

**This is part of the story of Tom, my new Australian friend and I traveling on the bus in Granada, Spain and then meeting up again a day later, to tour the Rock of Gibraltar with friends we met at the entrance to the rock.**

### **Monkeying around with monkeys and friends on the Rock of Gibraltar**

I met Tom at the bus stop after the bus ride from the freeway, and together we traveled by bus to the border between Spain and Gibraltar. After searching and asking a question of a taxi driver who pointed out the walkway to the entrance of the border, we arrived, got our passports stamped into Gibraltar, the Colony of Great Britain, and continued on.

We heard a man speaking to a couple, also from Australia, about touring the rock in a van with him as a guide, going to the top where taxis cannot go, and also where it would take several hours to walk.

"That's what I want to do," I said to Tom.

"You could save some money if all four of you go together," the guide who heard me, said.

We turned and looked at the couple, and we all agreed

without further delay. It turned out to be one of the best decisions in my journey.

“Will we see monkeys at the top of the rock?” I asked the driver.

He replied with humor, “If you don’t see any monkeys, I’ll give you your money back. Yes, you will see monkeys.”

We found our way to the top of the Rock of Gibraltar, but how did the 200-plus monkeys get there? According to everything I have read and accounts from the guide, the tailless *Macaca Sylvanus* monkeys’ arrival to Gibraltar still has experts guessing, and, so far, no one knows for certain. One theory is that they came at a time when Europa and Africa were joined. Another is that they were brought over to the rock by the Moors during their centuries-long occupation of the Iberian Peninsula. There are those who believe they were introduced to the British as pets and then allowed to go wild on the upper slopes of the rock.

Sir Winston Churchill, upon learning the numbers were diminishing, intervened, ordering their numbers to be replenished. Thus, continues the saying, “Gibraltar will cease to be British on the day there are no apes left on the rock.”

There are centuries of history of the rock, the caves,

the monkeys, the city, and the wars, so that to spend one day there wouldn't be enough time. Tom said he's going back there after his upcoming trip to Morocco.

The guide took us to several viewing places where our new friends, Kim and Keith, and Tom and I took photos of the city and the bay and one of the tunnels, before we got to the monkeys.

Then, all of a sudden, there they were--monkeys walking among the people, sitting on fences and rocks, watching us make fools of ourselves. The monkeys played and rolled around on top of vehicles. We were instructed not to touch them, as they will bite. Also, be careful about rummaging around in bags, because they may think you're about to feed them. That was also a no-no. But, dear monkeys: "Is it fair that you can jump on us and bite us, but we cannot touch you? C'mon."

Kim screamed and jumped when a monkey used her head as a bridge from on top of a van to a rock.

It was difficult sometimes to be somewhere close to a monkey without causing it to get nervous and lean over to hit you or bite you. They were everywhere, and I have many photos of monkeys on vehicles, on fences, watching us, and with their babies. Then, on the way out, I saw a cat.

I walked close to get a photo of the cat, and another guide scared me on purpose with a loud, "Meow." Then, after my surprise, he told me there was once a cat who gave birth to kittens, and one of the monkeys nursed it and took care of it.