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Magazine[®]

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REFLECTION

A World of Contrast

IN BOTH THE JOY OF TRAVEL AND THE COMFORT OF RETURNING HOME, WE LEARN ABOUT THE COMPLEXITIES OF LIFE



BY JEFFREY R. PICKERING

Shortly after a wonderful surprise party planned perfectly by my wife, Stephanie, for my 50th birthday, my family and I set off on our first European vacation together. It was the first time in my professional career that I had ever taken three weeks off work, but I was confident that my team

had everything under control. Other than two phone calls to help facilitate a \$6 million charitable contribution of stock and another to approve the terms of a \$1 million charitable bequest, my trip was uninterrupted.

We began our journey in London. Over the course of the next several weeks we traveled

to Paris and Biarritz, France; San Sebastian and Madrid, Spain; the Algarve province of southern Portugal; and finally home from Lisbon.

Other than one-night stays in Biarritz and Lisbon, the length of our vacation afforded us the opportunity to spend at least a few days in each location. Long enough to

INDIAN RIVER INSIGHTS



Clockwise from top: The Louvre, Le Jules Verne restaurant in the Eiffel Tower, and Churchill's bunker were among the favorite stops of the trip.

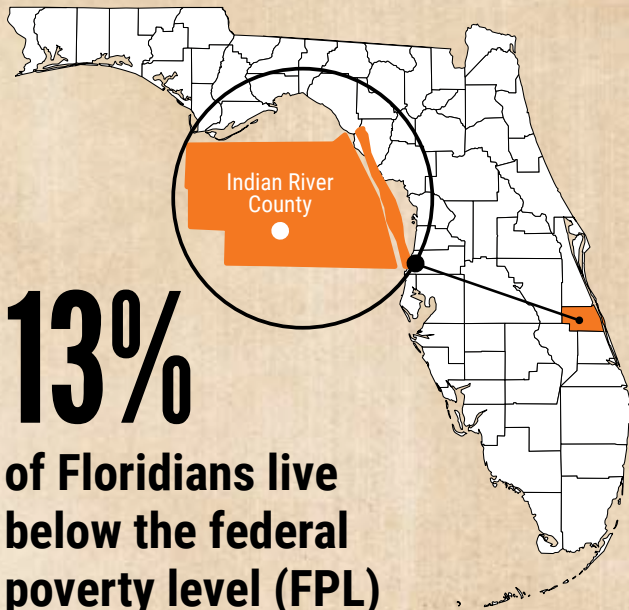


become familiar with the Mayfair neighborhood outside our London apartment. Long enough for the children to be recognized by the clerk serving baguettes at the local boulangerie in Paris. Long enough to return a second time to a tapas bar in the Old City of San Sebastian for our favorite pintxos, or to know where to sit in the lineup to surf the best waves at Playa Zurriola. Long enough to understand the true meaning of “siesta” in Madrid.

Long enough to comfortably greet familiar faces with “Bom dia” or express gratitude with “Obrigado” in Portugal.

As far as highlights go for me, there was the visit to Churchill’s bunker and the Indian dinner at Trishna in London. There was the guided tour of the Louvre and the elegant seven-course meal at Le Jules Verne on the second floor of the Eiffel Tower in Paris. There was the side trip from San Sebastian

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*ALICE stands for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed. The household survival budget for an individual living in Indian River County is \$27,516.

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INDIAN RIVER INSIGHTS

I was able to appreciate the joy Grant experienced, and, over time, he has been curiously reflective on mine.



to the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao. There was Picasso's *Guernica* and the most delicious seafood meal I've ever eaten, at El Pescador in Madrid. There was the scenic tour of the wide range of agriculture on the drive from Algarve to Lisbon.

If you ask my 10-year-old son, Grant, however, there were two activities that topped his list of European travel experiences. The first was his self-designed scavenger hunt to find the name of one of his classmates and best surfing buddies, Nicolás, on a sign in every country. The other was the quest to find an Oreo ice cream sandwich in a bodega in every town where we stopped. He succeeded with both challenges. It made his trip. But so did coming home.

It's funny how my expectations of this trip and Grant's were so varied, yet we were able to arrive at the same result of having the most wonderful travel experience together and return home safely to Vero Beach. Rather than focus on the differences,

I was able to appreciate the joy Grant experienced, and, over time, he has been curiously reflective on mine.

"Dad, was Winston Churchill scared?" He asked me this question one late summer evening as he drifted off to sleep.

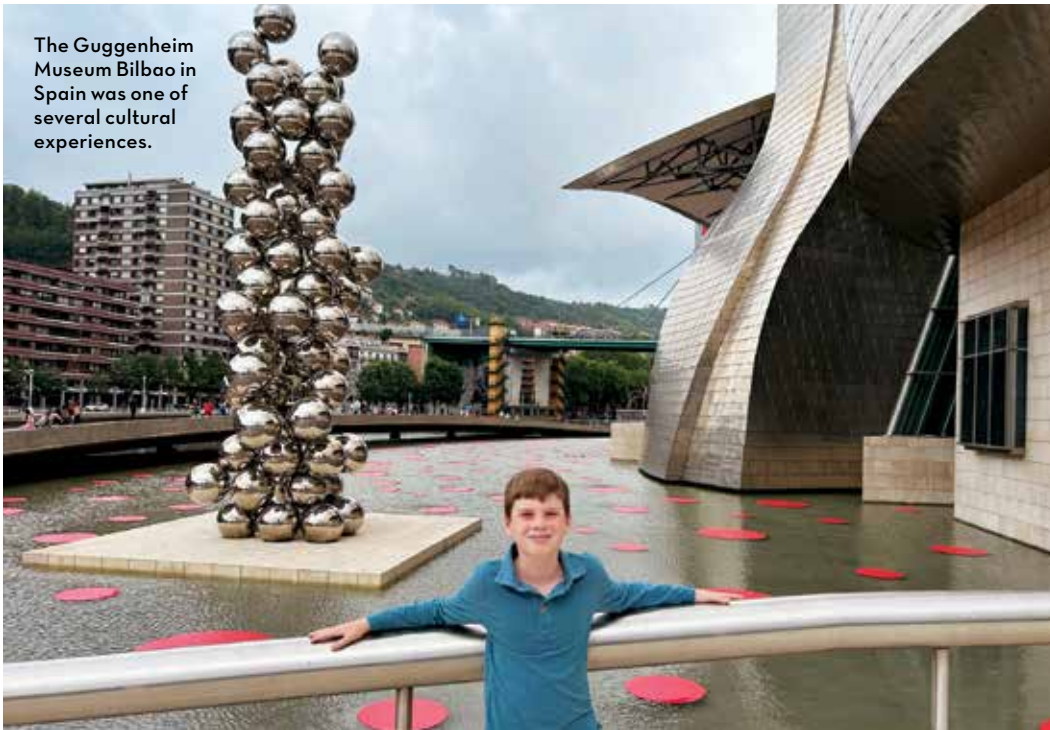
"There is one thing I can say about the restaurant in the Eiffel Tower," he responded when a grandparent asked about his trip. "They sure use a lot of foam!"

"Do you think the waves at Riomar Beach will ever get as big as the ones we surfed at Playa la Concha," he shouted as we entered the ocean on a hot and humid August afternoon.

On our last morning in Madrid, we had scheduled a

INDIAN RIVER INSIGHTS

The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao in Spain was one of several cultural experiences.



guide to lead us on a private tour of the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía. Everyone was exhausted, so I ventured out on my own, not wanting to miss the opportunity to view Picasso's *Guernica*. I was glad I went alone, as I do not think my young son was mature enough to comprehend the troubling story behind the painting or, at least, that he should have to bear that burden. Not yet.

One thing that surprised me about the painting was its size—about 12 feet tall by 26 feet long. I am not sure why, but I expected this famous work of art to be similar in size to a large flat-screen television or the framed



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“Dad, was
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— GRANT PICKERING

Above and right: Picasso's *Guernica*, a frightening depiction of war, is on display at the Museo Nacional Centro de Art Reina Sofia; Grant takes to the ocean in Biarritz.

black-and-white Joan Miró print that hangs above the fireplace in my living room at home.

Another fact I was unaware of is that Picasso painted *Guernica* at his home in Paris rather than on location in the Basque region of northern Spain. Despite its abstract style, it always seemed to me like a scene that the artist must have observed with his own eyes rather than in his imagination.

The revelation that made the greatest impression on me, however, was the tragic depiction of war and suffering in what is regarded by many as Picasso's most famous painting. From news reports, the artist created his account of the horror that ensued following a bombing by Hitler's powerful air force. My guide explained that this first known aerial attack on a civilian population was essentially a practice run, carried out at the invitation of Spanish Nationalist general Francisco Franco—an awful preview of the moral depravity that was yet to come with the Holocaust.

Until now, most of the family vacations I have taken with my wife and children have been

for pleasure and relaxation. Undoubtedly, while away at college, my older son, Colin, and my daughter, Olivia, are being exposed to historical facts and truths about the places we have traveled that reveal a darker side of humanity. They are learning the atrocities that war brings, and that evil does in fact exist.

While I would like to shield Grant from this reality for at least another year or two, I know that everything is likely to be illuminated soon. He has yet to have his heart broken by the scourge of anti-Semitism, but I fear that day will come.

When it does, I will lean on Temple Beth Shalom's Rabbi Michael Birnholz for spiritual guidance. I will call on attorney and advocate Samuel Block for wisdom from his own life experience overcoming the same adversity. I will gather with the fathers of Ari, Eli, Noah, and Zachary for strength as we comfort our boys in an unfortunate coming-of-age ritual that should not exist in a civilized society. Certainly not in Vero Beach, this special place where all our journeys begin and end and that still feels like home. ✨

