

Sabrosa, birthplace of Ferdinand Magellan is 90 Km east of Porto just off the A2, IP3, E801. There were 51 bikes entered from GB, 12 with pillion passengers.

The fee for the three days of the rally was £104 and I booked two extra nights camping at £10/night. As well as the rally costs, I opted for the coach trip to Porto with tours of the city with a three course lunch, which was accompanied by "Fado" singing to two guitars, and a boat trip on the river Douro for £46. There was an escorted ride out to a port wine factory Quinta Nova (of course there were tastings!) for £9, so all up £179 paid via Keith Freak to the ACU, who paid all GB fees direct to the organising club Moto Clube Do Porto, who were extremely friendly and efficient.

I left home just after 5am on the 3rd Sept to get the ferry from Newhaven to Dieppe at 10 am to give time to negotiate the M1, M25, M23 and A23. Four hour sailing time plus an hour time change, off the boat at about 3 pm and heading for the Spanish border at the Atlantic end of the Pyrenees. At about 6.30pm I began to look out for campsites and spotted one at Beaumont sur Sarthe about 15 miles before Les Mans (326 miles from home). It was a riverside site, well sheltered, grassed and good toilet/shower block for 6.83 euros/£5.50.

On the road again about 9 am. After riding through Poitiers, Bordeaux, Bayonne and across into Spain (470 miles ) I found a campsite at Zarautz, a surfing spot on the Gulf of Vizcaya. I was lucky, as Tala Mendi was closing for the season that weekend. Camping cost 12.20 euros, about £10.00, with a good restaurant/bar, shower/toilet block but on a hillside as all the flat sites were full. Question is, do you pitch across or up and down slope? I decided up and down and managed not to slide out of bed until daylight, up and away by 9, with some super swervy roads along the coast and to Vitoria Gasteiz for breakfast at 10.15 and on past Burgos for lunch at Valladolid 1.15 pm.

Cruising down a motorway I spotted some statues on the central reserve, fighting bulls painted up in psychedelic colours, after the second set I decided to stop at the next ones and take a photo, you guessed it there were no more, so I bought a silver stick on one for the fairing to make up for that.

Crossing into Portugal at Vila Formoso, I came across a new thing in tolls, you stop and pay a registration fee of 0.60 euros, 50 pence, by credit card and your "front number plate" is photographed automatically, and every time you pass under the overhead gantry at tolls your credit card is charged. No stopping but, no front plate so no charge, result! Then things started to go downhill not just because I was heading south but at 390 miles for the day the speedo cable broke just after Guarda (I know that is past Sabrosa but I was going to visit friends in Lisbon before going back north for the rally). At Constancia the steering went peculiar, front wheel puncture, late on Friday evening. Out with the emergency kit and co2 cartridges, pullout the nail and ream the hole, insert the string and inflate, easy off the highway and into a campsite by the river for 5.90 euros.

Saturday morning, tyre flat again the "string" was protruding so I pushed it back right in re-reamed the hole and another string co2 session, then flat battery! I had noticed when repairing the puncture the first time that the underseat area was very hot (I had been having a good thrash down deserted main roads and it was fairly hot weather) and suspected loss of acid, anyway a push from some campers and away until 10 miles further down the highway flat front tyre again!

110 Km short of Lisbon, no phone signal, emergency phone wrapped in a bin liner, so as a last resort front wheel out ready to thumb it to the city, hide back pack and helmet in the bushes when a good Samaritan arrives. A Portuguese guy with an Irish ancestry, Fred Ayres, on an FJ Yam with a lady pillion he parked across the other side of the dual carriageway and came over, after I explained the situation he phoned his breakdown

club and told them as I was with him they would recover me to the nearest bike shop. Wheel back in and kit recovered and truck arrived and with the battery still flat like the tyre it took the three of us to push the Triumph up the ramp onto the truck. An hour had passed since Fred stopped until we said our goodbyes and I was taken to Best Bike in Tomar but as it was late on Saturday morning the mechanics had gone home so we tried the Continental tyre shop but they didn't do bikes, the driver phoned his base who spoke English he recommended taking me to the train station and the bike back to the bike shop to pick up on Monday and as the train to Lisbon was due to leave in a few minutes I grabbed a few things from a pannier, left bike kit in the truck and dived into the station.

I don't speak Portuguese but "Lisbon a retour" got me a return ticket on a slow train for 17.90 euros, £15. The terminus is by the docks and my friends live at the top of the city, well I needed the exercise! With the aid of a city map I found the address OK and that surprised them, as they didn't know I was in the country. My friends had no room for me to stay so a budget B&B Hotel Chile 90 euro for two nights and Sunday sightseeing until tea with the friends and back to the hotel by Metro.

The first train back to Tomar was 7am so I missed breakfast but the cafe at the station had just opened so I got a snack to take on the train. The Tomar bike shop at opening time "Hello I have come to get a new tyre on the Triumph brought in on Saturday" blank looks all round. "We have no Triumph here." After an hour of phone calls to other bike shops and tyre dealers (good job the owner spoke good English and was concerned about my plight) the recovery truck arrived with the bike still on it and my kit in the cab, PHEW!! The reason the "string" was pushing out became clear, the blue slime puncture preventing muck was lubricating the sticky string so it couldn't seal. A new Metzeler RoadtecZ6 and fill the battery I was on the road for 186.96 euros - £156 arriving at the Natur Water Park for Motocamp

2014 at about 3 pm and pitched my tent among several other Brits mostly Mayflower club people. After pitching camp on Monday afternoon 8th September at the Natur Park, I walked around the park for a look at the swimming pool, crazy golf and sports area ending up in the cafe/bar/restaurant area, where they were serving a variety of hot and cold snacks and full meals.

Tuesday was the first optional event of the camp with a coach trip of 120 Km to the city of Porto, the original bottling and export centre of the port wine business. Because the vineyards used to be too small to have their own bottling plant, the wine was brought down the river by boat to warehouses in Porto to be aged in oak barrels, blended and bottled for sale worldwide. After a tour of the city and a visit to a wine cellar (with tastings), we were taken to a "typical" restaurant in the Gaia district for entrees, 3 course buffet meal, dessert and drinks accompanied by a mature lady singing in traditional Fado style backed by pair of guitarists. Following lunch was a boat cruise under six bridges which link both sides of the city by road and rail, before returning to the coaches we had an hour free to explore the riverside area for souvenirs etc., then a short stop to allow a quick visit to a cathedral for some or coffee and cake for others.

Wednesday morning the second optional event saw 53 bikes set off to Quinta Nova a recently revitalised vineyard and winery and once off the highway the roads were "interesting" with steep up and down hairpins with fine views of the Douro valley. Some varied surfaces, gravel, loose stones and on the property itself very bumpy. We were shown around by one of the partners of the business, lots of new stainless steel equipment and automated mechanisation from the grapes arriving through to the bulk storage, the bottling is done at another facility. Tastings and buying opportunities then back to camp for lunch and socialising before coach rides to a restaurant for a three course meal preceded by drinks on the lawn and entertainment by a singing and dancing concertina trio. During the meal, clubs were

called up to receive a bottle of port, it wasn't until Fosse Riders was called out that I realised that all attending clubs were getting one so that was me! There was dancing to a group and more from the concertina boys before returning to camp.

Thursday a 44 Km ride to the Douro river in two groups the first group went for a boat ride while our group stopped on the way at a village where after blocking the square with parked bikes we were given a mug of wine before continuing to the riverside at Pinhao where we took a train ride alongside the river to where the first group took the train back to the bikes and we boarded the boat for our river trip. Cruising gently along, when a huge concrete wall appeared with a steel guillotine door in it, as we sailed under the door a lot of passengers on the promenade deck got rained on from the door bottom that had been in the water, with the door closed were in a 14 mtr wide lock in the 85 mtr high dam and only took about five minutes to get to the top and continue to the bikes and a ride back to camp. The evening meal was in the onsite restaurant followed by a concert on a temporary outside stage by a local folk ensemble of twenty or thirty from teenagers to pensioners in traditional dress with various instruments.

The third day of the rally is traditionally the Parade of Nations, we formed up in the carpark in national groups alphabetically to be flagged off between 9.30 and about 10.30. The UK group moved out for Sabrosa stopping at city hall before continuing to the city hall in Villa Real for a civic reception and on to lunch at Hotel Mira Corgo on the edge of a deep river gorge. After relaxing at a cafe on the square we rode individually back to camp, a round trip of 45 Km for the day. The evening meal and awards in the restaurant were followed by another concert by a more modern group of singers and musicians.

Saturday and time to pack up and head for home, across Portugal and Spain cross the border into France and I found a campsite at Ondres north of Bayonne at about 7.30, pitched

camp and went to bed.

On Sunday, as I had made good time across Iberia, I decided to go north to the La Rochelle area via Bordeaux, Saintes And Rochefort to a seaside campsite at Angoulins sur Mer at Poitou Charentes and an evening meal at Le Rochebonne Restaurant, Fish soup, Steak, Profiteroles and a couple of beers a good day and a good evening.

A gentle run across Normandy to a cafe close to Mont -St-Michel for a snack, I didn't visit as I had been there before but carried on to a village run campsite by a river at Pont Farcy for 8 euros where I was only the second camper that night.

On the 16<sup>th</sup>, a short ride to Caen and a visit to the castle and its museums, lunch and then head for Dieppe, getting drawn towards Rouen by dodgy road signs I ended up having to take a ferry across the Seine to get to the road north arriving in Dieppe after dark, disturbing the owners of Camping Vitamin having a party but getting to bed by 11 pm.

No rush today as my return ferry is not until 6 pm so a breakfast at pavement cafe a walk around the town and a visit to the Chateau Musee de Dieppe in the castle overlooking the harbour. Disembarking about 9 pm, found the M23 closed and diverted, eventually onto the M25 round to the M1 where the matrix indicated A14 closed from M1 so off at 15A, through Northampton and home by about 12.30 am on the 18th.

Estimated mileage around 2400 over the two weeks, most of the other Brits traveled via Santander from the UK, but I don't sail at all well and have been ill across the Bay of Biscay before.