

VENTURE

44



Picos de Europa

NUMBER 51

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(Sir Thomas Rich's School) Venture Scout Unit.

NUMBER 51

SEPT 1984

ESPAÑA 1984

The expedition to Spain this year was an unusual one for a number of reasons. It was, for example, the first time that a major unit expedition set off in a southerly direction, a journey seeking sun rather than snow! None of the party had been to Spain previously, and no-one spoke any Spanish. We had also been able to get very little useful information or maps before setting out and as we viewed the city of Santander from the deck of the "Quiberon" on Wednesday July 24th, it was not without trepidation. Our plan of action was very simple- to take things as they came and then see what happened...In the following pages all the members of the expedition contribute to give the reader a picture of some of those things that did occur, and perhaps a flavour of what turned out to be a most interesting and enjoyable time.

The party consisted of the following:-

Yosha Cowmeadow	Andy Deeble
Rich Drew	Simon Hawkins
Frank Henderson	Brian Herbert
Rich Kerswell	Paddy Smith
Brian Symcox	Dave Williams
Dave Wilson	Jon Wright

JDG 312 V

We would like to thank all those who helped to make the expedition a success, and in particular:-

John Tavener(Tav) for his help with transport to
Plymouth

Geoff and Julia Poole for their hospitality in
Plympton

Derrick Moon of Thomas Cook Ltd, Gloucester for
his help with travel arrangements

JDG 312 V For meritorious service under consider-
-able strain.

The people of Cantabria and Asturias for their
friendliness and tolerance.

Itinerary n. a plan or record of a journey; a road
book; a route. Sp. Itinerario (m)...

- Sun.22nd;Set off for Plymouth at 2.30p.m. 8 in the van
and 4 with Tav. Evening out at Barbican.
- Mon.23rd;Up at 6 a.m. Milbay Dock at 7a.m.,aboard the
Brittany Ferries vessel "Quiberon".
- Tue.24th;9a.m. Santander - looks quiet..fiesta. Try to
shop - not much luck. Camp at Cabo major, by
the lighthouse. Midnight firework display.
- Wed.25th;Bri's birthday. St James day. Santander sight
seeing and beach.
- Thu.26th; Discover starting point for bus to Torre
-lavega, despatch 4 people. Rest in van to
Santillana del Mar. Cuevas de Altamira; drive
to Oyambre, camp.
- Fri.27th;San Vicente de la Barquera. Two groups driven
via Desfiladera de La Hermida to La Isla near
Potes, in Los Picos de Europa.
- Sat.28th;Potes, find some official maps at last. Visit
monastery of San Toribio de Liébana, where a

fragment of the True Cross is to be found. Very hot indeed; attempted nearby small mountain, retreat exhausted.

- Sun. 29th; Fuente D^e. Cable car up into the heart of the Picos de Europa. Walk at over 2000 m - still very hot.
- Mon. 30th; Dave's birthday; party splits, some to coast, some to hike through the mountains, some stay at Potes
- Tue. 31st; Hikers and support group meet at Sotres, 3400ft Pigs trotters; support group camp at Arenas de Cabrales.
- Wed. 1st; Hikers met at La Hermida; party reunite at Pechon.
- Thu. 2nd; Walk in the gorge of Rio Cares; Some to B^ulnes Some stay to roast at Pechon
- Fri. 3rd; Heavy rain. Move to Ribadesella, some by train from Unquera. Campsite full - fiesta next day, so on westward to Caravia in quiet Asturian countryside.
- Sat. 4th; Drive to Oviedo, the big city, capital of Asturias. Later try to introduce cricket to Asturias, but have to cease when handle comes off frying pan, I mean bat..(B.Symcox not out 11)
- Sun. 5th; Covadonga, Spanish national shrine, tomb of King Pelayo.
- Mon. 6th; Cueva Tito Bustillo, prehistoric art. Train and van back to Santander. Campsite "completo" shortly after our arrival.
- Tue. 7th; Back on "Quiberon" for uneventful journey.
- Wed. 8th; Dock at 9 a.m. Gloucester by 1.30 p.m.

And now a bit of culture (or is it just a page filler?)

"Dear reader, may God protect you from bad books, the police and nagging, moon faced, fair haired women."

Francisco de Quevedo y Villegas.

IMPRESSIONS (ONE)

For me the main attraction of visiting a foreign country is the chance of obtaining an insight into how other people live. Comparisons of societies are always interesting whether structure, attitude, priorities or customs are under the microscope. However during our travels it was the small things which I remember most affectionately. The spicy smells that seem to fill every shop; the dominance of the bagette over the sliced loaf; the coffee, both sweet and rich, served up in petit cups as befits a local delicacy! The abundance of multicolour sausages of questionable consistency, guaranteed to produce havoc in the untrained stomach. The acceptance of cheap plonk as a water substitute, and the reluctance of Spanish bar staff to completely fill every third glass of Skol.

Driving is a whole new experience, with aggression the name of the game. The traffic lights and pedestrian crossings are ignored at will, as apparently is the cost of bodily contact. Renaults and Fiats dominate, as does the horn over patience.

Communication can be as enjoyable and worthwhile or as embarrassing and hopeless as required. Many a time we were helped by a surprising number of Spaniards with more than a grasp of Inglés. I personally will never forget an attempt to buy laxatives (for another member of the party!) which eventually necessitated appropriate gesturing in a drug-store. However, when it came to the crunch, results were always achieved.

Whether it is a comment on the climate, or purely economics, cold showers were plentiful on all the camp sites visited. Answering the calls of nature using the local facilities demanded certain new skills and novel techniques! As well as introducing us to new sanitation and Skol, the campsites never ceased to remind us of the role of Spain as a tourist attraction. Perhaps an indic-

ation of self consciousness, the lesser-spotted tourist, complete with inevitable camera, sun-glasses and sun hat was always to be seen.

It became quickly apparent, during our gradual introduction to the Picos de Europa region that there was much more to Spain than the inevitable sandy beach. Many a time a glint was noticed in the V.S.L's eye as yet one more spectacular panorama of mountainous country was seen. Heights of 2000m are always impressive to any one reared in Snowdonia country.

Perhaps the most lasting memory of España was the heat. For most of us fair skinned the first day or so proved irresistible for sunbathing, with shorts and sun tan oil the order of the day. However, the intensity of the sun, full of revenge, forced covering up for many as the holiday continued. For much of each afternoon the Spanish were nowhere to be seen, leaving the tourist to struggle with translations of siesta. I suppose that one adapts to such oppressive heat, yet I cannot but wonder how the internal cogs of Spain manage to turn. Is low viscosity olive-oil or just fiesta/siesta the answer?

Away from the tourist track, are the locals friendly? My impression was one more of sympathy. The Gringo has now been accepted as part of the way of life, and they have seen it all before.

Rich Kerswell.

A number of subjects touched on in the above article are covered in more depth in subsequent accounts.

TEACH YOURSELF SPANISH

Counting; Uno Skol; Dos Skol; Tres Skol; Cuatro Skol
Cinco Skol; Seis Skol; Siete Skol; Ocho Skol
Nueve Skol; Dos Skol; Once Skol... etc

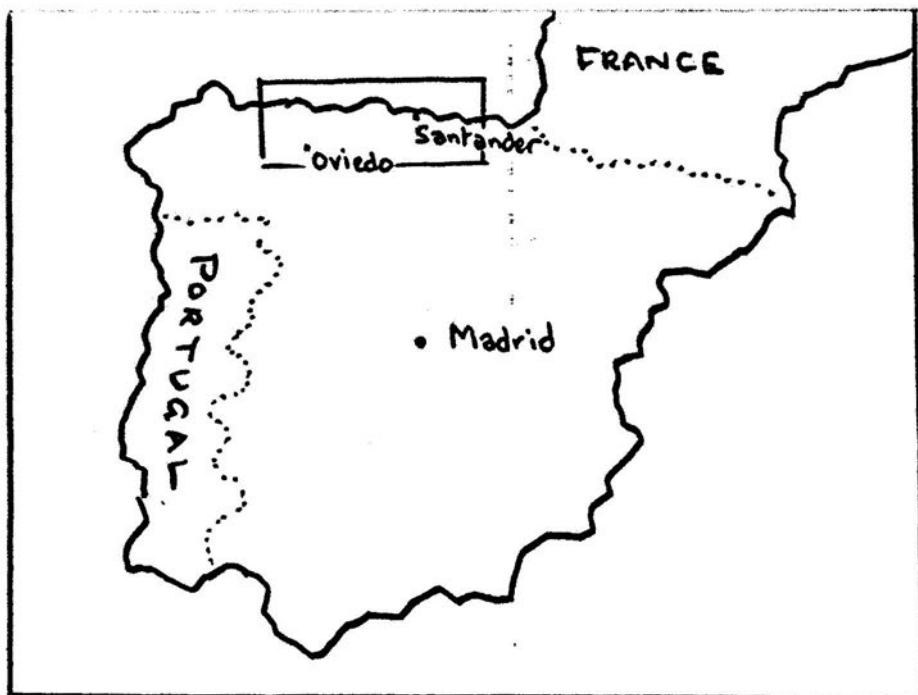
THE LANGUAGE BARRIER

As one would imagine, most people in Spain speak Spanish! This is alright if you are a Spaniard, but when a party of 12 English Venture Scouts are dumped in the centre of Santander with a joint vocabulary of about 5 words certain problems arise, as we found out!

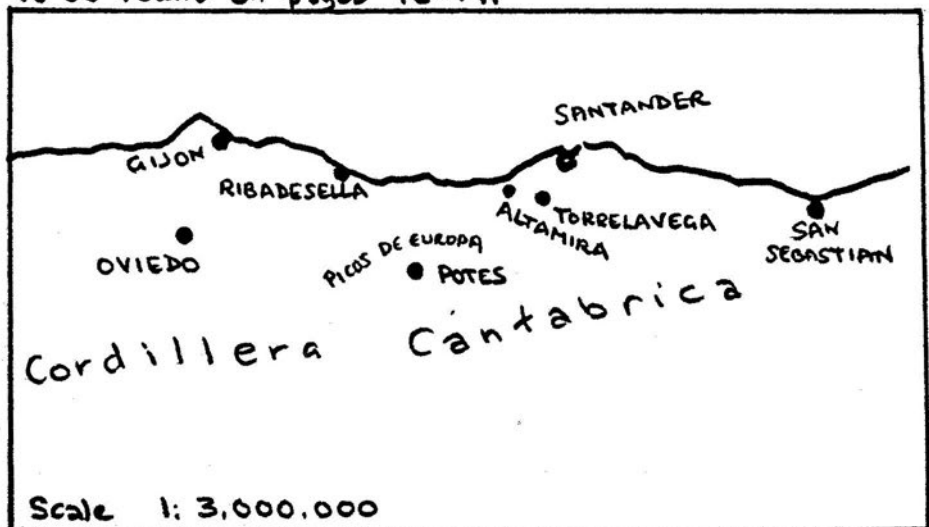
The fact that Spanish is similar to French helped to ease the blow, as both Yosh and I have studied the language at an advanced level. It was inevitable that one or both of us had to do much of the negotiating with the locals. At first it was rather a harrowing experience to have to enter a shop and to ask for 12 of something unpronounceable like "naranja", which, after numerous tries and many variations, I still didn't manage to get right (this was reflected in the dumbfounded expressions on the faces of shopkeepers who were privileged to experience my trilingual mélange. Practise, however, makes perfect, and after 2 or 3 days I had grown used to the art of shopping and was adept at mumbling the appropriate phrase from my phrase book and stabbing a finger at the required article on the shelf. This method proved to be successful in the large stores of Santander, but once hidden away in the mountains and cut off from anyone who could speak English, or even Castellian (official Spanish), new tactics were needed. Luckily at the camp site shops the person in charge seemed inevitably to be an attractive, sun-bronzed example of Spanish señorita adequately prepared to cope with the needs of foreign campers such as ourselves.

As the expedition progressed most of us managed to pick up a few words which helped to alleviate situations when previously we had been forced into awkward silence, appearing ignorant and no doubt rude to the hapless Spaniard who addressed us.

There was no hiding the fact that we were English for even if our Spanish had been faultless, our general



A more detailed map showing the main area visited is to be found on pages 16-17.



N.º de Tienda
27 36 185



Niño
Carava

Apellidos WILSON
Tienda lam. y 009530

Fecha entrada
Fecha salida
Total días

Thomas Cook
871961

Camping Cabo Mayor

SANTANDER

Nombre Richard Anthony
Nacionali Camping "LA ISLA"
D.N.I 671961

Amount
POTES - TURIENCO



Banco Atlántico
Fundado en 1900
EXTRANJERO

2ª CATEGORIA
PICOS de Europa



Camping "Las Arenas"
Pechón - Cantabria - España
Teléfono 71 71 88

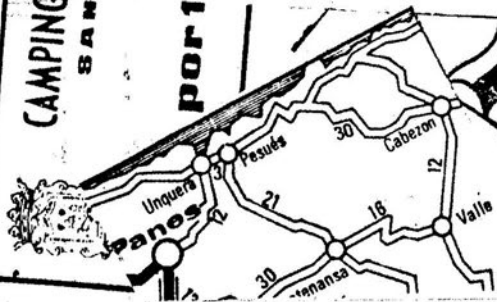
CAMPING CARAVIA
ASTURIAS-ESPAÑA

N.º Pasaporte
Matricula coche
Nacionalidad

Situado a:
75 Kms. de Santander-Ferry y A
a 40 Kms. de Santillana del M
a 25 Kms. de Comillas
a 12 Kms. de San Vicente
a 130 Kms. de Oviedo
a 3 Kms. de Unquera
a 40 Kms. de

CAMPING SAN

por 1



NOTA.- El presento recibo no justifica su pago sin el sello del Camping.
Horario de entrada - Salida vehículos 8 a 24 horas.
No se autoriza encender fuego de leña ni dejar animales sueltos.
Los amigos o familiares de los clientes que deseen pasar el día en el Camping deberán abonar en Recepción el importe de una jornada.
Horario Bar-Tiendas 8 a 23 horas.



features and complexions gave us away. The typical male Spaniard of our age is small and wiry, sporting a lot of jet black hair, so our pale bunch stuck out like sore thumbs! I am glad to say that our sun tans improved as time passed, and even Yosh managed a little brown along with the bright red patches. But I digress!

In conclusion, I think all of us would be happy to have a chance to return to Spain, and I, for one, would gladly spend some time learning the language properly so that the barrier could be removed.

Dave Wilson

ASPECTS OF THE GEOLOGY OF NORTHERN SPAIN

The famous geologist H.H. Read stated that "the best geologist is the one who has seen the most rocks!" My two weeks in Northern Spain provided me with a wealth of knowledge and enjoyment with great areas of rock exposed for examination and a good range of minerals and fossils. Casting aside the academic aspect of the subject, one of the great joys of Geology, both for the serious student and the amateur is the collecting of good specimens.

Santander provided large expanses of cliffs, and embedded within these were numerous fossils which evoked a picture of an ancient sea-floor, some 60 million years ago. Excellent echinoids were especially common, related to the sea urchins we find today. The geology students amongst us, Andy, the two Daves and myself investigated every available corner for these fascinating fossils and the discrete tap of the geological hammer was heard far into the night on the beach below Cabo Menor!

Moving westwards into Asturias we were on much older rocks, some 350 million years old. Running through them were mineral veins containing iron ore, lead and zinc minerals, dolomite and fluorite. A blue and very attractive variety of this is called Blue John. In one disused

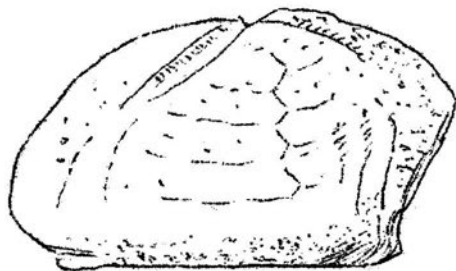
quarry near our campsite at Caravia excellent specimens of this semi-precious stone occurred. Two memorable evenings were spent hunting the spoil heaps for reasonable specimens. On the second night we encountered a Spanish mineralogist who tried to tell us that licences were required for collecting - at least that is what we think he said. Minerals were discretely stowed away as the V.S.L. skillfully used the language barrier to our benefit, and we parted the best of friends.

The spectacular limestone scenery and crinoid fossil finds of the Picos de Europa also stand out as highlights of the tour, and in all the part of Spain we saw was an extremely interesting one geologically and most valuable to our studies. We returned to England with rucksacks a good deal heavier than when we went out.

Simon Hawkins.

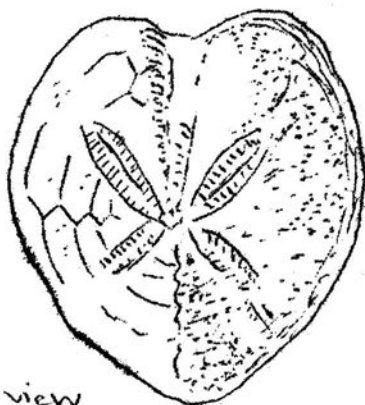
(Footnote. After returning from Spain Simon attended an interview for a University place. The geology lecturer conducting the interview was planning a visit to North Spain to examine Echinoids....)

Micraster sp.



Lateral view

True scale



aboral view

HASTA LA AUTO

Bang!***! A long haired spanish beauty flies through the air, knocked from her moped by another erratic car driver. Fortunately a hevy of brawny caballeros (men) rushed to her aid and she seemed to have escaped unhurt. In Spain only two days, we had already experienced a new dimension in driving. Not content with driving on the wrong side of the road, most drivers were intent to keep as NEAR to the Bedford's REAR (note the poetry of this line) as possible, seeming to have no fear that we might break suddenly. Others took unbelievable chances when overtaking, anytime, any place, anywhere, (there's a wonderful world you can share, its the bright one, its the right one, its Martini) regardless of the roadside signs.

Apart from the generally unpredictable driving (it looks as if good drivers may be banned in Spain) and the imaginative parking, the road surfaces in places left much to be desired. The passengers had some very bumpy rides and the trusty Bedford's suspension units were worked very hard. To help increase the chances of travel sickness the country roads we were on were all bends, first this way and then that, and always a chance of an unexpected danger round the corner, ranging from scythe weilding farmers, milk lorries, ox carts, mules and the local bus, always travelling fast, and on our side of the road! Another unexpected hazard, 'sleeping policemen' in the main road at La Hermida reduced our breakneck speed of 20 mph to near zero. Fortunately there were some good roads and we had the occasional trouble-free journey.

Peep! Peep! The ability of the spanish driver to use his horn in town is unimaginable, it is used more than any other part of the car. And now like many a spanish road, thse amusing anecdotes MUST come to an abrupt end as my pencil is BUST - note the poetry again..

Rich Drew



CAMPING.

Camping in Spain is much more restricted than in Britain. It is possible of course to camp in the remote mountain regions, but even there the authorities prefer visitors to use the system of huts -Refugios - which may accommodate anything between 4 and 50 visitors. There are over thirty of these in the Picos de Europa area. In farming areas, camping is not allowed, but there is a network of excellent and cheap official sites which we made good use of during our time in Spain.

LOITERING WITHIN TENT

Judging by our experiences camping sites in Northern Spain seem to be well organised, and have all the basic facilities, i.e. toilets, a shop, washing facilities for clothes, crockery and people, which are necessary to make life in a hot climate bearable. In addition most have added luxuries such as a restaurant and bar - without which camping can be extremely boring. At Santander even there was a swimming pool, although a charge was made for its use, whilst the nearby Atlantic ocean was free.

The food and drink at the site shops tends to be cheaper than elsewhere, and an example of this that pleased many of the group was the price of Skol lager which was as little as 70 ptas (34p) for a litre bottle.

The quantity, quality and cleanliness of showers and toilets varied between sites. The toilets were a novelty at first because as well as the British design, there was the continental type, for which good aim and balance were required, but this came with practise.

The cost of the sites also seemed to be much cheaper than corresponding prices in Britain, and it was normal practice to book in and deposit one or more passports and then pay on leaving. We found the staff at the sites to be most helpful and welcoming.

Brian Herbert

ASOCIACION DE EMPRESARIOS DE CAMPING DE ASTURIASORDENANZA

According to the law of tourism, silence is enforced between 11pm and 8am. during the time is absolutely forbidden the driving of cars inside the camping.

The management take no responsibility for the object jewelery nad valuable articles belonging the campers, which have no be deposited in the administrator

We cannot accept liability for any loss, sicknesses injury, or demege resulting from careless and natural forces

All campers are obliqued the obeying instrucciones given by the person in charge of the camping, for the benefit of the smooth running ofthe camping.

Right of admission is reserved. The person in charge is authorised to request any camper who demonsttraes a lack of the elemental rules of education and communal life to leave the site.

Les animales enclosure ower, to remain, rope cord.

(Camping regulations from the site at Caravia)

QUICK QUIZ

1. What have Toledo, Cangas de Onis and Valladolid all got in common (apart from all being in Spain.)?
2. By what name is Alonso Quixana better known?
3. Who is the Patron Saint of Spain?
4. Which composer appears on the 100 pesata note?
5. What is RENFE? (Answers on page 22.)

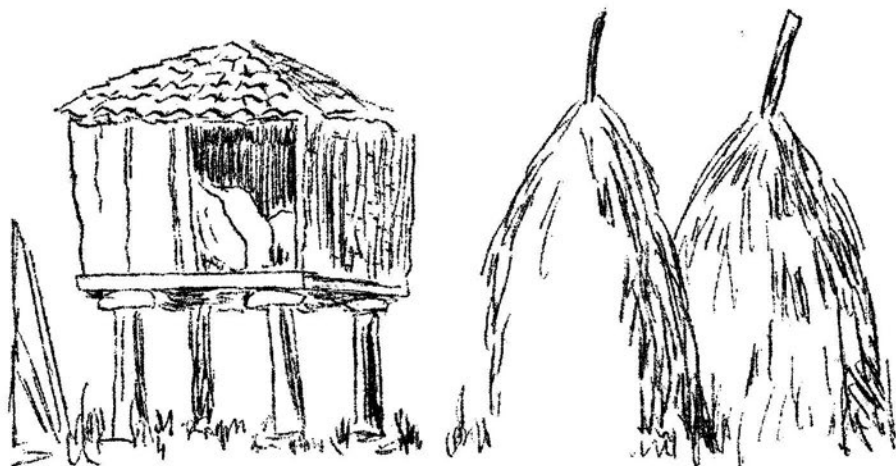
NOTES ON THE AGRICULTURE OF NORTHER SPAIN

The first thing one notices as you are stuck behind a donkey drawn cart loaded with hay is that the Spanish farming methods are more primitive than British methods. The farmer's only machinery is a small tractor or lorry, carts being the usual vehicles. Occasionally we saw oxen yoked to heavy loads moving slowly between fields and the typical small farmsteads.

The only crops we saw were maize and grass. The maize is grown in small separate plots in massive fields with very few hedges in sight. The grass is cut by the farmer with old fashioned scythes, raked up into lines and then stacked up into strange conical ricks around a central post.

A notable feature of the Asturian countryside is the occurrence of store houses raised on huge wooden mushroom like legs to stop rats and other rodents from getting in. Many of these have lost their original character and are now converted into weekend cottages for rich townies.

Paddy Agricola Smith

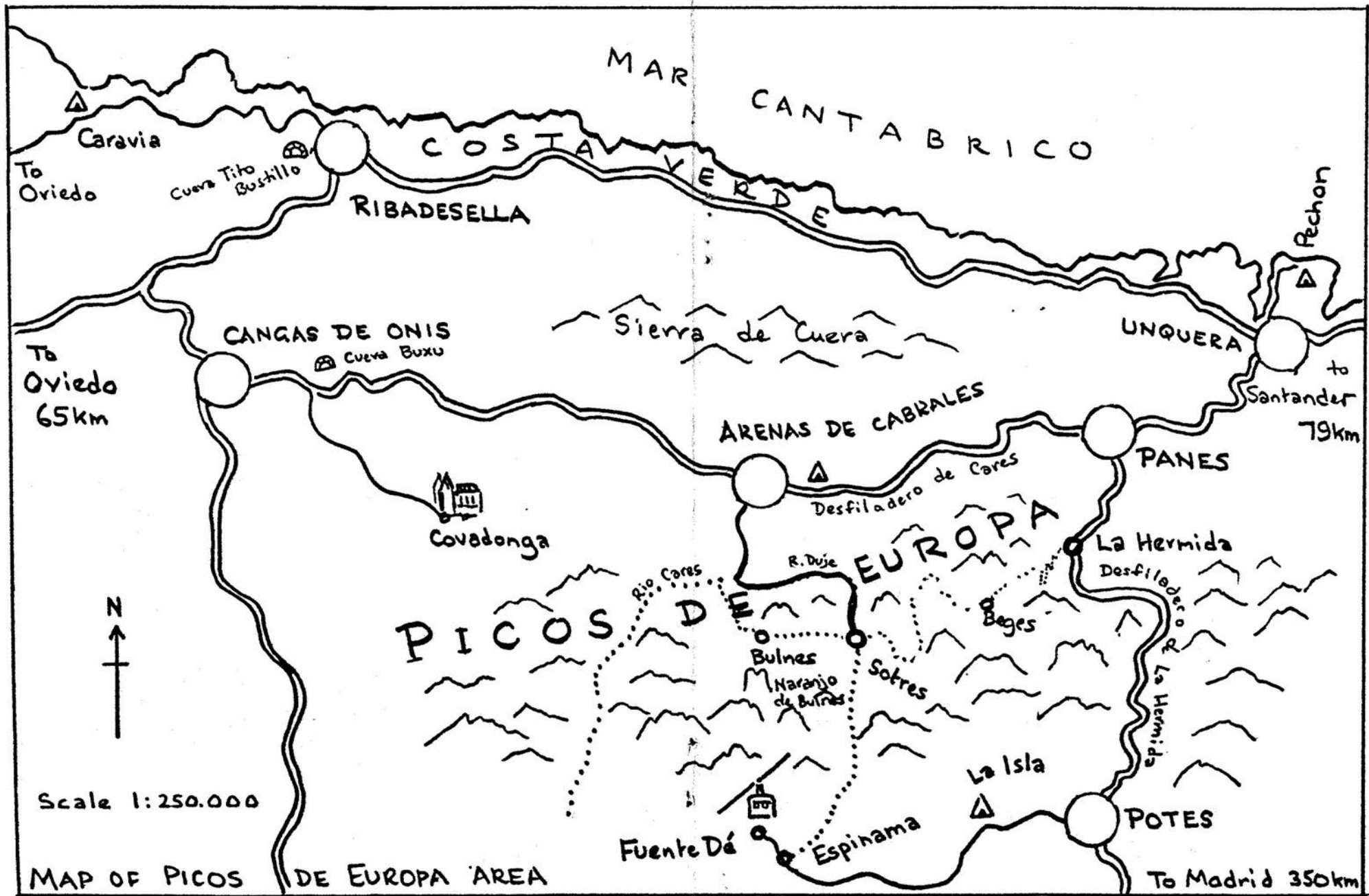


Asturian Storehouse

& Haystacks



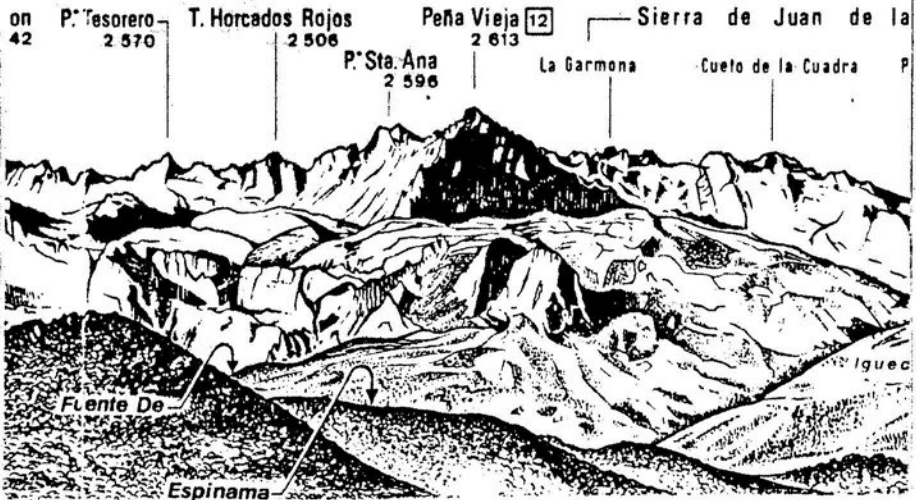
CANTABRIAN VILLAGE



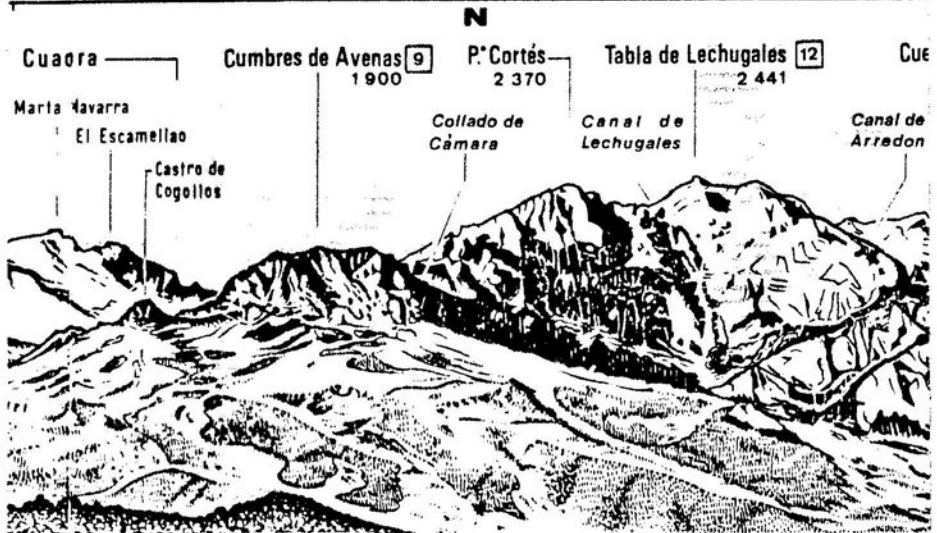
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MAP OF PICOS DE EUROPA AREA

LOS PICOS DE EUROPA



DESDE EL COLLADO DE LLESBA



Good hiking country.

Why does one climb mountains?

PICOS THEY ARE THERE

The start of our hike was heralded by the inevitable rumble of thunder echoing around the mountains. For a while it had seemed as if we might attempt a totally dry hike in the scorching spanish sunshine; Instead Rich K, Rich D., Simon and I were confronted with a mountain to climb on a hot and humid thunder laden evening.

This first climbing stage which we started at 6.30 p.m. on Monday proved to be the hardest of the whole of the hike, and took us from the village of Espinama into the upper mountain regions. The country we passed through was dotted with slightly eerie deserted villages of the typical red tiled houses seemingly inhabited only now by animals.

The path we were following was a rough Landrover track from Espinama to Sotres. Although a little hard on the feet we knew that at least it was impossible to lose the track. Much to our embarrassment, however, after two hours walking we found ourselves at a dead end at a mine which the map told us was about two miles off our track! By this time we had risen into a permanent layer of grey mountain mist which, combined with the mineral polluted streams, desolate landscape and the stink of the mine (with a touch of low morale thrown in) gave more of an impression of darkest Mordor than sunny Spain. At this point Rich k., our leader and navigator did an inspired bit of map reading to get us back on to the right track, a performance only slightly marred by an accidental immersion in a stream we followed.

The camp that night was wet and miserable, with some thoughts of dropping out next day rife. But next morning however, we forgot our problems and walked down into the sun of Sotres for an early lunch, and a rendezvous with the intrepid back-up crew. Our momentary high spirits were not exactly bolstered by being confronted with a

lunch of - wait for it - pigs trotters, Asturian style!

Still feeling somewhatnauseous we carried on up in to the mountains again. On this stage of the hike the scenery was really breathtaking, and justified the hike on its own. The only drawback was the necessity for the photo stop every 50 yards or so.

A steep descent that evening took us down to our chosen camping spot at about 7 o'clock. We soon realised what a difference the weather made to camping as that evening was very relaxed and enjoyable, in marked contrast to the previous night.

Next morning we were woken by wood-cutters who had finished work about 9 p.m. the night before and started around 6 a.m., presumably to allow for siesta later on in the day. After breakfast it was not a long walk down to the village of La Hermida where we were met by the ever dependable Bedford. It had been all in all a very enjoyable hike - I think...

Yosh Cowmeadow.

FOOTNOTE

Spain is not all sandy beaches, as has already been observed in an earlier article. In fact there are many impressive mountain ranges, of which the Picos de Europa is the one that we got to know a little of. Our first view of the Picos was early one morning from the camp-site at Oyambre, before the heat haze obscured them. It was when we moved to just outside Potes that we really felt their presence with snow clad peaks towering above the valley of the Deva.

The range covers an area of about 400 square miles and is divided into three massifs separated by deep and spectacular river gorges. The highest peak at just over 8600 ft is Torre de Cerrado, but there is a vast number of summits around the 8000ft mark. Probably the best known of the peaks is the distinctive Naranjo de Bulnes

8187ft - more of which in a later article.

Although high, precipitous, rocky and snow sprinkled the Picos are not forbidding mountains, and access to the main ridges is not too difficult. We took advantage of the lazy mans way up by using the cable car at Fuente Dé. The cable car took us up nearly 2500ft in only 3 minutes and deposited us at just over 6000ft. From the "Mirador del Cable" we were able to walk into the great masses of great limestone and savour the upper reaches of the Picos proper.

Despite the fact that stone and snow dominate the high ground there was enough greenery for a small herd of rather skinny cattle we met at about 7000ft! There is also a great variety of exotic plants which seem to, as if by magic, spring from cracks and crevices in the rock. We were amazed by the abundance of brightly coloured and inquisitive butterflies which danced attendance on us as well as other but less attractive insects. Lizards were also abundant, and eagles and vultures never far from view. In the more remote areas deer, ibex and bear occur but we saw no big game.

If the highmountains were impressive, then so were the steep sided river valleys. We either walked or drove along the sinuous gorges of Rios Deva, Cares, and Duje, and nevertired of the awe inspiring scenery.

F.H.

SLOW TRAIN TO SANTANDER

Due to the irregularity and secretiveness of buses in Spain we were on several occasions forced to resort to the use of trains.

One such situation occurred when we had to get from Ribadesella to Santander. With three others I was dumped at the station, if you could call it that, as it was run down and seedy with broken doors and windows, and the benches and even the platform in a bad way. The station

was packed out with an odd assortment of hippies and junkies who were leaving Ribadesella after the fiesta and canoe races of the previous two days. They did not seem concerned at the state of the place.

When the train eventually arrived from Oviedo, it was over an hour late. There was total chaos as the rush for tickets took place. The booking office did not open until the train arrived. We then crowded into a carriage and patiently awaited its departure.

The train itself was nothing to boast about. The carriages were very old, containing knife-slashed seats that were very close together. Only a few of the windows opened, and it was very hot and stuffy. There were ten carriages and five goods vans, all pulled by one very dirty clapped out diesel engine.

Eventually the train was slowly dragged away jerkily but we were dismayed when it stopped after only a few minutes. This stop-go procedure continued throughout the journey as we halted at every hamlet to pick up an odd person, or drop off bundles of newspapers. Due to this the doors of the carriages were nearly always open.

Once we got used to the routine and realised that we were in for a long journey, we settled back to enjoy the scenery. Much of the time we were going along the coast with impressive mountains to the south, passing through many small villages with their distinctive red tiled roofs

It took well over $4\frac{1}{2}$ hours to do the 80 mile journey to Santander, where the station was like a palace in comparison to the others we had passed through. I am not sure whether a bumpy ride in the back of the Bedford may not have been pleasanter after all.

Dave Williams

Answers to quiz on page 13

1. All have been capitals of Spain. 2. Don Quixote. 3. St James. 4. Manuel de Falla. 5. Red Nacional de los Ferrocarriles Espanoles - the Spanish Railways.

From "The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote de La Mancha"
by Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra.

Chapter LXXV.

In which Don Quixote and the faithful Sancho Panza discover the lost village, view the magic mountain, and the adventure of the lizard and the sad misfortune of the lens.

NARANJO DE BULNES

The V.S.L. and I headed away from the beaten track and into a steep sided gorge, the Salidas de Bulnes. We toiled up the steep twisting mule track with towering rocky cliffs on either side of us and a turquoise stream rushing below us. We were seeking a glimpse of the famed but elusive Naranjo de Bulnes, one of the highest and most spectacular of the Picos de Europa in the province of Asturias.

After about an hours walking through fine mountainous scenery, broken only by the occasional fellow walker we rounded a corner and Bulnes del Castilio came into view in the distance. The main part of the village lay in the valley bottom, obscured from our view. The houses which we could see were perched on a huge jutting outcrop of rock. We followed the track downward, crossed the river and pressed on upwards to the houses. Down below we saw more walkers beside the stream and above them at a great height it was possible to make out the dark forms of some vultures - natives of this region - which were catching thermals and soaring and spiraling skywards.

We had thought the upper part of the village to be deserted, but we met two ancient peasants and exchanged greetings before following the path down to the centre. It was intensely hot, but to our surprise we found that there was a shop (5 km from the nearest road)! We sat and took liquid refreshment in the shade, admiring the timeless old stone buildings.

Mini-siesta over, it was time to start the final part of the journey up the gorge to a spot where the V.S.L. had calculated that the mountain could be seen from.

We started to climb again, leaving the village behind. As we progressed further and further up the rough track I was beginning to lose hope that we would see the peak. We could see the tops of nearby smaller crags- were they obstacles which only served to conceal our objective? An excited cry from the V.S.L., and there it was! We moved a little further along, and were forced from the track by what appeared to be a moving haystack. It was a man carrying a huge bundle of hay wrapped in a tarpaulin and balanced on his head and shoulders. In a region with no roads tractors and other mechanical aids are useless to farmers.

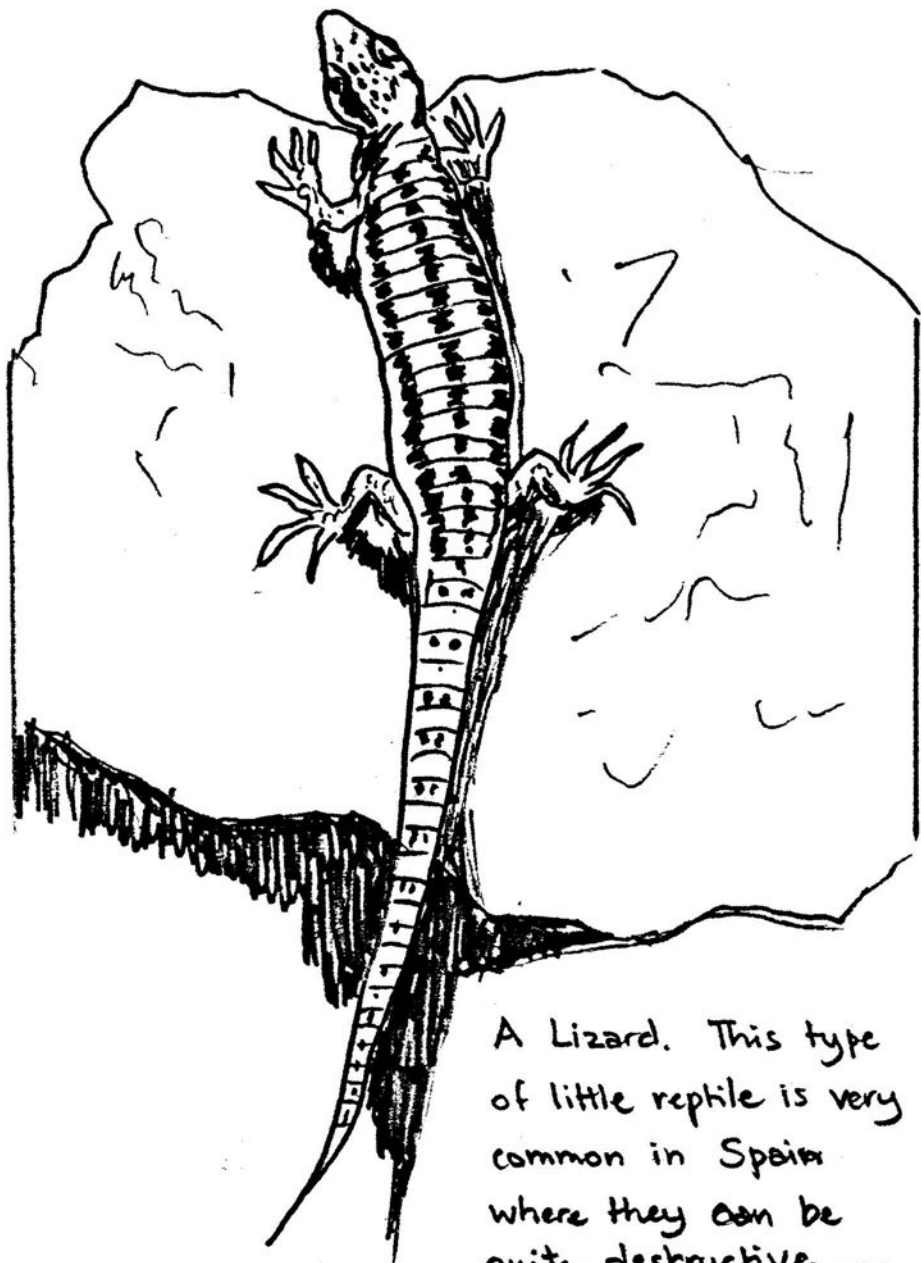
We stopped to sit on a stone wall by a steep grassy bank. Naranjo de Bulnes, 8187ft, stood before us. It was shimmering in a heat haze, with only its extraordinary outline visible. It had precipitous sides and an almost flat summit.

The V.S.L. photographed the mountain, using a variety of lenses, and when he turned round to place his camera in his rucksack, which was lying on the stone wall, he saw a small inquisitive lizard perched on the wall. It stood still for several seconds, and then darted off, apparently to seek refuge under the rucksack. The V.S.L. picked up the bag and a lens that had rested behind it toppled down the slope. Gathering speed and hitting the only rock in sight it disappeared into a small grove of trees. We rummaged in the undergrowth, and I found the battered remains. I tried to console the V.S.L. He then produced an orange, and we quenched our thirst before taking our final look at the mountain. This gesture was quite an appropriate one, as Naranjo means orange tree... Then we set off to join the others who had spent the day walking through the impressive gorge of the Rio Cares.

Jon Wright.



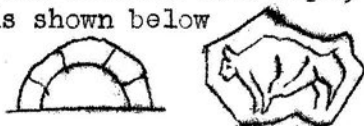
In the tumble of rocks that is the Picos de Europa Naranjo de Bulnes is not the highest summit, but it is certainly the most impressive



A Lizard. This type of little reptile is very common in Spain where they can be quite destructive.....

HUNTING THE CUEVA

The map of Northern Spain boasts many symbols that do not occur on our own beloved O.S. maps, and one of the more intriguing is shown below



cueva con Pinturas rupestres
(Cave with prehistoric drawings)

It was decreed that a visit should be made to one of these features during our stay, and so when we ventured west from Santander, it was to the picturesque medieval town of Santillana del Mar, from where we were in easy walking distance of Cuevas de Altamira.

The name Altamira is known to archeologists the world over as it is there that the most famous of all the illustrated caves is to be found.

Typically we arrived during siesta, to find the cave and museum closed. We patiently awaited the reopening—by now we were getting the hang of this siesta business! We were admitted to the museum and displays which were interesting, but sadly all the labels and explanations were in Spanish. Then we joined the queue to visit the cave. Imagine our disappointment to find that it was not THE cave. Although it contained some impressive formations, there were no drawings. Much later on our trip we learned that visits to the famous cave, with its very impressive and huge bison paintings were strictly limited. So ended our first essay in cueva hunting.

During the next week we passed on various occasions areas where illustrated cuevas were supposed to exist, but other matters claimed our attention, and it was when we were considering heading back to Santander that the next opportunity of a visit occurred. We were heading for Covadonga when we saw advertised the Cueva del Buxu. We

followed the signs and drove up a steep narrow road. It was difficult to park, but we did so and headed for the entrance. A small notice gave the message which when translated said that only 25 visitors a day were allowed and above this the simple legend "Completo". Cursing the quaint Spanish customs we retreated, and later in the day arrived at Ribadesella, noting that the famous Cueva Tito Bustillo was closed - fiesta - BUT would be open at 10 o'clock next day.

Monday morning saw seven of our number paying their pesetas and being ushered through an iron gate into what looked suspiciously like a modern tunnel beside a small stream issuing from the cliff side. We passed through a series of four hefty iron doors until we came into a big natural cavern. From our guides rapid Spanish we deduced that the tunnel had been constructed to circumvent an ancient rock fall which had blocked the cave and kept its secrets until it was penetrated by cave explorers twenty two years ago.

We then walked nearly a kilometer through the great cave, marvelling at the magnificent stalagmites and huge stalactites. Minerals in the water had stained the formations in shades of red, green, blue and brown. At last our guide stopped and with a hand torch drew our gaze to a section of cave wall. At first we could only see shape-less coloured blotches, but they quickly resolved into the forms of horses and men, deer, and the ubiquitous bison - red and yellow shapes outlined in black. Despite the fact that we could not understand the commentary, it was with a sense of profound awe as, kneeling or crouched on the floor we were shown the art of primitive man. It is estimated from Carbon 14 dating that the paintings were probably about 15-17,000 years old. As we walked back along the passage we all felt our persistence at the hunting of the cueva had been richly rewarded.

F.H.

IMPRESSIONS (TWO)

with regards to any holiday one remembers the enjoyable times. The factor which I best recall about Spain is its people.

Individuals, after all, make a place, and throughout our travels, whatever the site, we managed to meet local people who were friendly towards us.

In order of personal preference, if I return to the north of Spain, Caravia would be my major stop. Although on first inspection it appeared quiet, with little to offer, it was there that I experienced the warmth of the local hospitality, having been treated to a meal and a number of drinks. The people there were a credit to the country.

La isla will be best remembered by the remainder of our party. Everyone was impressed by a group of Guides celebrating their departure. Here I tried "Spanish Vodka" and Simon experienced more natural delights, and from then on his back began to peel.... (Some mistake, surely)

In conclusion therefore, Spain is in some respects similar to Britain in that at first it may seem to be inhospitable, but if one is able to ignore this primary shell, underneath is a yolk of friendship, and a country with hidden depths to be sought.

Andy Deeble.

Cave drawings



Bison (Altamira)



Horse (C. de T. Bustillo)

COVADONGA

Appropriately it was on a Sunday that we set off to Covadonga. It was soon apparent that a great many of the local inhabitants had the same idea, and the narrow road into the mountains was very busy. To us it was just a day out, but to many of the Spanish visitors it was more of a pilgrimage to a national shrine.

At Covadonga, beside the great medieval Basilica, is the cave in which lies the body of Pelayo who in 718 A.D. led the warriors of Asturias against the moors and began the reconquest of Spain for Christendom.

We joined the throng of devout pilgrims and made our way to the shrine in the cave. A young monk held up a placard inscribed "Silencio" as the jostling crowd moved towards the resplendent gilded altar. The glow of a thousand candles was augmented by the brightly coloured electric lights...

Don Alejandro finished his rosary. Then after some reflection he opened his weary eyes; he saw his helmet in front of him carrying the scars of a recent conflict; held in his right hand was his sword, its golden hilt gleaming in the midday sun; draped over his mail his once white mantle. He arose, but feeling faint tried to support himself with his sword, failed, and went crashing onto the limestone floor. When he regained consciousness some time later he did not feel stuporous but strangely refreshed. As he rose again he remembered his dream, that of someone not unlike himself casting something down upon him, and of his casting the sword in return. He picked up his rosary and replaced it in his purse, but when he picked up his sword, he felt a sudden repugnance never before known to him. It was as if he was shackled to something against his will. Turning, he saw the pool beneath and without a moments hesitation he cast the sword out into the void. He watched the gleam-

ing blade twist and turn in its arc. Only now was he aware of the cruciform of his sword.

José Ferri completed his rosary and opened his eyes. He rubbed his bruised arm; both young and old alike had scrummaged their way up to the cave wherein lay the sepulchre of Pelayo and the altar before which he knelt. He stood up and noted sadly the lack of respect shown by the majority of pilgrims for their God and religion. He turned and walked to the edge of the cave and gazed into the pool below. He saw himself reflected in the pool, and at the bottom some coins. He took a handful of pesetas from his pocket, casting them downwards... Below the rippled surface the reflection seemed to change, it was as if he saw a knight casting away his weapon of war. He turned uneasily away from the pool and walked slowly down the steps, past the garish gift shop, still clutching his rosary and contemplating what he had seen.

Brian Symcox

A GLOSSARY OF USEFUL SPANISH WORDS

Agua minerale; In England we would call it tap water, but in Spain you buy it in bottles.

Bagette; Not even a Spanish word, but we seemed to use it a good deal.

Caballero; The legend over the toilet that you DO go in (see also Señora, which is over the toilet you DON'T go in to.)

Doce; Twelve; invaluable word when shopping for the party

España; Where you go for Fiesta, Siesta and Mañana

Fiesta; Long period (several days) when no one does any thing except sleep, eat and drink. See also Siesta, a shorter period during afternoon for same activities.

Gringo; One of us.

- H; a letter that the Spanish seem to manage without.
Inglés; Us again, but politer than Gringo.
Jefferey; A Welsh irritant found either in the Picos
or Powys.
Kas; Refreshing orange drink.
Leche; Milk, U.H.T.
Mañana; Tomorrow, when most Spaniards plan to do things
The idea caught on well with our group.
Naranja; Special word used by the Spanish to infuriate
and confuse visitors. Totally unpronounceable.
Believed to mean orange.
Ola; What you say to Spaniards you meet in the hills;
it works O.K. on Dutch and Germans too.
Paella; The staple diet of all Spaniards EXCEPT for
the inhabitants of Cantabria and Asturias.
Que! Useful word when addressed in Spanish, should be
followed by shrug of shoulder, grim and the words
"no entente"
Refugio; Hut in the mountains; good spot for siesta.
Siesta; See Fiesta, etc.
Tienda; Tent, but it also means shop, so can be a bit
confusing.
Umbrio; The shade, good place to pitch your tienda, or
enjoy siesta.
Xilophone; Xylophone.
Yo; I, not you, which is tu, or te or ti, or even
usted or ustedes, N.B. not us, which is nos or,
well it doesn't really matter, we can sort it out
manana.
Zaga; to lag - "ir a la zaga" to lag behind... What
you tend to do if a hike strays into siesta time.

EDITORS NOTE All that he asks is that his readers shall accord to this account such credit as intelligent men usually give to those works which are so highly valued in the world. With this he will feel rewarded and satisfied, and will be encouraged to seek other histories as ingenious and entertaining. (Apologies to Cervantes)

