

The girls: Marion

The date: May, 2010

The destination: Andalusia, Spain

I have chosen a new destination for the first journey of the season, a place where I have never worked before: Andalusia, the southernmost region of Spain. However, we will not be travelling to the coast, which is completely overcrowded and spoiled, unfortunately; instead, we shall be visiting a few very beautiful and hidden locations further inland, which I found a year ago when I performed an extensive location search of the area. I was particularly attracted to several valleys in the mountains, with cool streams nurturing lush vegetation.

I planned our journey for the beginning of May because at that time of year there are hardly any tourists in Andalusia. What's more, it should be fairly certain that the streams and rivers will have

plenty of water; during the long, dry summer they tend to dry out almost completely. For this journey two models from Budapest have been booked, Beatrice and Marion. This time Timea will be responsible for the make-up; alongside that task she will also assist me on the shooting sessions and help with the video recordings.

We are all meeting up in Madrid, since we can get convenient direct flights there. And from Madrid we will be able to reach our destinations in Andalusia without any difficulty by car, in just a few hours. Of course, while I was planning the trip I had no way of knowing that this time a very annoying problem would crop up, leaving me with only one model instead of two – but more of that later!

## Monday, May 3rd, 2010: Day 1

*4.30 p.m.:* I arrive in Madrid, our meeting place, after a direct flight from my home city of Vienna. Since Marion and Timea aren't arriving till later in the evening, and Beatrice isn't actually getting here until noon tomorrow, the three of us are going to spend the first night in the Spanish capital before heading off to Andalusia tomorrow.

*8.30 p.m.:* After checking in at the hotel and picking up the rental car, I meet Marion and Timea at the airport. They have just arrived from Budapest and are looking forward to our trip to Andalusia. But first we just have to drive a few kilometres to our hotel, which is not far from the airport.

## Tuesday, May 4th: Day 2

*10.00 a.m.:* The reason Beatrice didn't arrive with the rest of us yesterday is that I had to make special arrangements for her. Over the last few days she has been in the Caribbean, working on another job, and she won't even have time to get

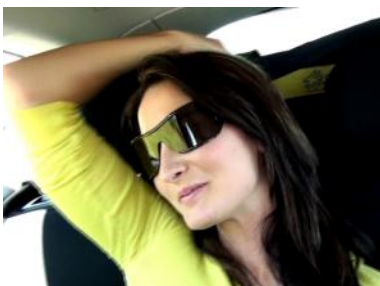
home before joining us: she is arriving in Paris this morning, and then she'll take the plane to Madrid and meet us here. But while we are waiting I learn we have a huge problem: the flight from the Caribbean to Paris was delayed for

several hours... which means she didn't have enough time in Paris to catch the connecting flight to Madrid. Damn!

*10.30 a.m.:* The atmosphere is hectic as I check out various ways of saving the situation. It turns out that Beatrice can't get to Madrid now until tomorrow. But we can't wait that long, because we have to leave around noon today if we want to reach the place in Andalusia where we're spending the night. And there's no way we can come back to Madrid for her tomorrow either, because we'll be several hundred kilometers away. It looks as though the only chance would be for Beatrice to catch a flight tomorrow to an airport in the south of Spain which is closer to our destination. Another possible solution would be to look for another model who could come to Spain instead of her. If only we weren't so pushed for time! Since I've only scheduled two and a half working days for this trip, we have to find some other solution for tomorrow – otherwise there's just no point.

*12.00 p.m.:* Two hours later we have discussed various options but still haven't found a solution. We have to set off now – otherwise we won't have enough time for the drive from Madrid to Andalusia. My agent in Budapest has promised she will do her best to sort things out, so now the three of us pack our luggage into the car and head south.

*3.30 p.m.:* A peaceful drive along a virtually empty highway takes us through the broad plains of central Spain towards the south of the country. It's a lonely landscape: eagles and storks circle over endless fields with olive trees, and we only see a village now and then. Now we realise we may be facing yet another problem: although it's



*We can't wait around in Madrid any longer, so we set off just with Marion.*



sunny, it's very cool! In fact, a fresh breeze whistles across the plain, making the temperature of 16°C feel decidedly uncomfortable. And not too far away we can see snow on a few mountains, which don't seem particularly high. It looks as though summer hasn't really begun in Spain yet!

*7.00 p.m.:* The weather forecast assured us that Andalusia would be significantly warmer than Madrid. But when we reach our hotel this evening, in a large village in the north of Andalusia, we are forced to give up hope of that: it's really cold here! According to the thermometer, it's only 13°. And although the sun is shining, we can hardly expect the weather to be much warmer tomorrow.

*7.30 p.m.:* It now emerges that what I have been dreading the whole time has come to pass: I discover that all attempts to bring either Beatrice or some other model to Andalusia by tomorrow have failed. However, in the meantime I have decided to accept the fact that this will be the first of our journeys with only one model. So let's make the best of the situation!

*8.30 p.m.:* But first we really need to find a restaurant. Unfortunately this turns out to be harder than expected: they don't serve dinner in our hotel, so we go down to the village. It's a reasonably sized settlement with fine white houses: several thousand people must live here. But all we find are a few bars where the local men sit round with their beer or wine, talking about their olive trees or whatever.



*The village is not small! But finding a place for dinner here turns out to be difficult.*

*9.15 p.m.:* The village is a pretty place, but it is so cool that we can't really enjoy our walk at all. So we're delighted when, after three-quarters of an hour, we finally come across a halfway acceptable place to eat. The restaurant is quite comfortable, with its rather eccentric decor, and the waiter is an amusing guy. Unfortunately the food itself leaves a lot to be desired: I really had imagined we would have a more pleasant ending to our second day!

*8.00 a.m.:* Before breakfast I take a short walk to the supermarket to buy a few things for a light lunch. The sun is shining in a clear blue sky, but despite that it's only about 8°C! Sure, it's bound to heat up quite a lot later on in the day – but will it be warm enough to get Marion out of her pullover?

*11.00 a.m.:* Make up, breakfast and the drive to a nearby location all take a certain amount of time. By the time we get to our destination the temperature has risen to 17°, and it turns out that Marion isn't so sensitive anyway. So let's get moving! Our location is a stream, and along one short section there is a series of wonderful rapids; the area is surrounded by a lush green forest.

*11.30 a.m.:* It only takes me a few minutes to position Marion on a rock with a waterfall in the background. In the shadow of the trees she looks simply breath-taking! But no sooner are the first 10 or 20 photographs in the can than we have visitors: an entire school class makes its way down the narrow path to our waterfall! Is there no end to the problems thrust upon us on this journey?? Actually it turns out that the teacher speaks English, and I manage to persuade her to herd the kids along to a different part of the river for the next few hours.



*We have only just started work when visitors appear.*



*12.00 p.m.:* When this problem has finally been solved we are at last able to get in an excellent first shooting session. Marion is left shivering a little, but these shots are definitely worth the trouble!



*When I manage to get rid of the kids, the morning proves to be a great success!*

*1.00 p.m.:* I would actually like to stay here longer and do some more work, but I don't want to push the tolerance of the Spanish teacher too far, so I restrict myself to two photo sets and two video clips. Anyway, the plan is for us to make our way to a second location later this afternoon, and it's going to take us a few hours to drive there.

*4.00 p.m.:* Andalusia is a large region which covers the entire south of Spain. This afternoon we discover just how big it really is: our next location is some distance away, and it takes us hours to get there. Fortunately the sun sets very late in the day here, and it is still light until well after nine o'clock. So we'll definitely have time for a second shooting session! There aren't any clouds in the sky, but we find it was unrealistic to hope for much higher temperatures further south: it doesn't even reach 20°.

*5.30 p.m.:* Evening is almost upon us by the time we finally get to our destination. We have come to the ruins of a church from the early middle ages, built by an Arab leader who had converted to Christianity. Situated high up on a mountain, the church once formed the centre of a powerful fortress complex. Today few traces remain of the fortress itself, but the walls of the church still tower up from the rocks, appearing to melt into them. The structure has a bare, archaic feeling about it, bearing witness to a distant past when Andalusia was the focus of a bitter struggle



*After driving for several hours we reach the spectacular ruins of Bobastro.*



*But it's getting late. So off with the clothes and let's go!*

between the Christian and Islamic worlds. Ever since I discovered this unique place during my location search a year ago I have been looking forward to placing one of my models in the setting of one of the arches here. Today the conditions seem ideal, and it looks as though I shall finally be able to make this vision come true: the sun is already quite low in a cloudless sky, and the ancient walls cast long shadows.

6.00 p.m.: In fact it is still cool when Marion, caressed by the gentle evening light, takes up position in the arch. But I succeed in putting my idea into practice just as I wanted to, and the resulting photographs are quite unique: just the ancient gray stone and Marion's youthful nakedness – nothing to disturb the perfection of this contrast!

7.30 p.m.: However, the location is actually quite small and doesn't offer a great many opportunities. Apart from which, I would really like to get to our hotel before darkness falls, so we soon set off again and leave the remote, historical location up in the mountains.

8.30 p.m.: We reach the hotel after driving for almost an hour – on this trip that makes it practically just round the corner. It's a "Complejo Rural", a complex of several small buildings grouped around a central courtyard decorated with flowers, set in the middle of the countryside far from the nearest town or village. We are given a friendly reception, and the wonderful atmosphere of the place allows us to put out of our minds the rather uncomfortable evening we spent yesterday. And we don't have to look for a restaurant here, either: in the very next building we are able to enjoy an outstanding meal with first-class wine. On top of the fine, successful day we had today, this serves to put us in excellent spirits.



*The hotel for tonight is definitely more charming than the one yesterday!*

## Thursday, May 6th: Day 4

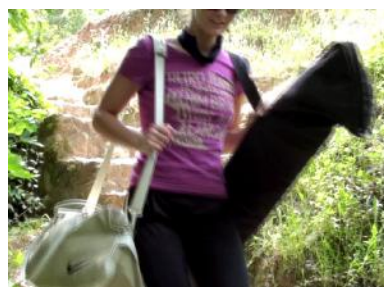
9.30 a.m.: Somehow you get the feeling that everything in this country happens an hour or two later than in central Europe. It's not only that dinner and sunset are at a time which we would regard as unusual – it's the same with breakfast. We don't get anything to eat until half past nine. I ask Timea to take care of Marion's make-up before breakfast, so we should still be able to leave before it gets very late.

11.00 a.m.: All the same, it's getting on for noon by the time we finally drive away from the hotel. Now we are heading west: the roads in this

mountainous region are narrow and winding, and we will have to cross two passes at a height of between 1200 and 1300 meters. Occasionally we catch sight of a flock of vultures, circling majestically over the harsh landscape.

1.30 p.m.: Not for the first time on this journey, it turns out that I have underestimated the distances and travel times involved: we get to the location much later than expected. Again it's a valley with a stream which nourishes some lush woodland. This place is popular with local people out for the day, so we can't be sure we really will

*We don't manage to get away until late in the morning.*



*We have to walk for a while to get to this location.*

be able to work here relatively undisturbed. There are quite a few cars in the large car park, and even some buses; on the other hand, the valley is several kilometres in length, so it must be possible to find a quiet corner somewhere for us to do our work!

*2.00 p.m.:* A narrow path, constructed several centuries ago to connect two villages, lines the stream along its entire course. When we walk into the valley along this path we discover that we are actually in luck: there are only a few people around today, and soon we find a spot where we can devote ourselves to our first shooting session. The vegetation here is so dense that it gives the place a tropical air, and what Marion gets up to with one small tree looks like pole dancing in the jungle!



*The dense vegetation at the stream provides a beautiful background for Marion.*



*2.30 p.m.:* A little further on we find something even better: at one place where the stream races past a rock face, Marion poses under a lush green fig tree. As she toys with the big leaves against her skin, I manage to get some wonderful shots. Moments like these remind me that it really is all worthwhile!

*4.00 p.m.:* I would have liked to do another shooting session here, since the conditions are really ideal. But unfortunately we have a long drive ahead of us this evening; it's going to take us about four hours, and first we have half an hour's walk back to the car. To make sure we're not too late getting to our hotel for the night, I decide to call it a day.

*5.00 p.m.:* Our route takes us over a mountain pass and across several broad, rather desolate plains; we are heading north-east, in the direction of Madrid. We are going to spend our last night in a village in the north-east of Andalusia, just before the border with the next region, Castile-La Mancha.

*9.30 p.m.:* When we get to our hotel it is just about getting dark. The hotel itself is an attractive building in the centre of a rather boring village in a not particularly interesting region. They probably don't get many strangers stopping here – so it's no wonder the boys of the village who have congregated nearby stare at us curiously!



*Again it's late by the time we reach our sleeping quarters.*

## Friday, May 7th: **Day 5**

*9.30 a.m.:* Today is our last day together: later this evening the girls will catch a plane from Madrid back to Budapest. However, since we covered quite a lot of the distance to Madrid already yesterday and only have a relatively short drive of a little more than three hours in front of us, there's still time for one last shooting session! But will it all work out? The weather hasn't gotten any better: today the sun has vanished behind thick cloud cover. It's cold, and without any sunshine there's not much hope that

it will get much warmer in the next few hours. It occurs to me that maybe we should forget about the last shooting session and just head straight back to Madrid. But we do have plenty of time, and it's about an hour's drive to the location – maybe things will be better by the time we get there.

*10.00 a.m.:* As we once again make our way along winding roads and over a mountain pass, my hopes begin to fade: somehow it's getting

colder and colder, the closer we get to our destination. Thick, heavy clouds hang low over the mountains, and the thermometer reads no more than 9°: not really the conditions we would hope for!



*The day starts cold and over-cast. But when we reach our destination it is an idyllic scene.*



*11.30 a.m.:* However, when we finally get there we realise we have struck lucky once again: the mountains we have just crossed apparently act as a barrier to the clouds coming this way from the south. Here it is sunny and quite warm – our last shooting session has been rescued! Our location is once again a green valley with a stream which forms a very pretty little waterfall at one point. Flowers of various colours are blossoming all around, and a golden oriole displays its magnificent, tropical-style plumage. At this time of year life here is in full bloom; later in the summer the hot sun will make everything dry and parched. However, at this moment the idyllic scene is disturbed by a couple of workmen who apparently intend to spend their lunch break here. Rather than put on a show for these curious men, we decide to wait – at some point they will presumably have to go back to work.

*12.30 p.m.:* The workmen's lunch break drags on! But finally they move away, and we can get down to work. Unfortunately, by now we are in a bit of a rush, but there is still enough time for two very fine shooting sessions. The waterfall is on one side, against some light-brown rocks, and there is a small pool in front of it with several trees scattered around. And set against this

fresh, springlike green there is a beautiful girl, completely natural and naked – I really can't imagine a better conclusion to this journey!



*We still have time for two quick shooting sessions...*



*2.15 p.m.:* My satellite navigation system indicates it's only a three-hour drive to Madrid Airport. That should be plenty of time, but I don't want to take any risks, so I urge everybody to get

*... before we have to set off back to Madrid.*



a move on. We quickly pack our things and leave this beautiful little place, heading for the highway