



In the newsletter:

- From the editors
- 2018 Review of the Year
- 2019 Early Bird Discount
- NEC Show Review
- 2020 Plans

Regular features

- Motorhoming and Travel Tips & Advice
- Coq au Van—the cooking feature!
- Keep in touch

From the editors

Nov 2018

First of all, a big hello to all of you who had your arms twisted and signed up for the newsletter at the NEC. We hope you enjoy it. Remember, you can always click 'unsubscribe'!

It's that time of the year again when we look back over the touring year and pick out our highlights.

We have had a fantastic year with a full complement on every single tour. Better than that though was how much we (and Dave & Sue) enjoyed running each of the tours. So this month, read our 'Review of the Year' to see which bits we liked best.

We have also welcomed two new couples as tour leaders. Colin & Sue and Gary & Eleanor

have now been 'initiated' having joined us on tour this year as co-leaders and are now ready to run their own tours next year (assuming we haven't scared them off). Our first ever team picture is above.

We are also starting to think about 2020 believe it or not. More on that on Page 8.

We had a great week at the NEC Show and we have a brief review of that on Page 5.

As usual, we have another great recipe from Dave with an epic rib-eye steak, and this month's motorhoming tips are suitably seasonal with a look at silver screens.

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

Review of the Year

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Our touring year started as it always does with our Three-Country Starter Tour. We describe this tour as a bit of Holland, a bit of Belgium and a bit of France.

We actually like the bit of Holland best, so much so that we are planning on doing a full tour there in 2020. That's not to say we don't like the other bits as Bruges and Brussels are two of the prettiest, most accessible cities we visit.

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Next trip for us was the Baltic States. This was our first time with a group and it was simply awesome. It's a bit different from all other tours, partly as you get two mini-cruises (from Kiel to Klaipeda and back) at either end of the tour.

However, the main attraction is just how easy it is to get around the three countries in your motorhome. You can take the van almost everywhere and get parked and with so little traffic, you are free to explore.

The three capitals are perhaps the obvious stand-out attractions although we have a massive soft spot for Rundales Palace where they filmed BBC's War and Peace.

We were also struck by Vilnius's most recent tourist attraction: "The upside down house" (it's



worth Googling), which will live forever in our memory.

Meanwhile over in Germany, Dave and Sue were soaking up the sun on our Rhine & Alsace Tour with a group of Brits who were going to miss two key events. One was the Royal Wedding and the other was England (doing well for a change) in the World Cup. Apologies to our Scottish, Irish and Welsh readers.

Our friendly campsite owner came to the rescue locating the group in the 'satellite' pitches so that a full-on British street party could take place. This tour was also notable as the first ever to include a ladies choir made up from 'Crossings' guests.

It was a quick lay-over for Dave & Sue as they then headed straight off for the Brittany & Normandy Tour.

Despite some of the worst weather of the year albeit just for a couple of days, the group enjoyed a hot and humid couple of weeks at some lovely seaside locations.

Perhaps the pick of the bunch was on the south coast of Brittany near

Concarneau with the beach on two sides and an attractive old walled town packed with restaurants.

Shortly after this trip, we were just down the road in the Loire with Gary & Eleanor, our new tour leaders. The main thing we remember about this tour is chateaux and wine. We didn't visit every castle and vineyard but some of us had a bloody good go.

For us, perhaps the pick of the bunch was Brissac. This was a cracking campsite with a lovely farmhouse at its centre. It also had its own vineyard and a very enthusiastic manager who provided our group with a

Our campsite was right on the shores of the Oslofjord. Some of the vans were parked literally metres away from the water's edge.

From the campsite a bus shuttled us all along the fjord road into Oslo. There is lots to do in the city, but our stand-out bits were the intact Viking Ship that they pulled out of the fjord and the bustling Aker Brugge area where all the local ferries dock. Then there's the weirdest sculpture park in Europe too.

August is a great time to 'do' Scandinavia as the kids all go back to school early August and it is really quiet on the campsites. The roads always

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fantastic evening of wine tasting.

The following day, many of us ventured to the beautiful chateau just a couple of miles away, which is the highest in the Loire.

Next tour was Scandinavia. We do get about a bit. This year we had changed the tour to include a little bit of Norway. This proved to be a very popular change and was one of the highlights of the year for us.

seem to be quiet, which again makes for a great motorhomer's holiday as you can take the van wherever you like without having to worry about it. You can even park in the centre of Stockholm!

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...continued

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the most sun. It was a draw this year.

At one point, the two groups are only separated by a bit of Adriatic Sea and we are often tempted to get the ferry from Krk Island in Croatia and surprise Dave & Sue in Venice! We've never done it though.

Dave & Sue had a memorable moment with a trip up the Mont Blanc cog railway en route. As if that was not enough they experienced a full-on avalanche occurring across the valley. No tour leaders or guests were harmed during the making of the tour!

They also had their first ever Titanic moment when some of the guests hired out a motor boat on Lake Garda, only to get 'buzzed' by a plonker on a jet ski who filled the boat with water.

This all ended much better than the film with everyone returning safely to shore with a story to tell.

Just across the Adriatic, we were enjoying our sunniest ever tour down in the former Yugoslavia.

We love the Istrian coast and were treated this year to a 45-minute dolphin display during our evening boat trip. There is something a bit emotional about watching the dolphins following the boat.

We also had a wonderful if busy day in the Plitvice National Park where the group embarked on boats and land trains to see the beautiful lakes and waterfalls.

So overall, running a tour business is not a bad job. That said, we always say that it is the people that make or break a tour, so we would like to say a genuine, heartfelt thank you to everyone who came with us this year and made it our best ever.

So here's our 2018 top ten (in no particular order):

1. Dolphin spotting off the Istrian coast of Croatia.
2. The upside down house in Vilnius, Lithuania.
3. The Royal Wedding street party in Rudesheim, Germany.
4. Staying next to and travelling up the Oslofjord in Norway.
5. The 'Titanic' re-enactment on Lake Garda, but with a better ending.
6. The first ever 'Crossings' ladies choir on our Rhine & Moselle Tour.
7. Driving over the Oresund Bridge between Denmark and Sweden (in the top 10 every year).
8. Eating traditional Belgian stew made from Grimbergen beer, while in Grimbergen, Belgium.
9. The wine tasting evening in Brissac in the campsite's own vineyard, followed by a visit to the chateau.
10. The two mini-cruises between Kiel and Klaipeda on our Baltic States Tour (and Rundales Palace).

NEC Motorhome Show

Nov 2018

We were at the NEC again this year with a wonderful corner pitch, which we think around 90,000 people must have walked past over the six days.

The NEC Show is great for us for several reasons.

The main one is that we get to see so many of our existing customers that every day is like a mini-reunion. Thanks to everyone that popped by the stand to say hello. When we started 'Crossings' we didn't know anyone at the show. Now we see loads of people we know every single day.

It is also great to see so many of you who have booked already for 2019 and came along to introduce yourselves. It is great for us to put faces to the names.

Finally, thanks to all of you who booked at the show. Don't worry, we will look after you!



Quick show report: total visitor numbers were down a bit this year, which is a shame. No-one is sure why. Also, some of the dealers seemed to be having a slow show. Two years ago there didn't seem to be any deals but this year it seems that there were bargains to be had.

What I learnt at the show: George Clarke seems to be very popular, especially with the ladies. It's probably because he is good at DIY.

Early Bird and Loyalty Discounts

Don't forget that we offer Early Bird Discounts on all of our tours. All you have to do is book before 31/12/2018 to secure up to £100 off your tour.

You can use this in conjunction with our Loyalty Discount where all existing customers get a further £50 every tour. We know it's not life-changing, but you can have a meal out on us when you are on tour.

All offers are subject to availability with most tours now full or nearly full. Please contact us to check the latest availability as things change quickly at this time of the year.

“Two years ago there didn't seem to be any [motorhome] deals but this year it seems that there were bargains to be had”.

Epic rib-eye steak

Ingredients:

600g piece of Rib-Eye steak (ideally 5cm thick), fat removed.

4 sprigs of fresh rosemary.

4 cloves of garlic.

350g mixed mushrooms.

1 x 660g jar of white beans

Method:

1. Place a large non-stick frying pan on a medium-high heat.
2. Rub the steak all over with a pinch of Sea salt and black pepper, then sear on all sides for 10 minutes in total, so you achieve good colour on the outside but keep it medium rare in the middle, or cook to your liking, turning regularly with tongs.
3. Meanwhile, strip the rosemary leaves off the sprigs, peel and finely slice the garlic, and tear up any larger mushrooms.
4. When the steak is done, remove to a plate and cover with tin foil.
5. Reduce the heat under the pan to medium, and crisp up the rosemary for 30 seconds, then add the garlic and mushrooms and cook for 8 minutes., or until golden, tossing regularly.
6. Pour in the beans and their juice, add 1 tablespoon of red wine vinegar and simmer for 5 minutes, then season to perfection.
7. Sit the steak on top and pour over any resting juices.
8. Slice and serve at the table, finishing with a little extra virgin olive oil, if you prefer.



Motorhoming and Travel Tips & Advice

“External silver screens seem to be the most effective”.

We have recently purchased some silver screens and having gone through the process, here are our tips.

1. The paper 'concertina' screens are brilliant for privacy. However, they don't stop condensation and if you have to buy them, they are around £700 fitted.
2. Internal thermal screens are OK but they are a slight faff to fit and they have gaps around the edges that let condensation and light in.
3. External silver screens seem to be the most effective. They fit snugly, reduce condensation in cold weather and keep the cab cool in hot weather.
4. Some makes now come with a privacy screen, which is like a fine mesh that you can see out of, but not into. Highly

recommended.

5. External silver screens are light but bulky so you have to store them somewhere.
6. When they get wet, you still have to store them somewhere!
7. We bought the “Silverscreens” brand, which we recommend. Other folks have used ‘Taylormade’ and these also come recommended.
8. They seem to last forever so are well worth the £250 you will need to pay new.



Crossings dot com

Please note that we no longer have access to our old “.co.uk” email and internet addresses as we have now moved across fully to “.com”

Our email address is:

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Nov 2018

The 2020 Tour Schedule—have your say.

2020

It sounds like a date from a science fiction film, but 2020 is just over a year away. I must be getting old. With this in mind we are now starting to plan our 2020 Tour Schedule.

We will be announcing the schedule at the beginning of January at which point we will be taking 'expressions of interest' as usual. We will then open the booking around March time.

Remember that newsletter readers always get first dabs on the new tours so keep subscribing.

We already have lots of ideas for 2020 with new tours planned along with the some firm favourites making a re-appearance.

If you have any suggestions for tours you would like to see, ***now is your chance to have your say.***

Please email us or contact us via the website with your suggestions. They will all go in the mix as we ponder 2020 over Christmas lunch.

