The current exhibit dealt with the pre-Columbian cultures of Mexico—fascinating stone sculpture, but very little gold. The Spanish conquerors viewed the Aztec art in gold as meltdown fodder for their empire. There was also a room of paintings that glorified the defeat of the Aztecs. One painting in particular depicted the Spaniards butchering the Aztec warriors on a block that the Aztecs had previously used to butcher their own sacrifices and conquered warriors. This was seemingly a cruel culture that was replaced by a cruel culture.

Nonetheless, the exhibit was truly fascinating and educational. The old town area and main square in Bilbao were also a delight of good food and good music and the town’s riverfront has been transformed into a promenade on both banks.

Our luggage was lost on the flight from Bilbao to Malaga—first time we have lost our luggage. Then we discovered that our rental car reservation was a fiction because Budget doesn’t have an agency there…which seems not to discourage them from accepting reservations for Malaga! We ended up renting from a local company at the same price that Budget promised us for a non-existent car. (According to the rental agent, we were her second Budget sale of the day!) We drove to Granada to meet Ken and Nancy Larner. Despite great effort by the hotel staff and many promises by Spanair, our luggage did not arrive until three days later—the day we were to leave for Seville!

Meanwhile, we had a delightful time with the Larners, with the highlight being a tour of the Alhambra together. They left a day before we did; we stayed on to tour the Alhambra at night (closed on Sunday and Monday nights). From there we went on to Seville and met up with the Larners again. We had similar reaction to the churches in Spain—excessively layered with gold that they stole from the new world. Ken describes them as “devotions to gaud!” On the other hand, we spent a delightful evening together over dinner and flamenco. Fortunately, our navigator was back on track in Spain, leading us to our hotels in Granada and Seville flawlessly.

We then went on to Madrid with a day to spare before the start of the International Meeting of the European Association of Geoscientists and Engineers. So, we did a day trip by public bus to Toledo. Here, there are two old synagogues, one, Sinagoga del Tránsito, a museum with collections of Jewish memorabilia of Spain, the other—Sinagoga de Santa Maria la Blanca, a thousand years old, with strong Moorish styling in an open empty building that saw many alternative