

Bill and Cathy McArthur in Spain: 7

We had an unexpected holiday on Friday, 2/28 in honor of Andalusia Day. It was a beautiful day, so we walked about 3.5 miles along the coast to the east to the village of Rincon de Victoria. We had a good day enjoying the warmth of the sun after a few days of clouds and rain.

On Saturday, we started our week-long trip. We had arranged a month ago to rent a Nissan Almora from an agency down the street from our house. When we arrived at the agency Saturday morning, the agent told us that our car had been in an accident and that she would order a Seat Cordoba for us. We had to wait a half hour for that car to arrive. The car had some serious dents on the right side and various smaller dents and scratches all around. To our surprise, it had a stick shift with 5 on the floor. I guess that they just assumed that we could drive a stick shift car, and in Bill's case, that is true. On our way to the highway out of town, we took a wrong turn and ended up on a dead-end alley. Bill had a chance to see if he could find reverse gear. We got on the highway going in the wrong direction (east instead of west) and had to get off and back on a couple of miles down the road. Stopping for gas was a bit traumatic because we couldn't figure out how to pop the gas door; it turned out to be one that pries open. We took the wrong fork on the highway at one point because our maps showed a different route number from what's on the highway. That cost us maybe 20 miles. Bill had laid out our route to the hotel on his GPS, but our maps were lacking detail. Cathy didn't want to hold the computer on her lap, so we relied on the GPS to bring us to the hotel. Madrid is a city about the size of Philadelphia, so dead reckoning isn't easy. We accidentally got off of the highway about 8 miles early and got to experience Madrid traffic. The GPS got us within a mile of the hotel and then lost its satellites due to the buildings surrounding us. Bill went into an apartment building and was able to talk enough Spanish to get a map with our route to the hotel marked on it. Fifteen minutes and many curses later, we arrived at the hotel at about 5:30 PM.

We caught our breath and headed out on foot to explore Madrid. We walked about 3.5 miles down to the museums. We spent some time in the museum of modern art and saw a lot of Picasso's paintings, including the famous "Guernica." We had dinner and then walked back to the hotel, arriving about 11:00 PM.

Sunday morning we drove to pickup Katie and Tom at the airport. Their plane had landed early so that we arrived outside of customs at about the same time as they emerged. Tom took over as navigator and we went back to the hotel so that Katie and Tom could check-in. It wasn't long before we were off on foot heading down toward the museums and other sites of

central Madrid. Katie led us on a guided tour using Rick Steves' tour guide. We did a tour of the Praedo and saw all of the major sights and sites. The day became sunny and warm enough to say "Hace buen tiempo." We all walked around 8 miles. Katie and Tom did a great job handling the tiredness of the first day in Europe. Our first dinner together was a bit of an adventure as well. We ended up with meals quite different from what we thought we had ordered. Bill's supposed meatless (sin carne) platter was loaded with sausage. All was well when we got our postres (desserts); these were perfecto.

Bill and Cathy