



# OUR BUMBLE

## EXPLORING EUROPE IN OUR MOTORHOME

JOANNE & CRAIG





# SPAIN

This week we headed in land to altitude to get a bit of respite from the heat. Only to realise the region of Aragon suffers extreme weather patterns. so guess what, it got hotter and we melted. The highlight this week without a shadow of a doubt is Morella, it is stunning. As you can see from the picture and if you look closely you can see Vin taking centre stage.

This week we've travelled 379km with an average spend of €23.93 per day. Highest temperature 46 and lowest 25.





## VILLAFUMES TO BENICARLO

Above: Vins spot for the night.

Below: The Church entrance.



### SATURDAY 27 JUNE

We both got up rather dopey after a sleepless night of itching Mosquito bites. Last thing I need on top of my chronic itching, which hasn't got any better. Popping 3 strong tablets a day gives some relief, the downside is they just make me sleepy but it's better than scratching myself to death.

After a shower we covered ourselves in repellent, took a deep breath and made a dash for it. The Mosquitos were still out ready to chomp, little sods but we grinned and beard it. As we wound our way up to the old quarters the streets got narrower and steeper. The character and feel of the places started to change, to more relaxed and tranquil. The properties changed from standard brick or render to pink terra-cotta stone, very pretty especially with a few hanging baskets. We wound up and round and stopped at the church. Inside nothing special but we did get to see the priest quarters with some historic goodies, which made a nice change. We did notice the paintings contained Arab characters, not seen that before. The priest and some of the elders were busy preparing the church float.





Clockwise: Joanne stood under the “Roca Grossa”. The castle built from its vivid red rock. The Priests quarters inside the church. Views from the castle.

Tomorrow is the towns religious festival in celebration of the towns patron saint.

Stepping outside was torturous. Someone had cranked up the heat and the sun was belting down. We took shade at the side of the buildings and carried on up the hill. 10.30am and it is already 37°C. It is so unfair, you think the Spanish would share some of the sunshine with the UK! At the top of the hill, the ruins of a medieval castle with great views across the countryside and down in to the town of Villafames. After a mooch around we slowly plodded back down through the town and home to Vin.

### **Why did we come here?**

Sounded like an interesting little place.

### **What's it like?**



A hilltop village with lots of charm and character the more you wind up the hill. Church and castle on top, which are free to enter and like most of the houses towards the top, they are built in to



Above: The Church of Villafames overlooks its flock.

the rock. The fringes of the town are not as pretty.

### **Our bumble verdict...**

Pretty village and worth stopping for an hour or so.

The drive on N340 was wonderful with not a soul to be seen. Great hill views and the red soil

contrasted well against the fields of endless olive tree. At one point it was so pretty, we stopped and had an Italian espresso. I also did my green juice and managed to completely miss my gob and end up with green gunk all down my white top. I said my favorite word “oops” and Craig smiled. I tell you what though, it took some scrubbing to get the green out my top.

We set off towards the coast heading north east but it was a long drive 60km. Not much to see except countryside that reminded us more of the Lake District than Spain but it was pretty. Occasionally you would drive passed a truckers hotel and then a few meters later, a lay by with a prostitute sat under an umbrella. They all seem rather young. Now I know an older lady isn't going to attract the fellas the same but by god these young girls looked too young.

Eventually, we hit the coast and before heading to the beach called at Mercadona for some bits. Our original plan was to stop in Peniscola (or fizzy dick according to Craig) but the plan soon changed. It's a very nice resort but much more built up than we expected. It probably doesn't help being the weekend but it was crowded with no parking spots for a big toe never mind a Motorhome. We cruised along the coast hunting for an opportunity but nothing, so we just carried on. In between Peniscola and Benicarlo quite a few parking spots on the street but we aren't keen on street parking especially when they bump park in Spain. Don't fancy being asleep in the back and someone nudging our bumper! Just after the Benicarlo marina we spotted a nice spot. Yip, that will do nicely. We parked Vin up right on the beach and chilled with a cool beer, this is going to be our last beach stop for a while.



## BENICARLO

The pebble beach at the north end of town with the Marina behind.

### SUNDAY 28 JUNE

A lazy day today by the seaside just chatting and planning next weeks trip. We planned on staying in Peniscola (the town before) which main attraction is a castle and old town that wind down the base of a headland (El Cid was filmed there) Sadly though it's gets that busy they had closed all the parking and restricted access all across the town so we move on to the next town which is Benicarlo. It's much quieter here with a sandy busy beach in the centre and a large pebble beach after it's restaurant and boat filled harbour, It's also home to a 5 star parador, which is straight facing a Lidl of all places.

We did have a cycle ride out for a nosy and to find some fresh water. We filled up four jerry cans at the local petrol station and made our way back to Vin to top up our fresh water tank. It's surprising what fits in a Brompton cycle basket.

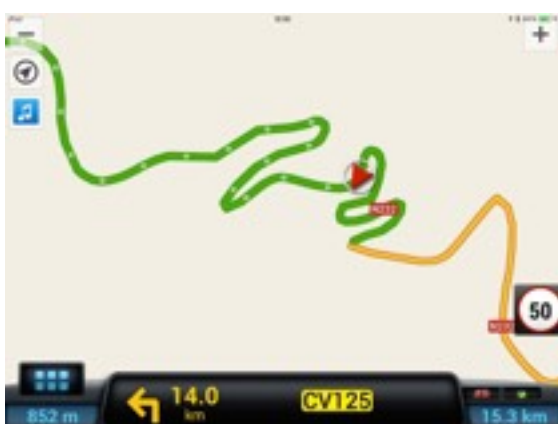




## BENICARLO TO MORELLA

Above: The view of Morella as you approach.

Below: Marg the GPS's, wiggly route.



### MONDAY 29 JUNE

Up early to set off and leave the beach scene. A quick stop at Lidl for some essentials, oh and Craig bought some Croc look a likes (Joanne nagged me as mine looked knackered in her opinion, Naff, but for €3.99 worth a try I suppose.) (cheeky bugger, adding a comment!)

The drive was awesome. Lush green hills with a mixture of olive plantations and wheat fields and the further inland we got, the more dramatic the landscape. The valleys got deeper and the roads got steeper. The river beds were all dried up and the little stone bridges looked rather lost as they blended in with the background. The only vehicles we passed were tractors and farm vehicles, so we felt well out in the sticks.

About half way through our journey, we pulled over for a coffee and to admire the view. Little Italian coffee maker out...espresso here we come. Once pumped with caffeine we set off and climbed the wiggly road until we reached the top, 1000m above sea level. The views over the countryside were brill but the more impressive looking back at the wiggly road we'd just climbed. Vin





Clockwise: Sat on the step with a beer, Craig and his crap (new) crocs with another beer and BBQing away, Washing out and hung from the canopy or "Markse" as Vin is German. A few prawns on the Barbi mate.



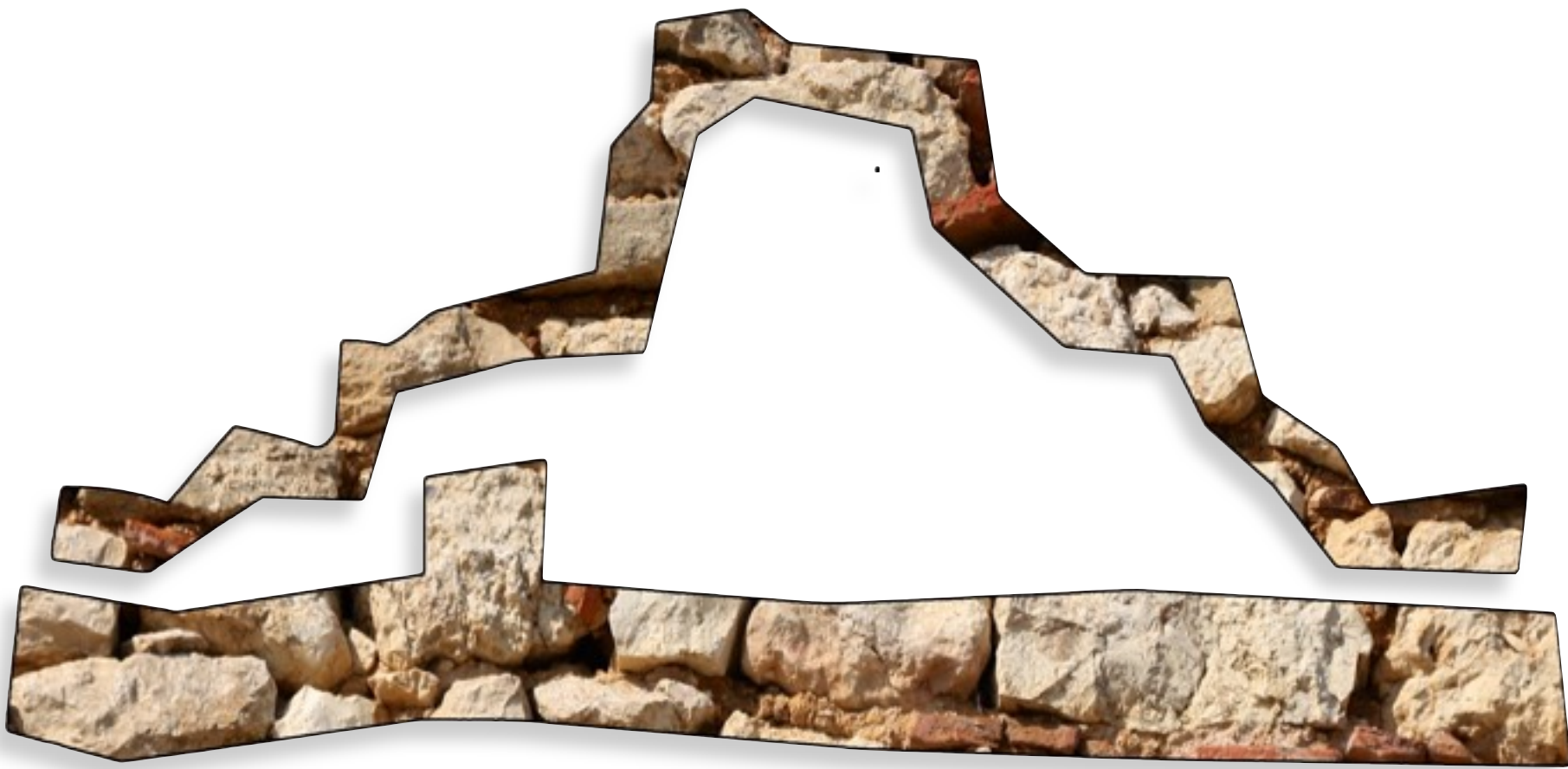
plodded on through the mountain pass whilst we gawked at the scenery...a bit like Derbyshire. After a few more kilometers we could see our destination, Morella, dare I say it, another hill top village with a castle on top. This one looked a lot better than most, fingers crossed it delivers.

We parked up on a free aire and what a cracking location. Situated about 1 kilometer from the village providing wonderful views of the castle. Surprising no other Motorhomes here but then again, we seem to find all the spots that no one else really visits. Apart from of course Ju and Jay.

With fresh water and all the services we could hope for we took advantage and did our weekly clean. Craig did the outside, I did the inside and between us we did the washing.

After several hours of cleaning we called it quits and cracked open the beers and pulled out the BBQ. We sat, chilled and had some cracking food. I had a little cry, it's our 1st BBQ without Peanut and it's times like this that remind us how much we miss him. To cheer us back up. I put on a few tunes and we even had a little dance under the stars. Cracking night!





# MORELLA

## MORELLA

### TUESDAY 30 JUNE

Last night, Craig ran out of tobacco, so this morning he is rather cranky. Think I will stick a note on his back, avoid until nicotine fix.

We um'd and ar'd about whether to leave Vin here at the aire and walk the few kilometers to Morella or risk it and drive up in the hope of a carpark. We risked in after all it's probably another hillside castle where you'll be around and down before you know it.

As we approached, we passed some lovely Roman viaducts. I wanted to stop but as we are on a Big Dipper ascent it is not a place to shout halt. I will suggest we go back later. Just before



the gated entrance to the village we saw a car park. We did a right turn and what a fantastic car park. It ran all the way around the circumference of the hill with panoramic views of the surrounding hillside. What a place!

The next two days, we spent looking around Morelia and what a fantastic place. The village is said to be one of the oldest villages in Spain and sits between Valencia and Aragon. It's certainly been through the wars and as a result, you can see traces of Roman, Moor and Iberian culture. The village is protected by an impressive stone wall with 14 towers and 6 massive gates that act as the entry / exit point to the village. At one point you could walk around the top of the wall until they blocked off the stairs.

As soon as we entered through the main gate, we knew we found something special but little did we know how special. We walked along the cobbled streets looking at all the shops admiring

the goods on offer, made a nice change from all the seaside bazaars. The buildings were primarily stone with wooden balconies and timber eaves. We walked along the ancient streets and as we did so, we slowly wound our way up to the

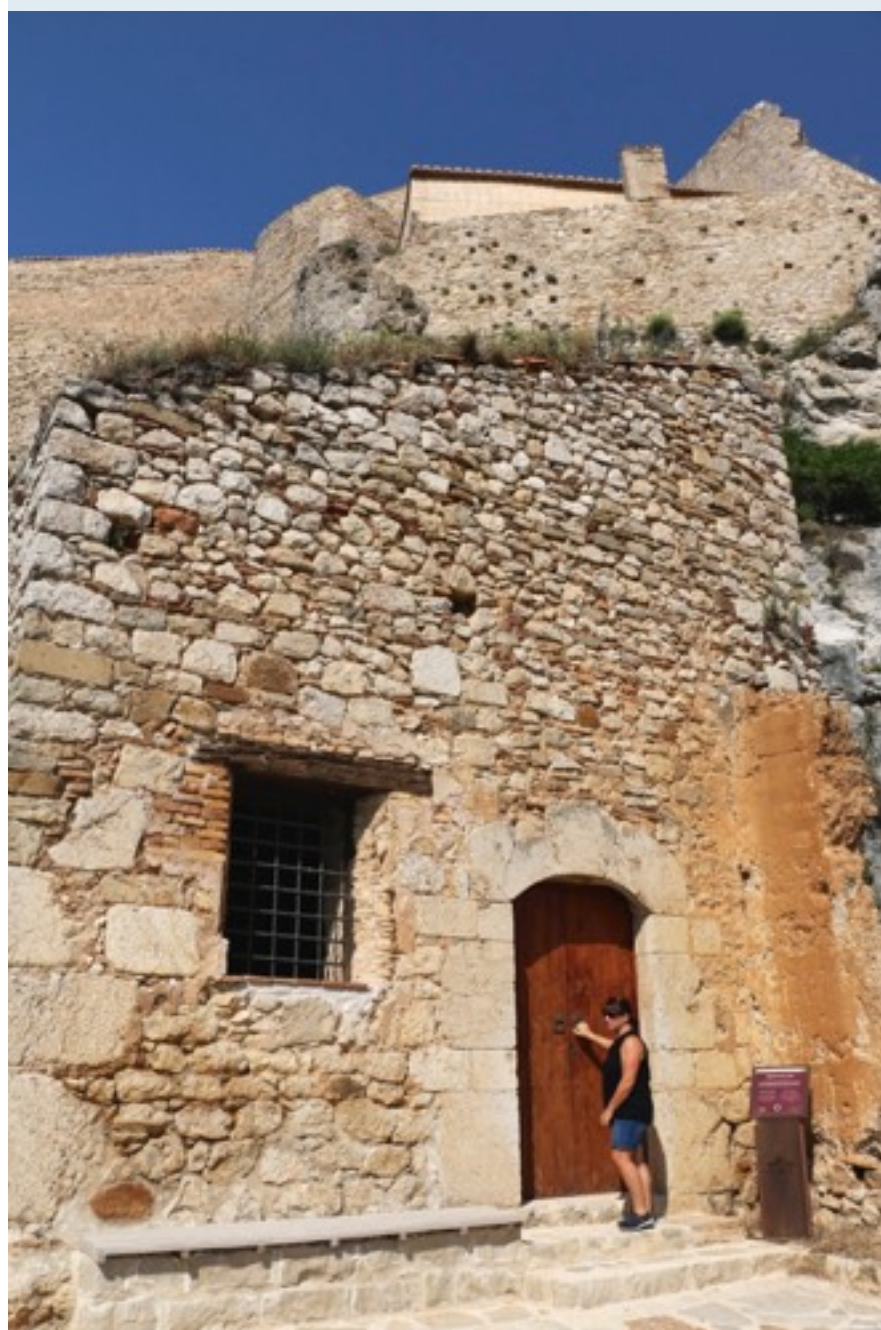


Portal i Torres de Saint Miguel, The largest of the towns many entrances.



Above: One of the many shops on the main street selling local truffles, honey and cheeses at very reasonable prices.

Below: Knock, knock on the Castle's Arsenal's door.





next level. Passing a “poets garden” and the most spectacular views of the countryside, we then arrived at the castle. We noticed it was open until 8pm, so we decided to visit later in the day when the light is much better for taking photos. That and the fact that Craig can't speak or read Spanish worked out that on Tuesdays at that time we'd not have to pay.

A little further down and Santa Maria Basilica. Entrance fee €2.50 but well worth it. It is one of the best churches we have seen in all of Spain. It was so beautiful, I was rather over whelmed and as we walked down towards the alter, a group of elderly people started to sing. They sang Ave Maria in Spanish and it sent goose bumps down my spine. The 10th century basilica is a mixture of Muslim and Christian architecture with the most elaborate and beautiful winding staircase. All the way up the staircase, colourful carvings and sculptures, it was just captivating. The alter was typical Spanish, gold gilded but when you looked closely it contained paintings and detail going back through its time. To the side, a little museum showing off the basilicas treasures and boy, they didn't disappoint. Unfortunately no photographs inside the museum, they had cameras strategically placed, but there was one painting that really caught my eye. I asked Craig to take a picture (he found a blind spot in the doorway). I just think the ghostly image captures such deep sorrow and pain in a captivating way. We stayed in the basilica for a while just staring around at all the tiny details...the door, the stonework,,,just about everything. Outside was even impressive.

That evening we decided to dine out. Morella was such a nice place, why not enjoy a romantic meal under the flood lit castle. We scrubbed up



A painting on display inside the Church's Museum.

and put on our best togs before strolling up in to the village. An hour later we were heading back to Vin with slumped shoulders. Despite scouring every street we had no luck on finding somewhere to eat. All the restaurants were closed with the exception of a grubby cafe serving pig hands (assume trotters) and sausages from the ground (vegetables?). I can't tell you how gutted we were. It's not often we go out but when we do, we make sure we have a nice meal with wine etc just like we would at home. Craig rustled up a nice platter of food, bless him and put on some good tunes. We munched away as the sun set behind the hills and lucky for us, it was a nice sunset.





Photos Clockwise:

- ❖ Santa Maria Basilica entrance.
- ❖ Ornate stone ceiling.
- ❖ Spiral staircase with religious scenes all around it.
- ❖ Elaborate gilded altar inside.
- ❖ The organs detailed tubes.
- ❖ One of the many painting in the church.





## MORELLA

The town as seen from the Castle ramparts showing one of the towns smaller churches and bullring.

### WEDNESDAY 1 JULY

We only planned in staying here one day but we've sort of fell in love with Morella. It's a great village with plenty history, streets full of hidden detail, a great atmosphere and stunning 360 views for miles around. On top of that, it has a free aire.

The restored convent of Saint Francisco is just at the side of the castle. The church was ok but little room next door was much more interesting with faint wall paintings. The castle sits like a crown on top of the village hill and the walk up to the top was challenging in the hot weather. Craig was struggling with his back too, we think he must have pulled a muscle but not sure? To



top it, he stood on a prickly spine and it went straight through his crocs and jammed in his foot. Ouch Oh that reminds me, the old crocs are back on, sigh. All the way up to the top there were sign posts and little information points pointing out the key elements of this huge and grand castle. At the top, the courtyard was disappointing but the views and cool breeze were splendid. The walk down allowed you to see all the treasures of the village plus a big crane! The Spanish government are taking the old monastery and converting it to a parador. A good thing for the village as long as it doesn't spoil it's charm. Another walk through the village looking at the shops and watching old ladies potter along. Taking a few careful steps in their

slippers, whilst keeping an eye out for their friends.

In the afternoon, we drove back to the aire, so we could fill up with water, ditch the grey and empty the loo. Craig also cleaned the solar panels even with a sore back!

In the evening we had another BBQ and relaxed admiring Morella castle after all, it's our last night before we set off to pastures new. We've totally enjoyed our stay in Morella and would definitely return, so with that we decided it deserved position number 3 on our top 10 destinations of 2015.

**Our Bumble Verdict ..** Bloody excellent



Selfie from the castle walls. Looking rough or wot.. Bad hair day for me, bad shave day for him!





Photos Clockwise:

- ❖ Morella Castle, built on a huge rock commanding everything below.
- ❖ The town of Morella from above.
- ❖ Looking out from one of the walls outlook posts.
- ❖ The terraced valleys below from the ascending pathway.
- ❖ Archways on top of the Castle.





## MORELLA TO BELCHITE VIA VALDERRODRES AND ALCANIZ.

❖ Above: Castle and church  
at Valderrodres

❖ Below: Traditional style  
transport.



### THURSDAY 2 JULY

Both of us woke up at around 3am. No reason just one of those nights and by 4am we were having coffee and wondering what to do. Several coffees later we packed up Vin and made an early start. The drive to Valderrodres was nice but neither of us paid too much attention as we were in zombie mode. As we approached Valderrodres we both looked at each other and snarled. This place doesn't look much cop. Once in town we spotted a parking spot which actually turned out to be a free aire. Great little aire right by the river and at the start of the old town. Maybe our first impressions were wrong?

We strolled along the river only to be scurried along by Mosquitos sniffing out our fresh, juicy, international blood. We crossed green slime river with the odd trout and frog at the old town bridge. Looking up at the village, it looked rather run down but at the same time it looked interesting. The only problem the whole town just looked drab. It was like someone has poured a tin of sepia paint on the village. Over the bridge and in to the old town square. The outside of the town hall building was rather nice just needed a bit of TLC. We meandered up through the tiny





#### Photos Clockwise:

- ❖ Old winching mechanism attached to roof
- ❖ A restored old town houses.
- ❖ The Church and Castle are both decaying away.



streets, which were rather interesting at first because everything was crumbling away. At the top of the village and place/castle and next door, a gothic church. Both of which were closed as were the tourist office and the plaza gardens. In fact, everything was shut except the odd cafe and the post office. By the time we reached the end of the village we'd had our fill of this place. It was unloved and resembled more of a shanty town rather than a village full of history and character. Craig made a fair comment, which I think is probably true...the village is built on a hill and the sanitation was probably poor and as such the village ended up rife with disease. They rebuilt the village on the other side and everyone moved over leaving the old town to rot. Now, people are slowly moving back in to houses and some are restoring whilst others are just squatting.

**Our Bumble Verdict...**as brown as the pictures.





Photos Clockwise:

- ❖ A Cathedral on a grand scale.
- ❖ The Town Halls entrance.
- ❖ Huge pillars inside an otherwise empty Cathedral.



Back to bumbling to the next place...Alcaniz. On route, we stopped at Santa Barbara church. Not for anything other than the wonderful 360 views across the plains of Aragon. They were beautiful although to our surprise rather flat. Someone nicked the bumps. As we approached Alcaniz we both looked at each other and once again, raised our eyebrows. We parked up and went for a trudge through the concrete blocks. We took the Mercadona lift all the way up the rock face to the old town. We got two croissants to munch on until lunchtime before walking around the church of Santa Maria. The baroque church was rather grand in scale but not in detail. Across the way the Spanish plaza and town hall, which looked rather authentic with its old stone and cobbled square. We strolled up to the castle, which is now a parador and had a toot inside. The castle restoration work was good in some areas but very poor in others. Overall it felt very cheaply done in comparison to other paradors.

**Our Bumble Verdict:** not worth the effort.

Back in Vin and so disappointed. Well do we stay or do we go? We went for 3rd time lucky and moved on. Just as we were



leaving we spotted a LPG station, yippee. We scooted over but to our disappointment it wasn't connected, so we moved on. At the next roundabout we took a sharp unexpected

The drive to our next place was brilliant with the countryside shimmering away in lovely shades of mellow yellow. Wheat seems to be the main crop in this area along with olives. There are plenty pig farms and the odd rabbit farm too.

The last 20km drive to Belchite was rather bumpy with single track broken up Tarmac road. About half way along we stopped at a solar farm, we just couldn't believe the size, it was huge. There was no one around for miles and the sun is belting down, so no wonder they set up here. Perfect place. The breeze was hot but without the breeze, it was unbearable. Craig had a coffee and I had a cold water and whilst we sat and admired the view we noticed a cloud of dust in the distance. As we watched the cloud get closer and closer we realised it was a mini tornado. There were loads all across the plain.

By the time we arrived in Belchite and had a quick ride around the place, it was time for dinner.. quickly followed by bed....it's been a long day today and we've covered a fair few miles or kilometers as they say in Europe.



Cheap diesel at a "Simply" petrol station, Yes please.

turn...diesel at €1.01' think we will fill up at that price. That is 20 cents less than the average price.



A massive solar farm on the hot dusty plains, They must provide Gigawatts of electricity. I wonder if it will fit on the roof of Vin.





## BELCHITE TO ZARAGOZA

Above: Belchite Church, riddled with gun fire.

Right: More walls destroyed from gun fire.

Below: The old towns depressing sign.



### FRIDAY 3 JULY

Probably the worst nights sleep in a long time. We nodded off OK but by 2am I was up and down with my itchy skin. It's gradually been getting worse and to coincide, I have gradually increased the number of tablets but I am now at the maximum. I just wish it would go away, it drives me to tears. Then to top it we got several Mosquitos, which drove us both nuts. Every time we just nodded off the damn thing would buzz right in your ear. Well on a positive note at least we got up early for a change/

Belchite is a ruined town and a stark reminder of the Spanish civil war. The whole town was ambushed and bombed by Franco's troops leaving nothing but ruins. The survivors managed to flee and set up new







The bell tower would make a good sniper spot, but once spotted it would have been game over.

Nothing sparred, even one of the towns crosses was mangled and creaked in the wind.



homes just 1km away. We walked all the way around the fencing looking at abandoned houses and crumbling churches, it was quite haunting. Craig pointed out the bullet holes in the church wall and a massive hole where large rounds had struck. On top of the church, a bent wrought iron cross just dangling and creaking in the wind. They recently fenced off the old area and a local guide visits the entrance at 12 and 5 to allow people inside. The lady opens the doors for an hour just enough time for you to wander around,

leaving you to wonder how anyone could survive this horrid attack.

**Our Bumble Verdict:** great place to visit for all the wrong reasons.

Our next stop Zaragoza. To be honest, the only reason we are going here is because we messed up on the LPG. When planning our route to Andorra we never gave LPG a thought and whilst we haven't run out will do before we reach Andorra. And there are no more LPG stops until we reach



France. That's the only downside to traveling in Spain, they don't have many LPG stations. The landscape once again started to change. From flat, dry plains to small hills and lush green vegetation. The region of Aragon is known for its extreme landscape but we never thought it would be so obvious. It also has extreme weather which includes mad blink-in hot, which we didn't expect at all, we thought it might be a wee cooler at altitude. We also didn't realise that Aragon is nearly half the length of Spain, it's a pretty big region.

Just before Zaragoza we turned off the road and followed the signs to La Cartuja, a nice working monastery only to end up at some gas plant and a dead road. Ah well never mind, we can park at the rear of the gas plant and look out over the green fields and watch the storks. Coffee break.

As we continued our journey, we spotted La Cartuja and the wrongly placed sign. First stop in Zaragoza, LPG or Autogas as it's called in Spain, we filled Vin up to the tash. Then to Lidl for water and basics. Half way round and Craig spotted proper crocs. He was in his element and before long we had two pair of crocs in the basket.



A gel filled wine bottle cooler, or in my case, A gel filled arm cooler for my dam itching.



Craig washing the newly purchased Crocs, He won't bin the old ones though.

We parked up just around the corner from Lidl on a side street. The heat was unbearable, 40 degrees and rising. No breeze, we were melting. We cranked open every window and door and prayed for cool air. I sat outside in the shade and stuck my feet in a bucket of cold water. It was the only way to cool me and my itching. Craig organised his croc box before cooking our evening meal.

At around 7pm we decided to have a cycle in to the old part of the city mainly so we could cool down. It looked pretty good and far better than expected. A quick toot around to check out all the opening times and get a feel for the place. We watched a small parade of people pass by





Above: Belly dancers giggling there charms at the watching crowds.

Below: Stonework on the main Plaza.



Above: One end of the main high street in Zaragoza with it's huge Basilica.

on one of the main streets, Belly dancers wiggling and jiggling and some very large puppeteers all melting in the hot evening sun. Zaragoza certainly had a good laid back atmosphere... we both got a good vibe, so we made our way back to Vin and looked forward to a full day of exploring the city tomorrow.

Tune in next week to find out what we did in Zaragoza and where we end up.



THIS WEEKS ROUTE.







# Olah!

## OLAH TIME AGAIN.

Nothing broke this week but the chopping board from last week is still holding which is good, but for how long we just have to wait and see.

When we were in Morella we had access to an Aire with as much water as we needed. As you may have gathered I do like to keep the van clean but when an opportunity arises I also clean the roof, reasons being:

- It makes it shiny again so will reflect some of that heat away.
- If the solar panels get too dirty it may impact their efficiency a little.
- It stops all the black run marks from appearing on the sides of a motorhome so washing the rest of the van becomes much easier.

We don't have a ladder on the back of the van so I climb through one of the roof windows. Fortunately Joanne says I'm as thin as Gandhi so I fit through no problem. Joannes arse would just get stuck if she tried (he's gonna get a slap), besides she doesn't like walking along narrow ledges and there are few on the roof.

That's it for now but I'll give you a couple of storage ideas next time unless of course you send me an email with things you'd like to see.

