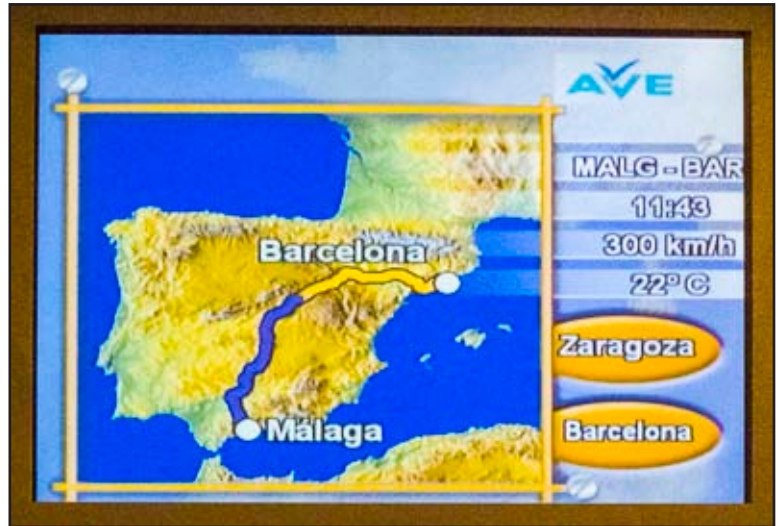


**BARCELONA, SPAIN (MAY 8 - 14, 2013)**

**Malaga to Barcelona**

We took the high speed train from Malaga to Barcelona. The general track we took is shown in the photograph here. At 300 KPH (186+ MPH) the scenery went by pretty fast. Once in Barcelona, we took a taxi to the flat we had rented, (or at least nearby). We were not exactly sure where the entrance was, other than off a very narrow street off a main street. Goggle Earth research had helped make the area recognizable, but the number of the actual flat was not posted on any exterior surfaces along the street. I had hoped to have a cell phone but Spain no longer sells burner phones and acquiring a chip for my iPhone required signing up for an ongoing program, passport registration, background checks of some sort, etc, etc...



Anyway, we narrowed the possibilities down and then found someone in a nearby business that would call the landlord. As it was, he was having lunch in the cafe next door. He promptly finished lunch and soon after we were shown the secret nondescript door (which we were standing in front of the whole time) and up to our residence for the next week.

This was one of my 'go-to' coffee shops. I preferred this one on days where I could sit outside. It was right next door to the building our apartment was located in.



This was my other 'go-to' coffee shop.

What made having two 'go-to' coffee shops really nice was that these two coffee shops were right next to each other and also next door to the building our apartment was in. If one was closed, out of croissants, or it was raining we could go to the other. We could also hook up to the free Internet of one of the cafes at either. Very convenient for us!

Wendy did like this one better due to the breakfast pastries and orange juice though.



We attended a cello and Irish bodhran (drum) concert at the famous Palau de la Música (Palace of Catalan Music). An architecturally fantastic building designed by the architect Lluís Domènech i Montaner and opened in 1908.



I was never sure what this colorful paint ball decorating effort was all about, but the CCOO is a large union like effort in Spain, (the largest by most measures).



Another ongoing effort that is openly displayed by flags, demonstrations and other efforts is the desire of the Catalan people to be independent of Spain.

The CCOO was part of a large demonstration about teacher pay that we saw. Demonstrations such as these were common and we saw several, always very civil and we saw no violence associated with them. Much police presence, but no violence or confrontation.



Serious competition in something other than football.



And then after the competition, a bit of down time and people watching...



The Spanish Grand Prix was the weekend we were there, held a few miles outside of the city. I did not see much activity related to the Grand Prix outside of this Ferrari fan and the waving Flavio Briatore look-a-like.



I'm pretty sure this tourist is not all that satisfied with the photo she took.



I saw a lot of people using iPads and tablets to take photographs with. Maybe it is modern technology and all, but I find it even less discrete than a 4x5 view camera. However, on the plus side, it is even more easy now to spot a tourist to stand next to in order for the pick pockets to ignore me for the easier target occupied with the iPad.

All y'all's turn to come up with a caption on this two hatted dogs image...





Across the street from us was a police station, decorated with surveillance cameras. And then even more on the backside.



Typical of the cafes.

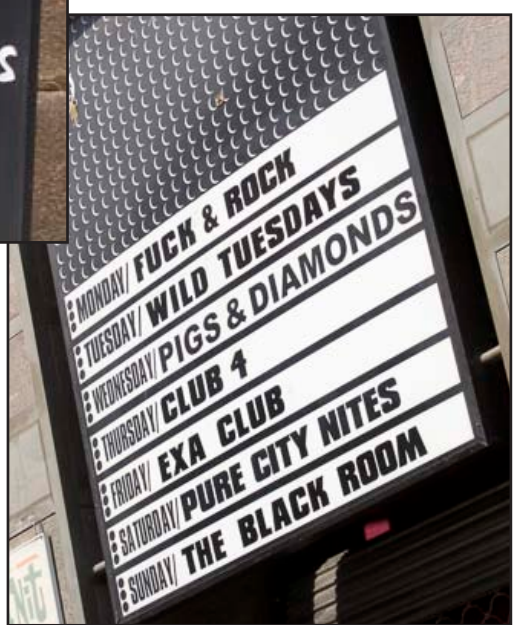


Clearly a highly popular and desired state of mind.



I was beginning to think I was in Amsterdam.

Well, if it includes I.V.A., is 7 Euros a good value?



There were lots of interesting people in Barcelona to photograph!





Catalan architect Antoni Gaudí's Sagrada Família from a distance. There is lots of construction activity now days. The major part of the interior is now mostly finished and is holding services. Still a long ways to go, but in the last decade a huge amount of work has been completed.



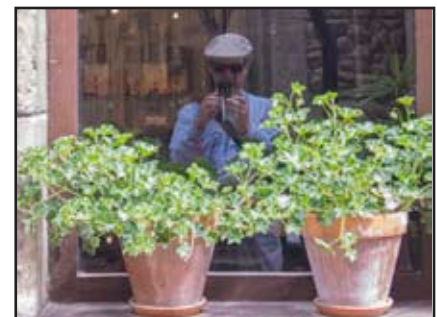
Bicycles are part of the Barcelona transportation system, (as in many other European cities). One buys a card and then can use bikes from these racks located all over the city. Set up for and used primarily by locals, not tourists. Similar to our monthly bus and ferry transportation passes.



Picasso under Ray Bans...



New age street art...



Self portrait in new hat...

.END