



MELCHERS *Travels*

L-R: Streets of Gibraltar; Clifftop at Los Canos Du Meca (Between Cadiz and Gibraltar); View within the Seville Cathedral

By Phil Melchers

Back in July I had the chance to visit Southern Spain. Speaking honestly, I knew little about the region known as Andalucía, but after being invited to go by a companion I had met in Amsterdam, my traveller's heart became greedy to go.

The trip started in Madrid before moving to Seville via high-speed train. While travelling I witnessed landscapes commonly seen within the Spaghetti Westerns filmed there, though they had seemed naked without rampaging outlaws, bursting six-shooters and shanty towns in its distance.

Arriving in Seville, the first thing I noticed was its dramatic climate, which reached temperatures of near 45C degrees. Though the weather certainly did simmer, I found that a cold shandy (mostly beer mixed with lemonade) was always just a few steps away.

There was a lot to see in Seville and though my top pick was the Seville Cathedral, playing I spy with a building's architecture proved to be just

as rewarding. Seville, and Andalucía as a whole, has a diverse history involving influences from Roman, Moorish, and Catholic cultures. Thus, it was easy to see most of Andalucía as a smorgasbord of design, and though this was true for Seville, its architectural diversity was incomparable to our next destination, Cadiz.

Cadiz is one of Europe's oldest continually inhabited cities. Everything from the cobblestone streets, built from stone brought from the Americas, to its hidden Roman ruins spoke something about Cadiz's long history. For me, this history was part of what made Cadiz so beautiful, and why it became one of my favourite cities. That, and the fact that it is surrounded by gorgeous beaches, full of fresh seafood, and inhabited by a collection of unworried, easy-going locals. As wonderful as Cadiz was however, I could only spend so long before I had to move to the final stop, Gibraltar.

If Cadiz was my favourite city, then Gibraltar was the most intriguing. Known mostly for its

militaristic history, Gibraltar is a small peninsula off the coast of Spain still considered to be British territory. This meant that to enter Gibraltar I had to cross an international border. To go from Spain into Britain is somewhat of a cultural shock, and for me, quite comedic. Gibraltar was quick to look like it was proudly British, with its red telephone booths and Bobby Policemen, and yet among the locals it seemed celebrated more for being entirely duty free.

Gibraltar's most central tourist attraction is a giant mountain fortified for military defence referred to as "the rock." Though I didn't get much chance to explore the rock, I did manage to see its many macaws, a cute yet troublesome breed of monkey, as common there as squirrels are in a typical Canadian backyard.

After Gibraltar my trip ended with a return to Seville, and then finally back to Madrid. I was a bit sad to leave Spain behind; especially after all I had seen. The worst part was the feeling that I had missed seeing something. What about Granada? Barcelona? Malaga? In my mind I had come to cross Spain off the checklist, and now there was no reason to return. I was quick however, to recognize the error of this thinking, for I had not finished Spain. I had only just barely scratched Andalucía. Of course there was much more to see. There will always be more to see. The beauty of this world lies in its size and diversity. For the moment, I treated my travels like some sort of menu, to be completed in short sittings, instead of seeing it as it had been so far: a buffet of endless discovery. **LH**

Editor's Note: Phil Melchers is one of our freelance writers, and has written for Living Here since our inaugural publication in Nov 2013. Phil lives in Lyn, On and has decided as a twenty something young man to do what some of us wish we could have done; take a year out of our lives and explore the world. In this case he is in Europe where he hopes to work, travel and connect with his family's roots in The Netherlands. In our March/April issue Phil started off his journey and gave us some of his first impressions of his trip. We learned some more about his travels in the May/June & July/Aug issues and we will be continuing for the rest of the upcoming issues in 2015 to have Phil write about his experiences through his eyes. To read about Phil's experience go to our website www.livingherebrockville.weebly.com and find our March/April & May/June & July/Aug 2015 issues.