



Getting away from it all

We promised ourselves that we weren't going to write another piece on the Spanish weather this week. You're all living through it just as much as we are. But with the thermometers hitting 45°C and the news constantly telling us about another heatwave there's no real way to escape it.

Or is there?

You see, the current temperatures may be setting records, but Spain has always been hot in the summer. And most Spaniards have found a perfect way to deal with it – they head to the village.

Up and down the country, when the summer heat rolls in, Spain's city slickers pack up their bags and head for the village they - or their parents - grew up in for a few days of country living and a few nights of cool sleep.

So, not being ones to fly in the face of tradition, this week we decided to do the same. It's not exactly the family village, but Matthew is lucky enough to have a cottage in a small place called Campisábalos across the border in Castilla La Mancha. His garden needed a bit of work so we threw our overnight bags in the back of the car and headed off for a couple of days away from the city.

Campisábalos only has about sixty inhabitants on any given day. But be warned, at the weekends that can balloon to nearly a hundred. So the local bar can get pretty busy. Supermarkets here are in short supply – i.e. there aren't any. And the baker drives through the village once every couple of days in a clapped-out BMW sounding the horn to alert anyone who's run out of bread.

But what it lacks in facilities, it more than makes up for in quality of life.

For a start, it sits at 1,300m above sea level. So whilst the days can easily hit the 30°C mark, at night the temperatures drop to such an extent, you often find yourself reaching for a fleece. Bliss!

Then there's the air. [According to the WHO](#), Campisábalos has the third cleanest air in the world – behind Muonio in Finland and Norman Wells in Canada. Now I have to say I googled that and couldn't actually get my hands on a copy of the report. But I strongly suggest you don't cast doubt on the claim when you're in the local bar. They are immensely proud of the fact and don't take kindly to doubters.

Statistics aside, there always seems to be a fresh breeze blowing, which is a welcome relief from the sticky July heat of Madrid.

You're also in a lovely area for country walks. You can follow the official *senderos* that take you past the local sights like the Piedra del Sombrero, the castle at Galve de Sorbe, or the rather noncommittally named "Possible Menhir of Campisábalos." Or you can simply walk out of the back of the village and turn right. Either way you'll find yourself in lovely rolling countryside with prehistoric rock formations and ancient villages nestled in picturesque valleys.

And that bar I mentioned is where everyone gathers at the end of the day to catch up with friends and family, get the latest village gossip, and share stories about the life they left back in Madrid. Or simply laugh about those crazy Englishmen who spent all afternoon trimming the hedge instead of taking a siesta like any normal villager.

So what does all this have to do with wine? Well, nothing – and everything.

You see, we spend a lot of our time telling you about what's inside a bottle to help you get the most out of Spanish wine. But as we sat outside that bar on a cool summer evening, sharing a bottle of red with the locals while their kids ran freely round the village, we were reminded of the fact that sometimes the key ingredients are the time and place. And that's as much a part of Spanish wine as any grape is.

Cheers.

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