



OUR BUMBLE
EXPLORING EUROPE IN OUR
MOTORHOME



SPAIN



Jerez Sherry Barrels

SEVILLA TO JEREZ DE LA FRONTERA

MONDAY 6 APRIL

The lightening bolts lit up Seville closely followed by the roaring thunder and boy did it roar. Not long and it was belting down, with rain drops the size of golf balls. Vin Was under attack and we felt every rain drop as it his his delicate tin frame. It was 7 am and Seville was soggy.

Today, is a normal working day for Spain unlike UK, so by 8am the roads were busy with workers hurrying to work trying to dodge the rain. We set off around 9.30 once the storm had passed and travelled South. Once out of the city the countryside look rather green and inviting. The endless lines of small aqueducts to water the crops were fascinating and...endless, but they clearly did a good job. The rolling hills were very lush and covered in what looked like young wheat crops with silver shimmering tips that swayed in the breeze. Fields upon fields of little crops all doing the Mexican wave, it was beautiful and mesmerizing.

At Lebrija we pulled in for lunch but only after we'd called at Lidl and Aldi. Craig was so excited mooching around the shelves filled with new

products. He was like a kid in a toffee shop. After 4 months in Portugal, it was good to see different foods and on quick glance, a bit cheaper than Portugal. We also found the local football club and asked to use their water tap to fill up Vin. The football coach was very friendly, helpful and only too happy to oblige.

Our next stop Jerez de la Frontera. The second half of the route was equally as good as the first but this time lots of chalky covered hills. The soil in and around Jerez is ideal for sherry and all the chalky (albariza soil) fields were covered in neat Palomino Fino vine rows, all just starting to bud. Jerez is the heartland of sherry and many of the sherry houses were founded by British refugees. The largest establishment is Gonzalez-Byass who sell their sherry under the brand name of Tio Pepe but there are over 100 different producers in and around Jerez. Like most of the other producers they also make Spanish brandy. So if sherry is your tippie then Jerez is the place to visit as you can sample white, ruby, creme, amber to name but a few.



Once in Jerez, we parked Vin on a large car park behind the primary school and made our way in to the town. Most of the main places were closed or still cleaning up from Semana Santa but it was still nice to walk round the old city. Jerez is much bigger than we expected and we couldn't believe how many historic churches, plazas and buildings there were. The cathedral and moorish Alcazar were pretty impressive both in grandeur and architecture. Whilst the plazas were tiny but plentiful.

On the outskirts of town and just around the corner from us, the famous Andalusian school of equestrian. Andalusians love their horses and it is here they train the horses to dance. On Thursday, you can see the horses and their riders perform traditional dance to folklore music but at €25 a ticket I think we'll give it a miss. Shame we can't have a quick peek at training time.

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Top: cathedral
Bottom left: Gonzalez-Byass Sherry
Factory
Bottom Right: Alcazar



Tio Pepe Statue in front of the Cathedral

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Frustrating amber light just to the right of 20km

JEREZ DE LA FRONTERA TO SAN FERNANDO

TUESDAY 7 APRIL

We'd just set off from Jerez when guess what the blinkin Amber light came on again. This time it didn't stop as a static light, it flashed. Then the acceleration significantly reduced. Jeez what is this Amber light, it is haunting us. We seem to have checked out more Mercedes service centres that hot dinners, of late. A quick check on the map and we turned around heading back to Jerez. We found the dealer but they guided us to a commercial service centre on the industrial zone. It was too far, thankful as Vin wasn't feeling too energetic today. Slowly but surely, he crept in to the Mercedes yard. It was very busy with trucks and coaches filling every service bay and more waiting in the yard. It

didn't look good in terms of getting sorted today. The staff were extremely helpful and once they realised we were only passing they took our details and then wired Vin up. They took blood and urine sample followed by a full blow lobotomy. Oh dear, I do hope he makes it.

Half an hour later and Vin was sat in the yard. Poor Vin looked under the weather with dirty hand prints all over his bonnet. His precision sensor was knackered but in order for them to change and test it, he needs to have a full tank of fuel. With directions to the industrial zone fuel station (cheaper than normal stations and one to bear in mind) we set off to get Vin filled up with go go juice. Back in the yard, we got some bits out of Vin and set off on the bikes. Vin was gonna be a couple of hours so we needed to find somewhere to waste time. The industrial zone was



Massive door knocker at Le Cartuja

everything you expect and more. Fragrant odours of sulphur, decaying animal products and burnt tar. Despite the sugar processing plant there was nothing sweet about this place. You know you've had enough when you start to admire roller shutter doors and wrought iron fencing. To top it all, it was damn windy and a nasty cold bite when it slapped you around your chops. Good job we grabbed our coats otherwise we'd be snuggling up to abandoned trailers.

Totally bored and fed up we went back to the garage. On top of that, I still haven't learnt how to ride a bike cross legged. Half an hour later, €215 lighter and Vin was all ready to go.

We switched on Marg the GPS and for some reason she decided to take us another route. The country lane route, down all the small roads! Craig had a little rant at her, telling her to get her act together but she refused to listen. Next minute, the most beautiful building appeared out of nowhere. Wow, what is it? We got out and had a stroll

around. Cartuja de la Santa Maria was a magnificent and historic monastery. The building itself was closed but we were able to walk around the grounds and see the external detail of the building and its impressive entrance. The courtyard was covered in a white flowered climbing plant and the beautiful aroma filled the whole courtyard. I have no idea what it was but it was beautiful. Such a shame we couldn't go into the monastery but so glad Marg took us on the small road, certainly the highlight of the day.

Just round the corner and we saw a highway sign "beware bandits on these roads"., ummm not sure I like the sound of that. An hour later and we were in Cadiz but not for long...it was packed beyond being packed. Not a chance of parking anywhere along the main drag or the historic centre, it is bursting at the seams. We did spot a car park on the headland with a few spaces but they wanted €28 for parking...day light robbery! We went to park on the outskirts several kilometres from



the centre but the road system sent us on our way. Before we knew it, we were in San Fernando on the other side of the water.

The wind didn't calm down and when I took Peanut out for a piddle the damn wind snatched the door out of my hands. Craig jumped out the van all concerned and confirmed the door latch had well and truly broken before jumping back inside to watch his film. I didn't bother telling him it had ripped half the skin off my fingers, bruised my knuckles and yanked my wrist. At times like these, I wish I was a door then at least I would get some TLC albeit in the form of a hammer or screwdriver.

Today, has been one of those days let's hope tomorrow is back to normal.



Photos from Le Cartuja



Views across the countryside from
Alcará de los Gazules

SAN FERNANDO TO ALCARÀ DE LOS GAZULES

WEDNESDAY 8 APRIL

Well the weather has certainly turned for the worse, it feels like middle of winter with gale force winds and rain. Vin didn't half take a battering last night.

San Fernando is mainly a residential neighborhood with a bugle player. We are not sure who blew the tune from the bugle this morning or why, but it was unexpected and different. Quite often schools sound a horn or siren at the start and finish of school, maybe this place plays the bugle? We waited for a while to see if the weather calmed down but nope, it's in for the day, so we set off maybe a little less windy inland.

We set off across the plains towards Medina Sedonia. The wind was horrendous and we were being blown all over the show. The countryside looked nice and green but with the high winds we were more interested in our immediate surrounding. Just after Medina Sedonia, we pulled over for some lunch. This was the first suitable place we'd seen to pull over...a large abandoned car park in the middle of nowhere. Well at least we got to empty the loo and our grey water (in a drain, of course) without anyone batting an eyelid.

After lunch, we carried on and it wasn't long before the little hills started to get bigger. No more crops just masses of trees and bushes. We were now skirting the northern edge of the National Park de Los Alcornocales, a natural forest of cork oaks. The weather was getting worse, so we



Me doing admin chores

decided to pull in at the village of Alcarà de Los Gazules. Not a place with a lot to offer but at least it had a car park and shelter from the wind.

We are heading to Ronda and along the way there are lots of little hillside white town settlement. They are called Pueblos Blancos or White towns. Most of them straggle a hillside with a castle, fort or church perched on top. From a distance they look great and make the rolling hills all the more inviting and curios. In addition, a lot of Andalusian towns have 'de la frontera' in their name. These 'frontier towns acted as a barrier between Christian and Muslim towns. Although Christian troops won the battle the towns are often more Moorish (Muslim) in feature and style. Typically, the town will have a fortress or castle referred to as an Alcazar.

Late afternoon and the rain paused for a while, so I went for stroll up the hill. Craig didn't feel like venturing out with his cold, so off I trot in my own. I wasn't long as there was nothing to see or do. Lots of

narrow, steep streets with white houses and that's it. Right at the top of the hill, an old church, run down square and some unsightly characters. Some nice views across the mountains but not in this weather. It was nice to stretch my legs though.

Wonder if they have a water tap or fountain in this town, Vin could do with toppling up plus we have some washing to do. I had a bit of a look but nothing so, on the way back to Vin, I decided to ask a chap walking my way. Trust me to pick a deaf and dumb person. He was a lovely chap, who clearly wanted to help but it proved a challenge for both of us. With his hands he signaled he could lip read. I smiled and thought oh shit, this poor guy has no idea I am a Lancashire lass with limited Spanish. How the hell is he gonna read my lips? I didn't know how to say 'it doesn't matter' in Spanish plus I didn't want to appear rude. So I started "agua". He looked at my lips as I said it. He paused and then looked me in the eyes as if to say 'wtf'. He shook his

head and then with his hands asked me to repeat. "Agua". This process went on and on and each time I said "agua" he moved his eyes closer to my lips. Just before he checked out my tonsils, I spotted a puddle. Ah, I pointed at the puddle, said "agua" and then used my hands to signal a drink. He smiled and threw his hands in the air. At last. He then went in to his bag, pulled out a tiny bottle of water and handed it to me. Oh bloody hell, this is not going well at all. I just wanted the ground to open up. I couldn't take this mans bottle of water but if I give it him back, it will confuse him. Oh hell, this is awful. With my hands i signaled lots of water. He scratched his head. Oh damn, nothing for it. I walked a few meters round the corner until I could see Vin. I pointed to Vin and pointed to the water bottle. At that moment, it clicked and we both smiled. We'd finally understood each other. To which he smiled, shook his head and shrugged his shoulders. After all that, I could have cried. I am sure there is a morale to the story but I've yet to find it along with the agua.

The village of Alcará de los Gazules





The road to Ubrique

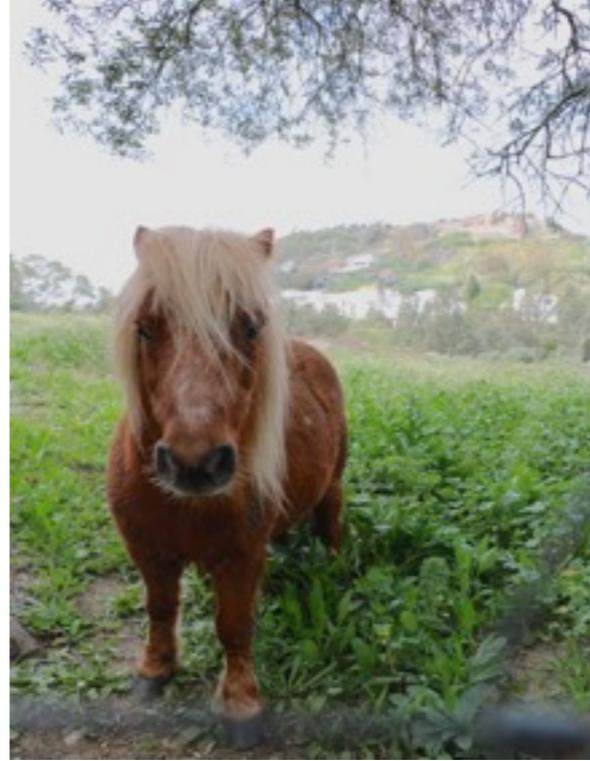
ALCARÀ DE LOS GAZULES TO UBRIQUE

THURSDAY 9 APRIL

The wind died down but the rain kept on coming. After an hour or so the rain stopped and we went in search of water. After last night's episode, I decided to keep my gob shut and just keep my eyes peeled. We didn't find any but found a nice viewing spot over the hills.

After lunch, we set off and it wasn't long before we turned on to a narrow road. Not quite single track but with no pavement and sheer cliffs at given points it sure as hell felt single track. At first we drove through some lovely farmers fields and spotted twin calves. Brother and sister were well cute especially the little bull, all curly and cuddly. Craig spotted some black piglet, he loves pigs. We couldn't stop and take

photos because the road was too narrow! After the farmer fields we bumbled through some nature trail park. We didn't see anyone but we did spot an empty building with a tap. Yippee. Or maybe not, the water was rather brown. Guess it's not be run for a while. After the trail came the cork and oak forest, which seemed to go on and on. Then finally the big stuff. I am not sure when a hill becomes a mountain but we hit some pretty big hills. The scenery was stunning and the hairpin roads were butt clenching and toe curling. On the whole the road was in good condition but every time we came to a cliff hanger or a bend the road seemed to subside or break up. Vin would cruise over and then wobble like a frigin womble. How the hell I didn't chew my stomach I will never



and went down the other road. It meant a change to our plans but not a lot we could do about that. The road continued to be up and down and round and round, providing some of the most beautiful scenery we've seen in a long time. Rock peaks and sheer cliffs dotted with olive trees, yellow bushes and

At Ubrique we'd reached our destination for today. This white town or should I say Pueblos Blancos is nestled nicely in to the Sierra de Ubrique. It is a natural mountain fortress and has seen many and civil battle but hopefully not today. We parked right on the edge of town. It felt like we were parked on the edge of a crater and looking down in to the village. We had a magnificent view and Ubrique looks fabulous especially at sunset when the mountains started to glow.

know. Craig on the other hand just bumbled along like nothing ever happened.

About 30km from our first point and we pull over at a junction. It's the first stop we've seen in ages and although the ground is a bit uneven at least we can pull over. At the end of the dirt track, a large rock with some sort of memorial. We had a coffee and a walk round. It looks like the rock might be some memorial to all the motorcyclist that have died on this



route. I didn't want to know any more not until we were off this route. Then we hit a hiccup...a road sign with maximum width of 1.8m. Oh dear, Vin's a little too tubby for that road, he's 2.3m. Fortunately we turned around on the dirt track

Top: various farm animals along our route.

Bottom: memorial rock



The town of Ubrique

UBRIQUE TO BENOACAZ

FRIDAY 10 APRIL

Damn cockerels you'd think they would learn how to do a proper cock-re-doodle-do. They woke us at some godly hour and then spent several hours practicing, badly. Even peanut put his head back under his blanket.

We wound our way back down to the edge of the town and filled up with natural spring water from the stream. It took a while to fill up the water containers but we provided light entertainment for everyone in the town, who seemed to look at us as if we'd gone bonkers. Once we filled up we went to park up and Craig decided to drive in to town. I told him not to but he didn't listen. A few minutes later and we were stuck. We

couldn't get through the narrow street especially when it was blocked by a delivery van. Rather than wait Craig squeezed passed only to bash both wing mirrors. Today, is not a good day and I had a feeling things weren't gonna be great. We parked up on some spare land next to a little Dia supermarket and went in to town. Craig was in fowl mood and he didn't want to look around this place but I wanted to take a walk. If nothing else it would help his mood shift.

Ubrique is quite a big place and not the quaint hillside town you expect. As we wound our way down to the centre, we passed a beautiful waterfall then some Roman baths and lots of spring water taps. Next a church and a convent (with tacky religious statues) then on to the town square and a few leather shops. The stroll seemed to calm Craig down,



thankfully. Before we set off from Ubrique we ventured in to the local Dia supermarket for a few basics. Not a great supermarket and we weren't too impressed with the pricing, a lot of buy one and get the second half price.

We set off and within minutes we were back on the roller coaster ride through the mountains. Up, up and away! Jeez these signal track roads with sheer cliffs do nothing for stomach. Felt more like the mad mouse ride rather than roller coaster. The views however were stunning. Within about 15 minutes we entered the Grazalema national park and it was gorgeous. Massive craggy, limestone rocks that just gleamed in the sun. As we turned another swooping corner, we spotted a flat car park an unusual site around these hilly places. Then to the right the tiny village of Benoacaz. Craig turned in and sccccrawwwwp. Ouch, that hurt Vin. The road was that steep it scraped the underside of Vin's arse. We parked up, got on our hands and knees to check out Vin. Phew, no damage just a graze on the edge of his classy. As we stood up a Spanish chap appeared. Ola, are you ok? Is there anything I can do to help? We explained it was nothing.

Top: Ubrique plaza

Bottom left: A typical street

Bottom Right: Pigeon bathing in spring water

Good he replied and welcome to my town. How nice was that, what a lovely chap.

The sun was shining and we had a gorgeous view over the mountains. What did we do...clean! We did a spot of washing and whilst I cleaned inside, Craig cleaned outside. It didn't take long and it was an ideal place to dry the bedding and towels. Just as we were finishing I heard this all might yelp from a dog. What the heck was that? I turned around and jumped out of the Motorhome. Peanut had fallen out the door and landed on a concrete floor. He just lay there on his side. My heart was in my mouth, I felt sick. He was motionless. We both reassured him, stroking him in the hope he was ok. After a few minutes he slowly got up off the ground. He hobbled a couple of steps but you could see he had hurt himself. We gently checked to see if we could feel any broken bones and check everything seemed ok. He seemed ok but we couldn't tell. We are miles away from anywhere, so god knows where we will find a vets. It was catch 22, do we set off to find a vets with the van rocking and rolling, which could hurt him more or do we stay and see how he is. Whatever I just didn't like seeing him in pain. We got his bed, put it in the

sun and he settled down. I sat and watched him and sobbed. Half an hour later and he got up for a wee. He had clearly hurt his left side and was hobbling but nothing appeared broken.

As most of you know, Peanut is blind and 15, so he's getting on a bit and not the agile dude from yester year.. The door to the Motorhome is very high and way too high for Peanut to get in and out. There are two steps that pull in and out to make getting in easier. The steps weren't out because we were cleaning the outside, so when he has fell there were no steps to break his fall, so he has fell the full height. From the inside step to the floor is about 4 foot.

We went for a brief walk in to town and it was a very pretty village. Nothing much here but little winding streets, flower baskets, white washed houses with the odd bit of stone work and all with a back drop of limestone cliffs. The people are very friendly and the atmosphere is just so nice. In fact, it is so nice, it is one of those places you could settle down in. The vista from the top was out of this world. We could see several peaks and roll upon roll of hills and mountains. In the distance, a

Our view from Benoacaz



tiny church perched in the top of one of the peaks. We didn't stay out too long then we could make sure Peanut was ok.

Up above were two very large birds. They were flying around and around. We got out the binoculars, blinkin ek they are huge. One brown with a white head and what looked like white fringe. It's wings were huge. As it moved closer (but still miles above) you could tell it was an eagle. We are not sure what type but the only thing similar is a bald eagle. The other flew in opposite direction but it looked very different with a long neck, black and more like a vulture. The eagle circulated around us for a

while and the more we looked the more we are convinced it was bald eagle.

At teatime, Peanut ate his biscuits as normal plus I gave him some of my fish. He loves a bit of fish x. His appetite was good and he seemed much more perky. Clearly it still hurt to walk and for sure, he had bruised himself badly but I don't think it is anything else. With a full belly, he went in search of his toy and after a squeak or two he settled down for a cuddle.

Peanut feeling rather down in the dumps after his fall





Bull Ring at Villaluenga

BENOACAZ TO ZAHARA DE LA SIERRA

SATURDAY 11 APRIL

Pitter, tap, pitter, tap. Hey, Peanut is up and about, hobbling towards our bed. Not the pitter, patter like we normally here but he is up and walking. I jumped up and made a fuss before letting him outside. No cocking his leg this morning but he did go to the toilet and he did manage to walk the length of Vin (very slowly). After a spot of breakfast and the lick of a yogurt pot he settled down for a snooze. We think he is just badly bruised.

Before we set off, we filled Vin with fresh water. I also put a blanket at my feet and let Peanut snuggle in. I didn't want him rocking and rolling around if the roads got bumpy. The road continued to climb up in to the

mountain and then we took a left turn in to a big crack in the rock. As we wound in to the valley another little town appeared, Villaluenga. As we pulled in, it started to rain hard, so we made a cuppa and admired the cloudy view. Half an hour later and we were walking through the village admiring the cheese factory and the houses. We also wandered in to the empty bull ring. Andalusia is famous for its bull fights but it is certainly not our cup of tea, so we won't be seeing any live shows.

Back on the road and for miles we passed nothing but mountain goats, sheep and pigs. Not a human or vehicle in sight! We were due to stop at Grazalema but we took a wrong turn but never mind because the drive was certainly worth it. We climbed to the second highest point in Andalusia 1350 meters over the Puerto de las Paloma, which means



pass of doves. The windy road with wonderful views took us right on to a lake. Unfortunately we can't stop on these single track roads with hairpin bends otherwise we'd take some photos.

At the lake we carried on round until we arrived at Zahara de la Sierra. Another hillside town but this one has a castle on top. We had a brief walk around town and admired the views but not for long. It was getting late and we wanted to look at Zahara tomorrow.



The village of Villaluenga

ELLO

This week three easy and cheap tips

1. Place a baking sheet under the grill pan to stop any rattles when traveling plus it keeps your grill pan clean.

2. Storing dinner plates and preventing them from sliding everywhere can be a nightmare. The Ikea wardrobe drawer dividers work a treat for both plates and bowls. Easy to stack (upright) and if they rattle a little just pop in a kitchen roll or sponge.

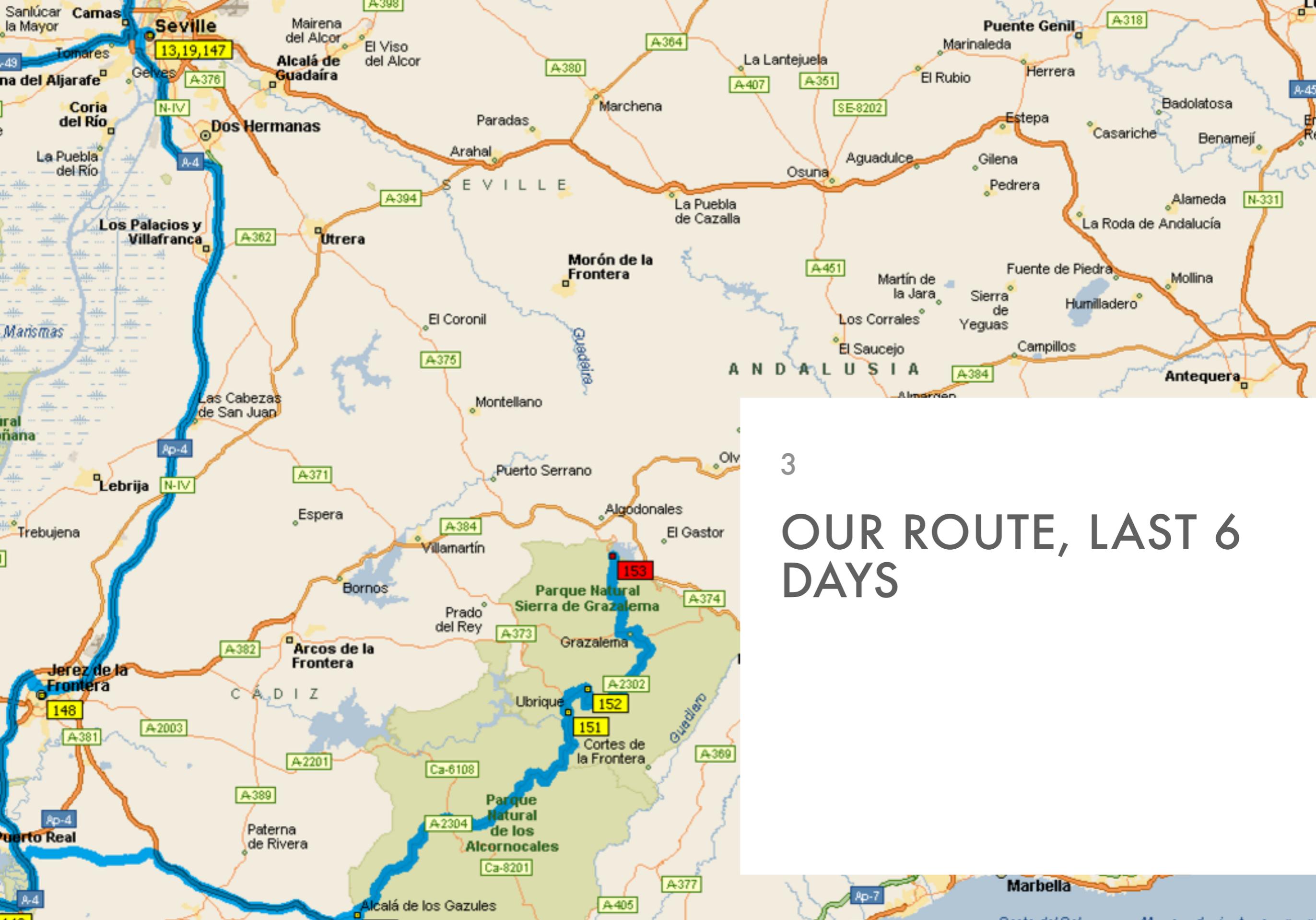


3. Kitchen utensils, foil and clingfilm. A length of brown plastic downspout from any DIY store. Cut to desired length, stick together and pop in drawer to hold utensils. Takes up minimum space and keeps everything tidy.



ELLO





3

OUR ROUTE, LAST 6 DAYS