

## A few days in Madrid

The easiest way to book the trip is on the internet, we thought. Hotel Maria Elena Palace was no difficulty. We then came to book the AVE train, there it came into a halt. So many options and discounts. We called Ruta Solar in Torremolinos who helped us earlier when we traveled. The tickets come with email and everything was ready for departure. We parked the car in the garage under the train station in Fuengerola and took the elevator up to the platform. Comfortable in every way, but maybe a bit expensive. The security screening to the train is easy, without all needed more or less take off their clothes. We had booked so we could sit four people facing each other. Two hours and fifty minutes later we step out of the Madrid Atocha. Our hotel is ideally located only a golf shot from the Puerta del Sol, one of the tourist great starting point to explore the city.



It was now just in time to stroll down to the Plaza Mayor and find a Tapas restaurant. Around the corner is the old market hall, which today has countless small watering hole for those who want a taste of what Madrid has to offer when it comes to both food and wine. Crowded, intense and full of new smells. Lots of new taste. However, we are tired of traveling and looking down on the street next door and puts us in an open-air café in the sun to plan the day in the capital of Spain.

Normally, we start with a bus tour around the city. Now we skipped that. We were here for twenty-one years ago but we can hardly say that we remember the city but little grip we have. It will be a walk down to the Palacio Real and the little stray in the area next before returning to the hotel for siesta.

Many small shops close for siesta, but the big chain stores are open so we recognized a little when we are passing.

In the evening we strolled past the Plaza Mayor and down to Calle de la Casa Baja. Here lies the fifty tapas places. One can go from place to place and taste the different specialties and to this a good glass of wine or a beer. It takes all night and you get to meet lots of happy Madriljanos. A lovely experience. Should the unlikely still be hungry, there are plenty of restaurants to visit. On the way home, we went through the old town and took the opportunity to book a table at the world's oldest restaurant, Casa Botin.

The next day, we went up and down the shopping streets north of Puerta del Sol. The latter seems to be the major venue in Madrid. Lots of people, different types of street performers and



much to look at, almost around the clock, it seems. We strolled on a little northeast to the pedestrianized Calle Hortaleza. Lots of small unique shops and then we turned to the west and stopped for a coffee at one of the few remaining cafés from the last century, Gran Cafe de Gijon. The waiter says that he worked there for thirty eight years and seen many intellectuals come and go over the years. Let's try some of the specialties. The cake is big enough for all three of us and some more.



Satisfied we continue to Calle Serrano to browse through the really expensive shops. There will be window shopping with an occasional visit to enjoy some beautiful clothing, out of reach financially.

The plan is to go thru Parque de Retiro. The major lung in Madrid, such as Central Park in New York and Hyde Park in London. You can stroll for hours undisturbed and enjoy the trees and plantings. We sat down on a bench and enjoyed the day. But suddenly came black clouds on the Sky. Some friends call and ask if we should be eating lunch together at a Japanese restaurant. The choice is not that hard. Hey, taxi! It's raining so we skip the museums and have a nice afternoon in the company of good friends. You do not need to do everything you planned. The museums remain. We take them another day.



Later that evening, we get ready to go to a restaurant Botin. In the basement masonry arches and in the upstairs rafters hundreds of years old, carefully counting from 1725, even though the restaurant started back in the 1600<sup>th</sup> century. Nothing wrong with the environment, the full pot. Most guests seem to take in the fixed menu with traditional roast suckling pig. The food comes with rocket speed as they are cooking pork and potatoes in advance. The food may not get the highest rating, but it's fun to have been

there. On the way to the hotel we stops once more at the Puerta del Sol and watch the entertainment. Here you can find the 0-point of the roads going out from Madrid. Despite being late are several school classes in the square, probably on a school trip and with other evening habits than we northerners have. Something we who lives at Costa del Sol is a bit unfamiliar with the intense begging, with or without instruments. It's a little disturbing when the tenth person comes while we are eating lunch. Police presence is great so you feel safe. But as in all big cities you should have an eye on your belongings.

The last day there shall be some purchases. It is much less expensive here than in Marbella. We walk around and shop. Now the plan is to resume the walk through Retiro Park. So nice to enjoy the arriving spring. There is a small lake where you can rent a boat to row around in. Everywhere families with children, retirees who enjoy life, joggers, school classes, and tourists. The area is so large that it will not be disturbed. We walk to Crystal Palace, an exhibition pavilion from the late nineteenth century and on through the great rose-planting.



Spring had not come so far, so there were no roses bloomed, you will have to wait until May to see them and especially feel the scent.

We pass the Prado and Thyssen museums. We will not visit them today. We wait until next time. We stop and look at bookshops located in the hill sloop down to the Prado - for those who can Spanish is a paradise. The city has shown its best side. Beautiful house and many squares create a pleasant urban

environment. Large boulevards and parks make the city airy and open. We sit in the Plaza Santa Ana to eat a tapas lunch. In the morning we discovered that the maid threw our paper bag away, with cinnamon rolls and our train tickets together some other things. One can get nervous for less. While it would be nice to stay for a day at the hotel's expense, we want to get home. During the day, they ordered new tickets - copies of our internet tickets. We can eat our lunch in peace and quiet in the square and enjoy the spring sunshine and take a taxi for ten euros to the train station. Nice to comfortably rush at a speed of 250 km per hour and look out over the first agricultural landscape and then miles and miles of olive trees. The evening sun starts to go down over the horizon and landscape is dressed in the yellow twilight. We are soon in Malaga and take the car home. We will soon return to Madrid - we are probably a bit in love with our Spanish capital.



Hasta luego!