



OUR BUMBLE

EXPLORING EUROPE IN OUR MOTORHOME.

BY JOANNE & CRAIG.



THIS WEEK...

Joanne arrived back in France and after a quick detour via the garage for our annual habitation service we got back on track bumbling along. We planned on spending more time in the South of France but 'no camper' signs forced us to carry on and before we knew it we were in Italy. This week we've travelled a total of 180km.





ENGLAND TO FRANCE

Above: My mum Betty with her sister Elsie.

Below: Craig checks out the lidl offers.

Next page: Wall sign on a chemist. Just what i need.



SATURDAY 29 & SUNDAY 30 AUGUST

Craig returned to the aire in Saint Laurent Du Var, so he could spend the weekend amongst fellow campers as well as have access to the aire services. Craig knows I love things clean and tidy but most of all I love clean bedding, so he spent the weekend scrubbing and cleaning in readiness for my return.

Back in the UK, I spent the weekend enjoying time with my family after a week of zipping here there and everywhere for hospital visits. Lucky for me, my home visit coincided with my aunties 88th birthday party, which she celebrated in style with her family in her little home. Auntie Elsie put on a buffet and all day long people came to wish her well. Auntie Elsie is my mum's sister and they belong to a rather large family of 22 children. Unfortunately not all the 22 brothers and sisters are around to celebrate but non the less, its a busy affair.

On Saturday, I had a lovely lunch with my dad in return for sorting out a new mobile phone. In the afternoon, final cuddles and kisses from my two adorable great nephews Lucas and Oliver. On Sunday, time to go home, back to my hubby in France. My



flight wasn't until late afternoon, so rather than wait around we set off early and made the most of our day in Liverpool. It's not a city I really visit but have to say, I had a fabulous day with my sister and my mum walking around Albert Docks.

The Easy jet flight from Liverpool to Nice was the usual no frills event but I sat next to a lovely French chap, which made the journey a lot more enjoyable. He told me about his beautiful country and all the best places to visit, which I duly noted. He was also very honest and said that a lot of French people are becoming very bitter about life. As such, France was becoming an

unfriendly society and he was worried that people were only happy when they were complaining. I understood his concern, I suppose we all know people who love to complain and only happy when things go wrong. We started our descent to Nice airport around 8.30pm and thankfully French air traffic control weren't on strike! The warm sun kissed sky was a true delight and it filled the cabin with excitement. We circled around the city for a while, so we got a wonderful aerial view of Nice before heading out to sea, doing a U turn and gliding in to the sun drenched beaches of Nice bay.



SAINT PAUL DU VENCE TO VENCE

Above: St. Paul's properties.

Below: Street café.



SAINT PAUL DU VENCE TO VENCE

MONDAY 31 AUGUST

A cracking nights sleep but there is nothing like your own bed with clean cotton sheets for a good kip. We'd parked up on a small parking area for campers just outside the village of Saint Paul Du Vence. Craig found this place whilst I was in the UK and he knew I would like it. It was a wonderful little hilltop village full of character and charm. The cobbled streets and stone walls draped in vines and violet petunia's gave the village a 'loved' feel. The people who lived here clearly had a passion for the village. We skirted around the end of the village following the old village walls until we reached the old 16th century ramparts. The views across the countryside and down in to the bay of Nice was stunning. Every so often you would spot a swimming pool or red roof peering through the trees, it was certainly a view you would not get bored of.

Inside the medieval wall a myriad of cobbled alleys lined with galleries and art studios. The village was only tiny but it sure was



Above: Figurine at the entrance to the village of St Paul Du Vence.

compact with every spectrum of art from the modern studios to restored relics. The tiered shops spanned over various levels and intertwined in such a way that you never knew which shop you'd been in. Confusing but fascinating and total fun.

Before setting off we had a stroll up to the Foundation Maeght. A modern art museum built in 1964 by a couple of Parisian art dealers. The well maintained grounds were home to a number of strange but wonderful sculptures. In the middle, a square pebbled dashed building with a bit of pink render. It certainly didn't look like the architectural building of the century but I guess that's modern art for you! Outside the grounds wonderful cypress trees with the odd squawking monkey that only Craig managed to see.

Our Bumble Verdict: Definitely worth a bumble too.

Below: Parking spot in Vence, right next to the supermarket just off the main road:

GPS position: N 43.720240 - E 7.111486





Above: Vences Hotel Ville in the towns old section.

Right: Window boxes.

Below and front cover: A local artists impression of Vence.



VENCE

We set off to Vence and within half an hour we were parking up just outside the town. It was actually a nice spot which turned out to be pretty quiet and well shaded. Most of the parking spots in Vence are metered with limited timeframes, so a great find.

Vence is more like a regular town with some old quarters for a sense of character. It is no where near as pretty or quaint as Saint Paul's but it does have some historic attractions like the Roman forum and urn shaped fountain. It was mid afternoon and siesta time, so it made wandering around the town much easier but less atmospheric. I would imagine this place would be at its best early evening when everyone congregates in the tiny plaza's or quirky bistro's for a vino or two.

With a whistle stop tour of two places in one day, it was time to eat and chill. Nicely washed down with some fresh vanilla ice-cream from Super U supermarket.

When Craig came he visited the town cathedral and had a look around upstairs, he came across a selection of statues and



Photos Clockwise:

- ❖ Vences cathedral.
- ❖ Carvings depicting Christ being lowered of the cross.
- ❖ Carvings depicting Christ being nailed to the cross.
- ❖ Sign on one of the towns chemists walls.



Above: WWII vehicles and weapons on display.

Right: Willies jeeps.

Below: J.I. Jane explains what a willy is!



scenes all depicting the last days of Christ, the statues were made over about 200-300 years by locals all carved from hardwood so each one had it's own style. it makes a change from the typical carvings inside churches so quite interesting. Also when he arrived in town a display was being set up for the towns folk, French, American and Swiss flags were flying everywhere and a selection of American military vehicles were on display in the towns square, on the edges were stalls selling all kinds of military merchandise from the wars, everything from boots to bullets could be purchased. He's no idea whether it was just a display or even some kind of celebration that happened each year but took a couple of quick snaps to share.

Our Bumble Verdict: Good town but if pushed for time go straight to Saint Paul Du Vence.



VENCE TO SAINT LAURENT DU VAR

Above: An old Citroen
camping car.

Below: The aire at Saint
Laurent Du Var.

GPS position:
N43.677015 - E7.201751



TUESDAY 1 SEPTEMBER

Up bright and early today because we need to be at Nice Caravan's for when they open. We want to have our annual habitation service to ensure we keep everything up to date and Nice Caravan's is not only a Hymer dealer but seems to have a good workshop.

We arrived at the same time as every other bugger on the planet, so the service department of the dealership was pulled out. It was their first day back to work after a two week shut down, so not only were they challenged with getting back in to the swing of work but they had a queue of demanding people. The poor staff were inundated with customers wanting their attention but in all fairness, they dealt with everyone in a professional and polite manner. In the main, they were faced with bashed in motorhomes and owners wanting their pride and joy repaired back to its original condition. So when we asked for a simple annual service they jumped at the opportunity. Vin was lined up and wheeled in to the service bay in no time. Once the chaos calmed down the General Manager, Patrice came over for a chat. An Australian living in France, so he spoke excellent English! He told us about

the fine wine and great climate, which balanced out the ever growing frustration of doing business in France. An hour later and Vin was done and dusted with no problems. We didn't expect any issues but it is still a relief when it is formally confirmed. With ticket and stamp in hand we set off with smiles on our faces.

We pulled in a few kilometres down the road at Saint Laurent Du Var. You will probably remember the aire from last week. Its the aire that Craig found and it is really quite nice. Nothing special just simple and basic but the views out to the beginning of Alps are amazing. We debated our next route and despite wanting to go back to Saint Rafael and cover the South of France we decided against it. The coast has some amazing scenery and wonderful coves but its not really aimed at motor-homers. In fact, most of the towns are anti-motorhomes, so it makes visiting or viewing incredibly hard. A shame but maybe one day when we are millionaires we will come back, buy a plot of land and help change the rule book!

Just before sunset a couple from Liverpool pulled up. There was no space on the aire but we told them to park in front of us and block us in, we didn't mind. Then they started to chat and OMG. This couple had bad luck tattooed on their forehead. In five months they'd toured Scotland, Ireland and Italy and hit nothing but bad luck. In that period they'd had

- 2 attempted break in's. 1 through main door and 1 through passenger window. Both times they were on Italian sosta's
- 2 actual break in's were the thugs removed all their contents. The first time they took all the things like clothes and laptop. The second time

they stole what was left including passports and all documentation. The first time in Ireland and second time in Italy.

Motorhome stolen from a supermarket in Italy. Without going in to too much detail the village folk rallied around and gave them free meals, free phone calls, free lodging etc until the motorhome was recovered by the police. When they got the motorhome back, some but not all the number plate had been changed with stickers.

Despite all the adversity they were extremely positive and upbeat. The only common factor between all their events were Bulgarian vans. They couldn't prove anything but each time Bulgarian vans were present before the event and then disappeared after the event, leaving an element of suspicion in their minds. They told their story and we stood spell bound for hours. We were amazed at what they had gone through but also at their sheer determination to continue with their 5 year plan. If anyone deserves a break this couple do and we sure as hell wish them all the best for the future!

Just as we were closing shop, our neighbours to the right arrived back after a day out at the beach. We said hello and introduced ourselves but as they reciprocated we paused....a Bulgarian woman, an Italian chap on holiday in an English van...ummm. Are they part of a gang nicking GB plates? Our minds went on overdrive. They seemed like a lovely couple but we weren't taking any chances. Everything was locked and triple locked...Vin was going nowhere tonight.

Sleep tight...yeah right!



SAINT LAURENT DU VAR TO VENTIGMILIA

Above: Cap Ferrat.

Below: A beach we missed
out on.



WEDNESDAY 2 SEPTEMBER

With our plan not to cover the South of France we filled up and headed towards the Italian border. We had planned to stop at 3 points along the route but with constant restrictions we had no choice but to head in to Italy.

We drove through Nice, the largest resort on the Mediterranean coast and it was buzzing with summer tourists. After we carefully nudged our way through the traffic jams we headed to Cap Ferrat. We drove over the headland to be greeted by a big fat wow. Cap Ferrat looked absolutely stunning with crystal blue waters, sandy beach, back drop of mountains and all topped off with plenty little clusters of seaside restaurants. We got all excited and all our plans went out the window. This is heaven. We wound along the road passing beautiful villas and marble mansions clearly owned by the rich and famous. The terraced gardens and infinity pools looked wonderful. We carried on and wound down the steep hillside road until we hit the coast. After several twists and turns we were on the coast road, perfect. We drove along the front until we came to a grinding halt. A blinking height barrier. We turned around and headed in the opposite

direction but guess what, another height barrier. We were gutted. With no where to stop, we had no choice but to skip Cap Ferrat although have to say, it looked amazing.

Our Bumble Verdict: Definitely visit but not in a motorhomes.

We constantly kept our eye out for somewhere to stay but to no avail. Before we knew it, we where in Monaco and before we could say Jack Rabbit, we where out of Monaco. We knew it was small but by gosh, that is small. We never really got an opportunity to park up because we never got out the tunnel. What a weird experience. A road system with traffic lights and roundabouts all built underground, it felt awfully strange and very alien. Our experience of tunnels is simple - one entrance and one exit. We've never had to make a choice in a tunnel before, so the brain refused to function when faced with a choice, so we never got to see Monaco. I was more disappointed than Craig. I wanted to walk around Monte Carlo and dream for a day then take Vin for a spin around the streets. Looks like I'll just have to go back to day dreaming.

This will do for the night, well maybe not after all.

Our Bumble Verdict: Oops we missed it.





Above: The bay view from above Cap Ferrat.

Our third and final stop for today, Menton. The last town in France before we head over to Italy. We drove through the old town with golden villas and chic shops. In the centre, the Basilica St Michel, neatly decorated in pastel pink and mellow yellow. With the golden beaches on one side and the Alps on the other, this looked a perfect spot to spend our last day in France. Towards the edge of town the coastal road offered parking spots with great views out to sea. We drove up and down until a space became free. Once parked up, we sighed and said finally we found somewhere. We were so pleased. Craig prepared lunch, a feast fit for a king...full English fry up! We tucked in and half way through...tap, tap, tap. Two police on bicycles. They were extremely polite and asked us to move once we'd finished our lunch. We apologised and agreed to move. Our yummy lunch soon tasted bitter, it wasn't quite the same knowing we were on borrowed time.

Our Bumble Verdict: Lovely place but not for motorhomes.



Above: Another beach we missed out on.



Right: The old French/Italian border crossing.

Below: Italian speed sign.



Half an hour later and burping for England with indigestion we set off. We tried to find something in and around Menton but nothing not even a campsite. Nothing for it, we waved goodbye to France and crossed the border to Italy. We weren't quite sure what the border crossing would be like given all the recent media around refugees and migrants. We approached with caution but no need, we just sailed through without even a glance. We could see a handful of refugees near one of the small stations but that was it.

Once in Italy we headed to 6km from the board to Ventigmilia and immediately found space on a great car park located near the river. Stunning views of the historic town to our right, the Alps to our rear, the river to our left and the beach to the front. Perfect.

This once prosperous border town has slowly gone down hill since 1995 when they permitted uncontrolled traffic between Italy and France. The old town to the west looks a little run down with shanty buildings displaying typical Italian stringed vests and Y fronts swinging from the balconies but other than that it is really a nice place. As you walk down the street you pass a Roman



Ventigmilia

Above: Church

Right: Historic quarters

Below: Our view from car park.



amphitheatre and baths. It always amazes us that people just walk passed beautiful historic sites like its normal part of a town. The new town is big, sorry no, it is huge, with one very long street full full of high street shops. For a border town, it has a very cosmopolitan feel about it and surprising very busy with locals rather than tourist. We get the feeling the tourists head to the more sophisticated town of Menton.

We where parked up along with several other motorhome. A Dutch couple with a white Pomeranian dog called snowy. Two Belgium lads taking time out on the beach and an Italian couple who's idea of parking up their motorhome meant ramming the wall until the motorhome stopped. The Italians are certainly entertaining and for that we just love them. The car park tariff was a little odd, free except on Friday's when we assume there is a market? Well thank god its not a Friday.

Our Bumble verdict: Difference of option - Craig says naff and I say great shopping place with character.



VENTIGMILIA TO SANTO STEFANO DU MARE

Above: Santo Stefano du
Mare.

THURSDAY 3 SEPTEMBER

The sun rays pierced through the gap in the blinds making it too hot and bright to sleep through. So up we got and off we set, so we could make the most of this glorious day. The drive through the town was slow partly due to the morning traffic but in the main down to triple parking. The Italians will honk their horn like billy oh if you stop for 2 seconds but its OK to get out your vehicle, completely block the lane and triple park. Were is the sense in that?

Not long and we were in San Remo. Just after world war II this city boomed in to a classy joint when a Russian Empress and her

community set up home. The city sits in a large bay nestled between two headlands and all along the front are grand old fashioned styled hotels offering wonderful sea views. No doubt offering first class accommodation to the constant trickle of aristocrats seeking a bit of pampering or even a cheeky gamble at the infamous casino. The palm fringed promenade with ample seating and water fountains is a good place to stroll up and watch the world go by. Throughout the city you can see the Russian influence on the architecture with onion shaped roofs and domes. Unfortunately we didn't get to stay long because they'd sectioned off all the car parks in readiness for this weekends festival. What festival...we have no idea!

Just outside of San Remo and still on the coast we stumbled across the little village of Santo Stefano la Mare. At first we parked on the seafront just so we could have a cuppa and suss out the best place to stop. But a local policeman beat us to it and politely asked us to move to the other side of town. We bumbled along the sea front and right near the marina a camper stop. Ah wonderful. We pulled up and walked over to the ticket machine. As we read the prices the memories of Italy came flooding back....as a rule of thumb you only pay for parking between 9-12 and 3-7 Monday to Friday. The rest of the time it is free. Sometimes you can pay just one price for the day but its not always the cheapest option! The camper rates are €1.50 per hour or €10 per day.

We shuffled Vin in to a nice flat spot and checked out the view...perfect ocean view. After a bite to eat we cycled in to the village. There isn't much to offer in terms of historical offerings but its a lovely tiny village with a simple plaza,

quaint church and half a dozen shops offering staples such as bread, vegetables and fruit. Behind the shops the cobbled alleys wind up the hill, dotted with pastel coloured houses and crochet pink bikes! We are not sure the relevance of pink crochet bikes but no doubt we will find out at some point. Along the front, the odd cafe and bistro offering simple pasta and pizza. The beach is more shingle and shale with the odd sprinkle of sand but when the sun is out and the turquoise blue waters just make the place look so tranquil and inviting.



Above: Pink bicycle.

San Stefano la Mare is nothing exciting but it has all the simple ingredients and chilled out atmosphere that makes a place feel special. Nite Nite folks.



SANTO STEFANO LA MARE

Above: One of Stefano Du Mares little beaches.

FRIDAY 4 SEPTEMBER

No sunshine today folks but not to worry, it means we can go for a long bike ride! After breakfast we pulled out the Brompton's and zipped over to the Italian Riviera Cycle Route. We've never heard of it but it is blinking brilliant. A cycle path that runs all along the coast from San Remo to Genoa. We think it used to be the old coastal road or train track? Well its great and all along the route are little stopping points. Some are cliff balconies offering great vistas of the coast line and others are little play areas for children. Every so often SOS stations for direct access to medical support and the police.



Above: The Car park in Santo Stefano La Mare.

GPS position: N.43.837071 - E.7.905704

We cycled east about 6km to the town of San Lorenzo la Mare. Along the route we encountered our first cycle tunnel. It was a bloody long tunnel and it felt weird cycling through a tunnel. About half way through we got the eebeegeebees as we talked about how easy it could be for someone to hide in the tunnel and pounce on you. Maybe that's what the SOS stations are for? Maybe this place is riddled with crime? Wait a minute, what are we doing frightening ourselves to death! Yeah be cautious but not paranoid! Too late, by this time our legs were going like the clappers and we were doing warp speed out the tunnel.

This stretch of coast is called the Riviera di Ponente and if you read the guide books you are lead to believe it is over built, over populated and full of sprawling Italian resorts. We haven't seen all the coast to Genoa but our experience so far is far from over populated resorts.

The village of San Lorenzo la Mare was a little bigger than Santo Stefano with a couple of small

hotels and a few souvenir shops. Two small bays provided ample beach space for beach lovers or alternatively, a stone jetty which is great for a spot of sea fishing.

The ride back to Santo Stefano was equally as good offering wonderful coastal views but most of all, a great cool sea breeze. Before heading to Vin we tootled over to a nearby Lidl. It was only a small store but by gosh it was full of goodies. The Lidl's in France were terrible both in product selection but also in price but glad to say, Italian Lidl's are back in full swing. We only had the Brompton bike bags, so we couldn't go mad buying stuff but it didn't stop us from wanting everything in the store. Craig was might pleased to see the wine prices back to a normal range as well as the meats and chicken. We filled our basket full and cycled home as fast as we could.

We have a new neighbour, Antonio. He's an elderly gentleman with a heinz 57 dog and a tatty motorhome held together with sticky tape and glue. He has every bling gadget in his window and clearly a sucker for souvenir tat. But Antonio is great, 89 years young, a real character who just loves life to the full. We had a



Below: San Lorenzo la Mare.



Below: Statue at water fountain.

lovely conversation, I didn't understand a word he was saying but I got the gist. I think he was just happy to chat to someone and share his tales.

In the evening, we had a tootle around the village and watched the sunset. What a great end to a brilliant day.

SATURDAY 5 - SUNDAY 6 SEPTEMBER

We are not quiet sure what it is about this place but we love it. Maybe it being right next to the ocean or maybe its the chilled atmosphere? We have no idea why we love it but we do. So rather

than move to the next place we grew a few roots and stayed put. We didn't do much other than doing our weekly chores on one day, finish Our Bumble, stroll up and down the coast and chat to folk as they walked by. We spent a lot of time chatting about a website! Thanks to Jason from Our Tour the seed is planted and its got us wondering...do we or don't we?

We are parked right on the sea front next to the marina. Palm trees line the walk ways and guide you down to the marina restaurant, which in the evenings is lit up beautifully. As a result, it gets pretty busy with diners. During the weekend they also have live entertainment, which kept us fully entertained all weekend. The artists ranged from a fantastic male soloist to a terrible shoot them quick duo. The choice of music wasn't really our thing but it didn't matter, it created a wonderful atmosphere. We just sat by our little motorhome watching the waves roll on to the beach, sipping a nice bottle of plonk and humming along tunes like...What a Wonderful World by Louis Armstrong.

Our Bumble verdict: Brilliant chill out zone

LAST YEARS BUMBLE IN HOMER.



THIS YEARS BUMBLE IN VIN.

