

# Jim and Emmy's Travel Journal

## The Country of Spain

1979

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We arrived at the Luxembourg Airport on Aug 26, and visited Emmy's cousins and Germany for a few days. We traveled by ferry to Denmark, another to Sweden, then by boat to Helsinki, Finland, and another ferry back to Sweden. Visited along the Norwegian coast (including many small ferryboats), and another ferryboat back to Denmark. We crossed Germany, spent a few days in The Netherlands, then Belgium, and a week or so in Paris and France. We then drove across France, on our way to Spain.

As we neared the Spanish border we found ourselves on the French Autoroute toll road. It was really expensive and we saw no sign of an alternate route. We crossed the border with no problem, then drove into San Sebastian and just looked around a little. Very few people on the street, partly because it's Saturday afternoon, and maybe because of the recent bombing and a riot by the Basques, who don't like the government of Spain.

Continued looking for a campsite, then decided to look for a hotel. At the first place we stopped, we couldn't find the entrance, and we then found the Hotel Castillo. A very nice place for \$20, with bath and all. The splendid restaurant was deserted, we thought that was funny for a Saturday night, but the Spanish people arrived at Hotel Castille for dinner at 10:30, then left very noisily at 1:00 AM.

We brought the electric heater into the hotel room, and a hot bath in a tub in a warm room was greatly appreciated. A tub of hot water is something we miss in the camper, and in 99% of the campsites!

### **S, Burgos, Oct 28, Sun - Hotel - 635 - 6,830**

Emmy and the weather are both much better this morning. Interesting countryside, but the soil looks red and rather barren, maybe not good farm land. We see people in the small towns with bread under their arm like in France, and there is a fresh dusting of snow on the top of a mountain. The guide books states that some times these roads can be closed because of too much snow.

The country of Spain looks poor, with few goods displayed in the store windows. There are many new six to eight story apartment buildings. The town of Vitoria looked like it was almost all new. In many buildings in Vitoria, Spain the ground floor is typically not used. Perhaps people would not feel safe living on the ground level. Once in awhile there is a small store, and a couple of times cars were parked on the ground floor. Many buildings just had the area between

the pillars bricked up in a very haphazard manner, and even those bricks were covered by posters and graffiti.

Many buildings have balconies, but they are not neat, and usually there is laundry hung out to dry. Even without balconies, they find some way to hang out the laundry. TV antennas are sticking out in all directions and manners. The nicer areas have less laundry. Maybe some Spaniards have clothes dryers, or perhaps they hire other people to do their laundry.

Drove into Madrid on a Sunday afternoon and took the opportunity to look around the city. What appears to be the main office and department store area in Madrid, seems quite nice, but just when we get out a little way there is trash, etc., and it looks like no one cares. We saw the flea market, but could find no place close where we could park, and we hate to park just anywhere.

**E, Madrid, Oct 29, Mon - 37 - 173 - 7,003**

We don't see all those low prices that are supposed to exist in Spain. The hair care, food, and miscellaneous things seem expensive. At Sears in Madrid the ice-maker refrigerator cost \$3,300. Television sets cost \$300 to \$1200. Of course ordinary people don't buy these things anyway.

Emmy ate lunch at a buffet in a large department store, Galleries (something). She enjoyed items like herring, various salads, roast beef, chicken, artichoke hearts, even ice water with plenty of ice. Also, the first time Emmy has eaten paella, a rice, fish, and chicken dish. Excellent, she said. If Jim had gone with her, he could have had a roll with no butter, all for \$7.50 each. But it was nice for Emmy.

Traffic and parking is worse here than in Paris, Rome, etc., especially the parking. They normally double and triple park in Madrid, and park along the curb in the crosswalks. If a vehicle gets blocked, the driver will just wait until lunch time, or whatever.

We were looking for a particular store, and as we were driving we saw it on the other side of the street. When we got to the next large intersection, where many streets joined, Jim just made a very wide U-turn and started back in the direction we just came from. We double-parked and Emmy went in the department store for a moment to ask if they had a beauty shop.

In the rear view mirror, Jim could see a couple of Madrid policemen strolling down the street toward us. Emmy hurried into the camper and we drove on, but with the traffic problem we could see that the police, while in no hurry, were gaining on us with no problem. At the next traffic-light they caught up, and were explaining the problem and their solution, but we were not understanding. (Who said we always want to understand all the languages!) Jim said we just treated that large intersection as a traffic circle. They indicated they could fine us 5000 "something" of their money. Jim shook their hand and thanked them, then drove off with no other comment from them.

Emmy had her hair done in the beauty parlor today. As usual she had to pay more than expected. They didn't have the right hair color, so Emmy says that since the Madrid beauty parlor did not have the right hair color, she is gray around the edges. Jim says, big deal, who cares!

After Emmy finished with her hair, we went to American Express for mail. No way to park legally, so Emmy stayed in the double parked camper while Jim went for mail. There was a letter for Emmy from her friend in Spain, but since it was addressed to Emmy, she had to pick up the letter herself. So Jim went back to the camper, then Emmy went across the Madrid streets and traffic to the American Express Office and got the letter. Linda E. will be at home when we get there.

The grocery clerks in Spain bag the groceries. In some countries they don't even have bags to use, and in others they sell bags. Also, we find only a small number of selections, and small amount of goods to buy. In one large super market we found half the shelves empty. It's interesting to see the amount of chocolate bars in the stores. Jim "stepped" it off in more than one store, and found that 10 to 15% of the shelf space is piled high with chocolate. Much chocolate is wrapped in cellophane with no label of any kind. Not a bad flavor at all. (In contrast, Italy has almost no chocolate bars.)

### **E, Madrid, Oct 30, Tue - 38**

Camped a couple of miles north of Madrid and found many people were living there, and some seemed to be camping for the winter. Looking toward Madrid this morning we saw a blanket of smog. All around the city was clear, but right over the city was a smoggy mess, like we have seen in Los Angeles on hundreds of days. We could see snow capped mountains in the distance.

Found a lucky parking place and visited the Prado Museum with its Van Dyke, Rubens, Goya, and El Greco paintings. Took a taxi from there to Sears, so as not to lose our parking place. We could drive all over looking for a parking place near Sears, and spend more for gasoline than on the Taxi. Looked around more and found the greatest bakery—Winchell's Donut Shop.

A man had rigged up his Mo-ped so it would run a large stone for knife sharpening, so let him sharpen a pocket knife. Neither the taxi nor the sharpening were at all expensive.

We left for Toledo about noon and drove thru a part of Madrid that was newly bulldozed for several blocks, then there were blocks of new apartment buildings. It appeared to us that they tore down Madrid slums, built new buildings, moved the next people out of slums, then bulldozed some more, etc.

Found a campsite when we got to Toledo, then visited the old town. We drove down a street into a small plaza and found several narrow streets came into the area, but only one went out, and the sign said this Toledo street is two meters wide, building to building, not curb to curb. The Dodge is two meters plus mirrors. As we were trying to decide what to do, a small truck about our size went through, so we tried it. Had about 2 inches between each mirror and the buildings. People had to step into doorways as we passed, no other room for them.

A little while later we came back that way determined to use another street, but the police now wouldn't let us. Of course we had confidence we could make it, but we also had a car in front of us with a flat tire, with an unhappy Toledo policemen telling them to hurry, a truck stopped to make a delivery, and a

Spanish Army truck that was stopped in our way. No one seems to think we should expect a clear street, but all it took to solve the problem was time.

The Cathedral (Toledo) is truly beautiful. We were lucky. While we were there, some Spanish school children arrived for a visit, Toledo's Cathedral lights were turned on and it was even more beautiful.

Emmy likes the steel plates and other objects, that have 22 and 24 carat gold hammered into a design. Can easily cost \$150 for a plate, and all other kinds of prices. Went into a grocery store in the new part of town and found a small pig in the meat case, complete with eyes. The "new" town is a mess, they keep the old town much cleaner.

Visited the house where El Greco lived and worked for years. Many of El Greco's paintings were on display. In one set of 12 pictures, each of the Apostles had small parts of each picture unfinished. For example, there would be a hand, but no fingers. While we were there, some important looking government officials arrived in a limousine, complete with guards and guides.

#### **E, Toledo, Oct 31, Wed - 39 - 122 - 7,125**

Walked around Toledo again this morning, bought a few small gifts then left for Portugal. Nice looking farmland and a good road. At the border, as we left the country of Spain, they gave us a questionnaire to fill out about the tourist accommodations we had used.

We left Spain, crossed the border into Portugal for a few days, then returned to Spain from southern Portugal, by ferry, across a small river.

When we arrived at the border with Spain, we found a wide river with no bridge, nothing but a small ferryboat with room for our camper and a couple of cars. From the size and arrangement of the parking lot, it appears they must have long lines of cars waiting for the ferryboat, at times. It would be a long drive north to find a bridge across the river, then drive back to this part of the country. When the Spanish customs man saw the outside of our passports he said, "Americans," and waved us on.

We had expected to spend tonight in the general area of Huelva, Spain. The road was so bad we could only go 35 mile per hour or so, and we didn't arrive in Huelva until near sunset. When we drove into Huelva, it appeared just too dirty and messy for us, and it was crowded with people all over the streets. It was their town, and they are allowed to be on the streets, but from what we have been told, we didn't want to park the camper anywhere like this. We had hoped to find their advertised campsite, but missed it somewhere, so drove on to Seville, arriving after dark.

We were so tired we decided to stay in a hotel in Seville tonight, but could not find a protected place to park the camper. Hotel garages were not large enough to get the camper inside, and we had been warned about parking on the street in this part of Spain, especially in Seville.

We thought we were following the directions we had been given to get to the campsite, but nothing looked just right and by this time it was completely dark. We stopped at a gas station for directions. We found it amazing that a man who

spoke no English could make a few notations on a piece of paper that Jim could understand, and the directions would be so accurate. We found the campsite exactly where he said it was, way across Seville from his station. We got there about 10:00 PM, and were happy to get to bed.

**E, Seville, Nov 4, Sun - 43 - 239 - 8,088**

We awoke this morning in a lovely campground with flowers and the smell of orange blossoms in the air—no hotel could match that, even in Seville.

The Cathedral (Seville) is the world's largest Gothic building. It goes on and on forever. They were holding a church service in one part of Seville's Cathedral, and they could have had a ball game in the rest without disturbing anyone. On the outside, there are other buildings built up against the outside of the Cathedral, so we couldn't see it too well, or take a picture.

On the streets in front, there were horse-drawn cabs waiting to drive tourists around town. We didn't do that, but we did drive and park and walk a while. We could easily spend much more time here.

As we drove toward Cadiz, we saw people in the fields picking cotton. Where they had already picked the cotton, the field was brown, and otherwise the field was nearly white. When we stopped to take a picture, they saw us and waved. Cadiz has much ivy growing on the city wall. Stopped and looked for fruit and bread, some stores were open.

We have seen a lot of new construction in Spain and Portugal. Today we saw miles of orange and olive trees. There are dozens of big signs in Spain, advertising "Humbert wine".

When we arrived in Algeciras, across the bay from the Rock of Gibraltar, we decided to get information about a tour to Tangiers, Morocco just across the Strait of Gibraltar in Africa. Jim saw a building that looked like it belonged to the government, so went to see if it was open. It was closed, and with the sun shining directly on the dirty windows, Jim had to shield his eyes close to the glass to see into the office.

He then saw a pipe had broken in the ceiling, and water was cascading all over everything. Jim went to a nearby Algeciras policeman for help, but the police would not go with him. (That's a switch!) Jim saw another man in a Spanish officer's uniform and practically dragged him over to look. He acted ashamed to be seen with his nose at the window, but when he saw what was happening, he waved, hollered his thanks, and ran for help. Jim's good deed for the day!

We arranged to leave early in the morning, for a tour to Morocco.

We can look out the window of the camper and see the Rock of Gibraltar, and we doubt any hotel can match that view. This campsite has palm fronds spread on top of some wires so we would have shade to park under, but it isn't very hot today.

**S, Algeciras, Nov 5, Mon - 44**

The alarm went off at 6:30 this morning. We want to leave the camper parked in the campsite instead of a parking lot near the dock, where we would be concerned about its safety. We got up early, drove into Algeciras and had a taxi follow us back to the campsite. Then we left the camper parked, rode back to town in the taxi!

We rode a ferry across the Strait of Gibraltar to Cueta, Spain on the coast of Africa. Then crossed the border into Morocco, and the next day returned across the Strait, to Spain.

**E, Algeciras, Nov 7, Wed - 45 - 187 - 8,275**

It was cloudy this morning and we could not see the Rock. As we drove up to the entrance, we could see the Spanish flag and soldiers on this side and past the barricade we could see the British flag and their guards, but it was too cloudy to see the Rock of Gibraltar from there.

We drove along the coast, and over a twisty mountain road on the way to visit Jeff and Linda E. They have purchased three acres of land, and are starting to build a large home. They really like living here, and have met both Spanish, and people from other countries who live or visit in the area.

Going to the local store with Linda E to buy groceries, convinced us, if we needed any convincing, there is no way we could live here.

Emmy feels justified in her concern about not parking the camper on the street in Seville. Jeff said they visited there recently in their little old car and were told someone would break in if they could see anything inside the car. If what they find is worthless, they will then "trash" the car, because they wasted their time and effort breaking in! Jeff was told not to leave even an empty oil can where it could be seen.

Seville is supposed to be one of the worst cities for street crime in Europe. They'd have had a great time in our camper. We heard elsewhere there are more pick-pockets and purse-snatchers in Seville, than anywhere in Europe.

Ate dinner with Jeff and Linda E, and some of their British friends stopped by after dinner. We just plugged in our extension cord, and slept in the camper in Linda and Jeff's driveway.

**E, Malaga, Nov 8, Thu - 46 - 188 - 8,463**

We visited the outdoor market in the adjacent town, where Emmy bought some lace. We visited Linda and Jeff's building site, then said good-bye, and drove to Malaga. So crowded and smoggy. We tried to get information about a ferryboat trip to the island of Majorca, but were told the boats haven't operated from here for the last two years.

The road to Totana was rough, but we arrived at a campsite about 7:30. The man who ran the place wanted it kept clean. There were signs all over the place about taking care of the Totana campsite. It was nice to see he cared.

In southern Spain, between Malaga and Totana, we saw homes dug into hillsides and cliffs, with doors in front and chimneys sticking up through the dirt top. A lot of the scenery is just like California and Arizona.

All over southern Spain the towns are painted or whitewashed white, but as we go north they are less and less white. There is an area in Southern Spain where it's the law every house must be whitewashed by a certain holiday each year. Makes an interesting sight, with all the white towns in the distance.

**E, Totana, Nov 9, Fri - 47 - 238 - 8,701**

Emmy was going to try to sleep this morning while Jim drove, but no chance. The roads are narrow, rough and twisty. We got started about the time a Spanish Army convoy came along. Could not pass all of them, and didn't like being sandwiched among the Army trucks with those drivers.

When we got into Valencia, we found the worst smog we have seen anywhere, including Los Angeles when it was at its worst, years ago. As we approached Valencia we were in sunny weather, but in town we could only see for a few blocks down the street. We parked and got out to look around, but our eyes and throat said, "Leave." We saw people parked four and five deep on a wide Valencia street, with people in their cars waiting patiently for someone to move so they could leave for home. The fact they all go home for lunch means no one has to wait all day to be able to un-park their car.

We were told there are very few boats from here to Majorca, and there is no campsite in the area, so we drove on to Barcelona. It was difficult to find the campsite. According to the map and the directions we received it seemed it would be easy, but the one-way streets in Barcelona all ran the wrong direction.

**E, Barcelona, Nov 10, Sat, - 48 - 335 - 9,036**

There is an unusual design in the downtown streets. At many Barcelona intersections they have cut the corners of all four buildings, making the intersection very large and potentiality interesting. The problem is, they then proceed to park dozens of cars in the area and mess it up again.

Emmy is not finding all those bargains everyone said were available in Spain. The dollar value has something to do with that, but prices just seem high. Emmy looked at a buffet at the large El Cortez Department Store, and although it looked like a nice lunch the price was over \$10, and it was not fancy at all. The best bargain is lace tablecloths, made in China, and sold everywhere.

**E, Barcelona, Nov 11, Sun - 49**

We arranged to leave the camper in the campsite and fly to Majorca today, rather than riding the large ferryboat. We were told that on Sunday morning we could have problems finding a taxi to take us to the airport, so we made sure we were in the street in plenty of time. Just our luck, within moments a taxi stopped and took us to the Barcelona airport in time to catch the flight even earlier than the one we had scheduled. Sounds familiar doesn't it. Emmy was happy to find it was a Boeing 727 and not some little old puddle-jumper like we flew in the Caribbean one time.

The flight to Majorca was wonderful and the scenery, excellent. Took a cab into Palma to the Hotel Palas Athenia. We were told this is the off season, so our room was only \$50 a day with breakfast. There are not many people around the hotel, or on the streets of the city this time of the year.

Ate at a little cafe near the hotel, and Jim's hamburger seemed to upset his stomach. Maybe it was just his imagination, he really prefers the "restaurant" in

the camper. Emmy said she felt just fine after her hot bath at the hotel, and Jim checked and said she felt just fine to him too!

**E, Palma, Majorca, Nov 12, Mon**

The view from the hotel balcony across the bay filled with fishing boats, to the Palma Cathedral in the distance, will tax your imagination. We got up early this morning to make a telephone call to Linda, and it was the Amethyst hour. The exact point at sunrise when everything, Palma's Cathedral, the fishing boats, and the bay, were tinged with a light lavender hue! Exceptional! In the desert where we live, there is an Amethyst hour [five minutes!], many, many mornings of the year.

After our continental breakfast, we enjoyed a walk around downtown, and a visit to the Cathedral (Palma). Jim bought an excellent addition to his walking stick collection, and there are many stores selling Majorca pearls, which we understand are not made from pearls at all. Other stores sell, or make to order, leather coats of various kinds, many are very attractive. (In 1980 we bought a leather coat made in Majorca, while we were in Andorra, and it was stolen from our car in Los Angeles in 1991.)

**E, Palma, Majorca, Nov 13, Tue**

It was raining this morning as we walked up the hill to Castle Belvue. Stair steps most of the way, but still hard work. Left the hotel about 11:45 for the 15 minute ride to the airport. Surprise of all surprises, we were early for our flight, early enough so we caught the 12:10 plane to Barcelona, instead of waiting for the one we had scheduled.

It was nice to arrive at the campground, confident we would find our camper OK, and it was. We have never felt "threatened" in any way while in a campsite. Shopped around downtown again, and bought groceries at the El Cortez Department Store, and looked through the Sears store. Emmy was looking for some lace, but the expensive stuff really was, and the other wasn't what she wanted.

A most unusual Cathedral (Barcelona), named Sagrada Familia, (Sacred Family) is being built in Barcelona, and has been under construction for a hundred years or so. It was designed by Antonio Gaudi, and a most interesting design it is. The tall round towers, or spires of Barcelona's Sagrada Familia remind us of the Watts Towers in Los Angeles (perhaps that should be the other way around). Only the towers and part of the front is completed, no auditorium—yet! In another hundred years or so, who knows!

Some people think it should not be completed, and should be left just like it is. Others think it's OK to add (ugly!) statues and other (dumb!) decorations that are completely different from the style of the original design. They have the beginnings of a unique and beautiful Cathedral, we hope they finish it just as Antonio Gaudi would have done it, if he had lived for two hundred years! Gaudi also designed and built a most unusual apartment building that looks free form, and something like a cliff house, almost.

**S, Barcelona, Nov 14, Wed - 50 - 70 - 9,106**

Drove to the France Riviera. Then east along the Mediterranean Sea to near Genoa, Italy, then north and through the tunnel under Mont Blanc and back into France, then to Switzerland. After a couple of days in Switzerland, we returned to

Germany, and parked the camper at Toni's neighbor in Mettlach for several months. From Luxembourg's airport, on November 29 we flew to Iceland for a couple of days, then home to the US.

# 1980

We drove from Andorra into Spain, then turned left.

## **AND, Villa de Andorra, May 28, Wed - 9 - 235 - 1,431**

It's cloudy and chilly as we head south out of Andorra and into Spain. Went through a couple more small towns, still much construction in each. We made a left turn as soon as we got into Spain and drove for about an hour on a very rough road, then back into France.

And a few miles later, turned left again and returned to France.

Llivia is situated 1 km from the Spanish border en about 20 km east from Andorra. It's size is 12 square km and the village of Llivia has 1200 inhabitants.