

• Dave Cox in Cordoba, Spain, May 3, 2012

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Hello again. A couple of Mondays ago I traveled on a huge high-speed catamaran ferry from Tangier across the Straits of Gibraltar to Tarifa, Spain. The entire trip took just over an hour, most of which was getting out of Tangier port and Bay. Tarifa is a sunny (usually) and WINDY small town on a nice stretch of beach at the southern point of Spain; in fact, it is the southern most point of Europe, sticking out much closer to Africa than the Rock of Gibraltar. Did I mention windy - Tarifa is one of the kite-surfing capitals of the world, with half a dozen large schools dedicated to teaching the sport (in the past it was wind-surfing, but now it is kite-surfing, which entails riding a surf board while attached by long cables to what looks like a small version of a hang-glider kite, with which one controls the direction of sailing).

The castle in Tarifa, built by the Moorish conquerors in the 10th century, is named for Guzman "el Bueno" (the Good), the reconquista hero who in 1294 retook Tarifa. During the battle, when the Moorish forces captured his eldest son, threatening to kill him before the fortress walls unless Guzman relinquished, Guzman is reputed to have thrown down his own knife for the deed.

About 20 kilometers up the coast from Tarifa lies Baelo Claudia, claimed to be the most intact Roman settlement in Spain. It is not well excavated yet, but no modern town sits on top of it, and it is beautifully situated on the coast, where the town made garum, the very strong sauce made from partially putrefied fish offal which the Romans seemed so to like. Unfortunately, there is no public transportation to the town. The owner of my hotel was good enough to drive me there, leaving me on my own for the return. I spent several pleasant hours at the ruins, which currently have some French archaeologists excavating. My bad luck was it was the one day of the year bus loads of theater students came from nearby cities to use the theater; so it was closed to all tourists. My good luck came when I struck up a conversation with one of the guards in the museum, lamenting the loss of my only chance ever to see the theater; she asked me to wait 20 minutes - went to the office - and returned granting me special rights to visit the theater. My next bad luck was the complete lack of rides back out to the main highway - I wound up walking 5 kilometers up the hill, passed by perhaps a 100 cars, none of which would stop to give me a ride (Spain is not the place to expect to hitchhike). Good luck returned when the same guard, on her way home, recognized me and gave me a lift the rest of the way to the highway; there I was greeted by further good luck when a car stopped within 5 minutes and gave me a lift to the outskirts of Tarifa.

On Thursday I caught a through bus to Cadiz. That weekend was the Gran Prix motorcycle races in nearby Jerez, and all hotels were booked solid for the weekend. I barely got a room for two nights - so had to rush sights. It rained pretty much the entire time. I spent about 8 hours in two museums, the Cadiz Museum which combines the old archaeological museum's and the old fine art museum's collections. I spent more time in the archaeological section, which had a large collection of Phoenician and Roman artifacts, including some of the best from Baelo Claudia and from Gadiz, the Roman city under present day Cadiz. While in town I saw a poster advertising a special exhibition for "Lord of

Sipan", "Huaca de la Luna" and "Lady of Cao". These are the great Peruvian sites of the Moche culture which I visited 9 years ago. While in Peru, the great treasures from the Sipan tombs all were in the "Lord of Sipan" Museum near Chiclayo, which, as a private museum, did not allow photography at all. I visited other museums with Moche artifacts, but had a first generation digital camera not well designed for museum work. Guess what - I spent almost 5 hours photographing that which I could not in Peru. It was wonderful, and I have included a few pictures, even though they represent a trip of 9 years ago, as I could not provide the pictures then, and the artifacts are priceless.

From Cadiz, I took the "slow" train to Cordoba (the slow RENFE trains go 160 km/hr (100 mph), there are speedometers in the carriages - the high-speed AVE trains go 280 km/hr (175 mph). Unfortunately, my troubles with hotel rooms continued; it has been a week-long Spring festival here, celebrating a number of holidays simultaneously, including the famous "Patios of Cordoba" festival, where private homes in the medieval heart of the city vie for prizes for best flowered patio, and open them for a week to visitors. My first evening I checked 7 hotels without luck for a room. I was standing at the desk of Hotel Maestre when they had a cancellation call for that evening - so I had a room for one night. Early the next morning I went on a hunt, and finally found a good room here at the Hotel Gonzales for 5 nights.

As with most larger towns in Spain, Cordoba had a pre-Roman history (Paleolithic through bronze age and then Iberian), then became a large Roman city, followed by the Visigoths, then fell to the Islamic forces in the 8th century, before finally being reconquered by Ferdinand III of Castilla in the 13th century; in other words, a very long history with fabulous sites and museum pieces. Cordoba is most famous, though, as becoming perhaps the pre-eminent Islamic center of the world from the 10th through the 12th centuries, when it was the largest city in western Europe, sporting one of the two greatest mosques in the world, and being the center of Islamic, Christian and Jewish scholars at its universities and libraries. The great mosque was built in the 8th century on the site of the 6th century Visigoth Cathedral, utilizing some of its pillars. The mosque was enlarged twice in the 10th century, when the mihrab (the nook marking the direction of Mecca) was built with mosaics of semi-precious stones and 1,600 kilograms of tiny gold cubes which were gifted to the mosque by the Christian Byzantium Emperor of Constantinople. After the reconquest, a cathedral was sited inside the mosque in the 13th century, and then in the 15th century the entire center of the mosque was converted to a huge renaissance cathedral, which subsequently got its huge 17th century jasper and marble retablo and 18th century mahogany choir. The cathedral still is in use today, having services every morning. I do not have the total size, but the interior of the mosque probably covers over 8 open acres. The ceilings are supported by unending hundreds of huge double arches of yellow and red. Right smack in the middle it opens into the towering interior of the cathedral. At the southeast wall is the mihrab, with two side arches and the main arch over the open niche, where the ceiling over head opens into a large cupola. All is covered by mosaic patterns incorporating the 1,600 kilograms of gold cubes. I figure the cubes are about 1/2 cm on a side (about 1/5 inch), and so each cube probably weighs over 1/2 gram, and is worth about \$35. In all I figure there are about 3 million gold cubes, worth a total of about \$100 million at today's value. I have included a close-up picture to give an idea of the glory of these mosaics (high steel fences keep tourists at least 30 feet from the mosaics, and the mosque is thick with guards).

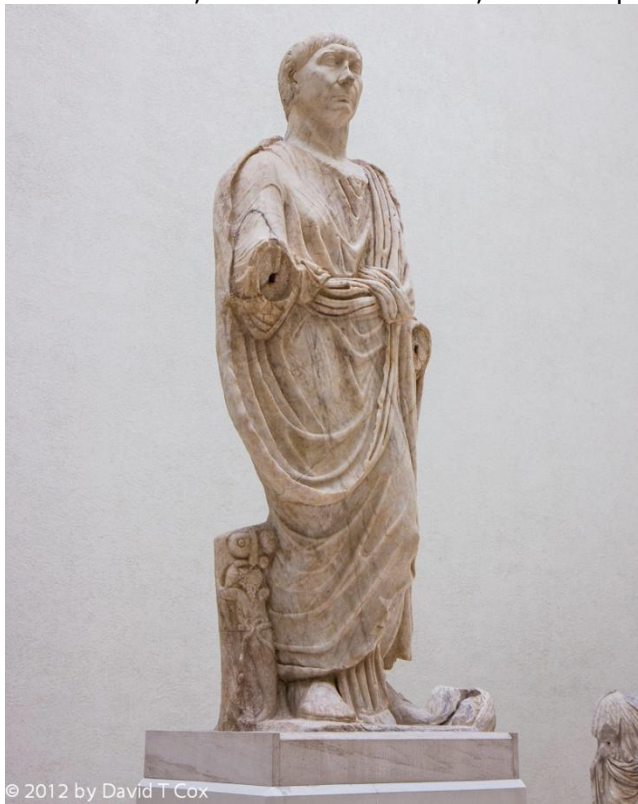
I also have visited the Alcazar, the old fortress of the monarchs built after the reconquest in the 13th century, which houses a good collection of Roman mosaics from ruins opening up below the Alcazar. Also the archaeology museum which is built over the ruins of the Roman theater.

It has rained for over half of my time in Spain now, and it looks like rain will start again soon. I guess they had a dry winter here, but most springs don't see this much rain; it makes for difficult travel and sight-seeing. I probably will move on tomorrow, catching a bus to Antequera. Later. Dave



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Lord of Sipan gold attire from tomb, Mochica 200BC-600AD, "Lord of Sipan" Exhibition, Cadiz, Spain



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Roman Emperor Trajan, marble, from Baelo Claudia, Cadiz Museum, Spain



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Tarifa coast near Isla



de las Palomas, Spain
Baelo Claudia Roman City, Bolonia, Spain



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gold

cube mosaics of mihrab in Mezquita, Cordoba, Spain



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Mezquita arches 9th-

10th C, Cordoba, Spain



Puerta del Puente & Catedral from Roman Bridge, Cordoba, Spain



Torre del Alminar 14th C, Mezquita, Cordoba,



Spain © 2012 by David T Cox



train from Cadiz Station, to Cordoba, Spain © 2012 by David T Cox feline
deity in gold copper encrusted w precious stones, Sipan Tombs, Mochica 200BC-600AD, "Lord of Sipan"



Exhibition, Cadiz, Spain © 2012 by David T Cox

royal ear piece, gold & turquoise, Sipan Tombs, Mochica 200BC-600AD, "Lord of Sipan" Exhibition, Cadiz, Spain

• Dave Cox in Merida, Spain, Mon. May 14, 2012

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Hello everyone. From Cordoba, where I last wrote, I decided to travel back west and then north, rather than to Antequera as originally expected. I took the "slow" train again (the one that only goes 100 mph - it took just 40 minutes longer than the fast train, and cost 1/3 the price - really true) back to Sevilla, where I spent a week. Twice before I have been through Sevilla, but it always seemed such a busy and expensive city I didn't stay long. This time I found a better location for my hotel, had two more days of rain to slow me down, and stayed. Sevilla is expensive, but has some wonderful museums and sights beyond the city limits in addition to the always incredible cathedral and Alcazar. Starting with the cathedral -- as I've probably written before, the Sevilla Cathedral always has been known as the largest gothic cathedral in the world; but based upon volume, due to its incredible interior height, it actually is the largest cathedral of any type in the world. Its outer upper walls are crisscrossed with gothic flying

buttresses, which can best be appreciated from its famous bell tower, Giralda. The tower originally was the minaret of the great Muslim mosque built here in the 12th century and was patterned after the Koutoubia Mosque minaret in Marrakech (of which I previously sent a photo); after the Christian reconquest of Sevilla, the mosque was converted to a church, and, ultimately, after earthquake damage, the minaret had the upper 1/3 of its current height, containing the bells, added during the renaissance. The cathedral itself was constructed in the 15th century. The cathedral inside is amazing; maps are provided for tourists to keep them from getting lost. Much of the interior lower outer walls contain chapel after chapel, each with gold gilded retablos, 16th to 18th century paintings, and often marble or alabaster sarcophagi. The upper outer walls are 16th century stained glass windows, many by de Flandes and Aleman. On one side is the huge tomb of Christopher Columbus (it recently has been confirmed it is unlikely his remains are actually in the tomb). The treasury is filled with jewel-encrusted gold crosses and reliquaries. Anyway, it is easy to spend hours visiting the cathedral.

Just south of the cathedral is the Alcazar, originally a small fortress-palace for the Muslim ruler, it was continuously enlarged after the reconquest in the 13th century as it was used by the Spanish kings and queens as the royal residence in Sevilla. Much of the work is known as "mudejar" which denominates Moorish architectural work done after the reconquest. The work rivals the best of the Moorish work at the Alhambra in Granada.

I spent a day in the Sevilla Museo Arqueologico, with its huge collection of pre-historic artifacts from the Sevilla region. The area is riddled (as is much of Spain) with caves containing artifacts from Paleolithic and Neolithic (stone-age) cultures, and the local maps are covered with dots, each representing a necropolis of copper age (Chalcolithic), and subsequently bronze-age, cultures. Of particular interest to me was the Tartessian culture(s) (or mixture of cultures) which existed here in the southwest of the Iberian peninsula from the 9th to the 6th century BC. Thought to originate from a combination of influence from the local Iberian and the eastern cultures, particularly from Phoenician settlements, there is a rich mix of ceramic, bronze and gold treasures. The Tartessian language is by some considered a Celtic language, and the written Tartessian language is the earliest in Europe outside Greece. Where Sevilla now sits was the ancient Tartessian city of Spal, in which was located the Carambolo Sanctuary dating from the 9th century BC, where the Goddess Astarte (and possibly Baal) was worshiped. A special exposition now displays some wonderful artifacts and gold treasures from Carambolo. All this was in the first half of the museum; the second half contains the subsequent Roman pieces, particularly from the city of Italica, as well as pieces of the Visigoths and then Moors who followed Rome in time.

I visited the Roman ruins of Italica itself, located about 8 km north of present Sevilla. The city was established by the great Roman general, Scipio Africanus, in 206 BC, the first major Roman city on the Iberian peninsula. The city sports the third largest amphitheatre of the Roman world, seating 25,000; my interest at the site was mostly in the mosaics. The black and white mosaic in the House of Neptune probably is my favorite of the hundreds of mosaics I have seen. It contains a central portion dedicated to Neptune's oceans with all sorts of fishes and mythical ocean beasts (the best are the sea-horses - part fish, part horse), along, of course, with Neptune himself. The outer corridors of the mosaic contain fresh water scenes, all apparently from Africa, with comedic views of pygmies interacting with birds (I believe many are goliath herons) and Nile crocodiles.

Finally, I visited the Museum of Fine Arts back in Sevilla, claimed to be the second great art museum of Spain after the Prado (I think the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum in Madrid is arguably better), and contains large collections of paintings by Sevillian artists Murillo, Valdez-Leal and Zurbaran, and sculpture by Torrigiano, among many others.

I found a wonderful bar-restaurant to haunt in the late afternoons, the Meson Serranito, near the Plaza de Toros; needless to say, it was decorated with old photos of famous matadors, and had a number of mounted bull heads with inscriptions memorializing the great fights they "lost". The bar, of course, as

with all "authentic" old style bars, had a number of legs of the famous jamon Iberico bellota (Iberian hams come from the indigenous ancient race of black pigs, not the common white pigs from which Serrano ham comes, and the bellota designation refers to pigs which for a year have been allowed to feed on acorns out under the oak forests - all come from the Salamanca region, my favorite in Spain and, perhaps the world, where I am soon headed) hanging over the bar, and lovingly sliced for tapas (very expensive).

The weather, which had been cold and rainy in northern Morocco and most of my stay in Spain, suddenly turned when half way through my week in Sevilla; from highs in the mid 60s and windy rain, within two days it dried, turned sunny, and hit 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees F), and it has stayed that way for the last 5 days (winter to summer in 2 days). On Friday I traveled by bus north to Merida, with its great Roman ruins, particularly its theatre, built in 16 BC, one of the most beautiful in the world. But I will leave Merida to discuss in my next email, and close for now. Later. Dave



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gold armband from Carambolo treasure,
Sanctuary of Carambolo, Sbal, 7th C BC, Museo Arqueologico Sevilla, Spain



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Venus deity, marble, Roman Italica 117 AD, Sevilla

Museo Arqueologico, Spain



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detail Mosaic of

Neptune, Casa de Neptune, Italica, Roman, Spain



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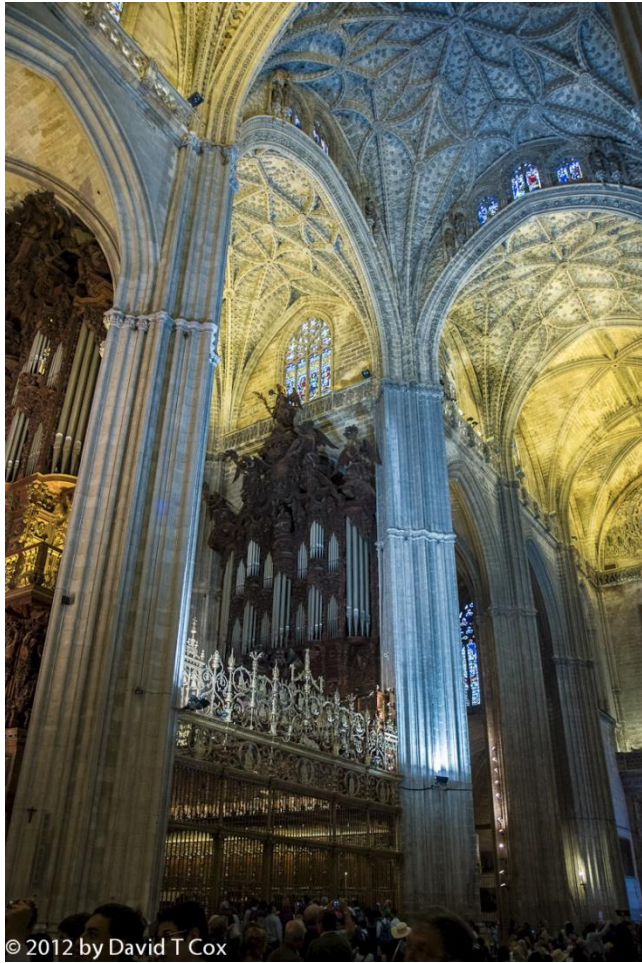
San Jeronimo, Pietro Torrigiano,



1525, Sevilla Museo Bellas Artes, Spain © 2012 by David T Cox

gold, ivory

& jeweled reliquary cross, anonymous 14th-15th C, Tesoro, Sevilla Cathedral, Spain



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inside Sevilla Catedral, Spain



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Patio de las Doncellas,



Alcazar, Sevilla, Spain © 2012 by David T Cox

Hall of Ambassadors, Alcazar, Sevilla, Spain



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Sevilla Cathedral, Spain



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Meson Serranito traditional bar,

Sevilla, Spain

• **Dave Cox Reporting on Merida & Caceres, May 21, 2012, from Salamanca, Spain**

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Hello again. I last reported from Merida, on Sevilla, and now report from Salamanca, on Merida and Caceres. The time seems to be flying by, and it is just 3 ½ weeks until my scheduled return to Arizona. I would extend my trip, but by mid-June high tourist season is in full swing in Spain and I would have travel and accommodation problems.

Merida has some of the finest Roman remains in the world, and the finest in Spain, which was second only to Italy for Roman presence. As mentioned previously, the theatre, constructed in 16 BC, is one of the 3 or 4 best in existence. The amphitheatre, although smaller than that at Italica, preserved one of the finest mural fragments of man versus beast. The Roman bridge over the Rio Guadiana is just under a kilometer long, consisting of 60 granite arches of which only 6 ever have needed to be replaced in 2,000

years, and which still is in use (traffic stopped using it just some 30 years ago, it now is pedestrians only). The aqueduct "Los Milagros", though not as famous as the aqueduct at Segovia, is more picturesque, with its huge stork nests on top, and brought water from the Roman reservoir built some 8 kilometer away; it is taller than an 8 story building where it runs across the stream, and has been standing thus for 2,000 years (in the photo, to appreciate the size, look for the man walking his dog on the path where it runs under the arch of the aqueduct). The Roman mansions, scattered about modern Merida, contain some magnificent mosaics. Wandering the Merida streets one passes endless excavations and remains, including a cult temple (erroneously called the Temple of Diana) alongside the forum, which temple was well preserved on account of a renaissance mansion built into it which helped support and protect its columns, and the towering arch which supported the gate to the regional forum (erroneously called "Trajan's Arch"). Among these riches, Merida also houses the impressive National Museum of Roman Art. I have included photos of many of these, including several stitched panoramas, necessary to appreciate the scale of the monuments.

SKIP this paragraph UNLESS you have interest in photo software. I have upgraded my software on the fly here in Spain; now using Photoshop Lightroom 4 (upgraded from 3), which has hugely improved the control of highlights and shadows, and the brush tools; I wish I had had it before sending out the photos of the Barbary apes from Morocco - the expressive eyes shadowed under the heavy brows were very difficult to bring out before - now a snap. Also, I have upgraded my panorama stitching software, PTGui Pro, from version 8 to 9, which, wonder of wonders, now permits masking and selectively revealing portions of the original photos. Modern panorama software determines where to make the seams in stitching photos, and, at least for me, has a hellish (or marvelous, depending on point of view) habit of putting the seams through any tiny people that appear somewhere in the photo. Because people (or animals) move while the dozens of photos are taken for a panorama, this produces a phenomenon I have named "Picasso graffiti"; where seams cross moving people, disembodied appendages, heads and half torsos appear in the blended panorama. Because these are small in relation to the whole, it usually is only on inspection of detail that the phenomenon is obvious. It is ghostly. In the past one had to create panoramas as layers, and use Photoshop to resolve such seam detail; it took hours. Now PTGui Pro 9 permits resolution with a few well chosen touches of a masking brush. (In fact, I just have realized, by taking more than one photo of popular tourist attractions (those that perpetually have people around them), with proper timing, people can be removed altogether, if one so chooses, without having to resort to cloning tools, and with revealing the true detail hidden behind the removed people.) Enough on software - how I love (hate, if it is Microsoft or Apple) it.

Merida also was a major center for the Visigoths, who ruled much of Spain during the latter centuries between the decline of Rome (3rd-4th C) and the arrival of the invading Moors (early 8th C). The Santa Eulalia Basilica, originally built in the 6th century over the crypt of Santa Eulalia (an early Christian martyred by the Romans at age 14 for professing her faith), was a paleo-christian/Visigothic church, the remains of which are excavated along with Roman houses, and other paleo-christian burials, and may be visited under the still in-use 13th century "new" Basilica. Merida also houses the only Spanish museum dedicated to Visigothic artifacts.

The weather was warm, the food decent and the beer cold, especially at my daily haunt, the Cervceria 100 Montaditos, (montaditos are small versions of sandwiches made on the crusty bread rolls), which had exactly 100 different types of montaditos each for about 1 Euro, along with the half liter, very cold and full jarras of good beer for 2 Euros (\$2.65).

From Merida, a World Heritage Site, I traveled by bus to another world, Caceres, with the finest preserved "casco monumental" (the old walled monumental city), also a World Heritage Site. Old Caceres within the walls has completely preserved its medieval and renaissance palaces, towers, churches and streets; no modern buildings impinge. Wandering its narrow passageways and small plazas is to be transported back 500 years in time. Practically every building sports its family emblem or shield.

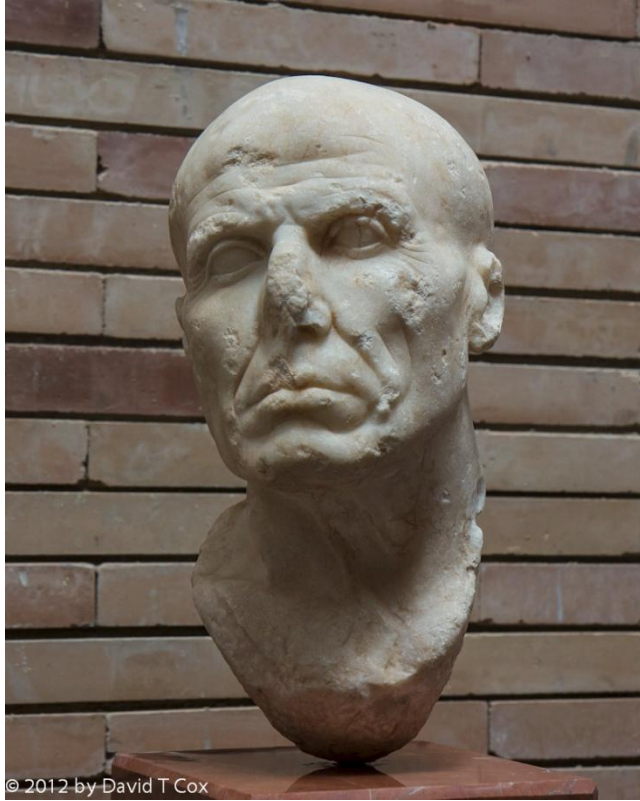
I got a terrific price at the wonderful Hotel Iberia on the Plaza Mayor, just in front of the Arco de las Estrellas main gate to the old city, surrounded by 3 completely different towers. It is difficult to contemplate a better spot for early evening beers at a sidewalk cafe. Most unfortunately, I arrived on the Thursday before the annual WOMAD (World of Music) festival; Friday and Saturday nights the hotels of Caceres and all surrounding towns were completely booked, so I spent just one afternoon and morning visiting.

From Caceres I again traveled by bus, north to Salamanca, my favorite town in Spain and perhaps the world. It has been frigidly cold and rainy the first two days, but is expected to clear and warm up tomorrow. I am ensconced in my favorite little hotel right next to the Plaza Mayor (Hostel Plaza Mayor), and will stay until I decide what, if anything, more I want to see this trip. Later. Dave



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Shield on Palacio Toledo-Moctezuma, Caceres, Spain



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marble bust remarkable for expression, eastern necropolis, 1st C, Roman Emerita, Museo Nacional Arte Romano, Merida, Spain



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Roman Bridge 1st C, Pano, Merida, Spain



Milagros Aquaduct Pano4, Roman 1st



Cosmological Mosaic in

Casa del Mitreo, Merida, Spain



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Merida

Roman Theatre Pano5, Spain



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Casa y Torre de las

Ciguenas 15th C, Cáceres, Spain

- **Dave Cox reporting on Salamanca, Spain, Mon. May 28, 2012**

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Hello everyone. I have been comfortably ensconced in Salamanca for 10 days now. It still is one of my favorite places on earth. My first two nights were over a weekend, and as is often the case, Salamanca in Spring was seeing a lot of wedding parties, and my first two hotel choices were booked. I wound up having to move twice, and stayed one night in the venerably cheap but serviceable Hostal Las Vegas, which also provided a much needed room over Easter week 6 years ago. Since, I have been in my favorite little Hostal Plaza Mayor, terrific value rooms with all I need, and situated just on the southwest corner of the Plaza Mayor.

Salamanca's Plaza Mayor has been described as the most atmospheric, beautiful, and elegant of Spain. It was designed by Alberto Churriguera, who together with his brother Jose, created the baroque architectural style now called Churrigueresque. Salamanca is so filled with monumental architecture which I am sure I already have written extensively about, in 2003 and again in 2006, I will be more brief here. The entire old city (within the original medieval walls) is a World Heritage Site, listed for Romanesque, Moorish, gothic, renaissance and baroque (including the exhilarating Churrigueresque and plateresque) architectural styles of the 12th to 17th centuries. The University, opened in 1218, is among the oldest on earth, and was considered among the 3 greatest scholarly centers in existence in the 15th century. The 12th century Catedral Vieja (old cathedral) is Romanesque in style, with a byzantine dome, and contains inside the oldest painting in Europe created by a known artist, Anton Sanchez de Segovia, in 1262 (it is painted on the wall of the San Martin Chapel - see photo). The 15th century retablo

(altarpiece) is considered the finest outside Italy, consisting of 53 panels depicting paintings from the life of Jesus, each within its own cubicle of a massive gold gilded frame, and above it the ceiling painting of the "Final Judgment" by Nicolas Florentino of Florence, Italy done in 1445. The old cathedral also contains numerous painted sarcophagi of benefactors from the 12th to 16th centuries, and in one chapel off the claustro is the oldest organ in Europe. Built into and around one side of the Catedral Vieja is the Catedral Nueva (new cathedral), commenced in 1513, it appears mostly gothic in form outside, with its classic flying buttresses, and uprising leafed points, but the decoration over the entrances on all sides is some of the greatest renaissance plateresque carving in existence; plateresque is a style which endured from the late gothic to the baroque, with intricate 3-dimensional carving done on stone surfaces which seems to emulate delicate silverwork (hence "plateresque" from "plata" meaning silver).

Among the other wonders of Salamanca is the Real Clericia church with its twin towers competing with the nearby Catedral Nueva, and in front of it, the Casa de las Conchas (shells) which was the private residence of Doctor Rodrigo Maldonado Talavera, a member of Queen Isabella's court in the 15th century. Behind the cathedrals are two of the best convents; the Convento San Esteban, with its huge iglesia entrance covered by plateresque carvings of the martyrdom of St Stephen (bear with me - I am only describing the handful of things of which I chose to send photos). Inside the church is perhaps the most magnificent Churrigueresque retablo in existence, created, of course, by Jose Churriguera; it is a massive and towering 3-dimensional carving in wood completely gold gilded. The convent's cloister is a gothic-renaissance courtyard with an incredible play of light through its picturesque and delicate networking of pillars and multi-arched ceilings. The nearby Convento de las Duenas contains what many consider the most beautiful renaissance cloister in existence; a two story courtyard, the upper story completely enclosed by carved white-stone railing and pillars, each with a unique intricate carving of fantastic 3-dimensional creatures where the pillar supports the upper arches.

Ok, enough waxing over Salamanca monuments; besides, I have used too many superlatives (all properly attributed). There are many more sights than I will put into this email; Salamanca is a place all should aspire to visit sometime. Aside from the monuments, the town still is considered a university city (although the academic reputation of the university doesn't really compete now with the schools in Madrid and Sevilla), and so has a boisterous nightlife, which I only experience on Saturday evenings and Sunday mornings. I enjoy the tapas bars in the early evening, but that is well before much action gets going other than on Saturdays, when things start around 4pm. Other nights, the "action" bars don't open until around midnight and go till dawn. Sunday mornings I arise at my usual predawn hour, but am greeted at dawn, when I run, by the numerous off-key serenades of groups of youth returning home after all-night partying.

As my trip is approaching its June 13 end, I have arranged (at least on paper) my final travels. Today I take the bus from Salamanca to Zamora, just to the north, which I never have visited; it is known for its many 12th century Romanesque churches. I will return to Salamanca then for a few more days, before heading to Segovia, a city I visited once, but for too short a time for its famous Roman aquaduct and 13th century Iglesia de la Vera Cruz (real cross) of the Knights Templar. From there I already have booked my room for the last 7 days in Madrid, where, of course, there are more than enough museums and sights to keep me occupied till my departure. Later. Dave



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Real Clericia & Casa de las Conchas, Salamanca,

Spain



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Catedral nueva, inside, Salamanca, Spain



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Catedral nueva, detail



main entrance, Salamanca, Spain © 2012 by David T Cox
 sepulchres of benefactors of Catedral Vieja 13th-15th C, Salamanca, Spain



© 2012 by David T Cox
 Capilla San Martin painting by Anton Sanchez de Segovia 1262 , Catedral Vieja, Salamanca, Spain



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Plaza Mayor panorama, Salamanca, Spain



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Vieja y Nueva, Salamanca, Spain

photographer before Catedrales



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Retablo 15th C, &

"Final Judgement" ceiling by Nicolas Florentino, 1445, Catedral Vieja, Salamanca, Spain



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Convento de las

Duenas, renaissance cloister 1st half 16th C, Salamanca, Spain



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Catedrales vieja y nueva & Puente Enrique

Estevan over Rio Tormes, Salamanca, Spain



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Cloister, Convento San

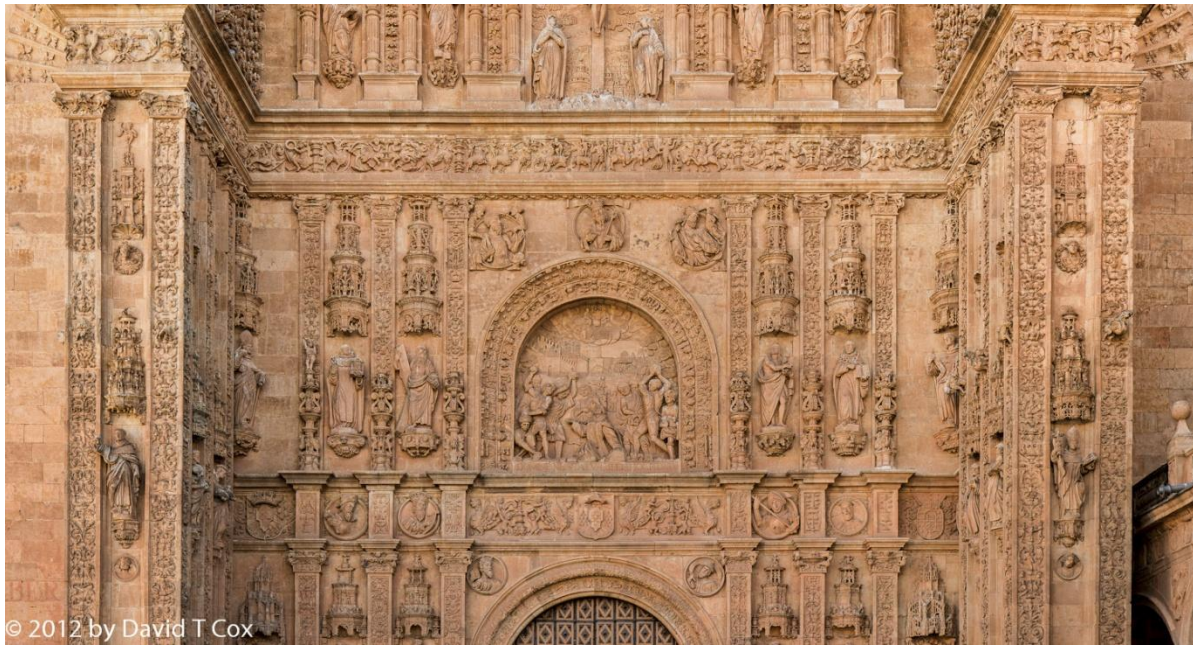
Esteban, Salamanca, Spain



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retablo by Jose

Churriguera, iglesia, Convento San Esteban, Salamanca, Spain



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Convento Sn Esteban panorama, detail over entrance to Iglesia, Salamanca, Spain

**Dave Cox Reporting on Zamora & Segovia, from
Madrid, Spain, June 7, 2012**

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Hello everyone. Monday a little over a week ago I traveled by bus from Salamanca north to Zamora, a small quiet town known as "La Bien Cercada", a reference to its almost complete set of medieval walls surrounding the old city. It lies on the Rio Duero, which provides its name to one of the premier wine regions in Spain. I went for the churches, 12 of them, each within a few blocks of the next, and all built in the 12th century after El Cid helped push the Moors out of this part of Spain. The churches have had some updates and rebuilds, but the basic structure is Romanesque, with the square towers, and narrow windows looking like medieval fortress openings through which archers could shoot in relative safety, all surrounded by the small "fake" decorative pillars. Several, particularly the Iglesia Santa Maria Magdalena, have stunning carving over the doorway arches. The city has, therefore, also been called the "Romanesque Museum". The real prize is the Catedral, also 12th century Romanesque, with a Byzantine dome similar to that of the Salamanca Old Cathedral. Inside the Catedral are numerous wall paintings, and a number of famous Flemish tapestries from the 15th century.

I stayed in a relatively run-down hostel with a balcony overlooking the Plaza Mayor and the Iglesia de San Juan (12th C Romanesque, of course). The owner, whom I got to know, is 83 year-old Don Pedro - practically deaf as I learned after first wondering if my Spanish had regressed to the point of being non-intelligible. He could only understand me if I looked him straight on, and spoke very loudly. First day I asked him about any form of transportation to get to a small farm village called Campillo about 20 kilometers from Zamora, where I had read of the best preserved, and perhaps only existing, Visigothic church from the 7th century. There is no form of transportation to get there. He offered to drive me. (This was the second time in Spain I have had the owner of my hotel take me to out of the way places - the first in Tarifa when I visited the Roman ruins of Baelo Claudia). We went on Wednesday afternoon, and I sincerely believe this was the scariest short drive I ever have been on in my life. Don Pablo's reflexes were sloooooow, but his ultimate reactions always over-compensated for whatever drift he was making. And, he wanted to talk. I tried hard to keep my statements short and to time them to various straight sections of the small highway; Don Pedro would turn to see my lips to help understand what I was saying. It was a contest, between feeling exceptionally rude if I didn't keep chatting, and realizing the potential to end up in a farmer's wheat field as Don Pedro listened to me. We almost went off the road numerous times, and did so once, onto a small side strip when the main road turned to the left. The church was worth it (I am still alive), sitting at the edge of the tiny farming hamlet of Campillo, well off any main roads. The entire church was moved 2 kilometers, with every stone numbered and replaced in its exact original position, in

1930, when construction of a small reservoir would have flooded it (the same plan was used in the 1960's to move a number of the most famous Egyptian monuments, including Ramesses II's Temple of Abu Simbel, when the Aswan High Dam was created to tame the Nile River, creating Lake Nasser). The construction used large perfectly cut stone blocks, each uniquely shaped to fit together with the others, as in the famous 15th century Inca stone construction, or 12th century BC Hittite construction; no mortar was used. Inside, the traditional Visigothic carved stone decoration is evident throughout, and particularly on four pillars with carved stone capitals, two displaying the scenes of Daniel in the Lion's Den and Abraham Sacrificing Isaac.

On Thursday I returned to Salamanca to relax a final 3 days, and then on Sunday headed by bus to Segovia. I have been before, but it is hard to tire of Segovia. Like Zamora, it is filled with 11th to 13th century churches, and the entire walled old town is built atop a long ship shaped hill. At the east end is the amazing 1st century Roman aqueduct, built of giant carved granite stones in double arches, with no mortar, and standing at its highest over 90 feet tall. At the highest point of the old town stands the great cathedral, built at the end of the Gothic period in the 16th century. At the west end of town is the Alcazar, built over a "V" shaped cliff, it is an exaggerated 19th century reconstruction of the original palace-fortress which burned in 1862. With its very deep moat, incredible fairy tale tower and "witches hat" turrets, it is claimed to be the inspiration for Disney's castle. I now have twice hiked to a hilltop to the southwest of the palace in late afternoons, to reach one of the most breathtaking overlooks I ever have seen; across the deep intervening ravine lies the mighty Alcazar on the cliff above a forest of trees, beyond it the Segovia Cathedral and Segovia medieval city walls, in the distance a mountain range, and in the valley to the north several monasteries and the Iglesia de la Vera Cruz, the 12 sided church built by the Knights Templar in the 13th century (where for hundreds of years they stood guard inside over a piece of wood claimed to be from the cross of Jesus - the piece of wood still exists, in a church in a small nearby town, unguarded now I suppose). Just up the street from my hotel, Hostal Fornos, is one of the best local bar-restaurants I have visited in Spain, El Sitio. I enjoyed their "menu del dia" daily, always a terrific 3 course meal, and had my late afternoon beers and tapas there as well. They had the best fried pulpo (octopus), and stuffed mussels.

Yesterday I again traveled by bus over the mountains to the south to Madrid, and now am in my favorite small hotel, the Hostal Luis XV, overlooking the Gran Via in the central city. Just a short walk south takes me into the Huertas District, always my favorite haunt for evening drinks and tapas. Later. Dave



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Iglesia San Pedro de la Nave, Visigoth 7th C, Campillo, Spain



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Flemish tapestry 15th C, inside back capilla Catedral de Zamora, Zamora, Spain



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Santa Iglesia Catedral
de Zamora 12th C, Zamora, Spain



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doorway, Iglesia de
Santa Maria Magdalena 12th-13th C, Zamora, Spain



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Iglesia de Santa



Maria la Nueva, 12th-13th C, Zamora, Spain © 2012 by David T Cox
Iglesia de la Vera Cruz, 13th C, Segovia, Spain



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Alcazar, Segovia,



Spain © 2012 by David T Cox

Catedral gothic,



Segovia, Spain © 2012 by David T Cox
Roman Aquaduct, no mortar, Segovia, Spain



© 2012 by David T Cox
Iglesia San Millan,
Romanesque 11th-13th C, Segovia, Spain



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Iglesia San Pedro de la Nave, Visigoth 7th C, Campillo, Spain



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Visigoth scene on Capital - Daniel in Lion's Den, Iglesia San Pedro de la Nave, Visigoth 7th C, Campillo, Spain

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- **Dave Cox final report on Spain (and Morocco) from home in Tucson, June 21, 2012**

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Hello everyone. I decided to send out a final short email on my last week in Madrid. I returned to the US last Wednesday, an uneventful but long trip. I had anticipated spending much of my last week wandering and photographing in several great Madrid museums, particularly the Museum of Archaeology. Very unfortunately, that Museum has been closed indefinitely for a complete rebuild of the interior of the building - my bad luck. I did spend a day in the del Prado, one of the world's 2 greatest art museums; I have visited twice before but it always is spectacular, although, unfortunately, it has stopped permitting any type of photography since my last visit in 2006. The Prado contains perhaps the world's best collection of paintings by each of such masters as Hieronymous Bosch, Peter Rubens, Titian and all the great Spanish painters, including Velazquez, Goya, Murillo, El Greco, Cano, Ribera and Zurburan. It also has large collections of works by Rafael, Tintoretto, Poussin, Jan Brueghel the younger, Pieter Bruegel the elder, and Durer, among others, and then representative works by hundreds of other great (and not-so-great) masters. With the exception of some Spanish painters, the Prado contains only Romanesque through classical period paintings, having sort of a cutoff date of late 18th century. All late 19th and 20th century paintings (modern art) are housed in the nearby Museo Reina Sofia; and to see a good selection of impressionist work (as well as all other periods) one must go to the Thyssen Museum across from the Prado (I have previously visited both). I've attached a handful of Prado images I took in 2006 just to present the flavor.

I also was able to visit for the first time the Museum of Origins, covering the archaeology and history of the geographical area now comprising greater Madrid. The large collection contains a good collection of Paleolithic stone tools and Neolithic and Chalcolithic pottery; interesting, at least to me. I also revisited the Museum of the Americas, where Spain exhibits the artifacts it collected for 300 years from the new world, including fairly substantial collections of Mesoamerican and Peruvian/Ecuadorian archaeological artifacts, along with such items as a small collection of infamous shrunken human heads from the Shuar Indians of southern Ecuador and northern Peru (where I just visited a few months ago).

I spent every late afternoon - early evening in the tapas bars of the Huerta and Sol Barrios. Spanish restaurants do not start serving dinner until between 8 and 9 pm, and as I am usually in bed by then, I necessarily always have eaten (and drunk) my evening calories in tapas bars; the food items sometimes are exquisite, the drinks uniformly ordinary.

A few final random remarks about both Morocco and Spain. If you want to see the spectacular 9th to 15th century Islamic architecture left by those from (originally) Morocco, go to Spain, specifically Granada, Cordoba and Sevilla; Morocco isn't even in the same league - practically all older palaces and monuments have been looted by succeeding dynasties, and little that is spectacular remains. If you want to see Phoenician, Punic or Roman remains, go to Spain; few areas are well preserved or available for viewing in Morocco (excepting Roman Volubilis). If you want to see the famous mud-brick fortified ancient cities of camel caravans (and backdrops for countless movies), of course head for central Morocco, east of the Atlas Mountains and well into Berber territory. If you want to wander and shop medieval medinas, the 3 imperial cities of Morocco. For museums, whether fine art, history, archaeology or other, Spain is huge, Morocco lacking. For terrific food, either country - Morocco for the incomparable tagines, and Spain for exquisite tapas (think the best cured pork in the world - Iberian bellota ham from the rare native black hogs), and either country for the world's best olives. Wine is cheap and terrific everywhere in Spain, but, surprisingly, Morocco has a few decent and reasonable wines as well. For beer, Spain is fine (not great), Morocco to be avoided. For birding and wildlife, neither country ranks very high. For transportation, between major tourist centers both countries have excellent rail systems, but for smaller towns, Spain has good buses, Morocco provides the "shared" taxis, not a preferred way to travel, although superior to the shared minivans in southern Africa. Finally, as to beggars, Morocco has the expected numbers, but Spain now is close as well; even in the heart of ancient Salamanca, on the Plaza Mayor, I found increasing numbers of young to middle age men (and sometimes even aged men, in old worn-out suits) asking for help. I think I was more troubled this trip than I ever have been in my life, expecting the 50% unemployment of younger men in the larger cities in Morocco, but finally really seeing the same phenomena in Spain, where overall unemployment is astonishingly over 20%, the highest of all first world countries on earth. I have to honestly admit the bleak situation in both countries continuously intruded to dampen my usually good moods. No solution either for the plight of the out-of-work, or the effect they had on me, was apparent. In theory, tourism supports a substantial percentage of the economies of both countries; it just doesn't help the out-of-work.

Later. Dave



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Plaza Mayor,



Madrid, Spain © 2012 by David T Cox

tower on Santander Bank building on Gran Vía, Madrid, Spain

Angel



El Lavatorio, Tintoretto, Del Prado, Madrid



La Familia de Felipe IV, Velazquez,



Del Prado, Madrid

Los



Borachos, Valaquez, 1599, Del Prado, Madrid

The Three Graces, Peter Rubens, Del Prado, Madrid



La Vista y el

Olfato, Jan Brueghel el Viejo, Del Prado, Madrid



shrunken human head, Jivaro

"Shuar" Indians, Peru, Museo La America, Madrid, Spain