

Barcelona Journal Part One (September 29 - October 5)

September 2014

Everyone who knows me knows that I love horses, I love teaching, and I love to travel. So, imagine how excited I was when the opportunity came my way to travel to Barcelona, Spain and assist Peggy Cummings in teaching a level 3 Connected Riding certification course. Add a few days of sightseeing in the city and the opportunity to share pictures of Spanish art and architecture and the vibrant, Mediterranean culture of one of Europe's premier tourist destinations with friends and students, and the mix for a perfect trip was in place.

An Arduous Journey

I departed Boise, Idaho at 6:00 AM on a Monday morning, flew to Denver, CO and then to Newark, New Jersey. I left Newark at 8:30 that evening and arrived in Barcelona around 10:00 AM Tuesday morning. Our approach swung us out over the Mediterranean Sea.

After an 8-hour flight and a 6-hour time change (8 hours difference from home in Idaho), I was fried but excited enough to follow the advice given to travelers to resist sleeping

until nighttime at your destination to adjust to the new time zone. The weather was overcast and rainy.



The drive out of Barcelona was scenic with the Mediterranean Sea to our right and mountains to the left. The farm that hosted us is in the mountains, about a 45 minute drive from the city.

Melin (mother) Farriols, one of the proprietors of Yeguada Farriols Farm, picked Peggy and I up at the airport. A "yeguada" is a breeding station. The stable is nestled in the hills and the family has bred Pure Spanish Breed horses for many years.

Barcelona is in a region of Spain known as Catalunya is an autonomous community of Spain, designated a "nationality" by its Statute of Autonomy. The region has its own language, history and culture that is separate from the rest of Spain. The people of this region advocate succession from Spain to become their own, independent nation. On September 30, 2014 Spain's Constitutional Court suspended a planned referendum on independence in Catalonia, opening a potentially volatile phase in a long-running dispute between the central government and the country's most important industrial region.

<http://online.wsj.com/articles/catalonia-suspends-independence-referendum-campaign-1412082277>



Once we left the highway, the roads were pretty rough. Recent rains had washed them out and created massive ruts.

There isn't a flat piece of ground for miles and some of the paddocks for the horses are literally terraces, carved out of the sides of the hills. (See 3 below)



My accommodations were fabulous, complete with two beds, a closet and bath. I was relieved to have Internet services, all the comforts of home and then some.

The grounds are stunning and my room was comfortable with a great view. In addition to about 50 horses, Yeguada Farriols is home to 11 dogs, chickens, peacocks, and Petardo, a pot-bellied pig.



The family's love of horses began about 1945, but the real origin of the breeding farm is from the 1970's. It was completely private then. It became a breeding farm in 1979.

The website showcases the facility.

<http://www.horseway.es/en>



Happy travelers are always good sports, so Peggy and I propped our eyes open and went back into the city with Melin for some sightseeing. I often love to poke around in Europe and stumble upon interesting corners of cities and towns, but having a native “tour guide” can’t be beat. I would not have been willing to drive in the city traffic, but Melin was fearless.



For the 1992 Summer Olympics, the city modernized. The Olympic Boulevard And Harbor Front remain as reminders of that event. The housing for visiting athletes was turned in apartment buildings for residents after the games and the public area around the harbor is a popular place to visit for tourists and locals alike.



Barcelona Streets And Markets

We drove past many sites, then parked at the Catalunya Plaza and took off on foot. We visited markets, stores and shops as we wandered the city's famous *Las Ramblas* pedestrian boulevard and the *El Raval* neighborhood. It was pouring rain, so we bought some cheap raincoats, (Not too touristy!!) and pressed on.



The city's oldest herbal and natural remedy shop.

At one point, it was raining so hard that I decided to go into a little bakery and have something to drink. I ordered Swiss Hot Chocolate with whipped cream and was in for the treat of a lifetime. The chocolate was so thick; I had to eat it with a spoon. It was hot and the consistency of freshly cooked pudding. If a chocolate overdose is possible ...





Las Ramblas (Spanish) or *Les Rambles* (Catalan)

This elegant tree-lined pedestrian promenade, known as *Las Ramblas* was a riverbed just outside of the city walls in the medieval era. By the 15th century, the city had expanded across the river, changing the characteristics of *Rambblas*. In 1856, the remnants of the old city wall were torn down. The central pedestrian promenade of *Las*

Rambblas has remained the same since.

Las Ramblas consists of five pedestrian-oriented streets: *Rambla de Canaletes*, *Rambla dels Estudis* (or *Rambla dels Ocells*), *Rambla de Sant Josep* (or *Rambla de les Flors*), *Rambla dels Caputxins*, and *Rambla de Santa Mònica*. Since the five streets all run together in one $\frac{3}{4}$ mile stretch, the plural is used to refer to all of them. I look forward to revisiting this walk next week.



This Chinese dragon holding a lantern hangs on the corner of a building that used to house an umbrella shop. (note the emblems on the side of the building) Dragons are also a symbol of Catalan pride. The city's patron saint is Saint George (Jordi), the dragon slayer.





La Boqueria Market

I love markets like this! There is so much excitement in the hustle and bustle and the eye candy is phenomenal.

Each stall is beautifully presented and the overall picture is pure chaos.

Whether you are shopping for a quick bite to eat or want to pick up some souvenirs or gifts, I can't imagine a better place to spend time. My guidebook pointed out that the market is closed on Sundays and locals avoid Mondays because they suspect the items may not be fresh.



There is definitely something for everyone to be found at a market like this.

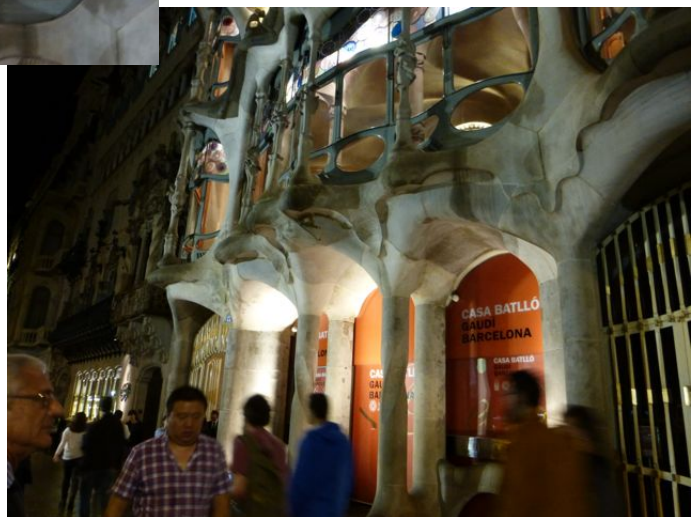
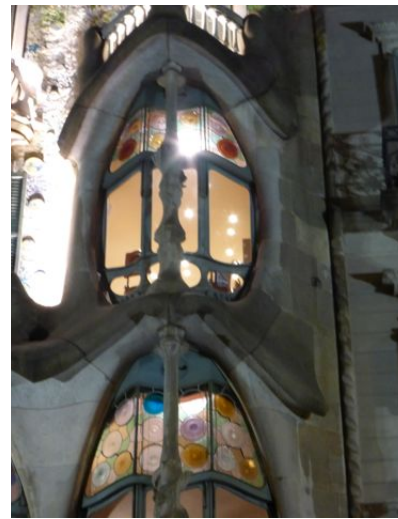
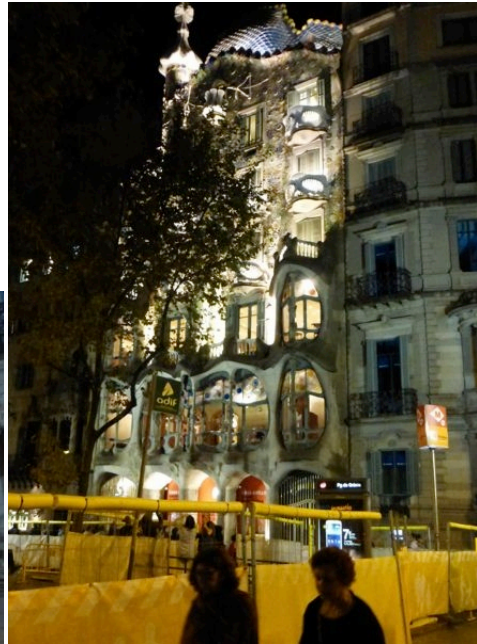


These beautiful little "fruits" are actually *Marzipan*, a confection consisting primarily of sugar or honey and almond meal, sometimes augmented with almond oil or extract.



Gaudi Architecture At Night Casa

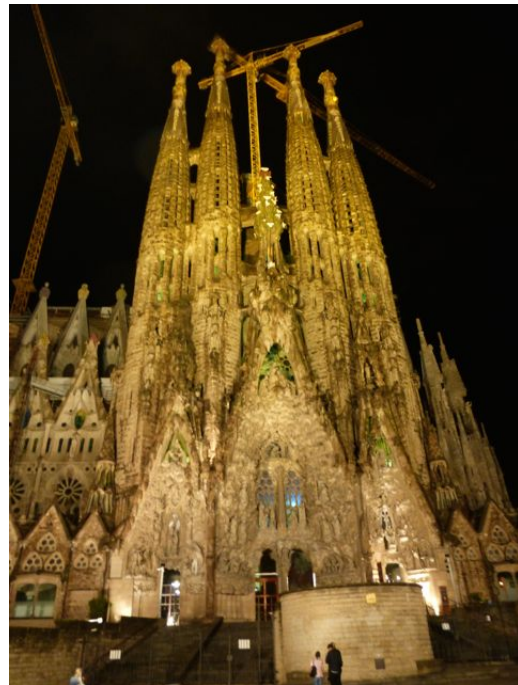
Night photography is not my little point-and-shoot camera's strong suit. I was, however surprised by how small the *Casa Batllo* structure actually is. It is only about 5 stories tall and quite narrow.





Casa Mila was being cleaned and was covered by a thin sheet of netting to protect the façade. I hope to visit the rooftop of this building, but my time will very limited when I get back to the city and the lines can take 3 – 4 hours. If I can find a tour that gets to “skip the lines,” as advertised, I may be able to swing it.

Gaudí spent most of his professional career building the Expiatory Church of *La Sagrada Família*, He received the commission in late 1883 and it occupied the rest of his life. My biggest surprise was seeing *La Sagrada Família* in real life. Pictures cannot do justice to this structure. As “gothic style” cathedrals go, it is not huge. The tallest tower has not yet been installed.



The surface is literally encrusted with decoration, to the point that it is a little hard to look at it. There is too much to see. The effect may have been magnified by the fact that I saw it at night. The only advantage to seeing this structure at night is that there weren't 3,000 people surrounding it while waiting to get in like there are in the daytime.



La Sagrada Familia



If you have 5 minutes, watch this Smarthistory video about this structure.

<http://smarthistory.khanacademy.org/gaudi-sagrada-familia.html>

I know I will at least be able to drive by this cathedral again and maybe go inside, but, again, I'd have to do that with a tour that can get past the lines. It's been a busy few days and I look forward to more horses, more art and more of the fabulous hospitality the Catalan people I've met are showing me.

