

A welcome escape from the cold damp weather of Europe's winter is the Sunshine Tour in Vejer de la Frontera Spain. This year marked the 6th year of the CDI*** which was also an Olympic qualifier. Competitors came to enjoy the good competition, warm weather and the great Spanish hospitality. 19 countries were represented. Many of the competitors were still trying to qualify for this year's upcoming Olympic games and the show doubled in size. The Grand Prix classes had 40 horses and classes were split over 2 days. The small tour classes were also very large and they were also split.

It was an unusual opportunity to have 3 CDI*** in one location on consecutive weekends. It was a lot easier for the horses since they did not have to travel from show to show. The journey from Holland took almost 3 days and most horses traveled from 3 to 6 days.

Once in Spain the challenge was trying to keep them "fresh" but not "too fresh"! I had never done 3 back-to-back shows and I was not sure how my horse would deal with the new challenge.

The stabling was excellent, permanent stalls, good lighting and plenty of staff to help and direct. The arenas were well manicured and the main CDI arena was a 15-minute trail ride away. The trail wound along the beautiful golf course of the Dehesa Montenmedio country club. On the other side was a natural reserve where herds of deer and wild storks reside. The storks made an unusual clacking noise, which sounded like castanets! The horses weren't sure about them at all!

The show ran smoothly and without apparent glitches. The staff was friendly and efficient.

Each show had a different panel consisting predominately of "O" judges. Each Wednesday the veterinary jog was held and the first half of the Intermediate 2 class began followed by the other classes through the weekend. On the last weekend the Invitational Kur was held for the large and small tour. Riders accumulated points from placings to determine the top 15 who would ride in the final. I was very pleased with my show series. Komo was always in the top placing until the last show when I misjudged his "tiredness" level and had much too frisky of a horse for my test! Fortunately we had accumulated many points from our other classes and had secured a spot in the finals. In the Kur finals we placed 6th. I learned a lot and made a lot of new friends. I hope to compete there again someday and would recommend it as a great International show experience.

*Carol Plough
April 2004*

Editor's Note: Carol Plough sadly passed away on May 19, 2005 from a pulmonary embolism after minor surgery.



Prize Giving



Prize Giving Lineup



Hotel



Komo in his stall with tackroom alongside



tackroom with ribbons won by Carol and Komo



visiting Gibraltar: must be a USET fan who couldn't resist Carol's cap!