

Spanish country resembles romantic 1950 movies

By MARIA WAWER

Pero, Senorita, Vd. no sabe la sangria... Not the first in Madrid. Not after spending last 24 hours (what with deplanes. Not when one's knowledge of the language is limited, all one knows is that one has to go to north-eastern Spain by bus - with no knowledge of the language or buses in the country.

It is a land where one need not even squint one's eyes to imagine Don Quixote and Sancho Panza riding into view. The hills are bare and rocky, and it is a shock to see so many deserted fifteenth and sixteenth century castles built upon them.... huge fortress affairs, built seemingly in the middle of nowhere. One can only imagine what toll in human energy and suffering the erection of such a building must have extracted.

was also getting worried—I was enjoying it too much.

Jaca, one o'clock in the morning. What a time to arrive. Now I was really alone, since all my army friends were going on to Canfran and Candanchy. -- ¡Adios, amigos!

Actually, I was too tired to have any worries except to keep from dropping before I got to my residence—wherever that was.

—Perdoneme, ¿va Vd. a la residencia de estudiantes? The chap at my side, who had apparently just come off the train, too, seemed pleasant enough.

“Ah, yes! No, no, I mean oui! Argh! No, I mean si, si!” He laughed, picked up my suitcase and left for a bus standing nearby. I followed, blushing. Ye, gads! I hated to appear like such a greenhorn tourist.

We sat down on the bus together. I tried to summon whatever intelligence I had left in me. It's hard to be coherent in Spain at 1:30 in the morning. Still, one had to begin parlaying with the natives sooner or later. I was to continue parlaying with this particular native for my entire stay in the country...

Found the residence. Didn't bother to unpack. Hit the sack. Woke up to glorious sunshine. Lovely town with a fabulous view of the Pyrenees. Residence with real class — and eccentricities. We had our own swimming pool—but only one hour of hot water a day in the bathroom. The maids made our beds for us everyday—but all the lights were turned off in the corridors at night. The place was surrounded by a beautiful rose garden and had a small zoo—but the animals kept making wierd noises whenever one tried

to sleep. Someone told me these sounds emanated mainly from the two vultures, whose mating season it was. Not being an expert on the subject, I can't be sure.

We were served all our meals at the table. The food was excellent — beautiful paellas (rice and saffron mixed with all varieties of seafood, such as mussels, shrimp and lobster) and once a huge plate of octopus tentacles, which proved to be delicious with a very delicate flavour. I noticed that some of the little old ladies taking the course with us (we had 4 or 5 who were over 65) were afraid to drink the water—so drank nothing but wine. The place also had a fully stocked bar, manned 15 hours a day with highly efficient (and discreet) bartenders. Cognac was 15 cents a shot.

Next Week: Part II of Spain.

ill, the cabdriver was only helpful. I did not realize helpful his suggestion was I did try sangria a few days during my stay in Spain. simply described as a type fruit punch with an extra to it, sangria is exactly what I need, hot person needs. Bottled operation, Inc.

The towns along the way, both big and small, could never be mistaken as being anything else but Spanish — white or yellow stone walls, red tile roofs, flower. As one got closer to the Pyrenees, all became more austere: darker houses perched precariously on the steep, limestone foothills.

At Zaragoza, the capital of Aragon, I had to switch trains—from the air-conditioned “Rapido” to the decidedly un-airconditioned, overcrowded, rickety and much more interesting mountain train which was to take us to Jaca, in the Pyrenees, only 20 miles from the French border. This part of the trip, approximately 150 km or 100 miles, took three hours. But what a ride! I was the only girl travelling “unescorted” with a detachment of Spanish soldiers going home on leave.

They adopted me. It is an experience to be adopted by the Spanish army one's first day in the country. I shall not belabour the point further.

There are two broad categories of Spanish trains. On the main lines, everyone is prim and proper. On the little side lines, it would be considered snobbish to just sit quietly. Food and bottles of the local wine are passed from person to person. Someone always has a guitar. Everyone sings. Due to fatigue or other factors, my Spanish was deteriorating rapidly, but who needed it! Communication plus, all around. By normal Canadian train standards, everyone seemed crazy. I was enjoying it. I

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