

## **SGC Barcelona Tour 2007**

The Barcelona tour flew by in a whirl of sand, sun cream, singing and of course ice cream. It was most certainly unforgettable and I will carry many happy memories and amazing experiences with me for the rest of my life.

It all started that very early morning in mid July, sitting in the lay by awaiting our chariot to arrive which would carry us away from the bleak British daybreak.

When the coach did arrive (fashionably late, naturally) it was quite a relief for me to collapse in my saved seat beside Becca and drift off to some well deserved sleep (I'd spent the last two hours running around the house like a crazed loon grabbing those all important last minute items to pack!). The journey sped past and before I knew it we were being dragged out of our new "home" for a toilet stop, and then back onto it again . . . and then off, onto the ferry! My ferry gang indulged ourselves in the eye popping reality of "Real People" magazine (which then inspired us to write a problems letter of our own . . .). Other members of the choir preferred to indulge in the ships shopping and cafeteria facilities, it was to be a long journey ahead . . .

Before I knew it, we were in Calais and were well on our way! "Sky High" was the choice of entertainment, of which, I slept though as we trundled through the idyllic French countryside. There were many more offerings of "in-drive entertainment" none of which I can recall, due to being unable to keep my eyes open for the vast majority of our 10 hour drive!

Being the nocturnal being that I am, I awoke as we approached our lodgings for the night, those being at the Lyon branch of the Hotel Campanile, just in time to join in with a quick rendition of "Crazy Moose" and "I saw a Bird". By that time as I'm sure you'd have guessed, we were driven mad by hunger.

The iron vice grip of starvation marched us all into the dining area of the hotel, where we were gratefully endowed with some fine French cuisine. Well, it certainly tasted like it to us! Once fed and watered by the friendly waiters, (who kindly humored our poor attempts to communicate in their mother tongue!) Rooms were arranged, and we were sent to collect our luggage and drag it up a hill, then in the case of my room, up two flights of unforgiving stairs. Once all three of us had managed to sort out the camp bed so it wouldn't flip up and eat Jenny in the middle of the night, myself and my two Room mates, Helen and Jenny were very grateful to be bedded down for the night. Although by that point I was already finding it difficult to sleep in a lying position . . .

After a continental breakfast, we were on our way again, bright and early for another day of traveling. Another 10 hours of my life that swirled by in a semi conscious state. However, I was always awake enough to get off at each toilet stop, I'd learnt from past experience to never miss a service station opportunity! There I was able to invest in some French reading material in the form of teen magazines, and some "Coke Black" (an energy drink unavailable in our own fair isle) of which I decided to "save for later". I

greatly enjoyed the final leg of our journey, as our friendly, knowledgeable Portuguese coach driver, Manuel gave us a running commentary of the sights to look out for.

Never the less, we were all glad to stumble, blinking, into the bright Spanish daylight when we finally reached our destination. “The Hotel Esplendid.” After much debate and a fair bit of secretive plotting, it was decided by me, Cat, Helen, Jenny and Becca that the only thing for us to do, was to be able to achieve a room of 5. We couldn’t get through the tour any other way, we were the fantastic 5. To our dismay, maximum amount of people to a room was four, typical. This resulted in us, carefully lifting a bed over the conveniently low walls that separated each room’s veranda, and squeezing it in. It was a tight fit, but was well worth it. Thus room number 4 became affectionately known as the “Refugee camp”. Either the cleaning staff turned a blind eye, or were too overblown by the surge of mess to even bother entering. It was a miracle that we could get the door closed, never mind our suitcases! We wouldn’t have had it any other way.

The low walls weren’t only used for furniture shifting however! They were excellent access points and escape routes into rooms of other friends! It was lovely to pay each other visits, or even gossip while leaning over the walls. How convenient! Not only that, they served as washing lines for wet beach wear, seats, tables etc. We certainly used them to their whole potential!

The days that followed were of a relaxing nature, visits down to the beach, or dunks in the pool under the watchful eye of our own tour lifeguard, Hugo. He also sought out to be our body guard protecting us from Spanish rascals lurking in the waters, who seemed to have a thing for English choir girls!

Naturally, a tour isn’t just about sun, sea and sand (or lounging about watching German MTV in our hotel rooms, which we were very excited to discover!). We obviously had to do some singing in order to make the trip worthwhile. We certainly weren’t disappointed with the venues we sang at!



The monastery in Montserrat was absolutely breath taking. Despite our slot being a short one, the sheer expanse of the people watching, and the magnificence of the building made the upward, dizzy journey we had to embark on to get there well worth it. (The monastery was situated in amongst the Pyrenees). Plus, for those of us that braved the Venicular (a lift that went up a mountain) the views were spectacular. Another of my favourite venues was in the amazing Barcelona Cathedral! My Spanish teacher was very impressed that I’d sung there when I casually dropped it in during a Spanish aural practice!

A tour is not a tour without some kind of Drama. This being a girls choir tour, that means double the drama! The first of those said dramas was the discovery of Ronald Corps choir staying in the same hotel as us! Singing our repertoire! This threw many of us into a state of hysteria while watching their initial concert by the poolside! Yet, as Roger and Rosemary told us, the songs don't actually belong to us, thus they can sing what they like. Never the less, we, being the professionals that we are, allowed ourselves to be included in one of their concerts, heads held high!

The second of the dramas was when my sister slipped on her platform flip flops (yes you heard me right!) fell over and fractured her thumb! This obviously caused quite a stir, resulting in an early morning hospital trip, and no more swimming for Alice! (No more platform flip flops for her either, they were confiscated and kept under control!). She kept her thumb strapped up and thankfully it's now fully healed! Rather an inconvenience at the time though naturally . . . Especially as Alison had to keep telling her off for hanging things off it . . .

We did in fact all make it to Disneyland in one piece! Including accident prone Alice! The French youth hostel we stayed in the night before has to have been my favourite overnight stop. It was situated in such beautiful surroundings; I was in awe and wish I could have stayed there forever! We were allowed free reign of the place really, and the large room sizes were an advantage for us (no bed lifting this time!). It was like a big sleepover! We all drifted off to sleep with smiles on our faces, Disneyland beckoned us! Despite it being one of the last places we would travel to together, we were all looking forward to it. All be it some of us weren't looking forward to the early morning ahead!

We did indeed drift off to sleep with smiles on our faces, only to be awoken at an ungodly hour by my sister's obvious nasal problems! I, being in the bunk below her took it upon myself to sort her out, thus leaned out of my bed, whacked her with a pillow and told her to "control herself". This worked for a precious few minutes, but then Darth Vader seemed to possess her again. It was a long night for the other 7 of us in that room!

The concert in Disneyland was fantastic for all of us. We had a rather large audience at our performance (always nice!) all of whom seemed to enjoy our choral offerings! Singing there was great, but of course, what made the day were the rides! My "Disney gang" literally threw ourselves into getting on all the rides we had on our pre-prepared mental lists! The day whizzed by at an unbelievable speed and it seemed like we had only just got there when it was time to leave.



The journey home was an emotional one as we travelled through the night, mostly due to exhaustion! On the ferry we dropped like flies, the majority of the choir spreading out on sofas in the seating area! I, for once, remained awake, trying to drink in the atmosphere of those last few hours we had left. It seemed like only yesterday that we were floating across that same stretch of water in the opposite direction. It had flown by as tours always do. I want to go back now and do it all again!

Emily Charlton