**Travels with Anzie – Barcelona**

February 23, 2020

Barcelona – city of color, sound, smiling faces, history, Gaudi, crazy foods and drinks, demonstrations and plenty of fun times.

It took us two days to get here; the last part was the toughest: driving through downtown Barcelona following directions from a GPS female who kept directing us to roads that were either blocked to cars or were one-way the wrong way. Frustrating!

Anyway, our apartment is located right in the Gothic Quarter, Barcelona’s Old Town: narrow streets, all pedestrian; bars, restaurants featuring various international cuisines: Pakistani, Indian, Italian, and Spanish of course. Paella, paella and more paella. Tapas, tapas and more tapas.

We enjoy the tapas bars because we can sit at the bar and talk to the bartenders. We order a beer or sangria; then we’re given a plate; then we stroll down the long bar display of tapas, each with a toothpick, and select whichever tapas attract our eye and taste buds. When we’re done eating and drinking, the bartender counts the toothpicks on our plates and multiplies them by the standard price. He then adds the cost of our drinks, and we tally up. We enjoy a “progressive dinner”: we might hit two to four tapas bars in an evening.

It’s Carnival time in Barcelona. Mardi Gras is two days away. We’re actually surprised at the limited amount a celebration here. Yes, we find a few men dressed up as women in gaily colored frocks and tu-tu’s ( judging from the size of the celebrants, you’d have to call them “three-threes”). Barcelona has become a popular gay haven. Haven’t seen any parades – just saw the news from NOLA: two people dead! How sad.

The number of tourists is extraordinary! Always surprised by the number of Asian tourists. Judging from the number of college-age people here, they must be Spring-Breakers on overseas-abroad programs. The Ramblas is the major thoroughfare through the Gothic Quarter. It’s a mile long from the Plaza Catalunya downhill to the port on the Mediterranean. It’s a fun walk past mediocre eateries, kitsch boutiques, ice cream stands, flower sellers, buskers and Senegalese peddlers. During your walk you overhear a veritable U.N. of languages.

We’ve conversed with several Spaniards about their government. They all dislike the current president. You know, judging from our talks with people of different nationalities, nobody like their head of government. But, when asked if they would trade their leader for Trump, the response is always a resounding “No!”

Speaking of political, so far we’ve seen fewer demonstrations than other years. No anti-Spain, pro-Catalan demos. We’ve witnessed two: one by people from the Dominican Republic protesting against dictatorship. We asked them if their current President is a dictator. They said “No”, but based upon their historic leaders, they want to make sure that the current leader does not become one.

The other demonstration occurred right on our street. A group of people with flags gathered in front of a bakery chanting slogans unintelligible to us. The flags were imprinted “CTW”. We could only surmise that it concerned a labor dispute.

One highlight of our trip so far: Yesterday we walked over to the plaza that fronts the Barcelona Cathedral. We found a crowd surrounding a guitarist who was playing soft, romantic jazz on an amplified guitar backed by recorded percussion. We started moving our feet to the rhythm. Anzie turns to me, grabs my hand, and we’re dancing. We go through our standard moves – a twirl, a breakaway, a bend, a twist …. After about 5 minutes we decided that’s enough and stop. Then, we look around. We’re surrounded by 60-70 people clapping, hooting and taking photos! If you happen to be in Tokyo tomorrow, you’ll probably catch us on Utube!! We were astounded. We made a short bow, and began laughing hysterically. I suddenly discovered tears in my eyes. What an unexpected pleasure!

Hasta la proxima,

**Chuck & Anzie**