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20081120 – Escape From The Frozen Wasteland

We're Lanzarote bound for 2 weeks. That's the good news, the bad news is we're flying with Monarch – allegedly the worst British airline. Anyway I've been practising reading with my kneecaps in my mouth, ready for the cramped seats.

I spread some honey on my kneecaps and set off with the view that if we get there before the midday tomorrow it'll be a miracle.

Oh yea cynic of little faith. No queues at check in; take off more or less on time; good legroom; modern and clean plane; pleasant aircrew; and we arrive early. Great flight.

Arrive in the dark. Pick up the manual rental car and do battle with the pudding stirrer in the middle of the car and that bloody third peddle – it's archaic, might as well advance and retard the spark and provide a man with a red flag. Oh and the car's a Renault Clitoris, surprisingly roomy.

Miraculously find the apartment without getting lost.

Apartment is very pleasant, modern and clean if somewhat sparse, but at least the WiFi and Satellite TV works.

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20081121 – Oh No Not Another Supermarket

Wake up to a sunny morning and about 23c. Apartment is on a small estate around the pools. We have a 1st floor apartment South facing with pool and sea views.

Find the obligatory supermarket. Fortunately it has a pleasant cafe outside so I have to sit in the sun with a book and a coffee – thankfully. When we come to pay they need to see our passport even though they have chip and pin – bloody 3rd world country. We're ready to walk off and leave them with the trolley full of food, but it will mean another 2 hours so we go to the bank and get some more cash – unbelievable.

Choice of wine is dire. They've only got Spanish plonk – rough and ready. Anyway I give a Rioja a last chance.

Driving over here is a nightmare the signs and road layouts are so poor and counter intuitive.

At least the Rioja is up to its usual standard – bloody awful.

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20081122 – Puerto Del Carmen (Blackpool)

A warm sunny day with some clouds. We set off for a walk down the front all the way from Matagorda to the harbour at Puerto Del Carmen – well that's the goal. Despite much moaning from Wendy and at one stage a good impression of a donkey refusing to go any further, we finally make it to the harbour. Must be about 5 miles so now we have 5 miles back.

Good news is you can walk all the way along the front, bad news is that PDC is full of English bars; Worthing E; Live football; big screen come dancing and X Factor (whatever happened to Only Fools And Horses). And of course they're digging up the main road. Pavements here are of the classical Spanish school of architecture – unfinished, falling to pieces and of course full of piles of waste cement.

Overall a good 5 hour walk and we've explored the coastline.

Thankfully we're staying in Matagorda, which is very pleasant and not so spoilt.

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20081123 – Lava Fields

A sunny day with clouds and temperature is about 22c. We set off to visit the Volcano, drive through lava fields to the visitors centre. Interesting video on the island and the volcanoes, but in typical Spanish fashion its half cocked – do they ever think it through? Bear in mind the majority of the people there were English with a smattering of Germans and some Spanish. The First film has multi-lingual sub titles – now there's a bit of sense. The second longer film needs headphones, on sale at the shop, mind you they don't tell you that until the film has started – so everyone watches the film in silence and their money making racket failed. Mind you the whole film and interesting visitors centre was free.

We then set off to go up the volcano, it's so well sign posted we miss the turning completely. By now its become a bit overcast so we leave this for another day. Instead we call at El Golfo, a small village with some stunning rock formations and a green pond! They really isn't that much on this Island so they have to make the best of what they've got.

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20081124 – Northern Island

We meet up with Kevin and Anne at Costa Teguisse and set off to explore the North of the Island. Thankfully they've been here before so they are our guides for the day.

First stop is Jameos Del Agua which is an intriguing cave formed by the volcanic eruptions, complete with Albino crabs, beautiful pool, gardens and vistas with interesting displays in the museum. A lot of the gardens and pool have been created by Cesar Manrique (CM), more of him later, as his influence is everywhere.

Sorry no photos on this blog as someone forgot to pack the card reader.

Then we drive up to the Northern tip of the island to Mirador Del Rio which is another CM creation of a unique cafe with a fantastic view over the small island of Graciosa. A sheer drop down to the sea. Quick lunch and tea (I've given up trying to drink the local coffee it's a lot like Arabic coffee but gritty and worse) and then it's off down the Island with some fantastic views to Nazaret. Where hidden up a side road is an impressive house designed by this CM geezer for Omar Sharif – who apparently lost it in a game of cards before he even moved in – c'est la vie.

We then go to CM's house which is incredible. Basically he has built a house underground, in the middle of a lava field, and the rooms are formed out of caves / bubbles created by the lava. It's very impressive and even has an underground pool. The house also has some stunning views across a lava field and as CM is dead is now the CM Foundation. It also hosts a load of his pictures, unlike his architecture and mobiles, they do nothing for me.

Then it's back to Matagorda for bread and cheese and wine. Unfortunately neither the bread, cheese or wine are a patch on the French version.

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20081125 – The Volcano

Another warm sunny day so we're off to Timanfaya National Park to the volcano. Hopefully this time we'll find it.

Interesting demo of how hot the ground is at the top, just 3 feet below ground and brush wood catches fire – saves on the old matches. Then they pour some water down holes to have a burst of steam / water emerge 3 seconds later, this is followed by a bus tour around the volcano and then of course the obligatory merchandising opportunity – yet more tat.

The roads are a complete mystery. Road signs are either non-existent or distinctly misleading.

Then it's back to the apartment for a bit of sun and a read.

Oh how we miss Belthorn!

20081126 – Lazy Day

Glorious sunny day so we have a lazy day around pool and balcony.

Time to give some comments on Lanzarote in general.

Good points:

It's hot and sunny.

Petrol is cheap – E0.75.

Good taxis – no Ladas or Datsuns.

It's making us appreciate France more.

Not so Good:

Spanish beer is full of E numbers and the best that can be said about it is that it's wet. With the number of chemicals it is probably good for cleaning toilets.

There coffee is awful. Supermarket choice is very limited. We have no coffee machine and they don't sell proper coffee bags or plastic filters. But never mind the intrepid caravanner came up with a solution, the wisdom of which I will impart to my children in case they are ever in such a desparater situation. Take a 1 litre plastic water bottle and cut off the top about 3 inches below the top. You now have the basics of a cup top filter. Buy some filter papers and ground coffee, invert plastic top over cup, insert filter paper and coffee, pour on hot water and you're away.

Supermarkets are very basic and they have not yet got to grips with credit cards never mind chip and pin.

Food is expensive compared to France and UK.

Unlike France there are no bakers, delicatessens or wine shops, they've probably all been squeezed out by grot shops and English pubs.

If you want to give up drinking wine then this is the place to come. They only tend to sell Spanish and Lanzarote plonk – I've yet to find a good one. It's certainly put me off drinking wine.

Late afternoon we set off for a stroll along the front with the Wallace Arnold crew (worrying isn't it) – although to be fair there are quite a lot of younger people here. Great news we find an authentic German Konditori, full of Germans and all signs in German, but best of all it sells draught Konig Pilsner, a proper beer; served in a proper glass; no chemicals and brewed to the Reinheits Gebot. And unlike our aborted trip to a Spanish cafe it was served within minutes. The highlight of the week at this place is Thursday evening when they have a cards evening and everyone comes to drink and play cards. We'll definitely be back.

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20081127 – Wot No Footpaths

Another hot sunny day to start with although the BBC forecast says rain.

We returning the car today as there is so little left to see it hardly seems worth keeping it for a 2nd week.

First it's off to the supermarket for our last big shop. Then after lunch we drive back to the airport to drop the car off. The airports only about a mile away as the crow flies and there is a footpath all along the front so my aim is to have a pleasant walk back. Doing my bit to reduce my carbon footprint. But it is not to be, the only way to get to the seafront is either to run across the runway and climb a 6 foot barbed wire fence; catch a bus to playa Honduras and then walk back; walk down the motorway – not advisable with the way they drive over here.

We decide to catch a bus to Playa Honduras and walk back from there, but give up after 20 minutes, just like the waiters the buses don't bother. By now the clouds are looking formidable so it's a taxi back.

Well the BBC did get the forecast right it spotted with rain for about 5 minutes.

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20081128 – I'm Too Young Get Me Out of Here

Clear blue sky and hot. Today's objective is to walk down the coast to Playa Honda and back.

Well we achieve our goal in about 4 hours, despite several go slows from Wendy, and as a reward we go to the German cafe for some proper beer. Sat there drinking a quality beer watching the Wallace Arnolds shuffle by makes you think. What are we doing here? British bars are offering Barrow Versus Brentford on the big screen tonight; tomorrow strictly come dancing. Time for another German beer (how decadent can you get drinking in the afternoon), time for a proper holiday, skiing!

I've made my mind up no more Holidays to the Med, instead we should go on a longer skiing holiday and stick with the caravan in France. I really can't see us venturing to Spain with the caravan, I'm sure it will be a total waste of diesel.

By the way I may have mislead you into believing that Rioja is the worst wine in the world. Well I can assure you it's not, the local Lanzarote wine beats it by a mile.

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20081129 – Beggars Paradise

Cloudy but warm so we set off to visit Arrecife, the capital. We were going to bus in and walk back to Matagorda but being so overcast we just caught the bus.

Well what can you say about it? Not really a lot. The Lanzarote marathon was on so you would have thought it would have been teeming with folk and judging by the number of runners we saw there must have only been 20 people running.

The town was all very seedy and more beggars than you could shake a stick at. To give you an idea of how bad it was, Blackburn is better! On the positive side we did find a patisserie.

So its a bus back to the apartment for a read.

Pavements in Lanzarote continue to amaze me. The amount of excess cement that's been slapped on them, rather than anybody clearing up, it ends up like a major hill walk going up and down the concrete lumps. Lamposts are also unbelievable, I defy anyone to find one that isn't held together by white tape.

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20081130 – The Roar Of The Crowd And The Smell Of Chips

Cloudy morning but the sun comes out in full force after lunch.

After lounging around we go for a walk down the front to race the Wallace Arnold shufflers and pop into the German cafe for a decent beer and a hot chocolate for Wendy. Walking back you get a distinct feeling of pride as you appreciate what the British Empire has given to the world, yes it's the roar of the crowd from Football games being played in every bar and the smell of chips.

Whilst we're on the subject of gifts to the world lets contemplate the multi-blade razor. When they first launched to dual blade razor you could almost believe that there was some sense in it. Then the 3 blade was launched who would believe it. Surely it would end there. No one would be daft enough to launch a 4 blade. Well they did and I got one given me free. A good job really when you see the price of these things. Well what a load of crap, they cost a fortune; they clog up; totally useless after one shave. Who buys these things? The good old single blade razor costs a fraction, doesn't clog up and can give you as close a shave as you want.

So how long before the 5 blade, or what about the ultimate infinity mobius blade razor.

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