



December 2019

In this month's edition:

- The Annual Review.
- Meet the newest addition to our Tour Leader team.
- Last chance for Early Bird offers.



The lavender field in front of the Abbey de Senanque, Provence

Plus our regular features:

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

Welcome to the December issue of the newsletter. It's nearly Christmas and I'm already bored with this season's Argos advert and it's only the 12th December.

2019 has been a packed year. We have run more tours than ever as our team of excellent tour leaders continues to grow. In this edition we have our annual round-up of all of the best bits from the season. Read more from Page 2 onwards.

Next year is bigger still with twelve great tours on offer and a brand new couple, Ian & Linda, who will be joining us as tour leaders. Meet them on Page 6.

We are delighted that our existing team of Dave & Sue, Colin & Sue and Gary & Eleanor will all be continuing to tour with us in 2020 too!

We have a final call on the early bird offers, which end on 31st on this month.

More details on Page 8.

We also have another great recipe from Dave with a slightly unusual spaghetti dish.

This month's motorhoming tips are all about preparing your van for the winter.

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

Annual Review 2019

Sitting here now looking at the rain pounding down on the window wrapped in my granny blanket, it's hard to believe that this year was essentially HOT.



The Grand Place, Brussels.

I have a vague recollection of seeing 42 degrees centigrade on the dashboard thermometer in Provence only to be surpassed by Colin & Sue who hit 44 in Spain.

The year started normally enough with our old favourite—the Starter Tour. This is fairly early in the season and it was met with the usual mixture of sunshine and showers. 'Four seasons in one day' was how Sue described it in fact.

Reading back on the reviews, guests really did enjoy the variety offered on the tour, but perhaps the stand-out attractions was the Grand Place in the

heart of Brussels. You really do get the wow factor when you stand in the centre of that square and then do a 360 to take in all of the gilt-clad buildings.

Regular customers will know that Wendy (the boss) was ill at the beginning of the year although thankfully she is now fully recovered. We have to thank Colin and Sue again for gamefully taking on the reins for the starter tour and guiding our guests around Belgium, Holland and France.

There was also another appearance of 'Colin and Sue's Cafe'. This tradition was started in Italy when Colin & Sue were guests on a

Crossings tour. Happily it has now become a feature of all their tours and features copious quantities of bacon sarnies lovingly prepared on Colin's massive hot plate.

Next stop for us was what we call 'BPV' or Budapest, Prague and Vienna to give it the full title.

The three cities are all stunning in their own way and there was no consensus among the group on which one was the favourite.

Personally, it's Budapest and one of our favourite memories is riding the 'Budapest Eye', which is a massive big wheel offering great views

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Kayaking at the Pont'D'arc in the Ardeche.

The other tour was Colin & Sue's inaugural trip to the Pyrenees. They were taking a relaxing drive down the west coast of France en route to Northern Spain.

This is where things started to get hot for them and for us across in Provence.

Reading back on Sue's report now what really comes across is how the beauty of the area—the mountains, coast and shoreline, really were bathed in the brilliant light that you only seem to get in southern France and Spain.

Barcelona was a real highlight. The city does have something for everyone, from the Camp Nou football stadium to the bizarre Gaudi architecture, to the large beaches, to the longest shopping street in Europe.

Meanwhile in Provence, we were all trying to keep cool. In

over both parts of the city.

Having said that, Prague is impossibly cute with its narrow streets, bridges and amazing astronomical clock.

Vienna too, spread out over a large area, has some amazing buildings, the pick of which is probably the Belvedere, where you can see a real-life Klimt painting (if you like that kind of thing).

Next on the schedule was a new one for Gary and Eleanor down the to the Dordogne region of France. This tour saw the first ever 'Haggis evening'. Although this

isn't a thing in France (yet), Gary & Eleanor did manage to smuggle a few of the lively creatures through customs from their native Aberdeenshire, before presenting them to an unsuspecting group of British motorhomers somewhere near Sarlat.

We had another first on this tour as we had two tours that crossed over on the same campsite near Bordeaux. To celebrate this momentous event we laid on a bus for the two groups into the town itself followed by a lively evening of wine-tasting in the nearby St Emilion.

"We had another first on this tour as we had two tours that crossed over on the same campsite near Bordeaux".

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fact, rivers feature prominently in our memories of this trip. To start with, the group kayaked down the Ardeche and through the famous Pont d'Arc.

Later we used the Drome River to cool off as most of the group simply sat in it and allowed themselves to drift downstream to escape the heat.

Next stop for us is our annual trip to Scandinavia. Regular readers will know that this is pretty much our favourite place in Europe. Big open roads, friendly locals and motorhomes welcome everywhere. You can even park in the middle of Stockholm!

Stockholm remains one of our favourite cities. For a capital city it is very relaxed and it is easy to avoid the crowds. Highlights are probably the Vasa museum, which everyone seems to



The Plitvice Lakes

love, closely followed by the ABBA museum, which tends to divide opinion.

We also love the two main bridges on this trip. The first is the Great Belt Bridge that joins two of the Danish islands and then the famous Oresund Bridge that joins Denmark to Sweden.

Driving across both of these is always a highlight of the trip for us with the sun glinting off the Baltic below.

Driving was also one of the highlights of the Croatia & Slovenia Tour that went in September. Not only

do you get to drive through the Austrian and Slovenian Alps, there is also a stunning stretch of coastline down the Istrian Coast in Croatia, ultimately arriving on the very pretty Krk Island.

The weather was favourable this year and lent itself to outdoor pursuits on and off the water. One stand out moment was an evening boat trip around the Brijuni National Park culminating in a night-time arrival into the historic port of Pula.

The amazing drives continued when the group headed inland

"Later we used the Drome River to cool off as most of the group simply sat in it and allowed themselves to drift downstream to escape the heat".

to the Plitvice Lakes famed for its turquoise waters, lush vegetation and waterfalls.

At the same time, just across the Adriatic, Gary & Eleanor were busy guiding their second tour of the year down to the Italian lakes.

We had made some changes to the tour this year by splitting our time on Lake Garda between the south and the less commercial north shores. This was a decision that was very well received as the group really enjoyed their time up at Rive del Garda.

Of course, no trip to this part of Europe is complete without a day-trip into Venice and another to Verona (the setting for Romeo and Juliet).

Believe it or not, they also have haggis in this part of Italy so we suspect that 'Haggis Night' might be a feature of Gary & Eleanor's tours.

Meanwhile we were embarking on another new tour to Poland. This is quite different to anything else we do at this time of the year.

Essentially we spend a couple of days driving across to Poland with a two-night stopover in Berlin.

Poland is perhaps not your traditional holiday destination although it proved to be a fascinating trip. It boasts some stand out towns and cities all of which seem to have a similar layout in that they are centred around dramatic squares stuffed with historic buildings. Krakow is perhaps the best of these due to its size and scale.

Also, in Krakow you have the indescribable Salt Mines and the more disturbing Auschwitz complex both of which make interesting and thought-provoking days out.

For many in the group, one of the highlights was a wonderful evening we

spent in the foothills of the mountains surrounded by valleys and trees. Here we enjoyed a traditional evening of Polish singing and dancing followed by Polish sausages cooked on an open fire pit, all washed down with homemade vodka.

We really were catching the last remnants of the season by the time the tour finished with a few days on the Baltic Coast before heading home.

Looking back it has been a busy, busy year and from a personal point of view it just got better and better as the year went on.

Next year we have twelve tours in prospect (two more than this year) and we are very much looking forward to the new season.

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Meet your new tour leaders

We are pleased to announce that we are adding another tour leading couple to our team for 2020.

They are Ian and Linda Willox, who some of you will know from this year's summer in Scandinavia Tour.



"We have been travelling in a motorhome for over twenty years and, although we have graduated from a small camper to our current larger motorhome, we still love travelling to new and faraway places and meeting likeminded people. Being semi-retired and self-employed means we can go on extended trips which suits us perfectly, as we have been known to change route half way through if the mood takes us.

Ian spent the majority of his working life as a vehicle engineer and Linda was administration manager for a large bank, but now confines her number crunching to accounts work.

In 2007 we took late a 'gap year' to work as tour reps for a walking and cycling holiday company based in the Loire valley around the Tours and Amboise area where there are many famous chateaux. Since then we have spent a few years completing camp site reviews, primarily in France, for a Europe camping guide. This meant that over time we travelled to many places that we might not have got to in the course of a normal holiday. Of course, we still managed to travel much further afield on our 'proper' holidays!

Our first tour with Crossings was as

customers, and seemed like luxury to us having all the overnight stops booked and planned in advance as well as information on visits and places to stop on route. This seemed to us to be the perfect blend of an organised tour yet still retaining the freedom to find your own way each day. With this in mind we hope that, as the newest tour leaders, we will meet many more motorhome owners looking to spread their wings with a little help from us".

Ian & Linda Willox

"We still love travelling to new and faraway places and meeting likeminded people".

Coq au Van: the amusingly titled recipe section

Crab and Fennel Spaghetti

Ingredients:

1 Fennel Bulb.
150g of dried Spaghetti.
1 fresh Red Clilly.
160g of mixed White and Brown Crab Meat.
160g of mixed colour cherry tomatoes.

Cooking Method.

Put a large non-stick frying pan on a medium-low heat. Trim the Fennel, pick and reserve any leafy tops, then halve the bulb and finely slice it. Place in the pan with 1 tblsp of olive oil and cook with lid on for 5 minutes. Meanwhile, cook the pasta in a pan of boiling salted water

according to packet instructions, then drain, reserving a mug full of cooking water.

De-seed and finely slice the chilly, stir in with Fennel and cook uncovered until soft and sticky, stirring occasionally. Halve the tomatoes and toss into the pan for 2 minutes, followed by the crab meat, 1 minute later, the drained pasta. Loosen with a splash of reserved cooking water if needed, then season to perfection with sea salt and black pepper, sprinkle over the reserved Fennel tops and drizzle 1 tsp of extra olive oil. 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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Calls to our landline will automatically bounce to our mobile when we are away at no cost to yourself.

Early Bird Offers ending soon



Our Early Bird Offers end soon. In fact they end on 31st December. Please note that this is a strict cut-off date and all bookings made after that date are charged at the full rate.

Our Early Bird offers are available on ALL of our tours and entitle you to £100 of the full tour price.

In addition if you have booked with us before, you can claim a further £50 off as a Loyalty Bonus.

By the way, the Loyalty Bonus is available throughout the year and

can be used with or without the Early Bird.

To take advantage of the Early Bird, all you have to do is complete a booking form before midnight on 31/12/2019. We will then automatically reduce the tour price to the Early Bird rate.

At the time of writing, some of our tours are full, but we do have plenty of availability, particularly on our shorter tours.

To check availability, please contact us, or simply fill in a booking form for your chosen

tour and we will contact you to let you know if there is a space.

Remember that we strictly limit the number of places to 12 (plus you tour leader) and spaces are allocated on a first-come-first-serve basis.

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Motorhoming Tips

We haven't had any frosts in sunny Lincolnshire yet so if you haven't done it already, it's time to get the van ready for the winter.

Everyone does this a bit differently, but here is what we do (and don't do).

1. Get rid of all the water from the fresh tank, waste tank and the boiler. You need to run the taps off as well to make sure there is no water in your pipes. However, do not rely on this to empty the fresh tank. You do need to find the drain tap for this, which is probably under the van somewhere.
2. Turn off the 12v panel. Even an LED left on can drain your battery over the winter months so you really need to turn it off completely.
3. Leave the fridge and freezer doors slightly ajar.
4. If you can leave the handbrake off and put it in gear instead.
5. We don't empty the contents of the van completely although we do remove all foodstuffs, condiments etc as they will freeze. We leave our soft furnishings in the van although many folks take these out.
6. We don't put our silver screens up. We like the little bits of sunlight to get in and warm the van up.
7. We have a solar panel and would not be without one. This feeds charge to the leisure batteries and what is left goes to the car battery. You don't actually need that much sun for this to work really effectively.
8. We usually leave plenty of fuel in the tank. It rarely gets cold enough in the UK for freezing diesel (though we have had it in Burgundy in January).
9. Check your van from time to time to make sure there are no signs of anything untoward happening inside.
10. We also move ours from time to time (just a couple of feet) to stop the tyres 'squaring' off and we start it up and run it for a bit or take it for a spin.

