

opposed to, as the old saying goes "by the horns". No, maybe I am thinking of some other Spanish beast?) persuading him that he really did want to be tethered to a tree. In the preceding ten minutes the donkey re-homing plan had also been formulated, although I am a little uncertain where exactly in their two bedroom flat he was going to reside! Phase two of the plan was to return later that evening and if the now named, Señor Burro (Mr Donkey) was still affixed to the tree (as they were sure he would be) then the re-homing phase would commence. So, after one last stroke of Señor Burro's soft velvet like ears they climbed back into their vehicle and leaving him with a sad but knowing look they continued their journey down the valley. All thoughts of showers and dinner were now long gone, instead their minds were now occupied with practicalities such as should they report their find to the Guardia Civil and how would Señor Burro get on with Arthur, their cat?

Five minutes down the valley and with mind not fully on the task in hand (i.e. driving) a second incident occurred, along the lines of what I believe in aviation terms is described as a 'near miss'. At the last moment they had to swerve to avoid colliding with a man who until then had been stood in the middle of the track looking in their general direction, with a puzzled and searching expression on his face. They quickly made their second unscheduled exit from the vehicle of that afternoon, and speaking somewhat hurriedly (in English) they apologised to the man for almost running him over, explaining in great detail that they had an important task in hand concerning the welfare of an animal, who they had convinced themselves by now was in great distress (he wasn't). After several minutes and with an ever increasing look of confusion, the Spanish (non English speaking) gentleman took advantage of a pause in their hurried and incomprehensible chatter.

"¿Han visto un burro por aqui?"

Which I can tell you translates along the lines of - have you seen a donkey around here?

In the ensuing silence, the couple (who had a reasonable knowledge of Spanish) realized that;

1 - They had just spent five minutes explaining their predicament to someone who had absolutely no comprehension of what they were saying.

2 – (more importantly) he had just asked them if they had seen a donkey!

Once these two facts had registered, the couple's mindset started to change. They were no longer would-be donkey owners, but fine citizens who had just located and secured an escaped animal that no doubt would have perished had it not been for their actions. They were also pleased that their initial conclusion, that the donkey had escaped was correct (it wasn't).

They then went on to explain (in Spanish) that yes, indeed they had encountered a donkey, they explained that they had tethered 'the donkey' (no longer referred to as Señor Burro) to a tree some way back. The couple then folded their arms and waited for the man to express his eternal gratitude to them for finding and securing his escaped prized animal.

He didn't!

He went on to explain that his preferred method for exercising his donkey (Pedro) was to drive down the valley in his car and the donkey would follow on foot, and that he couldn't understand why on earth Pedro was taking so long!

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