

Club Tour of the Algarve; Sept 2012

Doc writes about the tour through Spain and onto a villa in Portugal's Algarve

Booked in for this tour were a small group of four FJR1300 and five members. I was riding down on a BMW F800 and bringing my FJ1100 back, Lorinda flew out and back using a cheap flight from Bristol. We all met up at the Port in Plymouth to catch the Britany Ferry and once we had sussed out the accommodation we met up in the bar for a brief introduction to each other which were Ron, Phil, Dave and Glen and his better half Lucy.

The sailing was from Sunday 15.30 and arriving in Santander Monday midday. The sun was shining and we were soon off on the 200 mile route to Salamanca. To break up the trip we headed on the A roads to Burgos and then went via the Spanish excellent motorway for the final part.

The GPS helped in finding the Ibis Hotel and the weather was around 28°C. That evening we went into the old town centre which was very pretty. The best way to describe it was that it reminded me of Bath with its old Roman style buildings.

That night in the 20°C night air we had a spot to eat and a few drinks. I starting telling the group a few RAF stories and Dave chipped in with tales of his 'Planet'. Sounds such a nice place, shame I've never been there!

In the morning it was the long haul to the Algarve at around 400 miles. It helped that the weather was sunny and warm and I again broke up the trip by popping onto the A roads when the scenery got interesting. By the time we got to Zafra (90 miles north of Seville) we were on amazing Spanish roads over the Aracena Mountains. These are fast sweeping roads for over 60 miles with no traffic. After Huelva it was a quick motorway ride to Loule in the Algarve.

We got to the Villa around 6pm, then a few popped to the local supermarket to get stocked up on beer and pizzas etc.. To end the night we sat outside having a beer watching the sun going down

The next day we were greeted to typical Portuguese sunny weather and after the long haul the day before we planned a chilled out day by the pool and a few of us managed a quick blip out for a few hours long the Old Road to Lisbon (295 bends in 30 miles) wow! This was the scene for the rest of the week. Some of the group would chill out while I took those up for it, on a tour of the most best roads and views that the Algarve could offer.

The evenings we spent eating and drinking in the Villa with the odd night out to the Marina or steak restaurant. We would plan to get back early each day to



The Villa in the Algarve; Perfect resting place



Whats better; Bikes, 25°C, sunshine and a coffee



A few beers in the beautiful Salamanca centre

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have a splash in the pool to cool down from the 28°C heat.

On the Sunday Lorinda and I slipped off to watch the World Super Bike racing at Portimao. That day the Algarve was hit with a storm, rain lashed down, and in typical Algarve fashion, after 2 hours the sun came out and it was back up to 25°C.

The guys had stayed at the Villa and Dave said it had rained so hard that he was trapped in the garage so resorted to cleaning his bike.

Talking of cleaning bikes; Glen pointed out that he couldn't remember the last time he'd cleaned his FJR but by the end of the week guilt got the better of him and he found a bucket and sponge.

It wasn't long before the week was up and we had to plan the return trip. Then we found out that the French had decided to go on strike and all the Brittany Ferries were cancelled and we were informed to make our own way to Calais. This meant a bit of a re-think, so we booked the LD Lines, Gijon (Spain) to St Nazaire (Brittany) ferry, this allowed cutting out most of northern Spain and France.

We made our way back to Salamanca then the next night we stayed around the Picos de Europa region of

northern Spain in a beautiful town called Potes. Glen and Lucy had a night to themselves as they headed back into northern Portugal and we met back at the ferry the next day

After the 15 hours Ferry crossing, this left only 400 miles to Calais, still a big trek so Glen and Lucky made a break for the port whilst, Dave, Ron, Phil and I had an overnight stay in Les Andelys (*this must be the only town in France that had no pub*) which seemed a half way point.

Next day was a quick blip to Calais where the tickets were exchanged for a P&O Dover crossing.

Conclusion;

The tour was whatever you wanted it to be. If you wanted great roads and to ride your bike then I escorted you around the Algarve. If you fancied having some 'down' time then you could chill out at the pool. It was a laid back tour. The Algarve had its normal plus 25°C sunshine while back in Blighty it was rain and floods.

So if next year you wish to have a fully arranged tour then please contact me and book early as I keep the group small to make it a friendly and relaxed biking holiday.



Ron ; Phil ; Dave ; outside a cafe overlooking a reservoir of which there are many in the Algarve