



**OUR BUMBLE**

**EXPLORING EUROPE IN OUR  
MOTORHOME**







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PORTUGAL





## Mèrtola to Alcoutim

### Saturday 7 February

Filled up with fresh water and set off. The countryside was good but not as good as we were expecting but still pleasant. However, we did spot a wild tea towel hiding in a bush and it didn't half give us a fright.

With an hour we arrived out our destination Alcoutim. We stopped on a free aire that holds around half a dozen campers. The little village is right on the River Gardiana and if we do a bloody big run and jump over the river, we will land in Spain. The Spanish town of Sanlucar is meant to be the mirror of Alcoutim but didn't look like it to us. It had a castle and a few white washed houses but that's it. Admiring the view when an English van pulled up. They walked over and took a look at the view "is that it?" We were quiet shocked given the aire is free. They then went on to say they might as well not bother and head back to the coast and with that they shot off.

We had a walk in to the village and it was OK but not great. It felt like a fabricated village, were a little bit of tourism had attracted them to build modern fountains etc around a Roman castle. You could imagine a little chew chew train arriving any minute to take you around the highlights. With not much around, we headed back to Vin. On the way back we spotted the infamous azure magpies. They are so pretty. When in flight they look more like a blue parrot, slender with long tail feathers. Not at all like our black and white magpies.



Craig was just letting peanut out for a pickle when a Yorkshire chap walked over and started chatting. Chris was a retired school teacher, single and manic depressive (by his own admission). He came to the Algarve on his own, travelled around by public transport and stayed in hostels. He came every year for 6 weeks and had done so for years. He looked a bit like a train spotter type of guy with grey trousers, knitted jumper, wooly hat and anorak 4 sizes too big. Chris was a really nice guy but we'd had enough of him after 5 hours. Yes, 5 hours! The guy never shut up. The only reason he decided to go is because he needed the loo. Normally I would offer the use of our loo but I am not sure he would ever leave. Shame really, he just wanted some company. I did make him a nice cup of tea with a few biscuits, which he thoroughly enjoyed.

Not much else to report really except we are surrounded by French people. The guy to our left is on his own and he's a painter who just chins bottles of wine of all day. The couple to our far left are heading for a divorce and hate each other with a passion. The couple to our right are grumpy chain smokers and that's our neighbours for tonight.





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## Alcoutim to Alcaria

### Sunday 8 February

Jeez what happened? Did someone pay Jack Frost or something? Last night it went down to -2 and not just for a short time, for most of the night. We came here for some warmth and sunshine, please can we have some?

The French people to our right are grumpy this morning. He looks like he got his arse smacked and she's just puffing away to forget her worries. The French artist is busy cutting up pieces of paper and drinking his wine...at 9am in the morning. Maybe it's the wine that gets the creative juices flowing.

After a lazy morning of dosing around not doing much, we made a move to Castro Marim. We drove down a small country lane which ran alongside the Gardiana River. A good road and not a soul around, again. We passed loads of little lay bys idea for 1 night with some cracking views over the river and in to Spain. We jotted a few down just in case it gets too busy on the Algarve or if we fancy getting away for a few days. As we carried on we spotted a few vans on an elevated point. Ummmm, wonder what's up there? We followed the dirt track and to our surprise, a very clean and tidy aire. A young lad gave us the prices €4.50 per night including water and wifi. If you stay longer the prices reduces. We picked our spot and settled down for the day. It is only a tiny aire but what a location. It is right in the middle of the countryside on an elevated position, so you



have 360 views. Motorhomes park around the edge, so you never get overlooked by another Motorhome. In the middle, water, black and grey waste. A cafe bar with reasonable priced menu and picnic area. Have to say, as far as an aire goes this is one of the best.

Yippee that means we can have a BBQ. We don't have much food but what we do have is a right mishmash of bits - 1 burger, chicken wings, 2 sausage and a chicken leg. Means we can get rid of everything out the freezer but still enjoy it. I do like BBQ's.

I sent some emails and Craig checked the maps and updates. Unfortunately the connections wasn't great but we eventually got done what we needed to.

We fired the BBQ up and Craig made fresh bread to go with our piri piri chicken and burgers. Peanut was buzzing. He loves the smell of BBQ and gets ever so excited when he gets to bits of scraps. Today, he got a full sausage all to himself and he got so giddy he couldn't stop sneezing. Poor chap, it's the only time his senses seem to work, these days.





After BBQ we headed in doors before it got too cold. Today it's been sunny but the icy wind makes it uncomfortable to sit out. If we are in for another cold night then we might as well make the most of the heat we've trapped in Vin and snuggle up. Peanut fully agreed and with a full belly, he shot in his basket and stuck his head up his blanket.

Just before bed, I took peanut out for a wee and the sky was beautiful. With no ambient light up here, you could see the stars so clearly. I wanted to stay out and do a bit of star gazing but the freezing wind quickly changed my mind.







## Alcaria to Castro Marim

### Monday 9 February

Woke up this morning with a banging head. My eye is very sore, it is blood shot and feels the size of a golf ball. It's all linked to whatever is causing the itching but hopefully sorted in a few weeks time when I fly home.

Craig cooked me a strange breakfast, fried eggs and chapatti's. Good job Peanuts around to share but shush don't tell him. I then had a shower whilst Craig filled Vin up with water. By the time I'd finished drying my hairs he still wasn't back. I went outside and there he was chatting away to the Scottish couple and he did so for the next couple of hours. I FaceTime'd my dad who was full of a cold, bless him. Then I got to chat with Dave and Oliver...he is so cute.

We wanted to stay up here for a few days, it's so pretty but we've run out of food. The fridge and freezer are empty, so we need a Lidl, quick. The drive to Castro Marim by way of the river road was lovely and we passed many a lay-by worth a stopover. We really did want to stop but Lidl calls, we can't go another with food. Several hours later and we were stocked up with everything from water, detergent, bog rolls, meat, veg, fruit and chocolate. But the bargain of the day, 15 nice pieces of lemon sole for €6. I had a couple of pieces with caramelised lemon for lunch and they were yummy.



We filled up with GPL and then tootled off to find a spot. We drove to Vila Real but the aire was packed, so we drove to Castro Marim. The aire was busy but the spare land at the side was available, so we parked up. Given the time of day we weren't too fussed on finding the best spot. Not long and an English van pulled up. Craig tried to engage in pleasant conversation but the arrogant sod was quite rude...no wonder he's on his own!

It felt good to back on the Algarve...it felt warm and the sun was shining.







## Castro Marim

## Tuesday 10 February

Happy Birthday to my sister Shikha and her daughter Ocea!

What a miserable day! Looks like someone pinch the sunshine again. We waited until it stopped raining before taking a stroll in the town and up to the castle. The town was the first headquarters for the Order of Christ and is home to a huge castle built by Alfonso III. Not much to see in the town but the views from the castle to the Spanish boarder, the river and surrounding nature reserve were lovely. Just a shame it was so overcast. The reserve attracts hundreds of passing flamingos but not today. The only birds we could see were some homing pigeons, taking their daily flap around before heading back to the shed for a bit of seed.

It rained all afternoon and we just watched folk trudge by. We were pretty bored and spent most of the day twiddling our thumbs. When we first arrived in the Algarve, we stopped at a wild camping spot on a little car park bay in Monte Gordo. We parked next to a couple of Dutch vans. Well, they pulled up right in front of us. We went for a chat only to discover the police had just moved them on from that little bay. We couldn't believe they'd been there for over 2 months without moving. No wonder they'd been moved on.

Bored with nowt to do we went to Lidl to see if they had any vegetables. To our surprise the shelves were half empty and what





they did have was tatty. We grabbed a bag of spuds that were on offer and called it quits. We had a drive along the harbour front and it was quite nice but for the weather. We nearly pulled in to stopover but Craig felt uneasy. There were too many lay-bys and funny looking folk around, so we bumbled back to Castro Marim. Well, at least it killed a couple of hours.

The rest of the night it bounced it down!





## Castro Marim to Vila Real do Santo Antonio

### Wednesday 11 February

We got up early and headed towards the aire at Vila Real Santo Antonio. Today the weather is overcast, so what better time to give Vin his monthly clean. As we pulled on to the aire we notice a van from Finland and a couple from Norway, what a fleshing change. Don't think we've seen anyone from so far North, will have to pop over later and say hello. We like the Norwegians, so friendly.

We found a spot on the aire right on the front overlooking the river. Lovely views to Ayamonte coastal town of Spain on the other side. To be honest, we were very disappointed with the aire, it certainly looked much better from afar. The ground was broken rubble with lots of broken glass. Ever so often were clumps of crap and rubbish, which wasn't nice at all. Well, we are only here to clean, so as long as they have plenty water, we are not bothered. Unbeknown to us, we'd parked right in the middle of two English vans. A couple from Birmingham to our right and a couple from Devon to our left. After 5 minutes chat it started to rain and so everyone shot back to their vans.

Scrub, scrub and scrub some more! I did inside and Craig did outside. We washed anything and everything and the only disappointment was the weather. The intermittent rain meant we had to dry everything inside and leave the bedding and towels until tomorrow.



After a full day cleaning, Craig did a BBQ and treated me to a nice piece of fresh salmon. It was extremely tasty and even Peanut thoroughly enjoyed the crispy skin. Not long and we were fast asleep dreaming of detergent.

Snails like the rain...not good when you see plenty of these little fellas.







## Vila Real do Santo Antonio

## Thursday 12 February

It wasn't a glorious sunny day but it was dry enough to hang out all the bedding and towels. Finish off the last of the big spring clean, so it leaves us free for several days to explore and enjoy Portugal.

The Devon couple to our left Gerry and Jenny were really nice. They retired a couple of years ago and were full time in their Motorhome. They were really enjoying every minute of their retirement and lived life just how they wanted. They had a little three wheeler motorcycle and during the day they would often go and venture where the camper couldn't. Gerry did make us laugh though, he'd fell off it more times than he would care to remember. Apparently the stabiliser system works well when you are stopped but the few seconds when you are setting off is tricky. The stabiliser system switches off and you've not enough power. He keeps forgetting to put his feet down hence he wobbles off with Jenny clinging to his back.

After lunch our bedding and towels were dry, so we had a cycle ride in to town. The marina was only small but it was pretty, a lovely place to chill and sip cocktails at sunset. The town is a perfect 19th century grid system with quaintly little shops and cafes. The town layout is built on the same system as the Baixa district in Lisbon. In the middle a simple and clean square. We wandered up and down and in and out before heading back to Vin for a BBQ.



Gerry and Jenny arrived back at the same time and before we knew it, it was pitch black and cold. Well there goes our BBQ and here comes beans on toast. It didn't matter, we'd had a good day with good company and the beans were damn tasty for a change.







## Vila Real do Santo Antonio to Cacela Velha

### Friday 13 February

Up nice and early, so we could set off, grab a few fresh croissants and have breakfast at the beach. Today, the sky is blue and the sun is shining, so what better place to have breakfast than by the ocean. Cabeço beach is only a few kilometers west and it is beautiful. Unspoiled golden sand that goes on and on no matter which way you look. Last time we stayed here there were only two Motorhomes but now a dozen noisy, clicky French vans.

After breakfast, i had a walk on the beach and then I sat out and chilled with Peanut. We had a lovely time catching a few sun rays, I scratched his belly and he occasionally sneezed on me. At one point, I flicked his nose and he went in to a playful mode but it didn't last long, but it was nice to see. The days of playing are well and truly gone and snoozing seems to be the better option these days. Craig tinkered with the chopping board well I say tinker but he completely dismantled the whole thing. It had started to bow and drive him mad, so nothing for it, it needed fixing.

The French had started to get loud and we could imagine them getting quite loud tonight, so we moved to the next bay. There were a few vans on a small concrete platform with room for one van to tuck in the corner. Craig reversed Vin in to the corner and next minute a French woman hung out a van and started yelling at us. We couldn't understand her but from the waving of the hands and the noise



coming from her gob we gathered it was something to do with us parking at the side of her van. The space was plenty big enough and we weren't blocking any sunlight. We couldn't understand it. Anyway, she continued to make a horrid din and attract attention, so we just moved to the other end. Clearly she just didn't want anyone parking at the side of her. We know she had no right, it just a wild camping spot but we couldn't do with the fuss. Besides all the other vans were French, so enough for a revolution! We had a stroll on the beach but the French made us feel very unwelcome and uneasy. There was something that just didn't sit right, so we moved on.

A few kilometers down the road and we were in Altura. We parked up next to a small football ground and alongside a few German Motorhomes. We cycled in to town via the beach. All the time looking for somewhere to park for the night, again, it didn't feel right. We didn't find anywhere to stop but the town was quite nice. The 14 and 15 February is carnival time in Portugal and Altura is one of the towns that puts on a great carnival. We don't fully understand the background to the carnival but it is something to do with the start of Easter. As we cycled down the Main Street music was blasting from the street speakers. It was the Portuguese remix of the classic agado do

## Noisy French







do...we just needed a few pineapples and we'd be complete. It was one of those tunes that stop in your head for ages....arrrrghhh. Clearly the festival starts today with the children's activities as 100's of kids gathered on the square in fancy dress. All bright colours and full of energy. The little girls were parading around in their ball gowns whilst the little chaps were dashing here and there in comic book hero attire.

As we got back to Vin, our neighbours a Swedish couple were looking a little agitated. The police were on the prowl and moving people on. They had tried several Aires in the area and couldn't find any spaces. After a good chat we all decided it would be prudent to move rather than be fined, not sure where to! It seems there are more Motorhomes than Aires at the moment.

Back on the road, we headed towards Tavira. Would we get something before sunset? Then we saw the signs for Cacela Velha and took a quick turn down the country lane. Wow, what a view. We parked Vin on some grass with beautiful elevated views out to the ocean. We are not quite sure what towns we can see on the coastline to the east but we can see quite a few. It is so clear and through the binoculars you

can see quite a bit of detail. We think the furthest point we can see is somewhere around Cadez in Spain but not sure. Anyway, time for dinner and spot of freshly made lasagna and garlic bread.

Not the most exciting week but feels good to be back in the warmer climate.





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ROUTE SO FAR



# THE LAST 7 DAYS OF OUR JOURNEY



## Our Top 10 Places

1. Seville
2. Salamanca
3. Alvor
4. Lagos
5. Belem
6. Mertola
7. Mafra
8. Evora
9. Beja
10. Praia do Rocha Marina

## Our Hidden Jems

1. Praia Do Arrifes
2. Vila Do Bispo (forest)
3. Mertola river bank
4. Praia do Amado
5. Porto Covo (dunes)
6. Cacela Velha