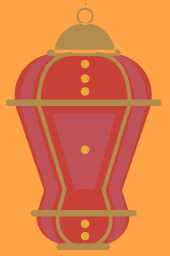




# Good surprises!



While taking notes in my Art History class at the beginning of the month in October, a name of a particular city kept coming up: Mérida. The capital of the neighboring province of Extremadura, this humble city of 60,000 people was and is still famous for one very intriguing phenomenon: Roman architecture. I, of course, only had the vaguest notion that the Romans had existed in Spain at all, let alone that they had such an influential and dominating presence, so the prospect of getting to see the remnants of a brilliant world was hugely intriguing to me. And when would I ever be this close to Mérida again?



In the Roman theater, in Mérida

And thus, I did something I never thought I would: I took a solo trip. I hopped on a bus, hopped off that bus, and stumbled, blinking, into a deeply beautiful city where the historic relics of a long-dead kingdom rested casually and commonly next to modern buildings. For only 16 euro, I purchased a ticket to see the Roman circus, theater, amphitheater, place of worship, and funeral areas. It was wonderful. I learned everything I hoped I would, and I was stunned and in awe by the remnants of this brilliant land, and more than that, I realized something absolutely mind-blowing: this was manageable. Small adversities like the bus being late or my phone needing more power weren't as intimidating as I thought they would be. With my entrance ticket and portable charger in hand, I could conquer any ancient empire.



Enjoying solo travel in Madrid

And so I did. I went to visit Madrid during the puente weekend, taking the train by myself for the very first time, and immediately discovered endless streets flooded with flags and soldiers, with people proclaiming "Feliz Dia de España!" on every street corner. It was truly wondrous to get to see and watch.

In order to describe my Morocco experience, I need only one sentence: Yes, I did ride a camel! Everyone was equally enamored with that concept, their eyes lit up in wonder, and for good reason. It may sound silly, but I genuinely could not stop giggling the entire time. I was just thrilled. I'm just so grateful I got to witness this small piece of Northern Africa through the ICS program. I never thought it would be something I would get the chance to do.



In Cape Spartel, Morocco

I guess in all this, there's one overarching theme that I should take away: I'm surprising myself. I am accomplishing things I thought I couldn't, and I am becoming better for it. If I have done all this growing in just the past month, I cannot wait to see where I am one more month from now.

For the unabridged version, please click here: [ics-seville.org/blogs](https://ics-seville.org/blogs).