

Ronda

Gabriella Sonnenschein

What. A. Weekend. I was not expecting anything that came my way throughout the weekend in the most incredible way possible! I was told that Ronda was beautiful and I saw a couple pictures but never could I even imagine what wonders that city holds. You have to see it for yourself and experience the beauty of Ronda.

On Friday, before Ronda on Saturday, we went as a group to the San Jorge Castle, a site of the Spanish inquisition where both royalty and prisoners lived/were held. I had no idea that this building was in Seville before this visit, I just saw the tower coming from it and thought it was nice decoration. I really do think it is important to visit this museum and I highly recommend getting an audio guide. Having Judy as our tour guide was definitely a plus because we learned things that we would not have captured if we wandered around without any sort of guidance. We learned about religious tolerance, the terrible things that were done to the prisoners, and how we can look at this history and change the world today from the lasting effects of religious intolerance in our world today. After this meaningful lesson and visit, we went to the river near by to enjoy the view and take pictures, followed by a trip to the pottery quarter here where we shopped around, looking at all the different kinds of ceramics. We worked up an appetite after our field trip so of course, we went to get sushi and fresh fruit in the Mercado de Triana (Triana Market)! I had some of the best sushi I have ever had. They had so many different kinds of rolls and you could pay by the piece which meant I could try as many things as I wanted. They also had plenty of vegetarian options so that definitely worked in my favor. The guy worked so fast behind the counter and made every roll perfectly. Go get this sushi! And definitely take advantage of some of the freshest vegetables, meat and, fruit I have ever seen!



Part of the San Jorge Castillo (Castle). Beautiful view, meaningful and powerful place.

After the amazing afternoon we had, we all went home to take our siestas (afternoon rest) and later, our amazing student Jheanelle G. coordinated a picnic for orphans living with families through a local church. We played with water balloons and got soaked, explored a new park that I have never been to, and ate plenty of chocolate and played plenty of games! It was a wonderful afternoon and I was so proud to have a student at my school that wants to better the lives of others through all the acts of kindness I saw that day.

Recommendation: Parque de los Principes!



The water balloons made an appearance at the picnic...oh boy did they make an appearance!

THE TRIP

Rise and shine! 8:45am and [almost] every student is on the bus to go to Ronda, in the province of Malaga, Espana. The drive took about 2 hours including a beautiful restaurant where we were able to taste the famous toast from that region. It looked like a really fluffy English muffin mixed with artisan bread, along with the traditional Spanish tomate y aceite de oliva (tomato and olive oil) that we put on our toast in the morning. I wish it was in Sevilla! There were also mountains surrounding the rest stop that were just stunning. They made me excited for our trip to Ronda, which was even more beautiful.

We finally made it to our destination and immediately went to the famous bull ring in Ronda! Ronda is known as the cradle of bullfighting in Spain, and the world. There were a lot of statues of famous bullfighters and everything in that area was really nice: the trees, streets, and the flowers. We went in through the "backstage" of the ring with our tour guide, and he showed us where the bulls are held a day before the fight, the rooms a few hours before the fight, and the last place they are held right before they go out into the ring. It was really interesting to see this part of Spain. Although I don't fully agree with it, this has been Spanish culture since the beginning of time, no one even knows when it officially started because it is such an old tradition!!! We saw the ring and where the bullfighters come out from. After we saw this, there was a museum that we walked through where we

could see the outfits of famous bullfighters back in the day. It was my first time ever in a bullring and I'll probably make it to a bullfight in Sevilla before my *gasp* last days.



The bullring. Crazy stuff!

After the bullring our tour guide gave us a tour of the old city of Ronda! How beautiful. The views in this city are so unique and the Spanish history behind it is fascinating and overall expanded my knowledge of the world. We saw the main square where bullfighting took place before there were such a thing as bullrings, the main church with a beautiful clock tower, the old palace of religious leaders in Ronda such as the priest, and views of bridges and gorges used for transportation and other necessities of a city. The palace of the priest was unbelievably gorgeous. It has views in the backyard that looked like postcards! Really, I could not believe it was real. The mountains in Ronda are amazing, seeing vineyard in the distance, as well as so many kinds of trees and animals!



Clocktower of the church in the Main Square. Isn't it gorgeous?



View from the priest's palace. I might have to make it my own...

The tour was definitely in our top 3 yet. Our guide was awesome and the old city was something else. Although a bit touristy, there is definitely a reason for it. Ronda is something special. During free time, 2 other girls and myself went off to go hiking. Our goal

was to try and get to a waterfall wayyyyyyyyyy down in the gorge, underneath the 300 ft. tall New Bridge. I was so scared, how on Earth was I going to get down there? But we all three helped each other out to experience something that we probably won't experience again. Gina told us that she saw us from a point where people look at the New Bridge and she didn't see who we were but told us she saw people from way up above! The hike was really scary, and of course I was underprepared and wearing sandals, but it was so worth it. Climbing through rivers with bare feet and getting all my clothes disgustingly dirty was not my plan for the day. Ronda was so much better than expected.



Our view BEFORE the hike...before we ventured into the vast gorge.



Our destination, we are sitting right under the 300 ft. tall New Bridge (Puente Nuevo).



Relaxing along the waterfall...don't fall!!!

Ronda did have some amazing food. I definitely worked up an appetite after our hike! We went to a couple of local restaurants and got fried goat cheese, delicious olives, and sandwiches. It truly was the perfect day with perfect people. I can't believe my time is almost up...I am getting so sad. I still have Feria and just a couple weeks left so I am going to go and enjoy every last moment I have here. Hasta luego! :)