



Terry's Travels

TT11-1 Le Mans - but NOT 24 hours 22/05/2004

With the winter dirt washed off Mercie the Motorhome, the tanks topped up and the larder provisioned (thank you Di) I was out of bed at just after 3am (remember in Yorkshire we say "its a poor man that can't get up to lake (play)"). I picked my pal Neil up at 5am to head South via the M1 - M69 - A34 to Portsmouth. Simply lovely weather and with the English countryside looking wonderfully lush and green made for a very pleasant journey. Neil took over driving and enjoyed Mercies' 6 speed auto box with cruise holding 110kph. There was one hold up and a half hour greasy Mini Chef breakfast and 296 miles later we were looking across the sunny Solent on England's South coast. This left plenty of time for a cuppa and a walk round the shops. Neil bought a little pot man to accompany us (later to be a present for his wife).

Neil got us a free day cabin (thank you P&O) and we both had a sleep during the calm 5 hour crossing. We cleared Le Havre FRANCE around 9pm local time and there was just enough daylight left to see the magnificent Seine as we crossed the spectacular bridge before wild camping in Honfleur beside a canal.

The drive South along both D and N roads plus a bit of pay motorway was a delight of different sights and smells and we were soon at the famous Le Mans circuit collecting our 3 day tickets for the Motorcycle Grand Prix that Neil had bought over the internet. The perfect weather continued and amazingly there was a power pod in the free camping area - and it worked, so the fridge looked after all the goodies that we had bought at a LeClerc supermarket. Our noisy neighbours were friendly - even returning the key I carelessly left in the Kawasaki 250 that lives behind Mercie. After the racing four of Neils pals turned up for a cuppa. We had a siesta whilst the crowds left the circuit after some great racing and then started heading South down the N138. The traffic built up approaching Limoges so I turned down a country road towards a camp site. The road was barred - bummer - but I parked beside a graveyard and we investigated. We had been led to a wine and food festival in a charming little village!!

Of course we joined in and then ate with the locals at a marquis that locals were manning to provide food and therefore raise money for the local school. It wasn't hard to be a do gooder with a four course meal with superb salmon for 20 pounds with a good bottle of wine - for two of course. Sleeping by the graveyard was peaceful - and cost nowt.....this is living.....

Terry - Castellon, SPAIN





Terry's Travels

TT11-2 Sanitaire 23/05/2004

Leaving the graveyard wild camp, it was so much better to find the road through Limoges with much less traffic early in the morning. Neil fancied going to Andorra, the small country between France and Spain in the Pyrenees mountains. We used the toll roads A62 and headed around Brive and Cahors. Lovely rolling countryside with many Chateaux standing near the Loire and later the Dordogne giving reminders of how much wine comes from the vineyards in this fertile area.

You maybe didn't want to know - but our loo needed to be emptied. We followed a sign to an Aire (rest area) and found a blue cubicle. It needed a token costing 2 Euros for 10 minutes use to allow emptying, flushing and then from a different hose a pressure filling of our water tank with (claimed) drinking water. You can also be plugged into power during all this - an excellent service called a Sanitaire. I still use bottled water to ensure that our cuppas taste OK.

We headed onwards around Toulouse and took a new road to Foix in the foothills of the Pyrenees. A delightful campsite called Du Lac was well worth paying for and just at the edge of the small town. The local ducks gave us a great welcome and were rewarded with a stale flute bread). They rewarded us with a great display of squabbling. The males are stronger but the females are much quicker so they all ate well. I got the slow cooker doing the veggies and the gas barbie for the entrecotes. A great meal with a local French Rose and then a red and we were sitting outside very happily until well after dusk. I had been appointed the role of chief cook - so Neil became chief bottle washer.

Neil drove us up to Andorra the next morning which allowed me the chance of enjoying approaching the snow capped mountains with verdant pastures and clear streams everywhere. The houses were now chalet style, many of wooden construction. We crossed the border and drove around without finding a parking space. We re-crossed the border, parked and walked back into Andorra to have a look around the shops

Terry - Castellon, SPAIN.





Terry's Travels

TT11-3 Andorra 26/05/2004

Andorra is struggling following the change to the Euro - at least it is with selling tobacco and booze. The French customs are VERY diligent at cutting down too much getting into France, with a consequent loss of tax to the French government. Last time I visited Andorra it was wet and cold and I found it a miserable place. This time the weather was perfect - I still found it a miserable place. Even the electronic equipment there was not really up to date. I drove us back down after crossing the spectacular peaks covered in deep snow. I filled the tank with cheap diesel. Neil now had in mind to head for Castel de Fels, a seaside area just S of Barcelona near the airport. More motorway driving made it easy and quick and using the plastic at the toll booths made you forget the expense. We shared the driving and were entertained by the wonderful views.

Camping 3 Estrellas (3*) was OK but should have been better for 26 Euros per night but we had a site overlooking the fine sand beach - even the sewer pipe was some distance away! I went into the bar and got talking to a cyclist from Wales. Paul had had a quadruple By-Pass and then found he had Leukaemia. He had brought his bicycle on a special bus to be dropped to the N of Barcelona. He was still reeling from dealing with crossing this busy city of 14 million people so I was not surprised. His plan was to go all around the coast of Spain, up through Portugal and then catch the bus from across the French border near Bilbao in 3 months. I gave him the chance to get a lift to regain his "schedule" but he did not ring me, I will be interested in finding how it goes, he promised to write - the traffic will remove the pleasure from many stretches - but what a spirit.

Neil was one of those few people that got a flight from Barcelona to the UK for just ONE EURO - actually it becomes a bargain 15 Euros with taxes. The plan was for him to fly back and another pal Capt Dennis to fly up from his boat from Malaga. The Prince of Spain had (very thoughtlessly) chosen this weekend to marry a Senora off the telly. With 1400 alone going to the "do" in a marquis rented for 1.3 million Euros this big event had filled the flights.

Neil and I visited the Gaudi Sagrada Familia. It was really interesting to see this Temple being added to with some really modern engineering methods. I'm not sure that Gaudi who died in 1926 would feel that the new work matched his older work but the scale of seeing a Cathedral style building in construction is very well worth a visit. It has no religious feeling as yet to me.

How better to finish a day out in this exciting city than a beer down The Ramblas main street. Neil insisted on a "grande" beer. He speaks his one word of Spanish so eloquently that two HUGE Stein type glasses arrived that we could just lift using two hands (and pay for over 3 months) - we did a LOT of people watching.....



I drove alone further S after dropping him at the airport and found a better site near Castellon. Even the internet worked and I got to see the nearby Monaco Car GP whilst drinking an 80 cent glass of beer - great.

Terry - Mojacar, SPAIN.





Terry's Travels

TT11-4 Captain Dennis 03/06/2004

Having driven the coastal Autovia I called and spent a couple of nights in the campsite of Los Gallardos which is near Mojacar. I had spent months here in the past and looked up some friends. The campsites same old washing machines were still nearly working. I used two simultaneously - one for coloureds the other for whites and felt proud to be so efficient - until the laundry flooded. Eventually the spin cycle ended so I could paddle in and I pegged out just in time to catch the rain - and this is a semi desert area.

Leaving this site I used the fabulous new A92 that now connects Sorbas to Guadix and had the best driving yet on this quiet new spectacular FREE motorway. The brooms in the central reservation were brilliant yellow and many spring flowers added colour everywhere following the wet (for here) spell. New snow had dusted the Sierra Nevada mountains and made an awesome backdrop. My temperature guage dropped to 14C on the peak before Granada and there was a brief heavy sprinkle of rain. By the time I arrived at Malaga airport it was 25C and sunny. I was collecting my pals from my teenage years (yes - as long ago as that) David Fortune and Peter Dyson, we were having a reunion to celebrate an older pals imminent 70th, yes Captain Dennis.

We have had a lot of laughs with Capt Dennis' lesbian barmaids and other wrinklies. Great eating out wonderful prawns on our barbie with Riojas, Rosadas and some bubbly prompting LOTS of conversation. Dennis had us onboard his boat Paradiddle and served us prawns with Marie Rose sauce for a starter - he had assumed that all prawns came cooked and just needed thawing! He has yet to live this down, but since we had only chewed one or two before we got him to cook them we lived to tell the tale. His local knowledge had us invited to a beach barbie with a much younger age group that showed lots of skin that certainly was not wrinkly. He has given us white knuckle rides in his old Peugeot - we were terrified with the screaming tyres. The weather has been fabulous throughout.

Puerto Banus was as over the top as ever and since the billionaires can't get their arm candy to display any more skin they all have huge toy cupboards that they leave open to display speed boats, jet skis, mini subs etc. Of course this still isn't enough and one had a ferry boat to accompany the main liner that was full of HIS toys. After seeing all this we had to splash out and bought four small cones of the world's most expensive ice cream. I bought yet another VARTA battery to get Mercies' on board Kawasaki motorcycle fired up, at least it did all the shopping trips.....What a life

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Terry - back in Mojacar en route to the Grand Prix at Barcelona, SPAIN.



Terry's Travels

TT11-5 Euro Scam 04/06/2004

Further visits to Posh Adas (actually the Bar Posada) and more chatter with interesting ex pats. Making a bit of movie camera fun on the lovely Cabopino Beach Benny Hill style - HOW old are we all? - but what a laugh and I was soon dropping the lads back to Malaga airport. It had been a great re-union - even down to bubbly and singing Happy Birthday to Dennis.

My tour back to Mojacar was again through the Granada mountains and in just a week the temperature was up a massive 11C - it was hot. I filled with diesel and the pump man tried to scam me. Yes 66 Euros on my credit card when it should have been 66 LITROS at .73 per litro. He gave me the cash back out of his well filled pocket. I said a smiling "Gracias Senor" so be warned.

The Moors and Christians Fiesta was being held in the village of Mojacar (Pueblo), this is a medieval event and it was fun to people watch. My pal Ken was riding the next night in the parade dressed as a Bandolero. Since he was having trouble with his lady I didn't get to see him. As I left around 10pm all the youngsters were arriving for a late night of music and dancing. I had seen three different stages and lighting waiting for all the partying.

The TV at the campsite showed the England v Iceland and with a six to one victory I'm excited about Euro 2004 which starts in a week or so. Even better was seeing all the Grand prix racing from the excellent Mugello ITALY circuit. It was this years best yet. I leave Wednesday to see the Catalunyan GP in Barcelona - I have space in Mercie if there's anyone can make it.....

Terry - Mojacar SPAIN. Text or Tel 0034-636856566



Terry's Travels

TT11-6 Rocamadour 18/06/2004

I had an invite to dine with friends Gwyn and Rose - the little Kawasaki rode me to their tiny village? (just 18 houses and no bar) of Los Raimundos near Antas. It was a delight to sit under their grapevine and manage some conversation and gesticulation with their friendly Spanish neighbours before eating indoors then back outside to the lovely evening. I had seen the bad potholes as I arrived and managed to avoid the worst ones by the feeble light of my bike as I returned to Mercie after midnight.

I headed NE and wild camped in central car park in Peniscola (that's the name of the town, not a pastime!). What a lovely place - I walked the North Beach and then listened to a good outdoor band in one of the many hotels. Before reaching Barcelona I shopped before parking near the Main Entrance to the Catalunyan Circuit. I got my 3 day ticket plus free pit lane walk for 72 Euros which included a grandstand seat where I could see a giant TV screen (the best grandstand is Tribune B, but this was sold out). Another GP gypsies couple had parked in the same car park and we decided risking trying to camp there. It worked, we were chained in which suited us and kept things quiet - and free. Andy and Julie invited me to dine with them - he cooked a great paella. The pit lane walkabout was exciting with them starting the bikes one by one. The sound makes the hairs on your neck stand up and the bellowing cacophony tries to cave in your chest cavity, judged on best sound it would be a close call between the Honda five cylinder and the Ducati.

Some of the riders came to chat and autograph clothing and helmets. I was delighted to see Shinya Nakano looking well and relaxed. He had crashed end over end at over 200mph following his rear Bridgestone tyre exploding at the Mugello GP and luckily escaped without a scratch.

The Kawasaki took me down to party night in the nearby Mont Melo village. It was madder than ever with bikers wheely-ing and stoppy-ing down the main street lined with barriers. There were souped up quads noisily drifting in other back streets - it was DANGEROUS. Even more people than ever were there, younger too, busily boozing and quite openly smoking the happy baccy. Maybe I'm getting too old but it seemed just TOO crazy - almost like anarchy.....I had to ignore the shouts of the security guards as I rode back into the dark parking areas around the circuit.

On race day I got to meet another GP gypsy couple Kel and Ed (short for Edwina) who had been next to us last year at the Jerez GP in their American motor home. It was good to have the company of very enthusiastic people. By taking a siesta during the thunderstorm that fortunately came after the races, the crowd of 102,000 had cleared. The sun was back out as I started my return journey. I had reached Roses on the Costa Brava when it was time to have dinner and watch the England soccer (OUCH!) before I wild camped.

A very early start and more miles on the coastal motorway before I pulled off on D107 to Bages. I parked and walked a few km along this pretty coastal/marshy wild life area with a great variety of birds to keep me company. The village of Bages is one of the most pleasant coastal villages I have seen, I bought fruit and bread from the village gourmet shop and really enjoyed a quiet lunch by the sea. I shall come here again. More wonderful driving in the Dordogne area before I came to a 4* campsite Camping Les Pins in Payrac. Excellent value at 12 Euros with power and a bar with big screen TV for more Euro 2004 soccer. Also a pool and tennis court. I started an early morning ride from here to visit Rocamadour, a most inspiring medieval village in a canyon. I had a quiet coffee and a good ride everywhere before the tourists started to arrive - truly memorable.....

Terry