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## From the editors

June 2018

Welcome to the June edition of the newsletter. We have had two tours out in May, one to the Baltic States and the other to the Rhine & Alsace.

We took a group for a 27-day tour to the Baltics while Dave and Sue revisited some of their favourite haunts in Germany and on the east of France. We have full tour reports on both trips in this month's edition, although I'm

not sure I've done justice to either of them really!

We have another recipe from resident foodie, Dave who has taken his curry obsession to a new level.

Finally, this month's motorhoming tips are all about getting wifi in the van.

**Bob , Wendy, Dave and Sue.**

## 2019 Website and Brochure Update

If you have not visited the website recently, please take a look as we now have put up all of the information for the 2019 season.

Our new brochure is currently in production and we hope to have it ready for the Norfolk Show in July. If you have

requested a copy we will send it as soon as it becomes available.

In the meantime, if you see any tour you fancy for 2019, please get in touch as we are now taking bookings for next year.

June 2018

## The Baltic States Tour Review

This year we took a group to the Baltic States for the very first time.

*“It is a relatively un-touristy place with a magnificent cathedral and a terrifying KGB museum”.*

The three countries that make up the Baltics (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) all have their own distinctive characteristics and make for a different experience to anything else you might encounter in Europe (in my humble opinion).

Our tour started in Dover, like all of our tours do, which then means a couple of days of driving to get up to the northern German seaport at Kiel. We had a couple of relaxing overnight stops in Holland and Germany before arriving at the rather ramshackle port in the evening of our third day.

The ferry itself was a bit of a treat with an excellent bar and restaurant where we all sat and watched the sun go down as we left the port.

Our first stop was Lithuania’s third largest city, Klaipeda, which is also where the ferry pulls in (after 20 hours on the Baltic Sea).

The town is a great introduction to the country with its laid-back feel among a mixture of old and new architecture. We also got our first taste of Baltic food at local prices. By that I mean cheap!



We then embarked on the first of our longer driving days, characterised by long empty stretches of roads with plenty of places to stop along the way.

Next stop was Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania. It is a relatively un-touristy place with a magnificent cathedral and a terrifying KGB museum. The group all enjoyed an open-top bus tour that picked us up directly from our campsite.

Some of us walked or cycled across to the nearby TV Tower, which has one of those lifts that takes you up twenty floors in as many seconds. After our stomachs caught up, we enjoyed a marvellous lunch in the revolving restaurant at the top.

If you looked at a map, the next sensible destination would be to cut inland, but instead we decided to get into the old Baltic States by passing along the Russian border on the eastern side of both Lithuania and then Latvia.

Here we saw evidence of the old Soviet collective farms now given over to subsistence farming. It is not uncommon to see an old

woman in a headscarf milking a cow tethered in a meadow. The cow is tethered not the old woman.

At Daugavpils, we also went past the old concentration camps that were used in the war and subsequently by the KGB.

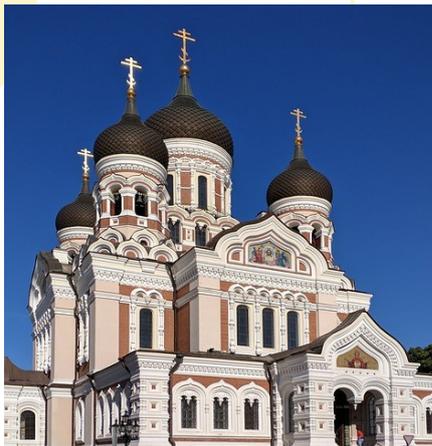
After a couple of days in the east we re-entered the land of the living with a couple of nights near Tartu, Estonia's second largest city. This is a lively university town nestling on the river. Our personal highlight was the upside down house that has just opened.

Next stop was probably the most commercialised part of the tour—Tallinn. The capital of Estonia has long been a draw for tourists and remains popular, not least as a destination for the cruise ships.

It really is a beautiful city where you can take an interesting photo with every corner you turn. The Old Town is the star of the show although there is plenty of interest around and about including the Harbour Museum and Singing Bowl.

Next stop was the Estonian resort town of Parnu with its massive sandy beach and network of gridded streets lined with old wooden buildings.

En route, the group visited a diverse range of attractions including the defunct Soviet



military base at Paldinski, the Holocaust Memorial and the National Park.

We then embarked on a long coastal drive out of Estonia and onto the capital of Latvia, Riga.

The group enjoyed another bus tour today taking in the various sights, most notably the Freedom Memorial, the Russian Orthodox Cathedral and the Art Nouveau district.

Our campsite for our stay was on a harbour overlooking the city and we were treated to a couple of lovely sunsets.

Our final destination in The Baltic States was the magnificent palace of Rundale, where they filmed the BBC's War and Peace. We stayed in the grounds and enjoyed a wonderful group meal in the local restaurant.

On our final drive through Lithuania, we all stopped off at the slightly bizarre Hill of Crosses. This was originally a pilgrimage site for repressed Catholics but has now become

something of a tourist attraction with over 100,000 crosses of various sizes spread across a small hill in the middle of nowhere.

Finally it was off the ferry for an enjoyable 20-hour cruise across the bottom of the Baltic and the most chaotic boarding procedure we have ever experienced.

Vans intact we all got off the ferry to make our way back across Germany with an overnight stop in Bruges before catching the ferry home.

Finally a word on the weather. We had chosen May for this tour as the average weather conditions were cool and dry. We got the dry bit, but we also had temperatures that were regularly into the high 20s Celsius.

Over the course of the 27 days, we had just one evening and one morning of rain.

All in all we had a fantastic first tour of the Baltics with a group of genuinely open-minded travellers who grasped every opportunity to immerse themselves in the local culture and really explore every inch of the three countries from the western coast to the Russian border on the east.

June 2018

## The Rhine & Alsace Tour Review

*“There was the small matter of a royal wedding and an FA Cup on the Saturday. Our friendly campsite owner did us proud offering us the ‘satellite friendly’ pitches so that everyone (who wanted to) was able to watch the tele”.*



A sunny morning greeted our group in Dover as they headed off to Calais with tour leaders Dave and Sue.

The Rhine is a bit too far to get to in one day so we built in a little bit of time in Brussels on the way. The stand out highlight of the city is probably the Grand Place with its gold tinted buildings. It is simply stunning viewed in any direction.

The Belgians are quite good at beer and chocolate too. In fact, the group had a very enjoyable meal in the local bistro, which was a great chance for everyone to get to know each other.

Next stop was on the Rhine where the group spent the next week split over two locations. First stop is the historical town of Remagen, perhaps best known for its strategic role in the war where you can still see the remains of the bridge that

was destroyed.

In fact, the town is a very pretty collection of half-timbered houses, traditional restaurants and small shops. There is also a path that runs right along the Rhine, which is great for the more active.

The group then enjoyed an extended stay at Rudesheim, considered to be the prettiest town on the Rhine.

There was the small matter of a royal wedding and an FA Cup on the Saturday. Our friendly campsite owner did us proud offering us the ‘satellite friendly’ pitches so that everyone (who wanted to) was able to watch the tele.

In fact there was a bit of a British street party that even involved a patriotic cake (thanks John).

Normal service was then resumed with a few lovely sunny days with the group visiting the town and the nearby cable car up out of the valley.

After a week on the German

Rhine, it was time to hit the Alsace region of France. The best-known city in the area is Strasbourg, sometimes referred to as the capital of Europe.

The city boasts a network of canals and islands and some stunning buildings, again many of them of the half-timbered variety. There is also a magnificent Gothic cathedral. The best view of city is perhaps looking out over the Rhine from the 242m spire.

The city has a mixture of German and French influences with lots of evidence of its medieval past.

One of the points of interest is the Astronomical Clock, although we are still trying to work out why it is so expensive!

One of the main areas is known as La Petit France, close to the Grande Ile, which contains the historical centre of the city.

Our final main stay was Luxembourg City. Although this is no longer in either the Rhine or Alsace regions, we put it in as a welcome distraction on the route home.

With temperatures reaching 30 degrees centigrade, most of the group ventured into the city.

The city is very compact as you might expect but still has the feel of a capital, not least due to various grand government

buildings.

The city sits in a bit of a dip in the landscape and is best viewed from one of the surrounding high points.

Last stop was in the Champagne region in France (why not?) as it was a half-way point back to Calais.

We had another 'Crossings' first on the final day of the tour. It transpired that the group contained a number of ladies who were members of various choirs. So with very little rehearsal time they put on an excellent concert that even included some harmonies! I've seen the videos and my personal favourite was Bobby's Girl (obviously).

Overall, it was a great trip, with great weather and a great group of people who seemed to bond really well from Day One.

*"The city has a mixture of German and French influences with lots of evidence of its Medieval past".*



## **Ham and Egg Curried Noodles!**

### **Ingredients:**

- 150g egg noodles.
- 4 spring onions.
- 100g roast Ham.
- 2 teaspoons curry powder.
- 2 large eggs.

### **Cooking Method:**

1. Cook the noodles in a pan of boiling salted water according to the packet instructions, then drain, reserving a mug full of cooking water.
2. Meanwhile, trim and finely slice the spring onions, and finely slice the ham.

3. Place the ham in a non-stick frying pan on a medium-high heat with 1 tablespoon of olive oil and the curry powder.

4. While it gets nicely golden, beat the eggs.

5. Pour them into the pan, moving them around with a rubber spatula until they start to cook, then stir in the noodles and most of the spring onions.

6. Toss over the heat for 2 minutes, then taste and season to perfection with salt and pepper, loosening with a splash of reserved noodle water, if needed.

7. Dish up the noodles, scatter over the remaining spring onions and finish with 1 teaspoon of extra virgin olive oil.



# Motorhoming and Travel Tips & Advice

*“The clever people that you need to speak to and that we can recommend are Adam and Sophie at Motorhome Wifi”.*

When we arrive on a campsite the first three questions are:

1. Where’s the electric?
2. Where’s the toilets?
3. Is there any wifi?

The first two are easy but the last one is a mixed bag. Often campsites provide free wifi, but it can be patchy. I am no expert in this so the following are some of the options. You would need to speak to someone clever to find out how to do it. See point 6.

1. You can use your mobile phone as a ‘wifi hotspot’ as long as you are able to pick up a mobile phone signal. Doing this your phone effectively becomes a router like the one you have in your house meaning you connect your other devices (laptop, iPad) to it.
2. Buy a ‘mifi’ device, which is a little gizmo with a sim card in it that also acts as a router. Again, a mobile phone signal

is required.

3. If doing either 1 or 2, make sure that you have password protected your devices otherwise everyone else on the campsite will tap into it and steal your data allowance.
4. If doing either 1 or 2 then get a device that is capable of picking up a 4G signal. You can’t always get 4G, but when you do it is pretty quick.
5. Tap into the campsite wifi with the help of a booster. This is like an aerial that you put up that will pick up the wifi signal and amplify it, meaning you get faster internet speeds.
6. The clever people that you need to speak to and that we can recommend are Adam and Sophie at Motorhome Wifi.



**Motorhome WiFi**  
Your connectivity experts



## Keep in touch

Please feel free to contact us at any time about any aspect of our tours. Whether you have already booked, or are just thinking about it, please remember that there is no such thing as stupid question.

During the non-touring months:

- The newsletter comes out every month featuring previews of the 2018 tours.
- We don’t tend to update Facebook and Instagram as often we when we are on

tour mainly as we don’t take so many photos!

- Your call will be re-routed to our mobile (at our expense) if you phone our land-line while we are away.
- We are available seven days a week.

**01522 861715**

**07957 745434**