

EUROPE 2023



4 months | 6 countries | 8 house swaps | 10 journey legs

A Foreign Country

Turn on the telly and try to work out what is happening. French was at least a little bit more decipherable than Spanish. A fast talking Spaniard sounds like a machine gun.

Flip channels and stop at what appears to be the Sports Channel. Hoping to see some football but was presented with the America's Cup sailing tournament in Barcelona. I got lost for an hour shocked at how much change the "sport" has gone through. Talk about winged keels!! Talk about the march of technology. Those "boats" are now captained by a "pilot" and no part of the hull gets wet during racing. I kid you not!!

Football? This is Catalonia and the world of Barcelona!! Woohoo!! Finally. But sitting here watching the pre match summary is really perplexing and a little boring especially when there are summaries of roller skate hockey, water polo and downhill bike racing with a drone (flown by someone I actually know) following a bike downhill at speed.

Other general reflections:

There are an amazing proliferation of pharmacies/drug stores and corner stores selling pastries and fresh fruit and veg and and basics.

Kids everywhere noisily playing in the various public areas.

Lots of grandparents chaperoning their grandkids home. Slowly. Talking. Smiling.

A proliferation of scooters (including e-scooters) and bikes. We are in our element.

Extremely narrow back lanes with little space available for cars to pass if someone decides to park inappropriately.

People are extremely helpful even if we don't ask for it. They offer to carry your bag down stairs, go out of their way to show you where to go, check out on Google as to locations, and generally smile and nod. Good to see.

Its all part of living like a local.



Vilassar de Mar

Today we spent surveying our local landscape. The downpour from above decided for us that staying at home was the best alternative. We awoke late and then walked the local area to find a bigger supermarket (with more reasonable prices). None was found but we did find a hardware shop just a few doors down from our villa. We needed some parts to fix the ruined wheel on our bike bag (the one I ruined by dragging it over the concrete for quite a distance due to it locking itself). To our surprise the little shop was of full of a huge range of things. The shop keeper was very helpful and we even found a spare wheel which Sig managed to fix to the bottom of our bag with very little effort. He suggested to me that I was lucky to have such a "handy person as a partner!!"

I'm sitting here now, listening to the loud noises that are emanating from the roadway no more than a metre from our lounge room wall. The motorbikes noises, in particular, funnel there way up to the second and third floors of this place - especially at night. It is such a foreign place to us — this close settled, busy little bustling suburb. However, it makes me appreciate that in Spain we may be, but people live their lives the same everywhere. They too walk their children, take their time to gossip with the checkout chick at the local fruit shop (when I am dying to get away and lay down my sweaty head), and busily go about their daily lives. It is not the type of place we would choose to live but it is very worthy of knowing, experiencing and getting to understand.

We have acquired train passes and booked a bus trip for tomorrow that will hopefully orient us to the city of Barcelona. Unfortunately we are not able to get to visit the Sagrada Familia because no spots are available unless we book an expensive tour. We saw this fabulous place in 2015 and thus are not too disappointed. Other Gaudi monuments are on offer as well as a wide eclectic mix of attractions. We really appreciate our usual preference of staying directly in city centre is far better for seeing the sights without the the cost and time of getting into the centre where all the attractions are typically located.

