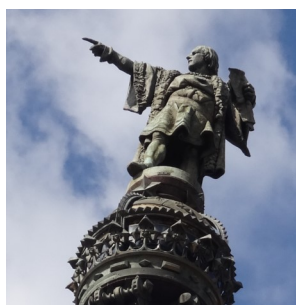




More Barcelona Architecture



***The Port
and
World's Largest
Statue of
Christopher Columbus***





Barcelona Cathedral (Right)

We stayed on this square on our first visit to Barcelona

We then took the Blue Route on the bus which covered the more northerly parts of the city, including Gaudi's famous cathedral, the Sagrada Familia. We got off the bus here and spent about 30 minutes walking slowly around this most unusual cathedral, which has now



Sagrada Familia



been under construction for over 100 years and, some say, will never be finished. We didn't take the time to go inside but we were able to see some significant changes to the exterior since our last visit here probably 15 years ago. It is a most unusual creation and looks quite distorted in some aspects, as well as being unusually colorful and "un-church-like" in others. Some parts of the façade are more "normal" and grand, like many other cathedrals, but it is by no means a classical European cathedral.



We returned to the central part of the city via many more wide boulevards and past hundreds of beautiful buildings, most of which are from the past two centuries and many from the “Gaudi” Modernist period of the last 100 years. We climbed high above the city, drove via the university and the FC Barcelona stadium and thoroughly enjoyed this wonderful city. It was a sunny day and the temperature reached about 75F, by far the warmest on the trip.

Tonight we walked to a restaurant about 100 yards from the hotel. I had tried to make an online reservation but had received no confirmation. We found out why: the restaurant is closed until mid-March. So, we went to our second choice in Le Meridien hotel (almost next to ours) and had a very pleasant meal.

Tuesday March 7

We left the hotel about 9:30 and walked to the cathedral square where we found a nice café for breakfast. We then went

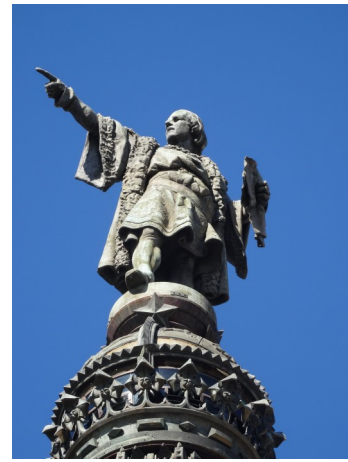
inside the cathedral for a while before returning to La Rambla for a walk. We strolled all the way to the Christopher Columbus monument and the harbor on a beautiful warm and sunny morning.



Cathedral of the Holy Cross and Saint Eulalia



The cathedral was constructed from the 13th to 15th centuries, with the principal work done in the 14th century. The cathedral is dedicated to Eulalia of Barcelona, co-patron saint of Barcelona, a young virgin who, according to Catholic tradition, suffered martyrdom during Roman times in the city. The body of Saint Eulalia is entombed in the cathedral's crypt.



On the way back we stopped at a sidewalk café for a drink but ended up having a pizza and sitting for about an hour, just watching the world go by. It was great!

We returned to the hotel before 2pm and relaxed in the room before going out for a late afternoon coffee. We ate tonight at a local tapas restaurant, sharing five dishes and a bottle of wine. We also had dessert before going to Le Meridien bar for a nightcap. We returned to the hotel by 10pm.

Wednesday March 8

We were up about 7am and checked out by 7:45. Our taxi was waiting for us and we were at the airport before 8:30 so we had time in the lounge before our 11:10 flight to Amsterdam. Despite a French air traffic controllers strike we arrived in Amsterdam essentially on time.

We went to the KLM lounge and relaxed until the Atlanta flight time. This was delayed about 30 minutes but we were in no danger of missing our onward flight to Cincinnati. The Transatlantic flight was also operated by KLM so we were able to enjoy their service.

We arrived in Atlanta on time but our onward flight to Cincinnati was delayed a little so it was almost 12:30 am (Thursday) before we arrived, picked up the car and then drove home. It was almost 2am before we got to bed, 25 hours after waking in Barcelona.

It was another good trip with some interesting places visited and two more countries added to our list!

Two Appendices covering (1) Sardinia and Ancient Barumini and (2) Valencia, Spain follow. The first is included to expand on the island and the ruins not fully covered in the text and the second (Valencia) gives a little more information on perhaps the biggest (pleasant) surprise of the whole tour. Both seem worthy of repeat visits.

Appendix 1

Sardinia and Ancient Barumini

Sardinia the second largest island in the Mediterranean Sea (after Sicily and before Cyprus), covering 9300 square miles, and an autonomous region of Italy. It is located in the Western Mediterranean, just south of the French island of Corsica.

The region's official name is Autonomous Region of Sardinia, and its capital and largest city is Cagliari. It is divided into four provinces and a metropolitan city. Its indigenous language and the other minority languages (Sassarese, Corsican Gallurese, Catalan Algherese and Ligurian Tabarchino) spoken by the Sardinians enjoy "equal dignity" with Italian under regional law.

The island has an ancient geofomation and, unlike Sicily and mainland Italy, is not earthquake-prone. Its rocks date in fact from the Palaeozoic Era (up to 500 million years old).

Due to long erosion processes, the island's highlands, formed of granite, schist, trachyte, basalt, sandstone and dolomite limestone average at between 984 to 3,281 feet. The highest peak is Punta La Marmora (6,017 ft), part of the Gennargentu Ranges in the center of the island. Other mountain chains exist throughout the island. The island's ranges and plateaux are separated by wide alluvial valleys and flatlands, the main ones being the Campidano in the southwest between Oristano and Cagliari and the Nurra in the northwest.

Sardinia has few major rivers, the largest being the Tirso, (94 miles) long, which flows into the Sea of Sardinia, the Coghinas and the Flumendosa. There are 54 artificial lakes and dams that supply water and electricity. The only natural freshwater lake is Lago di Baratz. A number of large, shallow, salt-water lagoons and pools are located along the 1,150 miles of the coastline.

Su Nuraxi is a nuragic archaeological site in Barumini, Sardinia, Italy. It was included in the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites in 1997 as Su Nuraxi di Barumini. Su Nuraxi is a settlement consisting of a seventeenth century BCE Nuraghe, a bastion of four corner towers plus a central one, and a village inhabited from the thirteenth to the sixth century BCE, developed around the Nuraghe. They are considered by scholars the most impressive expression of the Nuragic civilization.

The oldest part of the Nuraghe consists of a central tower with three superposed chambers (about 60 feet high), was built in blocks of basalt between the seventeenth and thirteenth centuries BCE. Later, during the Late Bronze Age, four towers joined by a curtain wall with an upper balcony (no longer extant) were built around the central tower, all communicating with an inner courtyard served by a well. During the Iron Age, the complex was surrounded by a curtain wall with seven lobes. The real function of the nuraghe is still debated. The discoverer of Su Nuraxi, the archaeologist Giovanni Lilliu, confirmed the traditional interpretation of fortress-site. Other archaeologists believe that the oldest part of the dolmen was destined for a religious purpose, refuge, civil or even parliament or registered the village chief, while the towers were added perhaps intended for military purposes and stock.

A village, intended to accommodate the surrounding population, was built around the Nuraghe in the Late Bronze Age. The village consisted of about fifty huts, and was built on a circular plan with large boulders covered with dry stone walls and conical roofs made of wood and branches. Though the huts were structured in a single unit in more remote periods, there was a later, more prevalent tendency to subdivide housing into individual units. Of the huts found, the most significant appear to have been reserved for meetings of the local leaders. These huts were larger and more complex in structure, and the hut reserved for the inhabitants' meetings contained symbols of the deities worshiped by locals. Other rooms have been identified as workshops, kitchens, and agricultural processing centers.

During the sixth century BCE, the buildings were destroyed and subsequently restored by Carthage before being occupied by the Romans. They were eventually completely abandoned. The archaeological site was fully excavated between 1950 and 1957 and the excavations allowed archaeologists to retrace the different stages of the construction of the towers and surrounding village, confirming that the entire complex was a vibrant, vital center up to the first century BCE, during the Roman period.

Appendix 2

Valencia

Valencia is the capital of the autonomous community of Valencia and the third largest city in Spain after Madrid and Barcelona, with around 800,000 inhabitants in the administrative center. Its urban area extends beyond the administrative city limits with a population of around 1.5–1.6 million people. Valencia is Spain's third largest metropolitan area, with a population ranging from 1.7 to 2.5 million. The Port of Valencia is the 5th busiest container port in Europe and the busiest container port on the Mediterranean Sea.

Valencia was founded as a Roman colony in 138 BC, and called Valentia Edetanorum. In 714 Moroccan and Arab Moors occupied the city, introducing their language, religion and customs; they implemented improved irrigation systems and the cultivation of new crops as well, being capital of the Taifa of Valencia. In 1238 the Christian king James I of Aragon reconquered the city and divided the land among the nobles who helped him conquer it. He also created a new law for the city, the Furs of Valencia, which were extended to the rest of the Kingdom of Valencia. In the 18th century Philip V of Spain abolished the privileges as punishment to the kingdom of Valencia for aligning with the Habsburg side in the War of the Spanish Succession. Valencia was the capital of Spain when Joseph Bonaparte moved the Court there in the summer of 1812. It also served as capital between 1936 and 1937, during the Second Spanish Republic.

The city is situated on the banks of the Turia, on the east coast of the Iberian Peninsula, fronting the Gulf of Valencia on the Mediterranean Sea. Its historic center is one of the largest in Spain. This heritage of ancient monuments, views and cultural attractions makes Valencia one of the country's most popular tourist destinations.

The traditional Spanish dish, paella, originated in Valencia.

