



# OUR BUMBLE

## EXPLORING EUROPE IN OUR MOTORHOME.

BY JOANNE & CRAIG.







# KNACK'D & RUIN'D

A total of 341km this week with an average daily spend of €23.88.

This week we've hit a few more 'opportunities to test Craig's patience' or in other words...things not working as they should. Needless to say, my little tin hat took a battering..dink, dink, dink.

In between the repairs we did enjoy the Cathar castles, history and route, which we hope you enjoy too.

**Cover image: Joanne in Carcassonne.**







## VILLEFRANCHE DE CONFLUENT TO CUCUGNAN

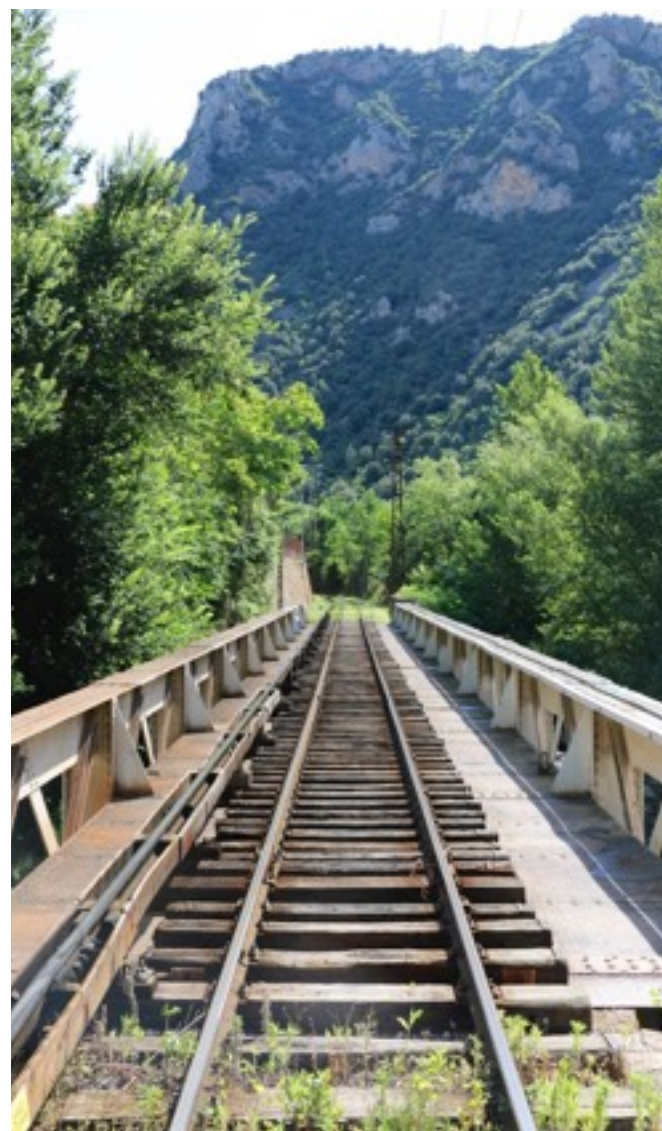
Above: The walled village of Villefranche de Confluent protected by its stone walls.

Right: The beginning of the road or should that be tracks for the Little Yellow Train that winds its way through the Tet Valley.

### SATURDAY 25 JUL

Craig had a tut walk around Vin this morning. Every second or so, I could hear a tut or a sigh and by the time he'd done the full circle and inspection his head was hung low. Vin was filthy from top to tyre. It looked like he'd been off roading and Craig was eager to clean Vin.

The parking tariff wasn't too bad at €2 for the day between 9am - 7pm. Craig popped in our €2 only to find the machine didn't spit out a ticket. Despite a kick, punch and





wallop, it still didn't give us a ticket and nor did it give us our money back! We wrote a little note hoping the French traffic warden would be able to read English and stuck it in the window.

We tootled around the walled village of Villefranche de Confluent, which felt like stepping back in time. Cobbled streets, narrow alleys, crumbling stone work, knackered dwellings etc. The Main Street was full of quaint tourist tat but we did like the fact every shop had a wrought iron sign made by the original village iron monger. As you walked off the Main Street the

lanes got smaller until eventually you arrived at the river. Under the stone arch way and over the bridge to the train station. This is where the famous little yellow train (petit train Jaune) departs. The train climbs up the Tet valley through various gauges providing wonderful views across the eastern Pyrenees. Finally, above the train station, the dominant chateau fort Liberia with its 1000 step climb to reach the top.

**Our bumble verdict - Well worth a toot around and spend the day.**



The Chateau sits above the village of Villefranche de Confluent accessed by steps.



The 1000 steps required to get you to the Fort, all of which are in a straight line.





Above: Abbey of Saint Michaels de Cuxa made of pink marble.

Below: The Abbeys tower.

Right: The interior of the Abbey, simple stone & timber.

By lunch time we'd arrived at the Abbey of Saint Michaels de Cuxa located in the heart of Têt Valley. As we arrived the Abbey was shut! We scratched our heads and looked at each other... what now? Then we noticed half a dozen people strolling from what looked like the exit path. Ah, let's do a quick reverse. We quickly did a rewind of the tour circuit and snook in the back way. Wey-hey man, we're in. The Abbey was founded in 868 by Benedictine monks and became popular it's roughing France and Spain. Inside the key hole arches of the church half a dozen locals sat waiting for mass to begin...a cue for us to leave after we said a quick prayer for our Nigel and his family. Outside the cloisters looked nicely built with a pink marble but considering an €6.50 entrance fee, so glad we arrived when we did!

**Our verdict - Nice but not worth a detour or the €6 entrance fee.**





We had lunch before twiddling our thumbs wondering what next. Let's go to Perpignan and see if we can find a dealer to repair the garage door. We're not expecting it to be open but might as well be there for Monday morning when it does open. Plus we can spend a day or two in Perpignan. Off we set, passing fields upon fields of vines. This region produces nearly half of France's table wine, so as you can imagine there's a lot of grape around here. On route, we kept seeing a yellow and red striped flag, which confused us slightly, so I did a bit of reading, whilst Craig did the driving. The Pyrenees treaty of the 1659 joined the two states of Languedoc (France) and Roussillon (Spain) and surprising they kept the main language of Catalan. Everywhere you go the road signs, menus etc are in both Catalan and French and the red and yellow flag is the proud flag of Catalan. If you ask anyone in the region where they are from they will say Catalan and just like Catalan in Spain, they feel Catalan should be a separate country just like Andorra, this also explains why we keep seeing signs for tapas and paella and not frogs legs or snails!

This region is also famous for its black bulls but we didn't see any, only the regular run of the mill brown cows. Good job because we'd just arrived in Perpignan and after a slight reroute we found the Hymer dealers - Loisiréo. To our surprise they were open, so guess what...we went inside. The Hymer booklet and website have this place down as a service and repair centre but somehow it looks more like a showroom. If they do repairs then they don't do many. We asked anyway and the pleasant young chap had a toot at our door. He pottered off and after a few huffs and puffs with the owner (small scruffy old fella) he returned to say they didn't have any hinges in

stock. The young guy looked like he really wanted to help but we got the impression the owner wasn't too fussed. Ah well never mind.

The city of Perpignan didn't look that great, so rather than struggle to park in a city we moved on. A few minutes later we noticed a sign for GPL, so we decided to fill up. The fuel station was linked to a retail park with height restrictions, so we couldn't drive in the normal way. We had to drive round in via the roundabout. It took us 30 minutes to find the damn entrance, by the time we got on the forecourt we were rather irritated. We were then faced with a choice of 20+ lanes all jammed packed with at least 4 vehicles. Half the lanes self serve and half kiosk/cash. I think we'll go with the cash and kiosk option. Now we just had to find the GPL. We scoured the signs but we just couldn't see one. In the end I got out and managed to find a tiny red sign on one of the pumps. We got in line and waited. It was a tight squeeze but we edged in and filled up to the brim. I paid the lady in the kiosk and she lifted the barrier but she nearly chopped off Vins rear end with it as it closed.

With everything full we set off and parked up for the night just outside Cucugnan, ready for our tour of the Cathars castles.



Our spot for the night at Villefranche.





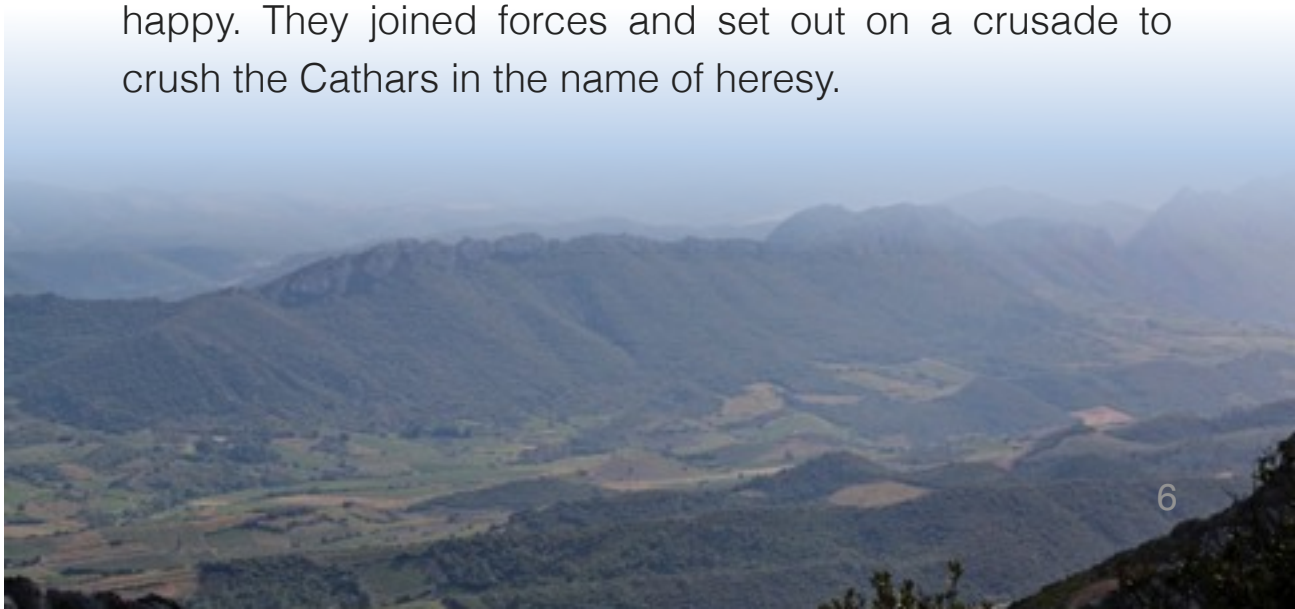
## CUCUGNAN TO ALET DE LA BAINS

Above: Vin parked up facing the Cathar stronghold. Joanne loved the views but not the 6 point turn involved to face the right way.

Right: View from our door, it was only 660m to the valley floor.

### SUNDAY 26 JULY

Rewind 800 years and we'd be in the middle of a Christian killing field. A Christian sect called the Cathars set up shop in the province but the Pope and the King weren't too happy. They joined forces and set out on a crusade to crush the Cathars in the name of heresy.





The Cathars took refuge in a number of castles all of which were built in remote areas and often high up on rugged limestone peaks. The bloody battle and torturous killings went on for a century and thousands were killed.

Our first Cathar place of refuge, Chateau de Quéribus perched right on top of the limestone ridge. The pass up to the chateau looked a little narrow but that didn't put Craig off, he carried on and bumbled up to the top. The single track road proved to a challenge at certain points but more for the oncoming cars, who faces were a mixture of "what the hell is a motorhome doing up here" to "Oh Shit, how do we get passed". Craig is an excellent driver and as usual, he did the reversing and manoeuvring, whilst the stunned drivers just watched with shear fear. At the top we parked on the steep car park and as usual, Craig got out for a fag and wandered off for a toot. Two minutes later he was back and we were off. He'd found a place right at the top, beyond the car park behind trees and bushes where no one could see us. It was bloody brilliant with great views of the chateau and the surrounding countryside. What a parking spot albeit right on

the tip with sheer drops all round. The Chateau is open from 10am until 8pm and an entrance fee of €8.50. The climb to the Chateau is along a long steep path that slowly climbs up to the entrance. There is nothing inside but the terraced walls and the way in which the chateau clings to the rock is fascinating.

The Chateau sits on a storm battered piece of rock and its location means it attracts lightening. In bad weather they close the access road and guess what...the storm was on its way. Black clouds hung over the vine valley, the winds started to rock Vin to a point that made us feel pretty uncomfortable. We'd planned on staying but with this weather, it's probably best we move otherwise we might lose more than a garage door. Down the pass and through Cucugnan and over to the next Chateau, Peyrepertuse. We didn't go up due to the weather but the chateau just draped along the spine of the limestone ridge. It looked pretty impressive and very similar to Queribus.

**Our bumble verdict - The Cathar castle drive is brilliant and it's well worth visiting one.**





With the threat of rain overhead we opted to drive towards the blue skies along the river Agly with the hope of arriving at the stone gorges at Gallamus. However, our journey was cut short when we reached the sign saying Vin was to tall, too wide and to heavy for the last part of the road to the gorge. Poor Vin lowered his head-lights and quietly roared his engine. Just around the corner a small village fate. We tried to park but the place was jam packed. Even the farmers field was stacked to the brim. What a shame, the little quaint village looked interesting. We quite fancied bobbin apples and sampling a few home made cakes.

We spent the next couple of hours driving through single track country bunch-kin roads. It

was extremely pretty and just like having a good old fashioned Sunday drive in the country. Just one problem, not a single place to pull in for a stop for a tea break and a stroll. Eventually we spotted a little patch down by the river. We pulled in and stretched our legs. The river looked liked it used to be some sort of tiered Roman baths. It was nice to just watch the many different varieties of dragonflies skim from leaf to leaf.

Not long and we reached the nice little village of Alet Les Baines. We drove over the stone bridge and up to the top of the town. We parked on the street as it was wide enough and quiet. After a quick walk round we called it quits for day.



Above: One of the many local dragonflies resting in the cool air of the ancient Roman Baths.





## ALET LES BAINS

Above: Joanne washing at the villages spring and below the locals get their drinking water.



MONDAY 27 JULY

Craig what time is it?

I dunno, about 6, I guess, its still dark... Blinkinek, you will never guess the time. Its 11 o'clock.

Jeez, are you sure?

Yip!

With that we jumped up. It was dark, overcast and miserable outside. Living in the motorhome for so long means you rise and





shine with the sun. No alarms clocks. Well the sun didn't put its hat on today and we nearly didn't get up!

Ding dong "Bonjour....." What the hell is that, the village tannoy? We have no idea what the lady said but all we heard was Vicky Pollard and Morning Campers. We later discovered that every morning the village announces the events of the day.

With half a day gone and feeling like we'd been smacked by a hammer (too much sleep ain't good) we decided to make the most of the sleepy village and stay here today.

Hardly anyone around just a few new age travellers meditating along the riverbank. Just opposite an old thermal baths and spa,

**Top left: Crucifix on the old Abbey wall.**

**Top right: Alet les Bains cemetery beside the Abbey.**

**Above: Female figurine fountain in the village square.**



which is still used today. The village itself has one main street, albeit rather narrow and windy, a small square with several tiny lanes that straggle off in every direction. It has a very 'shabby chic' look and feel about it but then most of France is very similar. The half timber framed houses with their overhang make the streets feel much more narrow and quite claustrophobic in places. In the middle of the village, a church with wonderful stained glass. Outside the grave yard leads on to the ruins of a Romanesque Abbey.

On our toot we stumbled across an old communal washing house and spring, so we decided to make the most of the facility. We dragged Vins axle down to the water and like a mucky child Craig scrubbed him to death. I did all the large washing items like covers and throws and joined in the village washing party. This place is buzzing with people. No wonder the village is dead, they are all here. Over the course of the day we discovered people from miles around travel here for their water. Filling every container possible with the untreated water, which according to one chap, it tastes fantastic with whisky.

As Vin dripped dry and the covers slowly dried we just sat and people watched all day. It's one fascinating place. One guy even turned up with a 1,000 litre container on the back of a trailer! As people came and went the feeling of community spirit and family times hit home. We love travelling, it brings endless adventure but at the same time we do miss family and friends. It's only a few weeks since we lost Peanut and we miss him so much, which is exaggerated on days like today. I guess it is just one of those days when a hug and chat with mum would fix everything.

**Our bumble verdict - Shabby chic village with a traditional feel about it.**



Religious documents inside the church.



Stained glass windows inside the church.







Above: Carcassonne old town is on one side of the river, the new town is on the other.

## ALET LES BAINS TO CARCASSONNE.

### TUESDAY 28 JULY

We brimmed Vin with as much fresh water as possible and bumbled off over the little stone bridge and waved goodbye to Alet Les Bains. We followed the Aude river along its tree lined 'D' road. When travelling in France there is nearly always a D road at the side of a toll road. They were the main roads before the tolls and they are often tree lined, so make your journey much more pleasant. After about half an hour we spotted a Lidl and guess what...yip, we went in. Bloody Lidl, I am gonna have it engraved on Craig coffin, I tell ya. We marched up and down and got the basics. But Craig was none too happy, the brows were down and the frown was out.

Whats the matter, chuck?

French Lidl's are crap.

Umm, I agree. Not a patch on Spain's Lidl.

And the bloody wine is expensive. It was only €0.59 for a litre of wine in Spain and here it's €1.99 for 1.5 litres. (Craig is now soberly depressed)

Ah well you can always share my water.

With that we paid for our bits and bobs of groceries and set off.

Lunch at a road side picnic spot but sad to say, no view. The freshly baked baguettes were chewy and the gammon ham was tasteless. Lidl is having a bad day and it may well get canned if it doesn't buck up.



Upon arrival in Carcassonne's we followed the signs for motorhome parking. It took us to 5 or 6 large car parks with one dedicated for motorhomes and buses. I jumped out and had a look at the tariff board before we entered the barriers. Wow that's a lot. €2 per hour with €20 charge for 24 hours. It wouldn't be so bad if it was an aire and it wasn't a bus and coach terminal. We turned around and went on the hunt for something a little less expensive and with a better view. First stop, quiet parking space between two new but unused retail units. We parked up, settled in and then got the bikes out for a cycle. Just as we were setting off a car pulled up and asked us to move. Hey ho, no problem. We moved around the corner and parked on Lidl with the aim of cycling around and finding a better spot. Then just as we were about to set off a group of immature lads pulled up. They didn't do any harm but we felt a little wary. As we looked around, we got the feeling

something didn't quite feel right. A stroll around the car park and a toot on the side street and we could see broken glass. Car windows? Whatever the anxious feeling of not being in the right neighbourhood got worse and so we packed up...again. After half an hour of driving around in circles trying to find a good place, Craig jumped out of Vin and walked off, two minutes later he was back, "What does that symbol mean" I had a look on the iPad and the answer - Risk of Flooding during storms. "Right, sorted" he said and promptly reversed under and old bridge and parked up. It wasn't just a good place but a bloody belting one. Right on the riverbank, by the side of an old roman bridge and directly looking up at the walled town of Carcassonne. We were like two giddy kippers. It even had ducklings to feed with our left over bread.

With all the messing around it was time for a bite to eat and then bed.



A lot of farting around getting the right spot but what a result. Beats Lidl's car park any day.





## CARCASSONNE

Above: Carcassone's old town is surrounded by double fortified walls

Below: Stone detailing.



### WEDNESDAY 29 JULY

We were all ready to set of an explore the town when....eeerrrr we have no water from the kitchen tap. Craig checked all the taps, which were fine just the kitchen one. Ah ha we've had this problem before, its the microswitch! Craig eager beaver to fix and solve the problem jumped out of Vin and threw open the side door. Out came the tool box. After several chinks and tuts the water was in flowing freely.

On our way to the town we stopped at a small church. As you've probably gathered by now we like churches. Not for the religious element but for the architecture, culture and history. Churches can tell you a lot about the place and this little church of Saint Gimer was no exception. The church wasn't outstanding but the story behind was brilliant...as young boy Mr Gimer would pinch his mothers bread and give it to the poor. Eventually he learned to bake and as years went by he became a wealthy and successful baker giving all his money to charity and the church to help feed and support the poor.





Photos Clockwise:

- ❖ Church bell.
- ❖ Old towns typical street.
- ❖ Marble plaques on a smaller church's wall.
- ❖ Archway views of Carcassonne.
- ❖ A little lizard say hello.



Perched on the hilltop, the double walled and turreted fortress looked like something out of a fairytale book. As we climbed the cobbled alleys the crowds of people started to block our views. It's was busy folks! Guess quite a few want to see the back drop to the movie "Robin Hood, Prince of Thieves" as it was filmed here. We weaved our way in and under the arched entrance. Once inside the walls we could see a myriad of streets with hordes of people shuffling around. All the little shops and cafes were absolutely lovely with something for everyone but the crowds spoiled it. There were way too many people to see or browse in the shops but we did our best. The Church of Saint Nazaire was lovely with grand stained glass windows and transcripts of Simon de Montford's tombstone - the famous seize stone of 1209. He's the chap appointed by king of France and the Pope to kill all the Cathars. Three young chaps stood at the front singing beautiful hymns, I went to the side and took time to remember our Russell as well as prey for Nigel and his family. Outside the church and open air concert with a list of up and coming events. We only recognised one of the names, Julio Iglesias.

For lunch, Craig splashed out and took me to the equivalent of a greasy, "nil poit" Michelin star kiosk. But have to give it to him, he was original and ordered a plastic tray of french fries. You know, he's gone all romantic too, he only bought one portion, so we could huddle up and share....as we sat on a ledge outside the stainless toilet block. What has my life come to, I married the tightest sod on the planet! Barrie sort your son out, please! Now stuffed to the brim on 6 chips, I slumped my shoulders and shuffled off back along the cobbled streets. Only to be more disheartened as we passed little eateries with



Joanne lives in hope I'll take her to one.

wonderful aromas from little crepe cafes to quaint bistros.

Back at Vin, I got out the stale bread and walked to the river, sat downs and feed the ducks. When all else fails, feed the ducks and watch the world go by. Oh and to all the motorhomers looking at Vin wondering how the hell we got down on the waters edge. Quacking day folks!

**Our bumble verdict - Brilliant place but visit out of season.**





## CARCASSONNE TO BEZIER VIA NARBONNE

Above: A gargoyle/gremlin,  
They seem to be plaguing us  
at the moment.

### THURSDAY 30 JULY

We woke to grey, miserable, wet day but it was nothing compared to the challenges ahead. During the night, the fridge starting bleeping at us, again. It's bleeped a couple of times in the past few weeks and both times are middle of the night. It basically, bleeps when it's not working correctly and from the sound of it, it sounds like it's not igniting. If you switch the fridge off and then switch back on again, it forces gas through and if you repeat about four times it seems to work. Now we are not sure if that's because of air in the system, dirt in the jet or what? Anyway, last night it played up several times, so we're going to try and find a service centre....who also sells garage hinges and table knobs.

The drive to Narbonne was gloomy with black clouds and intermittent rain. We stopped at a deserted Aldi for some bits and munched on a sausage butty for lunch. Nice fresh sausage but by gosh they spat everywhere and poor Vin smelt like a greasy cafe. We set off and followed the directions to TPL in Narbonne. Once there, the place was a little odd to find...one of those places you can see but can't get to. The entrance is tucked



down the side of the car hire place. Pleasant chap informed us we need to go to their other store in Narbonne. Back in Vin to shoot across town. It was easy enough to find but it was very busy. A young chap attended to us and he was extremely polite and helpful but we still walked away empty handed. The garage hinges could be ordered direct from Hymer and arrive by the first of September...eek. The fridge could be done but it's peak season and the soonest they could look at it would be in two weeks time.



One of the stores we visited, expensive and couldn't help.

We sat in Vin and pondered over the options. It was only 3pm, so let's shoot across to Beziers and no sooner had we said it and we were off.

Beziers was absolutely chockablock and gridlocked with cars. It took us an hour to get from one side to the other. We arrived at the dealers, CJL Evasion and once again, it was a bazaar entrance and set up. Inside, it was certainly the best so far and have to say very helpful. They did everything they could for us but same old story, long wait for the hinges and too busy for the fridge. Head hung low and tail

between our legs we slouched to the door. On the way out we spotted a door latch, you know the ones to keep your door open. Well all is not lost, we get a new door latch and at least the door can stay open.

We got back to Vin and Craig got the tools out to replace the habitation door latch. All going well until we went to open the door. The door wouldn't open? It was stuck? We tugged, pushed, prodded and poked but now't. We went inside via the drivers door to have a look. The catch was stuck. After a wiggle, we managed to open the door and Craig had a look. The inside spring has snapped. Oh dear. We fix one thing and something else breaks. After all these weeks of plain sailing and now this happens on top of the other bits. Craig managed to get the spring out of the door, so he could go back in the motorhome dealers. But guess what, they didn't have the part. Hey ho, it's not our week for bits'n'bobs. After much head scratching and plenty f'ing and jef'ing from Craig (At this point, I put on my tin hat and put my head down) he came up with a temporary solution. Some bungee spring thing....see his bonjour for the finer details!

By the time we'd finished bashing everything in place it was quite late, so we drove a few kilometres to a retail park. The reason being there is another accessory shop and a Bricoman there, so we can check things out tomorrow.

Craig drowned his sorrows and chinned the last of his cheap Pernod and a bottle of Sangria. I left him to it and went to bed with Ed Sheeran.





## BEZIER

Above: Joanne looks over the  
Midi Canal from the Roman  
footbridge.

### FRIDAY 31 JULY

The bloody fridge! All night, click, click, click. It drove me bonkers. Hardly any sleep but I was so glad when the sun rose, as it meant I could get up and do something. Craig was dead to the world...I wonder why?

We wandered in to another branch of Narbonne accessories but no joy on the garage hinge or the fridge or the door spring. Plan Z - take a photo and send our mates at Hymer an email. Ask them to ship the parts to our home address. I will pick up the bits when I fly home for my hospital appointments. Semi sorted lets hope things hold on for a few weeks or so.

We then went in to Bricoman and picked up a small hinge that will do as an emergency if our temporary fix breaks. We also picked up some more string and a brass tap. See Craig bonjour for his tap but it's great, we don't need to go inside the garage to turn on or off the grey water!

Craig did another gas flush on the fridge and it seems ok for now. We know it needs sorting, so we will bumble around the





Photos Clockwise:

- ❖ Stone figure watches you enter the church.
- ❖ Church exterior is quite plain.
- ❖ More internal details.
- ❖ Church's organs tubes encased in beautiful wooden carvings.
- ❖ Vin, parked on one of the Midi Canal locks.



south of France and hope we find somewhere to check it out.

After a morning of wandering round a DIY store, we headed in to Beziers town centre. We managed to find a nice, quiet location right by the canal. A spot of lunch and then we were off having a toot around the place. The walk up to the top of the town was a bit hard on the old calves but the fact the area looked quite run down, kept us on our toes.

The first place, Cathedral Saint Nazaire. Outside not much to look at but inside, it is excellent. Free to enter and if you walk around the back you can have a look at the cloister and the cathedral gardens. The wood frame surrounding the organ was rather grand and ornate and one of the nicest organs we've seen. The gardens weren't brilliant but provided a stunning view

over the surrounding area, oh and a bit of light entertainment...As we walked towards the garden statue, we disturbed a prostitute and her punter who were having a bit of hanky, panky in the bushes. We also saw the young girl later on in the middle of town drumming up more business.

We had a walk through the town and took a few photos before heading back home to Vin...and just in time before the heavens opened and the thunder roared for most of the night.

Well this weeks certainly been entertaining on the challenge Craig front, It's a good job the Cathar history, castles and trails have provided a nice distraction.

**Our bumble verdict - Beziers cathedral and canal definitely worth a stop.**



Sign draped on a hotels front showing the regions obsession with bull fighting, They like English rugby too.





# Bonjour!

## DOORS, TAPS & MORE!



Hello, sorry, Bonjour everyone, busy week again as you've gathered, If it can break it will me thinks this week.

### BUSTED TAP

First off the dam tap broke again. This has happened before in Portugal, the microswitch or more accurately the wires to the microswitch snap inside the tap because of a piss poor design. They basically get bent back and forth until they break. The last time it happened we got an engineer to fix it and they replaced the microswitch. I did however keep an eagle eye on him whilst he did it and bought a spare switch just incase it happened again. A couple of screwdrivers out of the toolbox and some insulation tape needed. To remove the tap and





Access to the taps inside is via one clip at the rear of the tap and then one screw.

access the wiring just push a small screwdriver into the hole at the rear of the tap handle, The handle then just pulls off, the inner knob is held in place by a single screw. I just removed the switch and peeled back a bit of wire where it had snapped and taped the two ends together again. Sadly i've no soldering iron so that's the best I can do for now. I'll change the taps insides slightly when we get home so it will never happen again and I'll replace the whole microswitch when it can no longer be repaired this way. Plus it saves about €40 each time it happens.



Nowhere for the wire to move so it rocks back and forth and twists with each tap operation until the wire breaks.

## HABITATION DOOR AGAIN

Next up was the main door, Yes we finally bought a replacement door retainer at the ripoff cost of €7 from one of the shops we visited. Dead easy to change, undo four screws and swap out the parts. Job done, or was it? I tested it out and it works fine, I closed the door and then attempted



Replacing the door retainer yet again. Dead easy, Although in my case this lead to bigger problems.

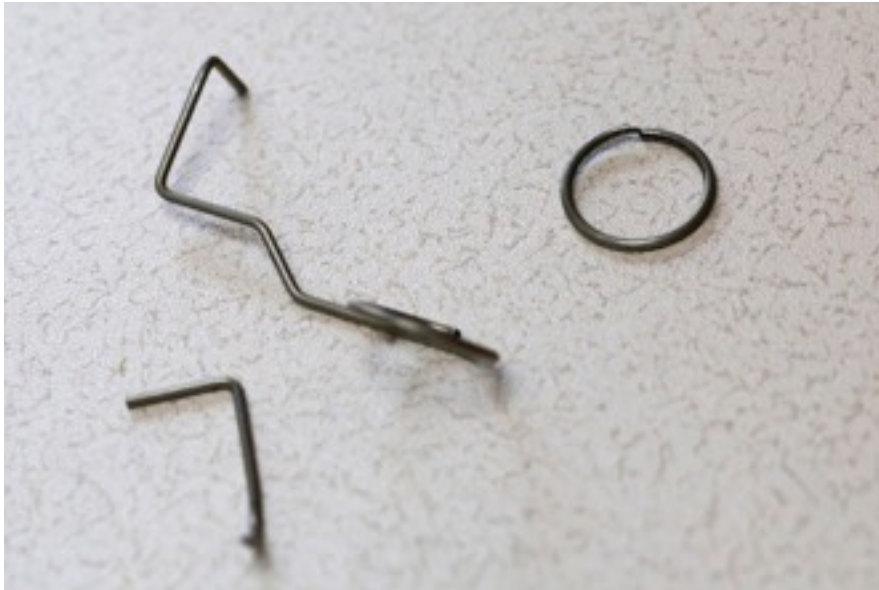
to reopen it when, "thud" the damn door won't open again, I climbed through the drivers door to see what was stopping the main door from opening, It was the latch mechanism, it wasn't releasing properly. I released it by hand and new exactly what it would be. I removed the black cover on the door to see the problem.



The faulty door latch mechanism.

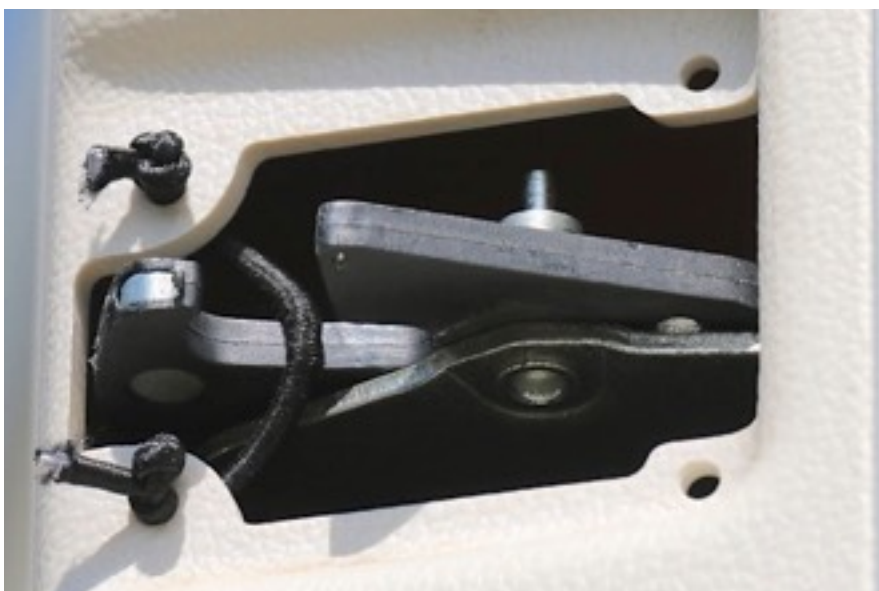


The bloody spring that operates the latch had snapped into three pieces. I carefully removed the bits and walked back into the shop but they didn't have any as you probably guessed.



**The problem is identified, a snapped latch spring is the culprit.**

This needed to be fixed as obviously getting in and out of the van is quite essential to our travels. I could have removed the latch mechanism but the door wouldn't be very secure when we lock it so time for a fag and a fiddle. I knew there was no way I could make a new spring so off to the garage and get some bungee. After a few attempts tying bits of bungee here



**Bungee to the rescue, simple but effective.**

and there it was fixed. As the picture shows it's a little simple and a little crude, but it works for now. The bungee simply pulls the lever back when you open the door and stops it catching on the other side of the door lock and releases the mechanism so it can be opened.

That's the door fixed, the door broke, now the doors boded again.

## EASY GREY WATER ACCESS FOR ABOUT €9

Next one up isn't a repair but a little accessory of sorts for Vin. When we want to empty out grey water tank (water from the shower and sinks) we have to open the garage door to get at the handle that opens the waste tap. "Pain in the Arse" so I called into a Bricoman (A foreign B&Q) to address the issue.

The idea is to put the grey water waste tap outside of the van for easy access.



**The vans grey water is emptied with this valve that's inside the garage.**

The parts required are as follows, 1 large opening valve to suit your waste pipe, silicone sealant, 2 screws and a bit of sandpaper.





Above is the large valve, The edges filed down a little and then drilled to take a couple of self tapping screws

First off is to file down the edges so that one end of the valve fits neatly inside the vans existing

waste pipe. Two holes are then drilled through the pipe and through the valve casing. These will keep the valve in place.

Sand the inside edge of the waste pipe so the silicone has something to key too. Apply the silicone sealant to the waste pipe and push the valve into place, tighten the two screws and smooth out any silicone with a wetted finger and leave to set for a couple of hours.

Voila, you now you have two waste taps, leave the inside tap open and just use the outside tap. If the temperature really drops you can open the outside tap and just use the inside one so water doesn't freeze inside the waste pipe.

Total cost is about €9, not having to keep opening the bloody garage door, priceless.



Above is existing waste pipe opening, sand this down first before assembly.



New extra valve in place, works a treat and well worth doing.



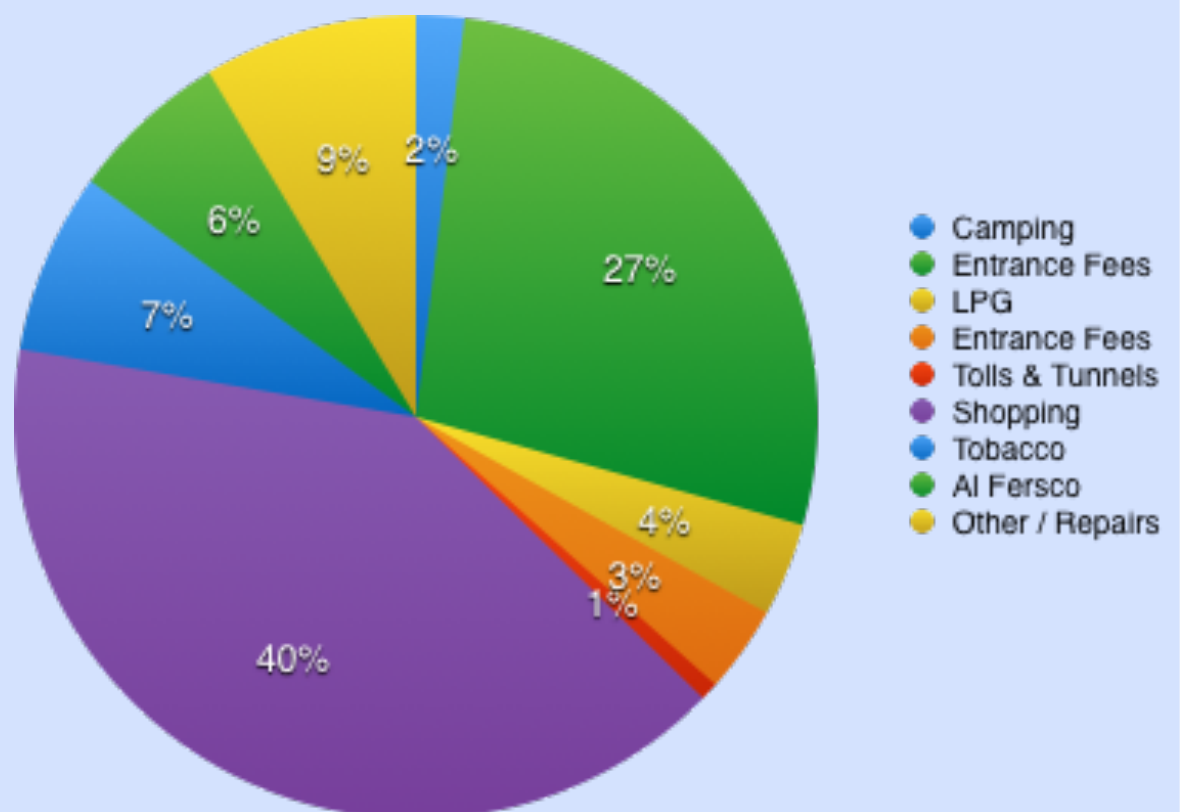
# HOW MUCH DOES IT COST US?

This is our second year of travelling and we've been on the road for 236 days this time. As a rule of thumb we move each day and travel around 50km. We aim to wild camp where possible and failing that, an aire but campsites are a last resort. We generally shop at Lidl or local markets because they are good value and stock what we like. We eat well and go for quality rather than quantity. We basically live like we would at home. We avoid tolls where possible unless of course there is no other choice.

The only other expenses (currently excluded) are the annual fees like insurance, road tax and servicing fees. Once we've done a complete year in this motorhome we'll update but current estimate £1,500.

The following is a full breakdown of all our daily expenses for this trip

Total Expenses	
Camping	€ 109.00
Diesel	€ 1,543.97
LPG	€ 212.14
Entrance Fees	€ 197.15
Tolls & Tunnels	€ 41.30
Shopping	€ 2,274.67
Tobacco	€ 410.51
Al Fersco	€ 360.85
Other / Repairs	€ 485.01
Total	€ 5,634.60
Total Number of Days	236
Average per day €	23.88



Average Cost Per Country	
Portugal	€23.43
Spain	€22.95
Andorra	€19.83
France	€34.10

Mileage	
Total kilometers	9,936
Number of days	236
Average km per day	42