**The sweet sounds of San Sebastian: Ambra Sancin**

One of my favourite sounds transports me to Spain. It hasn’t just shaped my taste in music, it introduced me to an unforgettable dish of the Basque region.

I was backpacking in Europe in 1983 and boarded a train in Nice to start a fortnight travelling in southern France. My friend and I settled into our seats and after a bit of chitchat we were drawn to the sounds of live music. Curious to find out more, we looked for the person at the end of the trumpet.

Californian musician Doug was heading to San Sebastian in northern Spain to join the brass section of its new Basque National Orchestra. The city wasn’t on our itinerary but he made it sound appealing enough for us to change our plans and visit him when he played his first concert.

It was an impressive performance and got me interested in listening to trumpet players. Although not a big fan of jazz, I started to take note of jazz musicians I’d previously ignored including Miles Davis, Chet Baker and Wynton Marsalis. One month later, while travelling through Italy, I detoured to attend an outdoor jazz festival in a 16th century fortress.

That initial visit to follow the trumpet player to Spain had another reward. On the way to the concert, we walked past a restaurant where the smell of the cooking drew us to the front door. We discovered the family-run business specialised in a traditional regional dish: cuttlefish in ink sauce. We begged to be allowed to try the thick, black stew before official opening hours. I can still taste that meal today, and it’s another welcome consequence of that train trip.

I’ve returned to San Sebastian twice since my first visit and it remains one of my most-loved overseas destinations. I wonder if Doug realises the effect his sweet sounds have had on me.