

Portugal

PORTO – LISBOA – SEVILLA

Walking and Bus

16th August to
10th September 2010

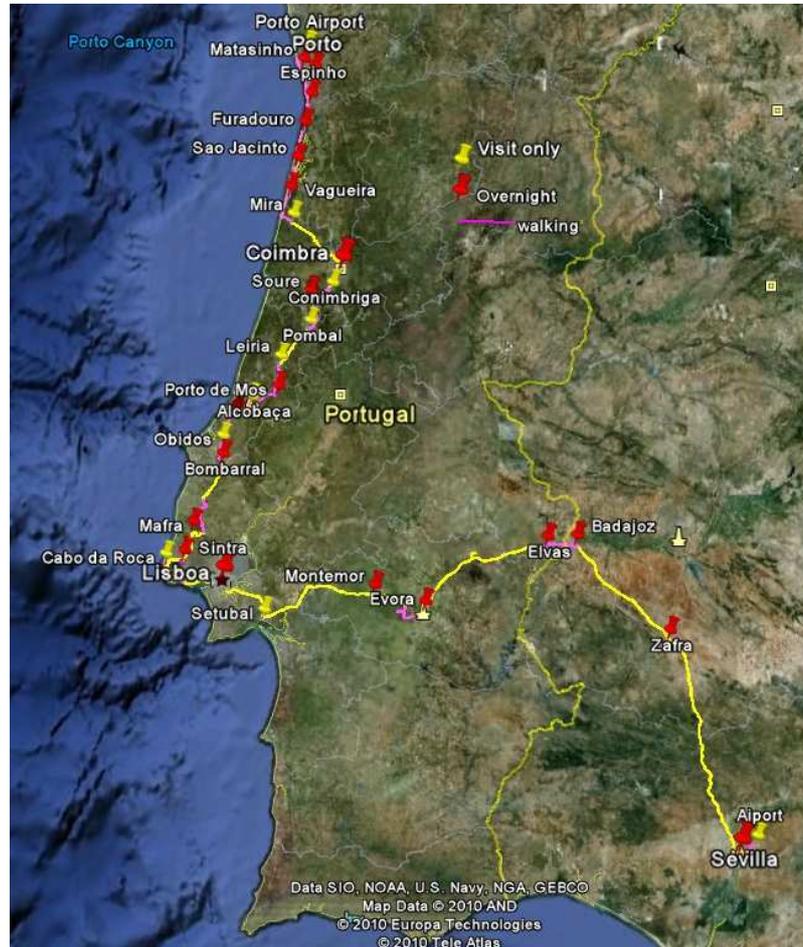
Background

Peggy, who grew up in Hongkong had always dreamed that one day she would like to visit the “Motherland” of the nearby colony **Macau**.

After my one-year grounding due to health problems we felt like taking up the challenge to visit Portugal the hard way to let the country immerge into our deep feelings and to take home a lasting memory and the satisfaction of achievement.

Here we knew very little about Portugal and even less about the Portuguese language.

Now we do love Portugal!



Goals and Strategy

- **Just go and see how we get on!**
- Peggy wanted to walk as much as possible, starting along the Atlantic Coast!
- Keep things simple – the minimum luggage!
- See nice countryside, sceneries, cities – meet locals – experience life the local way!
- Public transport only when unavoidable or to keep the overall schedule

Results

We managed to follow the master plan which required much flexibility to cope with the unknown and unexpected! **It was often hard but – (perhaps why) we really enjoyed the trip!**

Facts

- Time: 26 days (Porto Airport to Sevilla Airport)
- **Walking** **510 km** - walking overland: 368km walking sightseeing: 143km
- Transport: approx. 600km – buses, ferries and trains (no city busses nor trams)
- Nights: 25 - mostly cheap guest houses (20 to 40 Euro – once 50 Euro)
- Costs (Euro) Total: appr. 1400.- Sleep: 780.- Transport: 131.-
(excl. flights) Restaurant (incl. drink): 410.- Food shopping: 70.-
- Weather: Along the coast: comfortable, sometimes low fog. Later getting hotter up to 40°
- Health: Fine – both had a little cold at and after Lisbon.
No digestive problems in spite of drinking tap water all the way!
- Equipment: Two small backpacks 40x25x20cm (ok for cheap flights).
2 sets of body wear, 2 rain jackets (+my light survival), 1 bed sheet, minimum for body care, small new camera (77 Fr.), water bottle 0.5l, jogging shoes and light town shoes, slippers.

Walking Ways

As much as possible we tried to walk off-road. This was not easy most of the time as Portugal is not exactly a hiking country and also we had no detailed maps to venture too far into the unknown. So in the end we walked overland about 50 km on sand, 50 km on paths, 150 km on small roads and 100km on busy main roads. But we always enjoyed being slow and in touch with the soil of this magnificent country.

Accommodation

Sometimes it was difficult to find suitable accommodation where we happened to be at the time when we needed it. Along the coast south of Porto we felt that the offer was very sparse and one is likely to be ripped off. But on the whole we managed to find reasonably priced double rooms with a little bit of bargaining (try 30 if they say 50 – too much for a simple room – sometimes you may even ask if there is a cheaper place and they may even help or give advice).

Food and Beverage

During the whole trip we never had problems finding something reasonable to eat. We usually found simple bars (as we dressed casually – so to speak) where we usually ate well. We enjoyed the local specialities very much: bacalhau in x ways, tripes, cozido portugues, sardines, frango assado (grilled chicken) and strange good sausages etc etc. no problem. The portions were usually so big, that one was enough for both of us being big eaters. Wine and beer was cheap and available everywhere. Vinho verde was new for us and this light wine was sometimes an alternative to beer.

Sightseeing

The whole trip was sightseeing for us. But Porto, Lisbon, Coimbra and many other towns and sites are top places for enjoying to visit or just to hang around. The Azulejas give the whole country a unique cachet and one can never stop taking out the camera one more last time to capture them again!

Lasting impressions

Fortunately we did not experience any severe trouble! In the following just a few events or aspects which stand out in our memory (some of them are described in more detail in the diary):

- To land on a beautiful afternoon after an approach over Porto, get down to the tarmac and then walk out of the airport and straight to the Atlantic shore and follow the beach to Matasinhos in the setting sun – what a start! Franchesinha in a local pub!
- First approaching Porto in the early morning via the estuary of the Douro and then enjoying this beautiful city – tripas a modo de porto in the market – night walk on the bridge.
- Walking over 100 km along the shore – sometimes for hours totally alone in the mist between the dunes and the swell of the Atlantic. Enjoying bacalhau and sardines and the delicious pans!
- Walking through lovely countryside and crossing kind people (some speaking French) and enjoying the great variety of stolen fruit in abundance.
- All these impressive monasteries and forts on the way and the long roads until one finds somewhere to stay – and the evening rest is well-deserved!
- Sintra – Lisbon – Cabo da Roca – Belem: highlight after highlight, so much too digest!
- The walking for hours and hours through cork oak plantations over extended rolling hills with medieval walled towns in between – like Evora and Elvas!
- Walking from Portugal to Spain to the provincial city of Badajoz where Napoleon had a bad time.
- Eating grilled pork mouth in a cellar pub in Safra and then the grand finale in beautiful Sevilla, followed by an unusual walk to the airport to take our CHF 30.- (each) Ryan Air flight to Girona near Barcelona!

Writing the Trip Reports

I write these trip reports primarily for my own future memory. While writing, I live the trip again, sometimes even more intensively than during the real trip. While writing, I also enjoy sharing our experience with the potential readers, who are my dear daughter and son, maybe close family and friends.

Also sometimes people ask me details about our journeys and then I may just give them the Internet address instead of long explanations I know, in most cases they will be too lazy to go and look and read.... tough luck for them:-).

Ah... just one more thing! Often I had to use Google Earth to go and see where we had actually stayed, what the village, church, castle or anything we saw is called. Sometimes it helped to look at the pictures of particular spots and then you see this church, the promenade where you walked, the restaurant where you enjoyed your meal. Of course, I also used Google and Wikipedia for information.

Acknowledgement

I wish to express my gratitude to Peggy who as usually did wonders in managing our household logistics restricted by our tiny backpacks and who put up with the hardship of simplest life while appreciating the enjoyment and satisfaction of self-achievement and successful survival!

DIARY

16th August Start: **Ipsach** End: **Matasinhos**

Walk from Airport to Matasinhos: 2.5h, local loop: 1h

It rained when we walked to the railway station in Ipsach, but it was clear when we flew over Spain and Portugal (Easy Jet) and so we had a beautiful view down to Porto during the approach. Touch down at 15.15 and at 15.30 we already started our walk right out of the airport.

We had no maps, but at home I had taken a close look of the area in Google Earth and had made notes about the way to walk. In Pereira we passed by our first Church clad in Azulejas and here we felt that we had really arrived in Portugal. Soon we reached the Atlantic shore and here began our coastal walk over 130km.

After walking on wooden beach paths in the sun setting over the Atlantic and over a huge moving harbour bridge we reached Matasinho at 18.30 and started to look for a room. After seeing a couple of hotels and guest houses above our requirements Peggy went to ask people in a small snack bar for a cheap room and they kindly told us about a hospedaria nearby (pic). A kind landlady and a well-furnished simple room for 30 Euro – that was fair enough! Then we went back to the bar for dinner and had the local speciality: Francesinha - a huge Croque Monsieur with everything!



17th August Start: **Matasinhos** End: **Porto**

Walk from Matasinhos to Porto: 2h, local loops: 6h

We got out at 8.00 and started a beautiful walk along the Atlantic shore to the estuary of the Douro. It was also nice to approach Porto on promenades along the Douro and to have a first encounter with a tram. We got easily up to town and found right away a lovely Hospedaria (35E) near the Torre dos Clerigos. This problem settled we left at 11.00 and could really relax and fully enjoy sightseeing of this truly nice city. Highlight after Highlight! For lunch we had the famous Tripas à moda do Porto at the market! Passing the Capela das Almas we then walked over and up to the Cathedral with the Palourinho (Schandpfahl) on its terrace.



Then down to the Cais de Ribeira dominated by the enormous but elegant 2-level iron bridge. What an atmosphere on that beautiful day! Later we went for a rest at the hospedaria where we had a sumptuous picnic (our 1st frango assado) before we took another walk in the sunset and the upcoming dusk with a very romantic atmosphere under and on the iron bridge in Ribeira!



We were very, very happy when we got back to sleep at 10pm!

18th August Start: **Porto** End: **Espinho**

Walk from Porto to Espinho: 6h, local loop: 0h

We got out at 8.30 and realised that the adventure only started now. We crossed to the southern side to Vila Nova de Gaia via the railway bridge again and then followed the Douro down-stream passing-by the famous Porto Factories. Here we saw the huge pillars of a new touristic cable car on building leading up to the bridge.

Later we walked up to the ridge near the Arrabida motorway bridge to make a turn in the Arrabida shopping centre (to buy skin cream for me) and then we took a long and confusing walk until we reached the Atlantic shore at Lavadores.

To our surprise we found another wooden walking trail giving us a beautiful time for the next 15km – in the back you see the lovely Capela de Senhor da Pedra in Miramar!

A bit later we slowly started to look for a room again. There were no hotels and the only one we found was fully booked and the hotel manager told us that all rooms at the shore are booked out and that we better go back to Porto! We could not accept defeat here already! In Espinho (tired) we were told that the 2 only hotels are expensive and fully booked anyway – hmm, so we walked to the camping outside Espinho – here we were told: “no way to sleep without a tent – go back to town, to the bombeiros (fire services)!”

In the end the girls took pity on us and offered us to spend the night in the children play-room of the camping (see picture)! After a good shower and a simple dinner at the camping's restaurant we went to install ourselves on benches and chairs. We had just started sleeping when a crowd of youngsters arrived and made a hell of a techno party and a bid mess! What a nightmare! We kept a very low profile in our corner – when after 2 hours an employee came and in Portuguese asked us to move to the emergency room to sleep.

We were very cramped but relieved and at last we had some sleep!



19th August Start: **Espinho** End: **Furadouro**

Walk from Espinho to Furadouro: 5h (3 on sand), local loop: 1h

We got up at 6.45 and while packing I realised that I had lost my small wallet with all the change and the 2 tags of the camping! Panic! We just did not find this wallet anywhere! How will we get back our passports? Also, we were short on cash as I had left my Maestro cash card at home and I had no pin code on my Master Card!

Lucky us – the morning receptionist did not speak English and she did not want trouble – so she gave me the passports without questions and so we left quietly. We were sure that I had been robbed.....the wallet miraculously reappeared a few days later!

It took us a while to calm down in spite of the thick fog and we walked partly on the beach to Esmoriz and Cortegaça (pic).

There we chose to walk through the dune's forests as the beach seemed to be barred at times..... the path was under loose deep sand and it took us 2 hard hours for the 8 straight km until we reached the camping of Furadouro. No way to stay here this time and we were sent to the only pensão in Furadouro.

Holiday season and the sun had made it through by now and Furdouro was really a place to stay for the evening!

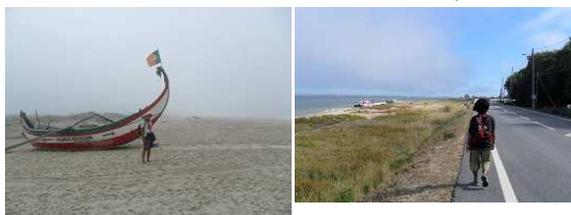
So we decided to stay at this pensão (pic) although we thought that 50 Euro is a bit much for that simple room and a common bath (which we don't mind) with beautiful view (pic) which we did not need as we had been out all day! The restaurants were a bit touristy - so we decided to have a picnic, which turned out to be excellent, especially with the yammie fresh pans from the bakery nearby!



20th August Start: Furadouro End: before S. Jacinto

Walk from Furadouro to near S.Jacinto: 6h (3.5 on sand)

After a comfortable night (enjoying the 50 Euro) we got up a bit later.-). Instead of taking through the forest we decided to walk the 13 km to Torreira barefoot on the beach. Although the fog had come back we enjoyed being alone with the sand, the ocean, the waves, the birds and once in a while a surprising object i.e. a fishing boat (pic). It was quite a long walk and when we reached Torreira we started looking for a room.



The only pensao was a bit posh and we were told that there is a camping with bungalows along the road to Sao Jacinto just a couple of km. It was quite nice to walk along the famous lagoon of Aveiro but in the end it was more than 7km until we reached the camping (Orbitur, a chain). After a bit of pushing they offered us a cabin for 41 Euro (no cooking and linen at extra cost). It was in the middle of nowhere, no restaurant and only a smallest micro market with exorbitant prices! So we had a simple picnic (a kind neighbour cooked the eggs for us) while we enjoyed remembering the day walking on the beach and along the lagoon! Peggy also washed our clothes hoping they would get dry by early morning! We had a good night, not least, because we used our own linen we had carried with us all along!

21st August Start: before S. Jacinto End: Praia de Vagueira

Walk from near S.Jacinto to Praia de Vagueira: 5h
local loop: 1h

Got out at 9.30 only – as there had been thick fog at night and the clothes were still wet – finally Peggy had resigned herself to play clothes hanger during the walking! Nice walk along the lagoon to Sao Jacinto (nice – too early to stay), so we took the ferry (1.5km) across the canal to Praia de Barra. After 1h of (nice) detours and in the end walking 500m on a highway we crossed this bridge to get back to the shore side.



An option would have been to visit famous Aveiro but we did not like the idea to walk over 10km on the highway and the same way back. Also we did not want to go there by bus. It was the right decision – so many other things to see!

After a turn at the shore at Costa Nova de Prado we decided to continue to Praia de Vagueira on the road along the lagoon again. There we entered the first inviting pub to have a beer and to ask where we could find a room. Suddenly a youngster speaking some English and his mum took care of us and did not rest until we settled into a house for 20 Euro. A bit shabby – but we slept fine on our sheet and beside the bread oven!



After a turn to the beach and through the nice village we had our first proper dinner at the above-mentioned pub/restauração next-door. As we did not know the wine, they offered us to degustate 2 wines – we went for both – a light vinho verde and a heavier vinho branca. We then fully enjoyed the delicious small snails, lulas grelhadas and bacalhau à brás. When we got back to the room we did not look around much and went to sleep:-).



22nd August Start: Praia de Vagueira End: Coimbra

Walk from Praia de Vagueira to Mira: 5.5h (2h on sand)
Bus from Mira to Coimbra: 40km

We left at 9.30 and walked on the small road along a creek and marsh with an interesting flora for about 5km and then the road turned inland to join a highway. So we took the option b'n'b (beach 'n' barefoot) and then enjoyed a very lonely walk for almost 2 hours to Praia de Mira. On the way we suddenly came across fishermen who had just landed with a large catch and sorted the still jumping fish in to different trays!



Finally we arrived in Praia de Mira, which is supposed to be the nr 1 resort of the coast. After strolling around we did not feel like staying here for the night and so instead of continuing to Figueira da Foz as planned, we decided to walk to Mira to take the bus to Coimbra. We had walked almost a week along the coast and a day more or less would not make a big difference. The walk was fine and we even found a foot/bike path leading us past a nice lake before we reached Mira. As it was Sunday we had to wait behind a beer for the bus at 6pm reaching Coimbra at 7.30. In no time we found a room for 55 Euro for 2 nights. Then we had bite at a small grotty cellar around the corner in the Baixa (we were the last guests – the rests of the day – ok).



23rd August Start: Coimbra

End: Coimbra

Walk sightseeing: 7h

Easy day! Walked up to university (top of hill) and then through the ancient door to visit the old part of the university and enjoy the view. Later we strolled to the aquaduct (with Joan Paul statue) via the Parque de Sta Cruz and back to the old town to see all the cathedrals, palaces and monuments.



We particularly admired the Igreja de Sta Cruze and the cosy and relaxed atmosphere of this old city. More by coincidence we visited the palace of justice with a dozen of huge historical azulejas scenes.



While walking around we also kept our eyes open for a place for dinner (one with a dry branch over the door). In the Baixa we spotted our favourite and asked at what time we could start eating and they said 7pm. So we got there at 18.45 to be sure to have a table ... as it turned out...



... 7pm was the time they close the kitchen... and so all goodies on the blackboard were no longer available. As people were very kind and felt sorry for the misunderstanding, we stayed and tried their improvised snacks. Nothing wrong with sardinhas grelhadas, bifana (pork on bread) and the blood sausages came as a welcome surprise! We ate and drank to our happy satisfaction (9E)!

24th August Start: Coimbra

End: Soure

Bus to Conimbriga – then walk to Soure 4h, local loop: 1.5h

Originally I had not planned to visit Coimbra – therefore I had not suitable info about walking out of Coimbra. So we took the bus for the 15km to Conimbriga to visit the biggest ancient roman site of Portugal. Unfortunately we arrived before opening hours but a kind guard let us in to have a quick look around (mainly mosaics and old walls) – which in fact was just right for us as we had seen several dozens of Roman sites elsewhere in the world.... As I had done my home work with Google Earth we could move on from here, following my notes!



We had a very pleasant walk passing many lonely villages in a varied hilly countryside. Right at the start (Condeixa a Velha) we filled our water bottle at one of the many public fountains. Later, on the nicest portion of the walk, from Ega over an extended ridge eventually descending to Soure, we excessively enjoyed to eat all the fruit growing on the wayside (blackberries, peaches, apricots, pears, figs, grapes, apples). Of course we made a little beer halt in a small cafe at the hottest of the afternoon!



In Soure we had to ask someone to tell us where to find a room – we then found a very suitable dormido for 20E. After making our tour around town we found a butcher/grill/bar and enjoyed huge grilled spare ribs and an authentic frango assado and huge jarres of vinho! On the way back Peggy was so "happy" that she had to give a display of Tai Ch'i.....



25th August Start: Soure

End: Pombal

Walk from Soure to Pombal: 5.5h, local loop: 1h

This morning everything started ok, but after 1km I did not believe my notes and went the wrong way! But after 5km just when our country road joined a busy highway I saw the turn-off to Redinha and here we were back on track! Redinha is not only a nice town in a lovely area but its bridge is also an important witness of Napoleonic wars in the retreat of Marshal Masséna's army in 1811.



It got very hot after 12 but we were really on track and moving well (pic) into the far distant hills. It was so hot that I forgot to take more pictures. Then, somewhere in the hills, there were crossings that I had not mentioned in my notes.....and nobody to ask (siesta). After erring around for a long time ... a car passed and the lady then told us the way 3 km later we recovered over a cool beer and 1h later we entered Pombal (pic) at 3pm.



We then found a reasonable room in the city centre for 30 Euro with b'fast! Soon after we visited town but there is not so much to visit and at 6pm the heat was still unbearable so we disappeared in an old simple 4 tables bar to have home-style bacalhau and enough wine to go back to the room at 8 pm as we were very tired. But we had enjoyed the day!

26th August Start: **Pombal** End: **Porto de Mos**

Bus to Leiria: 25km / Walk from Pombal to Porto de Mos: 5h, local loop: 1h

I had not foreseen to walk from Pombal to Leiria. So, after breakfast we took the bus and sat beside the bus driver who spoke French and told us all about the region! After a short turn in the old town and up to the castle (pic) we left Leiria and followed my notes walking 15km overland on country roads to the next highlight – Batalha – with a very impressive compound of a monastery with a cathedral and the famous capelas unperfeitadas (unfinished). After 1h we had seen it and it was 4 pm. The small town looked pretty touristy and so we moved on to Porto de Mos. It was still hot but half way we refreshed ourselves at a café of a village football club and with road-side fruit in easy reach:-)



We reached Porto de Mos, a small town with a very old castle by 6pm. As there was only 1 pensão, we had to take the offered deal (40 E for a nice room and b'fast). As there seemed to be no suitable place to eat we went shopping to the 'Intermarché' and then had a nice picnic in the room. Being tired we went to bed early after discussing at length about how to continue to Lisbon.



27th August Start: **Porto de Mos** End: near **Focha**

Walk from Porto de Mos to Focha: 6.5h, local loops: 1h

At 8 we went for a walk up to the castle to enjoy the nice view and then had a nice breakfast before we left at 9.30. From here on we had to walk mostly on busy roads, but it was ok as the hilly countryside was nice and as there was always something to see (eg a huge azuleja wall in the middle of nowhere) it was never boring. At 2.30 we reached Alcobaça with its enormous monastery and its overwhelming cathedral. Again, Alcobaça looked touristy and as it was not very late, Peggy wanted to continue walking..... although the lady at the tourist office had warned us that there is nowhere to stay on the way! After walking for a while we asked someone at a cafe and they said: "3km further there is a guesthouse". So we continued and everywhere we asked, people said "in 3km". After we had already lost hope we bumped into this new pensão, which was not yet totally completed but we got a room (20E) and had a nice dinner. We ended up in the bar with the locals who kept filling the mad foreigners' glasses.



28th August Start: near **Focha** End: **Bombarral**

Walk from Focha to Bombarral: 7, local loops: 1.5h

Saying bye to our pensão at nearly 9am we were back on the road to walk down to the plain. My walking notes had terminated at Alcobaça and so we were confined to main roads from now on if we did not want to risk great detours or even getting lost. In the plain we had to follow a dead straight road for 10 km until at 12 we reached the lovely and lively town of Caldes la Rainha (Springs of the Queen). After a nice coffee we strolled around for a while also passing through the busy market and then we continued to Obidos.



Obidos is a old town perched on a hill, surrounded by medieval walls. There are many small streets, lovely houses and churches (pic: oldest gothic chapel) and of course a palourinho (pic). Sure, we enjoyed strolling around but we did not feel like staying for the night in this most popular tourist 'trap' of Portugal.



So we decided to continue to the next town, Bombarral, and since the next bus would leave in 3h we decided to walk the 12 km although it was extremely hot these few days - up to 40°. We had a nice beer on the way in a café and admired the man-size azuleja showing the way (pic)! We reached the small town of Bombarral a 6 pm. Due to my tired impatience we took the first available room for 25 Euro which was much for the most shabby room of the trip. Fair enough – so we were forced to go out to eat and we found a small local bar with a nice offer of local dishes. After the meal a local (pic) bought us more wine and after telling the story of his life he tried to convince Peggy that we should move to his place!



29th August Start: **Bombarral** End: **Mafra**

Train Bombarral to Torres Vedras: 25km
Walk from Torres Vedras to Malveira: 5h, local loops: 1h
Bus Malveira to Mafra: 10km

The shabby room was not so bad after all as we went to bed (dizzy) at midnight and had the eyes closed during our sleep:-). We decided to take the train to Torre Vedras as it went straight in our direction and the road did not look inviting. We were happy since the most attractive place of Bombarral was its traditional station with the platform walls clad in azulejas. After a good coffee at the buvette we boarded the short diesel train, a lovely lady taking care of us.



After an enjoyable ride and strolling a bit through Torres Vedras we started walking at 12 towards Mafra. It was extremely hot and in the 1st village after 1h we made a stop at a café to have a dish of Frango. It got hotter and hotter and the road through nice countryside seemed to go up more than down. At 6 pm we reached Malveira where we had assumed that we would find a room. We asked around several times – no place to sleep – except for a black Angolan lady who asked us to stay in her house.....petty, I was not ready yet and we declined!



As we were tired and it was late we did not feel to walk 10 more km on very busy roads.... then a bus to Mafra just passed and we hopped in! We reached Mafra and the monastery in no time but right away, we went to look for somewhere to sleep. At last, 800m further, Peggy found a suitable room for 40 E in what surprisingly appeared to be the only hotel of Mafra! Peggy did the laundry and then at 8pm we went to the 'rustic' restaurant next-door to have a dish of cold grilled bacon and bacalhau! Here ended our inland walk as we were nearing Lisbon and walking on large busy highways would no longer be enjoyable.



Note: Since we had started in Coimbra we had walked over **160km in 6 consecutive days** and this after **160km from Porto to Coimbra in 8 days!** We deserved to relax now! We had already walked a voloncé!

30th August Start: **Mafra** End: **Sintra**

Bus Mafra to Sintra: 25km / Walk: local loops: 4h

The gates to the cathedral were still closed and so we went to the bank to see if we could get cash from my Master Card as our cash reserve started to run out. It took 2 bank clerks and a bank manager 45 minutes to pay out 300 Euro (12E fee) - remember, I had left my cash card at home. After a turn in town we went to see the huge cathedral of Mafra reminding us of St Peter in Rome. Then we took the bus to Sintra. As there was no aircond and no possibility to open windows it got so hot that we saw the driver literally melting! Good that it was not a long ride for us!



We found a room right away in the small pensão economica (pic) and were ready for sight seeing in famous Sintra at 3pm. We enjoyed the old palace with the chimneys and the walked up to the Maurian Fort high up on a hill in spite of the heat! When we got to the top and expected to see the view we were confronted with an entrance fee of 6 Euro each! We thought this too much just for a bit of view and continued towards the well-known Pena Palace - 11 Euro each, shortly before closing – forget it! So we walked down!



We still managed to have a nice view and on the way dawn we also refilled our bottle at the public fountain where locals were filling their large bottles by the dozens with fresh source water. Back in town we looked for an appealing restaurant but there was nothing 'our style' and with the nice terrace of our pensão in mind we bought picnic and then had fun sitting into the late evening and socialising.



31st August Start: **Sintra** End: **Lisbon**

Bus Sintra to Cabo da Roca: 25km / Walk to Azoia: 1h
Bus Azoia to Cascais: 15km / Walk to S.Pedro: 2h
Train S. Pedro to Lisbon: 20km / local loops: 2h

We made sure to be early to catch the bus to Cabo da Roca at 9 am. At 9.15 we discovered that I had chosen the wrong station and so we had to wait another 1.5h. We were very upset about the loss of time and it took us a while to get back into an enjoying state. We also felt sorry that the old tram to the coast only runs on weekends. Then of course we enjoyed Cabo da Roca as it was our only opportunity to see the rough part of the coast and we felt excited to stand at the most western point of the European Mainland.



To extend the stay, we walked back to the nearest village Azoia to take the bus to Cascais. Of course, we would have preferred to walk but there was no path along the shore. We strolled for a while through glamorous Cascais at the estuary of the Tejo and then followed the shore passing famous Estoril. Although the walk was nice we hopped on a train in San Pedro as it was 3.30pm and we had decided to stay the night in Lisbon. After arriving at the Cais do Sodre station we walked right up to the Bairro Alto to look for a bed.



We familiarised a bit with the upper area near the Gloria Elevador and found a room by 5 pm (100 Euro for 3 nights). As we tried to avoid the many touristy restaurants we had Bacalhau and snacks in a busy café at Camões, relaxing there for 3h and then we went for a night walk through the Bairro Alto and down to the port. Our room turned out to be a heat trap under the roof and as Lisbon was still under a heat wave.....



1st September Start: Lisbon

End: Lisbon

Walk: sight seeing 8h

At 9.30 we got out and it would be too much to describe all the things we saw..... all the huge squares with monuments and palaces, cathedrals, elevadores, parks, miradouros (look-outs) etc. We had lunch in a small café at Alfama – Bacalhau and Alfeira (blood sausage) before walking up to the fort.



Having covered most areas at the centre and east of the city and suffering from the extreme heat in the afternoon we went to buy picnic for dinner and then went back to our residential (pic) for a rest. When the sun got lower we strolled to the nearby miradouro again and had a beautiful picnic watching the sun setting over the city and the lights turning on. Later I went to an Internet Café to print our Ryan Air boarding passes – after a frustrating fight with an underpowered PC I had to give up!



2nd September Start: Lisbon

End: Lisbon

Walk: sight seeing 7h

We got out at 9.30 and Peggy had a cold and was a bit scruffy the whole morning. Nevertheless we still walked up west, passing Sta Caterina and the Estrela Basilica and then enjoying the view to the bridge over the Tejo. Later we crossed under the bridge and followed the shore on a huge and long promenade to Belem always in sight of the huge monument of discoveries.



Shortly behind the monument, we reached the old famous tower of Belem. Here I dreamed of the old days and of sailors hoping to see the tower again when passing-by on their ships out to the unknown oceans.



The next highlight in Belem was the Hieronimus Monastery's Igreja de Sta Maria with its wonderful netted gothic vaults. This made Peggy forget her cold and her mood improved just at the right moment when we dropped into this small restaurant where locals enjoyed their lunch – popular Cosido Portugues. We joined in and really enjoyed this cousin of the Berner Platte. So much so that we decided to walk back to Lisbon and we were still in good sprits when we reached our residential for a short rest. The evening was less successful, as I got frustrated from a guy who overcharged my beer. Lisbon is truly a beautiful city – but for our taste it has become a bit too touristy and we felt ready to leave for the countryside again.



3rd September Start: Lisbon

End: Montemor o Novo

Walk: local loops 3h

We now left for the last portion of our trip and we wanted to continue to Sevilla via Evora and across to Badajoz in Spain to enjoy some more inland-countryside. My guide had stated that the trains to Evora leave from Barreiro Station across the Tejo. So after a nice early morning walk we caught the ferry to Barreiro and all seemed under control. We enjoyed the ride. Then at the railway station, we learned that there is no more railway line to Evora and that we should take the next train to Pinhal Novo to catch a bus. There the bus had already left and the next one would only leave in the evening!



Hmm.... being flexible we continued to Setubal and took the opportunity for a visit of the surprisingly lovely old town to wait for the bus leaving at 1 pm. In the meantime we changed our mind and instead of travelling directly to Evora we decided to go to Montemor o Novo, a much smaller and unknown town. Why? - Just to enjoy localness! That we got there and we found a nice room (25 Euro) right away in a small residential. We even found a small tourist office and there the young lady was very happy to have someone to advise. So she told us of the menhirs in Almendre and other Neolithic sites to visit and she also helped to find out how to get there best on the way to Evora.



Problem: there are hardly any buses on weekends. The helpful lady then also told us that we may print our Ryan Air boarding passes at the town library and so we went and it was no problem at all (25 cents)!

We spent the rest of the time strolling around and enjoying the many small architectural details spread around town. Upon recommendation of a local we had dinner at a small self-service café, sitting and relaxing on the little quiet terrace in comfortable temperature after the extreme heat in the afternoon. We had delicious “carne con chilli” and battered calamari sticks (pic). A successful day!



4th September Start: **Montemor o Novo** End: **Evora** Bus to São Matias, Walk from S.Matias to Evora: 7h, local loops 2h

As the only morning bus only left at 10, we went first for a walk up to the fort and enjoyed the view in the cool morning. The bus driver was kind and dropped us in the middle of nowhere at the intersection to Guadalupe which we reached 30 minutes later. Here started our walk on a dirt road up to the hills to the Cromeloque dos Almendres. On the way we walked through very typical countryside with famous cork oak trees spread all over this region.



Then we had fun at the big solitary menhir (Obelixa) and then admired the largest group of menhirs on the Iberian Peninsula. Unfortunately we did not find the direct footpath to Valverde, which was traced on the park's map and so we had to return to Guadalupe by the same way and continue to Valverde on the road in the heat of the afternoon. After a cool beer in the only café in Valverde we felt strong again and went on to visit the nearby Anta Grande de Zambujeiro, the biggest Megalith tomb of Portugal. To our surprise and relieve we saw a footpath continuing to Evora.



The path was leading through no man's land but there where many things to see, i.e. a Roman Milestone (pic). Now the last 10 km turned out to be very hard under the extreme heat and soon our water bottle was empty! But when we reached the centre of Evora, Peggy found a room in a lovely pensão (for 30 E after bargaining) even before I could drag her into a café for a beer:-)



The evening was easy and we had a leisurely simple meal (bacalhau and Moela (gésier)) and then spent some time on the main square watching and listening to folk-dances.

5th September Start: **Evora** End: **Elvas**

Sure, Evora is a nice town and worth a visit. It's UNESCO status tends to give it a brushed up look and a sterile atmosphere. We still enjoyed our Sunday morning stroll and admired the Roman Temple and the old streets of which some reminded us of our Berne. We then hesitated for a while whether or not to visit Estremoz and then decided to go directly to Elvas as the towns tend to resemble each other.

Bus to Elvas: 90km Walks: local loops 6h



After a 2h bus ride with a short turn in Estremoz we reached Elvas at 3 pm. We found a room easily close to the main square (30 E). We liked this town in between walls right away. It had a much more natural aspect than Evora and a cosy touch. The western entrance to town is dominated by an enormous viaduct, which impresses from any side to see it.



After a long sight seeing walk we went to have exciting dinner at a small, very simple place where we had home-cooking bacalhau dourado and leitão (suckling pig). Later we had to go for another walk to digest walking up through narrow streets to the castle, passing-by an old palourinho and admiring the night sky over the plain to Spain - tomorrow's walk – the last countryside walk of this trip.



6th September Start: **Elvas** End: **Badajoz (Spain)**

Walk from Elvas to Badajoz: 5h, local loop 4h

We got out at 8.30 and enjoyed the morning-walk out of town and through the thick wall into the plain. As we walked we saw Elvas spread on the hill in the clear air until we reached the border to Spain and even beyond. The walk seemed long as there were long straight portions but we had enough memories to chew setting foot before foot for indefinite times until we reached the Rio Caya at the border (pic).



The border to Spain was no longer a border and the old border infrastructure looked like a ghost town. Yes, now we were in Spain and followed a big empty avenue until we crossed the Rio Guadiana over a high new bridge into the new centre of Badajoz and then on to the old town. Siesta time and also we realised that it would be easier to find a hostel on the other side of the river. So we crossed over again walking over the old Puente de Palmas bridge.



Sure enough we found a room in a small hostel beside the river (30E), left the backpacks there and then walked right back into town. After Portugal, Badajoz gave us a richer and more sophisticated impression as we made an extensive tour through the old town and also to the Alcazaba castle from where we enjoyed a nice panorama also over the Rio Guadiana. Unrightly we assumed that it would be easier to find a simple place to eat near our hostel. No way – and so I ordered a huge tortilla whereas Peggy would have been right to just stick to tapas – this was a bit of a flop for an otherwise good day.



7th September Start: Badajoz End: Zafra Bus to Zafra: 70km / Walk to bus 1h, local loops: 4h

Nice morning-walk across Badajoz to get the bus to Zafra. As we had managed keep our reserve day we decided to use it for an overnight stay on the way instead of hanging around an additional day in Sevilla.

After a nice bus ride through Estremadura's countryside we reached the small but touristy town Zafra at 12. Crossing the Camino de Santiago de Compostela which we followed it for 200m to the Torre de San Francisco. Then walked around for 2 h to find a suitable room at the Plaza Grande (40E incl. breakfast).



In the meantime Peggy had discovered a cosy wine cellar serving bbq-ed delicacies from a menu written on a big barrel. We had grilled chocos (squid) and pestorejo (pigs mouth) and had great fun. At 4pm we went for a rest at the room - our first siesta on this trip.

Although we had a nice view from our room (pic) we went for a stroll again in town but the many chapels and churches were closed and so we bought some pickles and a couple of beers and went to have picnic in our room at 9pm.



8th September Start: Zafra End: Sevilla Bus to Sevilla: 140 km / local loops: 6h

We had nice breakfast beside a bunch of retired Swiss tourists who live in Alicante. Upon our advice they had had dinner last night at our wine cellar and were still in high spirits.

Then we enjoyed our ride through very hilly countryside with widespread olive plantations and farms with a great variety of life stock and so we said a last bye to this side of the rural world.

We arrived in Sevilla at 12 and immediately rushed to find a room. 2h later, 200m from the departure we found a small room (70E for 2 nights). Then after simple lunch we went to visit the Macarena side. Lovely small streets, churches and monuments but we were a bit disappointed because most of the places were closed through the day. At last we managed to make a turn in the Museo Bellas Artes near our hostel before we went back for picnic. Lights off at 10pm



9th September Start: Sevilla End: Sevilla Walk local loops: 6h

We got out at 9 and had best churros for breakfast. Then we visited the main part of historical Sevilla with so many things to see: the very impressive cathedral with huge vaults, side by the staggering Giralda Tower, the Alcazar palace with thrilling patios, the Plaza d'España only to mention the top highlights.



Then we walked to the Rio Guadalquivir and went up to the Torre del Oro from where one has a great view over the river and Sevilla. At Spanish lunchtime, 2pm, we had lovely lunch (tripe and bacalau) on the roadside near the Plaza de Armas and then went for siesta at our room at 3pm. At 6pm we made another turn and we enjoyed the evening stroll until dark in the area of the Plaza and Iglesia de Salvador when the crowds emerged at last and gave life to the streets and squares. Had picnic in the room.



10th September Start: Sevilla End: Barcelona Walk to Airport: 3h / Ryan Air to Girona / Berlingo to Barcelona

After packing we left at 9.30 and started our walk to the airport. Since we had plenty of time we strolled once more to the cathedral and sat in for a mass and watched a communion. Then we took the direction to the airport trying to avoid the normal itinerary. This way we saw things which a usual visitor of Sevilla would not see: the brewery Cruzcampo (pic), Sevilla Futbol Stadion, bicycle paths one can also use for walking. At lunch-time in a far out suburb we stopped at a small snack bar (the only one around) and had a small bite – lucky – as we saw a much better place later on.



When we reached the last suburb before the airport we dropped into a little food street and took our last chance to have sardina tapas and a few cold beers. Stretching time we left at 3pm and continued what we thought to be a short lap to the airport. The airport was near indeed but the roads shown on the city map were fenced in. No way – so we turned to the motorway (pic) and walked the 2 remaining km on the side strip. Peggy panicked and was very mad at me!

We arrived at the airport at 4pm and then the long wait started – the flight was due at 22.30. I killed the time watching people having problems to comply with the strictest 1 small bag rule (no camera, handbag, coat, umbrella beside the only bag). We had no problem with that!

We started boarding on time but then we had to wait for 1hour (!) in the staircase of the gate. No information – just wait! At 23.30 we left and arrived in Girona at 1am where Evelyne and Rafa waited with our Berlingo to take us to their place in Barcelona. Late night – but all was well end we could relax!

11th September

Barcelona – Tordera – Barcelona



The next day Evelyne and Rafa took us to Rafa's parents in Tordera (near Girona) where Rafa's auntie prepared a delicious Paëlla.

Everybody was in high spirits and our trip thus ended in a dignified manner! Thanks to Mama and Papa Rafa and the whole family!



THE END

12th – 20th September

Ste Marie en Roussillon

The next day we took Evelyne and Rafa to the airport in Barcelona and then drove to Ste Marie to spend a few days for resting at the sea.

We also had the visit of Ella and Rolf who took Rocky and Yat Wah along to spend a few days with us with.



*PS - During our trip, on 20th August,
Our Grand Twins had had
Their 2nd Birthday*

