

My Málaga

This document provides an insight to my comings and goings, and favourite places and experiences whilst visiting the Spanish city of Málaga in the autumn of 2016. Enjoy.



With Pablo Picasso in the Plaza de la Merced

Flights:

I flew from London Gatwick to Málaga Airport (Aeropuerto de Málaga-Costa del Sol) on Friday 30th September 2016 aboard BA2714, arriving at 1335 in the afternoon. The airport was 8 km southwest of Málaga and has flight connections to over 60 countries worldwide - over 14.4 million passengers passed through it in 2015.

After arriving in Málaga I was picked up by a friend of the apartment owner, Paco. Friendly but with virtually no English, he took me to the apartment, let me in and disappeared. Later I switched on the water heater, the electricity tripped a couple of times, and then about 15 minutes later the boiler started pouring water into the kitchen! The heater thermostat probably didn't work, allowing the water to boil and the pressure to increase, leading to the pressure relief opening! And when the pressure dropped, the relief valve didn't close, so I had to isolate the whole apartment from the external water supply! Meanwhile I got in touch with the owner and she has arranged for a plumber to come tomorrow, but not until 1500!

Saturday 1st October 2016:

Had a good sightseeing session today, notably visiting the Málaga Cathedral - a huge sixteenth century monolithic masterpiece. But my memory of today was being asked for €4.50 for a bottle of water in a small kiosk in the centre of the old town, and eventually buying the same item in the Merced Mercado for €0.80! I had some lunch at the Plaza de la Merced - great setting for a mediocre glass of wine blanco, and a bacon sandwich (the menu didn't say that it was English style polystyrene toasted bread!). Finally today the other place of note was the El Jardine Restaurante, next door to the cathedral. An amazing classically authentic and traditional Spanish café - I didn't eat there but plan to return on Friday or Saturday evening when they have a dinner show (Piano, Spanish Songs & Flamenco).

The boiler in the apartment was removed for repair this afternoon, and won't be back until Monday 3rd October at the earliest! More cold showering!

Sunday 2nd October 2016:

I went out for what was planned to be an easy Sunday morning stroll, but ended up climbing the steep path to the entrance of the Castillo de Gibralfaro, which is located high above the city. The path I took was via the scenic Paseo Don Juan de Temboury, to the south of the Alcazaba. The path wound pleasantly (and steeply) through lushly gardened terraces with spectacular viewpoints over the city, and the La Málaga eta Bull Ring. On arrival at the entrance I discovered that there would be free entry after 1400, so I waited outside for an hour, had a snack for lunch and then entered the castle. The castle was built by Abd ar-Rahman I, the 8th-century Córdoba emir, but later rebuilt in the 14th century when Málaga was the main port for the emirate of Granada. The castle originally acted as a lighthouse and military barracks. There wasn't a great deal to see in the castle's interior, but the walkway around the ramparts afforded most amazing views over Málaga and out to sea. It proved an excellent day - plenty of exercise, an interesting exploration of the Castillo de Gibralfaro and finally a wander past the Roman Amphitheatre and through the Plaza de la Merced on the way back to the apartment.

Apparently the boiler in the apartment is having to be replaced, hopefully tomorrow Monday. Another cold shower this evening!

Monday 3rd October 2016:

An easy day today, but interesting with a range of sightseeing in this wonderful city named Málaga. First I walked to the "El Corte Inglés Málaga", which is one of the city's most symbolic department stores. El Corte Inglés is one of the leading major retailers in Europe with more than 80 locations across Spain and Portugal. It had a huge supermarket on the lower ground floor, several floors of clothes, furniture and such items typical of large department stores in Europe and the United States. On the sixth floor there was a rather upmarket food court, which included a gourmet restaurant and an outside terrace. It was too early for me to have lunch, so I took a look and went on my way!

It had taken me about 30 minutes to walk to the El Corte Inglés - the next leg of today's walk was of a similar length, to the harbour and yacht marina, where I stopped for lunch. There were a wide range of cafés and restaurants on the outer arm of the harbour - I chose just to have a salad!

Finally I had a 45 minute walk through the old town back to the apartment, but passing the amazing Ayuntamiento (Town Hall). This incredible building was completed in 1919 and the design is Neo-Baroque - the floor plan is rectangular, with a big enclosed patio in the middle of the building. The facade has a triangular frieze that is decorated with sculptures - there is a sculpture of a woman who represents the city, and beside her are figures that allude to architecture, the sea, fishing, and commerce. Above that there is a tower with a clock. Below the frieze are Ionic columns framing a balcony, and below that is the main entrance to the building, which has three floors. The facade is elaborately decorated including figures of men who seem to be supporting the building. Among decorative elements are garlands, large decorative brackets, cornices, volutes, fruits and vegetables, oak leaves, and pedestals. Needless to say I spent some time examining the building and of course taking pictures. This is definitely one of the most remarkable modern buildings in all Málaga, and probably the whole of Spain!

A new boiler was fitted this morning - wow, I had my first warm shower since arriving in Spain!!! **Tuesday 4th**

October 2016:

I walked a long way today, first back to the Málaga City Hall (Ayuntamiento) to have another look at the facade, which I had read about last night on the Internet and wanted to see again. It's a remarkable building, especially as it's not yet 100 years old, but looks more like 19th century. My walk then continued to the Bull Ring, which I was able to enter and view from the terraces. There was also a small museum, but of little interest to me! But the building itself was of greater interest - the style of the building takes the form of a 16-sided hex decagon and the ring measures 52 metres in diameter.

The Bull Ring is on a road running parallel to the ocean, where there is over a kilometre of sandy beach, several cafés and restaurants, and a selection of high rise and not so tall hotels. The most spectacular of the hotels was the "Gran Hotel Miramar", which is currently subject to a major refurbishment. It's a large elegant white painted building facing the sea across its own garden. It was the masterpiece of the architect Fernando Guerrero Strachan and was inaugurated after five years of construction in 1926 by King Alfonso XIII under the name "Hotel Príncipe de Asturias". The building was Málaga's Palace of Justice from 1967 until 2007 but has now been taken under new ownership and is scheduled to open as a 5-Star palace of unequalled luxury and opulence at the end of this year.

I continued my walk back along the Playa de la Malagueta until reaching the port - same restaurant and same Caesar Salad for my lunch! Following that I took the long route back to the apartment via the large supermarket in the El Corte Inglés commercial centre.

Wednesday 5th October 2016:

A more leisurely day for me today although still almost 4 hours of walking here and there sightseeing in this magnificent city. Today I started the day by walking to the "Mercado Central Atarazanas", about 30 minutes from the apartment. I found it difficult to find, as the tourist map I was using placed it in the wrong place! The building is undoubtedly one of Málaga's architectural gems - the present market stems from the 19th century and was built mainly of iron. However the entrance archway is a legacy from much earlier times - the market was once Málaga's shipyard, a place where ships were repaired over 600 years ago. At this point in history, the water made it all the way up to the market's entrance (there's been significant land reclamation since then). During the centuries that followed the building was shortly used as a convent, a military hospital, and an army barracks, before finally becoming a market in 1879.

After visiting the market I had a gentle stroll to the harbour restaurants again, and had my usual César Salad for lunch. This is becoming a habit!

I went out in the early evening to do a little supermarket shopping, and on the way back spotted an interesting looking church, which I had not noticed before, down a side street. I went to investigate and found a quite large weathered building shoehorned into a rather scruffy residential area. But on entering my surprise was total, as inside it was exquisite, beautifully designed and apparently recently refurbished. I was the only person there so had time to sit and absorb the peace and tranquility of my surroundings, and admire the beauty of the place. Later I spent time on the Internet searching for information on the "Parroquia San Felipe Neri" but could find nothing in the English language, and not much in Spanish (which I translated into English using Google Translate). The place remains a mystery to me, but also a personal secret!

Thursday 6th October 2016:

A lazy day today - I walked to the beach for some sunbathing and a walk, then to my usual café for my usual salad! I took a slightly different route back to the apartment and found another "Dia" supermarket, which mid afternoon surprisingly was open!

On the domestic side of life here in the apartment, I've now downloaded a few new movies from the Internet, which, using cables I brought from UK and a new power supply adapter bought from a Chinese bazaar down the street, I am now able to view on the apartment's television (it only has Spanish television programmes!). After almost a week here already I have everything organised!

It was 21 years ago today that my resignation from the Royal Navy became effective, bringing to a close 36 years of service to Queen and Country. A very memorable evening celebrating at a formal dinner in the Painted Hall at the Royal Naval College, Greenwich.

Friday 7th October 2016:

La Coracha, one of the most characteristic and oldest of all the Málaga city neighbourhoods, was between the south side of the old citadel and the sea, where the old port was in the Arab period, forming a bastion waterfront. I spotted a couple of interesting pictures of the area on the Internet and this morning went in search! Sadly the places in the pictures no longer exist, having been pulled down and replaced by walkways and gardens. So I went to the beach for some sunbathing, despite there being a heavy sea mist reducing visibility to less than a kilometre, and making it feel a trifle cool! Later I gravitated to my usual café at the harbour for my usual salad lunch. After lunch the sky cleared but the lack of wind persisted, leaving a warm and rather humid afternoon. I did a little food shopping and returned to the apartment relatively early at just after 1600.

My intention has always been that this document should not be a diary, but more a record of interesting things that I have done here in Málaga. At the end of my first week, there is still much that I want to see and do in this remarkable city, but I also plan to venture to other places on the coastline and inland of Andalusia. I also plan a visit to Gibraltar.

Oh dear - the toilet cistern in the apartment has started playing up! It has a mind of its own, flushing sometimes and not others, filling sometimes and not others, filling randomly, and so on. The plumber has been called!

Day trips I'm planning away from Málaga:

Fuengirola, Rhonda, Nerja, Estepona, Marbella, Gibraltar, Mijas

Sunday 9th October 2016:

Wow, what a good day! It was Sunday so I decided to visit some churches, but nothing could have prepared me for the amazing places I discovered, not a stone's throw from Málaga Cathedral.

The first church was the Iglesia de Santiago Apóstol (St. James Church). The church was founded in 1490 and completed in 1509 displaying Islamic, gothic & baroque elements. It is Málaga's oldest church and quite unique, both viewed from the outside and inside. Picasso was christened in the church in 1881.

My second church visit today was the Iglesia de San Juan Bautista. It was one of four churches founded by the Catholic Monarchs after the conquest of the city of Málaga in 1487. Again visiting this historic building was a moving experience - the altar is one of the most beautiful I have ever seen!

After viewing the two churches I wandered the old town backstreets and came upon a Plaza Concert being given by the Minicipal Band (Banda Municipal De Música). This was basically a brass band, but with some

stringed instruments! It attracted a large audience, including myself for 20 minutes whilst I enjoyed the music and took in the convivial atmosphere.

Following lunch in a café in the Plaza de la Merced I walked to do my sightseeing in the Alcazaba (free entry after 1400). This impressive group of buildings, mostly dating from the eleventh century, formed the Palace-Fortress of the Moslem rulers of the city. There was plenty of interesting architecture to see, and of course stunning views in many directions towards the sea, along the coast, inland and over the city.

Monday 10th October 2016:

I wasn't going to write anything today, but then this morning I discovered another spectacular church, the Iglesia de los Santos Mártires (The Church of the Holy Martyrs). What made this church, which is located close to the cathedral and two other notable churches, was an amazing depiction of Christ at the Last Supper - this was not a painting as I have seen so many times in Anglican, Catholic And Orthodox churches, but a full sized and perfectly sculptured representation of this important chapter in Christian beliefs. I have never seen anything like it before!

After spending some time in the church, I wandered the shopping streets for a while, went for lunch and spent some time at the beach topping up my tan! I was back in the apartment, having done some food shopping on the way back, by 1700.

Wednesday 12th October 2016 & Thursday 13th October 2016:

A day of torrential rain on Wednesday and a few spots of rain and distant thunder claps on Thursday, all as accurately forecasted by "Weather Underground".

Friday 14th October 2016:

It was a little chilly today with plenty of cloud, but some sunshine. I took the opportunity to do some shopping at the large El Corte Inglés supermarket market, which is the best that I've found in Málaga. Being a Brit, I bought some Heinze Baked Beans!

Close to the supermarket I briefly visited the modern church Basílica de la Esperanza (Basilica of Holy Name of Jesus Nazareno del Paso and the Virgin of Hope). It was built in 1988.

I also visited St George's Church (Anglican Church of England), which is the oldest Anglican Church in mainland Spain. It stands in the English Cemetery, one of Málaga 's well-known and historic gardens close to the city centre. The cemetery, established in 1829 on land ceded to Britain by the Spanish authorities, was the first Protestant cemetery in Spain. The church building, constructed in classical style with fine Doric columns in 1839-40 as a funeral chapel and lodge for the cemetery guard, was converted to become St. George's Anglican Church in 1890-91.

Finally I had lunch at one of the cafés bordering the Plaza de la Merced - a rather tasty chicken, bacon and salad wrap with some fries, all washed down with a couple of glasses of well-chilled local house wine.

Saturday 15th October 2016:

After some days of changeable weather (it rained all day on Wednesday and some of Thursday, and yesterday was somewhat cloudy with low temperatures) it was a glorious day today, with clear skies and a good autumnal temperature of 24°C this afternoon. I went out walking, not far really, just around town and to the beach, where I spent an hour topping up my tan, whilst listening to music from my phone.

I had a late lunch in a café on the harbour waterfront - the magnificent traditional cruise ship "Star Flyer" was tied up alongside - a four mast barquentine built as a cruise ship, and operated by Star Clippers Ltd of Sweden. A luxury vessel, "Star Flyer" is a sister ship to "Star Clipper" and was built in 1991 - I've seen these two vessels before, both in the Caribbean and Mediterranean.

So, I was walking through town this morning and the "eyes in the back of my head" spotted what I deduced was a pickpocket homing in on my backpack! I let him come closer, and then suddenly turned round, which caused him to abruptly alter course, but looking guilty! So I turned the tables and followed him as he dodged between people, around corners, stopped, walked quickly and slowly in an effort to try to shake me off! In the end I got bored, but he had definitely got the message, and if on our meandering through town we had encountered a policeman I might have taken action!

Being a beautiful and sunny Saturday it was very busy in town and around the port today. I've now been here in Málaga for just over 2 weeks, therefore 25% of my planned time here in Spain is already over!

16th October 2016:

I have a friend, Malgorzata from Poland, joining me for a few days starting on Tuesday week (25th October), so today I did a little forward planning by walking to the bus station to investigate day trips to Gibraltar. It was a pleasant surprise to learn that the round trip fare would only be €21 each, especially as the journey takes 3 hours each way (to La Linea, which is the town on the border between Spain and the British Protectorate of Gibraltar). A little closer to the time I'll book our seats, having confirmed that the weather is forecasted to be good on our chosen day of travel.

And that's about all I did today, except for having a snack for lunch in the main railway station mall, and walking back to the apartment via the beach, where I sat for an hour topping up my tan. Although the beach was packed with people I didn't see many swimming - perhaps when Malgorzata is with me I'll try the sea (because we'll be able to look after our things when in the water).

The temperature in Málaga reached 27°C this afternoon, and there was no wind! But I remember the Great Storm that passed over the south of England in 1987 - it happened 29 years ago tonight. On that night I was at sea off the south coast of England, aboard HMS Cardiff. We had been exercising in the North Sea over the previous week and on the night of the storm were heading west through the English Channel on our way to the city of Cardiff. I think that we recorded gusts of up to 80 knots, but surprisingly the sea didn't actually get very rough, although there was a lot of spray and visibility was much reduced. Actually I slept through a lot of it! In the morning we were surprised when listening to the BBC news that there had been so much devastation ashore - I suppose that we were pretty much used to extreme weather (usually far north in the Atlantic) so didn't expect such damage and disruption. Can't believe that it was so long ago!

19th October 2016:

An out of the ordinary day for me - my ex crew chum Ian visited me for the afternoon. I met him at the bus station, but whilst waiting for him I checked out the Centro Comercial Larios Centro, which is a huge shopping centre with two floors of shops (there are 125). On the ground floor there is a massive Eroski hypermarkets, which was bigger than some of the Walmarts I've been into in the United States! In addition there are ten cinema theatres, a food court, banks, a lottery kiosk, a travel agency and a dry cleaner's. About fourteen million visitors come to Larios Centro every year to do their shopping, go to the movies, or eat out.

After Ian had arrived we walked back to the old town, stopping at the "Cheers" café for a beer / glass of wine. This café is located just across the street from the cathedral, so is the ideal spot to enjoy a relaxing hour chatting about old times, whilst people watching. The cathedral area is the hub of tourism in Málaga Old Town, so it was interesting to see the many different nationalities of visitors passing by. During our walk around the old town Ian pointed out a couple of famous local attractions: First the "Antigua Casa de Guardia", which is the oldest wine bar/tavern in Málaga. Founded in 1840 by Don José Guardia, the Casa de Guardia is much more than a wine bar or cellar - it's an institution. For wine lovers, it is a place that must be visited when in Málaga. A true cultural heritage that has been producing wine in the same way for the last 172 years.

The second local attraction that Ian showed me was the "Bodega-Bar El Pimpi", which is the most famous tapa bar on the Costa del Sol, and one of Málaga's most iconic landmarks. It consistently ranks as top of any places to see in any Málaga listing - appeal is easy to understand. The Bodega Bar is situated in a former eighteenth-century mansion located right in the heart of the city, just a stone's throw from the Plaza de la Merced, and only 10 minutes walk from my apartment.

Finally we went to a café in the harbour area for lunch, and late in the afternoon he took the "A" bus to the airport to catch his flight back to UK. A good day!

Tuesday 25th October 2016:

A special day for me today because it was the day that my good friend Malgorzata from Poland came to stay with me. She flew from Warsaw and arrived at Málaga International Airport at just before 1600, where I was waiting to welcome her to Spain. We took the bus to near the marina, then walked the 15 minutes to the apartment.

In the evening we ventured out to the Plaza de la Merced for dinner, before taking a later evening walk around the old town. And the old town was a sight to behold, with every restaurant full to overflowing, all the bars doing a roaring trade, and all the landmark buildings floodlit, including the Alcazaba, the Roman Theatre and the Cathedral. What a wonderful place Málaga is, especially whilst sharing it with my special guest.

And a very special guest she was this evening, searching out the most expensive ice cream parlour in town to treat us both to tubs of their delicious offerings. I told her never to do that again, but hope she does!

Welcome Malgorzata, it's nice to see you again and to enjoy your company.

Wednesday 26th October 2016:

It was the first full day of Malgorzata's visit to stay with me here in Málaga, and what a good day it was. We did the rounds of some of the important old town churches, visited the El Jardin Cafeteria by the cathedral, the Café de Chinitas, the unique bar Antigua Casa de Guardia and the central market. Later in the afternoon we moved to the harbour marina area for an ice cream - actually a delicious frozen yoghurt and three fruits concoction with a delicious topping! After that treat and a fairly long relaxing session before continuing our sightseeing, we ventured further along the waterfront to be faced by the staggering sight of four cruise ships and a huge private mega yacht - the "Harmony of the Seas" with 5479 passengers is the largest cruise ship in the world, and the others were the "Oosterdam" (1848 passengers), the "Splendida" (3900 passengers) and the "Braemar" (929 passengers). The mega yacht was the "Octopus" owned by Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen (26 guests, 57 crew, two helicopters and a submarine).

In the evening we went to the Mercado de la Merced for a couple of slices of pizza for our dinner, and then returned to the apartment for a movie.

Thursday 27th October 2016:

Today we took the bus to Gibraltar and back leaving the apartment at 0615 for the 20 minute walk to the bus stop. It was a 3 hour trip along the coast of the Costa Del Sol, stopping to pick up more passengers at several places along the way, including Torremolenos, Feurengirola and Marbella. Luckily the bus took us across the border, through Customs and Immigration, and into the bus station in Gibraltar without having to get off.

Our mission in Gibraltar was to take the cable car to the top of the Rock, see the Barbary Apes, visit St Michael's Cave and to explore Main Street and some of the churches nearby. The weather for our visit was typically British, with heavy black clouds and a chilly wind, although we were spared rain. Sadly the weather rather spoilt the views from the top, where on a clear day we would easily have seen north Africa. We completed our mission in time to catch our returning bus at 1530, but would have liked a little longer to allow Malgorzata to shop in Marks and Spencer!

Our overall impression of Gibraltar was not complimentary - prices of just about everything (the cable car, the Caves, food and most of what we saw in the shops) was excessively high. The only bargain I managed was a litre bottle of Baileys Cream for just under £10, where in Spain it costs €16 in a low cost supermarket!

But sadly our impression of Gibraltar was of a tacky remnant of a tired English small town, which had been almost submerged in a concrete jungle of high rise apartment buildings. The actual "Rock" still of course stands in splendour, if not almost disappearing in the cloud and mist, and is a symbol of British colonialism in this otherwise charming Spanish peninsula. We were pleased at the end of the day to return to the civilised and sophisticated city of Málaga, leaving the cultural wasteland of Gibraltar far behind. It was worth the effort, but definitely never again!

Friday 28th October 2016:

I spent the morning catching up with work (uploading images from my camera and phone, updating my websites, backing up, etc.) on my laptop whilst my guest went to the old town for some private sightseeing (otherwise known as window shopping for clothes!). We met up early afternoon and went for lunch in "Le Canasta", a pleasant little restaurant on a corner across the road from the El Corte shopping centre.

Later we went to the rail and bus stations to purchase tickets for our visit to Madrid next week - not a great experience - the difference in price between a train and bus round trip bus ticket was staggering - a difference of €80! Needless to say I decided to take the bus, albeit that it takes over 3 hours longer!

Malgorzata decided to take the train as she wants longer to go sightseeing in Madrid, and she is sure that it'll be her last opportunity!

But yesterday's tough day began to catch up with us by late afternoon - we went for an ice cream and then returned to the apartment quite early, and enjoyed an omelette rather than going out for dinner. Our movie tonight was "Summer in February".

Sunday 30th October 2016:

The clocks were put back last night, so we had an additional hour of sleep! Málaga is now in the timezone UTC+1.

We left the apartment at 1000 this morning heading north to go to the Sunday morning Flea Market that I had read about on the Internet, only to find that it didn't exist! Oh well, some good exercise looking for it! Then we returned to the old town looking for the weekly Municipal Band Concert - not going week unfortunately! Amongst all these wanderings we stopped at a café for lunch. Phew, we definitely needed the rest!

As we were walking along the Calle Marqués de Larios from Constitution Square towards the harbour we stopped to listen to a stringed quartet playing classical chamber music! This busking group (Grupo Con Brio Musica) were really excellent, and checking their website later, I found that they indeed were professionals! They offer their services for Concerts, Weddings, Cocktails, Religious and civil ceremonies and Masses. Their objective is to present the best of classical chamber music, offering violinist only, or string quartet or trio, or duo (violin or viola cello) or singers (soprano and tenor). The audience was big!

Later we took the lazy route to the entrance of the Castillo de Gibralfaro (the bus) and took advantage of it being open for free after 1400. After circumnavigating the wall and enjoying the spectacular views (it was a very clear day) we walked back to sea level. There was an open air market in the Plaza de la Merced, but was only local crafts and tacky trinkets, so I soon gave up and returned to the apartment, leaving Malgorzata to browse to her heart's content! Anyway she had planned to visit the Picasso Museum, so it was some time later before she also returned to the apartment.

Monday 31st October 2016:

Half way through my two months here in Spain and today, with my guest Malgorzata from Poland, we went on a free guided walking tour of Málaga old town. Of course I had been to everywhere on the tour already, but having a local guide made a big difference - despite having researched most places on the Internet, he was able to tell many local tales and anecdotes, and expand on the history I had already accumulated. It was 2.5 hours well spent, and the €5 tip we each gave to the volunteer guide was a just reward for what he delivered.

Following the tour we walked to the harbour for a late lunch / early dinner, as we were both quite tired and had decided not to go out for dinner in the evening. Another early evening for us watching a movie.

Tuesday 1st November 2016:

Pinch punch it's the first of the month, and here in Spain as in many other European countries it was a public holiday today commemorating "All Saints' Day". But it didn't affect the intrepid sightseers of our Calle Refino apartment, who took the bus to the "Jardin Botanico" Gardens on the outskirts of the city. We had planned well ahead, catching one of the tourist busses straight to the entrance to the gardens - on entry Malgorzata managed to negotiate a Senior Citizen discount for both of us, despite she being several years below the threshold age! We walked the gardens for almost 3 hours before we caught the bus back into town. I was rather disappointed with the gardens - at this time of the year I was expecting there to be a dearth of colour, but was not prepared for a complete absence, except green of course. Anyway, as many of my family and friends are aware, I'm a total philistine when it comes to flowers, plants, trees, shrubs and so forth, so even though there were a huge selection of exotic exhibits from around the world, including historical specimens, the whole event left me rather unimpressed! For Malgorzata, who has a greater understanding of the science, she was much more satisfied, often able to imagine the beauty that would be there to be savoured at other times of the year.

On returning to town we again headed for the excellent La Canasta Café for some lunch, and a well-earned glass of wine. We arrived there just 45 minutes before it closed for the day - quite long enough for us to enjoy our lunch and recover our energy for the walking still to come!

Later we asked to the harbour area for an ice cream - on the way we were amazed by the quietness and lack of people around town - we discovered why - they were all at the harbour area and without standing in line for ages (which I won't do), it was impossible to get the ice creams we craved! We actually continued to the beach, but didn't manage to satisfy our craving there either! Eventually we returned to the Bodega-Bar El Pimpi and after a long wait (poor service) had and absolutely delicious piece of cheese cake with mango ice cream. It was our extravagant indulgence of the week!

Thursday 3rd - Saturday 5th November 2016:

Spent two rainy days in Madrid. Please visit my special gallery page for pictures and comments. Sadly I was underwhelmed by the Spanish capital and have no desire to return!

Tuesday 8th November 2016:

Today was United States Presidential Election Day.

Today I visited the city of Ronda - please visit my special Gallery page and the "My Costa Del Sol" link for my comments.

Thursday 10th November 2016:

A fine, clear and sunny day here today in Málaga - my British friends Sara and Adrian, who are currently vacationing in Torremolinos, came to visit me for a few hours of sightseeing. It was a great day much enjoyed by us all, but also gave me the opportunity to test myself on the local knowledge I have picked up over the last few weeks since I arrived in the city. I took them to all the obvious local landmarks, churches, gardens, statues, cafes etc., but also to some of the more hidden attractions that tourists don't always find. They were pleasantly surprised, and appeared to have not been aware of this fantastic city sitting on their doorstep in the more beach tourist resort where they have their vacation apartment. I expect that they'll return, especially as the frequent train service from Torremolinos only takes 25 minutes to reach into the heart of Málaga.

Friday 11th November 2016 (Remembrance Day):

Remembrance Day today coincides with the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month in 1918 when World War One ended with the signing of the armistice - most churches in the UK and in many other parts of the world, including here in Málaga, will however observe Remembrance on Sunday 13th November 2016, the date nearest to Armistice Day. I shall attend the service at St George's Church, located within the English Cemetery here in Málaga. And just to remind everyone what 'Remembrance Day' is all about - Basically the Flanders Poppy, or corn poppy grows profusely in the trenches and bomb craters in war zones, and this appears to be caused because the earth has been disturbed, which gives the light required to germinate the poppy seeds. It is strange that after such a short time after a conflict the scenes of carnage and much blood shed, is covered in a blanket of red flowers. The idea of wearing the poppy is to remember all who have perished and suffered in all wars, not just WW1 and WW2, but also more recent conflicts such as the Falkland War, Afghanistan, Iraq, etc. The Poppy was adopted as a symbol of remembrance by some French widows of service people, in 1921 and has been the symbol of remembrance ever since.

At 5 a.m. that morning of 11th November 1918 Germany, bereft of manpower and supplies and faced with imminent invasion, signed an armistice agreement with the Allies in a railroad car outside Compiègne, France. The First World War left nine million soldiers dead and 21 million wounded, with Germany, Russia, Austria-Hungary, France, and Great Britain each losing nearly a million or more lives. In addition, at least five million civilians died from disease, starvation, or exposure.

Today was also special for two further important reasons: One that it was National Independence Day national day in Poland, commemorating the anniversary of the restoration of Poland's sovereignty as the Second Polish Republic in 1918, after 123 years of partition by the Russian Empire. Secondly because it was the anniversary of the Battle of Taranto, that took place on the night of 11–12 November 1940 during the Second World War between British naval forces and Italian naval forces. The Royal Navy launched the first all-aircraft ship-to-ship naval attack in history, employing a small number of obsolescent Fairey Swordfish biplane torpedo bombers from the aircraft carrier HMS Illustrious (R87) in the Mediterranean Sea. The attack struck the battle fleet of the Regia Marina at anchor in the harbour of Taranto using aerial torpedoes. The devastation wrought by the British carrier-launched aircraft on the large Italian warships was the beginning of the ascendancy of naval aviation over the big guns of battleships. The Italian fleet lost half of its capital ships in one night, thus for some time tipping the balance of naval power in the Mediterranean towards the British.

Today was also Veterans Day in the United States, which honours military veterans; that is, persons who served in the United States Armed Forces. Veterans Day should not be confused with Memorial Day (annually on the last Monday of May), which honours those who died while in military service.

My mission today was to visit the Automotive Museum of Málaga - it took me an hour to walk there from the apartment. The Museum had 85 vintage cars on exhibition displayed in thematic groups by the years they were produced. These groups were the Belle Epoque, The 20's, Art Deco, La Dolce Vita, Dream Cars, Eccentricity, Popular Cars, English Tradition, Alternative Energies, and Tuning. The collection of cars is worth around €25 million and is one of the most important collections of vintage cars in the world, and shows the cars as works of art. The car in the 20th century has been the symbol of aristocrats, and artists have embellished cars with their ideas of beauty. There is a Unic (French manufacturer founded in 1905) from 1920 with the design of Sonia Delaunay and a Rolls Royce from 1966 that is called "Flower Power", because of its painted design reflecting the psychedelic art of that time. Another Rolls Royce from 1985 is called the "Swarovsky" because it is decorated with crystals from that company. There is an Excalibur USA, an extravagant car made famous by owners such as Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sylvester Stallone. There are also cars in the museum that have historic value, such as a Mercedes 540K which was used by Heinrich

Himmler and a Lancia Italia, used by Mussolini for parades. This museum really shows its cars as works of art - it was a great experience and a most enjoyable to visit.

On the way to the Automotive Museum I chanced upon the El Corté Inglés Outlet store, which I ventured into for a few milliseconds, departing rather quickly after discovering that it contained 99% women's clothing!

On the way back from the Museum I walked along the waterfront from West to East - it was a beautifully warm afternoon with clear skies and a temperature of 22°C. Hey, not bad for November!

Sunday 13th November 2016:

Today I attended the Remembrance Sunday Service at St George's Church here in Málaga. The service was followed by the customary 2 minutes silence in remembrance of those who had made the ultimate sacrifice, laying down their lives for our tomorrows. A serving Squadron Leader (in uniform) from the British Embassy in Madrid also attended, and led the wreath laying ceremony - wreathes were laid on behalf of the Navy, Army, Air Force and Marines by retired members of those arms of the British military services. A trumpeter sounded the "Last Post" and "Reveille" before and after the silence.

By an amazing coincidence I recognised the gentleman who laid the wreath on behalf of the Royal Navy - the last time we met was 26 years ago when I was his boss in the Naval Engineering Training School, HMS Sultan in Gosport on the south coast of England. It was very special to meet up with Keith after so many years, and I will hopefully stay in touch with him and his wife into the future.

After the service I had a walk to the harbour area, sat for a while with an ice cream and caught up with emails, Facebook, WhatsApp, Viber and the BBC News on my smartphone. It was a pleasantly warm afternoon with crowds of people taking advantage of the many restaurants and open market stalls on the waterfront. On the way back to the apartment I stopped off for a while to listen to the live music on a stage in front of the Roman Theatre - an excellent group with a lead singer who not only looked like Eric Clapton, but sounded like him too!

Monday 14th November 2016:

A pleasant day today with a clear sky, plenty of sunshine and healthy temperatures for this time of the year. I met up with Sue for lunch, the owner of the apartment I am renting here in Málaga. She's from Brighton in the UK, but recently drove here with her two little dogs, and is staying in a village 30 minutes drive from Málaga. The apartment seems to be proving a good investment for her!

Tuesday 15th November 2016:

Another clear and sunny day here in Málaga. Unusually for me I went clothes shopping - it's not an experience I enjoy (and that's a serious understatement!), but luckily I found what I was looking for in the budget store Primark, in the Larios Shopping Centre. I came away feeling satisfied that I had got a lot for little, and probably won't need to repeat the experience for quite a long time to come! Later in the afternoon I walked to the local Dia supermarket for some food shopping, including snacks for my day trip to Seville tomorrow.

After Seville there are just two things that I want to do before leaving Spain at the end of the month - one to visit Mijas, and the other to ride on the Benalmádena Telefonica cable car that rises 800m above sea level and gives views over the coastline as far as north Africa, and inland over the Sierra Nevada mountains. I suffer vertigo and am not sure if I'll be able to cope with the cable car, but having done the Gibraltar ride to see the apes without any problems, I'll probably give it a try! I suppose I can always keep my eyes closed for the 15 minutes ride!

Wednesday 16th November 2016:

I travelled to Seville for a day of sightseeing today. Please read the document "My Andalucia" for all the details of my fabulous day out.

Friday 18th November 2016:

I travelled to Mijas for a day of sightseeing today. Please read the document "My Andalucia" for all the details of my not so fabulous day out.

Sunday 20th November 2016:

The first day of my final week here in Málaga this year, and the weather forecast for the coming week is wet, wet, wet! I was hoping to get to Torremolinos to see Sara and Adrian on one day, and take the train or bus to visit the city of Córdoba on another, but neither may now be possible before I fly out in 10 days time.

Perhaps there will be the occasional day when the rain is less - I'll have to keep a close watch on the forecast and grab my opportunity.

But today had an autumnal feel about it - top temperature today was just 18°C and the cloud cover increased as the day wore on. The rain was expected late this evening.

But Málaga was as busy as ever - in the Plaza de la Merced there were about a dozen artists with their paints and easels, a group of children in an open air art class, and a ensemble of Andalusian singers with their stringed instruments singing in traditional costumes by the Picasso statue. There was also some television production going on, which seemed to be a bit of a haircut-athon! I didn't know what it was except there was an army of hairdressers in action both when I passed by on my way to the harbour and almost 3 hours later on my way back?

I was only out of the apartment for about 4 hours today, walking to the harbour for some lunch, spending time watching the activities at the Plaza de la Merced and generally strolling around watching the world go by. There was the usual busker with his Spanish guitar near the Roman Theatre, and the accordion player in his customary position further down the road (replaced by a trombonist on my way back)! There was a Spanish navy frigate alongside in the harbour, which was open to visitors, but it didn't really interest me! The usual Sunday open air market was spread along the waterfront by the restaurants at the harbour, and a cruise ship in port by the Terminal. In another part of the harbour / marina area there was a really excellent jazz band, which I listened to for about 30 minutes - there were plenty of local couples dancing - I recorded a lot of video of this happy and cultured corner of this fabulous city. Life as normal today in this vibrant city of Málaga!

Thursday 24th November 2016:

I spent the day visiting Córdoba, arriving back in Málaga just before 1800. On my walk back from the train station I decided to detour via the Plaza de la Constitution and Calle Marqués de Larios, because I knew that today was the day when the Christmas Lights would be switched on, and I guessed that the centre of any festivities would be centred about that central area in the Málaga 's fabulous old town. And so it was, and I joined in the fun and party atmosphere that the city had created for this special evening. Apparently in previous years 600.000 led lights had been used in Calle Larios, but apparently this year there were more, with 1.6 million points of light. I read on the Internet that the company in charge of this year's Christmas lights in Málaga also make them for many cities worldwide, such as New York on fifth avenue, Las Vegas, Dubai and Hong Kong among others.

The lights were switched on at precisely 1900, and the following 10 minute light show, accompanied by live music (Queen's "The Show must go on") was breathtaking, as the strings of LED lights described and flashed Christmas designs and shapes and patterns along the length of the archway that covered Calle Larios from end to end. There were thousands of people to see this spectacular show - where I was the crowds were dense, and it was impossible to move. Families of people of all ages, all sizes and all shapes were amongst the audience, jostling for the perfect position to witness this special day in Málaga's calendar. And I had a perfect position, in Plaza de la Constitution but at the end of Calle Larios, looking straight down the archway of Christmas lights as they gave their show. Just behind where I was standing was the giant Christmas Tree, which was illuminated a few moments after the light show had completed – wow, what an evening in this fabulous city.

After the light show the crowds started to disperse, including myself who was pretty tired after a day of sightseeing around Córdoba, and this evening in Málaga. But I guess that more was to come, as the stage was set for a big party – the live music was there, Constitution Square was ready and so were the people of Málaga, never missing the opportunity to enjoy a party and dance the night away. But for me it was home, a shower and a much needed rest after a great day.

Friday 25th November 2016:

A busy day on my laptop – bringing my documents "My Andalucía", Córdoba Info" and "My Málaga " up to date, and creating a Córdoba page on my "European and World Travel" website. I slipped out for some food shopping, but for the rest of the day I hibernated inside the apartment. Actually the weather outside was not good, with occasional rain off and on most of the day. I finished my work by 1600, and watched two movies during the evening, with a break to communicate and voice chat with friends in different parts of the world. With only four full days remaining before I fly back to UK, I'm also beginning to think about what I need to do and see before leaving Málaga for the last time this year.



***In my Malaga rental apartment
(I shall return)***