

Dave's Planet

Dave Cunliffe view on the October's Club Trip to Portugal

Along with Suzi, my partner, we commenced our new, true nomadic life on 25th November so no more winters for us and bye to our beloved FJR for a while. But before that, my last FJR trip of the year to Portugal where I'd arranged to store the bike whilst back-packing around the world.

Early October 2013, I left the Lakes to ride down to meet Doc and six others on five bikes, a nice easy number of people to ride along together. We all met up after boarding the Brittany Ferries service to Santander boat, found our ensuite cabins then as the sun was well over the yardarm it was to the bar and introduced ourselves over a beer or three.



After a good nights sleep in our cabins and a calm crossing we breakfasted in the onboard croissanterry then it was all ashore in hot, sunny Espania, bliss. It never ceases to surprise me that you can leave cold, wet, horrible England in October and 24 hours later after a great sleep, be in 25 degrees c., great roads and cheap food, a no brainer really?

After leaving Santander behind we were soon in lovely Spanish hill country on perfectly surfaced almost empty roads, blue sky, sunshine and just an easy 200 mile ride to our hotel in the ancient city of Salamanca.

At one stop off there was a sign in the gents toilet that was funny, it said.. " **Do not wash underpants or private parts in the sinks please**". Well that told us ! Upon entering Salamanca we soon found our pre booked hotel, garaged the bikes, showered and a stroll to the fabulous, ancient city square to dine al-fresco in the balmy Spanish evening. We all got to know each other and exchanged travel tales, a great end to a great day.

Up and away v.early the next morning, we had a 400 miler to do to get to our beautiful villa in Loule'.

What a glorious ride, we set off as it was dawning, mist filled valleys amongst stunning mountain scenery and empty roads.

In only 1 hour it went from 6 degs.c. to 15, amazing.

After some great roads pre reccied by Doc, we arrived at our "rock star quality" villa accommodation in time for showers, changed, and to Villamoura marina for supper outside, in October!

What a stunning setting (*you can almost smell the money*) and some fabulous yachts to check out, the holiday started in earnest now.

The next seven days were spent either riding the roads around southern Portugal or chilling by the pool, walking, reading, whatever took our fancy really.



No need to rideout if we just wanted to swim and relax, Doc went out daily regardless and we either went along or not, it all just depended how we felt, no pressures.

Too many fabulous rides in stunning, traffic free countryside for me to describe here, just ring and ask Doc if considering this years trips...and you should as they are amazing value.

I'm REALLY not one for doing organised bike trips, not my scene really, but I've done this one two years running now. I'd happily do so this year too had I not been world tripping.

A similar worry free, fully organised trip such as this sells for double what the club charges if offered by a bike magazine or commercial tour company.

This tour is fun, inexpensive and it gives every member the chance to use their bikes for what they are made for, long distance touring.

This last trip I made "friends for life" with like minded people too so all in all, another memorable, fun, sun filled road trip. Thanks Doc.