

## **Bill and Cathy McArthur in Spain: 15**

**Cathy completed her Spanish textbook and had a comprehensive written examination on it. The passing score was 50, but Cathy earned a 93 and a comment of “excelente”. Bill stopped going to classes on Monday in order to devote full time to the pressing demands of work back in the States. Cathy claims that Bill is happier working than studying Spanish.**

**Our weekend trip was to Seville, the capital of Andalusia and the point of embarkation/debarkation for voyages to the New World. We had two main goals for the trip: to engage the history of the city and to view flamenco. On one of our walks into Malaga during the week, we bought a pair of bus tickets for the 3 hour bus trip. Bill found a good deal on the Internet for our 4-star hotel, Catalonia Giralda.**

**The first thing we noticed when we arrived on Friday night was that the air temperature felt warmer than Malaga. The temperature shortly after sunset was a balmy 78 degrees. We realized that the Mediterranean, with its water temperature of about 63 degrees, was retarding the warmth of spring along the coast. This was no surprise to us since we have the same phenomenon back home at the Jersey Shore. Our hotel lies on the edge of the old town with its maze of alleys. We decided to take a walk in a “straight line” in order to be able to find our way back to the hotel. We were surrounded by the rich history of Seville as we strolled along. We returned to our hotel for a surprisingly good fixed price dinner.**

**On Saturday morning we had a good buffet breakfast and then headed toward the cathedral and its bell-tower, La Giralda. We toured the largest cathedral in Europe which was truly awesome. We headed to the river, Guadalquivir, which is a key to the history of Seville. We had noticed that many of the rivers around Malaga had names that began with “guadal”. We found that this prefix is from the Arabic for “water”. We did one of our marathon walks down the river and then walked back inside of the East Port of Seville. We were all alone in that huge port area and enjoyed the solitude. We took a river cruise and found that we had walked about half of the distance earlier. By early afternoon, the temperature had risen to the low 80s and could be described as “hot”. For the first time since arriving in Spain in January, we actually sought the shade. We walked across one of the bridges and ate lunch in a nice little restaurant with a terrace on the water. After lunch we took a bus tour which took us farther afield in Seville.**

**After the bus tour, we entered the Santa Cruz district, which was a Jewish ghetto in the past. There was a sign on the entrance arch that indicated no entrance except for residents. We paused, but then tentatively entered. A man approached us and said that the area was open today. He talked a bit**

about the area in broken English, and before we knew what had happened, we found ourselves on a guided tour of the district. Our guide, Pedro, made me feel good because his English was worse than my Spanish. Nonetheless, he gave us a thorough tour of the area. When it was time to settle up, he asked for 50 euros. I said that we were “pensionistas” and he lowered the price to 35 euros; however, he couldn’t quite make the change from 40 and we ended up paying about 37.64 euros. We wandered around a bit more and then ate a very good, cheap meal at a small cervceria. Each fixed rate meal was 8.85 and included wine or bottled water, but Cathy’s gin and tonic was 6.25. We capped off the day with a two-hour flamenco show at a bar/theater in Santa Cruz. The price was 27 euros (23 for entrance and 4 euros for a cheap drink such as wine or a small bottle of water). The show was excellent and included a cast of 5 female dancers, 2 male dancers, and 5 musicians. The dancers were very talented and expended an amazing amount of energy. Somehow, we managed to find our hotel after the show.

On Sunday morning, we walked to the beautiful Plaza España. This is a shrine to romanticism and impracticality. The structure was built for the 1929 exposition of Iberia and the Americas. We also walked by the river and then headed back to the hotel through the maze of narrow streets. We stumbled upon a large outdoor pet market featuring birds, mice, rabbits, puppies, and fish. Even pigeons were being sold; nobody was selling seagulls.

We enjoyed Seville, but gave ourselves a tough problem when we asked each other what we would choose for our top 3 locations in Spain. Maybe we’ll attempt to answer the question later.

Bill and Cathy