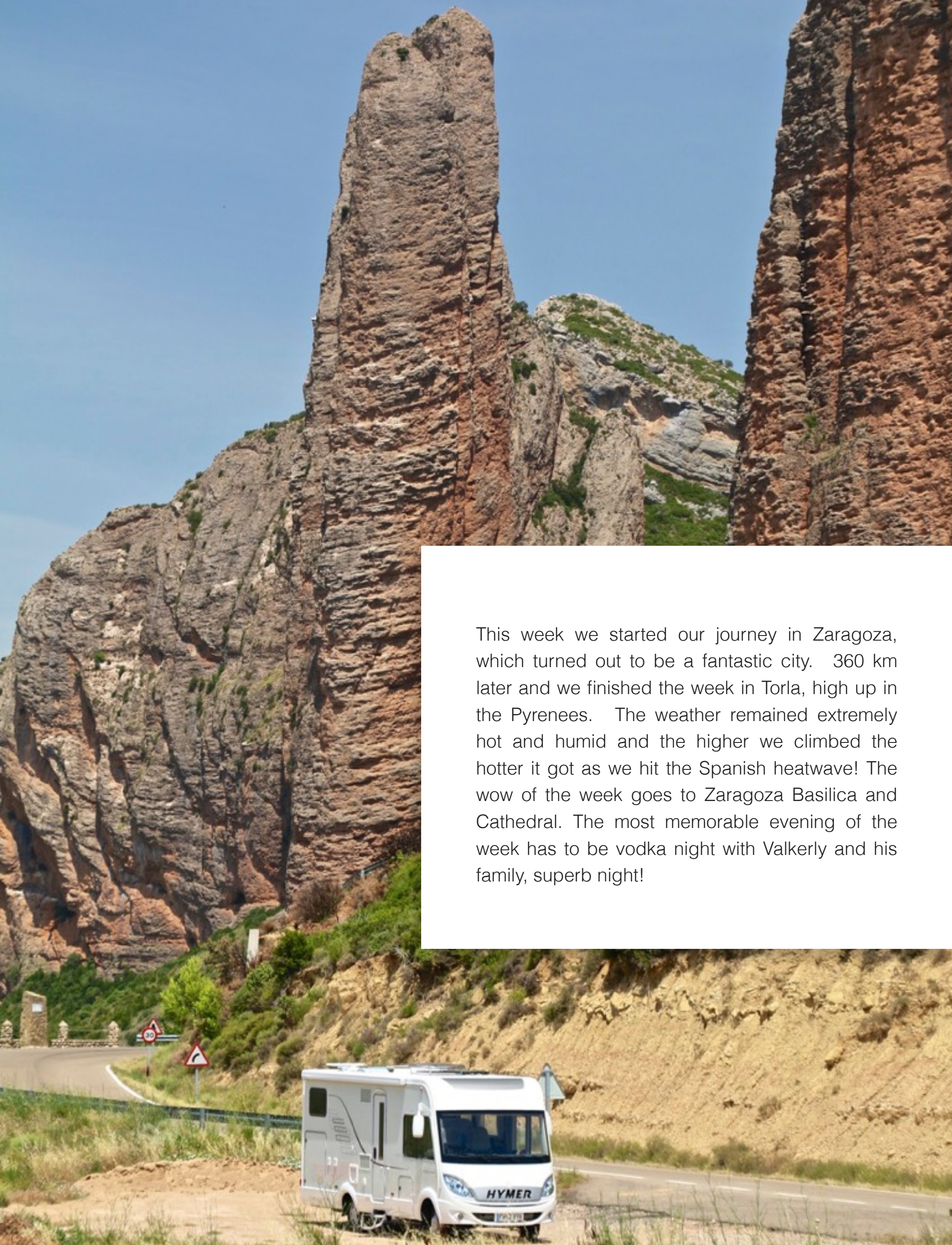




OUR BUMBLE EXPLORING EUROPE IN OUR MOTORHOME

JOANNE & CRAIG





This week we started our journey in Zaragoza, which turned out to be a fantastic city. 360 km later and we finished the week in Torla, high up in the Pyrenees. The weather remained extremely hot and humid and the higher we climbed the hotter it got as we hit the Spanish heatwave! The wow of the week goes to Zaragoza Basilica and Cathedral. The most memorable evening of the week has to be vodka night with Valkerly and his family, superb night!



ZARAGOZA TO GUERRA DE GELLEGO

Above: inside the Basilica

Right: view from bridge of the
Basilica

SATURDAY 4 JULY

After a few nights broken sleep it was no surprise that we slept like logs and it felt good to feel refreshed. Up we got and off we trot to the city. A brisk pace along the Ebro river and a hop, skip and a jump over the bridge to the old quarters of Zaragoza. We turned in to the Plaza del Pilar, a massive central



square were everything seems to happen. The city was founded by the Caeseraugusta in 250BC and right at the far end of the plaza stand the proud Roman ruins. Our first stop, the Basilica de Nuestra Señora deal Pilar. Outside the building looks very grand with an elaborate roof line of towers and colourful tiled domes. Inside, well it certainly got an initial wow and as we

continued around, the vows continued. The detail in this place is just amazing. This mammoth baroque church dates back to 17th century and is home to Spain's patroness the Virgin del Pilar. The minuscule wooden figure is



Back of the of Virgin del Pilar. A seriously important religious point. Kissed and touched by thousands.

displayed on a jewel pedestal in the holy chapel and devote followers walk around the back to rub and kiss the statue. According to legend this little statue protected the building during civil war



Craig in front of the Plaza fountain

and performed several miracles. Everywhere you look there are bright frescos painted by Goya and statues carved out of marble. Behind the main alter, the most wonderful marble/alabaster carving that is the full height of the church. Personally, we just loved the holy chapel, it was different and like nothing we'd seen before.



One of Zaragoza's shopping streets.



Photos Clockwise: All inside Basilica

❖ The holy chapel

❖ The roof of the holy chapel (inside)

❖ The rood of the holy chapel (outside)

❖ The marble alter

❖ Intricate metal floor detail



Photos Clockwise: All inside the Cathedral

❖ Joanne looking at one of the nave.

❖ Centre of the cathedral covered in intricate detail

❖ Perfectly flat, detailed marble floor

❖ Window and floral details

❖ One of the many beautiful paintings

The Roman ruins are just behind the water feature and they stand unprotected for anyone to walk around and have a look. Further in the city is the Roman amphitheater, which we just stumbled across as we walked up and down the city streets.

After a bit to eat in a little cool taverna, we finished the day with a visit to the 12th century San Salvador Cathedral back in the main plaza. Entrance fee of €4 but well worth it. Like the basilica it is grand and majestic but much more formal. The styles are mixed and represent the changing times of Spain over the years. You can see elements of Romanesque, baroque, gothic and new classical. Grand pillars and naves with unusual and elaborate statues or paintings. In the middle of the cathedral a choir and organ section that is completely surrounded by mini alters and marble carvings. Craig was impressed with the floor - marble and perfectly flat with small amounts of details. The amount of skill required to carve the marble inlays without the visibly seeing the joints was impressive. At the end of the cathedral, a small museum displaying some of the most marvelous tapestries.



Joanne takes a shady break.

On way back, we spotted a mobile lottery ticket seller and fella's selling flowers.

As we walked back along the river we both could feel our feet throbbing. We had certainly covered some miles today and in this heat they were knackered. Back in Vin and first thing, shower and refreshen up but within ten minutes, we were sweating cobs again. There was simply no breeze and despite all efforts to cool down, we just got hotter, this high humidity just zaps your energy. I even popped on my new arm cooler (wine cooler) to help stop my itching. Nothing for



Zarragoza vendors, selling there wares.



Lidl bottle coolers alternate usage.

it we need a Lidl more water, pop and free aircon! We loitered in Lidl until our body temperatures came back to normal but within minutes of exiting the building we were pumping buckets again.

In an attempt to find a breeze we headed out of the city and in to the countryside. We went in search of a hill, any hill but it must have a breeze. We didn't care about the view just the breeze. We stopped at a few place but the breeze quality didn't pass the test. Then just before sunset we found the spot. In the middle of nowhere, off the radar and on a hill with a load of sheep and wild bunnies. The breeze was hot like a fan assisted oven on max but it was a breeze none the less. We went to bed and baked like English muffins.

Below: Guerra de Gellego aka middle of nowhere, our stop for the night

Our bumble verdict Zaragoza - highly recommended





MIDDLE OF NOWHERE TO HUESCA

Above: Huesca Cathedral

SUNDAY 5 JULY

This place is really in the middle of nowhere and not a soul around for miles except the farmer, we enjoyed the peace and tranquility for a while. Sat on the step drinking our morning brew we just watched the world go by. Nothing but miles upon miles of hay and wheat fields. The odd bunny hopping around and the odd bird of prey. So glad we didn't see any natural hunting today!

We casually set off and arrived at Huesca in time of lunch. We parked in the most bazaar place, a side street near all the car dealers but it had shade and that's all that mattered. Craig tinkered outside whilst I cooked lunch and managed to boil myself in the process. The temperature in the van reached a whopping 45 degrees. Forget wiping my brow, I just need to mop the floor, I was dripping wet through. I really don't function in high humidity. Craig on the other hand doesn't mind the heat but even he is feeling it.



Clockwise: A priest figurine set into a garden wall. Local moth found in the Huesca region. Stone marker beside the road.

After lunch we moved from the back street and parked in the middle of the town. A cycle in to what used to be Aragon's capital until 1118 but it was awfully quiet. A handful of people here and there but you could see they were wiped out. Even the Spanish were starting to feel the heat. We went to the cathedral, town hall and then in and around the town. It was OK but everything felt rather square, yellow brick and quite modern.

Sort of a city that lost its charm but at least it has a Lidl!

Bumble verdict - don't bother

HUESCA TO LOARRE

Below: Castillo de Loarre, overlooking the great Aragon plains.

MONDAY 6 JULY

Woke this morning wishing we could have a slice of warburtons toast and Lurpack. Oh the simple things in life. We finished our bumble and caught up on the news. Just read about Greece and Yaris's resignation, no surprise. Greece has no money, again...even despite best efforts of a mad English man to raise the bailout money via donations. There is always one! Wonder what Greece's international sugar daddies will do? Bail out or kick out...unknown territory for all. Maybe Greece should have a chat with Puerto Rico, they could console each other.

Also found this article, lovely letter from parent to daughter... <http://qz.com/445135/letter-to-my-daughter-this-is-how-you-find-a-mentor/>

After news debrief, we showered and set off to Lidl. I wonder if they sell Warbles Super Toasty, now that would be cool. This is our last Lidl in

Spain, so we need to stock up with plenty water and the basics before we head off to the Pyrenees. I couldn't help but chuckle at check out...a great example of our cultural difference. Craig handed the checkout lady a €20 note plus €6.55 in change. As he handed over the exact amount to the checkout lady, she held out her hand and paused. She looked up at Craig, looked back down at the change and back again. It was like Craig had given her rabbit droppings. If looks could kill, we'd be dead. The alternative a €50 note, which would rob her of all her change but in Spanish eyes, a better option. Spanish hate it when you give them a load of change.

We also topped up the diesel at the Simply supermarket, it's a bargain price compared to the others.

The countryside was in full glory today. The farmers out cutting the wheat and then rolling it into nice neat bales. Leaving the field looking like a soft piled carpet.. Not long after, we could see today's destination, Castillo de Loarre. A large castle built around a huge rock. The castle clings to the rock and it looked like it's been moulded in place. At points you can hardly see the castle but when you do, it screams out at you. Perched



Our last Spanish Lidl. A fond farewell as a tear rolled down his eye,



at an altitude 1000 meters and towering over the landscape below. The film Kingdom of Heaven by Ridley Scott was filmed here in 2003. We



Finally, at the top, what's through the arched window?

wound up and up until we eventually reached the top. A nice big car park with only half a dozen cars, perfect. We parked up and got the chocs



Arches, steps and narrow passage ways as you ascend to the top.



Dam fine views, but I cannot see the pub from here.

out to level Vin. Craig shuffled about for ages getting Vin level, sometimes we can be a bugs dick out and he still not happy.

Despite being at altitude, it was still 42 degrees. We slapped on our sun block and tootled over to the ticket office. Entrance fee €3.90 and a free little map. Outside it looked very grand with an impressive fir forest to the right and almond grove to the left. Considering it was built around 1037 it's in pretty good nick and you can see they haven't done that much to it. Inside, was good but not as good as the views over farms and reservoirs of the Elbo river plains. The castle was built on what was already a Roman settlement, which you could see once at certain

points. We wandered around the castle maze to explore the church, tower, marble windows (not glass marble) and dungeons all used by the King of Aragon to resist the Moors.

Come nightfall, we were the only people on the car park and with no lighting and no moon, it was very dark.

Bumble verdict - great countryside for miles around and brilliant to look at from afar but don't bother paying to go inside.



Our parking spot for the night, quiet, dark, great views and it's all to ourselves.



LOARRE TO SAN JUAN DE PENA

Above: Los Mallos, a popular area with climbers.

Below: The fridge thermometer maxed out at 52°C, then the needle hit the casing.



TUESDAY 7 JULY

Last night, we left all the blinds and windows open to maximise air circulation. The temperature dropped to a low of 27 that's around 80, so you can imagine it was rather toasty. Leaving the blinds open meant we woke up to beautiful rays of sunshine. The only problem the sunshine got pretty hot, pretty soon and by 11am the temperature was way over 50 degrees. The Spanish heatwave has landed! We opted for a driving day, so we could keep the air con on and avoid getting crispy skin.

The drive down from the castle was just as good as the drive up. We passed a little town and Craig stopped off for some tobacco, fresh bread and a little surprise for me. Umm I wonder what goodies he has got me. Slaving all the way to our next stop, the Rio Gallego where we pulled over and had





Above: One of the many bridges we crossed.

Below: One we decided not to cross.

Right: No bungee jumping off bridges!



a spot of lunch. Inside my little brown package, a huge almond slice! I made a cuppa for Craig and to go with his fresh bread. As I tucked in to my yummy soft almond slice, Craig ripped his gums to spreads on his rock bread. With full bellies we had a trudge around the river and its Roman bridge. How about this for a bridge sign...no bungee jumping!



In the distance, we could see some lovely red rock formations that stuck out from the ground like pins. We couldn't resist a look. They turned out to be Los Mallos, a collection of 9 rock formations that attract climbers from all over the world. The bright red tombstone rocks rise 300 meters above the village. This is where they filmed The Mountains of Yesterday.

Once Craig tweaked the door and sorted out the door catch, we set off again before our skin melted in the heat. It was so hot you could smell everything starting to singe and burn. Even the Tarmac smelt hot. We followed the Rio Gallego as far as we could. Passing some beautiful bridges and waterfalls until we reached a tunnel. It looked pretty small,



Images clockwise: Joanne grooving the water. Complex dam system. Will Vin fit through that little hole.

so we got out and had a check. As we stepped out the views around were amazing and so we took a walk and looked back and admired the meandering valleys. Back at Vin and we decided he would probably fit through the tunnel if we all breathed in...yeah, we got through! We carried on until Quitiera where Craig got the shakes for some urgent food. He scoffed a bag of biscuits as well as a cheese, onion, Philadelphia and

crisp booty. And you wonder how thin his is...so do I.

It is fair to say, Craig is crap with music and his current playlist confirms it. He has gone and picked his favorite tunes and I am not joking they are all from the 80's. After several tracks I could feel my eye lids closing. I know... if he wants 80's music he can have 80's groove mix. There we go much better. We even had a little sing a long...



Above: The new monastery.

Right: The old monastery built under and into the rock face.

Below: Joanne blowing giant sugar steelys hoping the wind would then blow her.



The last leg of our drive to our final destination was wonderful. Mountain passes, steep valleys and not a soul around. In fact, come to think of it, we've only seen two cars in total today, where is everyone? The amount of birds of prey was unreal. We even had one eagle swoop gracefully in front of Vin. Then 10 minutes later we saw a peregrine falcon, again only meters away from us.

We arrived at San Juan de la Pena late afternoon and tucked ourselves in the forest car park. What a day! The drive today of chasing rivers and bridges has been absolutely fantastic and we were both buzzing. I had a walk over to the monastery to find out the opening times whilst Craig chilled for 10 . There are two monasteries here, a new 17th century monastery at the top of the hill (where we are parked) and the original old monastery at the bottom of the hill. With about 1.5km between the two, it's €12 to see both and open 10-2 and 5-8. As I looked down the corridors it looked rather plush for a place of worship. I walked around the perimeter and discovered that the majority of new monastery is now a 5 star hotel and conference centre. Some elements of monastery are still used and can be viewed but it is not quite as it first appears. Maybe the admission fee is a little misleading? I

shuffled back to Vin and suggest we take a walk down the hill to the old monastery and don't bother with the new one. Off we trot down a steep and windy road. At the bottom, the old monastery built in to and under a huge rock by hermits, later adapted by Cluniac monks. It is said this monastery was the early guardian of the holy grail as well as the 1st place to deliver Latin mass to Spain. In 1600 a fire destroyed the building and rather than restore, they build the new monastery, which is now part hotel. In the main, the interior of the old can be seen from outside and no real need to enter. We mooched around and then painfully crawled our way back up the hill in staggering 50 degree heat. Stupid or what!

Our bumble verdict - an excellent days drive with fascinating stops.

When we got back we noticed Russian plates on the camper parked next to Vin. We got chatting to the family - mum, dad and 17 year old son, who later asked us round for a drink. They kindly shared some Russian water aka vodka and showed us how to drink like a Russian. A shot of vodka down the hatch in one and then a sip of coca cola. Now that's how you mix drinks! Needless to say, I couldn't hack it but Craig drank for both of us. After about an hour the Mosquitos got a little too much for all of us, so we headed in to Vin with a bottle of vodka and coke. Valkerly (dad) spoke pretty good English and entertained us all evening with his stories and tales of his life. Natalia, his wife, sat gracefully at his side, listening to him and helping occasionally with Google translate. On the surface, they appeared to be a normal Russian family, working hard and living in a difficult and changing country. However, as the

night went on, we realised that Valkerly was actually quite a unique character, fascinating and inspirational. Despite all the odds and the poverty, he had a dream to take his son, Vadim, to Europe in a self built camper van. Valkerly is a legend and his tales will stay with us forever.

Around 1am we called it quits and in traditional style, Valkerly left the remains of the vodka. We then had a bug fest for an hour. Every bug and insect in the entire forest decided to pack their bags and move in to Vin. Well, you've never seen anything like it. We stared with a clean, cream ceiling and an hour later it looked a scene from a Tarantino film. Massive beetles, huge moths, buzzing mosquitos, sneaky earwigs, the bloody lot. I was going crazy and despite the heat, I closed every window and hatch. Needless to say, I had a shower before getting in to bed and it took a while to get to sleep.

Below: The lovely Russian family we met, Valkerly, Natalia & Vadim.



Craig doing his international relations bit, "No coke for me, just the Vodka, now another bottle please comrade.



SAN JUAN DE PENA TO OLIVAN

Above: village of San Juan de Pena.

Below: Views over Pyrenees from San Juan.



WEDNESDAY 8 JULY

After a late night drinking vodka followed by a full on bug fest, we got up rather late. But still in time to say good morning and cheerio to Valerky, Natalia and Vadim. We waved them goodbye as they set off to Bilbao. Oh forgot to say they have done 20,000 kilometers in 26 days!

The drive down the valley provided plenty decent views to the Pyrenees and we got to see our 1st glance of snow. Only a few traces left but that's all we need. We stopped at the bottom of the valley at the quaint village of San Juan and it was absolutely stunning. A little village that sort of reminds you of the Swiss Alps but with stone as opposed to log cabins. The chimneys were very unusual and as we looked closely we noticed they all had something different on top, heart, cross, bird etc. nice finish. The little church of Santa Maria with marble windows was the focal point for the village. Tiny but ever so cute.

Our Bumble Verdict: worth a visit

We debated going to Pamplona to see the annual bull festival but with this heatwave and 1000's of people, I am not sure we could stand it. I don't do well in high temperature, so would probably



Images clockwise:

Chimney with heart on top.

Church plaza

Stop for the night right next to river.

Joanne on a wishing well.

pass out. We set off and half an hour later we were in Jaca. A quick whistle stop tour of the town before heading out the village towards Olivan. Well a couple of kilometers away Craig found the perfect spot, right by the river with stunning views to the mountains. At last, cool air, so Craig made a traditional English meal...A chicken curry with rice & nan bread to end the day.





OLIVAN TO TORLA VIA BIESCAS

Above: church at Biescas.

Below: Biescas high street.



THURSDAY 9 JULY

Craig got up with icicles on his toes or so he would lead you to believe. Last night the temperature dropped (Craig bellowing it didn't drop it bloody plummeted) to 10 degrees and with just a little sheet it was rather a fresh night. Heaven at last.

We set off and only 6km to our first stop, Biescas. We parked on the huge municipal car park under the trees and walked in to town. A chic little place with narrow lanes, artisan shops and a few bars and cafes. Everything is based in and around the plaza, which is just at the side of the little stone bridge that crosses the Gallego river. The views out to the countryside are best seen from the Santa Elanea church at the top of the village. There are a couple of small hotels at the edge of the village offering what seemed to be reasonable accommodation.

Our bumble verdict - pleasant place to stop and relax.



Typical street sign.



Photos Clockwise:

- ❖ Torla church & backdrop.
- ❖ Tea break stop on way to Torla.
- ❖ Torla butchers.
- ❖ Joanne in need of a drink.
- ❖ San Miguel Church.

Heart pumping fry up.



After a mammoth fry up, Craig style, we set off on a scenic drive towards Torla. The drive was awesome with sweeping view of the valleys below getting deeper the closer we got to Torla.

Once in Torla, we parked on the main car park and walked in to the town. The town has the

most striking back drop, Mondarruego standing proud, colourful and very inviting. Torla is a low key holiday resort for walkers and climbers, so plenty little bars and cafes. Even though a holiday place, it still has a good village atmosphere and still looks reasonably authentic. Little alleys, stone cottages, tiny windows and flower boxes everywhere. We called in the tourist information to ask about the roads in and around the park. The chap was really helpful and he drew the best route and told us where we could and couldn't go. He also informed us we could stop on the car park as long as we didn't use the awning or table and chairs. Torla is the gateway to the Ordesa National Park and in order to reach the park, you park on the main car park (free) and take a bus to the foot of Ordesa. €3 one way or €4.50 return and the buses run every half hour. At the foot of the car park there is an information point dedicated to the park with routes for all levels of walkers and very informative.

Oh nearly forgot, Craig saw a small deer, which we think might be a chamois.



Another lousy view for us to take in.



TORLA

Above: Joanne melting on a rock, gasping for air, water, a cold shower and probably an air conditioned taxi back to Vin.

FRIDAY 10 JULY

Today, we planned on taking the bus to Ordesa but it is so hot and humid we decided it wouldn't be a good idea. Instead we took a wee cycle ride. The Spanish government set up the national park about 100 years ago to protect the ibex, so there are no cars allowed in or around the park otherwise Vin would be in like a shot. The glaciated valleys and limestone mastiffs form part of the Pyrenees boarder with France. Monte Perdido stands 3,355m and often referred to as the lost mountain, the highest limestone mastiff in Europe. Well despite our best efforts we never found the mountain but hardly surprising with my pace of travel. We cycled towards Ordesa and then turned off at Puente de la Navarros and followed the river Ara along a dirt track in to a beautiful valley. The river was flowing at a fair old rate given its summer time and with that it provided plenty wonderful waterfalls. A good job it was pretty cause the ride was horrid, it was up hill and the sun was belting down on us like a blow torch. Brompton bikes aren't meant for off roading with their little wheels. We hardly passed a soul only waterfalls, bridges and



Photos Clockwise:

- ❖ Brompton bikes go to Odesa.
- ❖ Craig dipping his toes.
- ❖ Joanne enjoying the cool water.
- ❖ Joanne over heating, ice cold dripping cloth to the rescue.
- ❖ Countryside view.

stunning valley views. We cycled until I collapsed in a heap on the floor, a cue for Craig to halt! He is like bloody iron man and keeps going despite no food or water. On the other hand, I am more like a chocolate fire guard, bloody useless. We took the opportunity to cool down in the river and it was so refreshing. I kick off my sweaty socks and dunked my feet before nicking Craig's crocs, so the pebbles wouldn't hurt my delicate tootsies. I paddled for as long as possible before my feet went blue. It was damn cold that mountain water but just what we needed before heading back home. The cycle ride on the way home was much better...all down hill and much more my cup of tea. Shame they don't do upside down mountains to make the approach easier! Back in vin and after a big drink of cold water, we had a shower before our evening meal. Not long and we were both fast asleep zzzzzzz in the night away.

Cool refreshing water fountain.





OLAH!

BBQ's, Bogs and Balls.

Well last night we had another BBQ. We like our barbies, who doesn't so I thought i'd share my thoughts on the one we brought with us.



Cadac BBQ in its supplied bag.

An American (I think) company called Cadac make some but the one we have is the "Safari Chef". It is a collapsable BBQ that is ideal for Camping & Motorhomes. The legs fold out on springs and support the main bulk very well, the unit can be used as a stove for one pan, use one of the included hot plates to make crepes/pancakes etc, the lid doubles up as a wok although i haven't tried that yet. and obviously used as a BBQ. It's simply superb and a must for pretty much everyone, I have cooked everything in the little thing from huge ribs of beef with proper roast spuds to simple garlic prawns, If you use one of those metal sandwich tins upside down in it, you can bake fresh bread without it burning, again use the crepe plate for nan/flat breads. Roast chicken is no problem either but I always take the legs and the bottom of the rib cage off first to ensure a perfect even



Contents on the bag include:

The main BBQ itself, A deflector plate, griddle plate, cooking rack, main support ring, lid/wok, The hose wasn't included but the hose fittings are.



The BBQ assembles in seconds.

cook. I fitted a four meter hose and it plugs via a bayonet fitting into the side of the van. In fact get the longest length of hose you can so you can use it where you want or if the wind picks move it out of the wind oh and a great cleaning tool to get all the crap off after is a simply a one inch paint scraper. Costs about £65 plus hose and about £1 for the paint scraper.

On our last van when you flushed the loo it had a reasonable button to press to activate the flush, On this van however the button is flush with the surrounding panel, so if one of you gets up in the night you can make lots of noise fumbling around trying to find it, or maybe turn the light on and blind everyone. The solution, I had a pile of those little rubber pads you typically get with Ikea furniture for cupboards etc. Stick one on the toilets flush button to make a proper button like they should

Ikea cupboard door bumper.



Loo Button with door bumper stuck on

have done in the first place. Cost nothing as I had some anyway.

I have fitted some pockets to the rear wall and doors of the van, Cut them down to suit and put



Storage pockets from "The Range" and spare water cans hang from the ceiling.

bicycle reflectors on the last door pocket for night time just in case. They are ideal for storing all sorts of bits and bobs, shoes for the ladies and spare Sangria for me. Not very sexy in grey but they also don't scream out "look at me" like the bright red Fammia ones.

Cost, well if you buy the Fammia ones then probably about £20 each, so go to "The Range" as they are about £6 instead.



More pockets on the door with push bike reflector on the end.

Lastly the table top knob that allows it to move back & forth broke a while back. The thread had stripped so it needs a new one. I had to do something with it that allowed it to move it but not have to remove each time for it to work, Answer was two rubber balls placed in the space between the table top and the steel moving



Replacement parts whilst on the go.



Parts fitted, You can see the removed broken section.

frame. Sadly they kept coming out every few days so I used a bit of spare aluminum angle and stuck it to the frame to keep the balls in. It works a treat, The table top now slides very smoothly but with enough friction to stop it moving too easily.