

Pam & Martin Williams' 2014 Motorhome Holiday – Europe

Introduction

In 2014 we revisited our delayed 2013 holiday plans and toured France, Spain and Portugal by motorhome. The idea was to visit a new country, Portugal, and to see some of the out of the way places that are off most travellers' itineraries. Leaving on 6th May we were away from our home in Australia for 3-months during which we covered 10,950 km, just over 6,800 miles. At the end of the holiday we sold the van and after five-summers travelling through Europe it was the end of an era. The following covers some of the key features of another great trip.

Problems

Maybe it was the fact that the van was 4½ years or just the fact that we are getting older, but we seemed to have more problems this year than in the past. Things such as a flat battery, loose fuses, a shredded fan-belt, a PC that would not boot up, a blown inverter and spillages. Maybe it was just Lady Luck!

Once more into the Wild!

As with all our motorhome holidays we spent most of our nights at free Aires. Almost exclusively we used the French site 'Camping Car Infos' <http://www.campingcar-infos.com/index1.htm> and apart from a few minor glitches it was brilliant. For each site it gives lat & long co-ordinates, an overview (price, facilities, capacity etc) and generally really useful comments and photographs from people who have stayed there.

General Comments and Observations

In spite of travelling in the busy months of May through to the beginning of August we had no problems finding nice places to stay and in many places we had the aire to ourselves.

For years France has had a fantastic network of 'aires de service', one that seems to get better each year. What was striking to us in 2014 is how Spain has improved in terms of aires and motor homing facilities – we were last there 4-years ago when they were basic and few and far between.

Spanish minor roads have improved too – we used many minor roads which generally had good surfaces, very few potholes, good edges, good signage, well maintained and well engineered. Good drivers too on the whole.

Portugese minor roads were OK but the N-125 road across the Algarve was very busy and in poor shape.

Motorhomes are getting bigger and to my mind some are just ridiculously big. No wonder there are so many larger vans for sale with really low mileages on the clock – I think people just find them too big to handle. Our van was 5.65 m long very manoeuvrable and after 50,700 km miles I can say that it was easy to drive. We've always been very happy with our 2.2 litre Peugeot boxer Elddis Autoquest 115 as a touring van.

We'd had so many warnings about being broken into or gassed in the night in the south of France or in Spain that we were quite paranoid before we left home. We did try to get an extra lock fitted to our rear door but it was another one of those 'too busy, comeback next month' responses from the dealers, so it just did not happen, although in Cordoba we did park the van very close to a tree when we left it so that the back door could not be opened, as we'd heard about break-ins at the aire there.

Culture and People

We did see some singing and dancing at an evening concert in Agreda in Spain, we ate tapas in the bars of Andalucia and we saw some bull running in the streets of Olite, south of Pamplona. We also attended an open-air concert or two, but most of our culture in terms of dance and music was at the 'Grand Bal de L'Europe', an annual festival held near Gennetines, just north of Moulins in central France. An 8-day dance extravaganza involving hundreds of workshops and 'bals' that ran from breakfast time to well into the early hours. Lots of focus on French dance but also teachers and workshops for Turkish, Greek, Israeli, Romanian and from lots of regions of the UK.

We were impressed with all of the people we met. The locals in all of the countries that we visited were friendly, helpful and polite. Many spoke good English.

The End of an Era:

We may get back into motorhoming later but short-term we want to sort out some health problems, so for us it is the end of an era. We sold the van privately in the face of lots of pressure and propaganda from dealers who wanted to make about 25% profit on our van. We sold it in less than 4 days on Gumtree. .

Some of our holiday pictures [here](#) [use *slideshow* or click on individual photos and tab (➔) through – note the map option.