

Friday, April 20 & Saturday, April 21

We had a flight going out about 7 PM on British air. Richard was paranoid that they could lose our luggage or not get us on the plane, as the check-in line was quite slow. Fortunately it all worked out and the flight attendants had those lovely British accents.

The flight was mostly uneventful, and although we were in coach, we had 2 isolated seats with a little room between us and the window, giving us a sense of space and comfort. We both opted for Ambien. The net result for each of us was about 4 solid hours of sleep and the illusion of feeling rested coming into Heathrow.

One thing we clearly discovered is leaving at night is the way to go, as one tends to find sleep one way or the other, making jetlag a bit easier. It also makes arrival at your final destination a bit later in the day, leaving you only to get settled in and have dinner and go to bed.

About 3.5 hours at Heathrow, switching terminals, and then a flight to Lisbon about 3:30 PM, arriving about 6:30 PM. Our taxi driver, Manuel, was quite gracious with a Portuguese language lesson, although we learn subsequently that he likely charged us double for the fare. I guess the lesson was not free.

We stayed at the **Eurostars Museum Hotel**, not cheap, but welcomed after a long journey. We ran out of steam and simply went down to the hotel restaurant to receive our 2 free drinks, red wine for Richard and white wine for Louisa, as well as a small snack and then bedtime. Snacks comprised a salty but savory fish soup and a salad with local tuna.

Sunday, April 22

We slept through our alarm, set for 6:30 AM but turned off. We woke up subsequently at 8:15 AM, a bit in a panic, but still managed to take our showers in the most amazing bath-shower in the world. It was "tricked out" with 3 types of water spigots, but simple in design and full of good pressure and heat.

The world's best shower was followed by the world's best breakfast. We really were floored by the buffet breakfast included in our stay. There were many kinds of smoked fish, delicate pastries, fresh fruit, fresh squeezed juice, champagne, etc. In short we were slack-jawed.



We wished we had more time, but our front desk clerk, Joao, informed us gently of our taxi's arrival. We were taken to the Santa Apolonia train station, a bit run-down with its residue of homelessness, for our train to Porto. A bit of a traveling adventure for us. We panicked thinking we had only one ticket; we didn't understand which train car to board; and we were oblivious that we had to change trains at Oriente Station, 15 minutes into our journey.

Nonetheless we figured it all out, partly with the help of an Asian-Indian acupuncturist who had been living in Portugal for 40 years, Balkrishna. We traveled first class, and the extra cost seem to be well worth it.

We arrived in Porto about 1 PM and took a taxi to our Airbnb, where we met Walter, one of our Portuguese hosts. His English was choppy but earnest, and he admitted to a stroke years ago putting him out of the workforce. Our Airbnb was quite charming, incredible view of the Douro River... but a bit funky getting into the loft bedroom with steep stairs that alternated right and left.

We have never seen stairs like that before, and probably never will again. The kitchen was well-enough appointed, for simple stuff.



We managed to mobilize down to the waterfront, intuitively found below us, and take the river taxi to the other side. We were staying in the Cais de Ribeira, just west of the walking bridge, **Ponte Luis I**.

We took the river taxi across the Douro River and found a cute Portuguese restaurant called **Rabelos**, river-banked with a sweeping second-floor view. Our waiter was quite gracious, but added €7.50 to our check for a sweet bread and cheese interlude that we never asked for. Never mind, it was delicious... we found out a few days later that this was typical for Portuguese restaurants, not a private conspiracy. We also re-discovered sangria, a drink gone dormant since our trip to Andalusia last year:



We walked west along the south bank of the Douro River, almost reaching the Atlantic Ocean. We turned around at the BMW dealership at the mouth of the river. There was actually a public laundry built on the banks of the river, not out of something cute but likely out of necessity.

We managed to get home in time to find the local supermarket (Minipreco), which closed by 8 PM. **GPS was invaluable**, and proved strong despite winding narrow streets in the old part of town. We established a pattern of eating a late dinner, usually salad, having had a big lunch at a restaurant within the day.

We ate salad at home, and watched Netflix ("Retribution") negotiating our steps to the loft that night. The night view of the Douro River from our penthouse apartment:



Monday, April 23

We woke up fairly rested. We had a light breakfast at home, and then resolved to stay on this side of the Douro River. We decided not to navigate with GPS or maps and instead intuited our way down and to the right to reach the riverbank. This worked fairly well but we did dip below the Crystal Palace which might have been an interesting place to visit. An incongruous piece of street art in Porto:



We happened upon a fun collection of antique type stores called "**Armazem**" that had been written up in the New York Times as a place to visit with only 36 hours in Porto. Lots of fun but nothing we really needed and nothing terribly portable.

The weather was fairly warm, but not too hot, and quite sunny. We braided our way around the adjacent tram tracks towards the Atlantic coast. Richard had a sore left forefoot - for unclear reasons - and this limited his mobility a bit, actually for the entire trip. Nonetheless we accumulated another 19,000 steps today. The view looking back towards the Douro River:



We found a simple lunch near the river, a place that was a combination of hip-hop dancing and outdoor café.

We stopped at various places along the way, as the riverbank gave way to sandy beaches and the path opened up to the Atlantic Ocean. The area also became more clearly dotted with waterfront condominiums and an upscale look. Eventually we encountered a fluid woven mass that was meant to represent a giant anemone (*She Changes - Anémoma*), according to an articulate young Venezuelan girl who had emigrated to Portugal just a year ago. <http://www.echelman.com/project/she-changes/>



We meandered to the above-ground metro station in **Matosinhos Sul**, fairly crowded as there was a soccer match animating the city that evening. We had been recommended to try a seafood restaurant in Matosinhos, but alas, we were not yet hungry on our arrival.

After a quick stop at a bakery, we found a large grocery store just before the metro station. In addition to new red wine for Richard, we also got some "take away" food consisting of fried cod fish and fried shrimp croquets, adding much needed protein to our home salad meal that evening.

We took the metro (blue line) all the way into town and then switched to the yellow line to Sao Bento Metro station, less than a mile from our home.

We met interesting people along the way on our metro ride, including a young man from Nepal who was trying to get to New York where his wife had a green card. We also met a retired RCMP officer who was vacationing with his wife and sister, communicating partly in French with them, which was fun.

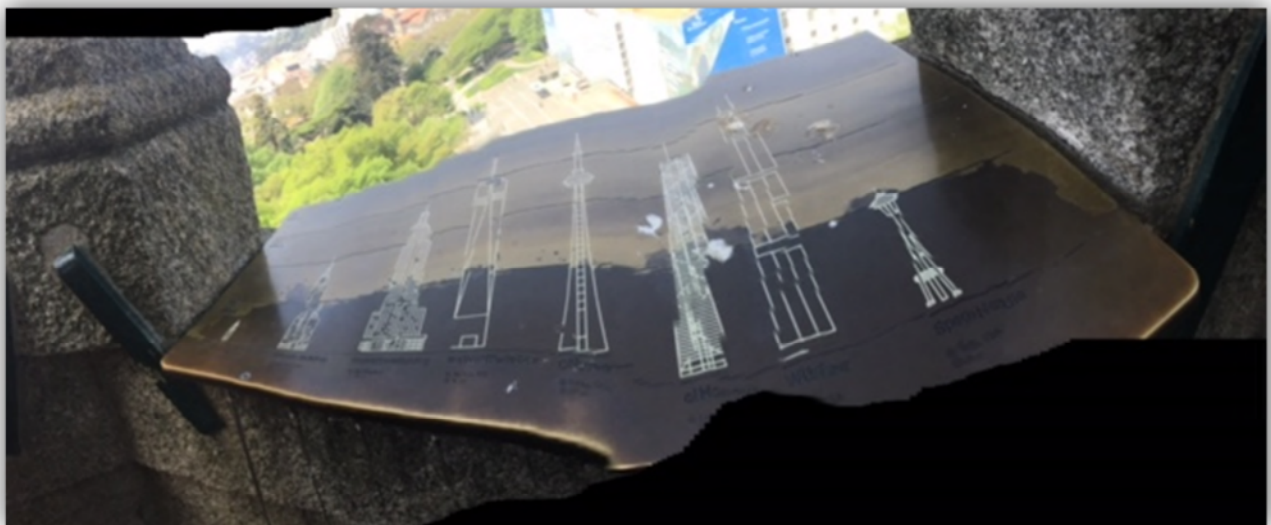
Home again with salad with our "takeaway" food and an evening of Netflix. This was a good routine for us.

Tuesday, April 24

This was a local walking day, seeing sites that Louisa had read about and filtered for us. We were indeed very centrally located, in the Sao Bento neighborhood. We walked away from the direction of the river and soon reached a famous church tower which we climbed. The church itself was baroque, not grand but quite ornate. The climb up to the tower gave us quite the view of the city.



The top of the tower also gave interesting factoids, putting the tower into perspective. They actually mentioned the **Seattle Space Needle** (far right below) and Richard did a panoramic view, which contained cubist distortions:



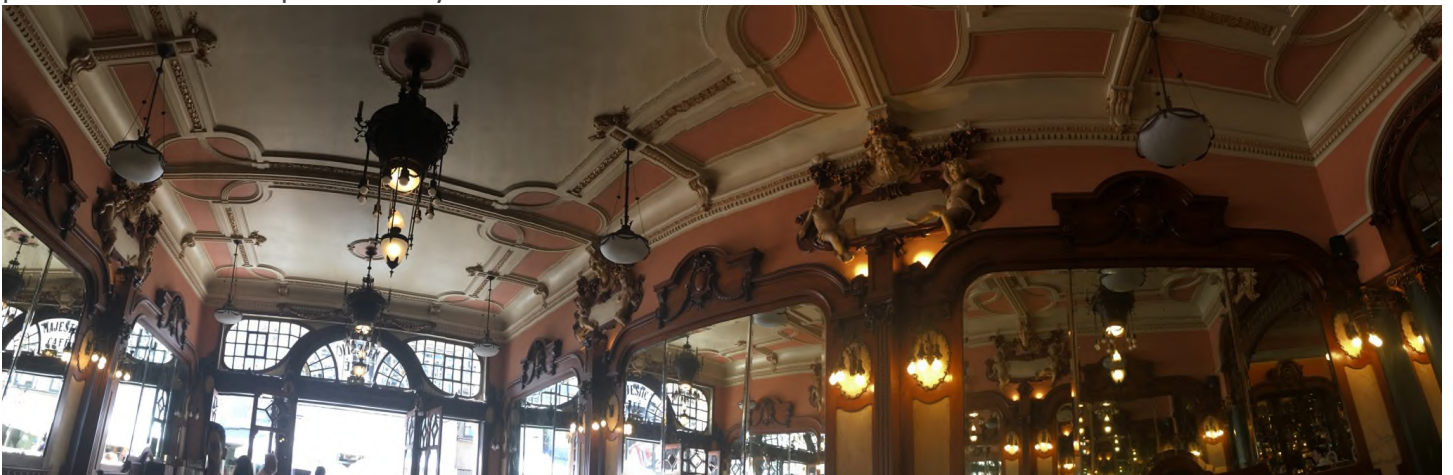
Richard was increasingly obsessed with panoramic picture-taking on his iPhone, a skill recently learned from Karyn's visit to Seattle. Here is a touristic sardine store, beautifully laid out:



We then did a little shopping, winding our way towards the open air market which was a bit of a disappointment, with a number of stalls not filled. Perhaps we came too late in the day or perhaps it is more busy on the weekend? We did manage to buy shoes (Portuguese Arcopedicos), one pair for each of us.

We had lunch at a nice outdoor café, a mix between the Porto working lunch crowd and some tourists. More walking around, Richard trying to find a recharger for his FitBit, which was futile but not that important.

We were in a nice shopping part of Porto, a section where they had closed off cars to pedestrian traffic only. We managed to walk to the **Majestic Café**, known since the 1920s as a meeting place for intellectuals, with its art nouveau style that has remained in remarkably good shape. Richard once again exercised his panoramic skills to capture the style of this café:



For our last stop on our GPS, we visited a famous book store, **Livraria Lello**, that had inspired JK Rawlings for the stairs and other features at Hogwarts. This Harry Potter connection created a certain tasteful kitch for the bookstore:



We got to our little apartment about 7 PM and resolved not to go out for the evening. To do this, Richard again tried to find "Takeaway" food and on his fourth attempt, he found a local restaurant willing to sell octopus salad and a steak dish.

We settled into watching Netflix, a series called *Wild Wild Country* about the Rajneesh commune in Oregon. We went to sleep at a decent time, our last ascent up the funky loft stairs. Next morning we were ready to go back to Lisbon.

Wednesday, April 25

We figured out Uber fairly easily to go to the train station, opting for the station that was further from our apartment but not requiring a train change.

The journey was uneventful until **Santa Apolonia station** in Lisbon. We were a bit anxious because our three-bedroom condo on Airbnb from the street view on Google maps looked pretty run down and full of graffiti. Turns out this was a photo from before a probable recent renovation.

Once we got to the train station, things got fairly chaotic. Our taxi driver appeared fairly gruff and overwhelmed from the start. He was not happy that we needed only a short ride within the **Alfamo**, the oldest neighborhood in Lisbon. Richard had the sense that the driver wanted a longer car fare. The neighborhood also had small and narrow streets, some under construction and others off-limits to most motorized vehicles except electric tuk-tuks.



Exasperated, our driver did not map our Airbnb location (**25 Rua Guilherme Braga, Lisboa 1100**) and instead dropped us off next to a bank of electric tuk-tuks, without explanation. His English was on par with our collective Portuguese. Richard was upset, paying 5 euros for a useless ride and unclear how to proceed. A young tuk-tuk driver named Ricardo tried to help out, but Richard was pretty impatient at this time and perceived that we were being upsold a fancy tour of town. Alas, Ricardo took the fare and Richard tried to patch things up with him.

Unfortunately, Richard and Louisa we are at odds for the rest of the day, for complex reasons not worth putting on paper. Suffice to say we patched things up over the next 24 hours... We did not leave the apartment again that day, eating peanuts-in-the-shell, dried fruit and almonds, going to bed early.

The apartment was amazing, truly a great find. 3 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, a balcony overlooking the city... smack dab in the Alfama district with its charm and history.

Thursday, April 26

We awoke to a sunny day in Lisboa, the house only containing a Nespresso machine for breakfast. The above map shows the train station from yesterday, how are accommodations, and where we had our late breakfast, with a stunning view of the city and the harbor (**Restaurante Portas do Sol**). Richard bonded with a sorrowful musician here, who was able to sing in English better than he was able to speak:



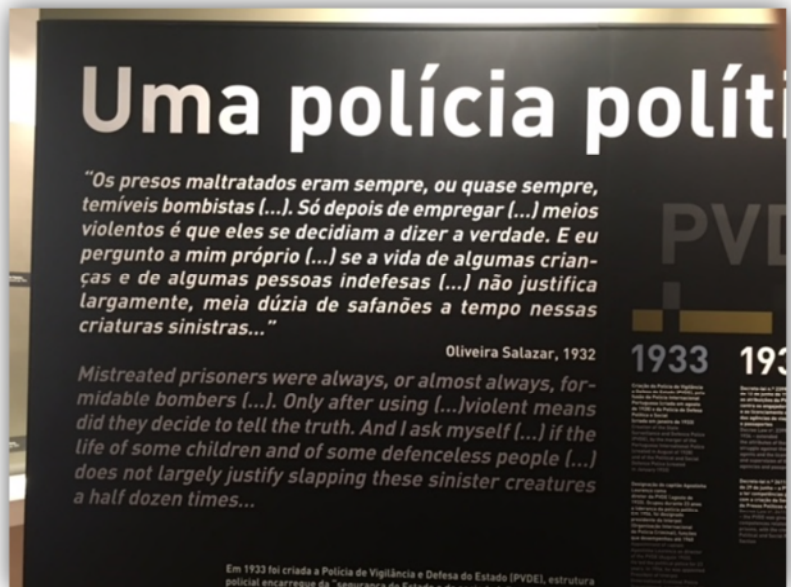
We then visited the Lisboa cathedral (*Sé de Lisboa*), a short walking distance away, started in the mid-12th-century and added to over several centuries, including an 17th-century sacristy. Like many things in Lisbon it had suffered damage from the earthquake of 1755. We somehow were not able to access the cloister adjacent to the church.

We did not venture far from our neighborhood, although we managed to accumulate over 3 miles for the day. We had a simple lunch in the shadow of the cathedral. In the late afternoon we visited the Museum of Resistance (**Museum Aljube**), one of the highlights of our trip. It was very well organized, sufficiently accessible in English, and it tried to capture the terror and misery over 50 years. Here is a paraphrasing of the Google translation from the website:

The Permanent Exhibition of the Museum presents the Portuguese dictatorial regime (1926-1974), their means of oppression over the population (through Censorship and repressive action by police and political tribunals), the means of opposition, semi-legal and clandestine, and the anti-colonial struggle that induced the military to overthrow the regime by military coup in 1974.

Some photos of the exhibit are shown here, with a quote from the major dictator of that time, Oliveira Salazar, shown to the right.

We managed to find a local grocery store with a fruitstand and an adjacent store with a bit more upscale wine selection. That made for our dinner that night, eating a simple salad at home.



Friday, April 27

We woke up today to sunny weather in Lisbon. Matthew and Terry were scheduled to be at the Airbnb by noon and Richard put his travel guitar out on our bedroom window to notify them of our location. The Airbnb was really hard to reach by car and we had to learn to instruct taxi drivers to go to the street above, and then be prepared to walk down the stairs. The view from the top of the stairs is shown to the right.

We had a wonderful reunion together, although Terry got locked in the bathroom because the door knob was missing. We had reserved the master bedroom for M&T as there was a long tradition of R&L getting the better hotel rooms on previous trips.

Despite their jet lag and fatigue, Matthew and Terry were ready for the day, and we headed to the **Castle of St. George**, a medium walk from our Airbnb.

We had a lovely outdoor lunch just next to the castle, believing we were sitting at one restaurant and finding out we were actually sitting at another. No matter, the food seemed authentic and cheap, and the waitstaff quite friendly despite our language barriers. A few phrases in Portuguese do seem to go a long way.

This castle was supposed to have some type of Moorish authenticity, but alas we really could not find much of this trace. It had a long course of occupants, including traces of the Iron Age, then the Visigoths, then the Moors, and finally the Christians. It did not have the traces of Moorish decorative exuberance typical of Andalusia, but we also missed the tour showing more details of the Moorish remnants. It was a beautiful view of the city from here, overlooking the river:



We walked to a nearby convent, in the Graca part of the city, higher up than the Alfama, but this was closed. No matter as we were not focused on the sites as much as catching up with each other...Matthew used the time-tested MPS to guide us gracefully to our Airbnb in the late afternoon, after we stopped for bread and provisions. We had cocktails on the veranda, capturing the envy of German tourists above us who simply had a 2-step balcony for their view. The city looked splendid, and the cruise ships that had blocked the harbor were disappearing.



We freshened up a bit, and then made a reservation at a funky restaurant, **Santa Clara dos Cogumelos**, where Richard claimed to be an incognito 007 with the friendly Portuguese lass. She remained amused when we entered the restaurant a few hours later. Again the staff was uniformly pleasant, the food was delicious and cheap, and the red wine was notable despite its mild slice of the final bill. A selfie of the four of us is shown at dinner, with a bottle of wine to the right.



Fortunately we were able to walk to and from the restaurant. We all got to bed about 10:30 PM and were pleasantly surprised to find out that Matthew and Terry were also in the midst of watching **Wild Wild Country** on Netflix, and we would finish this up together over the next few nights.

Saturday, April 28



We woke up to breakfast At the Airbnb. We decided to walk along the waterfront to the **National Azulejo Museum (Tile Museum)** which was amazing. We barely needed a map as the walk along the river was straightforward . A few hours at the museum, the different sections were broken up by different centuries. There was also a baroque chapel in the middle of the museum as well as some cloisters.



We were able to pass by our apartment and found a small tile store, **Cortiço & Netos**, on the other side of the Alfama. There was nothing that we wanted to buy, but it was fun to visit. We found a "muito" Portuguese restaurant, **Zé da Mouraria** (Ruta João do Outeiro), a place without a menu, and with plenty of hearty food. We shared veal stew and a large cod dish with chickpeas and salad. Richard inadvertently spoke for the team as he shooed away the french fries, not a good idea. Nonetheless there was quite a bit of food, and no one went hungry.:



Richard and Matthew walked home to the apartment, picking up a coffee filter along the way as Richard was nervous about the Nespresso machine going sideways that morning. The ladies went out for more shopping.

The boys rested up while the ladies were out. This was one of the few days of intermittent rain, but somehow we did fine with this. We had a simple dinner at home with salad and a little bit of protein, as we were all overwhelmed from the large Portuguese restaurant lunch.

We watched more of **Wild Wild Country**, as it turned out we were all pretty much in sync in terms of finishing this Netflix series.

Before dinner, Richard showed his PowerPoint slides from a recent talk on being a psychiatrist in private practice and Terry gave her talk on doing marital therapy using concepts from attachment theory.

Sunday, April 29

We had an early start, breakfast at home including eggs with vegetables and coffee. Richard drank coffee from Burundi, which was a little bit strange-tasting. Fortunately the Nespresso machine resurrected from its faulty finish the day before. Also fortunately, a taxi was quickly flagged at the top of our stairs. We were dropped off at the **Sete Rios train station**.

We met a young man named Philip, 25 years old, pretty quick with English, learning to do a career in IT after having studied chemistry in college. We were quite impressed with how articulate and thoughtful he was. Here is a photo of Matthew, Richard and Philip:



The train to Evora was fairly straightforward. Again traveled first class, although this was fairly modest. Turned out that it was easiest to book these tickets online and simply store the PDF files on our mobile phones, rather than buy tickets at the train station.

At the Evora train station, we could not find a taxi and resolved to walk to our rather fancy hotel, almost a mile away. Alas, sidewalks consisted of fitted stones, likely some of the abundant Alentejo marble. This made for a bumpy ride, akin to wheeling suitcases on cobblestone. This was impractical and luckily Matthew found a willing taxi. The hotel (**M'ar de Ar Aqueduto**, Rua Cândido dos Reis) was quite deluxe, as we were upgraded at the last minute from our original hotel. It was labeled as 5-star, and this may have been a stretch, but it certainly was quite elegant and modern.



The hotel derived its name from its proximity to a medieval aqueduct, visible and appearing intact from just nearby. We were quite impressed with the attention to detail for the rental bikes and itinerary. **Our tour provider, www.cycling-rentals.com (Didi Knowlton, our American contact) was the most proficient company we have worked with to date.**

We found a lovely place for lunch, the **Trovador Restaurant**, a short walk from our hotel. We had great salads, one of tuna and beans, one of peppers, soup carrot and greens. Our waiter, João, was young but knowledgeable and we managed to polish off a bottle of wine, called **Zagalos**, a popular brand in the region.

We strolled in the afternoon, a bit lazy from the lunch and wine. The weather was a bit sketchy this day, colder and rainy at times, and we stopped for espressos, a lively conversation about Trump and politics, and pastéis de nata.

We managed our way to the Evora Romanesque and Gothic cathedral, but did not explore the popular "human bones" collection at the cathedral. We then saw the **Temple of Diana** dating back to the first century AD, partially destroyed by barbarians, but still quite impressive:



We visited an underwhelming modern art museum with women artists from Portugal. They were a few scattered pieces that were quite good, but otherwise too abstract, independent of artist gender, at least for this journalist.

We rested up back at the hotel, our rooms now available, and had dinner at the hotel at about 8 PM. The restaurant repertoire was informed by a resident celebrity chef. Our waiter was quite knowledgeable about wine and careful with his recommendations. He would measure the temperature of the wine before opening a bottle by placing a sensor at the base of each bottle. He also was careful not to allow us to mix our food ordering with our wine ordering, done in that order.



Louisa enjoyed an entrée (appetizer) of broiled scallops on cauliflower purée. Louisa and Terry had salmon on celery purée. Matthew had vegetable curry on rice, which was rather like ordering Maine lobster in Prague. Richard had the rabbit which was succulent, though modestly-sized.



Monday, April 30

We met for breakfast in the dining room of the hotel, where we had eaten dinner the evening before. It was a feast, complete with scrambled eggs, grilled tomatoes, beans, many kinds of cured meats, cheeses, breads, fruits, and juices.

We got ourselves ready to cycle and took our bikes to a nearby parking lot to learn the electric bike thing. We quickly discovered that these electric bikes were very different than the one that Louisa used in southern Spain. They were easier to start from a standstill, but seemed to have less overall assistance.



Throughout this first day of cycling, Louisa and Terry tried to keep their assist at the “Eco” level, the lowest of the three, with the intermediate level being called “Sport”, and the highest level called “Power.” We were worried that we would use up the battery before we got to our endpoint. Because of that, we were both working pretty hard that first day, and harder than we needed to, as it turned out.

We took off from Évora to Monsaraz, a 58-km ride through mostly rolling hills with a very big climb at the end. The weather was cool, ideal for cycling, and the countryside was gorgeous, with brightly colored wildflowers, olive trees, and a castle in the distance.



We stopped for lunch in a small town called Montoito at **Restaurant A Lareira**, recommended by our cycling company, where we initially ran into a group of three snobby American men cyclists who at least made for good conversation among us. Little English was spoken in the restaurant and there were only a few verbal offerings, but we ended up with a delicious lunch. Matt had bacalhau with potatoes and green beans, and the other three of us had grilled veal medallions with fantastic french fries as salad.

The afternoon proceeded much the same as the morning. At the end of our ride, we struggled with the very steep hill into the medieval mountaintop village of Monsaraz. It turned out that this village, with its steep and narrow cobblestone streets, was one of the oldest settlements in southern Portugal, originally a pre-historic fortification in pre-Roman times carved from the local rock. It was later occupied by the Visigoths, Moors, Jews, and finally Christians. During the Christian conquest of the town from the Moors in 1232, the town was placed under the control of the Knights Templar, a factoid that would make more sense to us later.



The name Monsaraz actually came from the Arabic “Xarez,” meaning rock rose. Indeed, the countryside surrounding Monsaraz was full of white and red rock roses with yellow centers.

Our hotel, **Estalagem de Monsaraz**, was a very old converted house. The rooms were quaint, but not terribly comfortable. The hostess, Ana, spoke very good English and was very warm and welcoming. She recommended a restaurant in town called



The Taverna de Templarias, decorated with swords and shields, where we had a delicious dinner and sangria. We later understood what this was about, as noted above. Matt had pasta with vegetables, Terry had beef shanks, Louisa had grilled octopus, and Richard had a sort of pie made with fish, potatoes, and cheese. We concluded our meal with a shared chocolate mousse. Our waiter started off a little gruff, but Richard warmed him up, as he had done with so many other Portuguese. By the end of the evening, we were all laughing and joking and such good friends that we took a picture with him.



The next morning, we were to find out that he was the father of Ana, shown here with Richard.

Tuesday, May 1

Our second day of cycling took us **from Monsaraz to Estremoz**, 75 kilometers of rolling hills with one steeper climb after the halfway mark. We had wanted to get an early start, as the ladies were dreading the length of the ride, but the hotel did not start serving breakfast until 8:30 AM. The breakfast at our quaint hotel was delicious, though sparser than our breakfast the day before. The dining room was full of French people, including the nice woman whom Richard had helped with her foot the previous day. She was so grateful for his help that she gave him a little Portuguese coin purse in thanks.

After breakfast, we learned that our friendly and funny waiter from dinner the night before was actually the father of Ana, our hostess at the hotel. He showed up to clean the pool, and we all had a laugh about this close connection.



We walked our bikes up the hill and then started our ride with a long downhill. Soon we saw the first of our sights for that day: a menir from about 5000 BC, which was basically a large phallic-shaped object believed to have been used in fertility rates. It was just sitting in the middle of a field, which was interesting.

The next of our sights was a castle in the town of Terena. Unfortunately, we arrived right when it closed for siesta time, so we had a light lunch in the only restaurant we could find. It turned out it was a holiday called Workers Day (May 1st) and many things were closed.

We rode on through beautiful countryside, spotted by vineyards, cork tree forests, and fields of wildflowers. We saw cows, sheep, goats, and pigs. The roads were small with very few cars. The weather was cool and partly cloudy. It was as close to ideal as could be, but we were still worried about the distance in front of us.

The weather got a little rainy, so we stopped in another little village called Redondo for a later lunch and hoping to wait out the rain. Our hostess was yet another warm and friendly Portuguese woman, who served us free tidbits of peppers, figs, and dates stuffed with cream cheese, and then a big bowl of yummy tomato soup with bacalhau and potatoes.

Back on our bikes with the rain having stopped, we soon faced our biggest hill of the day. Terry and Louisa had been using maximum power on their electric bikes for the entire day, and it was still pretty hard. We slowly made it to the top with a real sense of satisfaction and relief, and were rewarded with the pleasure of a long downhill ride through newly-terraced fields and groves of eucalyptus trees.

We also passed several fields of cork trees, partially debarked as noted here.



We arrived in Estremoz a little before 6 pm, all of us pretty tired. Our rooms had little sunny terraces with views of the castle, so Richard bought us some wine and we sat and enjoyed it there. We had dinner at **Pousada Castelo Estremoz**, an elegant restaurant inside the castle. We enjoyed the beautiful atmosphere and delicious wine. Terry had lamb steaks, Richard had tomato soup and shrimp, Matthew had an eggplant dish, and Louisa had an Alentejano wild boar and bean stew served in a bread bowl. Matt felt a little urpy and we were all exhausted, so we crashed quickly after a little chocolate on our walk back to the hotel.

Wednesday, May 2

This day was designed for an optional bicycle loop trip or a day exploring Estremoz. It was raining a little, so after much debate we opted for not cycling.

The day got off to a rocky start with the least good breakfast of the trip. Many items were in packaging, and the coffee was really bad. Fortunately we could cheaply buy espressos and cappuccinos, so we did that, and the bread and cheese was just fine.

Richard opted for some alone time, while the other three went to tour museums. We were very confused about which museums were where, but it turned out both museums we wanted to see were in the same building, the **Palacio dos Marqueses de Praia y Monforte**. The space was originally a social hall of sorts and was very elegant, with gorgeous ceilings and painted walls. We started by touring an exhibition of the work of one modern artist, who had created interesting interchangeable panels, and paintings of the figurines for which the region is known. We basically got a private tour from Lydia, who was adorable and spoke wonderful English. It turned out that her parents owned our hotel! We learned from Lydia that the local figurines had

been designated as UNESCO World Heritage items, and because of that UNESCO was funding the renovation of the building.

Then Lydia offered to open the one-room rural museum for us that was also in the same building. There we saw many of the local figurines; these had begun as religious icons but then had evolved into depictions of everyday peasant life. We learned how the women pinned up their skirts to work in the fields, and how the people brought their lunches with them in cork containers that they carried on their heads and that kept the food warm. Lydia also pointed out and explained cork containers in many shapes and sizes, horns used to store olives (and which had been cleaned inside by placing them on ant hills), flute-like bamboo instruments for blowing through to stoke a fire, thank you paintings, horse-like iron skewer holders for grilling brochettes over a fire, and wooden double-sided tasting spoons. We learned so much more from her than we would have understood on our own. We felt wonderfully spoiled! And Terry and Louisa were in doll house heaven!

Next we stopped at the cafe next door, where Matthew declared he was having the best cappuccino he had ever tasted! Then back to the hotel to pick up Richard for lunch.

And what a lunch it was at the **Mercearia Gadanha** that Lydia had recommended! Richard had tempura vegetables, which we all tried and thought yummy. Terry and Louisa ordered to share a phenomenal appetizer of goat cheese au gratin with sliced pear pickles, honey, walnuts, and thyme ice cream, and then had fantastic mushroom soup with garlic foam and beet leaf garnish.

Matthew had potato and onion soup. It was really good too. He ordered another dish, but it did not come, which was just as well because we were all so full. Everything was delicious, and by the time we were finished, there was a long line of people waiting for a table! Lydia told us that people come from all over Portugal to eat there, and we understood why and felt grateful that we had gotten in without a reservation. One customer who was not able to eat is shown to the right.

After lunch, we visited the **only open marble quarry in Estremoz**. Our optional cycling loop that day was to marble quarry villages, so it was great that we could see a marble quarry without cycling. The quarry was fascinating: a very deep and steep-sided pit with many colors of marble and workers the size of ants at the bottom. We marveled at how much access there was, much more than would be the case in our own litigious country.

We were quickly approached by a worker named **Enrique**, who spoke a little Spanish and less English, but was nonetheless proud of the quarry's work and eager to share it with us. Using several languages, visual aids, and pantomime, Enrique showed us the way that they cut the huge slabs of stone out of the side of the quarry, and then cut those slabs into smaller pieces using diamond studded flexible cables and water. It was a genuine high point of the day! **Here are photos of the quarry and of Enrique with another friendly worker, our tour guide on the right:**





On our way back into town, we stopped at a supermarket and bought picnic food for our next day's ride. It was promising to be a long ride, and we did not want to stop for a long lunch in a restaurant. Then we hiked back up to the Castelo at the top of the hill to go to the Municipal Museum. It was nice, but mostly a bigger version of the rural museum that we had seen that morning. Without Lydia's wonderful explanations, we got less out of it. The most special moment was finding several figurines that Lydia had described earlier: "Love is Blind," depicted by female figurines who wore blindfolds and carried large hearts in their hands. A panoramic view from a courtyard outside the museum:



After a rest at the hotel, we attempted to go to dinner at Alecrim, highly rated and owned by the brother of the owner of Merceiria Gadanha. It was closed for unknown reasons, so we went back to **Merceiria Gadanha for dinner!** It was again spectacular! Louisa had delicious mushroom risotto, Terry and Richard had lambchops and migas (mashed bread with asparagus that was sort of like American stuffing), Matt had an egg and straw potatoes dish that he never got at lunch and that was like serious comfort food, and the goat cheese appetizer that had been such a hit at lunch. Washed down with 1.5 bottles of really good red wine and topped off by chocolate lava cake, it was a memorable dinner. We waddled back to the hotel and went right to bed.

Thursday, May 3

We had an early morning start as this was a 70 km day. Fortunately we had a tailwind, lovely small roads, and an early downhill as we left Estremoz.

We had our mid morning coffee break at a small roadside café, making friends with the locals, maximizing the 22 words of Portuguese we managed to accumulate. The Portuguese did seem to understand Spanish, although apparently the inverse is not true...



We stayed in a high-cruise mode, with on ongoing tailwind, we had our first and only picnic lunch, about 2/3 of the way through our day in terms of mileage, and back on the road by about 1 PM. Lunch consisted of prosciutto, cheese, peasant bread, fresh sliced tomato, and sardines. Remarkably tasty, and not too filling, we pondered why we had not done other picnic lunches. Understand however that the competition from local restaurants was steep indeed...

We reached our hotel, **Casa do Plátano** in the quaint but unpronounceable town of **Arraiolos** at about 3 PM, a steep climb into town followed by a steep descent, on a little off-road. The route was designed to help us avoid the big highway ("N4") as much as possible. The hotel was lovely, and our hostess, another Maria, it was really simpatica and welcoming. She had homemade cookies and tea for us and Matthew and Terry took the blue room while Louisa and Richard feasted on the colors of the lavender room, without the double bed.

The ladies went shopping for tapestries, a known specialty in this small town, while the boys hung out at home.

We walked to a very Portuguese restaurant a small ways from the hotel, **Restaurante Típico O Alpendre**:

The waitstaff flooded us with all kinds of appetizers, to a point where we had to politely say "basta", so we could focus on the main course. Appetizers included of course deep fried pork bellies, possibly from the "black pig" advertised on the menu as well.





Matthew had rice with tomato sauce and fried mackerel, which seemed a bit bony. The ladies had scrambled eggs with asparagus. Richard had veal with tomato sauce. The food was excellent, but perhaps a bit overwhelming, including the deluge of appetizers.

Wine was as usual excellent, and Matthew is seen to the right posing as a sommelier:



Friday, May 4

Our last day of cycling was a short 28 km day back from **Arraiolos to Evora** which dawned clear and sunny but still crisp. We enjoyed another lovely breakfast, this one in the charming country kitchen at our hotel, which was our favorite of all we stayed in, with its “woman’s touch.”

There was quite the debate about whether to take the Eco Pista, an old railroad bed trail with a packed sand and gravel surface, or the roads, so much so that we actually called Didi the day before for her input. In the end, we left it up to Matthew, as he had the only road bike. He did a “TOFTT,” (that is, he “took one for the team” and chose the Eco Pista). It was lovely to be away from cars, with only the sounds of birdsong. The surface was mostly good, but with intermittent rockiness and deep ruts that demanded slow speeds, high vigilance, and occasional walking.



About halfway through the ride, we switched back to the road, stopping for coffee and potato chips outside Evora. The MPS directed us to the hotel on back roads.

Taking some time to ensure that we were returning our bicycles and related paraphernalia in good order, we changed our clothes and walked into Evora for lunch. We ended up at **Bistro de Barao**, where we enjoyed the very special attention of the owner, Miguel. He spoke very good English, seemed to enjoy Richard's attempts to communicate in Portuguese, and offered to take our pictures. The walls of the restaurant were covered with rave reviews written in many languages.

The amuses bouches were the chef's specialties: 1) shrimp on a mushroom on garlic toast and 2) melted cheese with jam. Both were scrumptious. Next came grouper soup for Terry, fish stew with rice for Matthew and Louisa, and tempura octopus and veggies for Richard. Delicious all! Despite our protestations, Miguel also brought us a selection of four traditional Portuguese desserts. We managed to eat most of them, and they were very tasty as well. A very fitting birthday celebration for Terry!

Leaving Richard snoozing on a park bench, the other three window-shopped. Terry and Louisa bought very inexpensive matching scarves and then gorgeous Portuguese-made cotton



tablecloths, and Matthew finally found the hard sunglasses case that he had been seeking out for days.

After a brief taxi ride to the train station with yet another friendly and charming Portuguese driver, we had an uneventful train trip back to Lisbon. Another longer taxi ride to our apartment in Santos, we were met there by Thomas, our Dutch host, who did a great job of introducing us to the apartment and the neighborhood.

The apartment was in an old building, so it had a funky layout and vibe reminiscent of New York City apartments, but with a modern kitchen and bathrooms. It was decorated with a mod sense of design (Terry) and a neo-

classical sense of elegance (Matthew; or was it the other way around?)

It was late and we were tired from traveling and still full from lunch, so we just bought salad makings, roast chicken wings, wine, and chocolate at the Mini Preco around the corner for our last dinner together at home.

Saturday, May 5

We started the day with another great breakfast at home, adding pear jam with port to our regular breakfast repertoire of toast, cheese, yogurt, fresh-squeezed orange juice, and coffee. We toasted our cycling trip, the MPS, R's cycling experience, electric bicycles, the gorgeous Portuguese countryside, the wonderful food, and the warmth and friendliness of the Portuguese people. We looked at some ideas for our next cycling adventure, with Valencia and the Dordogne being the top contenders for a late May or early June 2019 trip. Then, after tearful goodbyes, T and M left for the airport to go home.

We rested a little, feeling blue, then walked around our Santos neighborhood, which felt less touristy than Alfama and was full of funky consignment and antique stores and hip eateries. We stopped at a consignment store called **ReUse** and bought a cat made out of a record for Daniel, a scarf for Louisa, and many little fish pins for Richard's staff. The very cute salesgirl at ReUse gave us a nearby lunch recommendation at **Zapata**, where we had a delicious lunch. Louisa had a dish of eggs mixed with onions, shoestring potatoes, and shrimp, and Richard had grilled salmon with potatoes, veggies, and salad. This all seemed very authentic and probably everyone in there was Portuguese.

Next we stopped and bought more gifts for Richard's staff and goodies for us at **Mercearia Poco Dos Negros**: sardine-shaped plates, flavored salts and olive oil spreads, tiles, sardine paper clip holders, etc. The owner was from Peru, had lived in Miami, and had sold everything and moved to Lisbon. He was happy, and we were impressed with that.

Dropping off our purchases back at the apartment, we walked to **El Corte Ingles** to look for suitcases. A tribute to nose ring art is shown to the right.

On our way there, we stopped for our last pastry and coffee on the way—so tasty, the Portuguese pastries! At El Corte Ingles, Richard picked the perfect suitcase for maximum flexibility: cabin size, hard-sided, expandable and with 4 wheels. We meandered over to the biggest shoe department we had ever seen, but did not buy.

It was a long walk home with lots of ups and downs, stopping at the Mini Preco for salad makings for dinner again. After a light dinner, we watched another episode of Inspector Lewis and hit the sack, tired and happy to have clocked 17,000 steps.

Sunday, May 6

We woke up early and had our last breakfast at home at our Airbnb. We had arranged for an Uber to take us to the airport, arriving about 10 AM for a 12:15 PM flight to Philadelphia on American airlines. What a great trip. We resolved to back much lighter next time but there were few other things that we would change. Richard also noted back in Seattle that taking a full Ambien when we were ready to go to bed about 11 PM PST that night was quite effective for keeping him to sleep at least six hours, helping with jet lag.

