

Crossings Newsletter



In this month's edition:

- A first look at our 2020 Tour Schedule.
- Expressions of interest for 2020.
- 'Stickergate' - the latest.
- Reserve list procedures for 2019.

Plus our regular features:

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

From the editor

Welcome to the first newsletter of 2019. Regular readers may have noticed that we have a new look for the newsletter. New year, new look.

This month we have the first glimpse of the 2020 schedule and this is the main feature for this month's newsletter.

We have more tours on offer than ever before with our usual mixture of brand new tours, perennial favourites and a couple of tours making a welcome re-appearance.

We are not opening the bookings yet, but we are taking expressions of interest. Read more on Pages 2, 3 and 4.

We are now at the stage of the year where we are almost full for 2019. **Please contact us to check the latest availability.** We are operating reserve lists as usual and many of you are on them already.



Happy New Year from the Crossings Team. From the left: Gary, Dave & Sue, Eleanor, Sue & Colin, Wendy & Bob.

Please see Page 4 for details of how our reserve list works.

Regular customers may be aware of the controversy regarding last year's Crossings motorhome stickers. Read page 5 for the latest developments!

On a more serious note, we have been trying to avoid the 'B' word, but we do have some important information regarding the possible consequences for after Brexit.

These form this month's motorhoming tips and

may well be the basis for the motorhoming tips for the next three months.

Dave has another great recipe for us this month with a wonderful winter warmer. He hasn't done a curry recipe in a while. We are a bit worried about him!

Best wishes for the New Year from us all.

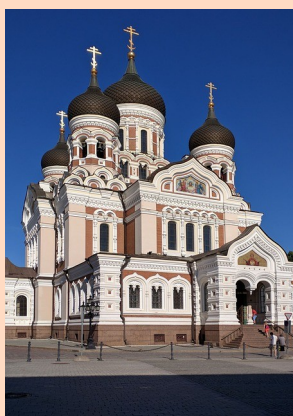
Bob & Wendy, Dave & Sue, Colin & Sue,

Gary & Eleanor.



The Keukenhof Gardens in Holland.

“...still keeping our commitment to small group sizes and the personal level of service that you are used to”.



The Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, Tallinn.

The 2020 Tour Schedule

2020 is shaping up to be our biggest and best year ever. We are still in the planning stage and we have not finalized exact dates and prices yet, but we do have the framework of our schedule.

Having three great sets of tour leaders (and us!) has enabled Crossings to extend our offering to twelve tours, while still keeping our commitment to small group sizes and the personal level of service that you are used to.

So what's on offer in 2020:

The Four-Country Starter Tour (April | 14 days) : We are making some changes to our ever-popular starter tour next year by adding another country, while still keeping the mileage the same. The tour will take place in April as usual but next year will cover France, Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg.

The Rhine & Alsace (May | 14 days) :

Making a re-appearance due to popular demand this mixed tour takes you down the best bits of the Rhine in Germany before heading to Strasbourg for the best bits of the Alsace region of France.

Springtime in Holland (April/May | 16 days):

A brand new tour for 2020, in the Spring we will be going all the way around the Netherlands. This includes all the bits we know and love including Amsterdam and the bulb fields, but also extends to the less well-known northern region.

Lake Garda & Venice (May | 18 days):

This is a renaming of our Italian Lakes & Cities Tour (for reasons that will become clear later). We spend time in the French and Austrian Alps either side of a full week on the southern and northern shores of Lake Garda, with a chance

to visit Venice and the other northern cities.

The Baltic States (May | 25 days):

This is one of our more adventurous tours taking in the three fascinating countries of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. In addition to three stunning capitals you can expect un-spoilt countryside and forests, quiet, sandy beaches and a rich history ranging from 18th century stately homes to evidence of more recent Soviet times. You also get two mini-cruises on the Baltic Sea.

Burgundy (June | 14 days):

A brand new tour for 2020, this is one of a series of tours that we have been running over recent years where we focus on a specific region of France. Famous for its wine, Burgundy also boasts some glorious chateaux, rivers, historic towns and cities including Lyons and Beaune.

The Swiss & Austrian Alps (June | 18

... continued

days): A regular favourite of ours, this tour takes us down to the Swiss capital, Bern, before heading via Lake Constance into the Austrian Tyrol. We have plenty of time to visit Innsbruck and Salzburg and to explore Austria's highest peak, the Grossglockner.

Brittany & Normandy (June | 14 days):

Another outing for one of our popular shorter tours, we take a relatively short hop across the France for a variety of attractions including the Normandy beaches and the picture-postcard ports of Honfleur, St Malo and Concarneau. You can also pop into Mont St Michel or the Bayeux tapestry, or just lounge around on the nearest beach.

Summer in Scandinavia (August | 25 days) - We know we put it on every year, but we love it and we would go even if no-one came with us! Three amazing capital

cities, miles and miles of un-spoilt coastline and countryside, canals, castles, Abba and Vikings. What more could you want? We travel in August as their season ends earlier than ours, so you still get decent weather without the crowds. A real motorhomer's holiday.

Spain & Portugal (September | 25 days):

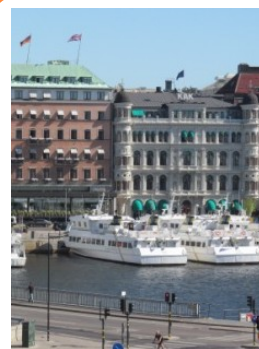
Brand new for 2020, this epic round trip uses one of the longer channel crossings to enable us to get all the way to the bottom of Spain, visiting Andalusia before heading west to the Algarve region of Portugal. We then follow the west coast all the way up to the north coast of Spain before heading home. This is a classic Autumn sunshine tour.

Croatia & Slovenia (September | 25 days):

Another perennial favourite, we head out and back through France, Germany and Austria with plenty of time to

explore the highlights of Slovenia and the Istrian Coast in Croatia. Of the many highlights you can expect beautiful stretches of rugged coastline, pretty fishing villages, beautiful lakes and mountains (including Lake Bled), two amazing capital cities, stunning waterfalls, lakes and the longest visit-able cave network in Europe.

Tuscany (September | 25 days): We wanted to do more of Italy in 2020 so we are putting on a longer Autumn tour to Tuscany. We are also keeping the old Italian Lakes and Cities Tour under its new name, in May. Tuscany is world-famous for its culture, history, wine and cuisine and could be described as quintessentially 'Italian'. Highlights include the Renaissance delights of Florence, Pisa, Sienna and Lucca in addition to stunning countryside dotted with vineyards and hilltop towns.



Stockholm Harbour

"We then follow the west coast [of Portugal] all the way up to the north coast of Spain before heading home. This is a classic Autumn sunshine tour."



Café view over Sirmione on Lake Garda.



Expressions of Interest for 2020

Bookings for 2020 will officially open in the Spring. We will announce the exact date in the newsletter. Remember that newsletter readers always hear about everything first and always get first dabs on the new tours.

What you can do now is express interest. You can do this for as many tours as you like and what it means is that we will come to you first when the bookings open. It is

only at that point that we will take a deposit that then secures your place on the tour.

So expressing an interest cost you nothing and you are not committed to taking up the space.

If we get more than 12 expressions of interest on any of the tours we will open the bookings early to guarantee that you get the chance of a space on your preferred tour.

You can express an interest at any time

simply by emailing us or using the Contact Us page on our website.

More tour details including fuller itineraries, exact dates, prices, tour leaders and whether dogs are allowed will be made available soon, initially via the newsletter (so keep reading).

“Remember that newsletter readers always hear about everything first and always get first dabs on the new tours.”



Reserve List for 2019

Bookings for 2019 have been very positive with many of you choosing to book very early. Thank you. As a consequence we have very few spaces left on our 2019 tours. In fact, we only have space left on two of our tours at the time for writing.

However, we do get cancellations from time to time and it is often possible to get a reserve space. To be

on our reserve list, all you have to do is contact us and let us know which tour or tours you would like to be a reserve for. We will also need a contact phone number.

If a space becomes available we will contact you by phone and you can decide whether you would like to take up the space. At that point, we will then take either the deposit or the full

payment to secure your place on the tour.

Reserve spaces normally come up around 10 weeks before a tour is due to leave as this is when the final payment is required. However, they can come up at any time.

If you are on the reserve list for 2019 you will automatically be contacted for 2020 so that you get first dabs on the new tours.

'Stickergate'

If you are new to Crossings you may wonder what the heck I'm talking about. Well this year, I (Bob) was left alone for a little bit too long in the home office and decided to order some promotional merchandise.

This included two baseball caps with logo (never worn), two mugs with logo (one that went missing and then re-appeared), one rubber stamp (which I forgot to put the address on and thus proved useless), five white t-shirts (not a good colour choice for a messy eater) and 500 Crossings bumper stickers (which I was very pleased with).



Normally when I offer our lovely customers a freebie they take them off me in the spirit with which they are offered. However, I found the bumper stickers very difficult to shift.

So during the year, Wendy had some new ones designed, which she cleverly (according to her) based on the old tax disk, which you no longer need to display. These internal stickers proved much more popular. See picture above with the sticker in situ.

This year we have extended the range and a new external sticker has been produced, which we will be handing out to customers throughout 2019. See picture on the left.

Wendy insisted that I show you photos of each of the three stickers so you can make your own mind up.

She says she has found a good use for the one I designed. See the picture below.

It looks like a picture for a 'guess the caption' competition, but I don't think I will open myself up to that!



"Normally when I offer our lovely customers a freebie they take them off me in the spirit with which they are offered. However, I found the bumper stickers very difficult to shift".



Motorhoming Tips - Brexit preparations

This month's motorhoming tips are all about Brexit.

We have been keeping a very close eye on the implications of Brexit for our tours in 2019. Obviously nothing has been firmly decided yet and we do not want to get into the arena of speculating as to what might happen.

In the short term, we are recommending that everyone who is travelling with pets, should go and visit the vet four months in advance of travel. This means that customers coming on the Three-Country Starter Tour need to go now. We sent an email to everyone affected some time ago.

For the rest of us, this is what we know so far, but if you are booked on a tour, we will email or call to let you know about anything that might affect your tour.

1. Visas. Very unlikely to be needed even in the event of a no-

deal Brexit. We will only have to have them if the UK government insists on them for people entering the UK from Europe. They have said this is unlikely.

2. Passports. UK passports will still be valid.

3. International Driving Permits (IDPs). Not necessarily needed, but it probably worth getting one as they only cost a few pounds and will soon be available from all main post offices.

4. Health insurance. Check with your insurer after Brexit and before travel.

5. Breakdown insurance. As above.

6. Vehicle insurance. As above. The old-fashioned 'green card' may be required.

7. EHIC/E111 health card is unlikely to be recognized. Travel insurance is compulsory on our tours anyway.

8. Queues at Dover

and Calais. Most likely to affect lorries rather than holiday makers. Lorries already have their own entrance and customs checks. Domestic travelers (like us) go through different lanes. UK border control have already put extra capacity at the Calais end.

9. Currency fluctuations. Will continue to be highly volatile as they have been since Brexit was announced in 2016. Keep your eye on the exchange rates. These could go either way.

We will keep an eye on developments and let you know anything that is concrete as soon as we know it. All customers will be contacted by phone or email if there is anything urgent that they need to know.

"If you are booked on a tour, we will email or call to let you know about anything that might affect your tour".

Coq au Van: the amusingly titled recipe section

A Winter Warmer - Peas, Beans, Chilli & Mint

Ingredients

1/2 bunch of fresh mint. (15g)
200g fresh podded or frozen broad beans.
200g fresh podded or frozen peas.
1 fresh red chilli.
1 lemon.

Method:

Rip off and reserve the top leafy half of the mint. Put the sticks in a pan of boiling salted water, then add the beans and peas to cook for 4 minutes. Meanwhile, halve and reseed the chilli and finely chop with the top leafy half of the mint. Place in a bowl, finely grate over a little lemon zest, then

squeeze in all the juice. Add 2 tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil, mix, tested and season to perfection with sea salt and black pepper.

Drain the beans and peas, reserving a mug full of cooking water and discarding the mint stalks. Pinch the skins off any larger beans, then pour the beans and peas on to a platter, toss with a few splashes of reserved cooking water, then spoon over the dressing. Drizzle with 1 more tablespoon of extra virgin olive oil and toss together at the table. 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.