

Ep #133: Spain Travel Using Points: TMS Takes Madrid, Barcelona, and Mallorca



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Hosts

Alex Payne, Jess Field, and Pam Lorg

[Points Talk with the Travel Mom Squad](#)

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Alex: If you want to visit Spain but aren't sure how to make it happen on points, then be sure to listen to this episode as we share how we did it and how you can do it too.

Welcome to *Points Talk with the Travel Mom Squad*. We are three moms who've discovered how to leverage credit card welcome offers to get hundreds of thousands of dollars of travel expenses for nearly free. We've used credit card points and miles to take vacations to places like Hawaii, Paris, Greece, Maldives, Japan, and so much more. And the best part? We each still have 800 plus credit scores. Imagine being able to take the vacation of your dreams for nearly free. It's totally possible, and we're here to show you how.

Alex: Hey, I'm Alex.

Pam: And I'm Pam, Alex's mom.

Jess: And I'm Jess. Let's talk points. The three of us recently visited Madrid and Barcelona on points. It's the trip that almost didn't happen, but it did. Today, we are all together to share exactly how it went down, how we made it happen using points and miles. Alex is going to kick it off with our flights because she's actually the one who sort of suggested this trip in the first place, thanks to an alert service that we use. So Alex, tell us more about that.

Alex: Yeah, so this was what, April 2024? I got an email alert from Thrifty Traveler with flights to Spain, and they were on Iberia and just 42,500 points from Dallas to Madrid. Coming home, we flew from Barcelona to Madrid, then back to Dallas for 51,000 points. So when I saw the alert, I texted my mom and Jess and I said, "Hey, who wants to go to Spain?" Not a shock, they both said, "Yes, we're in, let's do it."

So, like Jess said, the trip that almost didn't happen. The really funny thing about this is we all booked this flight a year ago to Madrid. None of us took this flight to Madrid. So, what's interesting though, first is Iberia had actually

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cancelled these flights, our flights to Madrid. And we kept looking for new flights, we weren't really finding anything. And they rebooked us for going the next day. And then, but we were like, "Oh, well we want to go the same amount of time." We were trying to figure it out. And then like three or four months later, they cancelled our flight coming home and moved that a day. So, the time still worked out. We just had to change our hotel dates by one day on each end, but we went for the same length of time. But that probably should have been our first warning, these flights might not pan out great.

So for myself, I'll share what happened to me, and then you each can share kind of what happened to you. I, my flight was looking fine. I, um, like, I had some trouble checking in. Apparently, when I rebooked my flight, they never actually ticketed it. So I was, I had to do a lot of back and forth talking to British Airways because we actually booked it through British Airways using Amex Membership Rewards, but the flight was on Iberia. So I was doing a lot of talking to both of them back and forth. The day before we left is when I realized this. When I tried to check in, it wouldn't let me.

And they said, "Oh, your ticket. I see that you're on this flight, but it actually hasn't been ticketed." So they reissued my ticket. I was good to go. But I get to Salt Lake, and they are cancelling flights to Dallas left and right. Mine looks fine. And I even board my plane. Because I'd been watching it and I was looking for backup options. I board my plane to go to Dallas, and as I'm on the plane, they say, "You guys might as well just all turn around. We're not leaving till 5 p.m." or something like that. And I was like, "Well, I'm not going to make that Iberia flight."

Jess: And this was due to thunderstorms in Dallas. It wasn't like they were just randomly cancelling flights to Dallas.

Alex: Yes, yes. Good point. So, I ended up finding a flight on KLM. I just, right, I had already been looking because I saw things weren't looking great in Dallas. So I booked a flight on KLM from Salt Lake to Amsterdam to Madrid. It was 27,500 miles in economy. And then I was already at the Salt Lake airport, and so

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I went to the Delta ticket counter because that's who manages KLM flights there. And they weren't open. They have to do, they have to do some work first before they know what seats are available. And it was too soon to take off for me to just check in online and then try to upgrade online.

So, I had to sit around at the airport for a couple of hours waiting for them to open or have know what their availability was. I got the last business class upgrade. It was 852 dollars. This is close, like it's either 9.5 or 10 hour flight. So I was feeling pretty good about that upgrade. So 27,500 points plus 852 dollars. It did take them a minute to figure out how to do this. This is the second time I've upgraded to KLM business class at the Salt Lake City airport. You just need to go to the Delta ticket counter. If they seem confused and they're unsure, just ask them to maybe talk to a supervisor or somebody else because it can be done. I've done it twice successfully. It just might take finding the right person.

So the guy that did it for me, he ended up having somebody come over and was walking her through it while he was doing it in real time to kind of teach her how it works. So, I made it and it was actually a better flight. The whole flight time, everything was better than what I'd originally booked on Iberia. And I was able to get that Iberia flight that I booked through British Airways. I was I was able to get that refunded. So that worked out nice. So Jess, share why you didn't take this flight.

Jess: All right, I'm not going to go into the whole thing because it's a long story and we have a Points Talk premium episode all about, like the entire episode is us talking about these flights. So I'm just going to give you the TLDR version, and that is that I checked in for the Iberia flight from Dallas to Madrid. Everything looked great. A little while later, I get an email from Iberia saying the aircraft has changed, we moved your seat. So sure enough, they had moved me to economy. And I was like, "Well, I'm not going to fly to Dallas." A, I don't even know if I would have been able to make my flight to Dallas given the thunderstorms. But I was like, "I'm not going to fly to Dallas just to fly economy. I can fly economy from Houston. I live near a major airport."

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So, ended up switching gears, getting that flight refunded, and I rebooked Polaris for 80,000 miles. I booked it through Air Canada, but it would have been 80,000 through United also, from Houston to London. Much better experience than Iberia business class would have been anyways. And then I just did a cheap cash flight from London to Madrid. So, that is that is my shortened version of the story. What about you, Pam?

Pam: Well, I just want you to know that I'm already in Madrid when this is happening. And I'm wondering, is anybody joining me in Madrid? So because I went a day earlier because that's what I had booked with our previous plans. So I'm just like, what is going to happen? But I think something to really highlight here is that last minute can be really good. Because when the airlines have, you know, sold all the business that they can sell, the last minute they open up some more. So you can usually with points or upgrading with miles like Alex did. I have find found so many times this works to my advantage. So that's for all of those few people out there who have extreme flexibility and don't have to plan ahead. You can plan at the last minute and get really good deals in business class. That's what I've done a lot.

But for me, Iberia didn't mess up with me. That wasn't the problem why I didn't take them. Um, my daughter that lives in London wanted me to come for a special occasion about five days earlier. And so that's what I did. I found an amazing ticket, Virgin Atlantic upper class for 29,000 in business from Boston to London. This is a flight I have flown several times. It's a flight I love. I mean 29,000 for a business class seat. And if you have a transfer bonus, many times I've gotten it for less than that. It is a great sweet spot.

The other thing is you can use the uh Delta Sky Club there and with a VA upper class ticket, you get to go into their lounge, their special Delta One lounge, amazing, order off the menu, almost as good as Polaris um business class um lounges when you go in there and get the cookie skillet. I didn't get a cookie skillet, but I got the most amazing caramel apple tart. Huge fan of that. So my trip ended up being better than it would have been too. So all in all, these mistakes turned out pretty good in our favor.

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Jess: A little stressful. A little stressful, but it worked out.

Pam: Yeah, a little stressful. Yeah. So on to transportation from the airport.

Jess: All right. So, we each landed in Madrid separately. Um, Alex and I did the same thing where we just got a taxi from the Madrid airport. Super easy. It is a flat 33 euros to go from the Madrid airport into the city. I pulled up the Thompson. That's where spoiler, that's where we stayed. On Google, they have a taxi line. So you just follow the signs that say taxi. There's a taxi stand, someone directing you which taxi to go into. I showed the driver the Thompson. I got in. She took me there. I paid my 33 euros with a credit card, and that was it. Super simple. I think it was around a 25 to 30 minute drive.

Pam: Yeah, and I paid probably twice that because I booked through Viator, so I had uh someone waiting for me. I had a shuttle service. They were out there with a sign with my name. And this is just probably the one area I get a little bit nervous about going alone as a female with someone that I don't know. I just feel better if I've booked it through a reputable company. I don't know why. I'm willing to pay more that way. And so that's how I usually do it if I'm alone. If I'm with somebody, oh yeah, absolutely. Taxis, Uber, Grab, whatever. I'm there for it. So, this is just what this is just an option you can do. Okay, so let's get on to where we stayed in Madrid. We stayed at a Thompson, the Thompson Madrid. It's a category six and the standard uh price for booking it is 25,000 points a night. We were there for three nights.

I love Thompson brand. I mean, if I can't stay at a, you know, at a Park Hyatt, give me a Thompson. Love, love, love them. We booked a two bedroom suite using points, a suite upgrade award and cash. We thought that we knew we were going to get two rooms and kind of a living area, but we thought that the bedrooms were going to be connected. And people do this with families. So we're trying to figure this out or if ours was just different. What we had was a king room with a living room, and then outside in the corridor in front of there was another room, but they were separate rooms. They were separate room

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numbers. They were not connected. And in the future, this, you know, this ended up being kind of expensive. In the future, we would just book two rooms.

Alex: Yeah, the at the hotel too, they only, oh you were just going to say this I think. They only, all rooms only sleep two except the family suite. When you hear family suite, you assume it's going to be a like two bedrooms in one room, not two separate rooms. So I think if you want to do this as a family, it's a little misleading. I would definitely reach out to the hotel and see if there is options to get the family suite or suite where everything's connected because it didn't, it kind of didn't really make a lot of sense to me.

Pam: Yeah, it worked out fine for us, but if you know if you have two little kids, they're not going to, you know, be walking through that corridor then having to knock on your room. That's just not the most ideal thing. It is an amazing location. It's walkable to most places. We walked everywhere. I think we used um to get to a restaurant one time. We used um a taxi, but then we used, you know, walked.

Alex: Well, we even walked home from the restaurant. We could have walked.

Pam: Yeah, we could have. We were just running a little bit late. It's right near a uh major walkway called the Gran Vía where there's tons of restaurants and shopping. And so that is fun. We walked to different squares. It is just a really good location. But even better than the location is an it is an absolutely beautiful hotel. As most Thompsons are. It follows what I find to be the typical Thompson decor is kind of this moody, dark woods, blues, a little dark. I wouldn't say there's a ton of light, but it's a very cool feeling. I love it. Luxury, upscale, all the bougie vibes. So I really.

Jess: I loved it. I agree. I loved it. Would 100% stay there again. If I go back to Madrid, I am staying at the Thompson. Don't need to try anything else. I found my place.

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Pam: Yeah, even the views from our rooms were so cool looking on the little streets, the little side streets, people walking around. People would walk around till, you know, early morning hours because their hours are very different than ours. So, but it was it was really fun. Really liked it. Um, we did, I didn't, but they used the template, the hotel uh, our...

Jess: Pam's upgrade template on Pam.

Pam: Yeah, they used it because it was my birthday and they sent up a delicious cake and they told them that I don't drink alcohol, so they sent up Diet Coke. So I was a happy girl and a little uh pouch that said the uh Madrid Thompson on it and it was just really fun. Again, 100% recommend this hotel. Thompsons just don't disappoint. They haven't disappointed me yet. So, you know, keep that in mind and head to one. So we had a great time and Jess is going to send us share some of the amazing activities that we did.

Jess: All right. Yeah. So we did a food and history tour combo. This was through Airbnb experiences. We only had really one full day in Madrid. Well, Pam had two, but Alex and I only had one. And so I was like, I want to learn about the history, but I want to eat the food. And so I was excited that I found this tour that kind of combined both. I think it was three hours long. It was 75 dollars a person.

Like I said, booked through Airbnb experiences. That included all the food and drinks that we had on the tour. It was not a private tour. There were four or five other people with us on the tour. But what I like is that this particular experience, he keeps it intimate. I think 10 is the maximum amount of people that he'll bring on a tour. So that was really nice. Sometimes I'll see like these huge tours of 20, 30 people out, like with the little guide holding the flag in the air and like that looks terrible trying to keep all those people together. So I liked that it was a group tour but an intimate group tour.

There was a literal lightning and thunderstorm going on when the tour started. And I was a little bit worried about that because I was like, "Is this going to or is he going to cancel the tour?" But the show went on.

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Alex: Or are we going to get struck by lightning?

Jess: Or are we going to get struck by lightning? But luckily we didn't. Um, we visited the Mercado de San Miguel, which I highly recommend even if you're not doing this tour. It's a cute little place. It's like an indoor market and they have all different kinds of food. We had like a charcuterie board, drinks, olives, like, but if you if you're not on a tour, you can go and get whatever you want. There were dozens of little like food stands inside of it. So really cool. Um, we did a couple of history stops, like the Royal Palace.

And then we ended at a cute little restaurant, El Bombín. I don't know, but the calamari was so good. That's all I remember. But we also tried papas bravas and pork something. I don't know. Everything was really good. It was like you got a little bit, you got to taste a little bit of everything. I thought our guide was great. He was really knowledgeable, he was nice, he was funny. Um, and so I highly recommend this tour. I don't know about with kids. Like what, I think Molly would be okay. Would you bring Noah on this tour, Alex?

Alex: No.

Pam: No, he'd be so bored. You know, it was it was such a great tour. You did such a great job with this tour. I thought the food was amazing and I'm always I'm I'm the picky eater. So I'm always a little worried. Everything we had was really, really good. It was really a great tour.

Alex: And the price was really good. For 75 dollars a person to include the food and it's like, it wasn't like we went to that restaurant and got a full meal. It was like appetizers, but there was enough where there was plenty of food when we went to the Mercado. Like we didn't even eat all the food he ordered so much. So it was it was really great and I think well worth the price.

Pam: And it included alcohol, some of the local um drinks. I mean, I didn't drink it, but I think that's pretty impressive that it included it.

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Alex: Yeah, and it was really nice because, you know, my mom and I don't drink and he went and found us juices or got us soda. And so it was like if you don't drink alcohol, you'd be great on this tour too.

Jess: All right, Alex, what did tell us what we did our next day in Madrid.

Alex: So our next day, we did a day trip and we went to Toledo. This used to be like hundreds of years ago, the capital of Madrid and or the capital of Spain, not of Madrid. Madrid's the capital now. It used to be Toledo. So we booked a tour on Viator. Originally, we were just going to take ourselves out there. We were going to take the train and it's like 14 euros per person each way. So like, we'll just take the train. We like found a little itinerary that we were going to follow and just kind of go explore at our own pace. But the day before we went to look up the train tickets and all of them were sold out. So it was we were there over a holiday. It was a holiday for them. And so I think that made it more crowded. But even still, I would, I would book those in advance to be safe.

So what we ended up doing was we talked to the guys at the Thompson. They booked us a taxi from the hotel. It's about a one hour drive, and it was 120 euros for all three of us one way. So definitely more expensive. Um, but, you know, it took us right to where we wanted to be. And it was really.

Jess: And they played Taylor- and they played Taylor Swift.

Alex: It was really cute. So the Bellman was like, "Hey, what music do you guys want?" And I'm like, "Oh, Jess wants Taylor." So I'm like, "Jess, tell him Taylor Swift." So the Bellman tells the Uber driver, "Hey, put on Taylor Swift." So we got to listen to Taylor Swift in the whole ride there. So it was a great ride. Um, then we did take the train back. So there were tickets available for the train ride back. We just chose one of the later times in the day. And it was, like I said, 14 euros per person. It's only 30 to 35 minutes if you take the train. So much quicker, but you will have to like, we had to take a train or a taxi from where we were in Toledo to the train station. And then when we landed at the train station in

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Madrid, we took a taxi back to our hotel. So, you know, you got to kind of add those things into the pricing too. Still the train's going to be much cheaper, but the Uber was convenient.

So, we ended up booking the Viator tour because we were like, "Well, the trains, like we just got thinking, okay, we can't take the train there. We might as well just get a Viator tour." And because originally we were thinking, "Oh, we'll do a Viator tour that includes transportation." And then we realized, "Oh, it's actually a lot cheaper just to take the Uber and book the tour that doesn't include transportation." So, we did the Viator tour.

The guide was a local born and raised here. It's a really small community. And as we were walking down the streets of Toledo, he's saying hi to all these people that he knows. Like, it just had that small town feel and it was just so cute. We even stopped over in his aunt's flamenco shop. Like she makes all of these dresses. And it was just really cute to kind of see like what local life would be like there. He was super knowledgeable. He's an archaeologist. This is like a part-time job he does on the side. And he, like I said, born and raised. He has an American wife who he's brought there and they're raising their daughter in Toledo. So just really, really nice guy.

We started at the Plaza de Zocodover and then we walked through the streets and learned about the history. So it's really interesting here. For centuries, Christians, Jews, and Muslims coexisted in this city. And we were able to kind of learn about how their cultures meshed together during this time. And it was just fascinating to see how, you know, that's not something we usually hear about is these different religions and cultures coexisting peacefully, especially in this day and age. And that's something he really drove home that like it's our responsibility and future generations to try to bring back this tolerance and this peace where we can coexist peacefully, you know, amongst different religions. And that was just really, really cool, really special.

We visited a beautiful cathedral. We explored the Jewish quarter. We visited a synagogue. So it's just really cool to be able to experience so many different

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religions in this one small city. So super cute, lots and lots of history. Highly recommend taking a day trip here. We both, I think all three of us could have stayed longer. You know, like we did the tour and we walked around a little bit on our own afterwards, but I feel like we only scratched the surface. I, what he recommended is he's, he highly recommends people come to Toledo and stay one night there so they can really see it after the tourists leave, really get a feel for the area. And so 100% recommend taking a day trip to Toledo.

Pam: So, after that, we went to Retiro Park. Um, Retiro Park is the big park in Madrid. And I've been there before. We actually, it had been kind of a long day. We didn't spend that much time there, but I've been there where I took a book and I just people watched and it has a big lake and rowboats, people are out there rowing. You can pack a lunch. It's just really a fun place to go. So whether you're going, you know, yourself or as a couple or with kids would love it. There's families out there. It really has a great vibe and I love it. Highly recommend it. I would have loved to spend more spent more time there. We were pretty tired, you know, by then. So we didn't spend as much time.

We had really good food on this trip, I feel like. I feel like Spain delivered on the food. Um, one of our favorite places was um a place that Jess had found out about. Now, tapas are the huge thing in all of Spain. So even lots of times people don't get big meals, they just get a lot of tapas, which is our appetizers and they share them. And there's a fabulous place on the Gran Vía called Venetus. And we ate there the first day, Jess and I before Alex got there. We were kind of staggered, loved it, loved it.

And so they went back another night when I was just exhausted and called it a night early. And they loved it, loved it again. So the cod was amazing, fried artichokes, shrimp, just really, really good food. Highly recommend it. And then for me, one of my faves on this trip was gelato. Who knew Spain had such good gelato? I do not need to go just to Italy now for gelato. They can attest that I had quite a bit of gelato. So all in all, we had a culinary dream trip in Madrid. So now we're after this, we head to Barcelona and Jess, tell us how we got there.

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Jess: So we did three nights in Madrid and then we headed to Barcelona. We took the train to Barcelona. So we took a taxi from the Thompson to the train station. I will say, as a whole, taxis in Spain were very reasonably priced. A lot of the times, you know, splitting it between the three of us, it was comparable to what it would have been if we each bought a train ticket and it was just really convenient to take a taxi. So that's what we did from the.

Alex: You mean like the metro. Like if we were to do the metro.

Jess: The metro. Yeah, the metro, the metro. So we did not take a taxi to Barcelona.

Alex: One thing about the taxis though, in Madrid, taxis were great. Like the drivers were great, they were friendly. In Barcelona, we had mixed. We had a couple that were really good and we're like, "Can we, can we just hire this guy to drive us around everywhere we go in Barcelona?" There was a couple times where I was maybe fearing for my life and I we're driving 10, 15 minutes away and I got so car sick because they speed up on these like there's a red light. I can see the light's red. We're going 30 yards and they are gunning it and then they are slamming on the brakes. A little bit of aggressive driving. So, you know, just proceed with caution with those taxis in Barcelona and cross your fingers you get a chill one.

Jess: All right. So we took, there I think there are three or four different train operators that operate trains from Madrid, between Madrid and Barcelona. I chose the most expensive one because it just seemed like I based on the research I did, it had the most times available. It was the most reliable. I'm not going to buy like a ticket for a low-cost train carrier when my itinerary depends on it. So it was 145 dollars each in standard class. I don't think that's terrible for a 2.5 hour train ride. And it was great. I have no complaints. And then from the train station, we took a taxi. They have a taxi stand there, so it was really easy. We took a taxi to the Kimpton Vividora. So Pam is going to give us a breakdown on the Kimpton.

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Alex: One thing really quick though about taking the taxi to the Kimpton Vividora, and we found this out from the Kimpton. A lot of times taxi drivers don't want to go all the way up to the Kimpton because it's kind of tricky with the pedestrian walkways and things like that, but they can. So our taxi driver when we got there said, "Oh, I can't get you all the way there. I'm going to drop you off here and you're going to have to walk," which we didn't know any different. But when we left, they picked us up right in front of the Kimpton and the workers were like, "They might say they can't take you here. They can take you here. Just tell them to take you here." So keep that in mind if you end up staying in at the Kimpton Vividora or anywhere near there and the taxis aren't willing to take you there.

Pam: So, let's go on to the Kimpton Vividora. First, let me preface this by saying, I love Kimptons. I, it is like, you know, one of my favorite brands with IHG. It is my favorite brand. So I'm always happy to stay in a Kimpton. And this was the first time I was disappointed. Sad face. I really just was kind of surprised. It was a nice hotel and I felt like the common areas were really cute. When we walked in, I thought, "Oh, this is going to be another good Kimpton, yay." And then we went into our room, really had kind of dorm room vibes. I mean, there was some quirkiness, had a yellow telephone and some quirky colors.

I think, you know, right away, you know, the fluffy white robes weren't there. They were kind of these cotton rust colored ones. Not much privacy for bathroom and shower use at all. It really felt like you were going to share it with your roommates. And so it was kind of disappointing. It was the first time that a Kimpton really didn't deliver for me. I mean, I'm still going to stand by them, you know, because I've been so happy at almost all of them, but this one was definitely my least favorite.

Um, so Jess and I each booked standard rooms and Alex stayed with Jess. We used free night certificates and topped them off. Um, I guess um Alex and Jess did buy points for one night and we stayed there two nights. I will say it is a great location. It is, it's a great location for walking. Um, it's right next to La Rambla, which is one of the main streets and everybody in the world loves, but Jess and Alex hated it. And I go, I love La Rambla. Now, granted, there is a ton of

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construction going on right now. It's like the whole street on one side is construction. So it doesn't give off the vibes that I got the first time. I think I still got the vibes because I could remember what it normally looks like.

Alex: Well, I just felt like one, the construction was in, literally insane. They were like replacing pipes or something like throughout most of the city. It wasn't just on that street. And then it's windy and it was blowing like the dust particles in our eyes. And then on every other street along La Rambla and most of Barcelona is either a kind of not very nice souvenir shop or a cannabis shop. So I was like, where this isn't that cute because it's construction, cannabis and souvenir shops. So I felt the, there was another street, I don't know what it was called where we went and did a little shopping. I thought that was a lot nicer. But I just think it probably if there wasn't the construction, it would have been much better.

Jess: I was just laughing because as soon as we got to Barcelona, Pam was like, "We have to go to La Rambla. We have to go to La Rambla." And I'm like, "What's La Rambla?" And then we go to La Rambla and it's a freaking disaster. And I was like, "This is what you wanted to see?"

Pam: But it is so beautiful when it doesn't look when it's not under construction.

Jess: I told Alex, I said, "I'm going to take a shot every time Pam says La Rambla and I'll be so drunk tonight because she just kept saying La Rambla, La Rambla." Um, but no, I am sure it's much nicer when it's not completely under construction, but it just was not what I was imagining.

Pam: Well, I think you guys didn't like Barcelona as much as Madrid in as a whole. I think you thought that it was a little dirtier. I don't know. I guess I loved it so much last time. I could see past all of that. I it still held some really cute vibes to me. Uh and you know, it has a Sagrada Família. What more can I say? Okay, so, but they did stay at a hotel, you know, that they liked. I did leave a day early to um go off with my other daughter that lives in um London to Mallorca. They stayed one night longer and stayed at a different hotel, but I think you really liked.

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Jess: Yeah, so after, here's the other thing about the Kimpton that I just want to comment on. It's not that it wasn't nice. It wasn't as nice as the points cost. Like it what like the value was not there in relation to it because we paid, I think 74,000 IHG points for one night and like 76. I would say it averaged out to about 75,000 IHG points a night. That's more than the Kimpton Seafire. And let me tell you, the Kimpton Seafire is about 10 times nicer than the Kimpton Vividora.

The reason Alex and I didn't stay there the third night is because the third night was 120,000 IHG points. That's why we didn't stay there. I was like, "There's no way I'm buying 120,000 IHG points." Like, no. So we moved to the Grand Hyatt Barcelona. And the location is not near as good. It's not walkable to the main sites. You're going to have to either take public transportation, take a taxi. I will say there is a taxi stand right outside the hotel. So if you do want to take a taxi, it's very convenient to do so from there.

This hotel, we walked in and I was like, "I wish we had stayed here the entire time." Just because like from the moment you walk in.

Alex: Not even the moment you walk in, the moment you step foot on the property, the guys running the taxi, the bellman, everybody was like smiling and welcoming us. We hadn't even set a foot into the hotel yet.

Jess: Yeah, they like got us waters. The woman checking us in, Clara, was the cutest woman. She, we didn't even ask for upgrades or any of that because we were literally going to be at this hotel for less than 24 hours. So we were like, "Whatever, if we get a standard room, it's fine." It's a category 5. It was a peak night while we were there, so we paid 23,000 Hyatt points and 0 dollars. So, about a third of what we paid for the Kimpton.

And she was checking us in and she was like, "I just want to get you into a suite. I just want to find something great for you." And she was like, "Oh, I found my favorite room. I put you in my favorite room." And so I was really impressed with it. They have a club lounge there. And so if you have globalist status or a club

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access award, that would be a great place to use it. The breakfast buffet was ridiculous. There was like three separate rooms with different buffet options. They had a Nutella dispenser that Molly would have been all over. And we ate at their restaurant. We ate dinner at they have like a rooftop restaurant on the 19th floor with really nice views of Barcelona and the food was actually really, really good. So overall, I thought the Grand Hyatt was great.

Alex: Yeah, and when we walked in our room, we were like, "Okay, this is, this is more like it." Yeah, it was so nice, such a nice property. In Barcelona, like my mom said, Sagrada Família is in Barcelona and I, to me it's like it's an iconic, it's iconic. So I think it's worth going to Barcelona to see the Sagrada Família just to be like, "Okay, check it off my list, saw it." We took a taxi from the hotel. They arranged it for us in the morning. It's about 15 minutes away. We got tickets ahead of time. You will want to buy your tickets to Sagrada Família ahead of time. It was 70 dollars each. And then we downloaded the official app and with the official app, your tickets will be loaded on there. It has a free audio guide, so bring headphones and it's a 45 minute guide. So you, you know, it takes you through like the outside structure of the of the chapel. Is it chapel? Is that the right word?

Pam: Temple.

Alex: No.

Jess: No, it's not a temple.

Pam: It's cathedral.

Alex: It's like a cathedral. Yeah. I probably should know that after listening to the 45 minute audio guide, but it's been a little bit since we got back. So anyway, you go outside to see everything there and then you can go inside as well. And I mean it's stunning. It's pretty incredible. And yeah, we really loved it. Highly, like it's a must do. If you're going to Barcelona, you can't not go see it.

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What's really funny though, we were walking around the Kimpton and we thought we had stumbled upon it. So Jess and I are like, "here, because there's tons of people outside this cathedral." And then my mom's like, "This doesn't feel right. Like I don't think this is it." And we're like, "Oh, it kind of looks like it." And then I look closer and I'm like, "Yeah, no, this isn't as grand. This isn't it." And we it was not Sagrada Família. So we were just cracking up. Every time we would walk by this cathedral, we're like, "There's Sagrada Família."

Pam: Well, it was like the Barcelona the Cathedral of Barcelona or something.

Jess: Yeah, that was kind of embarrassing. We were like taking videos in front of it.

Pam: Well, and I kept trying to figure it out. I go, "Well, maybe it's a little back corner that I never ran around." And I kept looking at it and I'm going, "Ah, this isn't making sense at all to me." And finally I go, "This isn't it. The Sagrada Família takes up the whole block, you know."

Alex: So, I mean, there's our like embarrassing moment of the trip. Anyway, definitely got to go see it, check it out, must do. Yeah. Now, Jess is going to share our next thing and it was like probably our favorite activity of the whole trip. So I will say why we didn't, why we while we didn't love Barcelona.

Pam: I love Barcelona.

Alex: We did so many fun things here. So our time here was super fun. And I will say like Barcelona, for some people, they're probably going to love it. And maybe if we were like outside of the main touristy areas, we probably would have liked it more. It just was a little grunge, but also like there and I truly believe this. Sometimes like there's certain things of grungy that can be kind of charming in a way and kind of cool and hip. And I will say it kind of was like the cool grunge vibe, not like, but there were definitely times where it was smelly grunge too. So, I don't know, take with that what you will, but we're definitely more like team Madrid. It's a little more like bougie and that's kind of us.

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Jess: Well, and I will say like I didn't, I didn't dislike Barcelona. Like I'm glad I went once. I'm glad I saw Sagrada Família. I'm glad that we did this Paella Club class that I'm going to talk about. But I just don't have a desire to go back. That's the thing. It's like I did it once. It was fine. Checked it off my list. Don't have a desire to go back. And I'm speaking for myself. I'm not speaking for Pam because we know that Pam loves Barcelona. So this is just a Jess opinion.

Alex: And I will agree, there's just too much to see too in the world. So like, I got to go to some places I haven't been.

Jess: I'm really sensitive to smells and so it was really the smells that did it for me, which is why I cannot go back to Barcelona. All right, the Paella Club is the yeah, like they said, my favorite activity, our favorite activity that we did, definitely in Barcelona, probably in Spain as a whole. Um, so I found this via recommendation of someone else and it was, they have a few different classes you can do. We did the Amuse Bouche class, which was at 1 p.m. It lasted two hours long. It was around 96 dollars for each of us. It includes a meal. So that was basically our lunch that day.

If you wanted to do a dinner, there are later times, but the dinner class doesn't start till 8 p.m. and it ends at 10:00 or 11:00 and I'm usually in bed long before that. So the 1:00 class was perfect for us. It was so fun. We walk in, they gave me Cava. Cava is what they call sparkling wine in Spain. And so I got some Cava. Alex and Pam got their sodas. And then it includes, um, you know, you make, it's a paella class, so you make paella. There were maybe 12 other people in the class, um, 12 to 14 other people in the class.

They put you on teams of two, and so Alex and I were together and Pam was with someone else, the cutest little Swifty. Um, and so we were next to each other. They assign you a type of paella to make, and so we all made seafood paella, but they had chicken, they had pork, they had vegetarian. And so, and then at the end of the class, you get to all, you get to try all the different paellas and they have dessert. And so they have, they're pouring wine throughout the

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whole, if you're a wine drinker, they were filling my glass. I was feeling good during the Paella Club class. So I thought for 96 dollars, all, you know, considering it's a two hour long class, it includes all the food. If you're a drinker, it includes all the wine. Like I thought that was a really fair price.

Kevin was our chef and he was hilarious. He, so they play music during the whole time and he was taking requests from people. So I asked him to put on Taylor Swift and he did not like that suggestion. And for the rest of class, he referred to me as Swifty. And he was flirting with Pam. It was hilarious. At the end, I wish I had gotten this on video. So like we were sitting on one end of the table and he was standing on the other end of the table and he was like, "Pam, if there wasn't this table between us, I would be running to you right now or something." It was just, he just loved Pam.

Alex: He was a comedian. Like he, he was not just a cooking class, it was a comedy show and it was a dance party. There was a part where like he turns on the music and your paella has to sit and so like you're doing like a basically kind of like the Conga line through the cooking class. He was a character and so funny.

Like, you know, sometimes you can be in these classes or on these tours and the they can be a little too much and it can be like, "Okay, this is getting corny." He wasn't corny. He was like maybe borderline inappropriate at times with his flirting with my mom, but it was so funny. If you've seen our story highlights, if you haven't, go check them out, but if you've you can see a picture of him and he's like wrapped himself around my mom. So, so funny. He was just talking about how beautiful she was and anyways, it was so great.

Pam: I think he had a little bit too much to drink too, maybe. Anyway, highly, highly entertaining, the best, you know, probably one of the best experiences I've had traveling anywhere. It was really, really fun.

Alex: You know what was really cool too? And it just goes back to, I don't know if this is like a just the two people that we had who brought this up or kind of a

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thing in Spain, but he talked about one of the reasons he loves doing this cooking class is to bring people together from different parts of the world. And it doesn't like we can sit together and have a meal. And he purposely like they encourage us to sit and just enjoy this meal and get to know each other and just share stories with everybody. And it's just, you know, such a point to sit down and have a meal with people from different parts of the world where you might not have very much in common.

You might, and especially in this day and age where like different political opinions, different religions, like those things can be very triggering and can be, you know, cause a lot of a lot of problems and hurtful feelings on both, you know, for people. And just talked about one that in one class, they had somebody from Russia and Ukraine sitting down together and sharing a meal and just the beautiful things that can happen when we sit down and share a meal with somebody.

So once again, like, I don't know, I like those kinds of things a lot where it's just the coming together of people and sharing these beautiful experiences and that like was just really cool and we got to visit with people from different parts of the world and share our stories and it was just a really beautiful experience besides just being really fun, it was a really like touching experience too.

Pam: Yeah, that is the very best part of travel to me is, you know, meeting other people, sharing your culture, seeing that you're really not that different, that we're all alike. So, yeah, it was is amazing.

Jess: So in addition to the Paella Club, Alex and I walked to the beach from the Kimpton on our last day. It was about a 30 to 35 minute walk. It was fine. It wasn't really beach weather when we were there, and so we didn't like get in the water or anything. I wouldn't choose Barcelona for their beaches. I didn't think they were that great, but like it was nice to be able to walk and sip my coffee and walk along the beach. We also went to Park Güell, Guel, Güell, I don't know. Also another one of Gaudi's masterpieces in addition to the Sagrada Família.

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We, again, I've I failed on this trip in some regards. Um, we didn't book tickets ahead of time. I didn't think you needed to book tickets ahead of time to go to a park. Well, you do. So, last minute, we booked a one hour tour through Viator for 28 euros and it included admission to the park. If you plan ahead, I don't think you need to book anything through Viator. I think you can just buy an entrance ticket and go and walk around yourself. I thought it was really cool. It was, you know, the architecture in Barcelona is just amazing, unmatched. And so it was really cool to check it out. So if I could recommend three things in Barcelona, it would be Sagrada Família, the park, and Paella Club. Those are three must dos.

Pam: Agreed. Absolutely. All right. And then Pam, Alex and I headed home. Our flights shocking, our flights shockingly did go as planned on the way home, other than we didn't have in flight entertainment, but that's a story for another day. Pam then left and went on to Mallorca with her daughter Lindsay, the one that lives in London. So Pam, tell us how you chose Mallorca.

Well, a long time ago, I was sitting next to someone on a plane and we started talking about travel and he says, "Oh, my favorite place in the world is Mallorca." And he started showing me pictures and so it went on my list. Um, it's an island off mainland Spain. Um, you can actually drive around the whole island. You know, we did rent a car. We didn't spend five or six hours that would take to drive all over it, but we saw pretty good share of it. Definitely has a Moorish influence. When I'm, I mean it's gorgeous. So I think that you guys should, we should have crossed off Barcelona or been there for a day and then gone to Mallorca. I guarantee you guys would have loved it. It is, to me, it's kind of a cross between Italy, the Tuscany area and South of France and then with that Moorish influence in architecture, it was stunning.

I flew from Barcelona to Palma, which is the best way to get there. I just used a cheap flight to get over there. Our first night was at a hotel called the uh Nobu Palma, amazing. It is a Marriott hotel. I used 85,000 free night certificates. We stayed there two nights. The minute we walked in, we were not sure that we wanted to go anywhere else.

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I was actually saying, "Well, if we don't like the other place we're going to, we may come back here for the rest of the time." It was stunning. It is an old palace, ancient old palace. Everywhere, the um decor is just amazing. You've got the in our room, there were the uh rock walls. It is, I can't even explain. I will do a review on it, so I'm not going to go into it too much, but it is one of my favorite hotels of all time. Great complimentary breakfast, amazing location, great service, everything. Cannot say enough about this hotel. Gorgeous.

Um, and so and Palma is super, super cute. It does have a really cute area that's smaller than La Rambla, but really, really beautiful and no construction going on. And a lot of gelato there. So we loved that area. We then went down to a Zoetry, um the Zoetry Mallorca, paid 45,000 for a suite, stunning outbuildings. When we got there, I go, "Oh, this is going to be good. We're not, you know, this is stunning." But unfortunately, the room we had was not stunning. And the food there was not stunning. It was buffet all the time and I'm not a buffet eater.

Alex: And it's an all inclusive, so your food's included, right?

Pam: Right. Yes. Yes. So that's your choice. And it's a little bit out of the way from other things. So it wasn't like it was, you're going to go travel to get your food. And when we're talking dorm rooms, this one was a dorm room. It was just, you know, I think it's a great place for a family. I think if I was there for a family, I 100% would have stayed, but that wasn't the type of trip I was on. I was on a trip about luxury with my daughter. That's what I like to do. And so I even that first night, I was trying to talk to the Hyatt concierge, you know, how can I get out of this? Can I get points back? I will write a post about that. I won't go into all of that. They were very kind. It is up to a hotel whether they're going to give you back your um points or not. It's not up to Hyatt or the concierge, but they were very, very kind and working with me.

I told them that it was a great hotel. It just wasn't what I had planned. I've never done this before, but we did leave after one night and we went to the most

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stunning hotel. Again, it used to be a Park Hyatt, and that's why I picked it to go to. Now I did pay cash for it, but I mean when all everything else that I'd done had been on points or miles, I thought I can pay cash. I knew for sure if it had been a Park Hyatt, it was going to be stunning. It's in the northeast part of the island and it's called Cap Vermell. It was amazing. It was huge. I felt like we were almost celebrities that had booked it because there was hardly anybody there. One night for dinner, there was just us there for an hour and as finally one other couple came. It is their off season, I understand, but um, stunning, stunning hotel.

We did the activities that we did mainly around Mallorca was visiting the towns. They are gorgeous. If you've been to the South of France, if you've been to Italy and some of the smaller towns, little alleyways, cobblestone streets, really cute uh shops, that's what it is. My favorite um towns were Deia, Sóller and Valldemossa, really, really cute. Went to some beaches. It wasn't again beach weather and getting in the water, but it was very comfortable to walk around with pants and short sleeve shirts and enjoy them. Lots of really great family beaches. My daughter would like to come back and take her kids. Lots of secret coves. Again, more palaces, not just our hotel. There were plenty of palaces to um look at.

Great massages we had there. There was even a Hammam in Palma that we went to. And then we had really good food and lots of gelato. And I would 100% recommend going to Mallorca. It is a place I would like to go back to. You do need a car there. And like I said, one of the best ways to get there is to fly from Barcelona. It takes under an hour, but loved, loved, loved Mallorca. It was my favorite place on my trip. So I definitely say that, you know, that should be a consideration. If you go to Spain, do not forget to go to Mallorca.

So we hope that this episode will be a helpful resource for all of you in planning your next trip to Spain on points. And if you have friends or family who want to join you, be sure to share this episode with them.

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