



Salamanca, Spain

After a full afternoon of cruising along the UNESCO World Heritage site of Upper Douro River valley and partying all night and learning how to make decorative table napkins, we got up for an early breakfast and departure for another UNESCO World Heritage site, the old City of Salamanca, 50 miles across the Spanish border. This is the



The cathedrals of Salamanca across the ancient Roman stone bridge

second most populated urban center in the community of Castille and Leon next to Valladolid, and even larger than Leon and Burgos. This is where the oldest University of Spain, the University of Salamanca, is located, the fourth oldest in Western civilization, having been founded in 1134, but the very first one to be granted a "Pontifical" status, like our own University of Santo Tomas, giving it an International recognition at that time. It was here that the important intellectuals in the Age of Discoveries like *Christopher Columbus*, *Hernan Cortés* and *Francisco Vázquez de Coronado* came to teach or learn or was born. Even notable religious figures, mostly Dominicans, went to school here, including St. John of the Cross and the "reformist", Ignatius Loyola. It is no wonder then that even today, the city's economy is dominated by tourism and by the University that boasts of an International student population and is a very important center for teaching and learning the Spanish language, civil law and canon law, among other specialties.

Going up the slopes of the valley from the Upper Douro river was becoming a familiar experience as we wound through the



scenic narrow roads until we finally crossed the Portuguese-Spanish border and got to the flatter grounds of the Province of Salamanca in the community of Castille and Leon. There was



Timely pit stop at Hotel Fenix before exploring Salamanca



enough time to play the rosary before we reached the outskirts of the old city where we stopped at Hotel Fenix and made use of the restrooms of the restaurant. The ritual that by now was perfected by the "water closet brigade" commenced with the ladies falling in their familiar long lines and the men hurriedly doing their thing. The men's room was then cordoned off as the ladies who did not mind using the room were ushered in, thereby shortening the ordeal of relieving ourselves. For those who got done early, the wait was not wasted as they sampled the local cuisine of *chicharon* and *lechon kawali*. Many took advantage of the excellent Internet connection and caught up with their emails and news. Then it was time to get serious and explore the wonders of the old city of Salamanca.

We were greeted by the glassed walls of the *Casa Lis*, the Art Nouveau and Art Deco museum, but we left this as our last stop as we gathered later in the day before heading home. A slow walk on paved streets to the top of the hill with a short stop at the *Colegio de San Ambrosio* that is now the repository of the archives of the Spanish Civil War (Generalissimo Franco regime that made Salamanca its headquarters). We eventually came to



Casa Lis Art Nouveau & Deco museum



Colegio de San Ambrosio

the two adjacent cathedrals with the older Romanesque section built in the 12th century and finished with Gothic influence in the 14th century that was dedicated to *Santa Maria de la Sede* (Saint Mary of the See) and the newer and larger Gothic section being started in the 16th century and finished in the 18th century with Baroque features as was becoming the more popular style at that time, especially evident in the dome and the bell tower that was built over parts of the older cathedral. The new cathedral was named *Catedral Nueva de Asuncion de la Virgen* to commemorate the Assumption



Santa Teresa de Avila

THE CATHEDRALS OF SALAMANCA



New Gothic Catedral de la Asuncion de la Virgen



Older Romanesque Catedral de Santa Maria de la Sede



Apse of the Old Cathedral



Lateral facade of the New Cathedral



Ieronimus museum with bell tower and new cathedral



Baroque copula of the new cathedral



Inside the Catedral Nueva de la Asuncion de la Virgen



Capilla de Santa Barbara



Ched, Sylvia & Mindy going up the bell tower



Atop the old cathedral by the bell tower



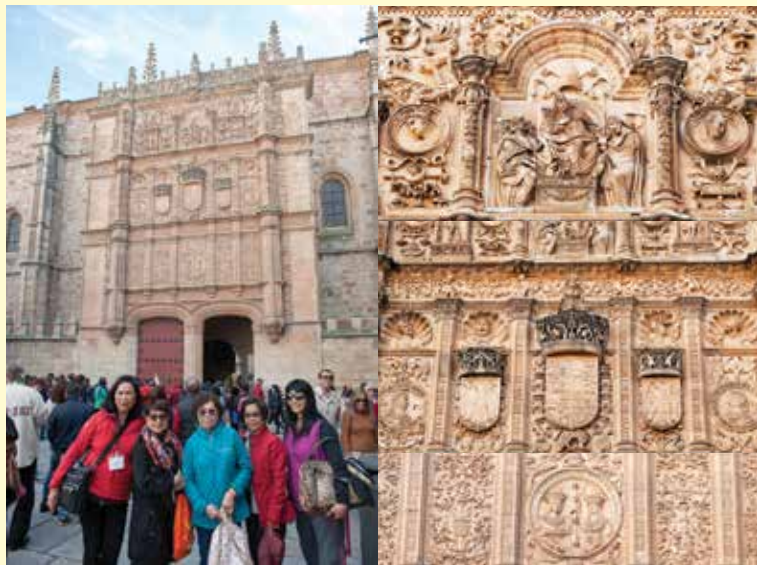
In the bell tower overlooking the city

of the Blessed Virgin. We were greeted by the statue of *Santa Teresa of Avila* at the lobby of the new cathedral. Both sections were very interesting and as grandiose as one can imagine. The apse of the old cathedral was made up of 53 tableau depicting the life of Jesus, above which was a fresco of the Final Judgment. The multiple chapels were equally as splendid. Later during



our free time, we were able to go up the bell tower through the *Ieronimus* museum and looked at the roofs and inside of both cathedrals, their naves and altars and even enjoyed the view of the *Tormes* and *Transtormes* neighborhood from an excellent vantage point. We had our heads rung when the bells rang at an inopportune time. I think it was providential as our minds were clearer thereafter.

The University of Salamanca with the statue of *Fray Luis de Leon* in front of the Plateresque facade with its incredible very detailed bas reliefs was just next door. *Fray Luis de Leon* was



Plateresque facade of the University of Salamanca

the famous Theologian who translated the Song of Solomon in Spanish and was put in jail by the Spanish Inquisition and came out five years later and started his first lecture with the famous phrase "*as I was saying yesterday ...*" There were several small lecture rooms around the courtyard that were now displays of how it was during the old days. The chapel inside was also a sight to behold. It was truly a center of learning in its heydays



Fray Luis classrooms and chapel of University of Salamanca

and the tradition continues on to the present day.

The short walk to the *Plaza Mayor*, perhaps one of the best



Plaza Mayor de Salamanca

in the country, passed by shops and restaurants, including few that served *cochinillo asado* (roasted suckling pig or *lechon na biik*). No wonder some had wandered off during lunch to enjoy this tasteful delicacy. Most went to the restaurant by the *Casa de las Conchas* (House of Shells) that was once the convent of the Order of Santiago (hence the association of pilgrims with shells)



Cochinillo Asado



Being called a "ham" is no joke, even if pictures are taken of you

located in front of the *La Clerecia* that is now the Pontifical University though it used to belong to the Jesuits until they were expelled. Oh just a little trivia about politics in religion. It was drizzling and it was a little cold as we gradually trekked down the hill to the *Casa Lis Art Nouveous and Art Deco museum* to keep warm while waiting for the buses to arrive. The ride back to Vega de Teron was long and quiet. A sumptuous dinner of *paella* was waiting for us at *MS Gil Eanes* as our chefs proudly paraded them in big platters. It was indeed a feast day, both for the eyes and mind, and for our now increasingly more demanding gastronomic appetite.

