iberia airlines sleeping wear and slippers.

Tuesday, 16 March 2010

We took the RENFE train from Atoche station to Cordoba. Breakfast at the train station of chocolate Napoleon and new socks made the trip pleasant. The day was sunny and initial crisp and eventually warm. We passed sheep, olives, and arid, flat and intensely cultivated and farmed land, before heading through the mountains and arriving in Cordoba.

According to wikipedia: Córdoba is a city in Andalusia, southern Spain, and the capital of the province of Córdoba. An Iberian and Roman city in ancient times, in the Middle Ages it was a capital of an Islamic caliphate and one of the largest cities in the world.

Cordoba highlights three major religions:

The synagogue, located on Jew Street, built in 1315 and active until the Inquisition of 1492.

The Alcazar, fortress to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, was viewed from the outside.



The Mezquita, an exquisite mosque built with Roman columns that was usurped by the Christians and converted into a church. Truly a huge covered space.



We ate at Taberna Los Palcos and had some traditional foods including Cordoba



soup, calamari, and pastel Cordebes y copa de vino dulce Pedro Ximenez. I had eggplant with sugar cane that looked and tasted like molasses and was called 'honey' in Spanish (miel).



We returned to Madrid where we ate a copious buffet at Topocal restaurant. Entrees included paella and the desserts were abundant and enjoyable. Mr. Martens was fortunate enough to receive his luggage when we returned to the hotel.

Wednesday, 17 March 2010

Another sunny day and we took the bus to Toledo, with breakfast at a cafeteria near the Madrid bus station before leaving. We walked up part of the hill and took the escalator the rest, heading directly to Plaza Zocodover and the stores that sold mazapan (marzipan) – yum!

We toured the Cathedral and had scenic views from atop this city on the hill and then bused back to Madrid, where we lunched at a yuppie restaurant called VIP, where we had chicken, roasted veggies/salad, and chocolate mousse.



We then went to the Centro de Arte Reina Sofia



to view Picasso's *Guernica* and its associated drawings and sketches.

We visited the 11-M Atocha memorial at the train station.

We then went to The Prado museum, which is free from 6pm. We saw tons of great masters and

paintings until we could stand it no more. As we were leaving, a woman ran up to me and asked if I had gotten my suitcase; she and her husband were two others who didn't get their luggage in Madrid; theirs had arrived Tuesday night at 10pm.



We returned to Plaza de Sol and had famous churros dipped in chocolate as an appetizer. We ate tapas of manchego cheese and lomo (at E16!) at Casa Labra, where the Labor Party organized.



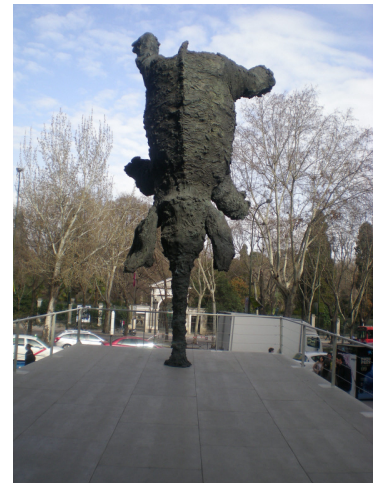
And when we returned to our hotel, Ms. Lapin was joyfully reunited with her suitcase.

Thursday, 18 March 2010



We spent our last day in Madrid; we walked to Plaza Mayor to see and then stopped for a breakfast of pastas de almendra and jugo de pina. We walked to the cathedral and palace, where we were treated to a royal escort of the king(?) and the changing of the guards. As it was raining, we returned to our hotel for coats.

We then walked to Retiro Park and enjoyed feeding cats, the emerging sun, and being hugged by a stranger. We lunched at Caxio Forum and had a sumptuous lunch of ribs, salad, and chocolate mousse/rice pudding/fruit sorbet. We were pleasantly surprised by an exhibit of Miquel Barcelo.



We took bus #27 to the business district and looked at tall buildings, some of which were engineered by the same person who built the World Trade Center. Our return trip took us to Mercado de San Miguel where we looked at local produce.

We did some last minute shopping at El Cortes Inglais and ate tapas al fresco before packing for our return trip (and a misplaced passport).

Friday, 19 March 2010

Because of an impending British Airways strike, we were forced to return home a day early. Fortunately our flight went smoothly, we sampled coronation chicken, and we all arrived home safely (although not totally healthy).