

spain-2007-07.txt, Ralph Abraham, March 22, 2007

MADRID

*** Thursday, March 08, 2007.

Arrive in Madrid! We were lucky to find a traveling exhibit on the Visigoths in the Museum. It appeared that some elements of Islamic patterns were absorbed from the Visigoths when the Islamic culture overran Spain.

*** Friday, March 09, 2007.

Day trip with two guides to Toledo, an old walled city now surrounded by the suburbs of Madrid. This was the capital of Visigothic Spain in the 6th century, taken by the Muslims in 711, and retaken by the Christians in 1085. El Greco moved here from Crete and Venice in 1577.

We began with a panoramic view from a promontory. It appeared that medieval Toledo was extensive and intact. Our main target was the Gothic cathedral, one of the greatest in Europe. Built over the years 1226 to 1493 on the remains of a mosque over the site of a Visigothic church, this is yet another monster for the Guinness Book or Records, covering 1.73 acres. One power walk around its perimeter was my aerobic exercise for the day.

The narrow twisting streets were impossible for our school bus, and we had about six hours of walking with our guides. We toured the Juderia (old Jewish neighborhood) and visited the Sinagoga del Transito, and its Sephardic Museum. I felt that this day was the most enlightening of our trip, and would gladly come back for a longer stay.

*** Saturday, March 10, 2007.

This day was devoted to the Museo del Prado, an art collection to remember forever. I was lucky to have Courtney and Carla as guides, and was particularly impressed by Hieronymous Bosch. We were also treated to an impassioned account of current events by one of our guides, as we saw thousands of people marching in the streets of Madrid in protest of corruption in the national government, and in memory of the Madrid train bombings of March 11, 2004.

*** Saturday, March 10, 2007.

After breakfast, I left for the airport, and home.

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