

~~OUR~~ MY BUMBLE MOTORHOME ALONE

BY CRAIG AND AN ANCIENT FARTING DASHUND CALLED DUDE.



Joanne's missing
from her shoes.



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BILLY NO MATES....

Well, Joanne has to nip home for a week or two so she can see the doctors about her skin condition that came about when we were in Italy last year.

She jested before flying off that I wouldn't keep up her bloggy, newsletter thing so it's up to me this time. You should all be warned that I cannot write for the life of me so apologies in advance, In fact I may just let the dog do it.



Faro Airport and Isla de Faro

Saturday 28 February.

Well, we both got up early this morning and not just me for once, Joanne needed to be up so she could do her bits and bobs for catching her flight back to Blighty. I decided to wash the seat covers and the odd bit of clothing so they could do their thing on the drive down to Faro airport.

We decided to drive to arrivals first so we would know where we would meet up when Joanne flies back in a week or so. I pulled in briefly only to be moved on by a very polite Police officer, I drove around the airport again and pulled into departures and after a quick kiss and goodbye she was gone. I decided to park up close to the Airport so that if she needed anything last minute then I could easily nip back.

Well, Praia do Faro is only 2 minutes away so off I went to find Faro's beach. It is essentially a very narrow strip of beach about 2 km long with a single road connected to the mainland via a very narrow bridge, narrow enough that Joanne would have goosebumps about crossing and also the fact it's only a 3.5 tonne bridge, Vin the van weighs in about 5.3 tonnes so as I tend to have selective vision I decided to ignore the width and weight limitations and go and have a look.

Getting across and off the connecting bridge wasn't a problem and there is a car park immediately facing you, there were approximately

ten other van parked up and a few other cars but i decided to have a drive along the single road to see the sights, five minutes later i was back were I started to decided to park up, there is toilet block to the right with fresh water available outside for the camper vans and also an area to empty your loo too, not the poshest setup we've come across but fresh water is still fresh water.

I sat down for a fag and was then approached by an English family who were waiting for someone to fly to Portugal that evening, Five minutes later they wanted the guided tour of our motorhome no doubt to compare it with there own van parked next door but one, (they had a smaller converted transit style vehicle), tour over with and then a Dutch couple came over to borrow one of our ten litre Jerry cans as they were struggling to fill there van with a one litre water bottle, I must admit some of my fellow motor homers are not the brightest of their respective bunch, the Germans with there watering cans for filling the van, the French do love there miniature plastic buckets for empty there vans and now the Dutch with a 1 litre bottle. I find using either a hose pipe or a ten litre Jerry can for filling is better than anything, a builders bucket for emptying of just driving over to a drain to empty the van also works



wonders compared to our EU counterparts. Joanne does give me odd looks at times though for not wanting to fart about and getting things done in a certain way..... "You and your OCD's" is the usual comment.

Lunch time then came around so I fed the dude (Peanut) and then myself before finishing my washing chores and converting the van into a Chinese laundry again, I must admit though as the outside temperature is currently 28°C and climbing



The Portuguese must think it's still very cold though look at this young family on the beach, 28°C, they should try a UK beach this time of year!



and over 40°C on the dashboard of the van it sure doesn't take long to dry the laundry.

Time for a little walk to the beach, fifteen seconds later I'm there, (thought to myself "I must park closer next time as the exercise is killing me") well I'll have a fag whist taking in the view, I must admit there is nothing here very exciting or inspiring but the beach is probably one of the best in the Algarve, it's clean,

has nice sand, and the sea's not too rough for anyone bar the youngest of children, plus as it's about 2 km long you get a lovely walk too, the other side of the beach is like an estuary with a few boats dotted here and there gently bobbing in the Ocean and not the usual mud flats like many of the other Isla's here in Portugal.

I must admit though, I think in the summer time this place will be over run by locals and tourists fighting for an inch of sand. The car park is now nearly full and it's still February so be warned if you ever visit.

After an uneventful evening bar watching the sun go down with a glass of plonk and missing my little Joanne I got up at six o'clock to let the dog out for a pee. I made myself a bit of breakfast and watched the sun rise over Faro before starting my chores of emptying the loo and topping up with water.

The dopey Dutch couple also left this morning, they ran out of electricity so they were off to find a site with a socket to plug into. I must admit even with Joannes excessive use of all things electrical including 2 phones, 3 cameras, her iPad, two computers, curling tongs, the all important hair dryer, clothes spinner, TV and satellite system and





12v To
240v
Inverter



300
amps of
Batteries



I release
lots of
methane gas
these days.



300 watts of
Solar Panels

the fact she is always leaving the lights switched on we never need external power, solar power keeps us topped up.

For the geeky out there I installed...

- Three, 100w solar panels to the roof of the van, they are connected through the vans electrical system.
- Three, 100 amp batteries and one, 90 amp engine battery.
- I fitted another circuit in the van providing five, 240v sockets.

- All connected to a 1500w inverter that turns 12v DC into 240v AC.
- Answer = Happy Wife.

The disadvantage is all this stuff weighs in at about 130 kg which can take a big chunk out of a typical vans payload.

Dude missing his
mum.



Isla de Faro to
Loulé

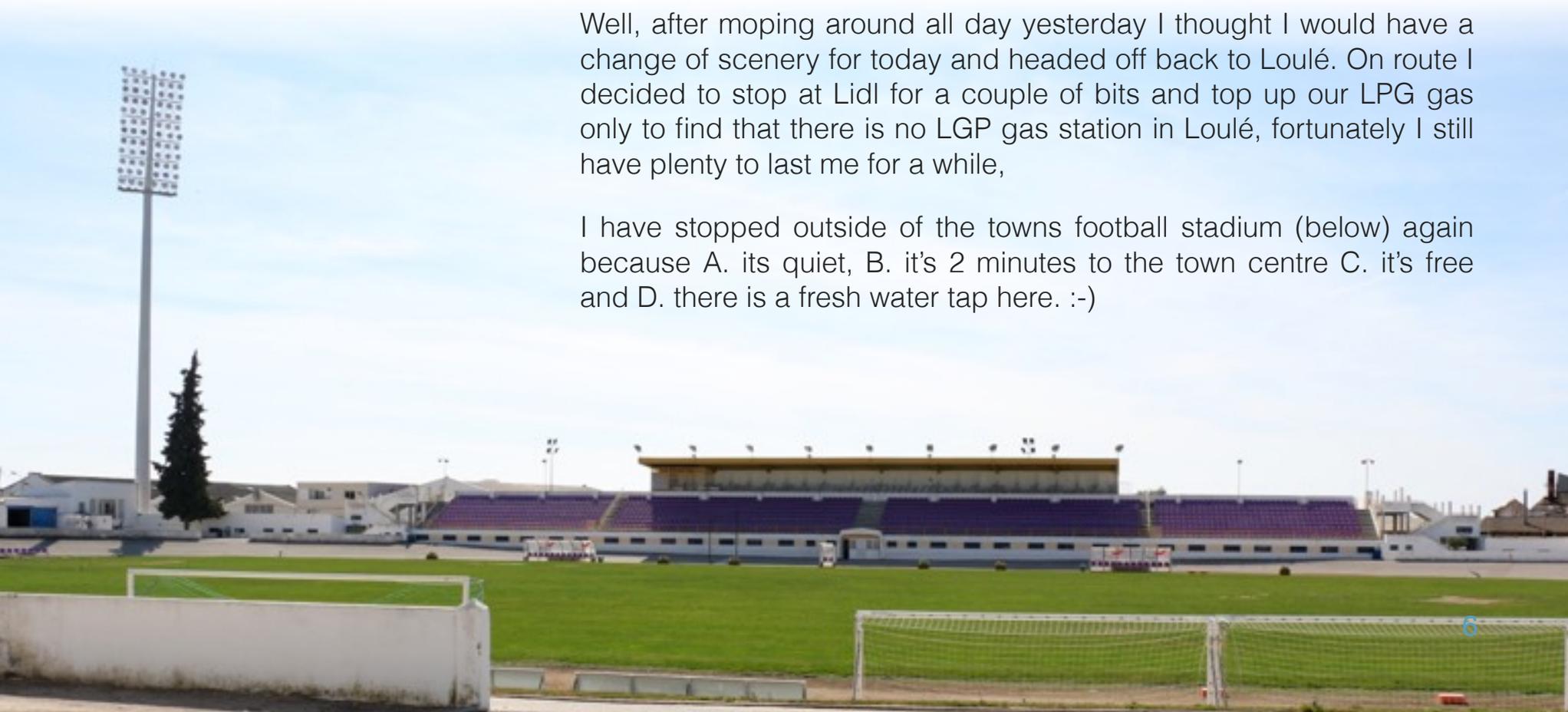
Sunday 1 March

Well, what a day I have had, I've done absolutely nothing what so ever, I didn't even visit the beach that's in front of me. Oh I lied, highlights of the day included speaking to Joanne now she's back home and giving Peanut a shower (old dogs do get a bit smelly).

Monday 2 March

Well, after moping around all day yesterday I thought I would have a change of scenery for today and headed off back to Loulé. On route I decided to stop at Lidl for a couple of bits and top up our LPG gas only to find that there is no LPG gas station in Loulé, fortunately I still have plenty to last me for a while,

I have stopped outside of the towns football stadium (below) again because A. its quiet, B. it's 2 minutes to the town centre C. it's free and D. there is a fresh water tap here. :-)



Loulé





Tuesday 3 March

Loulé is quite famous for its large Mercado Municipal (town market, above) and having quite a few craft and souvenir shops.

The shops that sell cork items are excellent, everything from umbrellas, coats, ties, shoes, wallets you name it and they make it all from cork (tree bark from the cork tree).





There are also quite a few pottery shops selling plates, bowls and vases, etc., all custom made to your requirements.

It has quite a quaint little centre with a few old narrow streets, an old Castelo (castle) which is now a museum, a thirteenth century gothic church and the town centres roundabout is a water fountain and lastly as you would expect, each property has the ambiguous ancient looking Portuguese chimney pot. It's quite a nice town really so I'll see how long it takes for me to get bored.

I have found a petrol station with LPG gas or GPL as it's called here, so I'll fill up the tanks as I leave. Our current average cost for the gas which is used for all our heating, hot water, fridge, cooker and BBQ is only about one Euro a day so it's cheaper living in the van than it is in our house.

Top left - Typical narrow cobbled street.

Top Right - The town centre roundabout with market behind

Left Centre - More traditional tiling

Bottom Left - Loulé Castelo



Cheap Skate Ideas

I'm totally bored today and missing Joanne so I thought I'd let you know some of my little ideas on staying on the road for less, by that I mean the little cost cutting measures or resource saving ideas. Life in a house is very different from in a motorhome, water, heating, electricity and even going to the loo are all privileges that rely on one another.

- Put the kettle on = Water, electricity and gas.
- Brushing your teeth = Water and electricity.
- Shower = Water, electricity and gas.
- Heating and Cooling = Gas and electricity.
- Fridge = Gas or electricity.
- Toilet = Water and electricity.
- Cooking = Water, electricity and gas.
- Washing up = Water, electricity and gas.

All this water needs to come from somewhere and go somewhere too including the toilet.

- Some countries have water taps in all towns and villages so get it while you can. Other options include petrol stations, sports facilities and even cemeteries, no water means EVERYTHING so get it when you see it.
- Poop bags for your pet, Tesco nappy bags are ideal and are so much cheaper, 300 bags for about 50 pence.
- Use the water after washing your clothes to wash the van, it's already got the soap in too.
- Use that initial cold water that comes through the shower to fill the kettle, every little helps!
- You can heat water to about 40°C by putting it in a bottle and leaving in the windscreen. (I don't do it but some do)
- Don't pour any soapy water near your van, it attracts the mosquitos and fly's plus if it's hot it starts to smell too.
- Use hair conditioner to have a shave, it's miles better and it's cheaper than using the Gillette stuff especially abroad as it's so expensive.
- Solar power is a no brainer, we never have to plug in so that means no need to visit expensive campsites just to charge the batteries.



- Convert the van (heating system wise) to run on LPG gas, no messing with different cylinders for different countries and it also much cheaper too, plus it's much easier to find.



- Tupperware, well the modern equivalent anyway, it keeps everything fresh and saves weight, doesn't rattle whereas glass jars do.
- Park facing the sun, I fitted net curtain rails in the front of the van, excellent way to dry your clothes very quickly without annoying the locals.
- McDonalds offer free WiFi, the username and password is on the front door so no need for internet access costs.
- Mobile phone costs, stop using it is the best option but this year roaming charges are supposed to be abolished. We have a Toggle sim card that enables you too make international calls at local rates in most countries.

- Fit LED lights in your van, they use about a fifth of the electricity.



- Learn the language, being able to say hello and thanks gets you a very, very long way when you need something plus it's just plain polite.
- Fill your fridge with your fresh water bottles, pop, beer or wine, your fridge lets cold air out and warm air in, water is great at retaining heat so you use less energy.



- Cigs, well if you smoke like me then roll your own, you smoke less and it's about a quarter of the price.
- Buy some Crocks shoes/sandals, they look like crap but are great in any weather and don't get wet, smell or need any fancy cleaning products.

- Batten down the hatches, close all your doors and windows 30 mins or so before sunset, No mosquitoes in the van and it keeps all that lovely warm air in the van so saves on heating.
- Don't buy expensive glass cleaning products, just use windscreen cleaning additive, it's miles cheaper and it's the same stuff. Preferably buy the concentrated stuff as it works out cheaper and weighs less, just dilute later.
- If you don't need it ditch it, everything you carry affects the fuel consumption and braking system of your vehicle, its all soon mounts up.
- Chicken, buy a full one, fillet it yourself and save about 50% over buying chicken fillets, you also get two legs and two wings for free, even chicken stock if you boil the leftovers.

The big one here is water usage, it's the single most important thing that is taken for granted in a home. You may not think so but stop for a minute and think what activities use water and how much is used, in a motorhome your carrying capacity is very low so if it runs out, everything stops. I'm very careful with what we use but at best we can only manage a week before having to refill everything. SO I LIKE WATER TAPS. :-)



Alte

Well, I didn't last long before moving on again, this time I have moved to a small village called Alte about 30 km west of Loulé. It's set in the foothills of the Serra de Caldeirão a few hundred meters above sea level, I have parked up next to a cemetery of all places but with superb views all-round looking down the valleys.

According to the guide books this is supposed to be one of the prettiest villages in the Algarve, with little white washed houses everywhere separated by narrow cobbled streets. It has an old sixteen century church at it's heart and natural springs or fontes on one side. The springs have had picnic and barbecues built next to them for everyone to use and are surrounded by wild flowers and herbs such as rosemary. I would imagine they are extremely pretty in the late spring and autumn when everything is blooming and the trees are covered in leaves.



- Above and right - One of the springs and picnic area.
- Top left - A cross set in the side of the church.
- Left - A typical tiled scene on the side of a restaurant.
- Bottom left - Front of the sixteenth century church overlooking the hills in the background.
- Below and below right - Wild flowers and herbs growing in the area.





Barragem do Arade

A reservoir in the hills.

Barragem is the name given to reservoirs in Portugal, this particular one is said to be one of the nicest to visit because of its location. Like Alte before it is set in the hills and surrounded by pine tree forests and dirt back roads going to remote villages and properties.

I have parked up on some gravel land with about six other vans, far below at the bottom of the dam wall are some more vans but this is definitely the better spot, you actually have to drive over the dam wall to get to this section. As you can see from the picture above you have a great view were I'm parked.

There are two the British vans so I can have a bit of a chat for a change and break up these stressful days. One of them is a Scottish couple who have kindly lent me a hard drive full of movies. Thirty minutes later I returned it after copying of the ones I fancied watching over the next few days being a Billy No Mates.

About 50 meters to my left are the remains of Café Coutada that looks like its been closed for a good few years. In the centre of the Barragem is an island that opens up in the summer months and for a few Euros you can be taken over in a boat and have a leisurely day cooling from the summer sun in the surrounding waters and even hire jet skis.



The Scottish chap also mentioned when he came here last he was woken up at the crack of dawn to lots of gun shots and then as the morning passed more and more shots could be heard, then all of a sudden a load of Portuguese came from the pines all carrying wild boar, they threw them into the carpark, skinned them, then butchered them followed by equally splitting the meat evenly and then had a big celebratory meal. Peanut likes piggy and even vegetarian love the smell of bacon so I might just keep my eye out, although it'll have to use a rolling pin as I've not got a shotgun handy.



There are quite a few mosquitoes and other flying bugs here so the screens fitted to the vans doors and windows come in very useful to keep the little buggers out. On some of the hilltops you can see little bee farms and by judging on how many are on these yellow flowers they must be busy little things. Not much else here though unless your into walking, although there are many more wild flowers.

Top left - Busy little bees

Top right - The now closed Café Coutada

Centre - The reservoirs wall which you have to cross.

Bottom Left - Home for a couple of days.

Bottom Right - Good views all directions.



Silves.....

Coming next week

More to come by me sadly as Joanne is still in the UK.

Like I said at the beginning I cannot write for the life of me so you'll have to put up with one more edition by me.

All the best everyone.