

THE DREAM SCENE

Newsletter

Issue no. 19 1st of September 2008

Bienvenido & welcome to the end of summer (?) edition. It's a minor miracle that this issue has appeared at all due to the computer and laser printer almost melting. Fortunately Keith of Affordable Air Con (see ad) installed an economically priced and efficient air-con (& heating) system which saved the day. Then the DTP software started to play up while I was compiling the new edition, which necessitated the purchase of the latest software package. The computer then crashed while loading the new software! Still, my problems should never be your problems.

And speaking of problems, the hotter than expected July & August also seemed to raise personal stress levels. There appeared to be an increased number of the usual confrontations relating to car parking, access to the pools, rubbish dumping, walls, noisy parties, ball playing, and 'why can't my little Tommy eat crisps / nuts / biscuits / fruit / ice-cream / sandwich / bag of chips etc in the pool area?' In one instance a couple of resident Spanish women tried to 'bait' the pool guards by shampooing their hair in the pool showers! In reality there were fewer problems but these all shrivelled into nothing when Telmicro went off the air. Many ladies were found wandering around both Dream Hills urbs with glazed looks in their eyes mumbling 'Corry, Emmerdale,' etc. Children and husbands were left unfed while the queues at the *salud* for Prozac reached record lengths. And the blokes; you would be sitting quietly in a pub and some chap would rush in and ask if Man City won? Good God Almighty! Who Cares?

During one week in August, Torrevieja town council fined 75 people up to 90 euro each for allowing their dogs to foul public pavements thereby breaking local bylaws. Lets hope that Orihuela town hall now 'pull their finger out', ratify and enforce its own new law asap.

On a more positive note, Jan of Neighbourhood Watch tells me that the incidence of crime in Dream Hills has been greatly reduced during the last two months compared to previous years. The crimes that have occurred have generally been facilitated by carelessness and dumb behaviour, such as leaving keys in doors, leaving doors, grills and windows open with valuables on the lounge coffee table and of course leaving car windows open. In one instance an estate agent left all the doors of a house open all day and night!

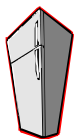
Last months Dream Scene was a record printing of 300 hard copies with two editions. A big thanks to the advertisers, subscribers and donators who make it all possible and to Tid for sorting, editing and stapling them all.

I could not include the promised review of local urbanisation fees in this issue. Some individuals who have provided information are not happy to have their urbanisations named, so this will mean a re-write which will hopefully appear in the next issue. Keep well.

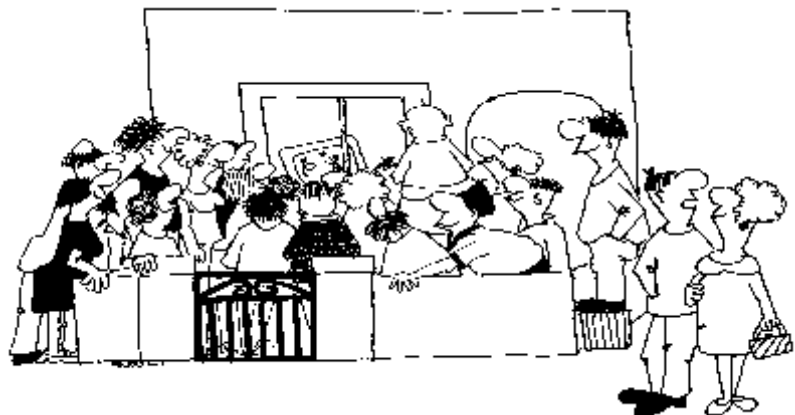
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'Seems he's got a satellite dish!'

WHAT'S UP?

The horrific Spanair crash on the 20th, which killed more than 150 holidaymakers while on route from Madrid to the Canaries, has dominated media coverage. On the 24th, another Spanair flight going from Barcelona to Lanzarote had to make an emergency landing in Malaga. One can only speculate as to what was going through the traveller's minds when the captain announced the emergency landing.

Some of you who have been watching Spanish TV may have been surprised by the graphic nature of the reporting on television which filmed burn's victims from the air accident being brought to the casualty departments. Another news clip this week covered the hallway where a woman killed her husband. It resembled a slaughterhouse with blood everywhere. This is one big difference between the media in the UK and in Spain which illustrates a significant difference in culture and outlook. The new Spain wants to see it all, will empathize with the victims and cannot understand the squeamishness of the *anglosajón*. 'Anything that smacks of restriction or prohibition in this country' says the psychologist Carlos Alvarez' Vara, 'is considered immoral, old-fashioned and fascist.' Remember the 'pot-noodle' ad which referred to itself as the 'slag of all snacks' in the UK, but then had to be withdrawn because it 'upset' some people. In the UK media there are many other instances where the overriding wish of not wanting to appear controversial, thereby sanitising content to 'protect the viewer.' The Spanish thankfully have a much more mature attitude, which is no doubt born out of years of repression.

Giorgio Armani has launched a new fragrance called Oranger Alhambra, which is described as an 'olfactory hymn to the gardens of the Moorish palace' - no less! However since 2001, commercial use of the word 'Alhambra' has been restricted to protect the reputation of the UNESCO World Heritage site and Armani have not sought permission to use the word. The trustees of the monument have now stated that unless a 'mutually beneficial' arrangement (i.e. the movement of a large amount of 'dosh' from Armani to the trustees), the matter will go to the courts.

Spain will start sharing certain medical records with 11 other EU countries as part of a pan-European project to help tourists and travelling business people access healthcare services in countries other than their own. Because of the sensitive nature of the information strong encryption and security features are expected to be incorporated. Patients will also have the choice of opting out of the system. The system is due to be up and running by 2015 and will initially link the medical records of Spain, Austria, Sweden, Czech Rep., Germany, Denmark, France, Greece, Italy, Holland, Slovakia and the UK. The project is called Smart Open Services (SOS). One can only imagine the technological and language problems such a project would entail. I think there is a greater chance of me becoming an astronaut!

Torre Vieja hospital has now installed a machine in the A&E department which will inform relatives about the condition of patients. Each patient is given a ticket with a code when registering. Relatives can get all the relevant information by entering the code on the machine which includes a touch screen.

Take Your Medicine.

Jake was dying. His wife, Becky, was maintaining a candlelight vigil by his side. She held his fragile hand, tears running down her face. Her praying roused him from his slumber. He looked up and his pale lips began to move slightly. "Becky my darling," he whispered.

"Hush my love," she said. "Rest, don't talk."

He was insistent. "Becky," he said in his tired voice, "I have something that I must confess."

"There's nothing to confess," replied the weeping Becky. "Everything's all right, go to sleep."

"No, no. I must die in peace, Becky. I ... I slept with your sister, your best friend, her best friend, and your mother!"

"I know, sweetheart," whispered Becky, "let the poison work."

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A Granada judge believes that breathalyser tests carried out on drivers to see how much alcohol they have been drinking are “illegal and illegitimate” as well as calling them an “obsessive persecution” of everyone at the wheel. They are a “serious violation of the right to be treated equally under the law”, argued the judge in a recent sentence in which he acquitted a man accused of drunk driving. This is at least the fourth time that this magistrate has used this argument in court. The Granada judge bases his reasoning on the fact that the current system offers impunity to those who drive under the influence of other types of narcotic substances, while on the other hand, it severely punishes those who drink alcohol.

A 24-year-old Nigerian immigrant who sells tissues to drivers at traffic lights in Seville, handed in a wallet containing 2,700 euros, an 870-euro cheque and a cheque book to National Police officers. Fortunately the police, contrary to perceived expectations, returned it all to the 68 year old owner, who stated that the wallet fell out of his pocket while he was driving his moped. He gave the Nigerian 50 euro.

A Roman sewer in very good condition has been found in Lugo, Galicia. Apparently it had been in use up to the 18th century. (Maybe they should move it to La Zenia and get rid of the stink there!) A Roman road and lateral canals have also been discovered in the proposed building site. Local officials have, thankfully, altered the building renovation project and have protected the site for posterity. This is a much more enlightened approach than that taken by the ‘town hall troglodytes’ in the southern Spanish town of Ecija in 2006. Beneath the town square archaeologists discovered a Roman forum, bath house, gymnasium, temple and hundreds of mosaics. The find was believed to be the last vestiges of the lost Roman city known as Colonia Augusta Firma Astigi - one of the great cities of the Roman world which had a population of more than 30,000. Much of the site was hurriedly bulldozed and concreted over by the socialist council with only a tiny fragment left visible for scholars and tourists to view. And what did the council put in its place? 299 new car parking spaces! The mayor who was responsible for the car park project said that he was happy to keep one of his main election promises (before he made his way back to his cave - no doubt).

A number of shooting instances occurred in Marbella last month leading many to rename it ‘Dodge’ (or Manchester!!). In one incident three Irishmen aged 39, 45 and 73 were shot in a restaurant but none fatally. Irish newspapers later reported it as an assassination attempt on an Irish drug boss.

An Argentinean journalist is presenting the theory in his latest book that Adolf Hitler never committed suicide but escaped to South America. He claims that Hitler, his squeeze – Eva Braun and 13 leading Nazis, arrived in Barcelona where they stayed for a month (Nazi Tours??) and were then taken by submarine to South America. He claims that he has seen secret FBI documents which prove this. My own theory is that Hitler stayed in Spain, changed his sex and is now working behind the reception desk in the *Cabo Roig Salud*.

On Wednesday the 13th of August at PACHA’s disco in Torry, there was an attempt to break the Guinness World Record for a water pistol fight. More than 5,000 water pistols were supplied for the event. Does anyone know if the record was broken? ‘She’ would not allow me out! Sat’ September 6th is the 23rd Anniversary of PACHA. A new Seat Ibiza is up for grabs during the evening, if you are feeling energetic!

Spain has been finally placed in the ‘dock’ by the EU concerning the LRAU & LUV ‘land-grab’ laws. No judgements yet but I will relay these when any has been made. Of course the Spanish authorities may still ignore any of the related directives issued by the EU as they have done in the past.

The voluntary period for paying your Property Tax (IBI) expires on the 3rd of October.

San Miguel de Salinas are holding a Trade & Commerce Fair from Friday 5th to Sunday 7th of September. There are a number of events planned, most suitable for children.

Many of the impressive Moors & Christians events are planned for the coming months. Keep an eye on the Costa Blanca News for details. At the cost of less than 2 euro it is vastly superior to the ‘freebie’ rubbish.

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The Telmicro Saga

There has been an incredible amount of guff (yes, it is a real word!) generated in the press and on-line about the Telmicro saga. In a nutshell, this is what happened.

Telmicro were showing Sky Sports but Sky only had a sole licensing agreement with Canal+ in Spain to show Sky Sports. Both Sky and Canal+ were naturally pissed-off with Telmicro who were showing the relevant channels without any licence, agreement or permission but more subjectively – not paying them any fees. With the backing of Sky, Canal+ called in the ‘Feds’ and the result was lots of people were placed in the ‘chokey’ and blank screens throughout the Costa Blanca. All those arrested have now been released but certain essential equipment is still being held by the authorities and some of their premises remain sealed.

So what does the future hold for Telmicro?

One must first realise that Telmicro was and is an enormous ‘cash cow.’ With monthly income well in excess of 700,000 euro, I cannot see how anybody would allow such a business to fold. There is simply too much money involved for anybody to walk away from it, despite the prospect of heavy fines and large legal costs.

Although the judge’s investigation is being held in secret, there are a number of issues which cause concern. Firstly it was widely reported that half a million euro in cash was recovered by the police. Now it may be a bit fanciful to believe that this amount of hard cash would be kept in offices, but whether true or not, it will certainly attract the attention of not only the *Hacienda* (tax authorities) but also that of organised crime, of which there are several international versions active throughout Spain. The *Hacienda* will obviously now check to see if Telmicro was correctly reporting their affairs and linked ‘black economy’ investigations were rumoured at one stage.

It has also been alleged that the massive amounts of money coming in to Telmicro caused the British owner, who resides in a suite atop the Bali hotel in Benidorm, to ignore or repress certain realities. What I found particularly interesting was that two Spanish business men were arrested at Telmicro, one of whom was a former PSOE councillor for Los Montesinos and the former president of the Commonwealth of Municipalities of the Vega Baja until the end of 2007. What were they doing there? There is no doubt that Telmicro’s competitors were very envious of their success and cannot now believe their luck as an impatient and television-less army of Brit’s are queuing up at their doors and probably throwing good money after bad.

Telmicro was developing into a substantial visual-media provider, with its own weekly magazine and massive market share. It could have developed other services for what is largely a captive market and could have promoted these properly through the TV and magazine mediums. Although the addition of Calle 13, CineStar and Xtrm were welcome, screen-freezing on Sunday nights was common which indicated that an engineer was not monitoring transmissions and that there was a certain lack of interest in quality control.

As of today, 30th, Telmicro are transmitting a limited service - several channels through a limited number of transmitters, but with much of their equipment impounded and the Spanish authorities probably being less than helpful, the company will probably have to purchase additional technology and set-up their operation again, if it intends to have a full broadcast capability soon. They certainly have the money to do so. But by then much of their original customer base will be massively eroded by their competitors with the usual false promises and Telmicro will have few if any engineers available to sort any problems out. Of the other providers few, if any, have the technology to match Telmicro’s broadcast-signal strength.

But do remember that **ANY** firm broadcasting BBC, ITV, Channels 4 or 5 etc does **not** have a licence to do so and are doing so illegally. Even if they say they are legal - they ain’t! A few years back the BBC created ‘stink’ in the Canaries over the illegal broadcasting of their signal, resulting in some shut-downs.

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Ladies & Gents

The Spanish Economy

Unemployment continues to rocket as the number of registered unemployed has increased by half a million over the last 12 months. During this period Murcia has seen an increase in unemployment of 52% and Valencia of almost 37%. In Málaga, Almeria and Cádiz, unemployment in the construction industry has increased by 80%. 11% of the active population are now unemployed.

The number of bankruptcies have increased by 172% in the second quarter, the amount of petrol purchased is down by 15% on last year and the demand for broadband installations are down 20% compared to last year and down 30% compared to 2006. Despite all this and more, the government continues to suffer from the 'Emperor's New Clothes Syndrom' and denies that a recession is either here or on the way. Actions they have taken to date have proved ineffective and their planned new major investment in 'assisted' housing beggars belief when one considers that there are more than a million vacant properties in Spain! Property sales are down at least 30% nationally with the Med coastal areas being the hardest hit. Banco Santander has warned that although 2008 will be an especially difficult year, the economy may not recover before 2010 and that the property crisis will last four years. Due to the high exposure of the banks to the property sector many assessment agencies have lowered their rating for most of the Spanish banks and the Wall Street Journal has predicted that Spanish banks may be the next to suffer the consequences of the worst financial crisis since the great depression. Batten down the hatches??

Be Strong!

A man escapes from prison where he has been for 35 years. He breaks into a house to look for money and guns and finds a young couple in bed.

He orders the guy out of bed and ties him to a chair, while tying the girl to the bed he gets on top of her, kisses her neck, then gets up and goes into the bathroom. While he's in there, the husband tells his wife:

"Listen, this guy's an escaped convict, look at his clothes! He probably spent lots of time in jail and hasn't seen a woman in years. I saw how he kissed your neck." If he wants sex, don't resist, don't complain, do whatever he tells you. Satisfy him no matter how much he nauseates you. This guy is probably very dangerous. If he gets angry, he'll probably kill us. Be strong, honey. I love you."

To which his wife responds: "He wasn't kissing my neck. He was whispering in my ear. He told me he was gay, thought you were cute, and asked me if we had any vaseline. I told him it was in the bathroom. Be strong honey. I love you too!!"

The Return of the Masked Man

The Lone Ranger was ambushed and captured by an Indian war party. The Chief proclaims, 'So, you are the great Lone Ranger! In honour of the Harvest Festival, you will be executed in three days! But, before I kill you, I will grant you three requests.. What is your first request? The Lone Ranger responds, 'I'd like to speak to my horse.'

The Chief nods and Silver is brought before the Lone Ranger who whispers in Silver's ear. The great horse gallops away.

Later that evening, Silver returns with a beautiful blonde woman on his back. As the Chief watches, the blonde enters the Lone Ranger's tent and spends the night. The next morning the Indian Chief admits he's impressed. 'You have very fine and loyal horse, but I will still kill you in two days. What is your second request?'

The Lone Ranger again asks to speak to his horse. Silver is brought to him, and he again whispers in the horse's ear.

As before, Silver takes off across the plains and disappears over the horizon. Later that evening, to the Chief's surprise, Silver again returns, this time with a brunette, even more attractive than the blonde. She enters the Lone Ranger's tent and spends the night.

The following morning the Chief is again impressed. 'You are indeed a man of many talents, but I still kill you tomorrow. What is your last request?'

The Lone Ranger responds, 'I'd like to speak to my horse....ALONE.'

The Chief is curious, but he agrees, and Silver is brought to the Lone Ranger's tent.

Once they're alone, the Lone Ranger grabs Silver by both ears, looks him square in the eye and says, 'Listen very carefully, you deaf and dumb heap of s**t, for the last time.....

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.Out & About

One of the main problems during August is the lack of parking. Several times we have tried to visit our favourite restaurants in the outskirts of Torre Vieja and have had to return because of the lack of parking spaces. It appears that this year more Spanish are holidaying in their own country, which would make it an ideal time to visit places like Madrid if you can tolerate the heat!

Works to the N332 widening continue to press ahead. There are already a number of new roundabouts between Cabo Roig and Pilar de Horadada. It will be interesting to see how the builders will incorporate the existing bridges into the new scheme. Normal holiday traffic encourages one to avoid the N332 traffic at the moment unless you have lots of patience, air con in the car and the kids are gagged in the back!

The Telmicro Saga has caused consternation in the *anglosajóns* circles in the Costa Blanca. There is little else talked about in pubs or gatherings as many people are now ordering new systems and others are hungry for information on the quality and content of the alternatives. I popped up to the new bar at Scampi's where a new system has been installed and watched a complete game when Hull hammered Fulham. Now these are two teams I would not even cross the road to shout abuse at, but being deprived often only encourages the dependence and ways to satisfy it. I sat googoo-eyed, shifting my gaze only very occasionally to quaff several cold lagers from iced glasses – simple pleasures - bliss!

Both of the swimming pools have been excellent this summer. Resident owners tend to use the pools early in the morning when the pool has just been cleaned and the water is perfect. People, or should I say the suntan cream and oil brigade, are the main pool pollutants. People should not only shower before they first go in the pools but should also shower again each time before re-entering the pool. But try telling that to the mums who smear 'little tommy' with factor 20 every time he steps out of the pool. The pool guards have thankfully been quite strict this year and although they have been openly defied on a number of occasions, their presence has been very worthwhile. While researching an article on community fees, I came across a community which fines anyone who breaks any pool or community rules 50 euro.

Another, somewhat extreme I thought, does not allow any sunbathing around the pools and no noise!

The new long promenade in Torre Vieja has nearly been completed. It would look a lot better if the translucent sun-shades were installed. Incidentally members of the Torry council are now demanding additional subsidies from the regional government. The council coffers are reportedly in debt in the region of 100 million euro plus!

OUCH!

You a shudda' up!

Paddy and Mick went to the local branch of Consum one Saturday morning to do the shopping for their wives.

While in the store they were each asked if they would take part in a consumer survey, and maybe by doing so, win a prize.

Three weeks passed and Mick got a letter informing him that he'd won First Prize.... "A Caribbean Cruise!"

Paddy also received a letter, he discovered that he' won the sixth prize "A Gold Plated Toilet Brush."

A couple of months went by and they were again in Consum, when Paddy asked Mick "How did you enjoy the cruise?"

"Oh, me and the wife were over the moon, we've never seen anything like it before, it was so fantastic.....But hey, Paddy, what about yourself?How are you and your wife getting on with the gold plated toilet brush?"

"Oh, not too bad," said Paddy,..... "but the wife thinks we should go back to paper !!!!!"

A bus stops and two Italian men get on. They seat themselves, and engage in an animated conversation. The lady sitting behind them ignores their conversation at first, but her attention is galvanized when she hears one of the men say the following:

"Emma come first. Den I come. Two asses, they come together. I come again. Two asses, they come together again. I come again and pee twice. Then I come once-a more."

"You foul-mouthed swine," retorted the lady indignantly. "In this country we don't talk about our sex lives in public!"

"Hey, coola down lady," said the man. "Imma just tella my friend to 'ow to spella Mississippi."

Spain - A History Part 1

Starting this month and continuing over a number of issues, we will take a casual look at the history of Spain from pre-history to the present times. Hopefully by its completion, you and I will know a lot more about our adoptive country and of the people and events which shaped it to what it is today. I hope you get as much enjoyment reading this as I did in researching it.

In March 2008, Spanish palaeontologists dug up the remains of a 1.2 million-year-old humanlike in northern Spain. This was a significant find as previous discoveries in the peninsula were dated only to around 800,000 years ago – Homo antecessor, was one of our earliest relatives. The Neanderthals are thought to have entered Europe at around 200,000 BC and moved south during the various ice-ages to occupy Spain and Italy; some groups moving back north when the ice receded. Others remained in the Iberian peninsula and their fossils are being regularly discovered throughout Spain, the latest being two weeks ago in Torre Pacheco and dated as 50,000 years ago.

Our own species, Homo sapiens, evolved in Africa and entered Europe about 40,000 years ago – not via the Straits of Gibraltar as one would expect but the long way round through north eastern Africa and south Eastern Europe. The last ice-age pushed tribes south for about four thousand years when both Northern Europe and the British Isles were heavily glaciated and uninhabitable and sought refuge in the warmer climes of Southern Europe. Their arrival in Spain before the last ice-age (20,000 to 16,000 BC) lead to what is known as the Magdalenian Culture which flourished in Northern Spain – around the Altamira, Cantabria and Asturias areas, where rock and cave art flourished and many beautiful examples can still be seen today showing depictions of cold weather animals such as bison, mammoth and woolly rhinoceroses, dating from around 16,000 to 10,000 BC.

When the ice sheets receded the British Isles were unpopulated and one noted historian, Oppenheimer, believes that the principal ancestors of the British and Irish populations arrived from Spain at around 14,000 BC. At this stage both the English Channel and Irish Sea were dry land so they were easily traversed by foot.

Little constructive is known about developments in Spain until around 3,800 BC when a wave of megalithic building spread across Europe and which also ran along the Iberian Atlantic and southern coasts. Circa 2,600 BC there were copper-making cultures in Almería and the Agaric Culture which developed out of the successful mining in the area created a population density which was not matched until the 19th century. The more advanced people in the peninsula at this stage were given the name Iberians and found mainly along the Mediterranean and southern Atlantic coasts. There has been some debate as to whether they were originally related to the Berbers of North Africa but the prevalent view today is that they were indigenous to the area. The western Pyrenees were already occupied by the Basques, arguably the oldest civilisation in Europe. Around 1,200 BC, the Celts drifting southwards through the Pyrenees and occupied the north western and northern areas of Iberia bringing the metal 'iron' with them. The Celt and Iberian population mixed harmoniously in the meseta plains becoming known as the Celtiberians.

Possibly around 1,100 BC the Phoenicians arrived in Iberia where they settled several sites along the south coast. They introduced a similar series of settlements in North Africa which will, we will see in time, bring long lasting consequences to the future Iberian and Roman populations. They choose sites at the mouths of rivers or on off-shore island which would not conflict with the native population. The Phoenicians were of an advanced culture and were great traders who originated from what is now known as Lebanon. Naturally the local indigenous population adapted the ways of their more affluent visitors. However one must remember that the Phoenicians practised human sacrifice and depended heavily on slavery, as did most cultures at that time. The Phoenicians were most interested in the various valuable ores to be mined throughout the south of Iberia and cooperated with the native Iberians to produce massive amounts of precious metals. The Phoenicians were obliged to pay significant taxes to the Assyrians who conquered their homeland but they produced so much silver from the south of Iberia that when shipped abroad, it depressed the price of silver in the Eastern Mediterranean. The Phoenicians founded Cadiz (from the Phoenician for 'fortified place') together with large settlements in Malaca (Málaga), Sexi (Almuñecar) and Abdera (Adra).

Next month - Part 2, Hannibal & the Romans.

The Odd Word

There are a number of mechanical devises which increase sexual arousal, particularly in women. Chief among these is the Mercedes-Benz 380SL convertible. PJ O'Rourke

Love matches are formed by people who pay for a month of honey with a lifetime of vinegar. Countess of Blessington

The worst government is often the most moral. One composed of cynics is often very tolerant and humane. But when fanatics are on top there is no limit to oppression. H.L. Mencken

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Expo Zaragoza

The International Expo has been celebrated this year in Spain's fifth city – Zaragoza.

The Expo aims to raise general awareness of water sustainability and promote better water usage. More than one hundred countries from around the world have been taking part in what has been called the biggest water festival on earth. Oddly both the UK and the US have not participated.

The Expo is made up of 22 pavilions from different countries, each presenting their own unique interpretation of water. Most show different aspects of it in their own country and what they are doing to preserve and save water. Ironically, during the heavy rains before the summer, part of the exhibition was flooded and had to be temporarily shut down. Who said that Mother Nature does not have a sense of humour?

Set within a curve of the Ebro, the only major river in the north of Spain, the Expo also includes other exhibits which include the recreation of a tsunami – *Agua extremas*, and the *Torre de Agua*, which is a tall building which towers over the whole event and has at its centre 'Splash' which is a magnificent sculpture hanging in the centre of the building and resembling large drops of water.

There is also the largest river aquarium in Europe which houses river creatures from five different continents. Some countries have also created market scenes from their own land selling various items, the ones from India and the Yemen being full of treasures and compared to Aladdin's Cave.

Aside from the serious environmental and ecological issues covered at the Expo, there are plenty of fun events for both children and adults. Children can also get a passport which they can get stamped at the various country exhibits. Every day at 2.30 there is a parade by famous Cirque de Soleil Company called 'Waking the Snake' which features acrobats and costumed characters. There are also a number of events throughout the day on the children's stage offering a respite from the hot sun.

Although there is plenty of water everywhere at the Expo, no one takes any notice of the 'no swimming' signs and many of the visitors enjoy a quick dip to cool off!

Unfortunately the queues can be quite daunting. But if you carefully plan your visit, or instead arrive at the exhibition at around 17.00 when most others are departing, you can have a wonderful time as the exhibition does not close until 3 a.m.!

The Expo runs until September 14. For more info., visit www.expozaragoza2008.es

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Confession.

A Mafia Godfather finds out that his bookkeeper has cheated him out of ten million bucks. His bookkeeper is deaf and dumb.

That was the reason he got the job in the first place. It was assumed that a deaf and dumb bookkeeper would not hear anything that he might have to testify about in court.

When the Godfather goes to confront the bookkeeper about his missing \$10 million, he brings along his attorney, who knows sign language.

The Godfather tells the lawyer "Ask him where the ten million bucks he embezzled from me is." The attorney, using sign language, asks the bookkeeper where the money is.

The bookkeeper signs back: "I don't know what you are talking about."

The attorney tells the Godfather: "He says he doesn't know what you're talking about." The Godfather pulls out a pistol, puts it to the bookkeeper's temple and says "Ask him again!"

The attorney signs to the bookkeeper: "He'll kill you if you don't tell him!"

The bookkeeper signs back: "OK! You win! The money is in a brown briefcase, buried behind the shed in my cousin Enzo's backyard in Queens!"

The Godfather asks the attorney: "Well, what'd he say?"

The attorney replies: "He says you don't have the balls to pull the trigger."

Mum

A 67 year old woman decided, against all the advice to have a baby, so she visits a specialist clinic and pays for expensive fertility treatment.

Now that the proud mother has a beautiful baby boy, friends and relatives curious to see the new baby visit her house and are offered tea and cakes.

After quite some time they ask if they can see the child, only to be told that 'you can't see him until he wakes up and cries.'

'We promise not to wake him', they say, 'we just want to see him.'

'Well you can't,' replied the aged mother, 'I have to wait for him to cry so I can find out where I left him!'

(Pat)

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Buffets - the best value!

Although there are now scores of Chinese buffets throughout the Costa Blanca, for me there is one that beats allcomers.

The **Wok Gran Mundo** in Pilar de Horadada is well worth the 15/20 minute drive from this area. What puts the Gran Mundo on top of the pedestal are the staff and the superior range and quality of the food.

The staff here are very friendly, super-efficient and professional. Drinks are brought, plates cleared and tables cleaned quickly and efficiently.

The selection of food on offer is superior and with a much greater choice than that available at other woks. It is rare to find prawns of any type in most woks but Gran Mundo provides two types of cooked prawns in abundance - grilled skewered prawns and deep fried prawns and two types are also available uncooked.

The salad and veg range is also comprehensive and there is often *tofu* available for those weird 'veggie' types, with plenty of fish and meat choices for normal people. There is also always plenty of roast duck with accompanying pancakes and the staff are very quick to replace any empty food containers. Just ask. Next to the dessert counter, which displays a large range of prepared fruit, there is some *sushi* available. The green sauce in a bowl is *wasabi* (not for girls!) and there is also shaved pickled horseradish, both delicious and guaranteed to clear your sinuses. The house wines are priced fairly at €5.45 but for another €2 you can get a bottle of Señorío de Roble, a good wine from nearby Jumilla. Adults €9.50, Kids €6.95 and children under 3 - free.

One disappointing aspect of life on the Costa Blanca for me has been the poor quality of Indian restaurants in the area. The meat portions are generally tiny and the sauces they produce should make the cooks hang their heads in shame. Fortunately 'She - who must be obeyed' is a good cook and makes a spicy curry that would shrivel the testicles of a Russian weightlifter. So we were very pleased to discover that **Indiana Cuisine** (965352901/687248213) in Pilar de Horadada keeps the flag of good quality Indian or Pak/Indian food proudly flying. Although we have enjoyed many good evening meals there, today I am reporting on their buffet, which is served every lunchtime including Sundays and at around €9.95 it is superb value. This price does not cover any drinks.

Do not arrive too early, say at 12 or 1, because the chances are there will be no food on the buffet table! The food is cooked when people arrive, so relax, have a beer, a dry martini or a papadum and the helpful staff headed by Bablu will tell you when the starters are ready. Onion bhajis, large lamb and vegetable samosas (sumptuous) and great chunks of juicy tandoori chicken await your delectation together with a virtual mountain of papadums, tomatoes, cucumber and lettuce! Gradually the main course dishes will be added to the selection. These are mainly chicken cooked freshly in a variety of sauces - tikka massalla, korma, madras, etc., and occasionally a lamb dish. There will also be a vegetable curry, Bombay potatoes, rice and a number of different types of nans. If anything runs short do ask the charming and helpful Bablu who will 'rustle' more up!

The Indiana is easy to find. Take the N332 to Pilar and turn right into the town at the Carrefour Express and keep going straight into the town for about 300 metres and it is on your left-hand side on a corner. There is ample parking behind the restaurant.

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What are a woman's four favorite animals?

A jaguar in the garage, a mink in the closet, a tiger in the bed, and a jackass to pay for it all.

Notes from La Casita

All the regular classes and events continue to take place in La Casita throughout the summer months. Notices have been put out to advertise a new evening event to play the card game 'Kalooki'. This will take place on Mondays, starting on Monday 15th September. Some of you may already know the game and we hope that you will come along to help teach it to the novices.

Some interest has been shown in the other proposed new events - Yoga, Pilates, and English as a foreign language. Keep an eye on the notice boards for more details and contact numbers to phone.

Joyce Sinclair is arranging social conversation evenings hopefully with both English and Spanish people present to chat and help each other informally. Many of us have been to Spanish lessons, have reached a certain level and feel that because of the English speaking community around us we do not get enough Spanish conversation practise. Now is our opportunity to overcome this.

Petanca.

As the warm weather continues, we are still playing from our late start time. We start at 5.00p.m. and play until about 7.00p.m. If you wish to play, please arrive by 10 minutes to 5 in order to draw for teams.

MN

Dialogue.

Are you interested in joining a group of Spanish and English-speaking people who will meet to practise and improve what they have learned in language lessons? This would be an opportunity for the Spanish and English-speaking neighbours to get together and talk, chat and socialise to the mutual benefit of all.

Venue: La Casita

Cost: Just one euro

Frequency: One evening per week, probably starting in October.

Cooperative, democratic and mutually beneficial!

Perhaps you have some Spanish friends or neighbours who would be interested, - or if you have any ideas on the proposal why not contact me, Joyce Sinclair on 966 799 544.

Likely Story!

Once a woman was in labour; she was having a really tough time dealing with the pain. The doctor came to her husband and her and told them of a new experimental psychotransference drug that allows the woman to transfer 25% of the pain to the father. The husband feels really bad for his wife so he decides they will try it.

The wife takes the pill and a few minutes later the husband says, "I don't feel a thing. You women are babies. Take another pill I can handle this." So the wife takes another pill. Something happens. Her husband tells her to take another pill. Same thing. By now she has transferred 75% of her pain to her husband. She is feeling a little pain but her husband is still feeling nothing. He is convinced that women are complete wuses. He tells her, "Take another pill. This isn't hurting me at all. Let me take all the pain away." So she does. Now they are both feeling great.

A few hours later, the wife gives birth to a beautiful baby boy.

The next day they take their newborn son home, and there they find the postman dead on the doorstep.

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