

Sheridan unjustly written off
'Desperate Housewives'?

B5

Gomez- no apologies
for relationship with Bieber

B6

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SEVILLE,

A PART OF SPAIN THAT'S NOT MADRID
(part one of a series about Spanish cities that are not Madrid)

BY MANNY GONZALEZ, PLANTATION BAY RESORT AND SPA

CATHEDRAL. As you approach and again as you leave the Cathedral, horse-drawn carriages wait to relieve you of 50 Euro a pop (but okay, they're worth it).



CHERRY ANNT. LIM Managing Editor [Special Pages & Features]

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PORTRAIT. The author usually tries to find a painting with lots of bare flesh, but, this being Spain, this is the best he could come up with. However, note the suggestive expression on this Seville noblewoman's lips.

My hotel in Seville had never seen a Filipino before (this sort of makes it even – most Filipinos have never heard of Seville). The front desk person looked at my passport, then my name, then me. “*Es de descendencia Española?*” (Is it of Spanish descent?) she asked, somewhat dubiously. To which I had to answer – in pretty good Spanish, if I say so myself, having taken conversation lessons before embarking on the trip – “*El perro esta corriendo. Vamos a almorzar. Le gusta la película?*” (The dog is running. Let us each lunch. Did you like the movie?). Which no doubt answered her question adequately.

Cracked china

This particular hotel was located in the heart of the old residential barrio, which meant that for miles in every direction, the streets were just three meters wide, and arranged like cracked china. Fortunately I was in the company of a truly talented map-reader, so we never got lost (except for one night, when said map-reader opined that we had “wandered off the map” when in fact we were 50 meters from the hotel).

For the benefit of historically-challenged readers, Seville was the place from which Magellan's and many subsequent expeditions set sail, and the place to which the gold plundered from Aztecs and Incas came back (also syphilis, maybe, though this claim is now under challenge).

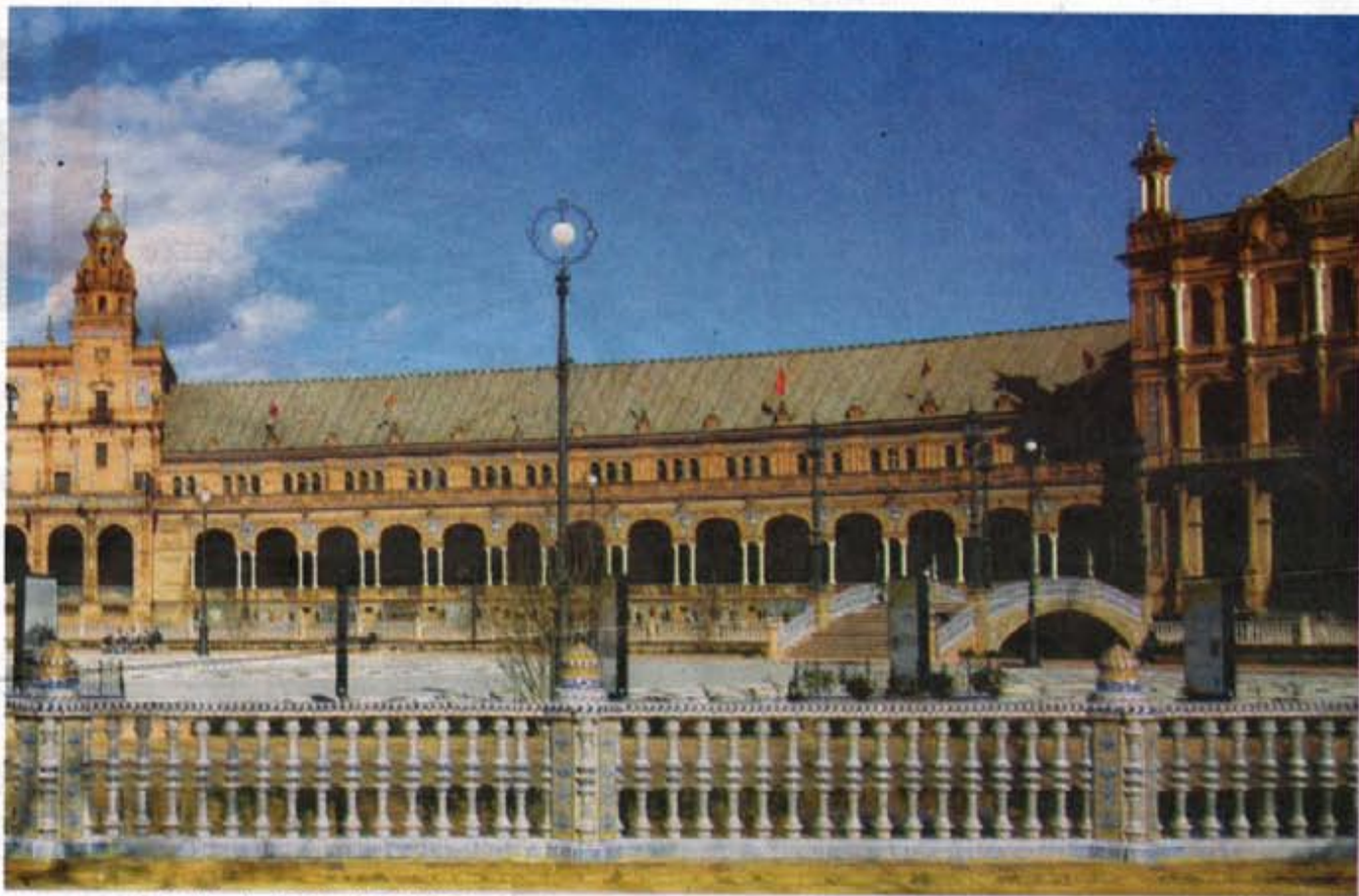
So it should not be too surprising that some of Seville's downtown looks a lot like parts of old Manila – nothing specific, but the same general sense of space, plus a river (the Guadalquivir) that looks like the Pasig, though slightly cleaner.

First things first

The first thing we did in Seville was visit the Museo de Bellas Artes. This was more or less an accident, since we had gotten lost coming out of the hotel, but you should always be open to a little culture. And admission was free. Though I tried hard, as I usually do, to find something provocative to present to readers, the best I could come up with was this (see picture).

The second thing we did in Seville was see the Cathedral. This was to get the Three Wishes, of course, and only secondarily to see what had been the largest church in all Christendom, when built with aforesaid New World plunder (it has since been demoted to third place, give or take).

The Cathedral is fine, though as I am fond of saying, if you've seen one church, you've seen them all. For example, if



PLAZA DE ESPAÑA. Built for the 1929 World's Fair, the Plaza de España still does service as a tourist attraction and movie set.



ALCÁZAR. Pedro the Cruel built this *mujedar*-style palace, but spent so much time hunting that his wife had to find other means of entertaining herself.

you've seen Malate Church, or Knott's Berry Farm, or a wayside chapel, you can pretty much give most cathedral interiors a miss, especially if they charge admission, as this and many other churches in Europe do.

Anyway, the surroundings – constituting Seville's tourist downtown – are better than the Cathedral itself, and absolutely the best way to see them is by horse-drawn carriage – a bargain at 50 Euros for almost an hour (if you paid less, don't tell me). The coachman cheerfully showed us all the main sights, like the Fabrica de Tabacos (the very same one that Bizet had his heroine working in, in the opera “Carmen”, not that I knew this before the ride), the various parks which adjoin the Alcázar (ul-KA-sahr), and of course the Plaza de España.

Neglectfully cruel

The Alcázar was a royal palace built by Pedro the Cruel (the Spanish often minced no words in describing their leaders; in addition to said Pedro there was a Felipe El Guapo and a Juana La Loca). Its architectural style is called “*mujedar*”, which means Moorish-Spanish fusion, the result looking a little psychedelic. The Alcázar also has spectacular gardens, and is a must-see.

And in case you were wondering, Pedro was called Cruel because he didn't take the trouble to attend to his wife's – *ahem* – personal needs regularly, but then murdered the local nobleman who did.

Armed with this Amazing Fact (you got it from me; they don't mention it in Seville), when you exit the palace, turn right into small, unpromising-looking alley. Two blocks later you will find a very pleasant open courtyard. Choose the Café Allianza, which has outdoor tables under big, leafy trees. It has friendly staff, a passable paella, and an under-10 Euro per-person bill, which is something anywhere in Europe.

Claro que si

The other Must-See is the Plaza de España. You may not care that it was the Host Pavilion for the 1929 World's Fair, but look at the picture. Does it seem at all familiar?

Claro que sí. It looks like, yes, you got it: the Palace of Naboo in *Star Wars 2: Attack of the Clones*. Like most movie sets and World's Fair structures, it doesn't actually have much behind the façade. But the façade is all you need for a nice picture.

Another thing you are supposed to do in Seville, and which we therefore did, is watch a flamenco. Flamenco is a song-and-dance by gypsies who sound like they are about to be castrated, but go



SEVILLE STREETS. A lot of the streets in Seville look like this. But thanks to the services of a Master Map-Reader, the author's party only got lost once a day.



BREAK TIME WITH CLARA. The author takes a break with daughter Clara.

around stomping on the floor as if they were trying to get the lease broken. No doubt this view is colored by the painful amount of money I was charged for my party of five, who compounded the pain by not eating the whole dinner and then asking out loud “Is she [the lead female] supposed to be fat?” This question was answered by us being given the bill ahead of all the other tables.

But now we have seen a flamenco.

Sure, you want to see Madrid first, but after that, see some of the other sights around the country. Bring a Master Map-Reader, blow the 50 Euro on the horse carriage, get your Three Wishes at the Cathedral, and get sworn statements before choosing a flamenco, and you will enjoy your visit to Seville.

Seville, a Part of Spain that's not Madrid

(part 1 of 3 parts about Spanish cities that are not Madrid)

By Manny Gonzalez, Plantation Bay Resort & Spa

My hotel in Seville had never seen a Filipino before. (This sort of makes it even – most Filipinos have never heard of Seville.) The Front Desk person looked at my passport, then my name, then me. “Es de descendencia Española?” she asked, somewhat dubiously. To which I had to answer – in pretty good Spanish, if I say so myself, having taken conversation lessons before embarking on the trip – “El perro esta corriendo. Vamos a almorzar. Le gusta la pelicula?” Which no doubt answered her question adequately.

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Armed with this Amazing Fact (you got it from me; they don't mention it in Seville, where Pedro is held in fairly high regard, having produced such a great tourist attraction), when you exit the palace, turn right into an unpromising-looking small alley. Two blocks later you will find a very pleasant open courtyard with several restaurants. Choose the Café Alianza, which has outdoor

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CAPTIONS

Museo de Bellas Artes – Never one to miss a chance to Get Cultured, the author stumbles upon Seville's Fine Arts Museum by accident, but makes sure to have a picture taken.

Portrait – The author usually tries to find a painting with lots of bare flesh, but, this being Spain, this is the best he could come up with. However, note the suggestive expression on this Seville noblewoman's lips.

Seville Streets – A lot of the streets in Seville look like this. But with the services of a Master Map-Reader, you may only get lost once an hour.

Cathedral – As you approach and again as you leave the Cathedral, horse-drawn carriages wait to relieve you of 50 Euro a pop. (Take one, it's worth it.)

Break Time with Clara – The author takes a break with daughter Clara.

Alcazar – Pedro the Cruel built this mudéjar style palace, but spent so much time hunting that his wife had to find other means of entertaining herself.

Plaza de España – Built for the 1929 World's Fair, the Plaza de España still does service as a tourist attraction and movie set.