

"Hidden Gems of Andalucia" Gathering - 17-21 September 2011

Five days in southern Spain, together with twelve other 5W women: I had no idea really what to expect. This was my first 5W Gathering, and I got to attend with one of my closest friends. I had a feeling it would be very special, and it was.

At the end of our time together, when I asked the others for one word to sum up the experience, they said such things as: compatibility, idyllic, overwhelming, majestic, educational, invigorating, enriching, friendly, comfortable, fattening, and wonderful! One participant summed up the Gathering as "soporific" which, after her explanation, did make some sense since we were so much on-the-go during our five days.

What did we do together as thirteen women from seven countries? We stayed at a rural inn, surrounded by olive trees and thousands of night-time stars. We ate sumptuous food, including Japanese and Indian meals prepared by the participants. We shared stories about our travels, our lives, and our home countries. We visited off-the-beaten-track – and unbelievable! - natural wonders. We danced at a village festival, relaxed, swam, laughed, and took long walks.



One particularly memorable afternoon was our first meal together. After settling into our rooms, we drifted out to the patio. The air was fresh and clear, the setting exquisite, and to top it off, a 5W member from Japan greeted us with beautiful ocarina melodies. She had come all the way from Chiba, Japan to join us. I could not imagine a more perfect way to kick off the week.

Things got even better from there, as we each reached out to the others and began to find out about each other and our magical surroundings. The presence of Roman, Gothic, Moorish, and Spanish architecture, cuisine, and other cultural artefacts — spanning more than 5,000 years of human history — fascinated us all, especially when superimposed over the eons of geological wonders we saw and touched.

Finally, I want to thank our two 5W hostesses for stepping forward to dream about and then plan the incredible week we spent together. It gave us hope for our collective futures.

Viva 5W!