

“España Es Como Una Madre”

Our most memorable Uber driver in Madrid was a young Pakistani man. We gave him twenty minutes; he gave us his odyssey. Too bad I failed to record the conversation, because this would have been a great interview to broadcast on Spanish radio.

Our driver's story: Back in Pakistan, he lived in hunger, so he left home to seek his fortune. In popular parlance, he became part of the “European migrant crisis.” He traveled solo, journeying from Pakistan to Iran to Turkey. Then he zigzagged around the EU, passing through Greece, Romania, Germany, Italy, and France. Our driver gave few details, but each of these countries treated him badly. He had to hide from the authorities, and could not legally work.

After three months, however, he reached Spain – and his life turned around. My Spanish sources tell me that migrants must normally wait three years to receive work permission, but my driver somehow managed to get his work papers almost immediately.

Three years later, he speaks Spanish, has plenty to eat, and loves his new home. Indeed, he practically describes Spain as a libertarian paradise: work hard, don't hurt people, don't steal, and you'll have a good life. Using his Spanish travel documents, he was even able to visit Britain. He liked it, but saw no hope of ever legally working there.

My Spanish is very poor, but I had no trouble understanding our driver when he gushed, “España es como una madre” – “Spain is like a mother.” He didn't say a word about government benefits; he was overjoyed to live in a country where he could live in peace and get ahead by working hard. Though we didn't even have a language in common, he was my kind of guy. The American Dream is also the Spanish Dream, because both are the World Dream.