

# OUR BUMBLE

## EXPLORING EUROPE IN OUR MOTORHOME.

BY JOANNE & CRAIG.







# ALL ALONE AGAIN.

Well as you know i'm on my own still, Joannes getting here tooth sorted and all is looking well on that front, Me on the other hand, well things are going a little downhill at the moment, bad weather, bad parking options, missing the dog and missing the wife, England in calling but i'm not there quite just yet, there's still quite away to go, but sadly everything has an ending..... or does it?





## TIME TO LEAVE GERMANY.

**Above: Bridge over the river Rhine, Time to leave the great place that's Germany.**

Well I set off for Aachen this morning with an uneventful and boring journey. This last little bit of Germany is not the prettiest by a long stretch of the imagination. Gone are the old buildings, gone are the superb paintings on properties indicating its trade, gone too are the elaborately painted churches and historic castles. All these things are replaced with boring buildings and too much use of concrete. I hate concrete buildings, cheap and lacklustre with no appeal in any form.

As I drove into Aachen, the last German city for me there was a problem, parking, or should I say a lack of it. You could park a car in town but there was nowhere for me to fit my van. What a pain in the arse. I drove around town and again but with no joy. As I'm not a lover of cities I thought stuff it, I'll head to Holland or the Netherlands as it's known these days. With that I punched Maastricht into the TomTom and away I went. There was no border crossing just one minute the signs were in German then they weren't. It was getting dark so I pulled up in the first town. Its name was Vaal, I pulled down a side street to find a spot for the night, there was plenty of spaces to pull in but all facing someone's home. Not my cup of tea and I know that wild





camping in the Netherlands can be an issue so I moved on a bit. A sign pointed the way to parking for a sports centre so I pulled in, A pleasant Dutch chap was walking his dog so I asked if he spoke English, Yes he said along with German, French, Russian, Italian and even Chinese. The Dutch people seem to speak more languages than any other nation I have met. I asked if it was OK to park and he said "Sure, no problem" so with that I parked up for the night.

Well I woke this morning with the intention of driving through this very thin section of the Netherlands and being in Brussels tonight after visiting a couple of towns on route. Good intentions don't always work out. I was just ready to set off when "knock, knock" at the door, it was the Dutch police, I always find that being super polite and acting a bit thick is always the best practice in these situations. He asked if I had slept here last night so I said yes, I told him

about asking the man with his dog and the Policeman said it was OK, no fine or anything but that it was unwise to park in such places and that campsites are the best option, there is a possibility of crime he said. I asked about the policy of sleeping in a vehicle, basically "wild camping" and he evaded the answer by just saying that in his opinion it was best to use campsites in the Netherlands. After looking at my driving licence he said goodbye and within 5 minutes I had set off myself.

I'd had a quick look at the Maps the night before and decided to visit a town or two before reaching the city of Maastricht on the border that afternoon. I saw some lovely young deer by the roadside on route but with my run of luck there was again no where to park. I pulled into a bus stop to take a couple of piccies and then drove into the town Valkenburg.





Above & right: Peekaboo,  
cute deer in someones garden.

The town centre car park allowed me to stay for free until 11am, more than enough time for a quick look around the centre. Valkenburg seems a nice little place, apparently the town is built on soft limestone rock and over the centuries the locals have dug the rock out and used it for building materials. There are now lots of caves in the area and even a couple you can visit in the town's centre. It appeared however that most had been turned into Santa's grottoes so I gave them a miss, I'm a little big to sit on Santa's knee these days. The town itself has lots of nice looking

cafés and restaurants though and lots of little shops to visit. It has an old ruin on top of a hill in the centre and a few little canals cut through the centre of town too, this is Holland after all, land of tulips, windmills and canals. After a couple of hours my free parking time was up so I set off for the city of Maastricht to spend the rest of the day.

The tiny bit of the Netherlands I have seen though does seem quite nice, this area is the highest area in its entire land mass, just 230m





Images Clockwise:

- ❖ Canals run through town.
- ❖ Gate post with a remembrance stone.
- ❖ Old style sign in town.
- ❖ Holland, one flat country. Highest points is just over 230m.



# PANO

**VLOEIBAAR  
EN VAST  
VLEESCHEXTRACT  
BOUILLON BLOKJES**

**—SOJA—**

**AROMA SDEPTABLETTE**





**ALLE ARTIKELEN  
VERKRIJGBAAR  
BIJ DE**

## FRANSCHÉ MOLEN

• SIKKENS • HUIS ½ KUNSTEN • IVOGRAPHIC •





above sea level at its highest point. The landscape was very green and very flat as you would expect and finally I arrived at Maastricht, Oh dear, same problem here as in Aachen, no parking or when there was parking it was €2.70 for 60 minutes even on the outskirts, I passed though a few housing estates and these even had parking meters. It's no wonder there are so many Dutch motorhomes in every other country. They cannot afford to park a camper for the day in there own country.

I was a little brassed off by now, that's two major places I haven't visited. I was on the border with Belgium so I thought I'd try my luck there instead. Brussels was entered into the TomTom but told to avoid any motorways, I figures i'd drive through a few Belgian towns first and get a feel for the country before reaching the capital.

Not long after I spotted a sign with a building on it, not knowing what it was I figured i'd have a look, I mean what else is there to do. Not long after I pulled up to what looked a bit like a French chateaux or something along those lines, It had nice gardens surrounding the impressive building with a courtyard in the centre, it even had its own small church. I walked into the information centre and asked what the place was. The lady explained it was a centre for congress, I think she actually meant a conference centre. I walked around and saw what looked like people having lectures or something through the windows.

It was time to move on again so I followed the TomTom route again. I passed through a few towns all of which i'd best describe as dreary, this was not at all as I expected. I continued on towards Brussels but the road was horrible, It was made the same as an airport runway. 10





#### Images Clockwise:

- ❖ A moat.
- ❖ The main building
- ❖ Angular gardens.



metre sections of concrete and not flat or even at that. My teeth felt like they'd fallout any second and anything that might rattle or chink in the van did so. I wasn't in a great mood to start with but this just felt like torture. I pulled over in the town of Tongeren to look at an aire i'd seen on the map and to put a wash on if possible.

The aire was €8.50 for 24 hours and included electricity, The area was in two parts, one a grassy area that would be good in summer and a paved area that was close to the sites toilets and shower block which are also in the price. All in all a good little spot and the price wasn't too bad i suppose. I opted not to stay and just sort out my washing, besides it was raining pretty hard so I decided to move on towards Brussels again.

Chatter, chatter, chink, chink time again on that flaming road, I was going insane and by the time I had reached the next town i'd had enough. As i drove i was weighing up my options, do I continue on or do I head home, some of the thoughts in my head were.

- I was missing Joanne.





- I had no Peanut to keep me company.
- I was sick of the no parking or expensive parking options lately.
- I was sick of the rain.
- Belgium so far was not my cup of tea.
- This bloody road was maddening.

My journey was only going to last for a few more days so I made a decision, I headed for the motorways and put my right foot down on the gas pedal. For a change it was me passing everything on the roads and not them passing me. After a few hundred kilometres had passed I was at Calais in France, it had been a long day so I headed straight for the Aire that's near the ferry terminal and phoned Joanne as she didn't expect me home for a week or so.

Ring Ring, Ring, Ring....

*Hello*

*It's me, I'm at Calais, have a look at the prices for ferries for me, i'm coming home.*

*Oh, er right then, I'll ring you back in ten minutes.*

Joanne rang me back but the cheapest ferry was €130 unless i waited a couple of days and then it was still €90.

*I'll get on the first ferry tomorrow and see you soon.*

*Great, i'll see you then.*

A couple of tinnies later and my long day caught up with me so I retired to bed.

The following morning I headed for the ferry terminal and booked on the first available ferry at 10.55am. A quick shower and a bit of breakfast and it was time to drive Vin onto the ship. The entrance was quite close to say the least, I had just 4cm of clearance on the sides and on the top too but I squeezed on.

I looked out and saw the huge Calais signs on the port itself and then the penny dropped, that was it then, my journey for this year was over, I had been away for a year, my arse had been in the drivers seat for 460 hours and i'd drove over 15400 km. It was a weird feeling knowing it had





come to an end. We had seen and visited some brilliant places over the last 12 months, the weather had been good for the most of it and we had met some really nice and interesting people on Our Bumbles. The bad points, well we had a few arguments, our beloved Peanut passed away and Vin got a little damaged but all in all it was well worth the time, effort and money to see and experience what we had. By the time i'd stopped thinking the loud speaker was saying the ferry was pulling into Dover harbour and it was time to disembark.

I drove Vin off and my right foot went heavy again for all the remaining 500km home. I stopped once for just nine minutes to have a brew and a quick sandwich.

I had phoned a few times on route telling Joanne I was stuck in traffic or behind schedule so I could surprise her. After a quick pit stop at Morrison's down the road from where we live to pick up a bunch of flowers and a bottle of wine, Guest what? She wasn't in so I had to phone Joanne and let her know I was home as I had left

my house keys with a neighbour before we left for the trip. So much for my surprise then.

Ten minutes later she arrived home as she'd been to the supermarket too, getting me some goodies. A quick kiss and a hug and once more we were home together. I walked into the house and it felt massive, space everywhere, even the sink seemed like you could have a bath in it, the reality is though living in a van is different from life at home, everything is smaller, the seating, the table, the sink, even the loo and shower are smaller. This will take a little time to adjust to again, no doubt as soon as I have got used to everything it'll be time to set off on another Bumble, just a couple of little jobs too do on the Van and then watch this space.

### **Total Statistics for both 2014 and 2015 trips.**

We set off on 11 April 14 and bar a couple of months back in the UK to change motorhomes we carried on travelling until December 15 enjoying the adventure all the way. So far, we have covered a total of 24,445 kilometres or 15,189 miles over 491 days. Travelling an



average of 50 km per day with the longest journey being 780 km.

We have travelled to and visited 17 countries and consumed 3,241 litres of diesel from 66 fuel stations with an average of 23 mpg.

We've filled our LPG bottles 44 times and used 932 litres of gas to heat our home, run the fridge and freezer, hot water, oven, grill, hob and last but not least our BBQ at an average cost of €0.93 per day.

We have paid 29 tolls, tunnels and mountain passes, 6 ferries and 7 flights. We've had 1 break in 1 bump, 2 reversing eeks and 1 oops when the garage door flew off at 2,425 m above sea level.

Overnight, we have stayed on 79 campsites or aires but we have grown to love wild camping and spent 412 nights where ever the road takes us.

242 supermarket sweeps and 44 evenings of fine dining.

A total of 302 days with nothing but sunshine, 109 overcast days, 21 mixed and only 54 days of rain.

So how much has it cost...€13,593.08 excluding insurance, service and road tax but includes any European repair bills. A bargain at only €27.68 per day for 2 people and 1 dog. Oh and we forgot to mention, killed each other 12 times, spent 7 days in silence and 486 days loving each other to bits.

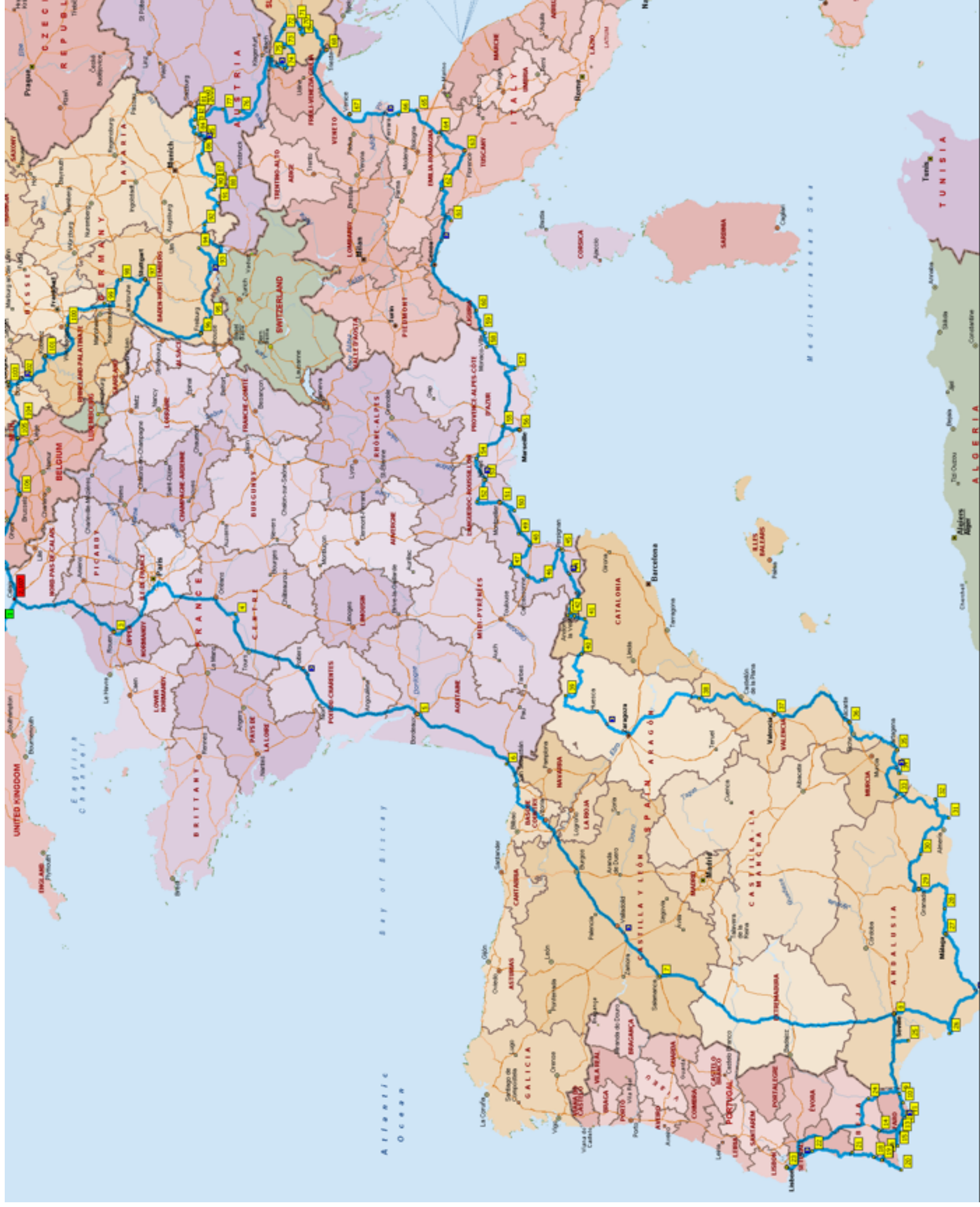
What next? Right now we have parked our motorhome and bums for a couple of months to give us time to arrange MOT, service and plan our next trip, to the IC's...Arctic and the Baltic. We are going to learn how to create and populate our own website, so we can share all our travel information (past & present). Plus we have acquired 2 cheeky little miniature dachshunds called Mac n Tosh to join Our Bumble Crew, who we need to train in readiness for their big adventure.

**Mac in on the left, Tosh is on the right. They are sat in the bathroom sink.**



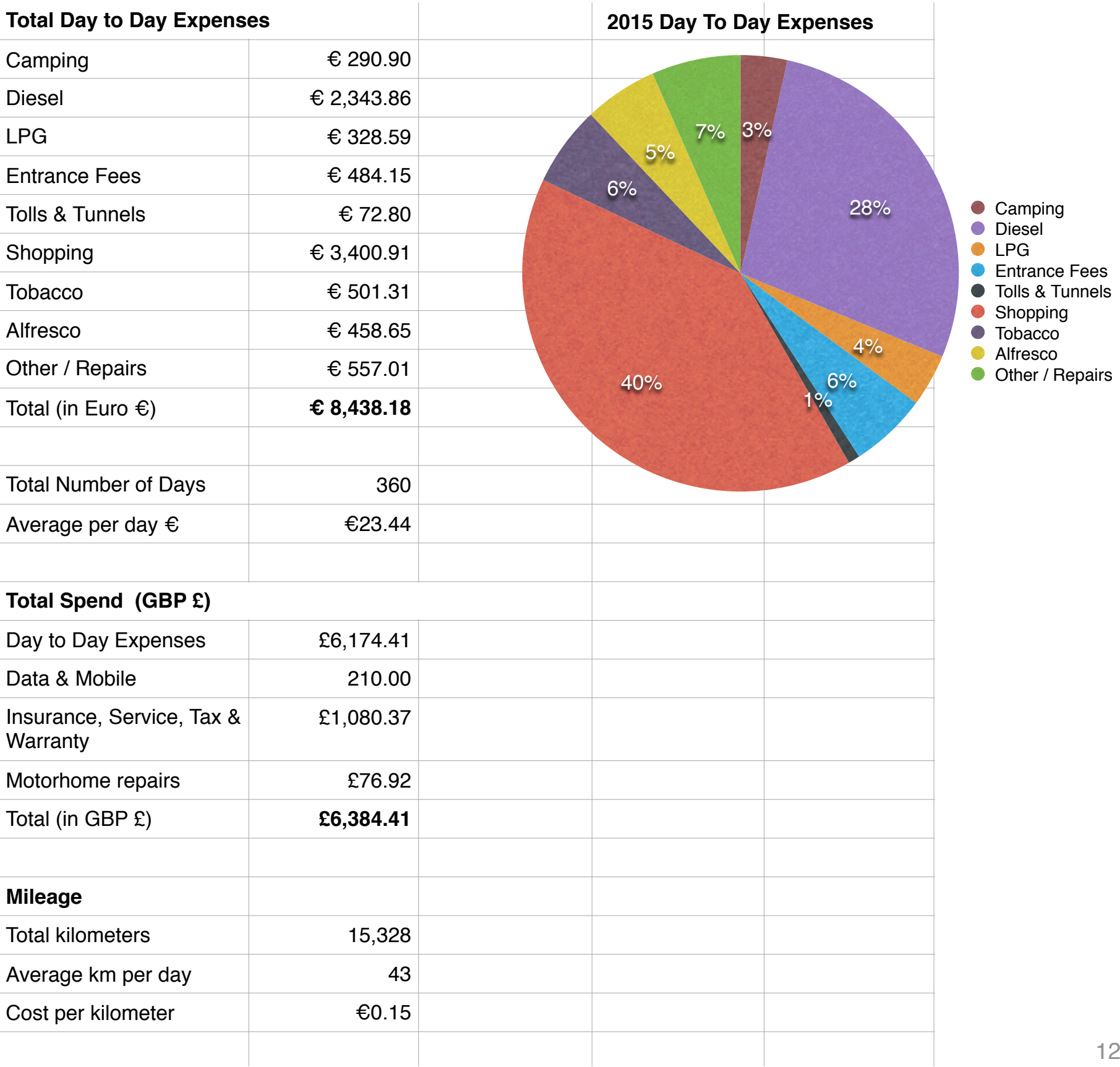


# THIS YEARS BUMBLE IN VIN.





THE FOLLOWING PAGES SHOW ALL OUR COSTING INFORMATION  
FOR OUR 360 DAY TRIP.





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Average Cost Per Country	Daily Spend	Number of Days	Average Spend Euro €	Average Spend GBP £
Portugual	€2,179.57	102	€21.37	€15.64
Spain	€2,374.85	109	€21.79	€15.94
Andorra	€65.50	3	€21.83	€15.98
France	€962.90	41	€23.49	€17.18
Italy	€856.61	38	€22.54	€16.49
Slovenia	€323.19	14	€23.09	€16.89
Austria	€135.90	4	€33.98	€24.86
Germany	€840.78	34	€24.73	€18.09
Initial / Final Journey	€698.88	15	€46.59	€34.09
Total	€8,438.18	360	€23.44	€17.15
Notes				
All daily spend in Euro €				
The total spend in GBP £ is using actual cost of £ to €, so you can see overall exchange rate 1.37				