

English Translation of Transcript Travel and Transport

Hi there and welcome back to Espangler. So I'm here again today with the lovely Miguel Angel to do an interview a little bit about travel, transport, the city, the country—a bit of a mishmash. It's going to be in Spanish. So there will be a transcript on the blog, and if I manage it, there will also be a translation... fingers crossed, on espangler.com.

So let's kick off straight off and go into Spanish now. I'll see you later at the end.

Welcome, Miguel Angel. Thank you so much for doing this again.

No, thank you for inviting me. I was just passing by, and well, it wasn't hard for me to come either.

Okay, so let's talk a little bit about travel and transport. I thought we'd start with means of transport: favorite means, means you don't like, means you'd like to try? I don't know. Do you have a favorite means of transport?

Well, the means of transport also depends on where you're going. If you go to China, you can't go by bicycle. You could, but then it gets confusing there, since they have so many bicycles in China. But honestly, for me, the means of transport that gives you the most freedom, the most independence, is the car. I know this isn't politically correct, private transport. You have to choose public transport. But with a car, you choose the time, the stops, the speed. It gives you much more independence. And I think traveling by car is much more efficient. Except for long distances, of course.

And of course, you can get to places where public transport won't go.

Yes, of course, then you'd have to, depending on where you're going, take a taxi, rent a car. In the end, you end up using the car. But that depends on the distance.

Do you still like driving?

I like driving. I like driving. I don't believe in horoscopes. I think it's silly, but my horoscope always told me that Sagittarians like the act of traveling more than the act of arriving. And I think I have some of that in common. Yes, I like the journey more. In everything, the journey in life, the journey itself rather than the arrival or the destination.

Okay, so another means of transport that you might not like?

That I don't like: the boat. The boat because in case of an accident, death is very distressing. For that, I prefer the plane, where you arrive on land and it's over. There's nothing like that, but with the boat, if you don't drown right away, you have to wait to be rescued. The cold water is all very distressing. So no. And then the journey itself is just seeing water and the occasional boat passing by. But I don't think it's very...

Didn't you want to take a Nile cruise?

Yes, but on the Nile. I mean, in this case, not because of the means of transport. I'd like to get to know Egypt, its history and all that. But I wouldn't mind going by train, car, or boat.

Okay. And I think what I wouldn't like is a submarine, because I'm a little claustrophobic, and

being in a submarine, locked up there, knowing you're at who knows how many meters they go down.

No, no, no, submarines are feet. Not meters, they're feet.

Oh, really?

Apparently, that's what they say in the movies.

Oh, okay. Well, that's it. I don't like that. No.

Well, after all, a submarine is a ship. Yes. In the end, the medium it transports you through is the same: water.

Yes, but I like ships. Where I am... where I have air. There I'm not about to drown. Well, that's what I'd like. But no, a submarine, no. And is there any means of transport you haven't tried? That you'd like to try?

Well, I think, if I remember correctly, the only one I haven't tried is a hot air balloon. All the others: ship, plane, helicopter, bicycles, train. I've tried them all. And well, no, the balloon doesn't really appeal to me. No, because, among other things, because from what I understand, when you travel in a balloon, you don't go where you want, you go where the balloon wants. So there's no control. It can go up or down, and that's it. The rest is up to the wind.

And when they do those balloon trips, what can you do as a tourist? Do they have to take the balloon?

I don't know, I'm not very informed, but I don't think so. I think there is some control, and they pick you up by car at the landing spot. Wherever it is, of course. Obviously, the person guiding the balloon goes up and down depending on the currents, trying to find the currents that take you one way or another, but it's more or less approximate. Then there's a car that comes to pick you up where the balloon lands. I think that's how it is, but honestly, I'm not that interested.

Perfect. Okay, I understand, I understand. Fine. And so these are the means of transport. Let's move on to the actual trips. So, a journey. If you could travel through time, where and when would you go?

Well, look, I wouldn't go to the future to experience a time when I won't exist. That doesn't interest me. The past, in general, historical moments wouldn't interest me either. History already tells me about it with more or less verisimilitude. For me...What I would really like is to travel back to my old neighborhood. To my childhood. But I don't need to be there, no, without me. It's simply to walk around and see what the neighborhood was like, what its people were like, to get a more realistic perception than the one you have from a childhood memory. It's often distorted that those memories are partial, that they idealize the neighborhood because of your childhood. Or the opposite, or you have a bad memory when it wasn't actually that bad in your childhood. I'd like to know how the people, the neighbors in my old neighborhood, whom I knew, to see them live in the neighborhood, to, well, I don't know, to become more aware of the poverty that existed at that time, how people got by, how they helped each other, something that's not common anymore. I grew up in a tenement here in Aranjuez, and back then the neighbors were very close. There was a covered walkway where we'd meet and chat. It's not the fifth one now, with the third one... And I would like to, yes, I would like to walk around my neighborhood, which has changed a lot, obviously, compared to the neighborhood of my childhood.

So, you would go as an observer? No?

Yes, yes.

You wouldn't go in there.

No, no, no. Well, yes. Let's see. You could chat. If they wouldn't recognize me, because they know me as a child, not as an adult. Well, yes. Good morning. How are you? You know, these things. But simply, to observe. To see what it was like. Not to participate in that world. According to the rules, in quotes, of time travel, if you go to your past and meet yourself or interfere in your childhood, you change the future. So, well, this is nonsense, excuse my language.

Yes, the butterfly effect.

Well, interesting. I think I would go to a historical period, but I was trying to think about it. Any historical period would be very bad for women. So I say, well, I'd like to go and see the French Revolution, but as an observer, not as a commoner, and not as an aristocrat either. But you know, to live through those times, to observe those times firsthand. But of course, not to participate, because in the past, you're always going to be in a worse situation than now.

Well. And there's also the problem that if you travel, if you travel to the French Revolution, you always run the risk of losing your head a little.

Ha, ha, ha. Okay, perfect. So, continuing with that idea of travel, obviously there are many trips we can take. We were talking about the difference between a trip, a getaway, a journey. So here I'm talking a little bit about trips, let's say getaways. When you take a trip, you go on vacation. That kind of thing. Okay. And so, I have a few, and I want you to tell me one good thing or one bad thing about each type of trip, so to speak. Let's start with the five-star hotel, obviously.

Well, the hotel, obviously, the obvious. What it has going for it are the services it provides. You have everything, from any kind of customer service to laundry and ironing. You have all the services, but I don't like them very much in general. Apart from something else we'll talk about later. They're all impersonal. They might have different decor. There might be luxury hotels. But in general, hotels are impersonal. It's the same old thing. The breakfast menu, the food, if you eat at the hotel, and little else. The toiletries in the bathroom. In every hotel you go to, life is the same. So, well, I don't like hotels very much in general.

But well, it's fine if you're going to a city for a couple of days, you know, to have a base.

Yes. The thing is, as you know, when we have that choice, we usually, if possible, stay in Paradores, which is something different from hotels.

We'll talk about that later, yes. What about, for example, going to the countryside, the mountains, nature?

Well, it's the complete opposite of a hotel. There's a lot of peace and quiet. Walks in nature. But there are no services. I mean, if you go to a house in the countryside, with a lot of luck you might have internet, but you don't have a supermarket 50 meters away, or a pharmacy, or any other amenities. But obviously, being in nature is very different, because you also change your usual life. Hotels are usually in cities, and if you live in a city, it doesn't change much. You trade luxury or the

dolce far niente, doing nothing. But in nature, in the countryside, in the mountains, you do change your surroundings.

Yes, your surroundings, and also, of course, how you live your daily life. And that's what camping is like, for example. Do you like camping?

Well, I liked camping more when I was younger. In my opinion, camping has one very good thing about it, which is the camaraderie with other tents and such. And it has one very bad thing, which is having to put up with the neighbors. And the noise from the children. So... But anyway, at 65 years old, I prefer a bed to a sleeping bag.

Yes, I've always preferred a bed. I'm not I'm very much into camping in tents.

Well, I also spent, you know, a year sleeping a lot in the army, in tents. It wasn't exactly camping. And I got used to the rocks on the ground and things like that, so it wasn't so bad.

Oh, how awful! And what about adventures, for example? I don't know, extreme sports, rafting...

Well, it depends. Let's see. As for extreme sports. As for the adrenaline rush, well, what can I say, I... I've already done it, I think I've done too much. I've done rock climbing, scuba diving, rappelling from helicopters, well, I've done a lot of things. And no, I don't need adventures. Logically, going on adventures is about discovery, discovering the environment, discovering the activity. But the problem in this case is age. At 65, you can't rappel down a cliff, for example. It gets a bit uncomfortable, yes.

It's a little uncomfortable, so to speak. And let's see, what we call a staycation. I don't know if you use the same word, it's simply staying around here. Yes, not necessarily at home, but assuming the area is right, because often we go to faraway places, if we can afford it, obviously. And we forget what we have here, for example, where we live there's an incredible palace that I spent, I don't know, 15 years without going, because it's right there. It's like, it's right there, I can go anytime and you never do. So, this staycation thing, well, it has its appeal.

Yes, in fact, the same thing happens to me. The first time, I was born in Aranjuez, and the first time I went into the Royal Palace of Aranjuez I was 30 years old, and well, I visited it because some Russian visitors came and we went to show it to them and I took advantage of the opportunity. And the same with the Casa del Labrador. And for example, I haven't been to the Royal Barge Museum yet.

I've been in once. Well, no, twice, I think. When someone's been visiting.

Exactly, that's what you were saying. That would be more of a day trip. We actually do that, especially when family members come to visit, for example, when they come to Spain and we go for lunch in Chinchón and they see the main square and all that, or we go a little further, like to the Enchanted City of Cuenca. We've been, for example. Anyway, we do that, but I think they're different things. A vacation, however short, four or five days, is different from a day trip, what we're talking about as a staycation, which is staying here and saying, "Hey, what do you want? Should we go to Toledo for the day tomorrow?" Great. And we're also lucky that near Aranjuez we have Madrid, the Habsburg district. It's beautiful. We have Toledo, we have Cuenca not far away, as we were talking about, and then there are small towns like Chinchón and such. We have it right here, and we can do it, but I'd leave that for another discussion, which is, going to spend the day in... The price is a plus. Of course, you're not obligated to sleep elsewhere, and the downside, in my opinion,

is why? Why would you go to Chinchón for five or six days to sleep at the Parador de Chinchón, for example, if you're only 15 kilometers away?

Yes, yes. Okay. The beach?

Well, for me, the beach is, as you know, rest. We've all been there, well, you still are, what can you do, working our whole lives. And when vacation time comes, you want to get away, disconnect. And so, lying on the sand on the beach, in the shade, having a vermouth, eating a good lobster paella, taking a good nap, and things like that. Well, that's resting. And that's it. And on the downside, the sand. I can't stand sand.

And when there's even a little wind... We've had experiences like that with the wind. Oh my goodness. Okay, perfect.

So, let's see, some recommendations. Here in Spain, for example, a recommendation for the countryside or a recommendation for the city. For example, for me, northern Spain in general, if you want countryside, all green, you have the sea, you have the coast, you have mountains, you have many very open spaces, with all kinds of nature. Whereas when you go to the south, well, it might be a little more brown instead of green. So, for me, practically all of the north.

Yes, yes, the truth is that, well, the north, Galicia, Asturias, Cantabria, the Basque Country, especially because of the climate, there's a lot of green, a lot of mountains too, but you also have it in the south. I mean, you go to the Sierra de Granada, now you go to the Sierra de Cazorla in Jaén and you have it there too. I mean, you have that all over Spain. I would recommend places with a special charm, and very specific ones at that. For example, from Spain—not the mainland, but Spain itself—I would recommend Lanzarote to anyone who hasn't been. However, if possible, avoid peak holiday periods, such as summer, Christmas, or Easter, because the last 15 or 20 years have already seen a surge in visitors.

It's true, it's very crowded and busy. But Lanzarote is a captivating island, one that charms you from the first day you set foot on it, because it is nature in its purest form. I mean, the raw power of nature with Timanfaya National Park, with its more than 300 craters and over 100 volcanoes, the volcanic tube of the Corona volcano that forms the Cueva de los Verdes (Green Caves), and the Jameos del Agua. In short, César Manrique did a spectacular job with the island of Lanzarote, adapting all of Lanzarote's countless natural wonders and integrating tourism into the natural environment. And it's absolutely beautiful. I recommend it because you can only visit by coach or bus, as there's no other way to explore it as a tourist. You can walk to some areas from the outside. But the heart of the volcanic park is visited by bus, otherwise it would be chaotic. And you truly grasp the power of nature. You're aware that we're just tiny ants, at the mercy of nature. It's a wonderful experience. I think you liked it too when I showed it to you.

It's magical. That island is magical.

And I'm in love with Lanzarote. And then, on the mainland, a very specific place that I loved when we went was the Monasterio de Piedra (Stone Monastery). You stay in a hotel that's the monastery itself—I think, I don't know, I can't remember if they were Benedictines or what kind of monks—and it's integrated into the gardens of the Monasterio de Piedra, which is an expanse of forests, waterfalls, rivers, and caves. It's gorgeous. In spring, it's perfect for walking around and getting lost there. It's wonderful.

Yes, yes, I agree. It's in Aragon.

Yes, in Zaragoza. It's in the province of Zaragoza. It's a couple of hours from Madrid. It's not very far. But it's a little further from where we are. It's less than three hours, but it's highly recommended.

Yes, yes, I agree with that. And a city?

Santiago. Santiago de Compostela, yes. We've been lucky enough to go to Santiago de Compostela quite a few times. We've stayed at the Parador de Santiago, which is in the Plaza del Obradoiro, right next to the cathedral, and just stepping out of the hotel and seeing it...

Yes, we're fortunate to be in a situation that allows us to do that.

And walking through the streets of Santiago's historic center...

It's amazing. And then all the seafood. Yes, yes. Well, I'd be there in Santiago too. But to avoid saying the same thing as you, I'd say, for example, Córdoba. I've only been once, when my parents came for a year, many years ago, and the city center, and the famous patios of Córdoba, where you walk around, strolling through the streets, and see these beautiful patios full of meticulously cared-for flowers. The mosque, which is... well, the mosque. Was there a fire? I don't know how they're going to rebuild it or if there was so much irreparable damage, but anyway, when I was there... It's impressive.

Yes, it seems it wasn't very serious, that it didn't affect much of the historic area. And well, it's a trip we have planned.

Yes, Córdoba, Córdoba is beautiful, but don't go in the summer. Córdoba is the city, I think, where it gets the hottest because it's in the south and inland, and where it gets the hottest in the whole country, I think.

Yes, the frying pan of Andalusia.

The frying pan. Right. So, that's it. We mentioned Paradores a little earlier. Paradores are a network of hotels under state control.

Yes, it's publicly owned.

And it's something, we were talking about it. It's unique. Well, maybe something similar exists in other countries. We don't know about it. So, would you like to explain a little bit about what Paradores are? Because we've mentioned it several times in this podcast and... we're not posh, you know?

No, I suppose practically everyone living in Spain knows Paradores. But just in case someone isn't too familiar with it, Paradores is a chain of publicly owned hotels spread throughout Spain. I think we currently have 98 hotels, and it's a real gem in Spain because so many of them—most of them, in fact—are charming hotels, each with its own special charm. They're located in enchanting places, and many are historic castles, palaces, convents, and monasteries. And they're situated in other historic locations. Trujillo, Guadalupe, Santiago de Compostela, Sos del Rey Católico. There's even a Parador inside the Alhambra in Granada. They are truly wonderful. I think... And they are relatively expensive, especially some of them. There are others that are quite affordable. But I think they're worth it. They're not as expensive as some four- or five-star hotels, and they offer much more than just the hotel itself.

The experience...

The experience, the surroundings, the location. Eating in the throne room of Oropesa Castle or Sigüenza Castle, or wherever we're planning to go this Christmas. Probably We'll have to go by the time this is published. The one in Jaén, which is high up on the mountain, is a relatively new building, but it's built on the ruins of a castle. On part of the ruins of a castle, because part of the castle is still standing. And it's right next to the Parador. It's attached. You can visit the castle. What remains of the historic castle. And it's built in the style of the Parador, in the style of the castle from the 1100s. There are many prices, depending on the Parador, but...

It's an experience worth doing at least once in a lifetime. Yes, really. And we were also talking about that, about how within the city there are historic buildings, but also buildings made with... newly constructed materials, but made with local materials.

And if, for example, we were in Sos del Rey Católico this summer—which was simply Sos until a few decades ago when they changed its name to Sos del Rey Católico—because that's where Ferdinand was born, fleeing Navarre. His mother fled; he didn't, because he couldn't run yet, he hadn't been born. The site where the Parador is located was once the ruins of some houses, and the stones and wood from those houses were used to build the Parador in the old style. And it's beautiful because it has stunning views of the mountains and the lovely town. We could say that Paradores have... Regarding their location, there are three types of Paradores. There are those located within the city, like the one in Santiago de Compostela or the one in Chinchón, which we have nearby, and many others. They're located on the outskirts of the city, like the one we were talking about in Jaén, which is a castle on the outskirts of the city, the one in Oropesa, the one in Sigüenza—those are castles on the outskirts. And then there are paradores that are in nature, in the Sierra de Gredos or in Fuente Dé; those are castles. And while most—well, most, there are many that aren't—they are mostly historical buildings. Some, for example, the Parador de Gredos was the first parador built in Spain. It wasn't originally a parador, because the first parador built specifically to be one was the one in Manzanares, but the one in Gredos was a hunting lodge for the King and ministers and so on, and it was adapted to be a parador. It's surrounded by nature, perfect for hiking, outdoor sports, and so forth.

So, that's it, a good recommendation. The paradores.

Yes, I'm also a big fan of paradores.

Okay, perfect. Well, we'll cover a couple more things and then we'll leave you in peace. One thing, you did years ago, when military service was still mandatory here in Spain, you had to do a year of military service. What you call "la mili." So, some experiences—and you had many—related to what we've been talking about, the travel and means of transport, for example. You used many means of transport during your military service. Tell us a little bit about it.

Well, for the young people who don't know what that was like, what you just said. In Spain, military service was mandatory for men for a year. And ultimately, what military service was about was learning to use a rifle, which you can learn in a day if you're really clumsy. Otherwise, in ten minutes, and marching in formation so you'd be ready to do some kind of thing, stand guard, get drunk, and so on. I decided I wasn't going to spend a year like that, and since I was obligated to do my military service—because conscientious objection wasn't an option for me, since I was trying to get a job at a company where I'd already worked, and having completed military service was mandatory—I decided to go somewhere where I'd do more than just get drunk, lie around, and stand guard. So I joined a special operations company, the Green Berets, as they're called...

Green Berets

And well, there I learned to scuba dive, climb, ski, and rappel from helicopters, like you mentioned. Basically, I did a lot of really tough things. You didn't have time to stop. But I did things I wouldn't have done if I hadn't gone there. No, I'm not going to go to the Pyrenees or Sierra Nevada, or here in Madrid, and pay for a ski pass to learn how to ski. So I learned it for free, through trial and error—not from being beaten up, but from getting hurt myself with my climbing skis. That's it. For example, the experience of diving in a reservoir, the Barasona reservoir, which is a town submerged by the water, is something I wouldn't have had if I hadn't gone. And since I had to do it that year, I chose that.

Yes, even means of transport that weren't so different, like, well, not the van...

Trucks. Yes. Then the use, of course. We had to do truck jumps and climbs. Jumping and climbing trucks while they were moving. I mean, if that's even possible, you have to unfold a moving truck and everyone jumps out with the bed open. Everyone jumps out and positions themselves.

They're on both sides of the road, protecting or whatever. And then, conversely, when they have to pick someone up, a couple of colleagues are on top of the truck, and as the truck passes, you run out, they give you a hand pulling you up, and you climb onto the truck. Helicopter rappelling, to mention a means of transport you were talking about. Well, that's descending on a rope. You're with the helicopter, but the helicopter isn't supposed to land. It can't touch down. And then, with climbing ropes, you descend from the helicopter, rappelling to the ground. In the water, well, the Zodiac. The same thing happened with divers; a Zodiac would pass by and pick you up when they let you out. People who have practiced diving will have seen that when people go into the water, they go backward, sit in the Zodiac, and jump in backward. Why is this? Because if you jump forward, you fall inside the Zodiac.

No. Well, this is because of the tanks. So you don't hit yourself when they throw you in. If you jump in forward. And then, well, they use a kind of hard rubber strap, they put it on, you put your arm out, they grab you with the strap, and they pull you up onto the Zodiac. But as a means of transport, those are more or less the ones that have been used.

Wow, what experiences! Great. All things considered, you had to do it. You had experiences...

I saved money that I would have spent on mixed drinks and kalimotxo, which my parents didn't have. I did things I wouldn't have done otherwise.

Great. And to finish up, I'm asking all my guests for recommendations of a movie, a series, a novel, anything related to the topic. Today it's been travel and transport. So, do you have a recommendation?

Well, if we're talking about travel and adventure, the first thing everyone thinks of is Jules Verne. But I'm going to choose a different kind of trip. A trip through time. And it would be a very typically Spanish series, very funny, very entertaining, which is *El Ministerio del Tiempo* (The Ministry of Time). For those who don't know it, it's based on the premise that since the time of Isabella I of Castile, time portals were discovered in Spain that take you to other places, to other centuries, but always within Spain. And so the Ministry of Time is created, which is absolutely secret. Nobody knows about it, but there are also portals that even the Ministry itself is unaware of. And there are people, the bad guys, who travel to the past and change. And then there are patrols in the Ministry of Time that travel to the past to fix the messes that people who have gone to the past through other uncontrolled portals may have made. It's a very good series because, apart from being very entertaining, you also learn some basic history. It doesn't go into too much depth, but you do learn about characters that everyone remembers studying in school, but doesn't quite recall. Like,

for example, El Empecinado, or the Catholic Monarchs themselves, or El Cid, which shows you what El Cid was really like. He was a mercenary assassin, not a Spanish hero, like they taught us in school. You learn a bit more about very entertaining history, about adventures. It's very good.

We don't have anything like that. But anyway. Doctor Who too, the time travel thing, sometimes they just go to a certain time, but other times, well, they meet people. There's an episode where they meet Agatha Christie and that kind of thing. It's very funny too.

Well, I think that's it. I think we've talked about a little bit of everything.

Well, we can talk about, if you like, the obliquity of the ecliptic, but...

We'll leave that for another day.

Okay, yes, because that would take us a little longer. Yes.

Well, thank you very much. Thank you very much. It's been very fun and I hope you'll come back to the Pod again.

Whenever you want. Okay. No, no, I won't be far away.

So just popping back to English now. Thank you so much for listening. As I say it will be a transcribed on the blog and you may have noticed if you are eagle-eared, not eagle-eyed, and you are bilingual, that I talked a little bit about this topic as well to my niece Nathalie earlier on in the season, but because we were doing it in Spanish, well, we're getting a very different perspective. So I hope it's been interesting See you next time. And I hope you listen again next week. Thanks so much. Bye.