Granada is a soul city for me. It has a small population for a city (approx. 240,000) and yet it is as funky-energetic-beautiful a place as I’ve been. Its old Europe-Arab-Moroccan feel make it completely unique in my experience. And if that isn’t enough, the big and snowy (this time of year) Sierra Nevada Mountains are very nearby, and contain Europe’s most southern ski resort. The place seems to have it all.

We spent two nights in a great, and very reasonable, room. On the day we arrived, and after a maddening drive to our hotel, we walked through narrow streets of the old Muslim district, ate baklava, Moroccan food, smoked from a hookah, and enjoyed the bizarre-like feel of the place.

Left: Jen looks out from our room’s balcony. Right: a view from the same balcony.

At the coffee shop Kasbah, Jen and I had tea and coffee and smoked from a hookah (right).
Granada has one of Europe’s biggest attractions in the Alhambra palace, which was built by the Moor’s during their several hundred year occupation of southern Spain. The Alhambra is truly spectacular on the inside; however the exterior doesn’t suggest this, which is, so I’m told, typical of Islamic architecture.

Here we are at the top of Granada’s Albayzin neighborhood, with the Alhambra in the background.

What the kids loved most about Granada was its 10,000 gift shops.
Alex and Elli inside the Alhambra. Note the gift shop sling-shots.
On our final day in Spain, we woke up in Granada, drove to Málaga and visited the Picasso Museum (he was born in Málaga). Increasingly I find that it is artists that inspire me and Picasso as much as anyone.

Málaga is about twice the size of Granada and seems to be a great place, though we were only there half the day. We happened upon a great and quick seafood joint for lunch and had one of our best meals of the trip, and the kids agreed as they ate their only American fast food (Burger King) of the vacation.

We flew out of Málaga at 7:30pm to Barcelona and then on to Helsinki at 11:45 pm. We arrived at our front door at 5:30am, exhausted.

Traveling with kids is expensive, challenging and tiring. But, Jen talked with a solo traveler in Granada who said, “Your experience looks richer than mine.” It opened up my eyes. I saw myself and Jen in a European city at 50, sitting on a sidewalk café drinking a coffee or a beer, enjoying the sunshine, watching people and wishing we were with our young kids instead. Enjoy what you’ve got while you’ve got it.