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Well, we have successfully completed our eleven day trip to Spain. Our itinerary was as follows: catch a morning flight from Helsinki to Barcelona, sightsee and stay the night; at 5pm on day 2, catch a flight to Málaga, then drive one hour to a condo on the Costa del Sol; after 7 nights, with a one day excursion to Gibraltar, drive to Granada and stay 2 nights; and finally, drive back to Málaga and catch a 7:30pm flight to Barcelona and then a midnight flight from Barcelona to Helsinki. The trip was a good mix of relaxation and hard-core-pavement-pounding travel.

Quintessential Europe in Barcelona: accordion music at a sidewalk café and narrow side streets.

While the narrow streets and churches of the Barcelona’s Gothic core are classic, for us the highlight was the Art Nouveau architecture of Antoni Gaudi. While his wild and undulating buildings in the downtown core are an inspiration (see below), his massive church (still under construction) La Sagrada Familia, is a truly awesome cite. It easily makes my “all time best sights” list.

Spiral staircase inside of La Sagrada Familia.
Gaudi preferred the undulating and inexact curves of nature to those of geometry.

What I loved about the Gaudi buildings was the lack of practicality in their exterior design. I have come to love Finland’s ultra-efficient design and architecture, but thank God for countries like Spain, where beauty can trump practicality and efficiency. Nowhere is this more evident than Gaudi’s masterpiece La Sagrada Familia, which is a Catholic Cathedral that is still under construction and is massive. I had no idea that such construction projects were undertaken in this day and age.

Construction continues in the upper reaches after over 100 years. The tallest spires are still to come.
These pillars were constructed recently. Can you imagine? The contractor must be a basket case.
It’s impossible to capture the overwhelming size of La Sagrada Familia.