**Robert’s Cross-Cultural Experience**

My cross cultural experience is not easily compacted to a few paragraphs:
    One of the main issues with Andalusian culture (I refer to Andalusia because northern Spain is somewhat different) is the high level of social interaction. People are extremely social and express emotions openly. It is quite common to see grown men crying when they are upset and there is no stigma attached to it. Physical contact also plays a very important part in this culture and I don't think a day goes by without me hugging a friend. People are far more prone to sharing and if you go to a Spaniards house and it happens to be lunchtime you will inevitably end up eating with them. I am also impressed with the level of political awareness in people, they have a high sense of justice and equality and it is sad that a very large part of the population refused to participate in the last general election, due to frustration. This is why Spain now has a conservative government that is systematically dismantling the social welfare infrastructure.
I can give you a couple of examples of my personal experience between Spanish and UK culture:
    The first time I returned to the UK to visit after not returning for years, I was with my brother in my home town. Every time I recognised a friend I ran up and hugged him. My brother said to me: "I do wish you'd stop doing that, your embarrassing me and your friends." That came as quite a shock to me and I realized how much I had changed and how much the UK culture was losing by not permitting close contact. My brother was also worried about the fact that I climbed up a pubs windows to have a peek inside and see if I recognised anyone.
    Another issue is punctuality. As you have probably heard, the Spanish are terribly unpunctual. This is always a big issue with Brits in Spain. I have no problem with this now and my own attitude has changed after reflection. I will always try to be punctual but I refuse to get stressed if circumstances conspire to make it difficult. I have learnt that we often try to control circumstances to suit ourselves, often with brute force and the stress this generates is unacceptable and unnatural. These may seem like small issues but they are actually very important and life changing. I was also a fairly shy person, despite the fact that I was a musician, but I discovered that my shyness was a consequence of my own fear of failure in my relation to others. It's far more acceptable to make mistakes in Spanish culture, it is also extremely healthy to be able to admit my mistake and ask for forgiveness.
    Another issue is violence. Weymouth had a high level of violence, especially in the pub environment. This is very uncommon here and whilst you may see heated arguments, it will never turn to physical violence, it usually ends with a couple of beers and a hug.
    Spanish culture has had a profound influence on me but I don't think it's all down to the Spanish culture in itself, but more to do with the fact that I come from one culture and have adopted another.