



Newsletter August 2019

From the editor

In this month's edition:

- Pyrenees Tour full review.
- Provence & Ardeche Tour full review.



Park Guell, Barcelona

Plus our regular features:

- Another great recipe from Dave.
- This month's motorhome tips.
- Keep in touch.

Welcome to the August edition of the newsletter and hello to everyone who came to see us at the Norfolk Show last month.

This month we have two big tour reviews. The first is from Colin & Sue for their recent jaunt to the Pyrenees that also took in some of the nicest bits on

the west coast of France.

We also review our very enjoyable Provence & Ardeche Tour. Hot weather was a feature of both!

This month's motorhoming tips are all about keeping your food (beer and wine) cold in the

fridge during the hot weather.

We have another great recipe from Dave this month with a one-pot fish special.

Bob & Wendy, Dave & Sue, Colin & Sue, Gary & Eleanor.

Pyrenees Tour Review



The stunning monastery at Mnserrat

“Then it was further south again to a site overlooking the Atlantic Ocean and a visit to glamorous Biarritz”.

We sailed from Dover in early June to start our trip to the Pyrenees and Barcelona – a new Crossings Tour for 2019. The first few days were spent driving down through France to our first two night stop near Bordeaux. It wasn't warm and we encountered tremendous thunderstorms and a yellow weather warning for winds of 40 – 50 mph. Challenging driving conditions to say the least!

Thankfully the weather

settled a little as we met up for two nights with the Dordogne Tour and enjoyed a wine tasting evening at a local Chateau and a sightseeing day in Bordeaux. Then it was further south again to a site overlooking the Atlantic Ocean and a visit to glamorous Biarritz before we headed into Spain and our first glimpses of the Pyrenees Mountains.

From our site in Spain we were able to catch the train to San Sebastian – a favourite for some of

us on tour – and also enjoyed a day in the local town looking at the spectacular Flysch rock formations on the beaches.

Our next driving day saw us moving inland and into the Pyrenees. The weather was beginning to get warmer and with clear blue skies we had some stunning views across the mountains. Bikes, buses or taxis were used to get us into the city of Pamplona – famous for its bull running. This wasn't on when we were there but several of us did do an

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interesting visit to the bull ring, the second largest in Spain. Our visit to Pamplona coincided with a music festival celebrating 100 years of the Pamplona Brass Band and it seemed that around every corner there was a different band playing or marching, along with gymnastic and dance displays and a parade of giant puppets. A brilliant day to visit.

We continued our drive across the Pyrenees for a three night stop in the heart of the mountains and a chance to walk, swim, sunbathe or meander round the historic town of Ainsa. We enjoyed fantastic views along the route - mountains, lakes and rivers – all bathed in gorgeous sunshine.

Next, it was down to a site near Barcelona, situated on the edge of the Mediterranean Sea, and a chance for people to visit Camp Nou, the home of

Barcelona FC, Glorious Gaudi artwork and the Cathedral Sagrada Familia or wander down La Rambla enjoying the sights and sounds of this vibrant city.

As we left Barcelona to head north through Andorra, across winding roads with spectacular views, and back into France, the second weather warning of the trip was announced. This time an orange warning for heatwave temperatures. The further north we got the higher the temperatures rose – “keep hydrated” flashed above us on the motorway gantries - until the temperature finally peaked for us at 44 degrees on the motorhome dashboard.

Thankfully all the sites we stopped at had swimming pools, which we made good use of to keep us cool, and pitched up in the grounds of a Chateau

near Limoges, the trees provided plenty of shade.

And so we ended up back on the site we had started from 25 days previously. During that time the temperatures had gone from a lowly 14 degrees to a high of 40, we had dipped our toes in the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea and driven across snow topped mountain ranges, through tunnels and done plenty of roundabouts and hair pin bends. We had eaten countless croissants, baguettes and pastries, tasted French and Spanish delicacies, and experienced plenty of memorable moments. Thank you to all our guests for a great trip.

Sue and Colin

“During that time the temperatures had gone from a lowly 14 degrees to a high of 40”.



Sagrada Familia, Barcelona

Provence & The Ardeche Tour Review



“Everyone who went on the tour will realise that I have understated the nature of the paddling”!

This was the third outing for this particular tour, although we have made a major change to it from the last two times. The changes proved to be very successful, but more of that later.

We started our tour with a couple of leisurely driving days through France before our first stop in the Ardeche close to the Pont Vallon d’Arc. Our five-star campsite was simply superb with our pitches providing access directly to the river.

In fact we were able to hire canoes and go for a gentle paddle for a couple of hours. Everyone who went on the tour will realise that I have understated the nature of the paddling! 90% of the excursion was gentle, but 10% of it was quite lively. The net result was some wet clothes, two lost hats, a lost oar, a lost Croc one ruined iPhone, and a story to tell the grandkids.

The tour then continued to the historic walled city of Avignon. It was starting to get hot by

this stage but this did nothing to dampen anyone’s enthusiasm for the city with its ancient palaces and open squares.

Next stop was the lesser known small town of Lourmarin, considered to be one of the prettiest in Provence. Here we were able to experience the true Provence with local markets, restaurants spilling onto the streets and pleasant evenings that stretched into the night-time as the sun went down.

By now we were

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getting very hot with temperatures into the high 30s. We were grateful for the lovely pool at the campsite.

Next stop was a dramatic drive through rocky outcrops and gorges that characterise this region. There was lavender to be seen too in the valleys. Our next destination was into the mountains of the Haute Provence Alps.

By now the heat was taking its toll and the planned excursions into the local mountain towns and villages were replaced by time spent in one of the two pools on offer in our campsites, both of which provided excellent views across the mountains and down into the valleys. Fortunately we had a great bar and restaurant at our five-star campsite we were able to enjoy a drink around the pool into the evening (even though it didn't really cool down much at night time).

Next stop was back into the Ardeche, this time on the east of the main gorge close to the pretty town of Crest.

Our campsite was located on the confluence of two rivers and this proved to be very useful as the temperatures continued to rise and we headed into the 40s!

One of my long-lasting memories of running Crossings is going to be watching most of the group decamp into the river to just sit and let the current take them down the Drome in an attempt to stay cool.

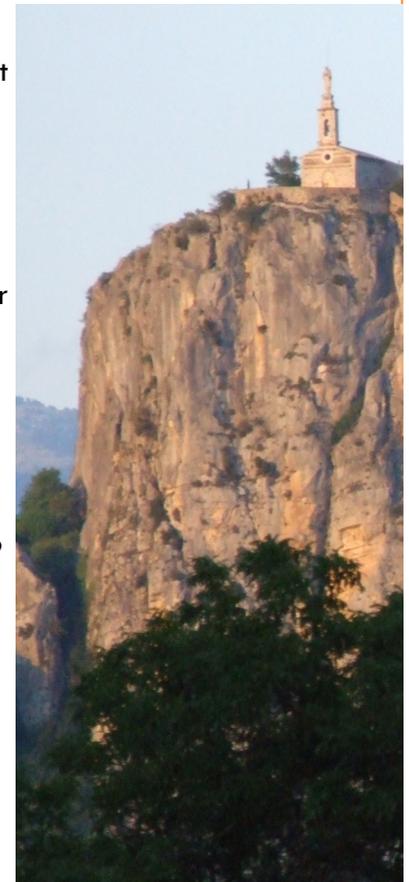
We were grateful for the shade in our pretty campsite and grateful too that we had avoided the coast, which would simply have been too hot and too crowded to enjoy.

In fact we had made the decision a couple of years ago to take the Cote-d'Azur out of this tour. It proved

to be the right one as we were able to spend much more time in the 'true' Provence with its beautiful mountains, gorges, Medieval villages clinging to hillsides, lavender fields and historic towns and (small) cities.

All in all the tour was a great success and will re-appear on the schedule in future years.

"Next stop was a dramatic drive through rocky outcrops and gorges that characterise this region".



Motorhoming Tips

Inspired by recent (very) hot weather, we noticed that a few of the fridges were struggling to keep things cool, so this month's tips are all about keeping cool (and how to get the best out of your fridge).

1. Most fridges work are 3-way working on 12v, 240v and gas. Where mains hook-up is available then this is usually the best option as your fridge will get cold but without using up your gas supply.
2. Fridges running on gas will actually get colder than electric but you will use approximately 400g of gas per 24 hours.
3. Most fridges will automatically switch over to the use the appropriate power supply. That is, 12v when on the move, 240v when hooked up and then gas if none of the other two are available.
4. Don't pack your fridge too tightly and don't cover the silver fins at the back of the fridge.
5. Fridges work by removing heat from the main compartment. This heat is dispersed at the back of the fridge and then out of the vent on the side of the van. Therefore, never cover the vent and in very hot weather, try to keep the vent in shade. Some people fit fans behind their fridges to help dissipate the heat and therefore keep the inside of the fridge cooler.
6. Conversely, if you winter out you might consider fitting vent covers to prevent the fridge getting too cold.
7. Leave your fridge ajar when it is not being used to prevent it getting smelly and mouldy inside.
8. Avoid using harsh chemicals on the inside of the fridge. Soapy water is usually sufficient.
9. Finally, have your fridge serviced regularly (it comes as part of a habitation check).
10. Your fridge will stay cold for a few hours (in normal temperatures) without any power source. However, be careful with freezer contents, which once defrosted need eating.



“Fridges running on gas will actually get colder than electric but you will use approximately 400g of gas per 24 hours”.

Coq au Van: the amusingly titled recipe section

One-pan fabulous fish

Ingredients:

300g White Basmati Rice.
 6 heaped teaspoons green olive tapenade.
 350g ripe mixed-colour cherry tomatoes.
 1/2 a bunch of fresh basil (15g).
 500g White Fish, such as haddock, skin off, pin boned.

Cooking Method:

In a large shallow pan on a high heat, mix the rice with 2 heaped teaspoons of tapenade, then pour over 600ml of water. Put the lid on and let it come to the boil while you halve the tomatoes and, in a bowl mix them with 1 tablespoon each of olive oil and red wine vinegar. Taste, season to perfection with sea salt and black pepper, and tear of the basil

leaves.

Cut the fish into four equal-sized pieces and place in the pan, pushing them into the rice. Scatter over the dressed tomatoes. Put the lid back on and boil for 10 mins Ute S, or until the rice is cooked through, then remove the lid and cook for a further 2 minutes until all the liquid has evaporated. Spoon the remaining tapenade over the fish, pick over the remaining basil leaves, drizzle lightly with extra virgin olive oil and serve up.
 Enjoy.



Keep in touch

We are very happy to hear from newsletter readers throughout the year. If you have ideas for features, questions, motorhoming tips or questions about any of our tours, please feel free to get in touch at any time.

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