



# OUR BUMBLE

## EXPLORING EUROPE IN OUR MOTORHOME.

BY JOANNE & CRAIG.







## THIS WEEKISH...



Well it has been a bit of a rollercoaster this week, up, down, up, down.... Joannes nipped back to England and i'm on my own again for 10 days.

Joanne does the writing and I do the pictures, this week however it's down to just me and my terrible writing skills so you have my sympathy.

So here goes....





## CALLELONGUE TO LE PRADET

Above is the view from the  
windscreen at Callelongue.

Below: Vin parked up for the  
night.

GPS: 43.211733 - E5.350966



Well after Marseille decided to drive to the other side of its bay and see what was there. After passing through a bit of a tourist town we landed at a place called Callelongue. It sits at the end of a huge bay and is just a tiny village with an even tinier beach. Great views out to sea though with some large white rocks and the odd passing ship. We decided to stay the night and Joanne did a bit of star gazing watching the odd meteor zoom by.

**Our Bumble verdict: Nice spot to visit to chill for the day.**

In the morning we continued on our way towards Nice for Joannes flight on the 21st. I had read up on a little town on the coast called Cassis but upon reaching there it was chockablock full so we kept going until we found something we liked. We passed through town after town but everywhere was very busy and didn't take our fancy until we ended up in Toulon.

Toulon is supposed to be a massive Navel base for the French and it's entire Mediterranean fleet is base here. We pulled up at one end of town but the car park sign wasn't very clear. We couldn't decide if we could park on it with the motorhome or not the sign implied the car park was for military personnel in places,



a German van had parked up but just because someones there still doesn't make it right. I asked a French chap and he said it was OK even when I pointed to the sign, we both sat there feeling a little uneasy. I went out for a fag and spotted a chap in camo clothes who looked like he was in the MP so asked if it was OK to park, yes he said, I pointed to Vin and then he said sorry no, or at least not overnight anyway so with that we fired Vin up and tried to find another place to stay. On the other side of town we found another car park with dedicated motorhome parking. It was free after 5pm but only €2.50 for the day. This will do for tonight we thought but after my fag walk I found the area to be less than ideal, It was next to a park but it was full of people that looked a little undesirable, quite a few people living rough and lots of wine bottle strewn about the place. Once again we fired up Vin and set off. The little we did see of Toulon seemed like one half is quite nice but the other side not quite so nice, beside there were only

**Parking area in Toulon, we decided to give it a miss and move on.**

**GPS: 43.127034 - E5.936636**



**Spot for the night at Le Pradet.**

**GPS: 43.102025 - E6.016674**



two small navel vessels in the bay so that wasn't really floating my boat either.

**Our Bumble verdict: Not worth the journey, but nice enough to pass through.**

Not long after we ended up at the town of Le Pradet, We saw a sign for the beach and parking so headed for it. A large dusty, car park awaited us but the area seemed nice enough. I parked Vin right up into the car parks corner so we would be out of the way. The sun was going down so we thought we'd have a quick walk down to the beach. There are two actually, we walked to the first which is beyond a small woods and was greeted by clear blue water on a pebble beach, oh and everyone was butt naked too. After watching the waves for a while we decided to have a look at the other beach, it was on the opposite side of the car park but was a small sandy bay (I suspect shipped in sand) but there was quite a lot of sea grass washed up so the sea wasn't as clear as the other beach, everyone did have their clothes on though.

One of Le Pradets beaches, this one required clothes, the other doesn't.



We returned to Vin for the night before we got munched by mossies as the sunset.

The following day was pretty lazy, a couple of hours at the beach then back to Vin for the afternoon, most of which was spent constantly wiping either the floor or the table, the wind had picked up and was lifting up the car parks dust and depositing it inside Vin. The car park soon filled up and the charge was €3 for the day, the dust was free, We'd came on when the attendant had finished for the day so we got round paying. (Always a good thing). It ended up that busy we couldn't even get off for a while even if we wanted to. We stayed again that night as it was nice and quiet.

The following morning I went out for my morning fag and too see what Vin looked like, honestly it looked like i'd driven across the Sahara in a sand storm, I wasn't a happy bunny. We packed up and set off again following the coast as much as possible.....

**Our Bumble verdict: Two nice little beaches with or without clothes, Nice place to stop for a day or two.**





## LE PRADET TO HYERES

Above: Vin getting a wee wash.

Right: Me getting that most precious commodity, water.



Vin hold about 130 litres of fresh water when full, you can squeeze 150 litres in though.

We also have 5, 10 litre jerry cans for that little bit extra.

We were on our way towards Hyeres, famous for having tonnes of mosquitoes. On route I spotted a tap sticking out of a wall in front of a football pitch. Time to top up Vin with fresh water. I told Joanne I was just going to wipe the bottom half off Vin down to remove some of the Sahara that had been deposited on him, I got carried away and washed him from top to bottom. Fully loaded again with water, two lots of washing on and an extra fifty litres just in case. That's over 200kg of water by the way we set off again. We pulled in at Hyeres, yet another dedicating parking space just for motorhomes with room for more than a dozen vans. Sadly it was full so I parked next to it on a







Parking no problem, Just don't camp there, maximum stay is 24 hours

GPS position: N43.114064 - E6.195387

lane until a space opened up. Sure enough one did, I moved Vin and we stayed for the day. For some reason we spent the day in the van doing bits and bobs and never even visited the beach that was only 200m away from us. The following morning we thought we should at least look at the beach before we set off. Well it was OK I suppose, but not that great. Behind the beach is a small park area with tables, chairs and shade, maybe that is why it's quite popular. A quick snap shot and we got back in Vin and headed toward St. Tropez.

**Our Bumble verdict: Nothing here worth going out of your way for and a reputation for mosquitoes.**



The beach at Heyeres, Not the best but very popular even with dull weather.





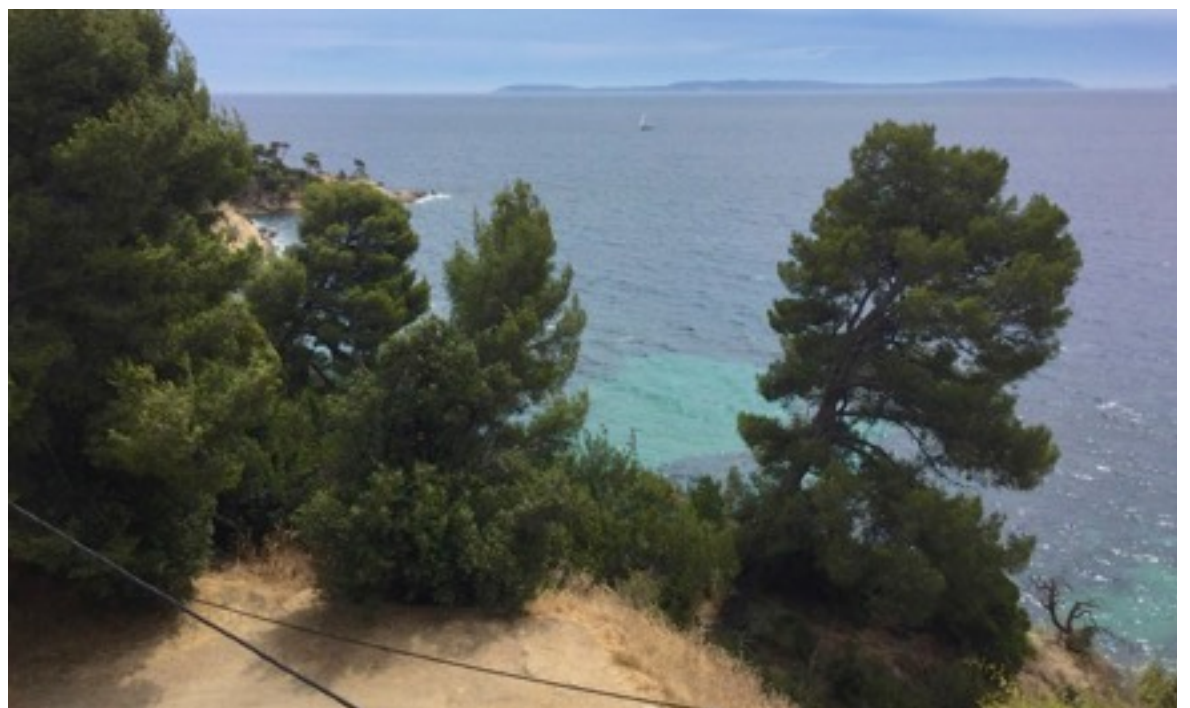
## HYERES TO ST. TROPEZ VIA PLATE DE GIGARO

Above: Little house with big land on the coast road to St. Tropez.

Right: Take a break spot but you could easily stop here overnight.

GPS: 43.149637 - E6.415975

St. Tropez is located at the top of a sticky out bit of land that juts out into the ocean. We choose to drive around the bottom section first and find somewhere to stay. The coastal road is very pretty with huge areas owned by just one family and their homes plonked in the middle. We stopped off by the roadside for some breakfast, I peered over the wall and spotted a perfect spot to stay for a couple of days, (see below) it's close to the beach and what a view but we decided we would move on anyway.





We then pulled up just outside a town called Plate de Gigaro for lunch and a little walk. The area is full of expensive but low key homes that all seem to command views out to the Mediterranean, most of which seem to have access to tiny coves beneath their properties. Joanne decided she wanted to move after a couple of hours so we headed to the sea front as it was getting late and there might be a chance of some parking.

Sure enough there was, right next to the beach with a couple of other vans, but the wind had picked up again so we hid in Vin and watched the surfer dudes on their boards. Time ticked on so I started to prepare our tea, I was just about to light the pans when, knock knock, It was a policeman at the door, they politely asked us to move as we were not allowed to stay overnight there or anywhere on the coastal road in this area. Bummer, we packed up and moved on to a couple of aires we knew about on the opposite side of the land mass near Pampelonne. Now as

**Vin at the beach, but not an overnight option.**

**GPS: N43.185621 - E6.594047**



**Off the main road next to Pampelonne. Not our first choice but it'll do for the night.**

**GPS: N43.219830 - E6.647665**



it was late and the fact the police moved the other vans too I put my foot down to make sure we got there first. 15km of very narrow hairpin roads and several very frightened motorists later we got to the first aire, €8 a night, but it was packed, no room at the inn. We got to the second aire but it was €25 a night 9am-9am so I said to Joanne, No chance, we headed back towards the first one as I'd spotted a option in between the two aires as a just in case. Not very level but fine for the night. I reassembled our tea and we went to bed.

**Our Bumble verdict: Nice beach but the aires can be busy and expensive.**





## ST. TROPEZ.

**Above: The harbour at St. Tropez.**

The following morning we drove into St. Tropez, once a quiet little fishing village, now home to the rich and famous. We parked on the main road near 3 other vans knowing there wouldn't be a chance in hell of parking in the town centre. Bromptons out and away we went. Joanne was looking forward to seeing the place, I wasn't too bothered, expecting the place to be overhyped.

We bumbled around the harbour area first, It's full of new money, old money and not much money at all. Some big mega expensive cruisers down to old knackered dingys but mostly big old and quite run down boats well past their prime.





Photos Clockwise:

- ❖ Large piece of artwork at the harbour.
- ❖ Joanne chilling out watching the boats go by.
- ❖ Not all the boats are massive
- ❖ The crowds ogle the more expensive boats.
- ❖ St. Tropez beach isn't that great.



The road that runs around the harbour was full of black vans, all with chauffeurs. Probably owned by people who are well off, but think they are super rich.

Just beyond the harbour is the town centre, filled with eateries and a few shops mixed in for good measure. To be honest this bit was quite nice but not as nice as you would expect the likes of Brigitte Bardot and other movie stars to live in.

We headed back to the harbour for an hour just watching the boats go by then back to Vin.

Beeeeep. b,b,b.

The alarm sounded different, just like when the doors open when you turn it on.

Shit, someone had broken in. I checked the doors and the locks were a right mess. Someone had shoved a screwdriver in and bust it.

I spent the next half hour attempting to get the door to close but it was a mess. Finally it closed but the lock was knackered and you could open it with just about anything.

Joanne checked our belongings but nothing was missing, the alarm had obviously made them leg it.

I phoned our insurance in the UK and explained the situation, they even offered to send the RAC and bring us home which was great but not exactly what we wanted. We were told we could also get it repaired locally and they would reimburse us once we got home.

Now that was a better option, we knew there was a Hymer dealer near Nicé so that was the plan. I put the bikes away but then noticed the next problem, They had stabbed the tyre too,

bastards, This one needed to be sorted first. Joanne looked on the internet to find a tyre dealership. It was in the next town so we set off once i'd blown the tyre back up.

**Our Bumble verdict: It's Ok in the centre but the place is overhyped and crime may be an issue.**

Is that a puncture or something else?







## ST. TROPEZ TO NICÉ

Above: Site dog at the dealership, we could have done with this fella yesterday.

We headed off towards Nicé, it was getting late, the tyre place was closed so we tried another and it too was closed. The next one was open but didn't have the tyre in stock, I asked if he knew anywhere that probably would have them but the address he gave us was 30km away. I topped the tyre back up with air and set off but it ended up being a joiners. Joanne looked on the internet again and there was a Hymer dealer just up the road, we headed off once more but it too was closed so we parked up across the road until the morning.

After a crap nights sleep we got up, I reinflated the tyre again and we drove across the road.

Below: One of the many tyre dealers we tried.

Fingers crossed we walked in and explained what had happened.

Can you help?

Yes we can help!

Today?

Yes today, no problem.





They began work on the door straight away and phoned a Mercedes dealers about the tyre.

The lady owner was very kind and polite. They were not amused what had happened to us and did all they could to help. Four hours later the habitation door was fixed but they could not fix the garage door as they didn't have the parts. Apparently the lock was smashed inside too and they had to strip the door down completely which is why it took so long. The tyre would be replaced the next day at Mercedes. The bad news was that the tyres fitted on the van are not available in France and French law forbids different tyres on opposite sides of the vehicle. Two new tyres were required for the front. The old front tyres would then go on the back as the



Vin in the garage at Mercedes.

van has four rear wheels. Oh to make matters worse, Joannes flight to the UK was tomorrow too, talk about a bit to close for comfort..

The dealers were very kind and allowed us to stay on there grounds for free, they offered us the use of the courtesy car, if time became an issue the owner would take Joanne to the airport, they even offered us the electricity hook up, oh and the site dog took a shine to us and sat

Site dog stayed by the van all night.



Vin showing off his new rubber.





outside the van all night. What more could you ask for? We highly recommend them but sadly we didn't get any photos of them.

The following morning I once again blew up the tyre and we drove to Mercedes with one of the dealerships staff. Once there they explained on our behalf and told us which tyres were going were.

We got there at 9.30am and by 11am we were done. Vin had his new rubber on and we could now safely drive on to Nicé so Joanne could catch her plane back to the UK, no rush we had 6 hours to kill so we took the slow route up the coast.

The views were superb and there are lots of little lay-bys to stop in all the way to about Saint-Raphaël. Then as usual for this type of area it's defiantly a case of "no camping cars please, your not wanted." We passed through Cannes and your not even allowed to park a motorhome on the front even in the day time. We eventually arrived at Nicé at about 5pm so I pulled up on a car park so Joanne could sort her stuff out and I cooked tea, chicken wraps and I also made a sandwich for Joanne's flight.

Nice airport is very badly sign posted and there are currently road works everywhere but we got there on time. Kiss and fly lane please, well that's what it's called, no parking areas just narrow lanes, a 3.5 tonne limit, a 3.1 metre height barrier and you just stop outside the airport doors, kiss the passenger goodbye and drive/fly away, quite a good system but not really designed for a 5.3 tonne van that's 3.2 metres tall and not very narrow. I do like a challenge though.

France has many memorials for first and second world war veterans.



I parked up close by at a cemetery which was very posh by the way (I'm too tight to pay for parking) and waited for Joanne to call me to let me know there were no problems, 9pm and the phone rang, she was fine with no delays, time to open the Sangria and watch The Avengers movie yet again before calling it bedtime on my Billy No Mates own.





## NICÉ TO SAINT-LAURENT-DU-VAR

Above: Vins view for a few days.

Below: The free aire in Saint-Laurent-du-Var, you can stay on this one for a week.

GPS position:  
N43.685500 - E7.185273



### BILLY NO MATES, YET AGAIN.

The following morning it was time to move on via a lidl, I picked myself up a few beers and a pizza for dinner then drove on to another place I'd spotted on the TomTom, a place called Saint Laurent-Du-Var. It was a proper little aire, the beach is about five kilometres south and the mountains to the north, it's free too and can even stay for up to week, I could have as much water as I needed to get a few cleaning jobs done, wash van, check, wash bedding, check, wash inside van, check, wash seat covers, check, basically if it couldn't fly away it got washed. The weather was either cloudy or chucking it down for the next three days so it kept me busy in between dodging the rain drops.

Apparently the town next door is ..... All the worlds top perfumes originate here, all the big names buy ..... And then dilute it down to sell to us, the stuffs not cheap. You can pay as much as ..... For just a kilo of the ..... The area is covered in ..... Which they make the stuff from. Not my cup of tea but maybe we'll visit when Joanne gets back next week.



The first day at the aire I had a pleasant Italian couple next to me who fortunately spoke a little English. The conversation got around to food and then that was it for three hours as they enthused at the qualities of a traditional pizza, Margarita and nothing else, you've got to hand to the Italians, they do like their food, in fact I don't think anyone else is as enthusiastic about food, not even the French.

The following day they left, heading home for a... You've guessed it, a Margarita pizza, Napoli style so I got back to some more cleaning to pass the time, if you've never stayed in a Motorhome before then be prepared to wash stuff, lots of stuff and all the time. Dust flies in, blows in, gets walked in, you name it, we must wipe the bloody floor five times a day just to keep the dust levels down.

On day three an English van pulled in, a husband and wife team on holiday, they asked if it was Ok to park near me even though the aire was full, no problem, they weren't blocking any access or anyone in so why not. They were from Yorkshire and had been using campsites mostly and they were looking for somewhere to get some repairs done. The week before they got into bed and it collapsed a little, they then realised that the fresh water tank was beneath them and they'd snapped the tanks water feed couplings that go to everything that uses water, the taps, the loo, the shower etc and none of it now worked. He said he had tried to superglue it together but to no avail and none of the repair shops they went to had got the right parts so couldn't help them. I offered to have a look and see if I could help, five minutes later I was in. The highlight of my day, well three days actually. The most exciting thing that had happened so far in

those three days was fixing Joanne's push bike puncture. I looked at their tank and pump, he'd obviously had a go at fixing it but had damaged all the fittings that weren't by broke by the bed collapsing in the process. I had another look, a little think, and then one of those cheapskate ideas evolved in my head, it involved two pieces of hosepipe, a kettle of hot water, 1 drill complete with a couple of bits, some aluminium angle and a couple of screws. (basically all the crap I have in my box of goodies, it was similar to my everlasting shower idea) All I had to do was take off a couple of the fittings, fit the hosepipe after heating it with the boiling water, drill a couple of holes in the aluminium angle and the thing would be as good as new, the bed would even be fixed and support them, plus it gave me something to do, I explained what I needed to do and it would take me about ten minutes to fix, they could then use everything again and sleep in their bed, his wife smiled, she could have a shower again, use the loo properly, wash up and use water from a tap instead of a big dirty plastic bottle. He too gave me a great big smile and said, "Brilliant idea I should have thought of it myself," I'll do it myself tomorrow if I cannot find a dealership to do it for me, his wife smiled at me and smirked at him, she looked tired and she desperately wanted that shower, but wouldn't get it today. He then showed me the two great big monkey wrenches he'd use and said he had some hosepipe in the back. I offered again but to be honest I think he was a little embarrassed, I had only met him five minutes ago, we didn't even know each other's names and now I was under their bed offering to fix there stuff. I told them they'd probably get parts that would fit from the local Bricoman (like B&Q) and left them to it. About an hour later they were still sat in the cab



seats of there van, I said hello, he thanked me again for the idea and then he said he was also going to put a house brick in the fresh water tank, just in case. With that I thought about those monkey grips again he'd used on those mangled plastic fittings. Letting this man loose with a house brick probably won't end well, I do hope they get it fixed though. Life's a bitch when stuff don't work, trust me I know all too well.

Well it was tea for one again tonight, Thai style garlic pork with chilli and ginger, steamed Thai rice with prawn crackers on the side. When I cook for Joanne I always try and make an extra effort with her food, whether that be presentation or whatever, she's into that kind of crap, me, well chuck it on a plate is more my style, I could even eat mushed up beans'n'sausage in a bowl for the rest of life and it wouldn't bother me (just ask my dad), for some reason though I served everything in proper bowls for myself, no idea why, hell normally I wouldn't even bother with the crackers. To drink, well I could maybe have some wine with my meal, or maybe some cold beers to freshen the palette, whatever I wanted, in the end I choose refrigerated water, the reason, I had no bloody wine or cold beers so I had no bloody choice. Dam, dam, dam. (By the way Bob I'll hold you to that £20 for booze as I'm on my lonesome.)

Anyway, why tell you about my tea, well it just so happens that after eating it I sat there typing some stuff up, then suddenly there was a huge flaming tiger stripped Mosquito attempting to break through the fly screen and get in to kill me, it was that big I'm sure it was carrying some bolt cutters to get past the screen. What should I do, dive into the cupboard and get out the extra potent mossy spray, running away is always

another option, then I remembered my tea and the fact that I was on my own, you see, on my own means, Extra Garlic. Clearly this bastard meant business and so did I, I've been broke in once this week already, well not today, it clearly wasn't put off by the garlic smell emanating out the van windows. It landed again on the screen, bolt cutters out and ready to attack, "F... It" I thought, I breathed in then slowly exhaled on the thing, it shit itself, clearly wounded it frantically tried to escape the deadly gases, I aimed carefully and breathed again. It didn't stand a chance, anybody would have thought Mike Tyson hit it in his hey day. Buzz, buzz and then it fell, completely away. The winner by a knock out goes too half a bulb of garlic for your tea, no swats, no chemicals, no weapons off mass destruction and probably no neighbours for the next couple of days. But it was funny watching the little bastard squirm, I mean how often do you see a mosquito shit itself.

Well it's now Tuesday so I have decided to move on, I thought I'd visit the village of Saint Paul De Vence that's a little further inland.



Motorhome parking at Saint Paul De Vence

GPS: N 43.702302 - E 7.116813



# SAINT PAUL DE VENCE

Right: Narrow lanes are everywhere in the village.

The route went through the town of Saint-Laurent-Du-Var and it seems a nice little place, lots of shops and stuff and it was only 5 minutes down the road from where I was parked up. Then a nice little drive but for the tomtom taking me down roads I didn't fit and I arrived at Saint Pauls.

I have parked up on a car park that has dedicated motorhome spots and even some shade from the sun until around 2pm. The village itself is perched on top of a hill and is surrounded by a stone wall. It's famous for it's art museum and shops but the big draw for most people is a museum know as the the Fondation Maeght that is home to many paintings, sculptures and mosaics etc. all by famous artists, its is supposed to be one of Europe's finest museums for modern art.

I visited the village first and it is a very pretty place, every building has some kind of artistic feature, even the public loos are fancy. The village is only small but it's very pleasant to wind yourself around with is increasingly narrow little streets that you end up almost walking sideways. Every other building in the centre is some kind of art gallery or art shop. Even the jam shop was impeccably laid out. It has one or two cafés and restaurants tempting you, Apparently some of the eateries even have paintings by Picasso and other famous artists, They used to pay for their rent and food with the







Photos Clockwise:

- ❖ Public loos are even nice here.
- ❖ Modern art abounds, sorry about the reflection.
- ❖ The cemetery just outside the walls.
- ❖ One of the many galleries in Saint Paul De Vence.
- ❖ Fine display of jams.





Photos Clockwise:

- ❖ A room with a view.
- ❖ The view from that window.
- ❖ Statue in the village church.
- ❖ One of the many statues.
- ❖ Even the pavement is artistic.



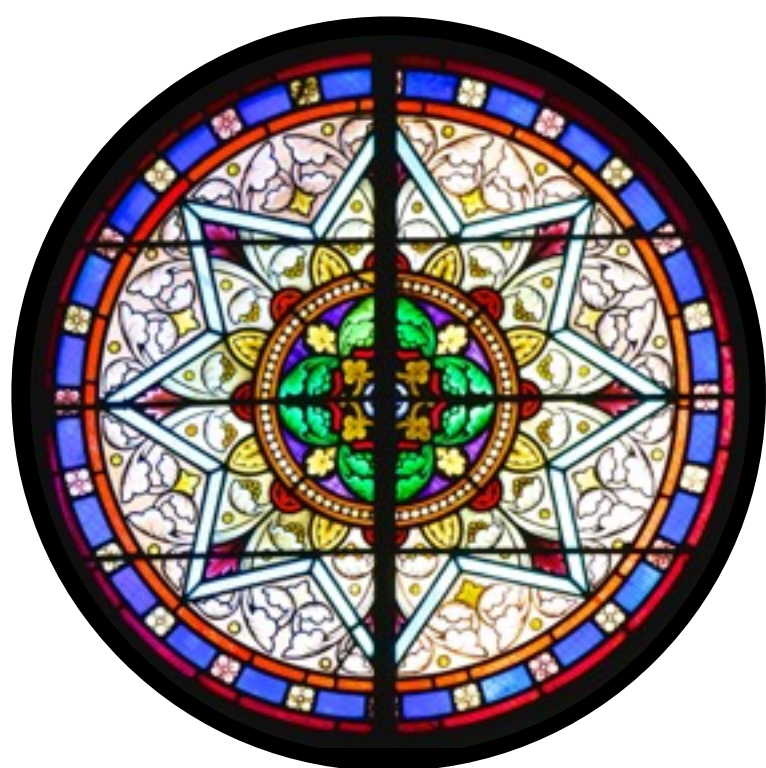
paintings before they were famous. The place is a right little rabbit warren and nothing is even, everything winds up or down even inside the buildings. Obviously it has it's own little church but it isn't anything special. If your the kind of person that likes arty things then this is the place to visit. My idea of art is an empty room with blank walls but this place still appeals.

After a couple of hours I returned to Vin for a spot of dinner. Joanne called and she's running back and forth between the doctors and hospital having various tests, I don't envy her visit back to England.

**Our Bumble verdict: Great little place, well worth a stop, especially if you appreciate art.**

Well that's its for now, Next time Joanne should be back at the keyboard and things will be back to normal.

Bye all for now.



Right: Figurine for sale. Above: Stained glass church window.

