



OUR BUMBLE

EXPLORING EUROPE IN OUR MOTORHOME

By Joanne, Craig & Peanut

SPAIN





Portugal to Spain, El Rochío

Thursday 2 April

Cuc-koo.. cuc-koo..cuc-koo. Gosh I have not heard a cuckoo bird for a long time. In fact, I think the last time I heard a cuckoo was my mums old clock! I wonder if they still make cuckoo clock?

Just as we were setting off our 85 year old Belgium neighbour tapped on our door. She had no gas, so she couldn't use her hob to make a morning brew but more importantly her fridge and freezer were now warm and the contents of her fridge had to be binned. Poor old lady. Craig had a look at everything for her and it seems like her gas regulator is not working, so nothing for it she had to go to Loule to CompuServ. I just hope they can help at such short notice and so close to Easter.



Bronze statue overlooking plaza



Street in El Rocio, local on horse back chatting to local



El Rocio street, sandy roads



Craig on towns promenade

A final top up of GPL, as Spain doesn't have many GPL stations and a quick stock up at Lidl and we were off. The roads were extremely busy and everywhere was buzzing...Easter is here and the celebrations are about to start! Bring it on!

We crossed the bridge in to Spain with the Gypsy Kings belting out Bambolero. We joined in, signing our little hearts out...well I did and Craig just looked at me if though I'd lost my marbles. La La La plus a cheesy grin. In return I got a raised eye brow with a hidden smile. He loves me really. We stopped on the motorway all the way to Huelva, passing fields upon fields of poly tunnels. We couldn't quite see inside but we think they were strawberries. At Huelva we pulled over for lunch and altered the clocks. Spain is one hour in front of Portugal and the UK. Not much here in Huelva unless industrial zones and large concrete prisons float your boat.

We set off again. Oh no we have an amber light on the dash. Not again. It was the same amber light we had before. It first appeared a few days before we picked up Barrie and Michele from the airport. Then it disappeared after a good run and keeping the engine above 2000 rpm to clear any build up. Now its back. I wonder what it is? We've run it over 2000 rpm and decoked it. Well, not a lot we can do on the eve of Easter weekend. I had a quick look to see if there were any Mercedes dealers nearby, nope, not until we reach Seville.

Our first stop in Spain, El Rocío. The town has no Tarmac only dust and sandy streets, so it very much feels like the Wild West. Now I have that

Joanne in El Rocio main square



Horse & Cart in front of El Rocio church



Will Smith tune in my head...wild wild west. The locals tend to be farmers, so everyone rides round on horseback or horse and cart. The white washed houses with semi thatched roofs make a refreshing and unexpected change. With their wooden ranch fences and brass rings outside of their front door for tying up their horses. Just as we reached the edge of the town, Craig's memory card in his camera packed up. We trudge back to Vin in sweltering heat and swarms of dust all for a little chip. Second time lucky!

Today, it's damn toasty, so there are plenty people around enjoying the sunshine. The bars are full of families enjoying a beer and a tapas whilst listening to traditional Spanish music.

In the main, the flow of the crowds headed towards church and so we followed suit. The church is home to the "our Lady of the Dew" statue, who's image is said to deliver miracles and hold powers of fertility. This little sleepy village is home to one of Spain's largest Pentecostal pilgrimages - Romeria Del Rocío. Every year around 1 million people swamp the village to see and touch the statue in the hope of a miracle. Before the procession the men fight for the right to carry the statue, which is carried through the dusty streets for over 10 miles. The brotherhoods come from all over Spain in elaborately decorated carts and horses. Well, lucky for us, the festival is not for a few weeks but the Lady of the Dew is on display for Easter.

Back outside we walked around the edge of the town admiring the little houses, the horses and soaking up a truly wonderful Spanish atmosphere.

Once back at Vin, Craig sneaked around doing stuff and then next minute he appeared with a bowl of water. "Here you are my dear, soak ya feet" He does look after me. I sat soaking my feet whilst Craig prepared dinner and what a surprise. He'd done a lovely candle lit dinner with tapas and red wine.



We are parked right on the edge of Donana National Park, which is home to 100's of birds. At sunset we sat overlooking the wetland, watching the birds feeding. Hard to believe we are sat in our Motorhome just 100 meters from a flock of flamingos. How's that for a backyard view?



Joanne you'll need to come outside and help me find Peanut

What do you mean, find Peanut?

I have lost him and It's too dark out here, I can't see him

It was pitch black just a twinkle of light from the moon. We searched around the Motorhome and then on the other side of the dirt track. OMG he could be anywhere. My heart was in my stomach, I do hope no traffic comes along until we find him. Poor little thing is



blind as a bat, so he will have no idea where he is going. We called his name and clapped our hands but it was useless, Peanut is virtually deaf, so he can't even hear us. Twenty minutes had gone by and nothing, I was getting really worried. Then we started to look in the grass but it was taller than Peanut. I went to find the torch in the garage when all of a sudden we hear a little yap. It sounded like it came from under the Motorhome but he wasn't there. We went back in to the grass and eventually we found him. You could see he was scared and frightened. We gave him big cuddle to reassure him and after a few minutes he came to. Next time, I think he will go on the lead if nothing but for his own safety.

At midnight, I had a walk in to the town to welcome in the Good Friday celebrations. The sea of candles in the little building at the side of the church was overwhelming. Craig was in bed snoring and I mean snoring his head off. Normally at midnight they carry out the church statue in to the streets but not here because the statue is too precious. Instead they light a candle in the church and then walk down the street with the candle to a sacred hall, where they say a silent

pray. It was lovely to see albeit very emotional and moving especially when I saw the sea of candles. As the last person left the church, the doors were shut tight and they rang the church bells. Within minutes the street were deserted until tomorrow when the celebration of Semana Santa continues with La Salida.

Sea of El Rocio candles.





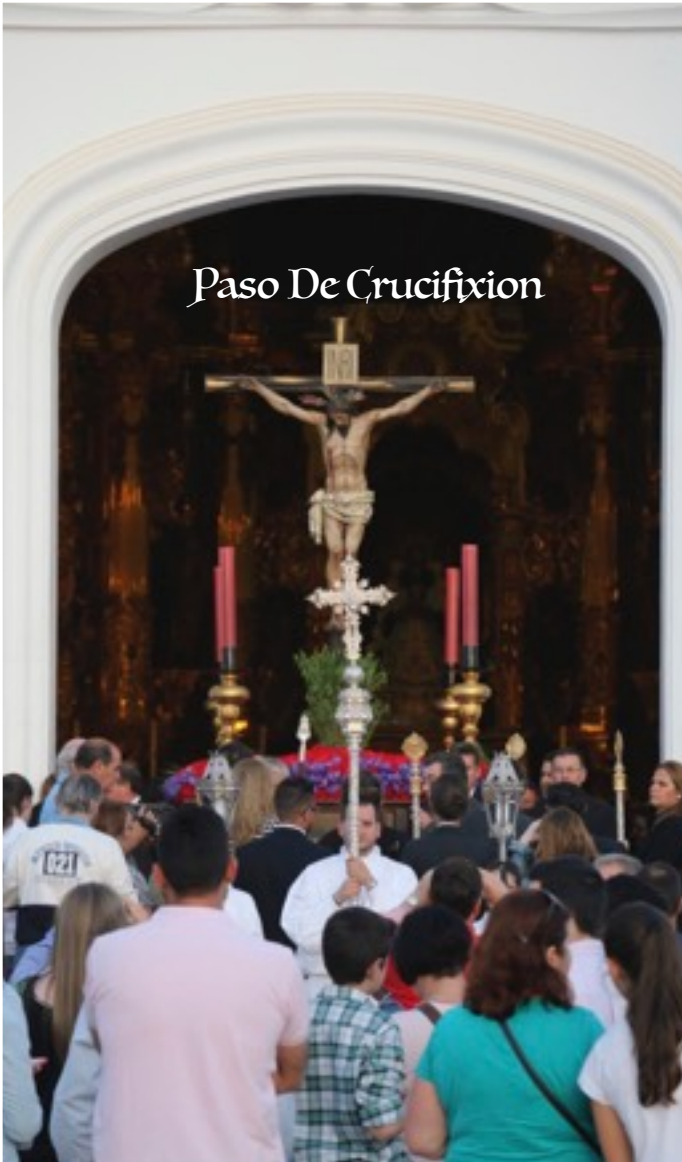
Nuestra Señora del Rocío (Our Lady of the Dew)

El Rocío

Friday 3 April, Good Friday

Last night, someone rocked the van and I know who. Our neighbours. Craig was snoring that loud he woke their children and that's no word of a lie. I can't tell you how loud it was, it was cringing tackle. Then this morning he complains of a sore throat...I have absolutely no sympathy what so ever.

Time for a bike ride around the edge of Donana national park to see what we can spot. In 1969, they fenced off the national park to protect the wetlands, their inhabitants and the huge variety of migrant birds that flock here each year to breed. The most impressive bird is the rare imperial eagle, which we managed to spot on two occasions (is it rare or are we lucky?) The flamingos were all out shutting their stuff and gobbling



Paso De Crucifixion



Leaving the church, the Good Friday procession

up tasty crustaceans. We spotted heron, egrets, sand grouse, duck, geese and stilts to name the ones we could recognise but as you can imagine there were loads more.

In the afternoon we strolled in to town. We certainly felt the odd ones out as everyone here is Spanish but we like that because then we know we are seeing the real Spain and not just the tourist route. Everyone was dressed up, not in a formal way but in a western type of way with tight jeans and boots for the women and lumberjack shirts and flat caps for the fellas. As we sat on the church steps to observe the Spanish culture, it reminded us of that TV program 'my gypsy wedding'. Not in a wedding or gypsy way but in terms of a mass

gathering and everyone looking the same. There were 100's of teenagers all dressed to impress, riding their horses and eyeing up potential partners. Every so often, you could spot the odd snob with a wee bit of tweed thrown in to their flat cap or waist coat. The young ladies caked in make up with the bright red lipstick and the fellas clean shaven.

At 6.30 we made our way to the church for the Good Friday procession, which finally started at 8.30 after a long mass. Craig was not impressed, he doesn't do church and nor does he do patience. The candlelit float bearing the crucifixion and covered in red and purple flowers looked extremely heavy. Carried by the church officials all wearing suits and white gloves. Every few

feet the priest would stamp on the floor and the procession would halt. He would then read a pray before the procession continued. Every so often the brass band would play a traditional dirge. We followed for a while watching the sunset behind the procession. Then just before we retired for the evening we stopped at admire the candles and take a moment to think of all our loved ones.





The El Rocio fashion parade



El Rocio to Sevilla

Saturday 4 April, Easter Saturday

Last night, we both had broken sleep, coughing and barking throughout the night. Wish this damn cold would hurry up and bugger off.

Today, we are off to my favourite place, Sevilla and I can't wait. Before parking up we went to the Mercedes dealer to see if they are open but nope, not today. We didn't think they would but no harm in trying whilst we are here. Would you believe it! As we pulled up the damn light went out. That's the second time the amber light has come on and then gone off just as we've got to Mercedes, how weird. Usually you get a message with the light but we haven't gone any messages. Ah well, we will still take it for diagnostic when we get then chance. On the way to our parking spot we spotting a few campers, so pulled in. It was a parking spot for campers and coaches and the day rate was €19.50! Craig nearly choked, lol. With that we set off to our free spot with a few entrepreneurial attendants. We parked up and gave the chap €2 to which he seemed rather pleased. The parking spot is ok cause it is only a few kilometers to the city centre but on the downside we are parked right next to a camper that hasn't moved in months. It looks dirty and not a great view when you step out the Motorhome.

Mid afternoon and we set off on the bike with Peanut to have a wee toot at my





Paso



Costaleros



favorite city. Within minutes of arriving in the centre, it felt fantastic. I really can't describe how wonderful this place feels. The atmosphere is just buzzing with energy. We had a cycle around a few of our favorite places before heading home via the cathedral. As we passed the cathedral the crowds were starting to build and then we noticed the TV cameras. Wonder what's going on here, today? We expected something yesterday and tomorrow but not today. Let's hang fire and find out. At 7.00 the drums started to roll and the trumpets belted out a tune. Next minute, they started to come through the doors of the cathedral. The largest gothic church in the world and there we stood right at the entrance, me, Crag and Peanut. "Craig. Craig, Craig". I got all excited. This is the moment, I had waited for. Another tick for

my bucket list, Seville's grandest festival, Semana Santa. The Easter procession in Sevilla sees over 100 massive religious floats(paso) surrounded by the hooded penitents all carrying candles and marching through the cobbled streets of Seville. The pasos of Christ, Virgin or scenes of passion are carried through the streets to saeta, a love song to Christ. It was amazing. The smell of orange blossom, burning candles mixed with incense filled that air. The penitents dress in long gowns and large pointed hats, which reminded us of klu klux klan. As they moved slowly along the cobbled streets carrying candles, it gave me goose bumps. As they walked the wax dripped on to the streets eventually leaving a massive wax trail. Every so often we would see men dripping in sweat and wearing towels or sacks of



The first brotherhood to lead the procession



Virgin Mary shaded under a canopy & surrounded in candles



sawdust on their heads, these were the costaleros, the men who carried the pasos. Some of the pasos weigh up to a ton and so up to 40 men carry the floats from underside, hidden by velvet drapes. Each church (brotherhood) in the area has two pasos, one of Christ and one of the virgin. The hooded penitents are responsible for guiding the pasos from their church to the cathedral and then back again. Each brotherhood has a unique emblem and their gown and hood can vary in colour but black is the most common.

We watched for around 30 minutes and then more people started to cram in to small spaces. It was getting a little too crowded for my liking especially with having Peanut. Also with 30+ temperature it was getting too hot and humid. We moved to a small side alley and let Peanut stretch his legs and get some fresh, cooler air. We could still see the procession and the floats (pasos) were beautiful. Then just as we were about to set off the procession came from behind, we were hemmed in. The crowds got denser and denser. Nothing for it, we will just have to push our way passed the crowds, it is too crowded and hot. With two bikes and a blind dog, it was no easy tasks going against a moving crowd but eventually we made it. We had seen a good chunk of the procession (earlier than planned) and now time to head back to Vin.

As we cycled the streets, the amount of People heading towards the cathedral was unreal - everyone from 9 months to 90 years of age, all dressed for the occasion.

Tiled Entrance, Small Church In Triana



Sevilla

Sunday 5 April, Easter Sunday

As I let Peanut out for a morning squirt the sun was just rising. It was nice and peaceful until all of a sudden SMASH. Some drunken idiot decided it would be a good idea to drive home and reversed straight in to another car. Within seconds his wheels were spinning and he was surrounded in a cloud of dust, he disappeared and fled the scene.

Our cycle route today started at Triana and Barrio Santa Cruz. It is a quaint residential area just at the side of the river. Cobble streets, tiny allies and balconies draped in flowers make the area a lovely place to meander around. Tiny bars, cafes and shops are dotted around the streets, filled with people sipping coffee and nibbling tapas. Today, is a family day were everyone goes to church to view their paso. After the procession last



Craig & Peanut relaxing in Sevilla Sun Shine



Azulejos



One of the tiles at the entrance to Cathedral

night, each paso returns back to its original church, so today everyone has a chance to view their own paso and say their own silent prayers. After church, it celebration time and everyone eats, drinks and chatters. Triana once the gypsy quarters and home to the flamenco, it's here you will find people just break out in to spontaneous flamenco but not without a jar or two...maybe we will come back later.

The river Guadalquivir, was quieter than normal with only one or two canoeists. However, along the river were little stalls selling everything from trinkets to fresh orange juice. Once again, Seville is full of life and the atmosphere is buzzing.

The old fashioned car poster is made of tiles, which are called an Azulejos. Introduced by the moors in the 16th century and they are everywhere in Seville to advertise stuff or just as shop signs.

After, Triana we meandered in and around the city just revisiting places or tooting in shop windows. All in all another lovely day in Seville.

OUR EASTER TRIP

