

Bill and Cathy McArthur in Spain: 2

We are working very hard in our Spanish classes. Cathy remains at the top of the class and is the teacher's favorite. Bill continues to ask insignificant questions such as "What is the water temperature?" (it turns out to be 60 degrees, which isn't bad for January). We are both finding that a lot of forgotten French is reappearing in our heads and confusing itself with Spanish words and especially pronunciation. We catch ourselves pronouncing "en" as "on" as we would in French.

Our weekdays have fallen into a routine:

- * M,W,F Bill gets up early to run around 5 miles down near the water; otherwise we get up around 7:20 AM**
- * Bill gets a (sometimes hot) shower**
- * We eat breakfast around 8:00 AM, sometimes with one or two others**
- * At 9:00 AM or so, we leave to take a walk along the water and show up at school at 10:00 AM.**
- * We have grammar class until 10:55 AM when we break for 5 minutes**
- * We have more grammar until 11:55 AM when we break for 35 minutes**
- * We get cafe con leche at the restaurant Sabores**
- * At 12:30 PM we begin conversation class until about 2:00 PM**
- * We return home and study until lunch at 2:30 or so**
- * We head for the Internet Cafe so Bill can read and answer emails; this lasts for 1 or 2 hours**
- * We shop in the local supermarket for bottled water, wine, and other essentials on some days and then bring the stuff back to our room**
- * We walk along the beach or around town until around 5:45 PM**
- * We get cafe con leche in the restaurant Odeon**
- * We return home to study**
- * At around 8:00 PM, we go out to eat at Sabores restaurant**
- * We return home to study**
- * We read and turn in around 11:00 PM**

We are creatures of habit and feel comfortable with a "normal" schedule.

During our first weekend, we decided to "do" Malaga. On Friday afternoon, we walked into central Malaga which is about 3.5 miles distant. We walked around the port and then, using the GPS, found Plaza Merced. We stopped for cafe con leche and found that the price had nearly doubled because we were in the big city (about 600,000 in population). We walked through a series of narrow walkways that reminded us of Venice. There are lots of shops in the area between Plaza Merced and the city center. Bill was approached by two "bums". The first bum put on a crazed look and gave the impression that if you didn't give him money he would bite off your ear. The second bum was the debonair, English-speaking traveler who had

somehow temporarily run out of money. We had met a character like him in Rome and were not fooled. When Bill refused to deal with him, he started to curse. What these guys didn't know was that Bill won't give money to a starving kid on the street. Call it hard-hearted or street-wise, but that's how it is. Again, with the help of the GPS, we found the bus stop and took the bus back to El Palo. We discovered a gem of a restaurant in the guise of a pizzeria when we enjoyed some Italian food. On Saturday we took an early bus into Malaga and did a more extensive tour of central Malaga. We found the train station and got information about trains to Torremolinos (maybe next weekend) and Madrid (when Katie and Tom come over). We did a tour of the big shopping mall called Larrios. We also toured the Moorish castle called Alcazaba which dates from the 11th century. We ate our first seafood paella in a restaurant and enjoyed it. We also took a quick look at Picasso's birthplace. We did a lot of walking and took a break at a cafe on the beach. When the afternoon sun is shining, the temperature gets up to 70 degrees or so and it's quite comfortable. Several guys had their shirts off on the beach.

For the most part, prices are much cheaper in Spain than the U.S. A cafe con leche costs around 80 cents. A baguette sandwich costs around 2.50. A small box of wine from a store costs about 85 cents. A glass of wine in a restaurant costs about 1.50. A "normal" dinner in a restaurant, with drinks, costs about 25.00. Our usual light evening meals cost around 4.50. The bus to Malaga costs 80 cents.

Bill and Cathy