

Many Factors Draw Tourist to Spain

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is another in a series of dispatches to The Eccentric from Donald Dennis and his wife, Margaret, as they make a seven-month trip around the world. Dennis teaches art at Bloomfield Hills High School; his wife is a visiting teacher in the same school system. The following letter is written about Spain.

The Iberian peninsula has been blessed with some of the most beautiful coastline in the world, and until recently, this blessing had been left dormant for a variety of man-made reasons. Now the doors of Spain are opening for the rest of the world to come in. The government is beginning to utilize this natural beauty in the hopes that tourism will revive a sagging economy.

MUCH TO THE consternation of the old-guard tourists and to the delight of Spain and its new admirers, e.g., vacationists are flocking into this country by the tens of thousands.

Hotels are being constructed at an alarming rate all along the coast, and they are still unable to absorb many of these visitors. Add to this the fact that the Spaniard himself is beginning to have more leisure time and to spend more money, and the picture is complete. A one-time bargain paradise is fast becoming a competitive tourist market.

DON'T DESPAIR over this influx of tourism, however, as Spain and the traveler are both benefitting from the results.

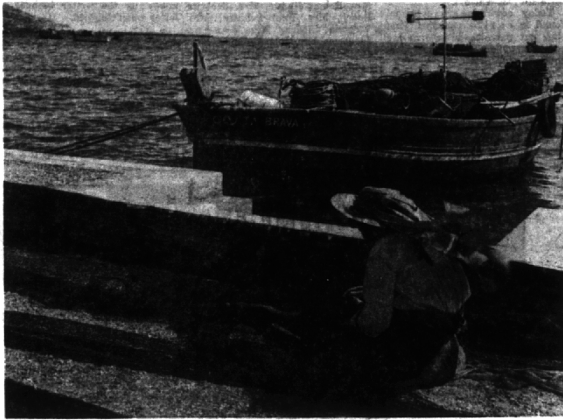
One-time nightmarish roads are opening into modern highways, frustrating transportation delays are being minimized, almost all accommodations are new and best first rate facilities at rock bottom prices.

True, these prices have doubled or tripled in the last five years, but they are still the best accommodations in Europe at half the amount you would pay elsewhere.

FROM THE Costa Brava to Seville, the terrain along the Mediterranean goes through a variety of ups and downs that dazzle the eye.

When it becomes mountainous, rugged red sun-baked cliffs hug the coastline, crested with the famous medieval forts and castles that tell of the many invasions. When it flattens, long stretches of golden sand move to meet the blue-green sea, and even today there are many beaches that seem completely deserted.

The variations continue for hundreds of miles, and the only two things that they seem to have in common are the beautiful Mediterranean and an abundance of sunshine.



SPAIN'S ECONOMY is and for a long time has been linked to the sea. Even today fishing villages dot the coast. Attendant local color, such as this Spanish woman mending the nets, aids not only the fishing industry, it also helps attract tourists.

THE TOURIST, of course, looks to this area solely for the pleasures of relaxation that it offers.

The Spaniard, on the other hand, thinks in terms of livelihood. The sea has become one of the chief sources of food for his diet, and the fishing industry is one of the most important to Spain.

This direct communion with the water has also lured many a Spaniard to the sea in search of distant treasures as the new world can testify.

Today this same lure is awakening a strong desire in Spain to trade with the rest of the world.

AS A RESULT of these two activities, her seaports are thriving with ships of all kinds and even the most secluded village seems to have a fishing fleet.

One of the most interesting sights for us to see was the swelling of the beach population by Spanish families as a result of religious holidays. The first time that it happened we were painting along the Costa Brava in the north of Catalonia; the second time was this past week, while we were spending some time along the coastline between Barcelona and Valencia.

FIRST, THE ROADS became jammed with every conceivable conveyance and all were heading for the sea. Next, there was a wave of humanity that made all beaches appear like Sunday afternoon at Coney Island and then a

mass exodus of sunburned, but happy Spaniards returned to work, leaving the beaches to the foreigners.

The Spaniard is a devout family man and quite often his warmth and hospitality make strangers feel a part of his family. This fact, along with the excellent regional foods and wines of the country do much to lure the tourist and make him want to stay.

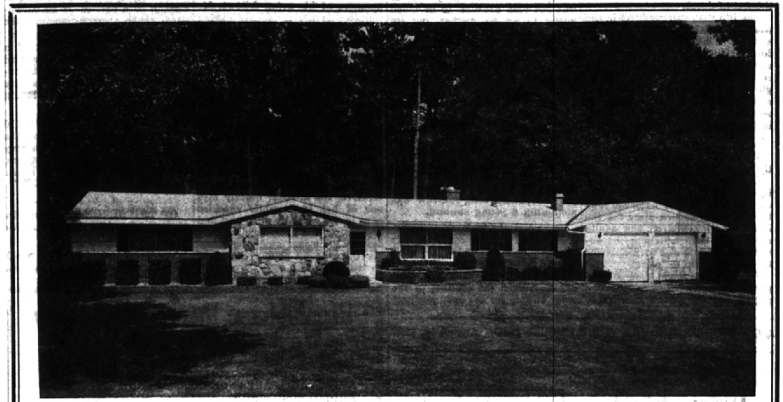
A DINNER of Paella Valenciana, washed down with Sangria, is a must.

Even though he may have adopted "Western" clothing and many "Western" ideas, he still adheres to the age-old Moorish custom of observing the mid-day siesta. This means work from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., siesta from 1 to 4 p.m. then back to work from 8 p.m. to 10 p.m. The evening meal is usually family affair that begins around 9 or 10 p.m. and is followed by a leisurely stroll through the plaza or along a promenade situated in the middle of wide streets.

CHILDREN are seldom in bed until after midnight and adults until 2 a.m. (This may extend itself into the wee hours of dawn if there is a good classic "Flamenco" dance being performed somewhere or Spanish guitarists are giving a concert.)

Couple this with a trip to church Sunday morning and to the bullfight late in the afternoon, and you have some of the flavor of Spain—the flavor that continues to expand tourism here and gives color that one is not likely to forget soon.

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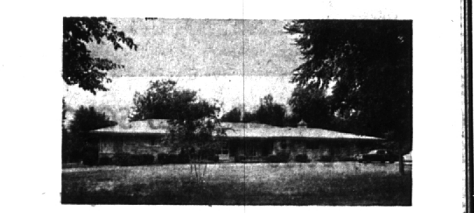
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