

The Spain Log - January 2024

Jack Karakashian

Day 1

“un día de descubrimiento”

We got off the plane around 5:50 am, going on two hours of sleep. We walked the vast halls of the uniquely sculpted airport until we reached the customs line. After another hour of walking, trains, and taxis we arrived at Justin's. He has a cute two-story apartment with a TV room, bathroom and kitchen on the first floor and his bedroom on the second. Street level. Shortly after we fell asleep and woke up at 2:00. We made our way into the center of the city. One thing I noticed was the city had a very DC feel. The architecture, city layout, and size all felt very similar. After our walk, we took the metro back to around Justin's apartment in pursuit of lunch. We picked a small restaurant called ... This was our first awkward interaction as our attempts at speaking conversational Spanish failed. They promptly switched to English and took us to our seats. In addition to bread, they served anchovies and olives to hold us over. I ordered the “salmonetes a la andaluza” which was just 7 whole fried salmon. After our meal, I tried to ask the waiter “Donde pagamos” meaning “where do we pay.” I thought I nailed it but she couldn't understand so I promptly pulled up Google Translate and she laughed. We soon left for the “Día de los Reyes Magos” parade, celebrating the three wise men and their voyage to see baby Jesus. The city was packed with tens of thousands of people crowding the streets to see the extravagant floats and to catch candy raining from the sky. This experience was incredible and the floats were truly breathtaking. After the parade, we set our sights on the bedding store to get blankets to sleep with. This was the second awkward interaction we had since the lady spoke 0 English, which was hard to believe because the store was called “Beds”. Charlie at one point said we needed a small shirt and she took us to the quilts. Yikes. We got our blankets and went to a corner-side burger shop. One lady asked me a question and I didn't even try to understand so I just said “Hablo ingles”. The burger and fries were fantastic and only 19 euros for the three. We then finished our day at the pub, conveniently located directly next to Justin's apartment. Here we got to interact with some locals, drink some Amstels, and pet a pub dog. All in all, day one was amazing.

Day 2

“un día de Belleza”

We woke up and started our day sore and freezing because those blankets were not warm enough. We got breakfast at a small bakery. We ordered three chocolate croissants and an iced coffee, which really confused the servers. They were very hospitable and even gave us free mini croissants. We were very soft and rich. We metroed to the Prado museum and took in quality architecture of the southern side of Madrid. We entered the museum for free and discovered the vibrant colors of the Goya, Velázquez, and Raphael. We saw many Roman busts of emperors and people of status. Many portraits of royalty. Goofy-looking incestuous monarchs. Many biblical and Greek mythology. Extravagant 3D renaissance artwork. My favorite was the Madrazo depicting the Death of Viriatus, a Lusitani king. We then left to discover the art of the church. After admiring the stained glass and paintings, I convinced Charlie and Justin to enter the pews and say a quick prayer. All of a sudden, the lights turned on and a pastor entered the room. We apparently accidentally joined the 2:00 p.m. mass for the Three Kings Day. We promptly left while they chanted a Spanish prayer. We then walked to the Royal Botanical Gardens. For only 1€ we got to see the beautiful winter plants that weren't sprouted. I guess they were out of season. We went to a restaurant called Briscut. We enjoyed some delicious pork belly, cocchetas, and pistachio cheesecake. I worked on my conversational Spanish and am starting to get better. We then went to the park. This park was massive and greener than the garden. While walking around, we ran into popular Spanish rapper, Tiago PZK. The people surrounded him like a music video and sang all his songs. We also ran into some exchange students from Boston and Cornell. We walked back and recovered at the apartment. Charlie was been doing extremely well with his Spanish. Many of the locals will have full-blown conversations and he's able to keep up. I, on the other hand, try and say something and then respond in English. Must be the blue eyes giving me away. We left for dinner at a tavern pub where we wanted to pregame before going out. So we got our three cervezas and I attempted to order my meal in español. I said “Puedo tener el Menú de día” Can I have the menu of the day, and the waiter said no. My confidence is so shot. I try again to no avail. Finally, I ordered a dish with eggs and loin which he said yes to. Apparently, it was just a breakfast dish. It is rude to not finish your meal in Spain but we could not. Justin felt sick so he went back to the apartment and we turned to the girls next to us and built the courage to ask what the best club in Madrid is. They told us Chapandez which is a cave-themed bar with their famous drink “leche de taverna”. So we left dinner to go to the club. We arrived around 11:30 and the place was hopping. We went to the bar to order the drink. It was a one-liter drink that contained milk, cinnamon, and Johnny Walker. The milk dropped

from one of the stalagmites. We then danced to the Bad Bunny and attempted to talk to some of the people. One even said that Charlie's Spanish was better than his. Eye roll. I asked one of the guys if there are usually more or fewer people at the club. He said that this was the early hours and people don't usually come until about 3. It was already crazy busy and 1 o'clock and we decided we weren't cut out to stay up that late, especially after the 1000 calories I had for dinner. We went back and that was the end of day 2.

Day 3

"Un dia de improvisación"

We did not recover well from our outing last night. Today we woke up at 3 pm. We were originally supposed to go to the city of Segovia and experience their Cathedrals and magnificent architecture. We couldn't do that anymore. Instead, we decided to go back to the area of the Prado and see things we hadn't seen before. Despite our tardiness, we ended up walking 8 miles, admiring the architecture and exploring the shops around the city. The first place we stopped was the bakery and got some croissants and coffee. This one went a lot better since I got a hot coffee instead. Then we trekked to the Plaza Mayor which was a massive plaza with many people, dainty shops and restaurants, and people trying to take your stuff. We got some pictures and made our way back to the Prado, to get gifts and see art we hadn't seen yesterday. My favorite part was this exhibit that had expensive artifacts owned by royal monarchs throughout the 16th and 17th centuries. After the Prado closed, we decided to do some shopping at Zara. This Zara was massive with 5 floors and probably a thousand people. Felt as stressful as a New York Black Friday. I ended up escaping with some clothing and got the chance to practice more Spanish with the cashier. Next, we got to go to the supermarket and pick things up for Justin's apartment. We then dropped that off at Justin's and went to the pub for some capezas and tapas. If you notice, this is the second time we had gotten food that day so I was still starving. We ended up going to McDonald's because everything on Sunday closes early. After McDonald's, we went to the casino to win it all back. At the casino, we played blackjack and roulette. I won 45 in blackjack and 20 in roulette. Overall, a great recovery after missing our trip to Segovia

Day 4

"Un dia de realeza"

We started our day earlier than yesterday, thankfully, because we bought tickets to the royal palace, located on the West side of the Opera. This exquisite marvel was primarily

used for multiple functions by the royal family as far back as the 9th century. Although the current monarchy does not reside in the palace, it is still used today for events and dinners. However, before going to the palace, we had to make a quick stop and get our daily croissants at the bakery. Upon arriving, we could immediately observe how detailed the exterior was. The interior was no different. Each room was unique but extremely extravagant, covered with religious murals and royal portraits of generations of monarchs. Although we weren't allowed to take pictures, I couldn't help myself and ended up capturing the throne room where the king and queen would often entertain guests. My favorite room was a sort of ballroom where the royals would hold parties with their close colleagues and friends. The room was highly decorated in gold and silver, with bright flower art on the walls and the ceiling had 3d wood carvings. We also went to the palace's armory which is where armor and weapons were kept for convenience. We got to observe many designs the Spanish used to protect themselves, their horses, children, and even dogs during war. We even got to see incredibly sculpted swords and katanas used during battle, as well as early renditions of muskets. One weapon we found rather interesting was a musket that spanned about 5 feet and had a narrow shell-sized barrel. We thought why not just use a cannon instead as these weapons were difficult to aim, had low efficiency, and were difficult to maintain? After our time at the palace, we stopped for empanadas. I had the cheeseburger, spicy chicken, and dulce de leche empanadas. Charlie got the ham and cheese. They were so yummy and only \$5 with a drink. After we ate, we had a siesta at Justin's until dinner. Much like the theme of the day, we wanted to treat ourselves after the big casino winnings. We went to a rooftop bar in downtown Madrid. Seeing the skyline and sipping on wine with Justin and Charlie has been my favorite part so far. We had a splendid view of the Prado and the bank. We ate well and left stuffed, I even tried green olives. They tasted okay, but now every time I eat a green olive, I am hoping to be transported back to this trip and that night on the roof. We then walked the streets and made our way back home. We couldn't stay out because we had a train to catch in the morning. This concludes day four.

Day 5

“un día del tren rápido”

Today we leave our baby Justin and head to the city of Barcelona. We made our daily stop at the bakery and got our croissants. We then made the voyage to the train stop. We had a very good time and took our seats on the train. The train was a fast train that went upwards of 250 mph. The views from the window are scenic with small villages encompassed by large mountains. Charlie and I both felt a bit sick but he powered

through with a nap and I powered through with an SQL intro lesson. We arrived in Barcelona and took a taxi to our hostel. Pulling out of the taxi lot, we almost got smashed by a bus because our driver wasn't paying attention. We checked into our hostel, which was located in a back alley. The part of Barcelona we are staying in is built like a maze where every turn is another alley and the people look like they're out to get you. After settling in we left to get food. We were starving. Charlie found a place called Circus Pizza which had phenomenal reviews online and was only located 10 blocks away. It was a tiny shop with no seats. I got the bufalina, which was so yummy. Charlie and I took the pizza to the plaza where we ate while chasing away pigeons. After that, we attempted to seek a laundromat. We are two stinky boys in desperate need of clean clothes. It was also a good opportunity to explore the Gothic Quarter. We saw many shops, the school, and a massive cathedral they have in the middle of the neighborhood. When we finally found a laundromat, we were bummed to find that none of them had driers. Later that evening, after a quick siesta, we went to a local pub near the plaza. We threw back some San Miguel's and talked about the rest of our Barcelona trip and what to do. After that, we got ready for bed and finished our day 5.

Day 6

“un día de la poderosa catedral”

Bing bong new day. This was the best night of sleep I've gotten so far, sorry Charlie. We did, however, start our day rather early to get to the Sagrada Familia, Barcelona's most famous attraction. From images online, I knew this was going to be something special. After the metro ride (which we've mastered) I very quickly understood why this was the most commemorative place in Barcelona. I can't even begin to describe how large this building was. The story goes that the building has been built over the last 300 years and continues to be renovated. Although we may never see a completed Sagrada Familia, the building we have is extraordinary. The inside feels like being at the bottom of a ravine, with how tall and elaborate the stone carvings appear. I'm a big stained glass fan and it didn't disappoint. One really interesting thing is that on the east side, the stained glass is blue and the west side is orange. The entire building is lit using natural sunlight. This means that the building glows blue in the morning and orange at night. One fun experience we had was climbing to the top of the pillars. This brings you to a bridge that overlooks the entire city of Barcelona so we were able to get some pretty fantastic photos of the skyline. Getting down was a bit scary as we had to descend a 400-stair narrow, spiral staircase, which many have reported getting vertigo on. Additionally, there was no railing in the center so any slip of the hand could send a phone falling 300 feet. After we reached the bottom, we felt rather peckish and desired lunch. We found a local

burger shack. Although it wasn't an authentic Spaniard delicacy, we went anyway to see if it was really all that, spoilers: it was. After lunch, we journeyed to Montjuic where we got to take a cable car and fly next to the city. We also got to walk around the sight which had canons and a castle. It also overlooked the Mediterranean Sea. We sat for a while and watched cargo and container ships dock and port, leaving huge containers with the county's imports. After this we began to descend the mountain, but not before stumbling into FC Barcelona's stadium at the old Olympic stadium, which was hosted in the 1980s. After this long excursion, we took a quick siesta and reset our bodies. After our break, we attempted to locate some good restaurants before we went to the park guell. We found this tiny sandwich shop which was genuinely the best sandwich I've had. It was Peruvian chicken, Brie, rice, corn lettuce, lentils, spicy, and special sauce. Just what I needed to power me through our 4-mile walk to the park. While this was a fantastic, uphill exercise and experience navigating through the Barcelona subway, the park was closed. So instead, we went to find gelato. After the first place we went to was closed, we found one on the main road. The gelato was very similar to ice cream but it was thicker and more rich. It was quite delicious. After a total of 9 miles, we decided to call it a day and go to bed. After getting ready for bed, we realized we were hungry and left to find food at 12 in the morning. At this point, the streets were filled with mostly students going to clubs and homeless people shoos them away to get some sleep. Anyway, we found a tiny pizza and empanadas joint that we quickly snacked on while going to bed. This final quest ends day 6 and our time in Barcelona. The next morning, we head out bright and early so stay tuned.

Day 7

“un día de autocuidado”

Likely our least eventful day just based on unfortunate circumstances. We woke up and dropped off our key at the front desk to head to the train station. Charlie and I walked about half a mile and metroed to the station with all our possessions. We stopped for breakfast at a cafe before boarding the train. We got our daily croissants and I got un cafe con leche. The train was a lot bigger than Valencia and we had better seats in terms of view out the window. The trip was about 3 hours but the views of the mountains and Mediterranean beaches kept me entertained. We arrived in Valencia and followed the masses to the metro station. We have become pros at navigating the metro so this was no challenge. We left the station which had very pretty rainbow glass to a wider, more suburban area of the city. Our hotel is only 2 minutes from the metro so our travel was nearing an end. We checked into our room which was by far the largest and most commercial of the places we've stayed. Three beds!!! Unnecessary but still

very nice. Now we didn't have much of a plan today because we wanted to get laundry done, but we decided to walk around and find lunch. Charlie found a local pub that had a really nice lunch deal. We ended up getting two courses and a dessert (and of course some beers). I got their soup of the day and pork secret. Charlie got the spaghetti and lomo. For dessert we had cake, but we weren't able to understand or figure out what type it was. We then began laundry so to prevent boring you from details, it was dinner time. We originally wanted to do the hotel restaurant because it was actually the highest-rated in the area, but it was closed. So we took the opportunity to explore downtown. We walked around for maybe 30 minutes admiring the city. It was by far the most modern and similar to the states. We ended up settling in a sandwich shop. We noticed that it wasn't very easy to find good places to eat, although that's what Spain was known for. They loaded us up with beers and tapas, although they were very close to closing. We took the hint and bounced once she started sweeping. At this point, I hadn't gone to the bathroom in over 6 hours and I just downed two beers. I had to pee so bad and that's when tragedy struck. The train was at 30-minute intervals. This means that I had to hold it for 30 minutes, ride the train, transfer (and hope it was faster), ride, and walk a mile to the hotel. I summoned the strength of the gods and after the hour-long journey, I barely made it to the bathroom. Lucky, lucky.

Day 8

“vino, tapas y la búsqueda del santo grial”

I got my day started earlier than Charlie as I was in pursuit of getting my haircut. I walked throughout the suburban center. Somehow, nowhere was open. I headed back to the room in defeat and waited for Charlie to wake up. We only had one day in Valencia and there were so many things I wanted to do. Explore Europe's largest aquarium, set out for the holy grail, and shop in their world-class markets and stores. I waited and waited and that boy wouldn't wake up. It wasn't until 12:30 that we left the door. Thanks, buddy. We had our wine and tapas tour at 4 o'clock which didn't leave us with time to do everything. After getting on the metro we decided that we were just going to wing it and walk around. We made our way to this bakery right off the city center. The store could fit about a total of 3 people, but they had croissants the size of my head for one euro. As we walked along we stumbled across a tower, shaped similarly to a rook in chess. Although we couldn't enter, it was interesting to see how much València preserves from its past. We made our way to a plaza which had many restaurants and stores. Additionally, it had a church. It was unbelievable how large the catholic budget was in the Renaissance era where they could fund such elaborate and extremely detailed churches and cathedrals. We left after spending some time reflecting on going to the

cathedral. This cathedral was special for many reasons. It was created in many parts. It started in the 1400s and had two more extensions added to it during the 1700s and 1900s. However, more importantly (to me), the cathedral was home to the holy grail. Well one of them. Apparently, there are multiple places claiming that they own the grail. But the one in Spain is over 2000 years old so it was still amazing to see. The cathedral also had art and relics from back in the Renaissance. Many gold and silver artifacts held unique value of the day-to-day Valencianes. In the basement, there was an excavation which revealed ancient Roman sewers and drainage systems. However, the most interesting part was the cathedral's preserved and showed off the left hand of Saint Vincent. As cool as this was, we had to continue and not tire out before our tour so we walked around the town. We found ourselves at a park with leftover stones from an old Roman building. The floor is lava went quite hard. Finally, it was time for the tour. We met outside a bar and slowly began gathering the troops. Our tour guide, Dani, introduced himself and asked us where we were all from. In our group, we had some Englishmen, Irish, Dutch, Australians, Canadians, and Austrians. Quite global. We began at the cursed church. During the Catholic revolution, the church was previously a mosque that was replaced with a church after Valencia was conquered by the Moors. We also got to see the silk factory. Silk production was very big in Valencia because of the Silk Trail. Additionally, we saw the marketplace which has been around for centuries. We learned about the prevalent orange trees that are scattered across the country. The lure goes that a king cursed all of the oranges so they weren't edible and had a very sour flavor. We made our way back to the plaza and learned that Valencians don't replace statues if they break off. Finally, on our way to the wine tasting, we saw a hidden wall where ancient catholic and Muslim people would sneak off and be together. Now we've reached the wine-tasting section of the tour complimented by delectable Spanish tapas. The first wine we had was a Spanish Cava. Very similar to Champagne, it was a sweeter, green apple taste and bubbly white. This was paired with a stuffed date (fruit) tapa. We then moved on to the whites. The rule of wine is that you start sweet and go more bitter. Additionally, when drinking white and red wines, you must start with white. The tapas for the white wine was a tortilla, which is a Spanish omelet. It was also nice getting to talk to all of these people with such different backgrounds. The Irish couple were taking a weekend trip to Spain to get away from the kids, the Canadian was doing some sort of world tour, and the Austrian Spanish guys had never been to Valencia before. They were very interested in US culture and politics. I guess the media in Europe really emphasizes the danger of the US in terms of gun safety and politicians so that conversation was very interesting. Finally, we had our Red wines, paired with tomato soup. In Spain, they drink soup from a glass like it's water, so that's what we did. In the end, Dani brought out this dessert drink in a shot glass. He told us that most people shoot it but it was okay to take it slow. Of course, me being me, I was the only person to shoot it. With that, we

were also given these rich chocolates which topped off the best experience of the trip for me. The Dutch couple offered to take everyone out for drinks afterward, so we obliged. We continued our conversation about careers, places in Spain, politics, and tuition all throughout the night while sipping on some beers. It was a very fun end to Valencia which has been my favorite. Last thing, Spain is known for their amazing oranges, and on my way out, they had these big crates of oranges, so I snuck them into my pocket. When I got back, I tried it. Better than Florida oranges.

Day 9

“un día de desmoronamiento”

This day was a doozie. We woke up early to catch the 8 o'clock metro because the Valencian metro was slow. Charlie was violently hungover after the wine and tapas tour and it showed. Once we got on the train, he threw up three times and was in the twilight zone for the entire 5-hour train ride. His dreams of being a wine mom are long gone. By the time we arrived, it was 3 o'clock and I hadn't eaten tapas since last night. I was getting the hunger shakes. We checked into the hotel and Charlie passed out and I immediately left to find a bakery or bar. The streets of Seville reminded me a lot of Barcelona's gothic quarter but it was a more vibrant city. There were also restaurants everywhere, all way too nice for what I was willing to pay. I eventually became impatient and found a restaurant that had a reasonably priced menu. This was the first meal I ordered without Charlie so it was fun getting to practice my conversational Spanish. I ordered this Chicken wing tapas dish and a cod entree. It was exactly what I needed and I felt recovered. Once I got back to the hotel, Charlie was recovered and ready to eat, so he left. We wanted to go to the Real Betis game but fell asleep instead. We woke up and it was time to go to dinner. The streets of Seville were lively and packed with so much outdoor dining, partially due to its amazing weather. After searching for a bit, we found a restaurant that didn't have a line out the door. We sat down and immediately the waiter, who's a big strong guy, said, “Can I get you two beers?” Before we could respond he said, “Dos cervezas grande coming up.” He comes back with a half liter of beer and takes our orders. I got a stuffed pepper with ratatouille and egg. This was the tastiest meal I've gotten the entire trip. By the time I was finished, he came back with another beer. Charlie intelligently asked for the check so he couldn't pull that again and I got to chugging. After the liter of beer, we went to meet up with Justin and his foreign group. They were a good group of people and decently entertaining for a group of engineers. We went out to get gelato, which I have come to understand is something the Spaniards do very well. After the gelato, half the group went back to the hotel and we went to the clubs. The first was a club called Plan B. Here, we just pre-gamed with some drinks. I

got this nasty drink called the Dracula which was 24 oz of cough syrup. Nasty, but did the job. Next, we went to a club called KOKO. It was so much fun and during one of the songs they dropped confetti from the sky. We went back to the hotel after about 2 hours and I threw up. Yipe! This was definitely not our best day but we still managed to have a great day.

Day 10

“un día de reconstrucción”

I woke up extremely hungover. Oops. Today was our big day in Seville. Our first stop was the Alcazar. The palace was formerly an Islamic mosque built at the beginning of the 15th century. It was said this way until the Christian conquest of Spain when the mosque became a cathedral built in a Gothic and Renaissance style, although there are still many Muslim techniques and designs. The palace was so large. Most people spend up to 6 hours exploring and finding new things. The best part of the Alcazar experience was the garden. The garden was extremely peaceful with so much green and fountains. It was also full of wildlife with really friendly ducks and peacocks that would approach you to say hi. While we were eating our lunch, a peacock walked up to Justin and took a bite from his carrot cake. So adorable. We also watched the ducks happily swim in the pond. It was so relaxing it cured my hangover. After we spent about 3 hours here. We made our way to Cathedral which was right next to the alcazar. We explored the top of the tower which was unique because it was sloped instead of stairs so a handicapped person could climb up. Although I couldn't imagine someone wheeling around up 40 levels. Getting back on track, after we reached the top we got to see the Seville skyline, one of the nicer skylines due to the compactness of the Sevilla design. We went down and explored the rest of the cathedral which was nearly as big as the Alcazar. The cathedrals are so big it is almost desensitizing. After the cathedral, we siestaed and thought about where we were going for dinner. We decided on a restaurant called Bar Alfalfa, which was notorious for its tapas. We got three dishes and a dessert. The first dish was a beef and potatoes dish with micro greens. The meat was extremely tender and so scrumptious paired with the greens. Next was this toast which was layered with many cheeses and jamon, or Spanish bacon. Finally, we had this noodle dish with pork and veggies. For dessert, Charlie had the tiramisu and I had the cheesecake. Although it wasn't Spain's best cheesecake that we had a Brisket, it was still very good. Very thick and rich. We turned in early because we had to be out early in the morning to go to Ronda. Anyway guys, that's going to be it for today's vlog don't forget to like and subscribe.

Day 11

“un día de gatos y acantilados”

Today, we are going to Ronda. Ronda is known for its beautiful cliffs and mountains. We woke up early because we had a 9 o'clock bus to catch. We stopped for some morning coffee and croissants and walked to the station. We boarded the bus and tried to get comfy, it was a three-hour bus ride so I was praying Charlie wouldn't get sick again. The bus ride over was incredible, the views looked like they were straight out of a Windows 7 background. The marvelous hills bleed green for miles and miles. We began to climb high into the mountains and began seeing some of the massive cliffs. I began to doze off, as I quite literally began counting the sheep roaming the giant farmlands. I woke up and we arrived at Ronda. We began to walk around the town for a bit and got a look at our first view. The world felt infinite when we stared off. We were suspended so high in the air as well. Maybe 1000ft between us and the rocky bottom of the ravine. I can't even fully comprehend how incredible our view was and our pictures do it no justice. We walked around for a bit longer and stumbled upon a park with a small fountain that housed very unique ducks. We continued our walk and took in more of the views, one of our lookouts was a stone platform with no supports at the bottom. It was interesting to feel such powerful winds pushing against my skin this close to such a divine scene. Additionally, many classical guitarists would situate at this point and play. The vibes were once in a lifetime. We continued our journey to a small church, which to be honest was extremely forgettable compared to the other cathedrals and holy sites we've visited, but we still went. Before eating, we decided to check out a few more views and one had this cat sanctuary where it looked like they were just growing cats on the ground. They were very fun to look at because they reacted to nothing and just sort of did their own thing. Great addition to a city though. We began feeling quite peckish so we decided to search for restaurants. We ended up settling on a place called the House of Ham. It was like a massive butcher's store with legs upon legs of cured ham dangling from the ceiling. Charlie and I both ordered a ham and cheese sandwich which was fantastic. So good actually that we ordered another. After our time here, we made our way towards a bakery to get some churros, one of Spain's most famous desserts. Charlie thought it was so good, I personally thought they were glorified fair funnel fries (with no disrespect to Spain). We headed towards the bridge, probably the most famous place in Ronda. Here we got an even better view of the cliffs with the houses of Ronda on top, with more guitarists playing music to the town. We stopped for some pictures, continued to a trail and began a hike down the cliffs. On our way, we walked by a friendly cat that began loving us. It was so cute so we made sure to give it many pets and ear scratches. As we walked away he sat and watched us disappear into the distance. I haven't walked many

hikes in my life, but this one was a bit dangerous. With extremely narrow paths and loose, slippery terrain, any mistake could have led to a 500ft fall. Clearly, that didn't happen though and the views of the side of the cliffs were amazing. We headed towards a waterfall that shot out from the side of the cliff by the bridge. What was interesting is that we walked this trail seemingly by ourselves. It was a pretty hard-to-find trail because it split many times in different directions. I could see why it was unused as we had to make some tight fits and delicate maneuvers. Upon our journey, we stumbled into an old, Roman structure that was hundreds of years old. It felt like we were explorers finding artifacts of the old world. This was a very scenic place to use the bathroom so I enjoyed that very much. Eventually, we hit the end of the trail and got a good view of the waterfall. Charlie began shouting to hear his echo bounce off the walls of the rocky cliffs. After our hike, we sat down and just soaked in Ronda. We soon walked back to the cat sanctuary to see how our furry friends were doing. The answer: sleepy. Two were missing however so we tried looking for them in the trees. I put in my AirPods and began to play The Lion King soundtrack (felt fitting), and as the chorus hit in the song, "Remember" Charlie screamed, "LOOK" and we saw hundreds of sheep running in a herd across the bottom of the cliffs. It was truly a magical moment. We had to leave soon but before we did, we snacked on some Nutella crepes. Charlie peed on himself here. I felt extremely grateful for today and all that Ronda had given us. But Ronda had one more surprise. As we pulled away on the bus, we got one more view of the sunset over the mountains. A truly spectacular sight. We got back to Seville and went out for dinner. We feasted on tapas, my favorite being this fried pork steak stuffed with gooey cheese and ham. Absolutely melted in my mouth. We headed back and prepared to travel to see Justin one more time. Still going strong, even 11 days in.

Day 12

"un día para justin"

I'm getting quite lazy with these so I'll keep it brief. We left early to walk on our train back to Madrid. We had nothing but relaxation and gifts getting on the itinerary so as to make an easier day for tomorrow, our big travel day. Nothing too special about the train ride besides it being our last. We made it back to Justin's and sort of just hung out. Justin was doing interview prep and we were watching and admiring him. This was the last day of Justin :(. We decided to treat him to lunch as sort of a "we love you/thank you for letting us crash/please never forget us." We went back to the bar we went on that first night and they loaded us with tapas and beers. We also bought ham and cheese sandwiches. As we were getting to leave, Charlie began talking to the bartender about where we were from and why we were there. A very common conversation Charlie

was very familiar with at this point. All of a sudden the bartender gave us free shots of this Spanish baileys drink. So yummy. We then went coffee beans and flight snack hunting around Madrid, taking in the scenes one last time. Finally, we ended the night with Peruvian pizza with ham on top. Some of the best pizza I've ever had and I'm not just saying that. That'll wrap up day 12 and our trip to Spain. So many great memories that I had the opportunity to write about. I'm glad I documented these things and I hope I look back at these memories fondly.