

8.12.2016 Caceres, Salamanca

We want to visit Caceres because the historic center of Caceres has been selected as an UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1986. As soon as we enter the old town, it feels like being beamed back into Medieval Ages. Cobbled narrow alleys, high thick city walls, time honored buildings... This city was founded by the Romans already 34 B.C.



After trying out again different new tapas dishes for lunch, we continue our way to Salamanca, which is 200km away.

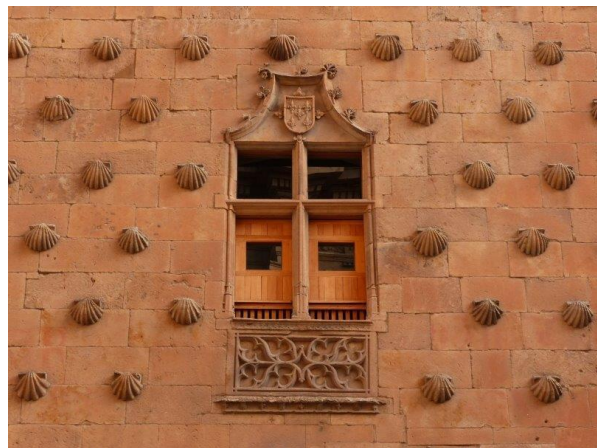
The road ascends very slowly, almost unnoticed we climb to an altitude of 1200m above sea level. Salamanca itself has an altitude of 800m above sea level. It's quite a stressful drive, thick fog accompanies us for almost 30 km all the way to Salamanca. We are quite relieved to finally reach our destination. The parking space is surprisingly crowded, but we still find a little spot for us.



9.12.2016 Salamanca, Burgos

After the heavy fog yesterday we deem ourselves lucky, that we are able to explore Salamanca with a perfect blue sky above us. What a pity if this pretty town – which has been selected an UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1988 – would have stayed hidden behind yesterday's fog.

Most famous here is the Casa de las Conchas (House of Seashells) and the name says it all. The whole facade of this city palace, which houses now the public library, is covered with a pattern of scallop shells. These scallops are as well the landmark / emblem of the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, a very popular pilgrimage trail in Europe.



Opposite of Casa de las Conchas stands the baroque church La Clerecia, today domicile of the Episcopalian University. We wander along the Plaza Mayor, the Mercado market, pass by the Cathedral La Nueva to the Puento Romano bridge.



This Puente Romano bridge over the river Tormes has been built by the Romans and is one of the best preserved Roman bridges of all of Spain – and it's still in use. The whole city is very impressive.



There is still some more to say about Salamanca, for example it's the partner city of Würzburg since 1980 and it is one of the oldest university towns of Spain with more than 40.000 students. Also, they supposedly speak the clearest high Spanish in this town and this is why many people who want to learn Spanish come to Salamanca.

In the year 1492 Christopher Columbus – shortly before starting his discovery journey to America – had to explain and defend his plans and theories in Salamanca: his calculations about the circumference of the earth, the distance between Europe and Asia and how he wanted to reach the Far East via a Western route.

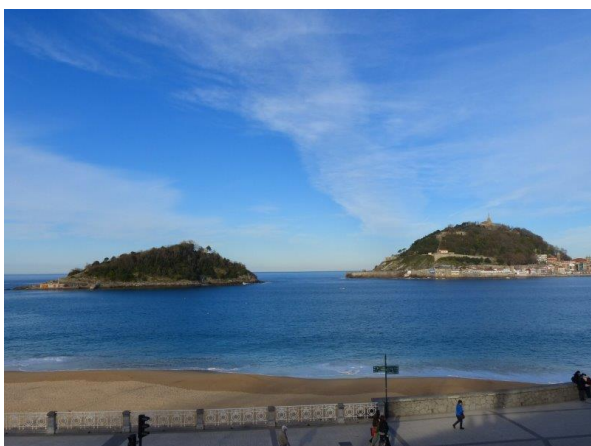
Filled with all the beautiful impressions of Salamanca and all the yummy tapas in fact, we continue our way in the afternoon to Burgos. In Burgos once again we have trouble finding the parking place, we almost don't dare to drive through the very small alley, but as we do suddenly the space opens up and we are on a big space near a park. Didn't expect that for sure.



10.12.2016 San Sebastian / Donostia

Burgos is quite a big city, we therefore give it a miss. We actually want to reach San Sebastian today, about 215 km away. Driving is smooth, we fuel up one last time in Miranda de Ebro, where the Basque region starts. From here on, all street signs are bilingual in Basque and in Spanish. San Sebastian's name in Basque is Donostia, or in short DSS – Donostia San Sebastian. In 2016 DSS was the Cultural Capital of Europe (together with Breslau).

Cities featuring a city beach always have a special flair and same applies to San Sebastian. DSS has always been a very popular summer holiday destination for the rich and the royals, i.e. Queen Mary of Austria, Franco, King Juan Carlos only to name a few.



We go for a long walk to reach the beach promenade from our caravan parking spot and continue along the port and through the old town.



The old town boasts countless tapas bars or as they are called in Basque “Pintxos Bars”. The Basque tapas are a bit different, a local culinary specialty. Small and big delicacies are usually piled up on a piece of bread and are offered as a self-service buffet. Ideal for us tourist with limited Spanish skills on hand. Everything looks so delicious, we stop at several places.





The icing on the cake of today's culinary feast is dessert, we try Spanish Churros for the first time. We have eyed them for a while and since today is the last chance to try them out we grab the opportunity. Churros are a kind of choux pastry, fried in oil, then dipped in thick chocolate sauce, stomach ache afterwards included. The place is packed.



We walk home through the town with pretty Christmas decoration. Since it is Saturday evening there are parties going on everywhere.



11.12.2016 Biarritz, Bordeaux, Roullet-Saint-Esphere

We are not far away from the French border town Irun. The border between Spain and France is quite fluid here, there are no signs indicating a border crossing, so we first don't realize that we are in France already.

We drive past Biarritz and Bordeaux, enticing names, we would love to visit, but it's time to head home. We tell ourselves that city visits with such a big car are too stressing anyways...

We continue until Rouillet-Saint-Esphere, a very small town near the Route Nationale with an official parking for caravans. The few little shops are all closed, but we could still get in touch with Santa Claus.



12.12.2016 Limoges, Montlucon, Montceau-les-Mines

Also today we have to drive, drive, drive. We pass through Cognac, take the country roads, luckily there is not much traffic, we manage to drive 500km until we come to a halt in Montceau-les-Mines.



13.12.2016 Emmendingen

Then on the last few kilometers of our trip it is still getting a bit exciting. Shortly before Mulhausen our Unimog starts to stutter and finally stops! We are in the middle of the Autobahn. Did we forget to switch fuel tanks on time? Turns out, that the fuel line came loose. Luckily Werner quickly locates the problem and can repair it by himself.

Suddenly the highway patrol appears next to us and wants us to drive to the nearest emergency bay instead of standing at the road side. We are a bit worried that we will get into trouble because a bit of Diesel was leaking, but luckily they don't say anything.



Then we hit evening rush hour and the roads are getting very full. We are tired of driving and spontaneously decide to stop in Emmendingen. In town we discover a cute Christmas market even with a little ice rink and of course Gluhwein – perfect.



14.12.2016 At home

The last few kilometers, the area becomes more and more familiar and we reach home. In total we traveled 105 days and drove almost exactly 12,000km to Morocco and back.

If we think back of Morocco what we now remember most are couscous, pita bread, tajine, medina, fossils, brochette, olives, souk, fiche, kasbah, gendarmerie royal, dromedar, cafe au lait, just-looking-no-need-pay, stylo, sweets, Mohammed V, begging, aggressive children, orange juice, pomegranates, 4x4 tracks, desert storm, palm trees, dates, rain, parking guides, In Shallah, flat tyre....

