

My Madrid



Thursday 3rd November 2016:

A long day today - Malgorzata left the apartment at 0700 to walk to the main Railway Station in Málaga to catch her high speed train to Madrid. I followed later, having decided to take the slower but much cheaper service to Madrid. My journey took 6 hours, but with a couple of good movies to watch on my tablet and a smooth ride, it wasn't a problem.

Getting to the Llunion Antrim Hotel by bus and metro wasn't a problem, and I was checked in by 1715. Malgorzata joined me later having accomplished several hours of sightseeing in the city centre, although getting totally lost trying to find the hotel at the end of her day.

Friday 4th November 2016:

It was a wet day today for our sightseeing in Madrid. We left the hotel at just after 9, first getting some breakfast at the local bus station before heading into town. We had not researched our route carefully and got lost in the metro / railway system - it took us over 2 hours to get to the Plaza Mayor, which is in the centre of Madrid's cultural area close to the important historical sites.

We visited an unnamed church, the old market, the cathedral (which we entered), the royal palace (which we didn't enter), and walked past the Opera House. We then wandered back to the Plaza Mayor area for a sandwich and glass of wine for lunch (we chose badly - not a good experience!). Malgorzata wanted to visit the Prada Museum and I didn't, so we went our own ways for the rest of the afternoon. Actually the weather by then was getting tedious for me, so after doing some food shopping for breakfast in the hotel room in the morning and for my bus trip back to Málaga tomorrow, I headed back to the hotel.

My visit to Madrid was a disappointment - the centre of the city is overwhelmed with tourists, but very few areas have been made into pedestrian only areas - traffic was always heavy, noisy and mostly in gridlock! The architecture in my opinion was generally heavy handed and with some exceptions, and not at all elegant (Málaga is much more attractive and interesting) - in fact it often felt like being in London, and the wet weather certainly added to that feeling! I had thought that today's visit would be a taster for a longer period of exploration, but the reality is that I may not return. But I have to concede that my overall impression was clouded by the miserable and wet weather, and our unfortunate experiences navigating the local transport system (which we could have avoided with more prior research). But Malgorzata did much better than I - after she had visited the Prada Museum she trudged around to other important historical locations and brought back an interesting collection of pictures taken on her smartphone. I should have followed her and as a result seen a lot more of Madrid than I actually did! An opportunity missed!

In the evening we walked to a local Chinese restaurant not far from the hotel for dinner - as always a good experience with great food and company, although oddly without white wine (the restaurant had some on the menu but none available!). It continued to rain throughout the evening but the two folding umbrellas I had bought not long after I arrived in Málaga saved the day! Today was the first time that they had been used.

Saturday 5th November 2016:

After this short and not so fantastic visit to Madrid it was time this morning to say farewell to Malgorzata and head back to Málaga, whilst she took the bus to the airport and caught her flight back home to Poland. It had been terrific having her join me in Spain for the past 11 days and I enjoyed her company very much, and appreciated the opportunity to share my lifestyle with her. Safe travels Malgorzata and I hope to see you again sometime in the future. Where shall we visit next?

I must comment on the public transport system in Madrid - it's fast, efficient and very clean. In particular, the metro is spotless, both inside and outside the trains, but also on the platforms, interconnecting passageways and ticket halls. Likewise the busses are spotlessly clean inside and out - very impressive and a testament to the Spanish people and the type of tourists that visit such culturally interesting locations. Definitely no larger-louts here!

The bus back to Málaga took the predicted 6 hours, with a comfort break of 20 minutes midway. It rained most of the way but in the final 20km into Málaga the rain stopped and the outside temperature rose from 16° to 20°C. The journey passed by quickly for me, watching two complete movies on my tablet and dozing the rest of the time. It took 30 minutes to walk back to my apartment after arriving in the main bus station at just after 1900.