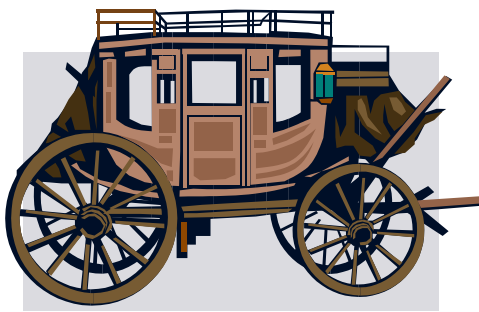


RECOLLECTIONS



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From his unpublished hand-typed chapters
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CHAPTER 17 - BOOKMAN IN SPAIN, 1989

This trip was made to buy books [for my rare book] business. An article on the bookish aspects of Western Europe appears in the chapter “**Bookman in London/Paris 1977**” [and in the long essay “A Bookman’s Trip to Spain” in *Book Talk*, New Mexico Book League, 6/1989, Vol.18, No. 3] Here, instead, I will describe experiences that might interest someone the most in a hundred years. I was 76 and Charlotte was 66 years old.

Why Spain?

We had earlier visited England, France, and Holland. Due to the drop in the value of the dollar and general steady inflation in those countries, we could not afford to go there again. The cost of rare books we hoped to buy would have risen. The dollar still was good in Spain, and their prices were not too high.

We sought certain Spanish books and contacts with Spanish booksellers with whom we might correspond. We bought many travel guides to Spain, reading and typing up notes. We made lists of rare Spanish books we wanted and addresses of booksellers.

The usual method for first-time travelers is to buy a packaged tour with all reservations already made. We went on our own, except for the airline tickets, the first three nights in Madrid and advance reservation in Madrid for a rental auto. These we made through a travel agent. We got an international driver’s permit, available through the American Automobile Association (but we never had occasion to show it).

Vocabulary

A few Castilian Spanish words occur frequently in this chapter. Some of these differ from Mexican terms used in the American Southwest. Words that appear only once will follow with their translation within parenthesis.

- cafe solo - coffee only (black without sugar or milk)
- con - with
- de - of
- hostal - modest hotel/motel without elevators, porters, and other niceties
- parador - a government-run star rated hotel, usually with a small restaurant
- plata de dia - Plate of the day, the daily special in a restaurant
- Si - Yes
- tortilla - Egg omelet

Packing Secrets

About two weeks before we left, we put an empty box in a corner at home and tossed into it anything we thought we might need on the trip. This included a diarrhea remedy (never used), spare eyeglass for myself; spare contact lens for Charlotte, a miniature tape recorder [for notes], the tiny screwdriver used to repair eyeglass frames, and so forth.

We watched the newspaper for April weather reports on Madrid and noted that the range similar to Albuquerque. We kept clothes to a minimum using one large suitcase, which had small wheels and a pull strap. We took along one stout case for books we might buy and each of us had a carryon bag. In this bag, we had all essentials for two days if the two main bags went astray (which happened once). We tried to carry extras on many articles, such as medicines, in more than one bag. This worked well, although we needed more aspirin and Charlotte needed some extra eye drops. The only item we lost was a necktie, which is more important socially in Spain than in the United States, We bought another. Charlotte needed more socks for her walking shoes.

We took along many American Express travelers checks, not only for purchase of books, but for daily expenses and for emergencies. Many things might happen [at our ages].

We had our passports, MasterCard, Visa Credit card, New Mexico drivers' licenses, and the return airline tickets placed in a light money pouch of water resistant fabric and closing with a zipper, on a cord hanging under my left armpit. Each day we cashed enough Travelers Checks for the next day's expenses. A thief could have taken purse and billfold but leave us still secure. I wore a "safari" shirt from the mail-order firm of Norm Thompson. This shirt had two large breast pockets and behind each of these was another with a thin zipper. We carried our passports and some travelers' checks there. The large pockets held our camera and the small tape recorder. With this equipage, four pieces of luggage, we could carry our own bags if need be.

[Since we had our home broken into and ransacked during a past trip,] we removed and concealed all valuable appliances, television, microwave, word processor, and typewriters. We placed the cat in a pet kennel, stopped the mail and newspapers, and alerted our neighbors.

Day 0- Tuesday 4/18 - Flight to Madrid

We took a cab about noon to the airport and checked in. Because of recent terrorist acts [in the 1980s], security was a bit more than usual, and this occurred at all subsequent airports. The ticket agents wanted to know if we had packed our own bags that day, if anyone else had handled the bags, and if anyone had given us at the last minute any parcel or gift to carry on. In Albuquerque, they opened our outgoing luggage and gave it a cursory examination.

[There were 33 notable hijackings during the 1980s, four alone in 1988. These few airport precautions in 1989 predated the devastating terrorist attack on 9/11/2001 in New York. Airport security became more strenuous and lengthy thereafter.]

Our plane, a DC-10, took off on schedule. It flew non-stop northeast over Indianapolis, east to Boston, along the 40th parallel across the Atlantic, into northern Portugal near Coruna, and landing in Madrid. It was a long, uneventful flight. As we neared Madrid, we could see the snow-capped Pyrenees to the north.

We walked through Immigration. We showed our passports and left a card stating our occupation as “retired” and our purpose as “pleasure”. We gave the Madrid hotel as our next address. They asked no questions. We volunteered no remarks.



Figure 1 - Passport to Madrid (page 7) – 4/19/1989

We claimed our two larger bags and went through Customs. We previously read the United States Customs pamphlet *Know Before You Go*. Since we had nothing beyond limits allowed a person entering, we simply walked through a door marked “Nothing to Declare” with our bags unexamined. We were in the Madrid main airport lobby. We exchanged some United States currency for Spanish money, keeping in reserve enough to pay the Albuquerque taxi when we returned home.

Taxi and Traffic

We caught a taxi from the airport to our hotel. I made it a practice to carry along a notepad whenever we took a taxi. I would write the address on a slip and hand it to the driver. This saved many attempts at speaking poor Spanish.

We drove directly to our hotel, the Hotel Emperador, at Gran via 53. In Spain, the house number follows the street name. It was our first view of Madrid traffic. We could see why all guidebooks advise visitors not to drive in the city. Traffic moves on the right, as in the United States. There are white lines for lanes and traffic lights. On a street marked for two lanes each way, you will find three or four lines of cars, tailgating closely at the maximum speed allowed, darting in and out, paying no attention to the white lines.

In choosing a hotel, we first obtained many travel folders, which often listed and showed pictures of hotels. We could find on a Madrid map the approximate neighborhood of

several of the bookshops we wanted to visit and made up a list of about five hotels in that general area. Our travel agent booked from this list.

Some lists rated the Emperador as a three-star hotel and as a four- star hotel on others. It was on a busy downtown principal street. The differences between it and a hotel in New York or Chicago were minor. It had a doorman and elevator, but no parking garage and no coffee shop. The desk clerk spoke some English, but Americans are not necessarily major tourists in Spain. The clerk must handle minimal conversations in French, German, Swedish, Italian, and other languages.

The room was all right with a private bath. The differences from its American counterpart were slight: soap but not an assortment; towels but no washcloths; a telephone but no local directories. These characteristics fit almost every place we stayed. There were always plenty of blankets. The beds were good but the Spanish hotel pillow is strange. Americans use a rectangular pillow. In Spain, the pillow is a long cylinder, similar to a bolster, and slipped inside a tubular pillowcase open at both ends. The pillow extends the full width of the bed. There is only this one long pillow, even a double bed.

We used taxis often and found the drivers honest. Usually we took a taxi out to the farthest point of that day's calls, and then walked back toward the hotel. After the last stop, if the distance back was still great, we again took a cab, so our total cab expense was not great and it enabled us to cover many places.

Day 1- 4/19 Madrid

We checked into our hotel at 1pm Madrid time but it was about 4am Albuquerque time, so we were up for almost twenty-three hours with only the uneasy naps one can take on a plane. This is the "jet lag" one has on eastbound trips, and you feel as though you could fall asleep standing in line. Two or three hour's sound sleep makes you ready to go again. In England or France, this means one awakens about the time all the shops close, but Spain observes the "siesta" in the afternoon.

Most bookshops would open around 10am until 2pm, close until 4pm, and re-open until 8:30pm. Clocks in Spain are on a 24-hour scheme, so the shops would be open 10:00 to 13:30 and 16:00 to 20:30. This meant we could get in a half-day's shopping on our first day. By nightfall, we had found our first rare book.

At another fine rare-book shop, when we presented our "want list", the owner suggested that it was too long for a quick reply. We said we would return the next day.

We walked a great deal, and at our [elderly] age, we gave out after eight hours. We moved with great intensity, with so much to see and do. No after-lunch naps here! This lasted through the entire trip; it took us more than a week to recover after we returned

Day 2 - 4/20 Madrid

We visited the firm of Jose Porrúa who sells both new and rare books and is a publisher. His office walls were cork panels.

After lunch, we took a cab to the Museo Arqueológico Nacional, which contains statuary, pottery, and objects dating back to the 8th century B.C. We were most impressed by the workmanship of Roman mosaic floors, the statuary head of “Dama de Elehe”, and by artifacts from the period when the Visigoths ruled Spain.

Next door to this museum, curators had reconstructed a cave whose ceilings carefully reproduced some prehistoric cave paintings of animals. Troops of schoolchildren came, but we could rest in the near-darkness and imagine those early craftsmen at work.

We visited the Prado Museum to see paintings by Goya Velasquez, and El Greco. Since the church and nobility generally supported these early painters, the paintings were usually either religious subjects or portraits. I particularly preferred Goya’s “black period” when he painted what he personally wanted to paint to express his own opinions and feelings.

We went out of the main Prado Museum building and up a block to another building that housed Pablo Picasso’s great painting of *Guernica* [11.5 x 25 feet in grey tones], which symbolized the saturation bombing of that city by planes during the Spanish civil war in 1937. We bought a small reproduction of this on canvas at the museum. Many say this will remain the greatest single painting done in the twentieth century.



Figure 2 - Guernica (Pablo Picasso, 1937)

Day 3 - 4/21 Madrid

We enjoyed Madrid especially the people, who were always friendly and ready to help with directions. The police, the Guardia Civil, in their hats of shiny antique design, were polite; one even saluted me before replying to my request for directions.

We visited El Corte Ingles, the largest department store in Madrid, as modern a match for Macys. We enjoyed walking the streets, watching people, and window-shopping.

At first, we thought of Madrid was a city with horrible street litter. Men handed out leaflets, which people threw on the sidewalk. Three days later the litter was still there. Some litter looked more ancient. Sidewalk litter cans were overturned at night.

This was not typical. Away from the central district, streets were clean. The wider streets in the better sections had wide esplanades planted with flowers; thousands of tulips were in bloom. Many multistory apartment houses had window boxes or balconies full of plants; some had ivy that grew downward for many floors. The walls of buildings usually were free of graffiti. If present, it was political [rather than ghetto gang tags].

I missed a real breakfast. I like to arise early and have a full meal that will carry me through lunch if need be. The Madrid cafes rarely open before 8am., and the usual [Continental] breakfast is espresso coffee and a roll or pastry.

One could order a tortilla (an egg omelet). (A “flour or corn tortilla” is unknown in Spain.) I found no pancakes, no hashed brown potatoes, no toast, and no oatmeal.

There was a McDonald’s near our hotel, but closed until 11am and served no breakfasts. It had an armed guard to discourage pickpockets, I suppose, for they knew that rich American tourists would flock there. It was only at McDonald’s that I could get a cup of “American” coffee, poured from a pot into a cup. There was a Colonel Sanders [Kentucky] Fried Chicken restaurant in the block beyond on the Gran Via.

The coffee served everywhere was espresso. One ordered cafe solo (black) or “cafe con leche” (with milk). The counterman turned to the machine on the shelf behind him and removed a device that slightly resembled an ice cream scoop. Filling this with ground coffee, he replaced it back on the machines, locked it into place, and started the steam. The coffee trickled down into a small cup. Most machines could handle two cups at a time, but there were larger machines. The machines appeared identical. We saw them all over Spain, in cafes and bars. I came to like the taste, but Charlotte liked it less and less.

Our hotel was in the heart of the retail business section. We scouted all of the bookshops around the Prado. [I wrote about the book aspects of Spain for an article in *Book Talk*.]

Jack Rittenhouse, “A Bookman’s Trip to Spain”, from: *Literary New Mexico: Essays from Book Talk*, New Mexico Book League and Ancient City Press, 1998, p.64-72 [a few extracts] - Originally *Book Talk*, 6/1989, Vol.18, No. 3

Don Diego de Vargas, when he died of illness on Bernalillo in 1704, had one of the earliest private libraries in New Mexico on which we have any record...

When I presented my want list at the shop of Gabriel Molina, they at once brought out one of the books. It was Diego de Saavedra Faxardo’s IDEA DE UN PRINCIPE POLITICO CHRISTIANO, printed in Amsterdam in 1659. A fat little book only 5.5 by 3.25 inches and two inches thick, 983 pp., bound in original vellum... DeVargas had a copy in his library.

The next day we went back to the Prado district to visit every store in the area. In one place, we secured another book from the DeVargas list: Don Goncalo de Cespedes y Meneses’ HISTORIA DE DON FELIPE III, REY DE LAS ESPANAS, Barcelona, 1634, a quarto volume in leather with 281 leaves printed on both side but numbered on only one, as was then the custom.



Figure 3 - Two 1600's Treasures from Madrid (J. Rittenhouse, 4/1989)

The area between our hotel on the Gran Via and the Prado Museum is Madrid's "old town" with crooked streets, no square blocks, and rich in old buildings. We spent part of one enjoyable evening in the old Plaza Mayor built in 1619. About eight streets lead into this square through archways, but no traffic passes through. [Public] executions, kings crowned, bullfights, and tournaments occurred there.

Buildings rise up two to four stories on all sides, and in one corner today under the galleries are philatelic shops. This vast patio is paved and on some sides are tables for open air dining. The evening we were there, some university students held a rally protesting some university policies. More than a hundred listened to speakers or rattled pans, and carried banners with slogans. There was no violence. Later we saw this same protest rally on the Gran Via. As soon as the police appeared, the rally dissolved and the students melted away, to renew the floating protest somewhere else.



Figure 4 - Plaza Mayor at Dusk, Madrid (Facebook)

In a cafe facing into the Plaza Mayor, we ordered some "tapas," served to us at a table on the edge of the ancient plaza. "Tapas" are a type of hors d'ouvres displayed behind glass on a counter buffet, without labels or prices. We picked three that looked tasty. We received large portions. Two turned out to be potato salads, although slightly different in appearance and flavor, and the third was a dish of sautéed pimientos. We ate them in the gathering dusk and walked the winding streets back to our hotel.

Day 5 - 4/22

We checked out of the four-star hotel. The cost for two was \$106/night, the most we paid for any hotel [in Spain in 1989]. We went across the street to the Avis auto rental office and they brought our car around. It was a pretty, red Renault. A booklet identified each dashboard instrument and control. It had a five-speed gearshift on the floor, and a tricky maneuver to get it into reverse. At first, it seemed sluggish on the curves until I realized it had no power steering.

I worried about venturing into the maelstrom of Madrid traffic, so we got the car at 8:30am, before heavy traffic began. Our route fortunately was an easy drive down two blocks, made one left turn onto the Avenida de Portugal for four blocks, and entered the freeway. We had no trouble, although naturally I stalled the motor as I pulled into traffic.

Spain has several very modern major roads radiating out from Madrid. They numbered the best with an “N” followed by a roman numeral. We took N-V [A5 in 2020] westward to Madrid, similar to an American freeway with easy driving. In less than an hour, Charlotte spotted her first Spanish castle, at Maqueda. It looked like a square fortress on a low hill off in the field.

We continued to the village of Talavera de la Reina and on to Oropesa. We began to observe the curious layout of Spanish towns. In the United States, any small town continues to spread out along the highways. It is almost as if some powerful landlord drew a circle for a town built only within those limits, no farther. In an aerial view, we saw several that showed a crowded village surrounded abruptly by fields. To some extent, this system prevails in England. When you enter a town in Spain, you are immediately in narrow streets winding crookedly between buildings.

There was a parador in Oropesa. We hoped to have lunch there. These are luxury motels, comparable to Holiday Inn or Ramada motels but in their way quite superior to those. There must be a hundred of them around Spain and it is a government project, not a private enterprise. The government in most instances converted old monasteries, convents, castles, and other ancient buildings into lodgings.

Sometimes the parador is within the old building, sometimes adjoined, or attached. To make these really show places, the government conducted competitions to get the best architects, interior designers, and craftsmen. The maintenance and quality control is without flaw. The rates were always lower than our Madrid hotel.

These paradors are booked far in advance and one had to reserve for more than one night. A friend suggested that we could at least stop for lunch at one. We stopped for lunch at the parador in Oropesa. Leaving the main road we went up a narrower road into a village and then on a still narrower street up to the parador. We entered a courtyard with an L-shaped two-story building of lodgings attached to a castle. A workman said they served no meals. It may have been that there was no restaurant or just closed for the day. We found our way down by another narrow street with one-way traffic.

We continued down highway N-V to the village of Trujillo, where there was another parador. There are always good direction signs to paradors but few good signs to anything else. Here the employees were on strike, with pickets carrying signs, so we went on. At the village of Miajadas, we stopped at a roadside cafe. It was the first of several such we patronized and was a fine building that would be a credit in any United States city, but it was beside the road to serve travelers.

We had “paella” which is practically the Spanish national dish, made of rice that is boiled or steamed colored yellow with saffron, and cooked in the rice is a variety of meats and seafood, whatever the day’s market offers. I never drank wine while driving. We usually had “agua mineral, sin gaz” (mineral water without carbonation). There was a mixed salad of lettuce, olives, Spanish onions, etc.



Map 1 - Madrid southwest to Merida (©2009, Ezilon)

Merida

We drove to Merida, an important place in Roman times with many ruins remaining. We found its parador. My friend had suggested that if we reached a parador late in the afternoon, we might see if they had a cancellation or one room vacant.

I went in and drew out a 1000-peseta note, which I usually called a “ten dollar bill”, worth \$8.70 with a portrait of the king. I laid this on the counter, a bit to one side.

“Por favor es posible obtener un cuarto para esta noche, por dos personas?”
(Please, it is possible to get a room for tonight for two people?)

I would hate to have my old Spanish teacher grade my speech! The man looked at me, at the king’s portrait, and examined some charts. He just happened to have one room for one night. They had a basement garage with a locked door, so the car would be safe.

The halls were narrow, ceiling low, and doorways all arched. The room was large; either two or three monastic cells combined into one modern room, or perhaps the old monks did not lead truly [miserable] ascetic lives. The tile work all through the place was ornate

and wonderfully precise. The doors and other woodwork had fine carving. The windows had styled shutters with hand-wrought iron latches that functioned smoothly. The lighting, fixtures, and switches were superior.

There was a color television, controlled from the bed headboard with channels for news, sports, drama etc. There was a small “minibar” refrigerator stocked with chocolate bars, cold drinks, even champagne. It operated on the honor system, when you used anything; you checked a list and paid when you checked out. The clerk gave you its separate key.

There was a fine patio with orange trees (in fruit), palms, and flowers. In the long hallway on our floor, there were four antique tables, each with a different, striking flower arrangement. We touched them to discover that the flowers were indeed real. The housekeeping was immaculate.

It was now only about 5pm, with perhaps three hours of daylight remaining, so we visited the ruins. The streets were crooked, narrow, and winding, so we promptly were lost. We asked two teenagers how to find the ruins. One of them detached himself from his friend and courteously led us a couple of blocks and pointed the direction.

There we saw a Roman oval amphitheater with banks of 15,000 seats for the old spectacles, with entrance tunnels. The entire site is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



Figure 5 - Teatro de Mérida (Benjamín Núñez González, 2017)

We bypassed the Roman circus in Merida, but we went onto the old Roman theater with its banked semi-circle of 5,000 seats, rising four stories, facing a stage backed by fine pillars and statuary. Many tourists and townfolk lounged in the seats or strolled about. Sometimes a person on the stage would call out a word or sound to test the acoustics.

Overhead the soft call of a turtledove was quite clear. The temptation to me was too great. I looked up a couple of words in my pocket dictionary, went to front center stage, and in my strongest voice declaimed the opening words of Marc Antony’s oration on Caesar in Spanish, “Amigos, Romanos, compatriotas! Prestarme sus orejas!” The volume and sound of my voice astounded me. It was quite an inner thrill, but it caused no stir in the seats. Another idiot tourist!

The cool dusk prompted us to walk back to the parador, part of the way along a street converted into a modern pedestrian mall with fine little shops. We did a little laundry that evening. We never saw a laundromat in Spain, although there must have been some. James Michener’s book *Iberia* described this specific parador in Merida.

Day 6 - 4/23

The Romans founded Merida in 23 BC. It has a long Roman bridge of stone, the longest in all Spain, with many arches. We arose early to get some food and see the bridge. At a convenience store selling bread and exotic fruits, we bought a liter of milk in a carton and a package of doughnuts (labeled Do-Nuts), with a couple of bananas. We walked to the famous bridge across the river Guadiana and had our breakfast sitting on the riverbank.



Figure 6 - Puente Romano, Mérida (A stray sheep, 2014)

A large friendly dog offered to act as guide. The doughnuts had a delicate anise flavor. We went back to the hotel, where the dog became guide to a party going to early mass. We asked the desk clerk to call another parador on our list to see if there might be a vacancy. No luck. We loaded the car, drove across the famous bridge, and turned south.

Sunday Drive

This Sunday was devoted to driving. We were on highway N-630, well paved with one lane each way but no median. The road from Madrid to Merida had often been winding and slightly hilly. The land now was nearly level. We played a game, asking each other what any present landscape reminded us of the United States. We agreed that it was like the California central valley with broad vineyards on either side and with low mountain ranges in the distance, rounded not craggy. The more we travel, the more we realize we are on one earth, with changes only in the people and in the structures built.

We readily compared the landscapes to the American West. One section might remind us of west Texas; another was like the road south from Monterey, California; still another would be like the landscape in south central Colorado. The trees in Spain were chiefly olive trees; sometimes cork trees. There were small flocks of sheep or a herd of a few cattle, attended by a shepherd or cowherd who guarded them while they cropped the rich spring grass on the wide shoulder of the highway.

On the entire trip, in city or countryside, whenever we needed a toilet, we stopped at any bar or café, ordered cafe solo, and then used the “servicios” which were always modern and clean. They had them for both men and women. The roadsides were quite clear of litter and there were few advertising billboards.

We often saw large farmhouses, with a big central two-story house, in the style probably introduced by the Romans, with several outbuildings, and the whole compound often encircled or joined by a wall. When still in use, they paint these imposing compounds white. All had red tiled roofs. If abandoned, the walls went unpainted, often partially collapsed, and even the red tiles seemed to disintegrate. In the villages, we sometimes passed a walled cemetery and could see through the gate a wall with niches for coffins, besides the graves.

Sunday Lunch

We stopped for lunch at a roadside cafe called “Vienta Los Conejos,” just north of the village of Santa Olalla. The Sunday customers included local groups, truck drivers, and travelers. One party of fourteen, perhaps an adult birthday party, sat at a long table and served with an immense bowl of “paella” which one of the family ladled out on each plate using a great serving spoon.

Nearly all restaurants handed us an ala carte menu, a vast affair of three folds, listing a hundred items in various categories. Any could be prepared but such custom cooking took time. We did not care to pay the higher price. We soon learned that there were daily specials ready to serve called “plata de dia” (plate of the day). Sometimes this was on a slip attached to the large menu; at other times one had to ask for it.

There often were two price ranges, the regular and the special. Each offered three courses, and a choice of two or three dishes in each course. The first might be a mixed

salad, an Italian dish, or some sort of fish. The second usually had three different types of meat or fish dishes. The third course was dessert, or "postres," usually "flan" (caramel custard tart) or "helado" (ice cream). Such a lunch might run about \$6 to \$10.

We ate many "platas de dia" but this Sunday lunch was not one of my favorites. I ordered as the second course, fried pork chops. There were two chops, cut only about half as thick as in the United States, but the vegetables were the brittle shoestring French fried potatoes that we do not especially enjoy. It was too much like a roadside meal in the States, and I had hoped for something more innovative.

We continued down highway N-630. As we neared Sevilla, we drove through a hilly region with many curves. This was cattle ranch country, although we saw no herds near the road. We bypassed Sevilla. Although it is a major city and contains rich archives that relate to the American Southwest, we had no information about its bookshops. Some Madrid dealers told us we might find little there, and warned about street gangs. We knew from Madrid that driving in the center of town would be a nightmare.

We were approaching Sevilla on the west bank of the Guadalquivir River, which flows along the west side of the town. Our map showed us that if we crossed to the east bank, immediately took an avenue south to the edge of Sevilla, and then turned east, we could thus go around the town and reach the main highway that ran south again.

We still were on busy streets, but sufficient signs guided us to highway A-IV [AP4 in 2020], one of the finest roads in the world. This is a true freeway, with two wide lanes on each side of a median with hedges and bushes down the center. This was a toll road but the toll was not high. There were hedges, bushes, and trees along the side, which kept us from seeing much of the marshland that lies along the Guadalquivir south of Sevilla.

The speed limit was 100 kilometers an hour or only about 62 mph., but the sight of that figure "100" on the speedometer, combined with the rushing sound of the little Renault in a low-slung car with the roadway flashing past made it feel as though we were driving at 100 mph. We kept it there and often went to 110 or 120 km, as we were the slowest car on the road. Every few miles there was a roadside telephone for help or repairs. Every 25 to 40 kilometers there was a roadside rest area identical with the best in the United States except that these served coffee.

Arcos de la Frontera

We continued on A-IV to the turnoff to Jerez de la Frontera, home of the famous sherry wines, especially our favorite Harvey's Bristol Cream Sherry. We had Jerez sherry later, but we left the main road and went about 30 kilometers east to the village of Arcos de la Frontera where there is a parador. The road was a bit narrower, but good and winding.



Map 2 - Sevilla to Algeciras to Almeria (©2009, Ezilon)

There were plenty of signs. Arcos de la Frontera, a town of 25,000, is the first on a national travel trail called “The Route of the White Towns”. They painted all buildings white. Since clustered on the hill, the town shines beautifully from a distance. As we approached the village, we could see an old castle (left) and a cathedral high (right) on a rock ahead. It seemed to be 500 or 1000 feet above the plain.



Figure 7 - Arcos de la Frontera, Cádiz (Alexwing, 2004)

As we entered the village, we kept to the main (almost the only) street, which quickly began to narrow and to climb, then to narrow again and yet again, and to climb until finally we were on a street that was barely nine feet wide including sidewalks, climbing upward at what appeared to be at least 10 degrees. It was a two-way street; belonging to whoever entered it first. I could not turn around but had to go on and up, praying that the Renault would not stall.

At the summit, we burst onto a plaza capable of holding about 75 autos, with a guard to show you where to park. Along one side of this square, the old castle was a frontier post in Moslem times (closed for restoration). Another side of the square was the ancient church, and a third side had the three story parador. The fourth side had a walkway and railing, from which one could look straight down almost a thousand feet (it seemed) to the Guadalete river below. This is one of the most spectacular views in all of Spain.

We went into the parador and again my use of the king's portrait and miserable Spanish brought the admission that there happened to be one room for one night, providing we were married. This curious question meant that the room had only a large double bed.

We soon settled in and walked around the small square, now packed solidly with cars. Autos came up the street we used and often went out at another corner through an arch I am sure was not more than eight feet wide. We walked down that street and saw that perhaps a hundred yards down it made a sharp right turn. Yet on this narrow street was the local police station, with a widened space where the police could park their second squad car. The front of the police station was white, a blank wall with many lovely plants in pots arrayed across its front in ironwork brackets.

We walked a distance back down the street on which we had entered and saw many small shops and one nice cafe, where we had a snack. We walked back to watch the sunset from our eyrie, and then into our room. The clerk was turning people away; we had the last room. This superbly designed and built parador had much tile and carved wood. Since no one had bought five thousand chairs, so all paradors would be the same; each was distinctive. There were fresh flowers in profusion. We watched one television color channel in English, describing some international tennis matches. The great church bells rang every quarter hour and sounded the hour in deep tones.

Day 7- 4/24

We awoke early, and I wondered how we would get down that narrow street. I asked the desk clerk, and he assured me there would be no trouble.

“Just go back the way you came, but if the street forks, take the left fork.”

We started out, with the attitude of the chef who knows one cannot break an egg cautiously. The street seemed even narrower, perhaps only seven feet, but in the next block, it seemed wider, in another block still wider, and then we broke into open streets. Soon we were back on the fine highway A-IV [AP4 in 2020]. We continued south. I enjoyed the road and driving. I burst into song with the [chorus] of the [humorous 78rpm 1939 recording of “Open Road, Open Sky,”] as sung by John Charles Thomas, the [opera and operetta baritone]: *“Free, free as the breeze; no one to say where or why. I can roam as I please; open road, open sky”* (How I wish that old record had not broken.)

We approached the turnoff to Cadiz and made the turn, another turn, and still yet another. We must have missed one sign, for soon we were heading east on a country road with no forks. We studied our map and chose an alternate route to Algeciras, our next major stop.

To make sure, we stopped at the next crossroad with a bar. We had cafe solo and some packaged sweet roll snacks. These friendly bars are not “saloons” but a rural roadside facility with no tables. The ceiling was open up to the pitched roof beams, from which hung several small hams and links of smoked sausage, which we saw in many places.

We brought out our road map. A country fellow looked curiously at the map, as though he had never seen one. It finally dawned on me that he was illiterate and could read nothing on the map. We got directions and soon were on the winding, hilly road south to Algeciras. We had not lost any mileage when we made that wrong turn in Cadiz.

This road was what we call a State Road, much like the road that runs from Cerrillos south to Mountainair, New Mexico. Even the landform scenery seemed similar, for there are mountains along the southern edge of Spain. We entered the village of Los Barrios and soon were in Algeciras. Our Michelin and Baedeker maps showed two parallel main streets in Algeciras, and with only a little difficulty, arrived at the maritime landing where ferryboats run across to Tangier.

“Open Road, Open Sky” (1885)

*My history has made me train
wild animals, but I'm more famed
Because I've really trained myself
to be as spry as any elf*

*The circus life taught me a lot,
now the circus is finished but I'm not.
For I'm not afraid to potter round the dark.
I'll breakfast on tomorrow's question mark.*

*Adventure is in my blood
why any lion could smell it well
But I always hold the whip
and I'll never let it slip
Whatever comes I'll take the good
and send the rest to hell*

CHORUS:

***Roaming free as the breeze
What's to stop me and why?
I can live as I please
Open road, open sky***

*My lion taming acting wazz
enough to create quite a buzz
From Timbuctu to Samarkand
I wowed them in the hinterland*

*I was king of the king of the beasts on the stage
Why the public wouldn't let me out of my cage
They loved it when the lions licked my paws
And I got the lion's share of their applause*

*I follow with the bold
and the brave, when the bold are gone
Whatever I wish I'll be
when the wish appeals to me
For there's a thing worth more than gold:
My creed! I must go!*

CHORUS

From: “The Gypsy Baron”, 1885,
Music Johann Strauss II, Lyrics Ignaz Schnitzer

Tangier, Morocco

As we pulled into the entrance, a small crowd of men milled around apparently wanting to make money as “guides.” We ignored these and went through the gate. The place was similar to many city owned parking garages in the United States, a two story new concrete affair. We drove in, parked, and locked our car.

A young man appeared asking if we wanted the ferry to Tangier. Men working inside are more trustworthy than those outside are. We gave him money for two round-trip tickets, which he soon brought us. He kept hurrying us, saying that the ferry would leave in “*very few minutes*”, and led us to the immigration exit gate. There we waited an hour!

Another person waiting was a young man from Australia, a construction worker with an international firm, which sent crews many places. He had worked in Southeast Asia and in Massachusetts.

The ferryboat was modern and deluxe. There were upholstered seats for hundreds of passengers, but on this Monday in a slow season, there were only scores of travelers.



Map 3 - Strait of Gibraltar

Tangier, Morocco, is almost on the Atlantic side of northwest Africa. Algeciras is on the west side of a bay on the Spanish coast. Across that bay is [the Rock of] Gibraltar, whose profile is more rounded when viewed from the west. The ferry pulled eastward out into the bay, south into the Strait, and southwest across the Strait to Tangier. There was no major motion to cause seasickness. The trip took three hours.



Figure 8- Passport: Algeciras - 4/24/1989

When we landed, we entered a sort of immigration building. In its wide halls, a local guide, a man in his forties wearing a long white robe, approached us. He showed us a government badge and said he was there to show visitors around. We had only about three hours before the return trip, as it was already mid-afternoon. His services including a sort of taxi would cost \$25. It was worth that for the time he could save us.

The ride was only a few blocks. We crossed a modern street and entered the old market and Kasbah. The guide was apparently recognizable as a semiofficial person, for beggars or hawkers usually did not follow us. He took us first to a salesroom displaying rugs. We finally made him understand that we definitely were not there to buy much, and he was crestfallen. I am sure he made money in kickbacks from merchants.

We followed him through the markets, not unlike mercados in Mexican border towns, where vendors offered wares from fruits to handicrafts, in small booths or in a few square feet on the ground. We wanted no textiles, brassware, copperware, baskets, souvenirs, or trinkets. I bought a belt, which turned out to be no better than I expected.

Charlotte bought a few postage stamps. Here were so many poor people working so hard to make a living. Generally, the Kasbah was any [tourist] picture of Morocco, come to life in costume, faces, and sounds.

I asked the guide to show me some bookshops, but I bought nothing.



Figure 9 – Tangier Bookstalls 36 and 29, Morocco (C. Rittenhouse, 4/1989)

The visit was nonetheless worth the trip. Our guide took us back to the ferry terminal, where we had a long, useless wait of more than an hour beyond the scheduled departure. If the ferry kept to schedule, we could have spent two more hours in Tangier. From the food service once on board, Charlotte ordered a sandwich. It was just sliced bread with one thin slice of lunchmeat; no lettuce, no mustard or catsup; plain and tasteless.

On the trip back, we saw Gibraltar with its famous rock in its usual profile. The water was smooth, with waves only a foot and a half high. We could see the white villages of Morocco along the shoreline, and any thoughts of home vanished as we watched the land in the sunset. It was full evening as we docked. We found our car and paid at the exit booth. We did not feel like venturing into the busy town to find a hotel in the dark.

San Roque

We left Algeciras without problems, hoping to find lodging along highway N-340, along the Costa del Sol, or Sun Coast. The winding road had only one lane each way. Within a few miles, we saw a sign HOSTAL and pulled in at the Hotel Patricia in the village of San Roque. The government rates and regulates all lodgings. Below hotels, rated with one to five stars, are the hostals (like an American motel but not at all like the communal hostels in Europe). The quality of the actual room may be very good and equal to any standard motel in the United States.

We got a nice room after carrying our bags downstairs. We were tired. The night was very dark. We left the shutters closed because of the sound of a strong wind outside.

Day 8 – 4/25 Southern Coast

The next morning we opened the shutters not to the sound of wind but surf. Outside the door (tall windows) was a balcony-patio at whose feet lapped the sea. We were on the Mediterranean shore. This hotel would be a wonderful place to spend a week, but this was not that sort of a trip. We watched the sea for a while and then went to breakfast, which was reasonably good, with eggs, toast, and orange juice. The room for two was only \$43.50/night when one could spend \$175 in London and not do as well.

The drive along the southern coast of Spain was the nadir [or lowest point] of our whole trip. We planned to drive from Algeciras to Almeria, less than 200 miles, and hoped to be in Almeria shortly after lunch, to visit a rare book dealer. It did not work that way.

The scenery was like the coast road from Monterey south to Los Angeles, California, hilly, winding, and on the edge of the sea. It was as built up [with side-by-side buildings] for its full length just as the coast road from Los Angeles south to San Diego, California. There was not a half mile in its whole length that was not hilly, curving, or built up.

The signs on the condominiums were often in English, luring English and American buyers. Places had such names as Sunset Villa, and even one named Poncho Villa! The traffic was heavy in this off-season. With only one lane each way, we moved at the mercy of any stow-moving truck ahead. We went through Malaga and stopped for lunch at a roadside restaurant. It was very pleasant to dine overlooking the Mediterranean.

Once we stopped for gasoline. There were adequate service stations all over. There appeared to be only three major oil companies in Spain. The stations were fine, large, with several pumps, but no self-service. I tried to think of the words for “fill it up”. When I said “*lleno*” (full), the attendant looked blank. In New Mexico, we use “lleno” to indicate a meal has filled our stomach. The attendant asked “*completo?*” I learned that this was all I needed to say. We saw no small, independent service stations.

It took us all day to make that run, and was almost dusk when we got to Almeria. Again, we hit that tangle of narrow streets, snarled traffic, inadequate (or no) street signs, and confusion. We missed the entrance to one hotel. In trying to go around the block (which is almost impossible to do in Spain, as there are no standard blocks), I once was directed down the wrong way on a one-way street.

Finally, I pulled into a rare parking space and Charlotte walked down to find the hotel. They had no rooms, but she put up such a piteous outcry that the desk clerk called around and found us a room at another hotel. We went and there was a room but no place to park the car. People in Madrid told us that autos parked on the street could be towed and a fine of about \$500 levied. We did not want the car broken into.

Lost in the Dark

Since the book dealer would not re-open until mid-morning, a delay we could not afford, we drove on. We did not know the roads conditions nor how far we had to go, as we would be entering a mountainous area once we left the coast. We had no choice.

We threaded our way out of Almeria on road N-340. Soon, we passed the area where Spanish and Italian producers film many American-type Western cowboy movies. From the highway, we saw an American movie set of a Western town, which visitors paid admission during no film activity.

Not long after this, the road began to narrow, with old stone bridges only wide enough for a single car. Whoever entered the bridge first had right of way. There were many curves around mountains with few or no safety railings. The evening was becoming dark, so we turned back and took a fork with a sign toward the village of Tabernas.

Tabernas was very small, with an irregularly shaped central plaza. We saw no sign of a hotel. We asked a workman, but we could not understand each other. We soon drove out in desolate country and turned back again.

Twilight Zone Hostel

We noticed a building at the far outskirts of the village missed minutes earlier. It had the eerie look of the old Rod Sterling's television series, *Twilight Zone*. It was a two-story structure with faded lettering across its front, "Bar. Zimmer. Camas." Charlotte knew "zimmer" meant rooms in German. I knew "camas" meant beds in Spanish.

There was a latticed area for dining tables, and across the back ran the bar, with the omnipresent espresso coffee machine. Not a soul was present. Then a small, timid woman appeared from the back, and after she vanished, the landlord-barman appeared.

Did they indeed have rooms? "Si"

Could I see one? "Si"

It was Spartan but adequate, so I pulled the car in under a trellis which half concealed the vehicle. We took in our bags. This was an unrated unlisted hostel.

With my halting Spanish, I asked if we could get food. "Si"

Realizing the place probably had neither menu nor a "plata de dia" [this late at night]; I asked if we could get an omelet ("tortilla").

"Si. Con patatas?"

I foresaw fried potatoes but when the omelets came, the potatoes were inside the omelet and quite tasty. The landlord suggested a mixed salad and I asked if he had any wine of the region, from Jerez. He brought out a bottle of sherry, not exactly Harvey's Bristol Cream, but good with French bread rolls. We had a good evening meal.

A large television sat in the corner of the room with a couple of overstuffed chairs. There the small children, a little girl barely learning to walk with a wheeled walker and a boy two or three years older, romped and watched television at almost 10:30pm. We wondered why the children stayed up so late. The initial eerie feeling of the place had given way to a warm, family atmosphere.

Our room had a large private bath, although apparently there was a scarcity of [hot] water, for a hand-lettered sign asked guests to abstain from doing any laundry. The double bed had no [box] springs under the mattress. It was that rare month with perfect temperatures. We needed neither heat nor cooling.

We arose early and were soon on our way. We could not find the receipt from this hostel, and the photograph of it failed. Had we really been in the *Twilight Zone*? The total cost for the room, the meal for two, and the bottle of Jerez wine came to only \$48.

Day 9- 4/26

We took road N-304 to Guadix. It was a beautiful drive on a winding mountain road. How fortunate we had not driven it at night! We passed the village of Gergal, with an old square castle atop a hill to the right. We came out onto road N-304 to Guadix, where we stopped for breakfast.

Guadix was a prehistoric town. Along one side were cliffs of very soft rock, in which early people carved out caves visible from the street. In later years, they improved the [cave] rooms and added squared doorways and windows. Eventually, they added houses attached to the front of many caves. These places are still inhabited. Chimneys cut upward through the rock.

The road ran west to Granada our next stop. We had difficulty getting down into the central district. Our objective was the famous Alhambra. We followed purple arrows marked "Alhambra," and went around and around in the hectic central district, often inching along through traffic jams.

We almost found it, but at the last turn, a traffic policeman waved us into a real traffic gridlock. The one-way street was eight feet wide, not including sidewalks. It took two hours to move five blocks, as autos were bumper to bumper.

Finally, we gave up in disgust and just kept moving as nearly straight as the crooked streets would allow out of the business district, then through a warehouse area with graveled streets, until we reached the highway north to the town of Jaen. As with Sevilla and Almeria, a visit to Granada requires a non-driving trip.

The road now lay through mountainous country, with winding roads but with no cliffhangers. The rows of olive trees down the slopes made geometric patterns. We stopped for lunch at a roadside restaurant, a large place like so many others, and continued to Jaen.

There was a parador at Jaen, but again lanes of close, heavy traffic caught us. When we came to the sign for the parador, it pointed to the left. We were in a "right lane must turn right" lane. We turned right but could not figure out how to get back.

We sat in a parking area and fumed quietly. When such things happen, as they surely will, the only sane thing to do is to accept them without swearing, tears, or panic. Even if we had reached the parador, there might be no room. The parador in Jaen might have been high on a hill, where there was a castle. It could have been a repetition of the narrow streets in Arcos de la Frontera. There was nothing special in Jaen, so we went on toward another town, Bailen.

Bailen

We reached Bailen without difficulty, an early Roman town. The Romans won a battle here in 208 BC and in 1808; Spanish troops gave Napoleon his first defeat here.

It had a parador and the engraved portrait of the king worked its usual magic. While not part of an historic building, it resembled a Holiday Inn on the exterior, but the interior was pure parador luxury. There was a covered place to park the car. Within the spacious lobby, one walked up three steps into a wide hall, down which ran a vast refectory table with a long embroidered scarf. The room was light and opened onto a flowered patio.

It was now about 7:30pm, so we walked three blocks to the center of this town of about 15,000 people. On the way, we passed an extraordinary civic rose garden with flowering bushes and trees. After going down one business street, we reversed our steps and went up to the town's small square or plaza. We went into a "papelería" (newsstand) which carried books. On the way back, we stopped in a small convenience store and bought milk, fruit, and pastries. It was an altogether pleasant evening walk.

Back at the parador, we saw why vacancies were so scarce. A bus tour booked almost the entire place. Such bus tours come from many parts of Europe. In one town, we saw a large party of Japanese.

Day 10- 4/27

We ran ahead of schedule and dawdled a bit going to Toledo, our next main stop. This time, we used some strategy to avoid the late afternoon traffic jams. We would stop about twenty miles short at the village of Mora. We could whip into Toledo early the next day at an hour when traffic was light.

From Bailen, we drove west a short distance to view the landscape, which proved to be nearly flat and ordinary. On the way, we passed heavy road machinery working along the highway. When we had seen enough of this countryside, we turned back, but by now, the road crew had stopped all traffic in both directions. We sat for an hour and a half.

Reaching Bailen [again], we found the major national highway N-IV [A4 in 2020] heading up toward Madrid. Soon, we were in La Mancha, Cervantes *Don Quixote* country. The land was flat with a fine divided highway. We made good time. We stopped for lunch at a roadside restaurant where there were some windmills, left undefeated by the ancient Don.

We had La Mancha dishes, such as "potage Manchego," white beans similar to our navy beans but larger, cooked with chunks of potato in a stock made by boiling ham, and served with pieces of two different kinds of sausage. For dessert, we had slices of Manchego cheese, the regional cheese, said to be the best produced in Spain. It looked like longhorn cheese but tasted like cheddar.



Map 4 - Bailen to Mora to Toledo to Madrid ((c)2009 Ezilon)

We drove on north to the village of Madridejos and left N-IV to head northwest toward Toledo on a lesser road C-400. We soon came to a castle [of La Muela] at Consuegra high atop a hill and flanked by a dozen windmills.



Figure 10 - Castle of La Muela - Consuegra (Kent Wang 2020)

Mora

We later entered the village of Mora, which had narrow streets but [the town] was not large enough to pose a problem. We found the central plaza, Plaza Principe de Asturias, with the Hostal Agripino (\$21.75/night). Next door, in the same building, was a bar. The front room of the hostel had a dining area, in which they were removing tables and setting up the chairs audience-style for a lecture that evening.

We got a room without difficulty. It was too small for its large double bed, but we managed. Every parador in Spain had ample bedding. This room had an adjoining bath.

I parked across the street and a young blonde fellow approached, whom I think was from Germany. Neither of us spoke good Spanish. He kept pointing at a big truck in front of the hostel. I thought he wanted me to give him my parking space, and I firmly said no. By words, signs, and body language he finally convinced me that he merely wanted to trade parking places, which occurred easily and to mutual benefit.

We walked about the town and various shops. On the streets leading out of the irregularly shaped plaza, men set up carnival rides when the town would celebrate its annual olive fiesta. The various rides were similar to any United States county fair.

Charlotte wanted eye drops for her contact lens. We found a shop that dealt partly in optical goods, but had no drops with the ingredients she needed. Still, they were knowledgeable young people and we understood each other. Charlotte wanted bobby pins and found a general store that handled what she needed.

I had lost my necktie, which I wore only when making a business call as is the custom in Spain. We could not find a men's wear store but found a women's wear store. The young salesclerk took me out to the sidewalk and pointed the direction to a men's shop.

We wandered a bit but found it. As a village, merchants developed good shops in very small places not built for display windows. We felt we were in someone's living room. Everything felt jammed in, yet there was a remarkably wide stock. Prices approximated the United States. A man was buying a new suit, or rather, his family was buying it, for such a major purchase required many approvals. A necktie was a "corbata" but I saw none. The owner's wife came out, and I asked for a "corbata." When she brought out a long box such as florists use for roses, it was full of ties.

Back at the hostel, workmen were still setting up carnival rides. Others erected a booth to serve "churros", a sort of deep-fried doughnut [often sugared] that consists of one strand a foot long as thick as your thumb, bent into a loop with the ends crossed

There was a crowd waiting to get into the lecture, which we learned was only an encyclopedia salesman giving a group presentation. It indicated the sparseness of entertainment in that village.

Around the plaza, at least a dozen older men all wore the same sort of brown beret. Charlotte wondered if this was only a current fashion or if the men were all veterans of some unit. She had noticed these in other towns. We never learned the answer to this.

In Spain, the beret, usually known as the boina, were once common men's headwear mainly across the north and central areas. It spread over most of Spain during the 19th century. It ended up becoming a stereotype of rural people, often with negative connotations of boorishness and uncouthness, found in expressions such as "paleto de boina a rosca" ("a hick wearing a screwed-on boina"), which has reduced the number of boina wearers even more.
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beret> (edited)

Day 11- 4/28 Toledo

We left the Hostal Agripino, and in half an hour, we were in Toledo. The town is compact because of geographical limitations sitting on a rocky eminence surrounded by a loop of the fast running Tagus River. The Targus comes down from the north on the eastern side of town and makes a loop around the south, then flows to the north. On the far side of the river, a suburban road encircles Toledo.



Figure 11 - Toledo Panorama (C. Rittenhouse 4/1989)

Within this loop, on a high mass of rock, is the city in a rough circle a little over a mile across. There is little in the way of outlying suburbs. This crowded area is equal in size to the heart of downtown San Francisco.

This was the center of Castille when Columbus reached America. It was a Roman stronghold and the capital of the Visigoths, who ruled Spain in the sixth century. Many of its streets are hilly, and the footing underneath irregular. We walked its streets for almost ten hours and saw much, but not all.

We entered the eastern edge of the city on a belt avenue to the north edge. Down a very few blocks on the Carretera de Madrid just north of the bull ring, we spotted the Hostal Madrid and a parking place in front, because the hour was barely 9 am.

There were two hostals in the building, Hostal Madrid was on the upper floor, and another was on the ground floor at the back. We entered the building and followed signs down a hall and up the stairs. To save electricity, the hall was not lit. One pressed a large wall plate and the lights went on for a few minutes.

At the top of the stairs, the locked door opened at the push of a button. They gave us two keys, one for our room and one for the front door. The room was neat and satisfactory, but the desk clerk said we could have it for only one night.

Toledo does not have many hotels. Michelin lists only eight, with barely 300 rooms, although this does not include the hostals. There are taxis, but we saw no buses.

Leaving our hostel, we walked south and entered the old walled city after a few blocks, entering through the towers of the Bisagra Gate. We started up the Calle del Arabal. Tourism is a major activity where shops offered curios and antiques of all types.

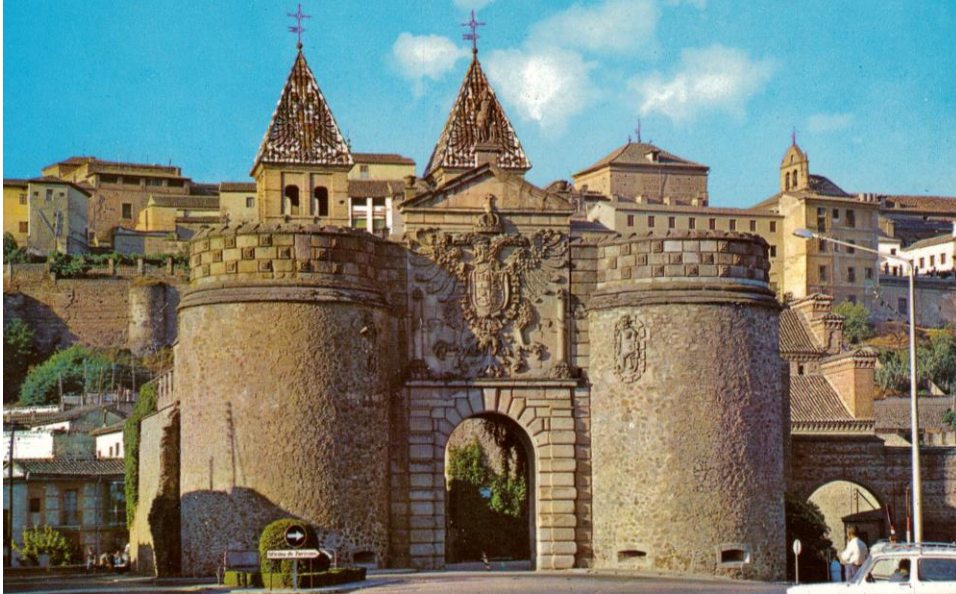


Figure 12 - Bisagra Gate, Toledo (J. de la Cruz postcard)

Toledo was known for centuries for sword makers and artisans in metal. We visited one workshop (among many) who do inlay work and damascene on reproductions of swords, jewelry, and metalwork. These shops display crossbows, old-style pistols, daggers; some may be ancient but most are reproductions. One shop of craftsmen showed incredibly fine artistry. [The hand-stamp on one receipt displayed various hilts of swords.]



Figure 13 – Handstamp on Artesania Toledo Receipt - 1989

We climbed one steep little street, upward toward the Plaza de Zocodover, an irregular open space that is their Times Square of Toledo. A young woman came up beside us pushing a baby stroller. She and Charlotte exchanged knowing glances at the climb.

On the “Zoco” plaza, we paused for cafe solo taken at open-air tables on the square. In a "papelería" (newsstand) on the north side, I purchased a better, larger map of Toledo than shown in guidebooks. At the Museum of Santa Cruz, there are many paintings by El Greco, who was a contemporary, more or less, of Cervantes and Shakespeare.

We walked down to the Alcazar fortress, rebuilt many times. This massive, square structure has pointed towers at each corner. It dominates the town, as does the cathedral.



Figure 14 – Alcazar Fortress, Toledo (C. Rittenhouse, 4/1989)

During the Spanish civil war in the mid-1930s, a group of Franco’s younger soldiers held the stronghold for some weeks before a relief column arrived. I was never an admirer of the fascist Franco, and this episode was to me a negative Alamo, although it was useful to see where it happened.

From the Alcazar, we walked through narrow streets and stopped for a good lunch. We went several blocks to the house of El Greco. Several tourist groups wanted to go through, one of Japanese, and another looked like a girls from Tome finishing school.

We stopped at the Santo Tome church to view one of El Greco's most famous paintings, the *Burial of the Count Orgaz*. This huge [16 x 10 foot] painting has the lower part showing the count lowered by two church dignitaries, while important aristocrats look on. The upper half shows the count's soul welcomed into heaven. The technical mastery of El Greco is evident, and the group of aristocrats reminded me of Rembrandt's group paintings of prominent men.



Figure 15 - El entierro del señor de Orgaz (El Greco, 1586)

Charlotte stood for several minutes at El Greco's *Tears of Saint Peter* at another place, as a masterpiece in conveying emotion. While she was studying this [40 x 31 inch] work, a group of visitors passed and their guide said something about this picture. A woman in the group [quickly] glanced at it over shoulder and kept walking. She had 'seen' El Greco's work, and that was all that she needed.



Figure 16 - The Tears of St. Peter (El Greco, 1590)

We enjoyed Toledo more than any other total city on this trip. One commentator, Cossio, says if you “can only spend a single day in Spain [you] ought, without hesitating, to spend it seeing Toledo.”

We climbed back up the hilly street to a pastry shop in whose window displayed wooden molds for pastry or candy. Charlotte collects these. We went in to see if they were for sale. The owner conveyed that these were his own and not for sale, not even when I held up a large piece of currency. He understood why she wanted the item. We understood why he could not part with it. This mutual feeling led to a most amicable moment.

We went across the street for a cold drink at a juice bar. It was a small hole-in-the-wall place. Workmen were bringing in a new cooler, a small refrigerator. They had to hoist it high and squeeze past the customers. Restrooms, “servicios”, are always immaculate.

Toledo: Javier Pulgar Alonso Bookshop

On this same street was the book and stationery shop of Javier Pulgar Alonso, at Santo Tome, 19. He dealt only in new books and his shop was not large. I gave him my card (“tarjeta”) and asked if any shop sold old books. He said there was one opposite “lion’s door” in the cathedral. We spoke only a few minutes with our little Spanish. He spoke no English. At first, our words were formal, but the tone of our talk warmed when I invited him to visit us if he came to New Mexico. He waved his hands at the shop around him and conveyed the idea that he was chained to this place. He gave me his card.

Toledo: Libreria Anticuaria Balaguer Bookshop

We walked all sides of the cathedral until we came to the “lion’s gate”. The bookshop was Libreria Anticuaria Balaguer, Cardinal Cisneros, 1, 45001 Toledo, operated by Senora Primitiva Poveda a middle-aged woman whom is the widow of a former owner.

This shop had wide frontage but shallow depth. The area in front of the counter was perhaps six feet deep. Behind the counter were shelves of old books ranked without shelf labels to indicate subject. Many were in ancient vellum, with spine labels hand-lettered, from the sixteenth to eighteenth century. Senora Poveda asked me in Spanish if I was interested in any special subject. The day was moving toward sunset, and both of us were quite tired (weariness hits me all at once), and I knew there was little likelihood of there being any of the books I wanted.

I resolved to get back some day and go down those shelves book by book. Instead, I asked her if she had any “hojas” (the single leaves from early books). She took me into another room and there were many leaves of manuscript music from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, done by hand on large pieces of vellum, with colored drawings of vines down one side and with a miniature of a reclining saint at the bottom.

I bought four. They are not Western Americana, but I could not resist them. These four leaves opened a new chapter in the world of books, trying to give these some identity, and learn their manufacture and usage. They are from an antiphonary.

We asked if she could call us a taxi. Taxis are not frequent. She brought out a chair for Charlotte. The taxi soon arrived and we rode quickly back to the hostel.

Day 12 - 4/29

Saturday was a leftover. Because schedule changes and we could not find a room for another night in Toledo, we chose to wander gypsy-like zigzag seeing the countryside toward the town of Alcala de Henares, northeast of Madrid. The main Barajas airport is on the northeastern edge of Madrid. If we stayed the night just beyond the airport, we could drive in the next morning, return the rented car, and catch our scheduled flight to London. The Mora and Toledo gambit had worked well. If it worked at Alcala, we could avoid Madrid traffic.

We drove west from our hostel, across the north side of Toledo and across the river, and then drove counter-clockwise on this outer road. There was practically no traffic. We stopped at many points to photograph the morning sun on the tiled roofs of Toledo.

We left Toledo and took road N-400 toward the town of Ocana but as we neared that town, we came upon a line of halted cars, backed up because of road construction. Remembering our experience west of Bailen, and having no special need to go into Ocana, we wandered off on a much lesser road to the southeast and at the first village turned north. We took any road that caught our fancy and gradually worked our way north toward the town of Chinchon.

In Morata, near Chinchon, we stopped at a pleasant cafe. It had fine tile work and on one wall were mounted some ancient tools used in vineyards and in winemaking. However, it was only 1pm (or rather 13:00) and lunch would not be ready for another hour. Of course, we got cafe solo, lingered a while, and drove on. I cannot cease to praise the maintenance and modernity of these restaurants, and their marvelous use of tiles.

Alcala de Henares

We passed through Arganda and Loeches, on a hilly, winding country road and came to Alcala de Henares. The Romans called this city of 140,000 as Computum. The Moors later named it "al Kal'a" (fortress). Cervantes was born here, and had for centuries a fine university, which was later moved to Madrid

Baedeker and Michelin both listed only two or three hotels or hostals in the town, but we had no local map. We just drove around and by sheer luck came upon one of them, Hostal Bari where the king's portrait worked its charm. We got a room.

This was no Spartan place. They rebuilt much of Alcala after heavy destruction during the Spanish civil war of the 1930s. Buildings were new, modern, and comfortable. There was a bullfight that evening, and one of the matadors, with his "cuadrilla" (entourage of assistants) stayed at this hostel. They all appeared in the lobby in full bullring costume. Charlotte took a photograph of one with permission, and it turned out quite well. Soon all ten got into a small van and a sedan and left for the bullring.

Day 13- 4/30 Flight to London

The street on which our hostel was located was the road to Madrid airport. In less than an hour, we were at the gate marked “international departures”. We surrendered the little red Renault. Its trip meter showed that we had driven exactly 2,100 kilometers.

We arrived early for extra check-in time and for baggage examination (not needed). We had breakfast in a quick-serve, share-table dining area. A young Spanish woman joined us who was going to Florence, Italy, to spend several months improving her skill in Italian. She spent time in Chicago, on Rush Street (my old haunt), and thought Chicago was a most exciting place. She was learning French, German, and English.

We were to take British Airways to London’s Gatwick airport. There was much time to wait, so we bought a fat copy of the *London Times*. In the literary supplement, there was an enthusiastic review of Riehard Collier’s new book, *THE WARCOS: The War Correspondents of World War II*. The next day, in London, I bought a copy of it, chiefly because it had much about Ernie Pyle whose home was in [our city of] Albuquerque.

The Spanish airport did not inspect our bags, but sent our bags to Heathrow airport in error and not to Gatwick. This caused us delay upon arrival in London, but by midnight, they delivered the bags to our hotel.

The flight was short and easy, about the same distance and time as from Albuquerque to San Francisco. Our agent made an error in our booking and placed us in first class. There were three clues: the price was curiously high, we sat in the first row (all seats otherwise identical). We were served an unusually fine lunch. That may have expedited the recovery of our lost bags. Of course, I had the rarest purchases in my carry-on bag.

Gatwick airport had undergone some expansion since our visit in 1985. We went through immigration, using forms we filled out on the plane, and went through the “nothing to declare” gate of customs, without any inspection. The train to Victoria station ran fast, but saw that the station had also gone through much change since 1985.

We took a taxi to the “bed and breakfast” hotel where we had a secure reservation. We scanned through several latest guidebooks until we came upon a list of lesser hotels. We picked some near central London, and I simply picked up my phone at home and dialed. The first two were booked up, but the third had a room. All of the calls cost less than \$5 total. I gave them my MasterCard number, so they would hold the room until late, which was lucky because of the delay caused by our missing luggage.

This was the Ruskin Hotel, at 23 Montague Street, London. This street runs beside the British Museum in the Bloomsbury district, just off Russell square. It was a home of the sort seen in the television series “Upstairs, Downstairs” but they so fully remodeled it that the only remaining [original] touch was a curved wall in the ground floor lounge and an old mural painting on the wall above the fireplace from 1820.

We had two keys, one for the front door, and one for our room. They had an elevator. They promised a room with private bath, but the day before we left, we received a reservation letter saying they could provide only a room with its own washbasin; bath and toilet were down the hall. It was too late to cancel and make a change!

We were ready for the next three days in London.

Day 14 – 5/1 London Bank Holiday

We neglected to check the British calendar before this trip, for May 1, our first day in England was a “Bank holiday” similar to a legal holiday in the United States. Banks and all government offices closed. Some businesses closed but not all. At first, we thought it would be a dull day, but the department stores were open. We headed out.

At one store, I bought a Viyella [mixed cotton and wool] robe. This fabric is easily washable and quite warm. My old one of the 1950s was sadly worn. We were unable to find another. Even at Brooks Brothers in San Francisco, they said they no longer carried these robes “because they became too expensive.” In London, we found one at a price below the cheapest substitute at Brooks Brothers.

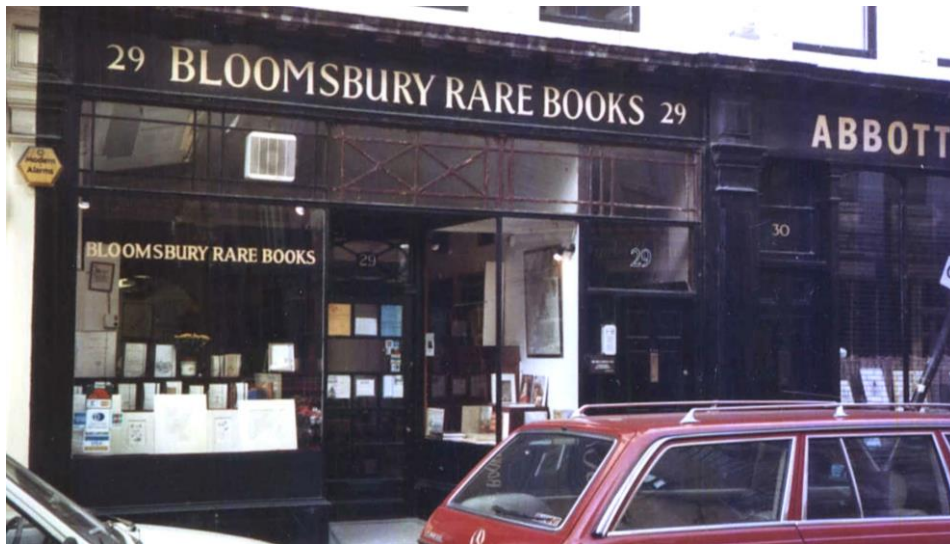


Figure 17 - Bloomsbury Rare Books (C. Rittenhouse 5/1989)

We walked down a busy commercial street and had lunch at a pub with a list of dishes posted on the wall. A waitress served us. I sampled a half-pint of Guinness’ stout and found it quite good.

We walk toward the theatrical district. We changed some travelers’ checks at a currency exchange but got less for our dollars than we would have at a bank. However, banks closed that day. At the theaters, all plays were sold out for the holiday and most good plays were sold out for the next two to three months!

Since not far from our hotel, so we went there. In “bed and breakfast” places, few places have a television in each room but they have one in the central lobby or lounge. We had our breakfast there that morning. At specified hours, one goes down to a dining room, for a fixed-menu breakfast. In this case, it was eggs, a strip of bacon, a slice of ham (both meats a bit different from the United States), toast, jam, and coffee. A young waitress, nagged and badgered by an eagle-eyed older woman, served us.

That night we looked out of our window, which faced the rear. Although all buildings on our block sat quite near the street, they combined their back yards into a small, common park, with lawns, walks, and flowerbeds. In the dusk, we saw a proprietary cat appear, then another and another, until five or six sat more or less in a circle as though discussing the day’s events.

When I arose once during the night, one or two still patrolled the area to keep the place safe from tigers I suppose. They took their work very seriously, and all retired at dawn.

Day 15- 5/2

We took a cab to Waterloo station, and as we were familiar with this place and its trains, we caught train at once for Guildford. We bought the lower priced one-day, two-way tickets. In an hour, we went through several stations and were at Guildford where we planned to attend a book fair of antiquarian dealers.

First, we stopped in a cafe for a snack, and then caught a cab to the city building for the fair. The fair was almost identical with fairs that attended in San Francisco, Phoenix, and Denver. It had the same sort of folding bookcases, filled (in this case) with British books. I found one reference work on British juvenile books, which I had long sought, but nothing else. The booksellers mostly displayed titles for local buyers.

We soon sought a cab, not easily seen in smaller towns. We stopped at a modern bookstore selling newer books with either a microfiche or computer to identify new books in stock or in print. We tried in vain to catch a cab and finally the shopkeeper called one for us.

At the shop of Traylor, an antiquarian dealer, we found a few books, but no treasures. We caught a cab to the railway station and a train back to London. As mentioned, we described the details of our book hunting in a separate account written for a New Mexico Book League bulletin.

We had one more full free day in London. Altogether, during our three days, we managed to get to Maggs Brothers bookstore and some other bookshops.

We had three good meals, at an Italian restaurant in Bloomsbury, at a deluxe Chinese restaurant below Russell Square, and at a Greek (Cretan) restaurant on the same street.

We visited the British Museum, particularly to see the Elgin marbles, sculptures in stone removed from the Parthenon in Athens. We viewed the original Rosetta stone, which enabled scholars to break the code of ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics, because they carved the same text in hieroglyphics, demotic Egyptian letters, and Greek. We brought a [13 x 10 inch replica, which in 2020 hangs in the Harry Briley home].

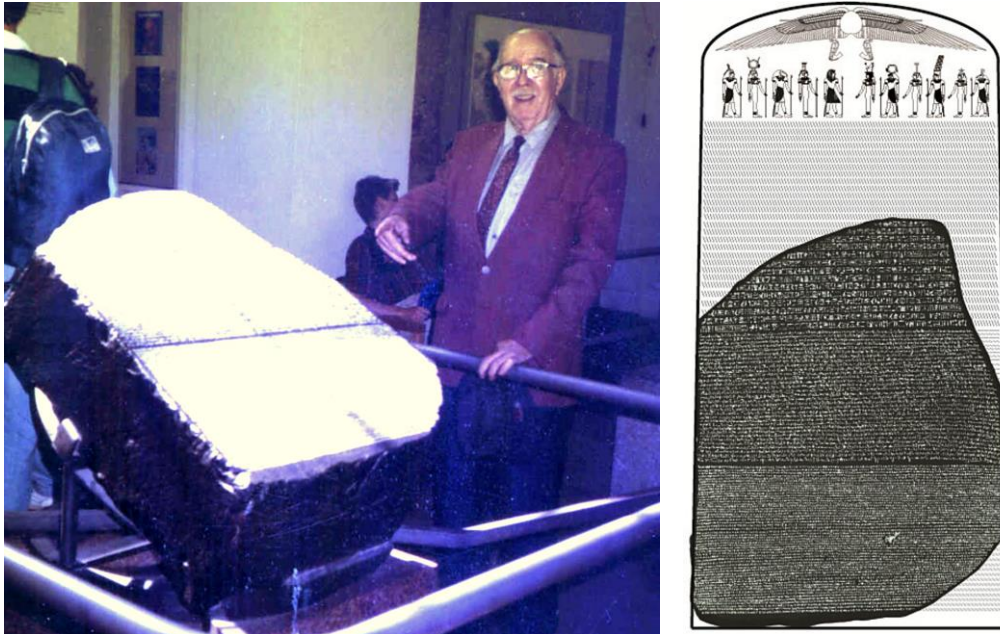


Figure 18 - Rosetta Stone (C. Rittenhouse 5/1989) and placement (Wikipedia)

Charlotte bought good additions to her stamp collection at a philatelic store and at the British post office. I bought a new Harris Tweed jacket at a store across the street from the British Museum, at a very good price compared to prices charged back home.

Day 17- 5/4 Flight Home

On the seventeenth day of our trip, we arose at 6 am, with our bags already packed. I paid the desk the night before, at about \$88.50/night, including breakfast, compared to \$170/night currently being asked at our previous London hotel. We caught a cab to Victoria station and the train to Gatwick airport. With time to spare, we had a heavy breakfast in a quick-food area that had a wide menu.

The trip via American Airlines was uneventful. We went through customs inspection in Dallas, and late the same day we reached Albuquerque. We were awake for twenty-two hours. Though exhausted, we had a fine trip. We stayed within our budget and bought books home that paid for the trip.