

1 March 2007

Postcard from Andorra

Wesley Trobaugh



While a spending a weekend in a country is not nearly enough to draw conclusions, had I been given a couple more days, I could have done an in-depth analysis of one of the smallest countries in the world.

I don't ski. If you don't ski in Andorra, on a winter day you practically get the country to yourself. My plan was to explore La Massana and its surroundings on Saturday. Maggy, my dog, and I left the hotel at 9:30, abandoned by our beloved skiers. By 10:00, we had seen the town of La Massana and drunk a salty Vichy Catalan. Now what? We went to buy some *llonganissa* and *bull*. We walked to all of the furthest extremes of the town, even into places I think we weren't supposed to walk into, in hopes of finding some hidden architectural treasure tucked out of sight. We found nothing of the sort.

On my map, I saw a neighborhood on the hill behind and above the hotel, El Pui. To Maggy's dismay, I decided to climb that mountain, too, and go see the church that was marked so largely and clearly. We got to a group of houses

and, assuming this was the neighborhood marked on the map, searched for a church. We walked around several times, me utterly confused and Maggy more irritable by the second, before I saw the bell. A little bell on top of a tiny building I had assumed to be a shed. I looked in the window and in that temple that made my bathroom look like a palace, there was an altar. This was my church! Mission accomplished, we traipsed back down the hill. It was 12:00.

For my late morning excursion to Pal, most attractive according to andorra.ad, I decided to leave Maggy and take the 1:30 bus to Pal. I would see the town, have lunch, and catch the 3:30 bus back down to La Massana. It was a perfect plan. Or it would have been a perfect plan. Pal is the Romanesque lover's dream. For ten minutes. I was alone. I had two hours. In Pal I saw a total of one person and one cat. The Plaça Major had a garage and a faucet posing as a fountain. Xixerella was only 2 kilometres down the mountain. Instead of waiting around Pal for two hours, I decided to walk. I passed a restaurant but I was embarrassed to eat alone. God, was I stupid. Just when I was walking down the road, too far to turn back yet still far from the next town, it started to rain. Cars sped past me, their passengers probably laughing, as I got more and more soaked. When I did get to Xixerella, *alleluia*, I was no longer embarrassed and was willing to go anywhere, willing to pay any price, willing to eat ANYTHING, as long as I could sit down and get dry. Luckily enough, there was a restaurant and there I ate (*una taula per a un...*) and waited until it was 3:30 and I could run out and flag the bus down.

I got back to La Massana unharmed, wet, but unharmed. The afternoon and next morning were spent in Andorra la Vella, where at least I knew I wouldn't be alone in the middle of a mountain town. Pending: Ordino, Sant Julià de Lòria, Meritxell...