



BUMBLING ALONG EXPLORING EUROPE IN OUR MOTORHOME

Portugal





Cacela Velha

Saturday 14 February

Craig spent the morning tinkering with his FileMaker program. It's a database to record all the wild camping spots and cheap aires. Every spot we visit we take photos and log the details, so we have the option to revisit or share with fellow campers. Craig's made it quick and easy to capture the information, so it's not a chore to update. Today, he added auto altitude is readiness for when we go in to the mountains.

The town of Cacela Velha is very small. It is perched on a cliff with a bit of a fort, church and half a dozen houses. To the west of the cliff are some terraced gardens with a stone path running down to the coast. From here you can walk down to the beach and wetland. It's also a good point for seeing the beginning of the Ilha's.



To the East, a sandy path that leads you through grassland with spring flowers and olive trees. We stumbled across a shed with a couple of turkey looking birds and a small allotment. As we carried on we eventually arrived at a stream. We tiptoed across and then wandered down on to the beach. You could walk for a good kilometer before you reached the sea but we stopped about half way, as there were 1000's of nesting gulls with their young. We didn't want to startle them. We watched for a while before we turned back and walked back to Vin via the terraced gardens.

Craig, looks who's there...it's the French lady from Alvor, the one who lost her dog on New Year's Day. We walked over and said hello. She looked well, it was so nice to see her.

After dinner, Craig watched a bit of TV but with only two channels it didn't take long for him to switch to a movie stored on the hard drive. Then just before bed time, he retracted the satellite and BANG. Jeez what was that? Then a big red flashing symbol on the satellite box. We both looking at each other. Craig stuck his head out of the skylight and after 5 minutes of clambering around in the dark he could see the centre cap that covered the wire had fallen off and trapped under the dish. He tried to move it but it was trapped. The only way to sort it, unscrew the 3 bolts that hold the satellite in place. Not a job for the middle of the night, so Craig took out the fuse then the dish wouldn't keep trying to retract.

Old Fort now a GNR
outpost (military police)





Cacela Velha to Tavira



Sunday 15 February

First job of the day, fix the satellite. Craig sorted it but now we have to stay here until the mastic sets otherwise we could have a flying satellite. Well, we could be stuck in worse places!

A Dutchman pulled up at the side of us with a 5 month old mini dachshund and she was just adorable. So sweet and playful just like peanut used to be. Unfortunately she was a little too rough for peanut, so he crawled back in his bed for a bit of calm.

Today is a light rain and black clouds day and we are bored. Even the artificial tree chameleon looks rather grey and fed up. Craig checked out the mastic and decided it would do. We packed up everything and drove a few kilometers to Fabrica for lunch. We watched the half a dozen boats in the harbour and studied the coastal flowers until we'd had enough. Craig even tried to make a toilet roll holder out of bamboo he was that bored.

Eventually we hit the road again until we found a good spot at ilha da Tavira. Castle ruins, sandy beach and loads of birds to watch. Even a kingfisher, my favorite little bird.



Tavira to Santo Luzia

Monday 16 February

Beep, beep.our friends Irene and Cliff. Where are you, it is wet and breezy here in Alvor and we are in need of sunshine. I text them back and told them no sunshine here although it is dry, calm but very cloudy.

After breakfast we watched the birds do their thing and then made our way in to Tavira....Lidl day. Craig is beaming it is supermarket day, his favorite day of the week. Hate to think what he would be like if they ever went in to liquidation..medical support comes to mind. At least I get one of my favorite little custard tarts and I bought Peanut a tin of Lidl's finest dog food in readiness for his 15th birthday on Wednesday. He loves tinned food but with his age, it just gives him smelly farts and in a confined motorhome...it ain't funny..

After Lidl we went a few kilometers to Santo Luzia. Driving through Tavira and over the Roman bridge which straddles the Gilao River. Luzia, a little fishing village surrounded with the wetlands, a bird watchers paradise. We tried to get on the aire but it was full to the brim, so we drove to the football stadium. We parked Vin on the road that runs around the stadium giving us an elevated position right over the wetlands. Perfect.



Craig cooked smelly smoked bacon for lunch...yuck. I hate smoked stuff, it stinks. Poor Vin now smells like a greasy cafe even with all the windows and doors open.

Our neighbour, an elderly German couple admired our bikes. They had their pinched a few days ago. Someone snipped the chain off the bikes locks that were strapped to the back of their Motorhome.

We cycled in and around Santo Luzia. The Palm lined promenade is a pretty place for watching the world go by. If gawking doesn't take your fancy you could stroll to the end of the town and watch the fisher men reel in their octopus pots. After the village we cycled to Pedras D'el Rai, the next village. We spotted a load of Motorhomes parked along the front but upon closer inspection they were just parked on the car park at €4 per day. A toot around the holiday villas before heading back by way of Barril on Ilha da Tavira.



Santo Luzia to Fuseta

Tuesday 17 February

A very gusty night but lucky for us we were parked the right direction. The wind hit Vin from the rear so no rocking like a pendulum. However, the odd gust did make you jump out your skin. Then in the middle of the night, I jumped out of bed...the bloody satellite dish, is it still up? Thankfully we'd put the dish away, phew.

We had hoped to stay here a few nights but with not much to do or see we were struggling. We set off by way of an Aldi. Yip you heard us right, an Aldi and not a Lidl. We need baked beans and pickles and the only place we know that stocks them is an Aldi. The supermarket was very quiet but that was good, we could blurt round and get all our stuff without massive queues.

After Aldi, we stopped at fuel station to get Craig some tobacco. What a bazaar mask! Some immature teenager walking around in a scream mask. Not a good luck when walking around town.

As we turned in to our next stop, Fuseta we looked at each other and sighed. We didn't think we'd been here but we were wrong. It was one of the towns we drove through in between Christmas and New Year. Ah well, let's park up for the night, you never know something might surprise us. We parked up on the front car park along with 100's of other Motorhomes.



Fuseta has a railway station at the beginning of the town then in the centre a load of Portuguese homes mingled in with the shops and then to the West several hotels. The hotels look like they were built at the beginning of the holiday boom but the boom never arrived in Fuseta. Now they make good shelter for the drunken fisher men. To the East, a little fishing harbour with the usual fish market accompanied by lots of broken beer bottles and the odd empty vodka bottle. It's a shame because Fuseta could be very pretty place if they cleaned it up. A potential quaint fishing village amongst the wetlands with a lovely stretch of sandy beach.

We got talking to a couple from Bristol and they've been coming here for years. This year, there are more campers than normal which is partly down to the French. A significant number of French vans go across to Morocco but not this year, they have fallen out with Morocco and stayed in Portugal.

From the comfort of Vin, we sat and watched the campers come and go. It is amazing how small Europe is but how vastly different we all are. With all our experience we can usually spot the nationality within a couple of minutes. The Germans are the easiest. Within minutes of arriving they mark their patch with some personal possession. Normally a table and chairs. They are the only nation that do

this and if they can't mark their spot, they leave and find a patch to mark. The English are next. The man is always the first out the van. He normally opens his door, stands there proud as punch, sniffs in the air and steps out. Always hands in pocket and wearing some ghastly piece of clothing. From socks with sandals, the spouse's jogging pants or cloth hat. Then Dutch. As soon as a dutch van arrives they step out and wave. It's a full on hearty wave like they've known you for years. They never park their van straight or in any logical place but who cares, it will do. The French. They step out their van and the first thing they do is wave their hands in the air followed by a frown and a rant, and that's at each other. The Portuguese are hard to spot but that's mainly because they drive somewhere and never get out their van but walk passed their van and you'll guarantee to find them fast asleep in the front seats.

Vin hidden amongst the
sea of camper vans





Fuseta to Praia do Talfur

Wednesday 18 February

Hey the sun is shining nice and bright. Today, Peanut is 15 the equivalent of 105 human years, so I think we can safely say he is an owd dawg.

For breakfast, he had his normal biscuits with a few piggy bits thrown in as a special treat. Left overs from yesterday's lunch! Little does he know it is covered in his medication.

We left all the vans and drove straight to Jumbo petrol station at Faro. We were going to fill up but the price seems quite high at €1.15 Cheaper than most around here but more expensive than we've been paying the last few weeks. We've not see the news and wonder if fuel prices are on the increase? We had loads of change, so we paid in notes and in coins. The cashier was not impressed having to count out €8 in small coins and she was convinced we were going to under pay her. Half an hour later, she lifted the barrier and set up free.

Just after Faro we turned off down a dirt track. It was bumpy and dusty but Craig had a good feel about this lane. Twenty minutes later we arrived at a brilliant spot, right on the beach. To the East a little watering hole for duck and birds and to the west, a forest. Perfect for a secluded spot. We kicked off our shoes and went for a lovely stroll on the beach. What a life.



Now for Peanuts second birthday treat, a Lidl prime chicken doggy pate. He adored it. I took a picture but Craig said it looks disgusting and would turn your stomach, so I didn't include for your own safety!

The afternoon we sat out just reading and catching a few sun rays. I noticed a few snowdrops in the grass, it reminded me of this time last year when I ran around every garden centre in search of crocus and snowdrops for our Russell. He loved flowers and early spring bulbs just brightened up the gloomy, grey winter days. With the sun shining down, I sat for a while and took time to remember him, one of the nicest chaps you'll ever meet. Later, we went over to the watering hole to feed the ducks but the ducks flew off. These Portuguese ducks mustn't like stale bread!

Craig disappeared for a while and I didn't give it a thought. Little did I know but he gone to make us pancakes. We forgot yesterday was strove Tuesday, so he made up for it today...one with fresh lemon and sugar and one with Nutella. They were scrumptious.

At sunset we took another walk and what a sunset, it was lovely. As we walked back the bats were out in force chasing the evening bugs. There were loads of the little fellas. Darting here and there. Then we noticed the giant Mosquitos...think it is time to dive in the Vin and take shelter before we get eaten alive!



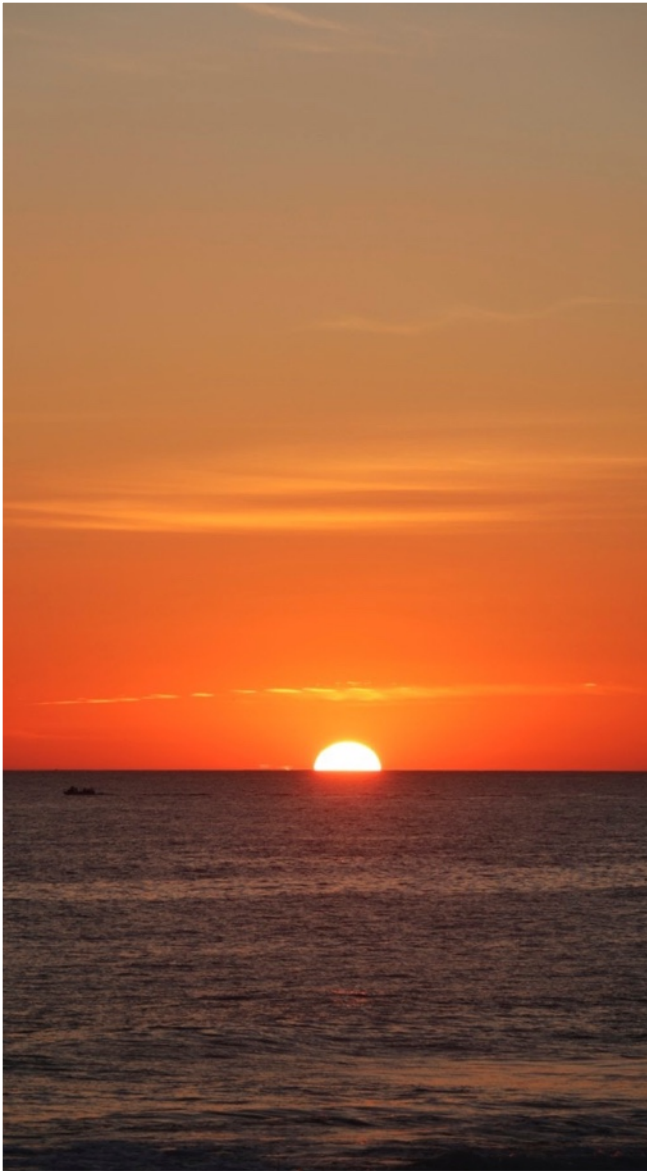
Praia do Talfur to Praia do Almargem

Thursday 19 February

What another wonderful sunny day. I do like it when you open your eyes, lift the blinds and the sun beams welcome you to the day. It's like an injection of happiness.

We quickly got dressed and then scooted around to a hidden gem, one we found yesterday. From the beach it is only a stones throw away from where we are but to drive Vin there is another matter. We headed back towards the main road and then wandered down loads of tiny, bumpy, narrow lanes. If we hadn't seen this spot then there is no way we'd venture down here, poor Vin is shaking his booty like Beyoncé. Eventually we reached our spot and it was perfect. Right on the beach with nothing but sand and sea as a view. The sound of waves crashing down and the sun shining bright. Today is going to be a great day, I can tell. Craig out on one of my favorite songs, L'Americano by Gypsy Queens. An ace tune that never fails to make us feel good and every time we hear it, you just want to smile and dance. But Craig doesn't do dancing but I enjoy trying to entice him to shuffle his twinkle toes.

We got the deck chairs and sat outside catching a bit of sun and listening to the ocean. A truly lazy but utterly fantastic day just watching the world go by.



At sunset a group of young teenagers took their horses for a trot on the beach. It was quite good to watch them dart between the frantic dogs. I forgot to mention we have neighbours, Rosie and Paddy from Ireland. Not sure of their age but definitely 80 plus but still going strong. They have a disabled son who they call junior and two dogs one of which they named bonkers. They too enjoyed the horses although I have a sneaky feeling Paddy enjoyed the young women...he certainly was a character. They'd been here in this spot for 3 months but tomorrow they leave, time for home.





Praia do Almargem to Praia dos Pescadores

Friday 20 February

Knock knock who's there. Jeez Craig, it's the police! We answered the door and the police asked to see our passports. Whilst he looked at our passports the marine police checked out Vin. They were very pleasant and said no problem staying here but they would prefer us the move to the aire in Alberferia for our own safety.

Rosie and Junior looked a little shaken by the police but Paddy put on a brave face and reassured them it would be OK.

Another English couple called George and Sam pulled up late last night and police said the same to them. We had a good chat with them before we decided to move on.

We bumbled on along the coast in search of somewhere to stay. The GNR were out in Falesia, so after lunch we headed on our way. We drove through the holiday resorts at Alberferia and headed to our favorite hidden gem - Arrifes. We arrived to find a few campers already parked up. We were gutted. We shuffled Vin around trying to get him in to a half decent spot but it was no good. The ground was either too uneven or too soft and we really didn't fancy getting stuck here. With that headed to Gale. This place came highly recommended but when we arrived, it just wasn't for us. Quite a large resort with loads of deserted villas and the odd spa hotel. It felt like a ghost town with a few unfriendly Motorhome signs, so guess

what...we moved on to the next recommended spot. This place has an aire right on the beach and only cost €1.50 per day. We keyed the coordinates in for Amacão de Pera and set off. We arrived, paid our fee, filled up with water and found a spot. We put a few things on wash, so we could peg them out first thing in the morning, the best thing about Aires, you can peg out. As the sun was setting we had a little walk on the beach but then called it quits for the day. We'd travelled all of 65 km today, a long way for The Algarve!

Craig working his magic and cooking up yummy food.





Praia dos Pescadores to Praia de Marinhah

Saturday 21 February

It was very overcast but tough, we had to peg out the washing. I rinsed the towels and Craig washed Vin. Next minute, a French chap came over waving his arms. We are not sure exactly what he said but we gathered he was telling Craig not wash the camper or the police will come. We looked around and didn't understand why. Next minute someone was washing their windscreen and 5 minutes later the French chap who'd told Craig not to wash the van was washing his roof! An English fella came over and told us to ignore the French chap, he thought he run the site and he was just scare mongering. Bloody French! You meet some cracking French people but then you get one or two who really think they are above the rest. Craig carried on washing Vin. We pottered around doing Motorhome chores most of the morning until Craig spotted the French chap taking photos of Vin. Then an English van pulled up at the side of us and asked us how long we'd been here. They then went on to say they were here on this site yesterday when the police served them with a fine but they didn't know what for. They served some but not all the campers with fines. The site people told them to return on Monday and they would have their solicitor help them. It all started to feel strange and bazaar. As we went back in Vin, the military police drove along the beach road. When things don't feel right they usually aren't right, so we packed up and moved on. No point staying somewhere where you are starting to feel uneasy.



We drove 10 km down the coast to Praia do Marinah and what a find. This is definitely the best hidden gem so far. Imagine a coastal garden with trees, bushes, wild flowers and loads of birds. Then a windy, sandy road running through it. Every so often small hidden lay-bys just big enough for one Motorhome. Brilliant spot. We found a place and when we stepped out, it even felt like you had your own piece of coastal garden. Sheltered with bushes and trees, heaven. We are not sure how many campers are here but around a dozen and each one is hidden behind the trees or bushes, so you are not in plain site.

In the next bush there is an English couple, Graham and Hanica. They are full time motor-homer's and we had a wonderful afternoon chatting to them about their experiences and picking up bits and bobs of tips. The best tip is the loo. Instead of using expensive chemicals or detergent they use Brewers Yeast tablets. No odour and it is not harmful to the environment. Apparently it is what they use in septic tanks. Craig got thinking about it and he kicked himself...why didn't I think of that, of course, yeast is perfect. They gave us a handful of the tablets to try. Craig was buzzing especially as it will only cost a couple of pence each time you empty the loo. Hopefully it works but will keep you informed...lol.

Late in the afternoon we had a little walk to the front of the road and to find a rubbish bin. On route we spotted campers nestled in the bushes, all claiming their own little piece of paradise. At the end of the road there is a car park and magnificent views down to the beach cove. We could see several walk ways but we had Peanut and I doubt he fancied a stroll along the cliff edge. One for tomorrow. As we walked back we noticed the procession caterpillars. All their pods had started to burst and they were falling on the floor..in a procession. I am so glad we are not parked near any fir trees but we will certainly be keeping peanut in doors until the little devils do their thing and turn in to butterflies. I hope it's not long, they are making us paranoid.

Hard to believe this morning we were cursing the French chap but now I just want to thank him. Without him we'd be stuck on a car park but his warm embrace encouraged us to push on and find our number 1 hidden gem!

Our Hidden Gem





Praia de Marinhah

Sunday 22 February

Last night was amazing - a great sky, super stars and so quiet. And this morning, is just as amazing surrounded in wild flowers, butterflies and birds.

After breakfast we took a walk along the coastal path. Perched high on the cliffs we had stunning views down to some untouched beaches and coves. The path hugged the edge of the cliff and at times a little too close to the edge for my liking. My stomach did a few summer salts at times especially when you could see parts of the path crumbled and smashed to pieces 60 meters below. The path had a great variety of wild flowers accompanied with loads of different wild herbs from Rosemary and sage to fennel and parsley. At times the path was very open with stunning views whilst others it was hidden under the fir tree and overgrown orchid ivy. About half way through our walk we found some steps and descended on to a fabulous beach. Quite a long beach with caves and coves at the very far end...oh and a sole sunbather with a pink umbrella. It was a lovely sunny day but not sure it is warm enough from swimwear. We are still wearing our winter coats! On the way back to the coastal path a chap appeared from the ocean carrying a massive green shopping bag and hook. James Pond I wonder! The green bag was mighty heavy and full with all sorts of tasty sea morsels like lobster. Lucky sod.



In the afternoon we did a spot of sitting on the deck chair and chilling. Well, I say chilling, Craig sat for all of 2 minutes before he went off hunting in the bushes for a photograph. I sat and started to read a book, which will probably take me an eternity to finish, as Craig never gives me a moments peace! Next minute, HIYA. Hanica came bouncing over full of the joys of spring. She has a lovely sense of energy and presence. She'd sent Graham down the coastal path to see if it was suitable for her to walk along. She has wobbly knees. Graham appeared half an hour later looking quite ruffled. The coastal path was too rough for Hanica and her knees, so he'd gone in search of an alternative path but failed to find anything. Fortunately, Hanica was preoccupied with Craig's bird discovery and as an avid bird watcher wanted Craig to take her to where the birds were doing their mating dance. We spent the afternoon chatting with Graham and Hanica sharing stories and swapping notes. Then just before sunset we went our separate ways.

We took another walk along the coastal path but this time we turned right instead of left. We found two stone arches and more stomach churning drops and blow holes. Craig walked right to the edge of a platform cliff to take a picture of a seagull, God he made my toes curl, he has no fear of heights or the fact the cliff is unstable.

Back in Vin and Graham came over quite flustered. He'd lost Hanica and couldn't find her. They went for a walk and he'd gone to check the trail before Hanica went down it. When he returned she'd gone but he



didn't know where. I stayed by the Motorhomes and Craig and Graham went off in search. Twenty minutes later, Hanica sauntered up the dirty track smiling closely followed by Craig and Graham. She's given up waiting for Graham and headed back to the Motorhome but she stopped on route to have a chat. They say opposites attract and Hanica and Graham are perfect examples! Both lovely but very different. Hanica oozes energy and enthusiasm and Graham is calm and considerate.

The sky was another cracker. Venus and Uranus were shining bright along with Jupiter. I tapped on Hanica's door and she shot out the camper all excited. I showed her the planets and then switched

on the iPad star App. She had a ball and was so excited to make out Taurus...her birth sign.

Later in the evening, Craig said he was going to update our bumble when I return to the UK on 28 February. I know we've been star gazing but I don't remember seeing any pigs flying by!



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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 Gems

1. Praia do Marinah
2. Praia do Arrifes
3. Praia do Almargem
4. Praia do Amado
5. Vila do Bispo (forest)
6. Porto Covo (dunes)