SHAKURA SUMMER CRUISE DIARY 2018

PART 2

THE ROAD TRIP HOLIDAY

FROM LAREDO TO PICOS DE EUROPA

via MADRID
1st July - Left Laredo 10:00 and travelled through the mountain roads instead of the Highway,

I can say that the views were so breathtakingly stunning, would not like so say how man times We said “WoW” or “Crikey look at that”

Some hair-raising bends to going up and coming down!

Arrived at the City of Burgos at 12:00 ish, had a light lunch in a hotel cafe, and then moved on to see the old town where there was some sort of Fiesta going on, the old town was amazing, the architecture and avenues stunning,

The Walled City entrance
Burgos Cathedral (Catedral de Santa María; Catedral de Burgos) is a Gothic cathedral. Started in the 12th Century, and later added to in the 15th Century. It is notable for its vast size, magnificent Gothic architecture, and unique history. Burgos Cathedral was added to the World Heritage List in 1984 and Frommer’s Spain calls it one of Spain’s best cathedrals.

The festival was in full swing when we arrived, it was very busy, and lively, with lots of different bands playing

This Group had red hats and drapes, but there were other groups with either red, yellow or blue. I think it was different Associations.
Some people were dressed in national costume.

We walked around until about 3pm then walked back to the car via the riverside.

Then set off to Lerma. (Laredo to Lerma approx 150km)
We arrived Lerma 4pm ish at our first Parador.

Parador de Lerma is a striking 17th-century Ducal Palace which was erected between 1601 and 1617 instructed by the first Duke of Lerma. And converted into a unique hotel.

Part of the grounds adjoining the parador

Bill chatting to a statue of Jose Zorilla, (A Spanish Poet)
2nd July - Still at Parador Lerma, Storks nesting on high points in the town; we saw them later also in Alcala de Henares and Segovia. Bill thought they were storking us! Ha Ha - (Get it! - Stalking)

A Close up shot

One of the gates to the old town
3rd July - We headed for the Parador at Alcalá de Henares. A long drive through Mountains. Approx 150km from Lerma.

Arrived at the Parador which was a complete contrast from the Dukes Palace at Lerma.

This one is a modernised monastery, decorated in a minimalist style.
After unpacking and sorting Archie out, we enjoyed a lazy afternoon with a dip in the hotel pool.

4th July - From Alcala Henares to give Bill a rest from driving we took the train to Madrid for the day and visited the Prado Museum.

A lot of the outside was covered in netting and scaffolding for renovations.
Goya was here

Velazquez was here too!

I just liked this fountain which was in the middle of a massive roundabout

There are many, many beautiful buildings in Madrid, far too many to print here.
Meanwhile back in Alcalá de Henares, we noticed that storks are also nesting, seems they are very common in this part of the world.

5th July - A Typical Street, full of restaurants and cafes.

We visited the Cervantes Museum, and posed between Don Quixote and Sancho Panza.

(For those who don’t know, Miguel Cervantes wrote the Don Quixote stories.)
6th July - Alcala de Henares to Segovia approx 75 km
We left the hotel early and headed for Segovia via Madrid so that we could take a look at the Royal Palace, (Madrid is so huge, it stood to reason that we would get lost en Route!!)

Eventually we found the palace,

The Cathedral was also impressive

we were just disappointed that we could not stay longer but did have a long drive ahead of us, destination Segovia.
The long drive took us through very mixed scenery, from mountains to flat plains that went on for miles and miles and miles!

Arrived at our destination in the evening at Parador Segovia
Although the Hotel itself is quite Modern, the town of Segovia is on a World Heritage site.

We had a fantastic view of the old town and cathedral from our hotel balcony.

Bill had a quick dip in the hotel pool prior to us going into the historic part of town to explore and find somewhere for dinner.

This is the Roman Aqueduct in the historic part of the town.
There was a folk festival going on, we just caught the tail end of it.

This is Segovia, also taken from our hotel balcony, showing more of the Roman Aqueduct and landscape rather than the town.

We had dinner in this square where the old buildings are just magnificent.
The tourist board advertise this building as a church, but it is actually the size of a Cathedral.

Unfortunately we were here for only one night, we wished it was longer as there was just too much to see. Perhaps we will go back one day!

From Segovia we travelled to Fuente De, stopping en route at a town call Valledoild

Again this is a very historic town, where Jose Zorrilla and Cervantes are still very popular.

This poem is by Zorilla
The Statue is Cervantes

This is the University Building, absolutely stunning.

From here, we took to the open road once more through all sorts of terrain

From open very flat plain, can see for miles land to mountains and very narrow roads. All different but very beautiful.
We also stopped here for an Archie comfort break, I couldn’t have chosen a better one!

We are at the top of a very high mountain pass on route to Fuente De, the weather has deteriorated as we are so high in the clouds,
the roads are sooo narrow eek! and such sharp bends,

Going Down!

Ahh, Much better.

Almost There!
After a journey of 225 km from Segovia we were pleased to stretch our legs.

Archie too

Here we are, at last.

7th, 8th and 9th July - Parador Fuente de (looks like a chalet in the Swiss Alps.)

Although we have travelled from Segovia, the hotel is in the heart of the Picos de Europa, in the Spectacular Cirque of Fuente de, The Source of the River Deva, Hence the name of the Hotel Rio Deva. 90 Kilometers South West of Santander.
The Cable car Known as the Teleferico is a fantastically quick way to the top of the mountain taking just 3 and a half minutes.

As dogs were not permitted in the cable car, we took the harder options and walked for 3 hours to reach the top. Very hard going when you are as unfit as I am!

We are almost at the top!

We followed a path, and did not Shin up the side!!

Yes, the white blobs on the mountains is snow!
We have now reached our destination, time for a rest and a much earned cold beer. I am not looking forward to the journey home neither!!

It was quicker going down, only 2 hours, but just as hard on the legs and back. As you can imagine, we were whacked at the end of it, must be something to do with AGE!!!

The next day, we took it easy and strolled around the very pretty town of Potes about 18km from the hotel.

We were not sure whether Archie was enjoying all this activity after lazing about on the boat. But, I'm sure he will benefit, just like we will.
10th July - We had to Back to the boat and to a vet’s appointment at 5pm for Archies pet passport checks. On the return journey we travelled through the mountains - again absolutely stunning.

Narrow Mountain passes.

We visited Potes as I noted earlier, now we have been to Pannes (see sign) in photograph. Oh! perhaps magnifying glass required. (Pots and Pans Ha Ha !!!)

Fuente De to Laredo 100km
11th July - Santander to ferry crossing at 21:15 was delayed by 4 hours due to engine problems.
The crossing (thankfully) as very calm and on the next day we spotted a pod of white or light grey Dolphins mid afternoon, Always heart warming to see them.

Archie had a very snug kennel on the top deck and a very nice walking area near the helipad.
Many of the dogs were quite noisy while in the kennel, but Archie was very calm and took it all in his stride. “Bless him”

12 July - We were due to Arrive in Plymouth 16:10 but again were delayed, we arrived home after clearing customs at 10:30 PM

This Adventure was the best. We have been to so many wonderful places, I am sure that the photographs above do not do it justice. We can thoroughly recommend all of the above Paradores.

The Spanish are very proud of their State-owned hotel network, the majority are set in historic buildings such as Castles, monasteries, palaces, convents, fortresses and hospitals and World Heritage Sites.

All painstakingly restored and converted into hotels.

The hotel network opened in 1928 under the patronage of King Alfonso VIII. Each one having a story to tell.

MAP TO FOLLOW
Next Adventure - Sailing From Laredo to La Coruna