

Impressions from Spain

By Plamena

Our journey to Spain for the project CLIL as a bridge to a real life English and our stay there was one of the most amazing and unique experiences which I will remember forever. I never imagined that me, Valeria and Zornitsa with three teachers would be in a country which has completely different culture from ours and where we would have only great and hilarious moments.



The real emotions began when we landed in the airport in Madrid.

We didn't have much time to look around the city because we had to take a bus to Cordoba but the one thing that impressed me the most there was the scene around me. On the one hand, there was the nature which was so different from ours in Bulgaria and while we were travelling to Cordoba I could see the hundreds trees that have been planted. The fact that the Spanish take care of their environment really had an impact on my feelings towards the people. On the other hand, another thing that I managed to notice was the magnificent infrastructure that they had – the streets and the highways were all well-maintained and that's the reason why we didn't have any problems while traveling by bus.



After we arrived to Cordoba the time went fast. First of all, we met our host families that were with the teacher of the Spanish participants in the project. After a small talk with them, we agreed that every family should give to one of our teachers a lift to the village Villaviciosa de Córdoba where we had to stay for a week.

We travelled for about forty minutes when we finally reached our final destination. We first stopped by Sierra Morena, which was the place where our teachers had to stay. I saw Valeria and Zornitsa for the last time this day and said my goodbye with them and the teachers before I would go to the house of my project partner whose name is Jose.

We finally arrived to his place where I met his whole family which seemed very friendly and kind. They showed me my room, then we had dinner and they left me to have a rest because of the long day I had.



On the other day all of the students from the project gathered together at the Spanish school. The building inside was absolutely impressive – the walls were covered with many posters, which were made for subjects like biology, geography, English, and there were a lot of pictures on them; some handmade figures of people were located on the walls resembling alpinists trying to reach the summit of the wall. In the middle of the school there was an enormous tree or vine, that could be seen from all floors and which was made from carton, recycled paper and duct tape. All the students looked so happy to be in this place, they greeted us with songs and I had the pleasure to meet people from Greece, Italy, Poland, Turkey and Slovakia, as well. The teachers counted their students so as to be sure that everybody was here and

they told us that we had to go to the library of the village where we had to show our presentations of the countries, which we had made in advance.

While we were walking to the library we had time to look around the village. Every house was painted white and on the walls of some buildings there were pots with flowers; there wasn't anything special about the streets which



only had small pavements and there was no place for even two cars on the road. I could see a lot of terraced houses there, which gave me the impression of a huge manor with a great number of entrance doors. On every street there was a great variety of plants, especially

tangerine trees which made the place so beautiful that I thought I was seeing Heaven.

After ten minutes we were already in the library – a spacious hall with a



stage and a screen on it in front of a number of chairs. We all sat down and started presenting our countries. The things there which drew my attention were the Spanish dances that the project participants showed – at first, a modern one and then a traditional one, flamenco.

All the presentations were shown and then everybody had lunch at the library and after that the Spanish teachers led us to the olive oil factory in the village. I was surprised by the fact that there was industrial production there and was very



well-developed. One of the teachers informed us about the whole process, every step of making olive oil – how they grind the olives and extract the oil by mechanical or chemical means. The people who work there showed us even the place where the stones from the olives are located, where

the finished olive oil was kept before it was given to the market.

Another destination was the wine cellar located in the outskirts of the village. I was so happy that we had the opportunity to learn how the wine (especially white wine) was actually made there. I got the chance to even have a

sip of a newly-made one (which actually had the same taste as every kind of alcohol).

We didn't have enough time to stay at the wine cellar for longer and we headed for the town hall where we had a meeting with the mayor of the village. On our way there I had a great view to the nature that surrounded us. I was so interested in the circular shape of the crowns of the trees, we also saw fallen fir cones which had large size and that's the reason why we decided to take one for home.

Our walk to the Town Hall wasn't too long. When we went into the building we were shown the way to a medium-sized room. The mayor, along with some of his assistants, greeted us and gave a long speech, expressing their sincere gratitude towards us visiting their village and participating in the project. One of the Spanish teachers translated everything the mayor said and after half an hour when the meeting was over we even received some presents. With this we finished all the activities for day one.



On the second day of the project we travelled by bus to Cordoba. Firstly, we visited the Mosque–Cathedral of Córdoba. We learned that it was built by the time of the Moors as the second largest mosque in the world and the most significant sight of the Umayyad in Cordoba. After the Spanish reconquest the mosque was renovated into a catholic church. Even later some of the Islamic arches and pillars were removed and

the church was made a basilica in early baroque style. The architecture of this monument created such unique ambience and I felt as if I lived through different eras in that exact moment. We managed to go inside and be witnesses to the building's beauty there – the painted ceilings in Christian style and the organ of the cathedral which had a magnificent contrast between black, white and gold. After the mosque we had a walk through the Jewish Quarter where the small streets and the flower pots on the walls made the place magnetic. The story that the tour guide told us about this quarter was very interesting and the view from these streets to the mosque was stunning. The last destination we saw was the Christian Alcazar where we had the opportunity to take a lot of pictures of the beautiful gardens surrounding the fortress.



The third day we spent in Seville – a city which I always wanted to see. The first place of the schedule we had to visit was Real Alcazar or also called the royal palace of Seville. This fortress is maybe one of the most

impressive sights in the city. It was first built by the Moors in 10th century, and later was renovated into a royal residence and is still to that day. Again, the things that captured my attention the most were the gardens, the small pavilion structures with the small monuments and, of course, the enormous fountains. Inside the fortress was also pretty, although I am not a type of person who enjoys seeing empty rooms with no evidence that there were people who had lived in them before. The most interesting part of the day was when all the students from the project had lunch at the most beautiful square of Seville - Plaza de



España. It is located in the end of the park Maria Luisa and is actually new. I was amazed not only by the immense sizes of the building, but also in the way that there were drawn all the provinces of Spain with their coat of arms. After the lunch we had time to go around the city and we chose to see The Catedral de Santa María de la Sede which is one of

the most impressive cathedrals I have ever seen. It is also the third largest cathedral in the world so that's the reason why I wanted to see it. I was almost shocked to hear that despite the huge size, it was being built for almost one hundred years and it was finished in the 16th century. Inside the building I had the feeling that it has even bigger size than it looks outside. What drew my attention there, though, were the small porcelain figures. Even though we had enough time to spend on looking other sights we soon had to gather with the whole group so we can go back to the village.



The fourth day was full of songs and interesting talks with the Spanish students

because we had a ten kilometer hiking in the outskirts of the village. Although the hiking was tiring, we got to see the unique nature there – the surrounding mountains, the trees and the different kinds of plants, some of which I had not seen before. When the hiking was over we went to the school where we ate a traditional Spanish meal – paella (rice with seafood and some kind of meat). After the lunch we headed to the library where we presented one of the pictures we had taken in order to participate in the photographic contest “Bridges among cultures”. Everyone showed great pictures and I was genuinely happy when Valeria from our group won the prize. In this way, we, the Bulgarians, showed how much ambitious and diligent we are.

Day five was much calmer than the others as the people from the village were celebrating the festivity of “Tomillos” – the only day, when it’s permitted for adults and children to light up a fire on the streets with a special plant called Tomillos. The time flew so fast and in the evening we had a great time with the families of our project partners.



In conclusion, I am extremely grateful for this adventure we had in Spain. Even if it is only the beginning of this project, I am very happy that I got the opportunity to take part in it and to practice my English by talking with foreign people. I am also grateful that the project provided me with the chance to see all these monuments that have a special meaning for the Spanish people and other nations, the stunning Alcazars with their enchanting gardens and interesting architecture which made me esteem all kinds of art.