

Pan Talk

Issue 8 - March 2015 014

The Occasional On-Line Magazine of The Northern Pan Riders

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The Cover Photo



Dent Head

No, come on now, behave. It is the view that we are talking about.

The view is of Dent Head, taken by Ruth on the descent to Dent Head Viaduct on the Settle Carlisle Railway on the club's February ride out, led by Dick and Ruth.

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A Dales Dawdle 8 Feb 2015

Dick, Ruth & Spud's Ride-Out

A cold and frosty February morning saw 5 bikes and 7 members gather on Skipton High Street readying for the first NPR Ride-Out of the year. A variety of expertly crafted excuses had been received from many members, who thought that discretion and a warm bed were preferable to freezing ones appendages off.

Fortified with Greggs coffee and bacon rolls, we set off and after passing through Gargrave took the road to Malham, and entered the Yorkshire Dales National Park. Malham Cove looked wonderful in the winter sunshine, and as we ascended on to the moor tops, it became noticeably colder (-2°C on my temperature gauge). There were plenty of icy patches to keep us all focused, especially in shady areas that the sun had not reached, and I think we all experienced a moment or two throughout the day (character building Lee!).

We followed the Settle-Carlisle railway line, an old favourite route (B6479) for the Club, and made our way to Ribbleshead Viaduct, but it was too cold and misty for a photo call, so we moved on to the twisty roads of Dentedale and some great scenery. Dinner stop, well, tea and cakes, was in the whacky Dent Village Museum and Heritage Centre, where the owner joined us and regaled us with tall tales and invites to her biker friendly camp site (definitely worth a visit if you are ever passing).



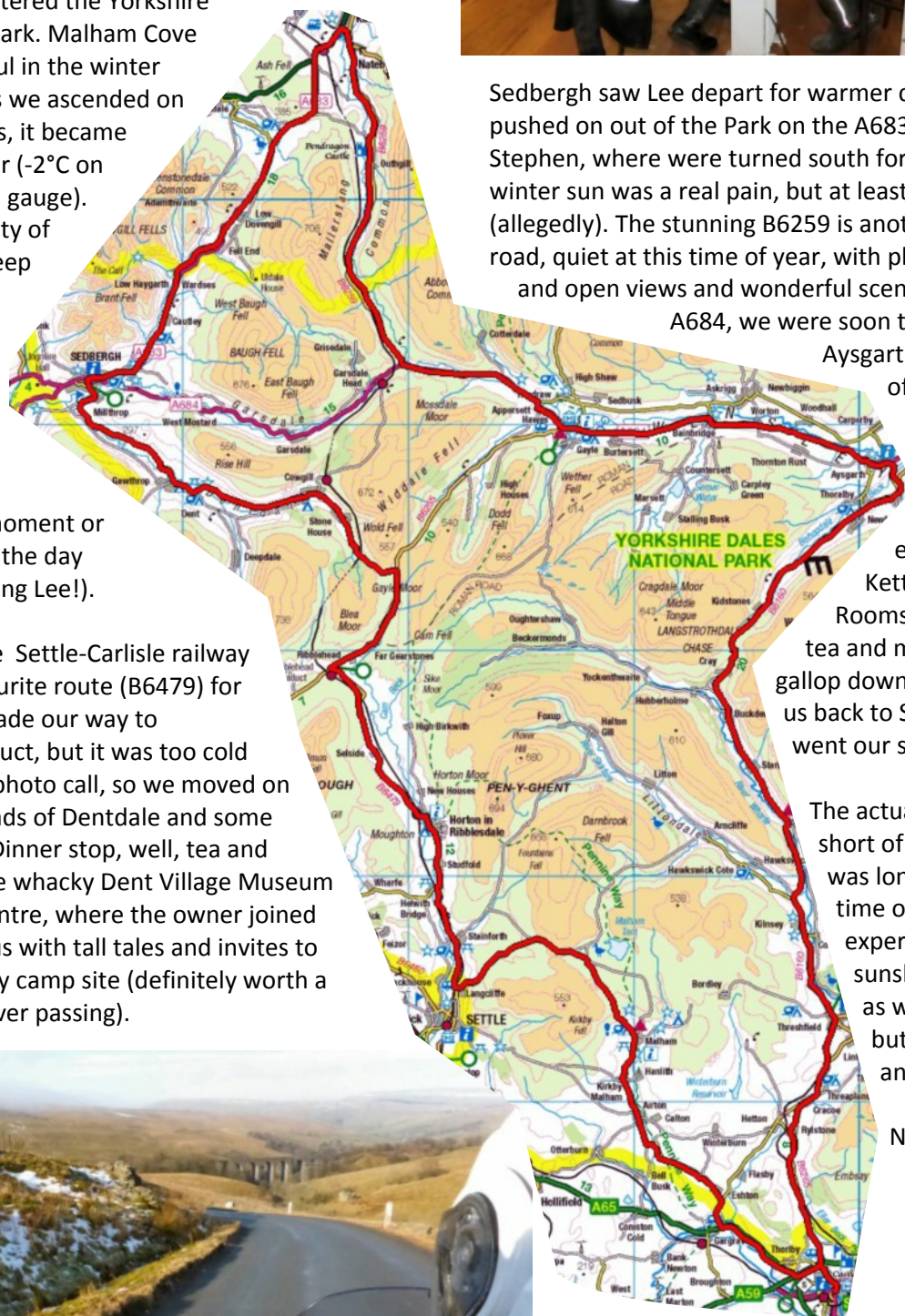
Sedbergh saw Lee depart for warmer climes and we briefly pushed on out of the Park on the A683 through Kirby Stephen, where we were turned south for Nateby. The low winter sun was a real pain, but at least slightly warmer (allegedly). The stunning B6259 is another great biking road, quiet at this time of year, with plenty of twisty bends and open views and wonderful scenery. Joining the

A684, we were soon through Hawes and Aysgarth, where we turned

off for West Burton and the run down the valley through Buckden and Starbotton to the ever popular Kettlewell Cottage Tea Rooms for much needed tea and munchies. A short gallop down the B6265 brought us back to Skipton where we went our separate ways.

The actual ride-out was just short of 115 miles, which was long enough at this time of year. We experienced brilliant sunshine and thick fog, as well as icy patches, but at least it was dry and no wind.

Not a bad day out.



Looking down to Dent Head Viaduct before the steep descent from Blea Moor into Dent Dale.



Safely down the worst bit, cunningly choosing roads that have remained in the shade, looking down DentDale.

Dent and our lunch break is 6 miles away down the narrow twisty lanes - and the icy part is on our side of the road.

Dent Head Viaduct on the right of the road is almost invisible in Summer, hidden by the trees.



Dent Village Museum and Heritage Centre

- and tearoom !

Swaledale, Buttertubs and Trough of Bowland

Richard's Swaledale and Bowland Tour - Sunday 8th March 2015

A prompt start from Sedbury lay-by - most of us had already had a good 80 minutes of riding through that horrible drizzly rain that seems to get everywhere - but by 10:00 this had stopped, and although the roads were wet, there were plenty of blue patches in the sky. It stood a reasonable chance of becoming a much nicer club ride than we had thought to be possible when we first got up. All that remained was for Richard to pack away his portable cup-holders, and we were off. Richard and Anne leading, with Alan & Jeanette back marking, leaving Alex, Dick, Andy and Tracy, John and Lynne to fill in the space in between. For some reason, marking the junctions seems a little odd: although there are six bikes, we only had to count 3 bikes through a junction before we are off again. It doesn't seem to be enough.



Descending Buttertubs Pass, cheesewire protection for the motorcyclist on the left.

We take the back roads to Richmond and then through Swaledale to Grinton, Reeth, Gunnerside and Muker, before heading over a very wild and blustery Buttertubs Pass. There are no people around and there is very little traffic. It's hard to imagine how absolutely packed from the verges to the white lines it had been during the Tour de France.

The drop down to Hawes is rubble-strewn but the run from Hawes to Ribbleshead is always a delight. This part of the Dales had clearly had some rain in the last hour or so, and the roads are still wet. At Ribbleshead, we had been thinking of getting a better photo for the website, and knew exactly which spot to choose. But the layby was full, and Whernside, which would have provided a snow-capped backdrop, was shrouded in fog. We decide to continue.

At Ingleton, we are beginning to think in terms of a break, and just after turning past a pretty decent café, Richard pulls over with a wobbly back end. It takes a couple of



Ribbleshead. Normally a good photo opportunity. Not today though.





Roadside Puncture Repair Stop.

minutes to find the nail, and another 10 minutes to discover that the pressurised can of puncture sealant merely sprays a white shaving foam substance over the road through the hole in the rear tyre. The instructions say something about warming the can in the car before using. Yeah, right.

So out comes 'The Applicator'. This is an ingenious device which injects a mushroom shaped lump of rubber through a very tiny hole. It takes six of us to read the instructions and work out exactly what they mean. None of us is really convinced that the large mushroom head could fit through that tiny hole, no matter how hard you turn the allen key. But it seems to work perfectly OK.

I make a mental note that I really must practice the procedure for fixing a puncture at the side of the road.

35 minutes after we had stopped, we are on the move again to our lunch break 20 miles away in Halton. (Halton is just above Junction 34 of the M6 on the map on the previous page).



Richard & Anne, Dick, Andy & Tracy, Alan & Jeanette, Alex setting off from The Greyhound into the afternoon sun.

We have only just arrive at The Greyhound in Halton when Garry rolls up, having had a late start he has made his way directly to the pub. It's always nice when the pub is expecting us, and they provide excellent service, and pretty good food. The pace is relaxing, the company is excellent and we emerge two hours later warm and well fed into brilliant sunshine.

The Trough of Bowland is a brilliant run - well known to locals, cyclists, groups of walkers and the car clubs, but it remains a fairly quiet area of Lancashire. It is printed on most maps as a blank space with 'Forest of Bowland' written across it, the map makers seemingly keen to preserve the anonymity of this place and they rarely make much of the delightful road that crosses it from North West to South East.



Alex nearing the summit of Waddington Fell, Trough of Bowland

Before long we hit the A59, and it is a straight run back towards Skipton, where Garry turns off, and past John & Lynne's road end where we also turn off. We bid our farewell and thanks over the intercom, and leave the hour long trip back to Squires to the remaining 5 bikes. We'll complete the run on Tuesday evening for the club's monthly social !

Many thanks Richard and Anne. A good run.

A Mid Wales Traverse

Elan Valley and Llyn Clywedog

A couple of friends of ours are currently touring in the Americas, although the word 'touring' doesn't really capture the scale of the adventure. They flew out to Buenos Aires in October with their GS, rode down to Tierra del Fuego and are making their way northwards through South America and then intend to continue all the way to Alaska. A year long journey and the trip of a lifetime. Yesterday, they crossed the equator in Ecuador. They have a blog which describes their planning and preparation, and their progress.

Follow them on www.motonoodles.com

We had joined up for 5 days last year in Scotland, both armed with our camping gear and we took them to places that they had never been before, so that they could test out their gear, the weight, where it was stowed and how easy it was to get to.

Then, before they left, they took us on a tour of Mid Wales - a traverse going against the grain of the major routes. The route below is a satnav log of where we went. It is an absolutely superb run of 168 miles on roads that I didn't even know existed. We started off in Church Stretton - because that was where we were staying - and headed off in a clockwise direction on the red route shown on the map.



The A488 and A44 were pleasant enough, functional roads in order to get us to Rhayader. From here the B4518 took us to Elan Village and the start of a series of bends which climbed up the Elan valley and past a series of reservoirs which bore a striking resemblance to the Derwent reservoirs in Derbyshire. The road stayed high above the waterline, but followed the contours until it eventually popped out onto the bleak moors above for a high level romp before dropping down into Devil's Bridge and on to Aberystwyth,

The A487 to Machynlleth isn't at all bad for a main road, whence we headed back into the hills following the un-named road heading ESE off the A489 just off the main street. This follows the Afon Dulas up to a height of around 1500ft, and then joins the B4518 heading South to the Llyn Clywedog Reservoir. A very impressive viewpoint. The B4518 emerges onto the A470 at Llandiloes which takes us back East through Newtown to Church Stretton.

Had we not started at Church Stretton, the run from Newtown towards Llandrindod Wells on the A483 is a superb ride with fast flowing bends which would complete the circuit without missing out the best moorland section - although the climp up The Long Mynd at the end of the day is rather exciting, especially if like us, you meet a car coming down the narrow steep section.

An excellent day out, and I thoroughly recommend this day long tour of about 170 miles.



Overflowing dam near Elan Village



Two views of Llyn Clywedog from the viewpoint on the B4518, North West of Llanidloes





PAN IN THE SAND



WESTERN SAHARA ADVENTURE MOROCCO

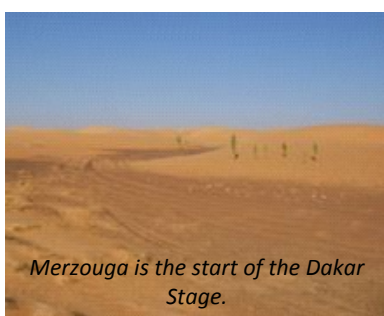
Any motorcycle tour that begins with: ***Take what you have & use what you've got*** "without additional expense" sounds like an **Austin Vince** Mondo adventure.

The Honda ST1100 and CB500 on paper "are probably two motorcycles" that are inappropriate to take off road and even attempt trail riding or desert crossings. In April myself and 4 other riders will be touring from the UK through Spain across to Morocco.

The plan is to cover 4500 miles, ride for 30 days, sleep under tarp or tent with a limited budget of £1200. The bikes will be the Pan ST1100, CB500, Yamaha XT and BMW GS1200, We'll film the whole adventure and edit it into a documentary for YouTube and broadcast it in July.

Without any backup or support we'll ride through Morocco south to Laâyoune on the Western Sahara on A+B road, trails and desert crossings before our return. During the ride south we will be heading up to the Atlas mountains and attempting various trails and desert tracks, stopping at any suitable venues for overnight halts.

One of my main objectives is to cover the 200km Dakar stage south of Fez (Erg Chebbi) on the Algeria border with Morocco, this area is heavily land mined because of the disputed territories, so accurate navigation is paramount. This Desert crossing is listed as a 2 day trip, however we have added a 3rd day to cover drop downs/bog downs and repairs!!!!!!!!!!!!



Merzouga is the start of the Dakar Stage.

The Pan European as we all know is a heavy bike so I will ensure none essential items are left in the UK, so Angela will remain at home!!!. Packing will be carefully thought out and limited clothing will be packed, wash and go as needed!!!!!! Valuable space for carrying water and fuel will take priority on the trip, as my fuel consumption will be higher due to low gear riding, No need for black tie and shoes on this trip.

Because the trip is based on a very tight budget, the luxury of eating out will be next to none, so I have acquired lots of boil in the bag food "compliments of the Armed forces. Beef stew, chicken curry, all day breakfasts, boiled rice, burgers, beef chilli, Chicken jalfrazi..... "perfect" just what you need spicy food!! – Hot bottom and sand toilets!! I will of course buy limited fruit and vegetables to supplement my poor diet, and a must will be a bottle or two of Sally's juice "VINO".

We have ear marked a few good locations to film and do some photo shoots in Morocco, we have also selected some good venues in Spain" off the tourist trails for additional filming with some TOP GEAR editing. Whilst I remain vague with the locations and routes of the trip, "There are reasons". We are trying to avoid taking the interest out of the final film broadcast.

Very few people get the opportunity to undertake a trip like this and have the grace to take a month off work, it's probably the only time in my life when I feel the time is right for an Adventure like this, there are some interesting characters in the group and god knows how it will turn out at the end. It won't be all riding and no fun, remember - I went to the University of Stupidity!!!!!! Dragged up on the turnip tops of life!!!!!!!!!! So enjoyment, fun, and frustration are my plans. See you when I return –

Dave Myers, NPR Durham

Pub Talk

Some completely irrelevant topics of conversation that have cropped up on Rides to Eat, Club Socials, or during P & T stops on monthly rides. These are things that I have either overheard or discussions in which I have taken part.

Names of months

Garry raised the question at Squires about the the names of the months. Why is it that October, for example, has the prefix 'Oct' meaning 'Eight' when it is not the eighth month of the year? The same prefix anomaly happens with September, November and December.

The answer is a complex one, but basically, the early Roman calendar had 10 months, starting in March. Later it was changed to 12 months by introducing January and February, and even later, Julius Caesar and Caesar Augustus completely reorganised the calendar, renaming two of the months after themselves. The early months still retain their reference to Roman Gods' names. The later months retain the reference to the early Roman month numbers when, for example, December was the tenth month, and October was the eighth.

The Missing 11 Days

This led on to a brief discussion about the lost 11 days as a result of calendar changes. In 1582 Pope Gregory III made a modification to correct the inaccuracies of the Julian Calendar, which over the years had fallen behind the seasons. Julius Caesar's year was too long. Although Caesar had introduced the leap year correction and the leap century correction, the calendar was still slightly inaccurate and by 1582 it was 10 days out. Pope Gregory introduced another fix for this and then lopped off 10 days in order to bring dates back into line with the the solstices and equinox. However, not wishing to be dictated to by Europe, it wasn't until 1752 that Britain adopted the new Gregorian calendar, by which time we were 11 days out of synch with the Julian Calendar and with Europe. Tourists would have to put their watches forward by 11 days when flying across the channel. That is some jet lag ! In September 1752 we put things right and dropped the 11 days to bring us literally 'up to date' with Europe. So the day after 2 September 1752 had to become 14 September 1752. There were riots. People thought that 11 days of their lives had been stolen from them and they didn't want to use the new calendar.

There are suggestions that this was one of the origins of the 12 days of Christmas. For many years, Christmas had been celebrated on 6th January. The date was shifted in Emperor Constantine's reign (his statue is outside York Minster) to 25th December, and there are stories of Christmas celebrations lasting to the 6th January. The adoption of the Gregorian calendar and the loss of 11 days coincidentally meant that Christmas Day fell on the day that it would once have been celebrated on the old calendar. In parts of the UK, 6th January is still referred to as 'Old Christmas', and of course we still have the 12 days of Christmas, Twelfth Night, removal of Christmas decorations, and Epiphany. It seems unlikely that the lost 11 days is the real explanation, but it is now there in the mix with all of the other possibilities.

Getting to Europe

There was some interesting exchange of anecdotes about the pros and cons of the Santander Ferry versus the Channel Tunnel as a means of getting to Spain, The Alps and to Southern France.

Chunnel - drive on, park bike pointing to left hand side of train on side stand, and hope the driver doesn't brake too hard. Takes about 40 minutes, stand with bike. Front wheel clamps are no longer used. About 560 miles to get anywhere close to the Alps - perhaps less if using the motorway.

Ferry - Plymouth or Portsmouth to Santander or Bilbao. Ferry takes a day, straight off ferry and into the Picos d'Europa or a short ride to the Pyrenees. Arrive sometimes after Breakfast, sometimes mid afternoon. Relaxing journey - providing you can cope with sailing. The Pont Haven ferry is a massive ship, bigger and drier than the Titanic, and rides the waves well. The ferry from Portsmouth takes about 5 hours longer than the ferry from Plymouth.

Ferry from Hull to Zeebrugge. Shorter journey, smaller ship. A good alternative to having to ride down to the South Coast.

Disadvantage of Ferries - Brittany Ferries have been known to change sailing times and to cancel crossings due to strikes or other industrial action, which the French seem to like to do during holiday periods.

Similar things have been known to happen on the Chunnel. When it does happen, queues at St Pancras build up rapidly. But at least there is one train every 30 minutes or so. The Spain ferry sails twice per week.

Northern Pan Riders' Website

northernpanriders.co.uk

nprclub.co.uk

The club website is updated regularly with photographs, videos of rides and news of up and coming events.

Some things of which you may not be aware:

You can subscribe to the news page.

This means that if you fill in your email address at the bottom of the News Page, we will send you an email every time a new item is added.

You can follow us on Twitter

Twitter tends to get a bad press because of the way that some people use it, but it can be a very useful tool, and you don't have to be inundated with unwanted messages. NPR's latest Twitter posts appear on the Calendar page. Only the ones that are posted by us appear, and if you click the 'follow' button, you will be sent an email whenever we post a new tweet. You do not get any of the messages that other people send out - unless you follow them too.

I try to place a tweet in the week before an event as a reminder that something is going on. If you follow us, twitter will then send you an email whenever we put out an alert like this. You can also send us a tweet - but it won't appear on the website unless we have read and approved it.

You can send us comments from the web site

Just click the 'Contact Us' link at the top. The message goes directly to Richard, the webmaster and broadcaster, and is provided as a quick and easy way for anyone (including non-members) to get in touch with the club.

You can access our Facebook account...

...from the Social menu. This is completely independent of the website and allows people to exchange comments and share photos. You need to be logged on to your Facebook account to get the full benefit.

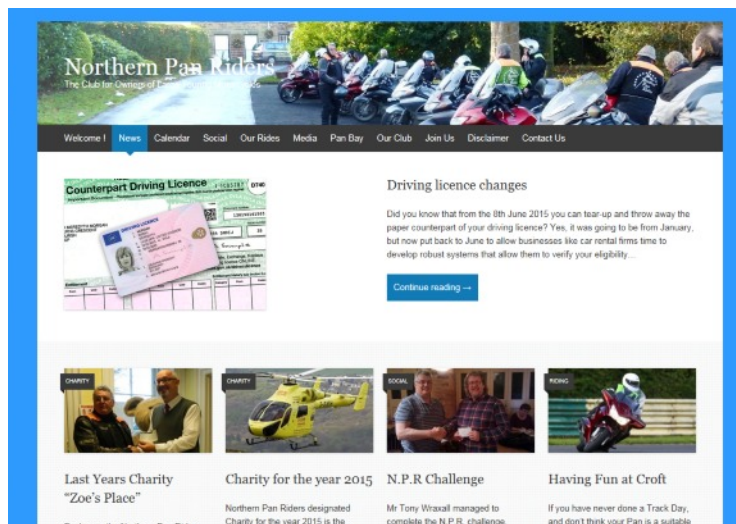
The Calendar is Always Up to Date

We have the standard club events in the calendar for the next year. The website always shows the next calendar entry at the top. On different pages you will see selected extracts from the calendar - the next social events, the list of next rides, the list of RIMBYs that are in the calendar.

Richard has recently added a 'month to view' Calendar to the website. If you use Google Calendars for your own diary planning, I'm sure he will be able to give you the link to incorporate the NPR entries into your own calendar.

Interctive Google Maps

These now appear on some of the pages - particularly the pages for Club Rides Out, Rides to Eat, Monthly Social Events and links from the Calendar main page and sidebars.



Zumo Maps & Routes

It's interesting to read the various comments on forums about the alleged routing inaccuracies that are attributed to Garmin satnavs. These are not the quirky attempts to get you to drive down the motorway slip road and then immediately rejoin the motorway (because it is a shorter route), but rather complaints I have read about about problems with Garmin not taking the route that was fed into it; problems with figure of 8 routes; problems with always trying to take you back to a waypoint that was accidentally positioned 10 metres up a side road.

First a bit of information. People seem to use the terms Waypoints, Favourites, Via Points, Shaping Points interchangeably. Example. Add a Way Point to a map and then make it part of a route. When you see the map downloaded to the Zumo, it refers to it as a via point. It is confusing, because I seem to remember the Zumo 550 treating Waypoints and Via Points slightly differently. Some use the term 'Via Point' to refer to points which are created by dragging the route to follow a particular road, whereas others call them 'shaping points'.

So to avoid any confusion, I am going to use my own terms in this article:

Named point: A place on the map which you have located, stored and given a name. Often referred to by Garmin as a Waypoint or as a Favourite.

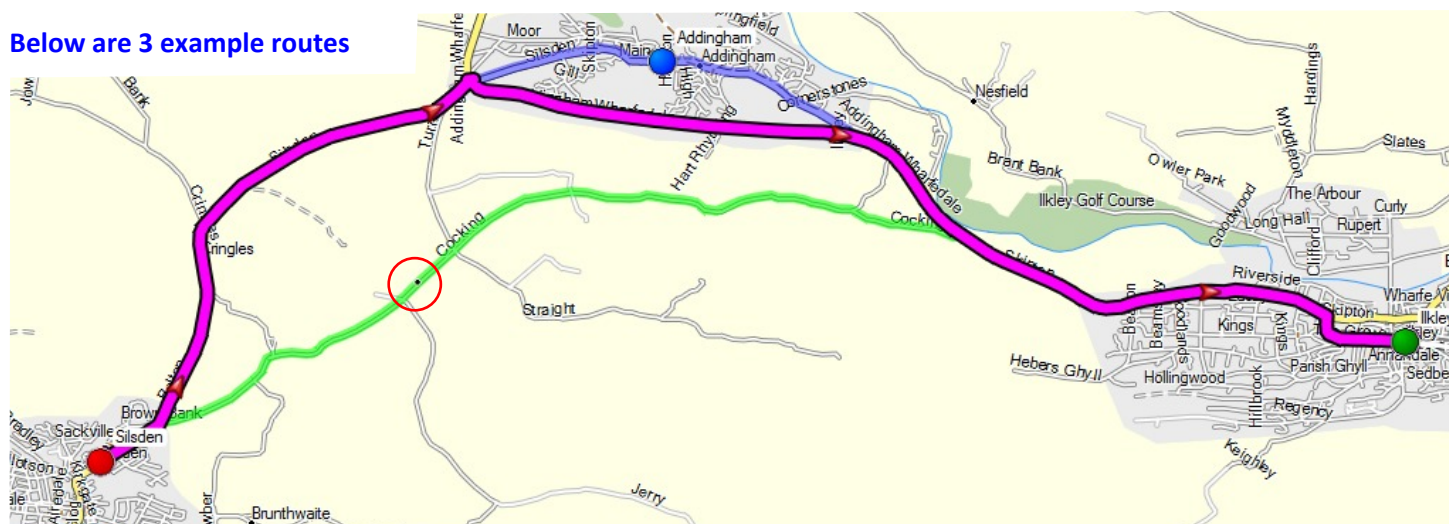
Start & End Points: Named points at each end of the route.

Mid Points: Any *named* points that you include as part of the route.

Drag point: A nameless point on the map which you have inserted in BaseCamp or MapSource by dragging the route to force it along a particular road.

Ghost Point : It is not possible for you to create a ghost point yourself. They are created by Garmin software to ensure that the route received by the Zumo is identical to the route sent from the BaseCamp or MapSource.

Below are 3 example routes



The Purple Route. **Start and End Points** are Silsden and Ilkley respectively. MapSource has created the best route using its routing options (which I can set). Although the actual route consists of only two points, the GPX file which is sent to Zumo contains 170 additional **Ghost Points**. These make sure that no matter what routing preferences are set on the Zumo, it will follow the precise route that it has plotted on the map. Garmin refers to these Ghost Points as 'Route Point Extensions'.

The Blue Route. Here I have created a **Mid Point**, saved it with the name 'Addingham' and included the **Mid Point** in the description of the route. So the route is Silsden - Addingham - Ilkley. The software works out the blue route, and it includes 244 **Ghost Points** in the GPX file that it transmits to the Zumo. When navigating, The **Mid Point** (Addingham) shows up on the list of 'turns' and will be spoken by the Zumo voice. The Zumo 660 refers to this as a via point.

The Green Route Has just a **Start and End Point** at Silsden and Ilkley respectively. However, I started with a copy of the purple route that MapSource offered, and I dragged a point on the route to force it along Cocking Lane. You can see the little black dot which indicates the presence of my **Drag Point** on the green route. The Drag Point appears in the list of route 'via points' and in the 'Directions' in MapSource and also in the list that is transferred to the Zumo, but the arrival at the **Drag Point** is not announced on the display or by the voice. The Drag Point is also referred to as a 'Via Point' on some Zumo screens. Again, the Ghost Points ensure that the Zumo follows exactly the same route that is plotted on the map.

Ok - so that is a simple example of what happens when everything is working as it should. Now read on to find out why I believe that some people think that the Garmin doesn't behave properly with their routes.

Reason 1 BaseCamp/Mapsource does not have exactly the same version of the maps installed.

If the identical map version is not installed, then it is quite likely that some of the ghost points created by the software on your PC do not correspond exactly to locations on the road by your Zumo. Having missed the ghost points, the Zumo software thinks you have gone off course **and recalculates the entire route**, using its own routing preferences and ignoring any future ghost points that it had received from Mapsource/BaseCamp. Since the ghost points were put there specifically to ensure that the route on the Zumo matches what was put into MapSource/BaseCamp, the route will now be different from the one that you intended.

Solution: Make sure that the maps are the same versions. Your Zumo will tell you if it has to recalculate the route because of this - providing that you have not turned off this option.

Reason 2 You didn't use MapSource / BaseCamp in order to calculate your route.

Using other software to plan a route is perfectly OK, but the chance of getting the exact same route as your Zumo is not guaranteed. (See 3rd map at the bottom of Page 19). Programs like Google Maps will create a route with its own Ghost Points to force the route to follow a particular path. However, these seem to be arbitrarily positioned. Crucially, the mapping that is used to create the route isn't precisely the same as the one in the Zumo, so a point that was on a road in (say) Google Maps may be slightly off route on the Zumo map or slightly up a side road. Both of these situations may force the satnav to recalculate the entire route, or divert you up a one way street.

Reason 3 When navigating, you go 'off route'.

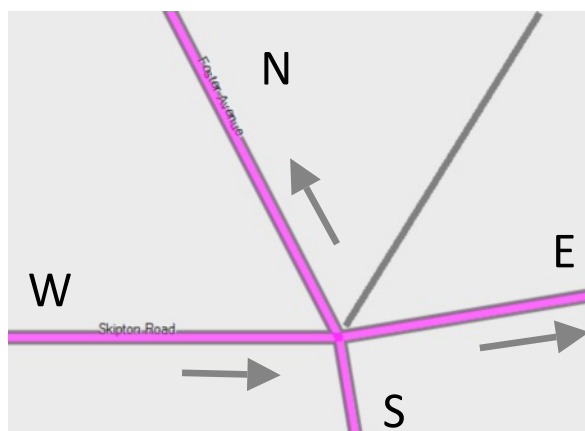
It doesn't matter which software you use to create the route, if you go in a different direction to the one that Zumo has plotted, it no longer has any Ghost Points to follow. It will be forced to recalculate a route from where you are now to the next **Mid Point** or **End Point**. But it will now use its own rules to find the best route. So even though there is a purple route to follow on the screen, this is no longer the one that you originally plotted. All that the Zumo is interested in is getting you to your next Mid Point or End Point, by whatever route it now calculates.

The good news is that as soon as you arrive at the next **Mid Point** on the original route, the Zumo will pick up the original route and continue as if nothing had happened.

The above scenario is easily verified by plotting a figure of eight route and observing what happens at the cross roads where the route crosses over itself. No matter where you have placed your Mid Points, the Ghost Points will correctly force the satnav to take you across the junction along the correct route. Eg - in the diagram, the plotted route starts from the south, crosses the junction going north, takes a left hand loop and then approaches the same junction from the west and heads off eastwards.

At the junction, the satnav will always direct you to take the road heading North, even though it has just crossed the West East route.

However, if at the junction you decide to *deliberately* take the wrong route - eg by turning right (East), the satnav will not complain. You should have gone North, but it will pick up the West-East **Ghost Points** after a hundred metres or so, realise that you are on the correct route and continue to navigate from there. It will do this, even if you had intended to visit half a dozen **Mid Points** after the cross roads. By deliberately going East, you have missed out these **Mid Points** and picked up the original route at a later stage, and the Garmin doesn't care. If you then realise your deliberate error, turn round and head up the North branch, the Garmin will resume its original course and take you via the half dozen mid-points, as originally intended.



If however you took the dark grey side road heading north-east, that would be different. You have gone off the route, and all the satnav can do is try to recover by calculating a brand new route, using its own rules, to your next plotted **Mid Point**. Now the satnav shows a brand new purple route which no longer follows the ghost points which were set out in the original map on the PC. It will pick up the original route at the next **Mid Point**.

Some Golden Rules.

Never create a circular route. You will reach the **end point** as soon as you set off, and the Garmin will stop its navigation. Instead, put the start point half a mile up the road. The Garmin will start its navigation as soon as you reach the start point.

Think carefully before saying 'Yes' to navigate to the start point. Garmin treats this as a separate route, and when you get to the start, it will stop navigating. You will have to re-select the intended route.

If you imported your route from a non-Garmin mapping utility, the ghost points will not work as they do with Zumo. Subsequently, if the route is recalculated (you get a message on the screen), you will have lost your original route. Best thing to do is to stop navigation, and select the route again. This will put the correctly plotted route back into the satnav.

The above is also true with **Mid Points** imported from Google Maps.

If your Garmin says that the route was calculated with a different version of the map, then check that all of your **Mid Points** have been put into the newly calculated routes. Note also that the Garmin will use its own settings (eg shortest distance / fastest route) rather than the ones that you set in Mapsource or Basecamp when you first plotted the route.

Updating Maps.

I have never had problems with software updates or with installing the latest version of the maps, but it is not a particularly easy process. For a start, Garmin seem to be easing MapSource out of the picture and it is becoming increasingly difficult to use MapSource with the later downloads. From my point of view, BaseCamp is an excellent bit of software, but I find it cumbersome and it stores all of my routes in one database. This means that should anything go wrong with my computer, I lose all of my routes. This has happened twice now.

Installing the maps takes forever, and it is possible to run out of memory on the Zumo. Something that I found out after having waited for 5 hours for it to complete installation.

The recent update to the installation process continues to differ from the way that I expect software to present itself, and I have to look hard to find the options that I know should be there, but they never seem to fall under my mouse as easily as I would expect. Every time I use the installation software, it has changed its appearance, but I must admit, it is getting better than it used to be.

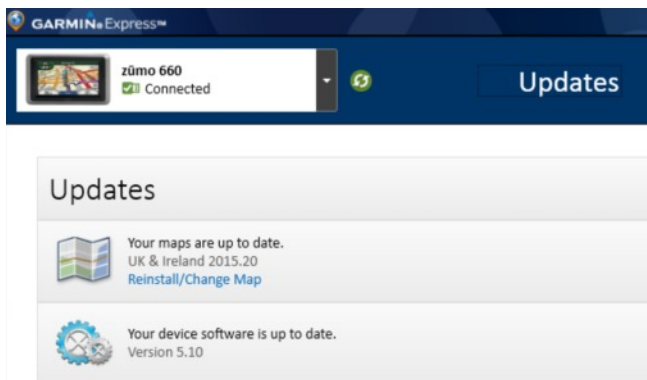
On the next page are some screenshots that I saved during this process, to give some indication of the options that are available. The program is Garmin Express, which is downloadable from Garmin. [Google it.](#)

I haven't bothered to annotate it. I find that Garmin changes its software so frequently that it would be a waste of time - but its handy to know the sort of facilities that exist - hence the screen shots.

Once the map is installed on the PC, Basecamp and MapSource should be able to use it.

All I am trying to say in this little article is that the Garmin seems to behave unpredictably. In fact, its behaviour is entirely predictable and depends on how you put the route into the Garmin in the first place, and what you do when you are riding. I have always used Mapsource to transfer routes and rarely have problems.

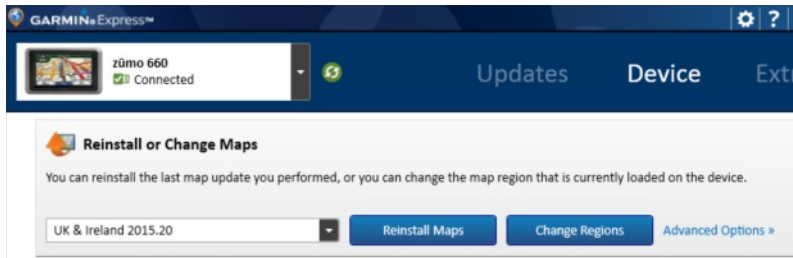
If in doubt about where your current route is taking you, stop navigation, and re-select the desired route. This will stop it nagging you to visit a Mid Point that you decided to miss. If you have gone away from the original route, then you will have to get yourself to anywhere on your route. As soon as you get there, the Zumo will start to Navigate again.



I was going to put some notes together on how to download and install Garmin maps on both the Zumo and on the PC.

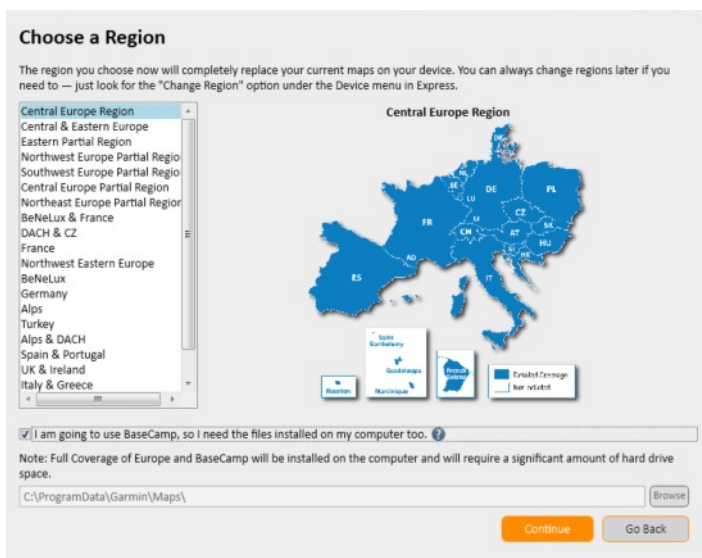
Garmin seem to be trying to get away from the idea of putting maps onto a PC according to one helpdesk assistant to whom I spoke. Instead they are preferring that you connect the Zumo to Basecamp each time you want to plot a route.

The fact that the Zumo can be used in the car and may be in use by your partner at the time you want to plan a route, seems to have escaped them !



When I came to write up the process, the software had changed since I obtained the screen shots a few weeks earlier. So I abandoned the idea.

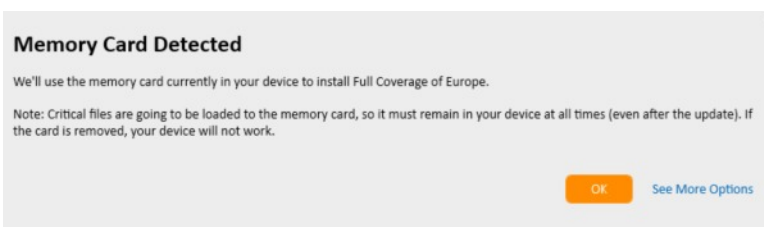
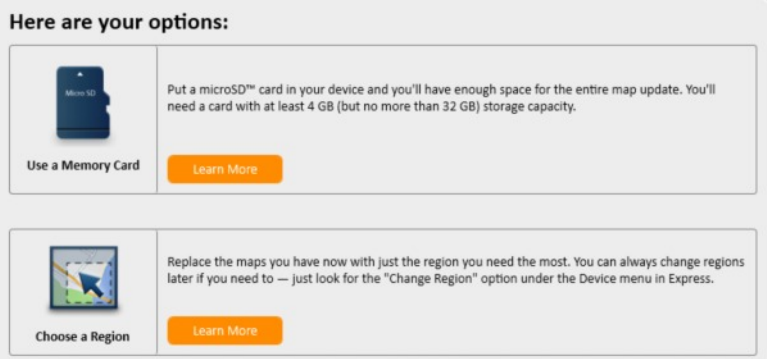
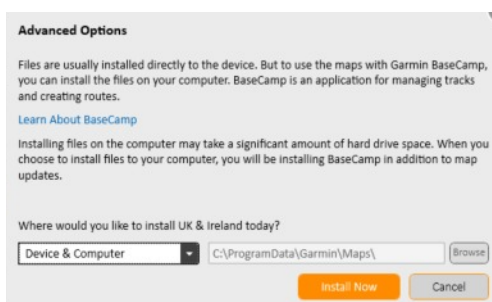
Instead, I have kept these screen shots to give an indication of some of the features that you can look for when doing the installation.

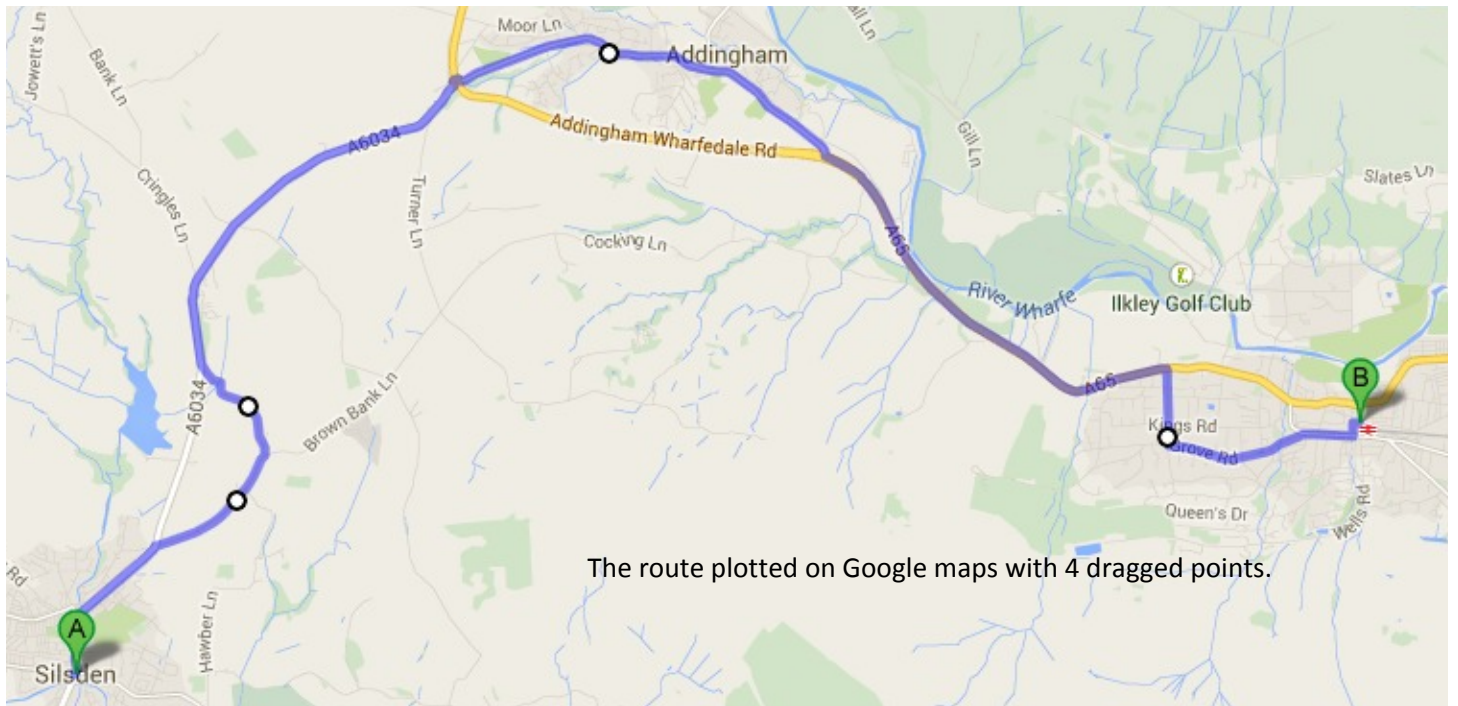


If installing the European maps, it is quite likely that the Zumo does not have enough memory. There are two options to solve this problem:-

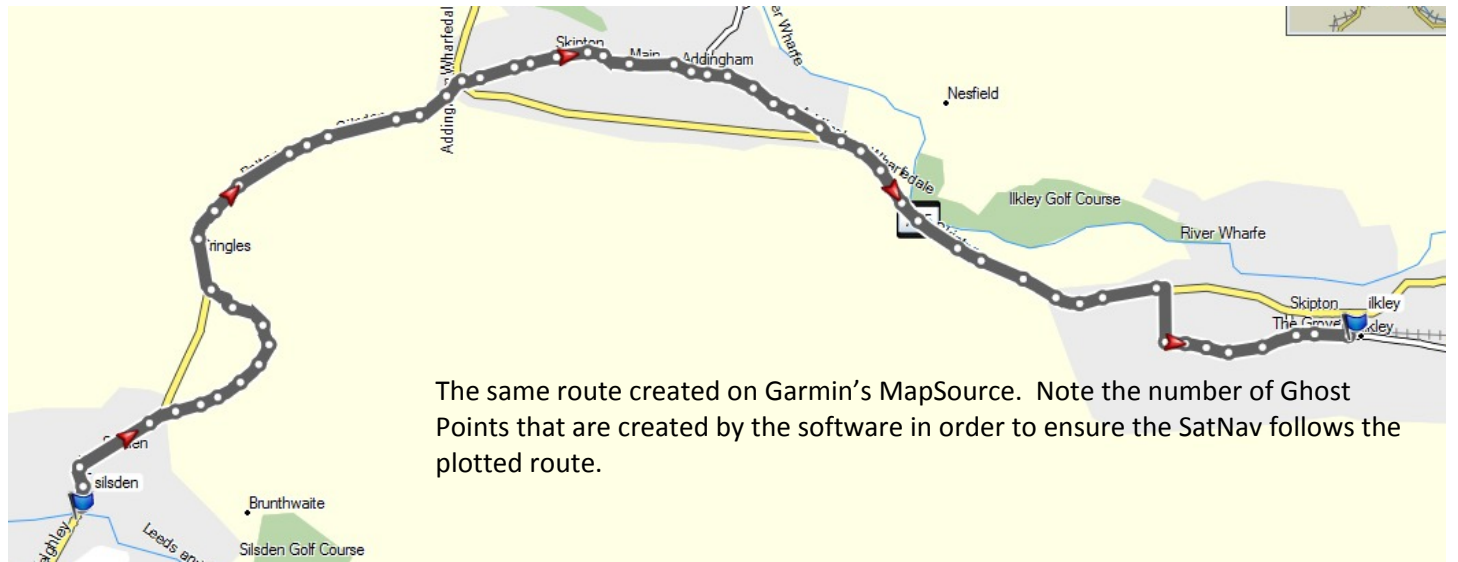
- i) Install the maps onto the Micro SDHC card
- ii) Select only the areas of Europe that you wish to install.

Both option still exist in Garmin Express, but you have to look for them. Note the little blue 'Advanced Options' in the second screen shot, and the easy to ignore 'Updates / Device / Extras' menu at the top. IT took me a while to realise that it was a menu and not a caption.

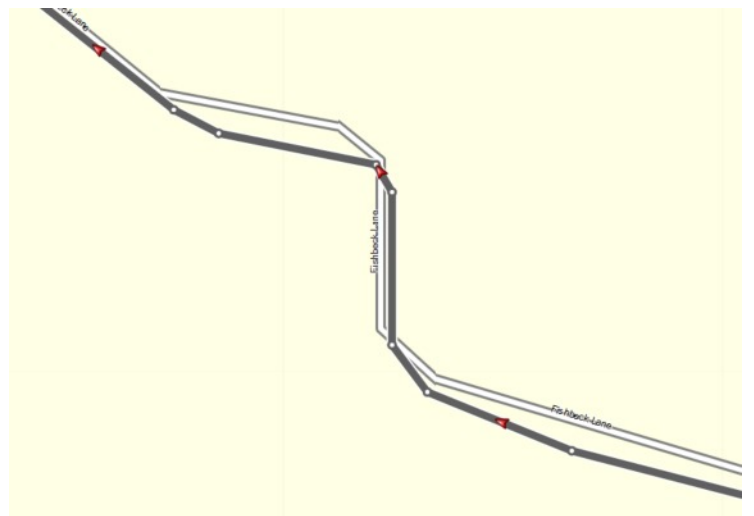
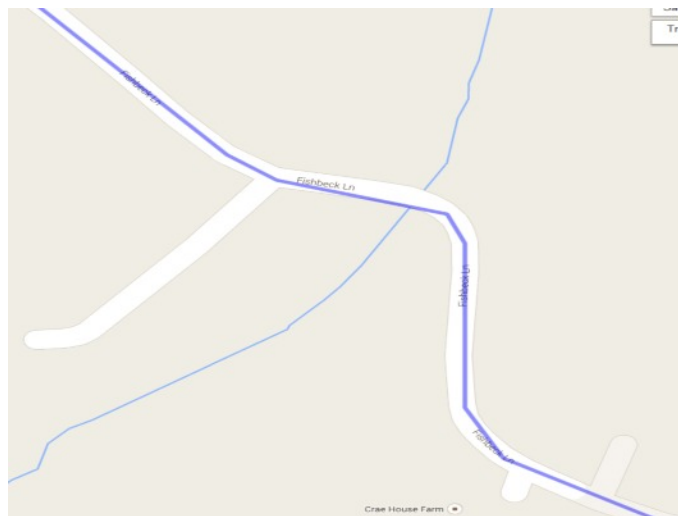




The route plotted on Google maps with 4 dragged points.



The same route created on Garmin's MapSource. Note the number of Ghost Points that are created by the software in order to ensure the SatNav follows the plotted route.



Two maps illustrating the difference between Google Maps and Garmin Maps. On the left, a section of the route plotted on Google Maps. The blue route follows the road exactly. On the right, the same GPX file has been loaded into the Garmin Map on Map Source, which is identical to the map on the SatNav. Note how the two roads do not match up. The Ghost Points that the SatNav uses are not actually on the route. Does this represent a deviation from the route which Garmin would need to recalculate? I don't know, but it is likely. If it does, then the SatNav will recalculate the entire route using just the start and end points and lose any of the interesting locations that you had intended to visit.

Zumo 660 - A few random notes and observations.

These are notes that I have prepared in order to try to establish the pattern of behaviour of my Zumo in certain circumstances. It is worth noting that when I got my Zumo 660, I noticed that it behaved slightly differently from my Zumo 550, but this was probably due to the way that route points were treated when they were first entered.

What does the SatNav do if you fail to visit a Mid Point ?

One of two things. It either nags you to take turnings until you have visited the Mid Point, or it just lets you carry on without saying anything. The behaviour is entirely predictable if you spot the circumstances.

If after passing the Mid Point you are still on the intended route, the SatNav doesn't care. This could happen if the MidPoint involves turning up a side road, visiting the point and then doubling back to rejoin the road. Immediately you pass the turning, you are on the next leg of the journey, and the SatNav lets you continue in peace.

If the MidPoint is some slight detour - leaving a by-pass to pick up a friend in a village, perhaps. Your friend phones, and doesn't need picking up, so you remain on the by-pass, away from the intended route. The SatNav will nag you to go to the Waypoint by whichever means it thinks is the shortest. It may be a U turn at first, or it may try to take you up a side road. If you stay on the by-pass, the original intended route will meet up with the by pass again - at which point, the SatNav will stop Nagging you. It does not care that you didn't visit the Mid Point.

If you never meet up with the originally planned route, the SatNav has to resort to the only information that it has - ie the next scheduled MidPoint, and it will try forever to take you back there. You will not be able to see the original route on the SatNav screen, because the SatNav will have recalculated a new route to the next Mid Point.

I carried out some experimental drives in order to establish exactly what the Zumo does if you ignore a MidPoint, a Drag Point or a Ghost Point. For the tests I plotted a route with Mid Points and Drag points which I knew I would ignore because I had placed them to one side of my intended route. These were 'pit-stop' like deviations - go off route at one point and rejoin the route further down the road.

Recent experiment to and from Keighley.

Failing to visit a mid point does NOT cause a complete recalculation. In this instance it took me to the destination, via the intermediate drag point. The satnavs preferred route is to go via Pickard Lane. The drag point was at the bend/junction at the top of North Street after the Pickard Lane junction.

This test does not conclusively answer the question: "Does it navigate to the end point or to the next Mid Point. ?"

Neither does it answer the questions:

"Does missing a Mid Point behave in the same way as missing a drag point."

"When does the satnav decide whether or not to stop nagging."

"And what happens to the rest of the route if you miss a drag point."

"Do imported points from Google all act like drag points."

Experiment Sat 7 Feb to try to answer the above questions.

To Ilkley with Plotted Mid Points and End points, plus a couple of off route drag points.

I ignored all of the drag points and all of the Mid points which I had set off route.

The Zumo tried to take me to the Mid Points until I met up with the plotted route (between two plotted midpoints).

For the Drag points, it tried to navigate me to them, but wasn't bothered by me ignoring them.

*For the return journey I used a Google map, exported by Visualiser to GPX and put on to the memory card. Zumo imported the route from the GPX track that it recognised. The route was originally plotted correctly, with all of the slight detours. However, as soon as I ignored one of the route points, Zumo calculated a brand new route from where I was to the **end point**. It completely ignored all of the remaining points that I had plotted in Google Maps. By aborting the navigation and reloading the route, all would be restored - until the next time I ignored a route point.*

It is worth considering that if you use Google Maps, its good idea to have the 'Recalculate' warning turned on. If it is turned off, you would never know that the route you entered is no longer being followed.

Tour des Grandes Alps

September 2014



John & Lynne



Tour des Grandes Alps

September 2014

Previously we had been quite happy doing our own thing for touring holidays - planning the route, booking the hotels and such like - we even went to night school in order to learn some Spanish - and we had some excellent tours on the ST1100 and on the ST1300. We splashed out on these and enjoyed the Paradores hotels in Spain, when they were still state owned and we enjoyed the juxtaposition of the smart casual evening dress and the morning riding gear. What we didn't have was anyone to talk to in the evening with whom we could share the days experiences.

The organised tours solved that problem for us, and we have been with Dave Galloway of White Rose Tours and a long time member of Northern Pan Riders, for 2 European trips - one to Austria and another to Spain and Portugal. They were brilliant and we were due to join him again this year for an Alpine trip, but the date clashed with our son coming back to the UK from Australia. Reluctantly, we had to remove our name from Dave's list.

This Alpine trip was one that we did later in the year with a different company. I have to say that it was nowhere near as good as the White Rose Tours trips that we had been on previously, but it had the other ingredients of the hotels, meals and routes being organised for us, and it gave us the benefit of company in the evenings with to share the experiences of the day.

The first issue was that this trip used the channel tunnel link. No problem there, except that it meant getting down to Folkestone for 7:00 in the morning, being cooped up in a metal box, followed by a 273 mile trip on motorways. We normally make our touring trips start from the moment we leave home and will typically take a couple of days to get to our port of departure, for example by touring down to Plymouth for the ferry through Derbyshire and across to Wales, so we would take a couple of days to ride down south.

For the chunnel, I tried to find a decent route but the best option seemed to be to take the M1, A14 and M11 and get it over with. We could have done it in one day, especially since our first stop was in Canterbury, but it gave us a relaxing day to look around this delightful old town.

The organised tour was 11 days and 10 nights. Our own trip took 14 days and covered 2756 miles, 562 of which were getting to and from Folkestone by the most direct route possible. This extract for PanTalk starts at Day 4 - the second day of the organised tour and it misses off the last 2 days. This is just the best bits.

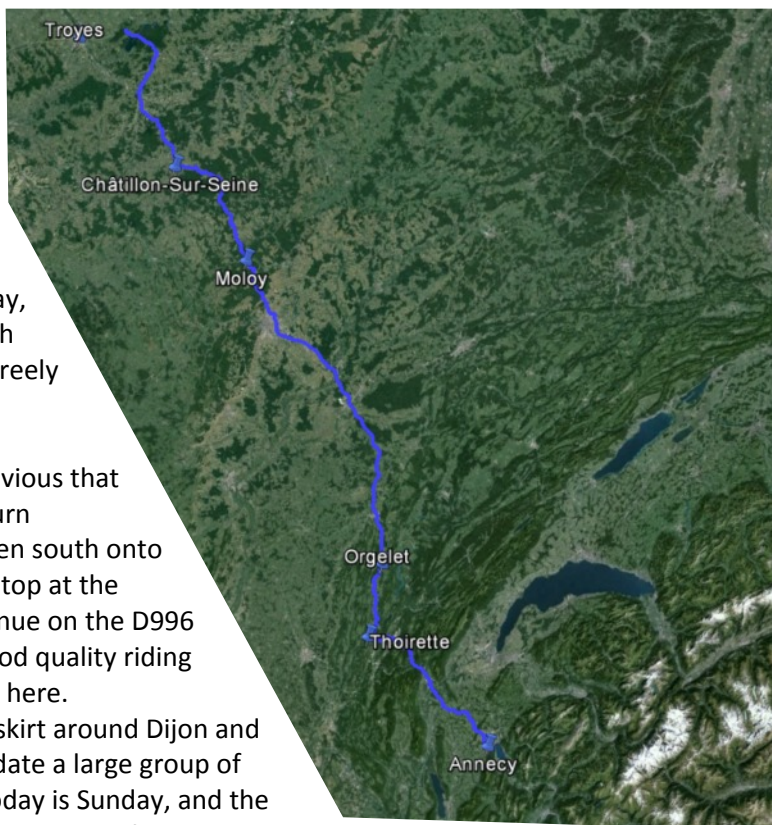
Day 4 Sunday 31st August

Troyes to Annecy - 252 Miles

The overnight stop at the Golfing Hotel near Troyes about 90 miles South of Reims was good. Today we set off once more in the knowledge that we are getting closer to the hillier sections. The morning ride starts of in much the same vein as we finished yesterday, but now the long straight sections are interspersed with some curvy bits. The countryside begins to roll more freely and many of the roads are lightly forested.

From the names of the village signposts, it becomes obvious that we are following the route of the River Seine and we turn Eastwards at Châtillon sur Seine onto the D928 and then south onto the superbly twisting forest road of the D996. A brief stop at the bridge over the small river at Molo and then we continue on the D996 towards Dijon. This is more like it - the first taste of good quality riding roads after 3 days of motorways and main roads to get here.

Unfortunately, we then have to take the motorway to skirt around Dijon and to get lunch. We need somewhere that can accommodate a large group of bikers, and service stations provide that and petrol. Today is Sunday, and the food outlets are full to bursting with hundreds of people queuing for the checkouts and there's nowhere to sit. But there's a newsagent type of place common in many UK service stations and it has large fridges with a decent looking selection of sandwiches and ready made mixed salads. No queuing, so we opt for this and sit outside on one of those large boulders which are often used to separate parking areas from the grass for our picnic.



Meandering descent to Thoirette

After lunch we continue on major roads to Orgelet and onto the D109. This takes us into 27 miles of superb country roads, forested, rolling and twisty. Nice.

Until now, the roads have been gently undulating and I hadn't been aware of any serious climbing - the countryside had a similar appearance to the low lying agricultural areas that we had driven through on the first day. But now, the roadsides are beginning to have more trees, and isn't until they disappear that I take much notice, because their presence has been blocking the long distance views. We are surrounded by hills, the 'sea level' countryside is now plunging away on our left hand side into a deep valley. It seems that for some time, we had been riding across a plateau which is 1500ft above sea level, and we have made our way to the start of a glaciated valley, now occupied by the river L'Ain. A long way ahead, we will cross the river at the bridge at Thoirette, but the descent is gradual and it takes 5 miles to reach the bridge as the road slaloms its way down the valley side. What few cars there are take a little while to get past and the group becomes fragmented.



Bridge over L'Ain, Thoirette

It is pretty good riding, and for the first time on our long journey south, the dark grey clouds that greeted us at the start of the day have been replaced with white fluffy ones. There are large patches of blue sky and when we emerge from the shadow of the valley side, the sun makes its first appearance. Someone wants a photograph and stops while the others catch up, so we all stop to stretch our legs and take a photo of our bikes, just in case the sun doesn't appear again.



Metafalon-Granges - Roadside Cafe

Our leader is a little frustrated by this impromptu stop as it seems that he has one scheduled just up the road.

The D936 from Thoirette is a very sinuous road, hairpinning its way up the opposite side of the valley. It is now very hot and a stop at the top of the climb at a wayside cafe at Metafalon-Granges provides a welcome break, and we treat ourselves to cold drinks and ice creams before our final ride into the town of Annecy.

With hills on the skyline, the motorway sections are well behind us and the twisties are beginning to have some gradient to them. Some of the riders are getting excited and their riding becomes twitchy and they are not content with staying in formation. With any group of riders, there is the usual mix of competencies, and as always, the ones who like to ride fast are not necessarily the same as the ones who are the 'good' riders. Some see a line of bikers as a race and forever feel the need to overtake. Goodness knows why, they don't have a satnav and the leader is just ahead. The most annoying ones are those who blast past on the straight, cut in before they have finished the overtaking manoeuvre and then hold us up on the bends. We begin to recognise the ones that seem to feel a need to demonstrate their prowess in this way and we give them plenty of room to have their own accidents without involving us - a course of action which turned out to be a sensible one on subsequent days.



Annecy - Clean Canals and cafes galore

Now the motorways are out of the way, today's run has been pretty good - we caught glimpses of the high Alps at various times this afternoon and we will be in amongst the mountain passes tomorrow. This has been a good warm up exercise.

Our hotel room is small, but it has air conditioning which helps after the heat of the last part of the day. There is no food laid on tonight, but Annecy is a lovely old centre with grid layout streets, cobbled and loads of old buildings. It has numerous canals, shallow, fast flowing with clean water and boardwalks along the side. There are hundreds of places to eat and we have a superb pizza sitting in the open air. Later we have a long walk around the town during which we manage to get lost and eventually find ourselves again after long conversations about the name of the street and the name of the hotel. Normally I am careful to take note of such things, but tonight for some reason, I didn't bother.

Had we been by ourselves, we would have taken an extra day here.

Day 5 Monday 1st September

Annecy to Castellaine 272 Miles (9073-9345)

Yesterday had been another long haul with a couple of very nice twisties thrown in to give the route some much needed variety. Today, we would hit the Alps proper, but first we had some very nice winding country roads to enjoy. The D912 and D911 head south through the Parc du Massif des Bauges and are followed by long, relatively traffic free sections of the N6. We turn south again and pick up the D902 which takes us over a series of 5 cols in not so rapid succession. From the start of the ascent of Col du Telegraphe to the village at the bottom of Col de Vars is 44 miles, and a total climb of around 13,500 ft and about the same in descent. Some of the paragraph headings below are hyperlinks to my on-board video of the route.

[Col du Telegraphe](#) (1566m) is an 11km climb from the town at the valley bottom, the rest of the group are way ahead as two of us get held up for a while at some road works, which is brilliant - there are no bikes in front to spoil the lines, and no bikes behind to worry about last second overtakes. This leaves me free to enjoy the run to the top by myself. The road is a two lane affair with hairpins which have plenty of room to tip the bike in and power it out. Although the valley is steep there is little sense of any exposure as much of the route is lined with trees and grassy verges. For such a high mountain road, this has the feel of a jaunt in the country, with the added bonus of some pretty good hairpins. The descent is much less sinuous and gives good views of the mountains across the other side of the valley, with enough straight road time to take the occasional glance.

[The Col du Galibier](#) (2642m) introduces itself gently as it weaves its way up the valley as if it was a typical Scottish Glen. These warm up exercises give way to a series of serious hairpins, still plenty wide enough for two way traffic, but steep enough to require consideration for vehicles coming in the other direction. These are great fun, and the backdrop is superb - and one bend even has a photographer on hand to provide evidence of our visit. Pity he was knelt down in the middle of the road, somewhat spoiling the line through the corner. Near the top, we ignore the direct route through the tunnel which by-passes the most exposed section. The road gets narrower and steeper, and the inside line of the hairpins becomes too tight to negotiate. The edge of the strip of tarmac becomes the skyline on many of these bends and although the road is in much better condition, less steep and the bends not as tight as many of the climbs in the Yorkshire Dales, the psychological aspect of there being nothing beyond the edge of the road demands that I take much greater care.

[Col d'Izoard](#) begins its climb from Briançon as a series of gently sweeping bends to the village of Cervières, after which it starts to get much more interesting. The hairpins are comfortably tight, the road is wide and the surface is dry. It couldn't be better than this. At the edge of the road are tiny barriers which, in the event of a spill would serve no useful purpose other than to catapult us over the edge. What they are effective at doing though, is to delineate the road edge and





The new-look 'infinity tarmac' on the descent of Galibier, where the stretch of road we are riding melds into the tarmac in the distance. Lucky that there was a bit of white line there to protect us.

prevent the eye from being distracted by the parallax motion effect that can be induced by being so close to the sheer drop.

Towards the top, the road is built on the side of a steeply sloping, scree strewn mountain which has curious pillars of solid rock scattered around as if some pre-historic stone mason had dumped his reject monoliths there. As we descend, the the road is carved out of solid rock, and the route has a more liberal scattering of trees. It is still a long way down to the valley floor, but the ride is all engrossing, incredibly good fun and truly superb - up and down. Looking through the videos for photographs, I am amazed at the scenery. I had hardly noticed it at the time, always focusing on the next vanishing point, which is a shame really.



Some of the impressive rock pillars and scree slopes on the descent of Col d'Izoard

Col de Vars (2108m) (no video)

With the descent of Izoard completed, the narrow limestone gorge opens out into the town of Guillestre, where I discover exactly how many hours of video I can get onto a 32Gb memory card. The answer is 30 minutes less than I need in order to film to the top of Col de Vars. We continue southwards on the D902, in a series of hairpins which are quite gentle compared to those of the previous cols. The ridge to the cols is lined with trees on the lower slopes but the road, the view and the throttle all open up after the first 4 miles. The next 7 miles are along fast flowing bends and the riding is relatively relaxed - too relaxed for one member of the group who nearly comes to grief on a deceptively sharp bend near the top.

A conveniently placed cafe / ice cream bar is located at the top at nearly 7000ft - about twice the height of Snowdon - and we bask in the sunshine.

The remainder of the route is along the Route Napoleon - a main road with plenty of twists and turns - but we can maintain a good pace. We need to. From the top of Col de Vars, we still have 105 miles to do before we get to Castellane and it is already 15:20. The road is very scenic, sometimes through open countryside, sometimes hemmed in by steep limestone gorges. I get chance to do a bit of on-the-move Geology, admiring the steeply inclined bedded limestone - still impressed by the colossal forces involved in folding the rocks into a massive arch, underneath which we would now be riding, had it not been eroded away by the elements and the river over thousands of years. We stop briefly in order to fill up with petrol, and we enjoy the final flourish of the bends that the D902 throws at us as we gradually descend into Castellane at 18:12. Surely not. We finish with the Route Napoleon for the day at 18:12 ?

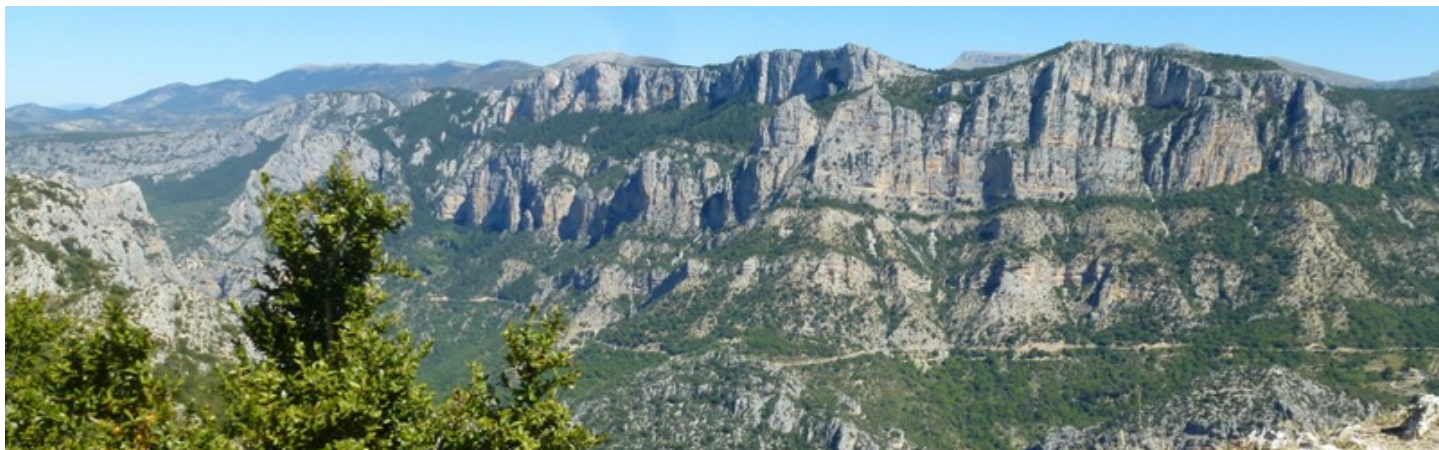
That's what the log on the satnav says when I import it into my mapping software.

The hotel is pleasant, but there is no air conditioning in the room, and it is still quite warm outside. We are told that it isn't necessary - the hotel gets quite cool in the evening and overnight - and indeed this turns out to be the case.

As is usual after a few days of riding, I find I am cornering faster, my neck muscles stretch further than normal as my head attempts to stay vertical in the bends. The result is that tonight, I am aching all over. My neck, my arms and the muscles down the side of my body are all complaining. It was a pretty good day's riding though.



The Main Square, Castellane



Day 6 Tuesday 2nd September

Solo Tour from Castellane - Gorges du Verdon - Start 9345, End 9425. 80 Miles

Castellane is in the Alpes-de-Haute-Provence about 30 miles from the Mediterranean coast, and 50m West of Monaco. Its about 2375ft above sea level - about the same height as Ingleborough. The sun is up and illuminates the square on which our hotel is located - but as it doesn't get to be overhead until about 13:30 local time, and the morning air remains refreshingly cool.

It's a day off today, so we decide to do our own thing, away from the antics of some of the riders, and we decide to head off around the Gorges du Verdon. The route is already in my satnav and we start along the D952 as soon as we are ready. The road rises gently for much of the initial part of the journey as it weaves between the high cliffs of Jurassic limestone on the right, and the low concrete wall on the left.

The riding is superb, but the edges are littered with boulders, and the overhanging rock faces restrict the amount of right hand lean that is possible without cracking my head on the overhanging rocks. I had clocked the smaller rock fragments earlier and had made a mental note to give the edges on the blind corners a little more respect. The fissile nature of the rock face and the relatively small amount of road debris seemed to be at odds with each other. I had begun to wonder about why this should be, when the solution emerged around the corner sporting a bright yellow blade and occupying what seemed at the time to be more than its fair share of the road.

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The D952 hewn into the northern side of the Gorge



The Italian Job ? A snow plough clears the overnight rockfall

Quite a surprise to see a snow plough out in 30+ degree heat, but no drama. I can't imagine why, at the moment it came into view, that I decided to think about that opening scene in the film of the original Italian Job.

Occasionally, a break in the low concrete wall on the left reveals what it is hiding from view: nothing. Absolutely nothing. And it continues to obscure nothing until our eyes manage to focus 700m down to the bottom where it becomes a turquoise-white ribbon of water.

A while later, a viewpoint beckons, and we stop to take a peek. The ribbon of water has turned into an artificially dammed turquoise lake. There are a couple of bridges, and the tiny specks of the canoeists way down below add a scale to the vista. In 10 minutes we would be down there and

starting the twisty hairpin ascent up to the rim of the Gorges on the other side of the river, along the D71.

Aiguines is a small town at the top of one series of bends. Narrow streets with shops on either sides. There are plenty of cafés, but nowhere handy to park. We amble along slowly wondering how such an oasis of life and colour can spring up half way up a dusty, scrub covered hillside. On the left, we pass a cobbled area which has tables and brollies and

trees. It looks ideal - but there is nowhere to park, and it looks as though we may be starting to leave this delightful little village. A couple of hundred yards further on, the road divides to make way for a line of parked cars in the middle, and up ahead is a motorbike sized space. It looked very much like an invitation, so we strip off our biking gear, stow it into the panniers, slip on our sandals, and wander back to the cobbles to sit in the shade and the dapple, enjoy a coffee or two, a very light bite, a pleasant and helpful waitress and sit and watch the world go past. Someone has to do it, and today is our turn. One of the advantages, we find, of travelling solo or in smaller groups is that we don't have to find as much parking or as many tables / chairs to sit at. This is bliss. We can get up and go whenever we fancy and there is no rallying cry to move us on to the next leg of a long haul. We are still there when about six of our group ride past on the same route looking hot and thirsty, but unable to find enough space for all of their bikes.



Lac de Sainte Croix



Aiguines

Eventually we move off, but we pass a tempting boulangerie where rather interesting things are being done with long sticks of bread and fillings. We select something unpronounceable and a cold drink it and pack it away for a picnic stop a little way down the road. This turns out to be a small lay-by overlooking the gorge and across to the opposite wall, along which we could just make out the narrow thread of road along which we had ridden earlier, clinging to steep hillside. (See photo at top of previous page). From here, it looks rather precarious, and there is a certain amount of disbelief that we had ridden along it without really thinking about the precipice on our left. At this very moment there is probably someone looking across from the other side thinking exactly the same thing about the road that we are now on.

Over the picnic lunch, I turn my attention to the road we are on. The occasional glints from cars in the distance can be seen zig-zagging their way up the hillside in the distance. At the last zig the glints seem to be on the very edge of the sheer cliff face but there is no sign that the cars turn back away from the edge. Slightly alarmingly, the glints just disappear. We can see where we expect the road to turn, but there is no sign. They've gone.





Gorge du Verdon

I keep my thoughts to myself and eventually we set off again from our lunch break. The climb up to the start of the zig-zags is uneventful, and we don't notice the complete absence of cars coming in the opposite direction. That's Ok, the road is grippy and the bends are good fun and engrossing. Previous thoughts of sheer cliff faces and lemmings up ahead are reasonably easy to dismiss.

When we get up there, all becomes apparent. Indeed the road does go straight to the edge - there is a sturdy guard fence for pedestrians who wish to lean over and peer straight down the 700m drop - but the road turns and carries on inside the rock face in a passage which has been blasted out of the cliff face. Its outside edge has a series of Juliet Balconies looking out across the gorge. In spite of the open air picture windows the passage has a

few blind corners which require headlights to be switched on and sunglasses to be peered over. These, as there are a few of them, are called the Tunnels du Fayet. Google searches show old photographs which reveal a much more open side to the tunnel, and the course of a tramway rather than a road. Presumably only relatively recently has the open side been supported up with massive stone built pillars as they do not appear on the old photos.



Tunnel du Fayet

We return to Castellane via a superb single track back road which twists its way through a narrow gorge. Marked as a white road on the Michelin Map, this is the D52 running North to Castellane and is a much more intimate experience of gorge riding - the stream that has carved out the route is just below us and the road is hugging the side of the gorge, following its every twist and turn. Often in front we can see deep indentations and swirl marks in the rock face where a previous level of the stream had carved its way into the limestone.

This had been a short, 60 mile jaunt along superb roads with fantastic scenery. The sun was cracking the flags all day, and by the time we get back we are eager to get our biking gear off, have a shower and enjoy a pint or two of ice cold beer sitting by the hotel pool.

A Google Earth 3D view of the route clinging to the gorge side on the D952 and the hillside of the D71 through Aiguines.

The turquoise coloured Lac de Sainte Croix on the left.



Day 7 Wednesday 3rd September

Castellane

Today is a scheduled rest day, and although locations such as Monaco, the Mediterranean coastal routes and even some of the higher mountain passes would make a good days outing, we decided that after 5 days of hard riding, we would really rather spend the time enjoying the local area. So we have a ride out to the petrol station and practice using the pay at the pump card systems. This is always a source of amusement and frustration.

The card that we got from Yorkshire Bank and topped up with Euros is designed specifically to work in such situations, but as it turns out, it fails more often than it works. Feeling embarrassed and confused in such situations is bad enough, but doing it in a foreign language is much worse. Fortunately debit cards and credit cards come to the rescue.

The hotel in Castellane looks out over a market square and this has all sorts of residential roads emerging into it. We sort out components for a picnic lunch which we later enjoy at a table around the hotel pool with a glass of beer. The bread is superb, the pesto mix is laced with garlic and tastes excellent.

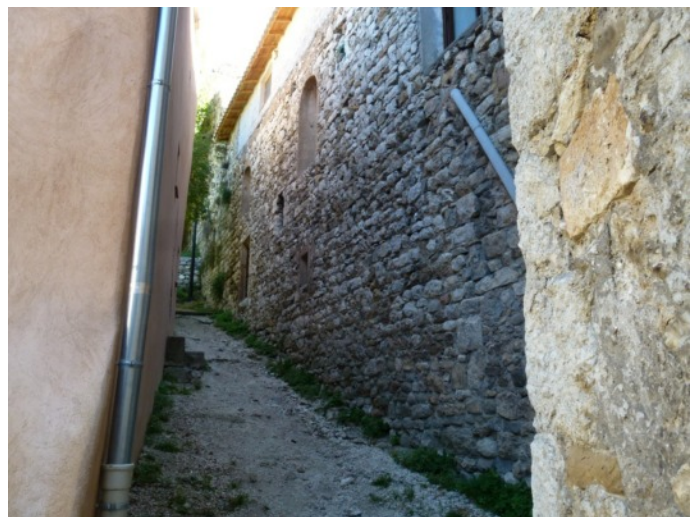
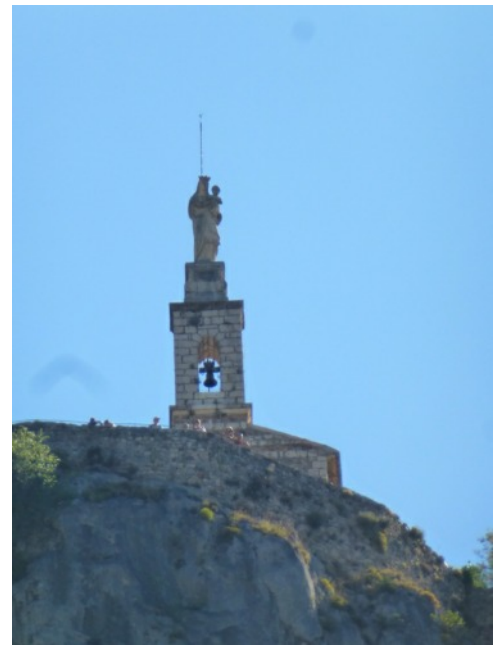
The rest of the day is spent wandering around the town, being eyed suspiciously by the



local residents as we invade parts of the labyrinth of streets that are not normally visited by tourists, but these quaint old village locations are some of the things that we like about touring around. We pick a dark passageway leading off the main square and explore between the high windowless walls of the surrounding

buildings. Frequently, the passages lead into quiet secluded squares, the neighbouring houses sheltering each other from the heat and intensely bright sunlight of the square. Looking back, the passageways are arched and illuminated by the outer sunlight, the entrance offering glimpses onto the market scene. What looked like a dark and dingy passageway on the way in makes a lot of sense when looking back out.





Day 8 Thursday 4th September

Heading North - Castellane to Les Saisies. Route Napoleon, Mountain Passes, Rural Roads

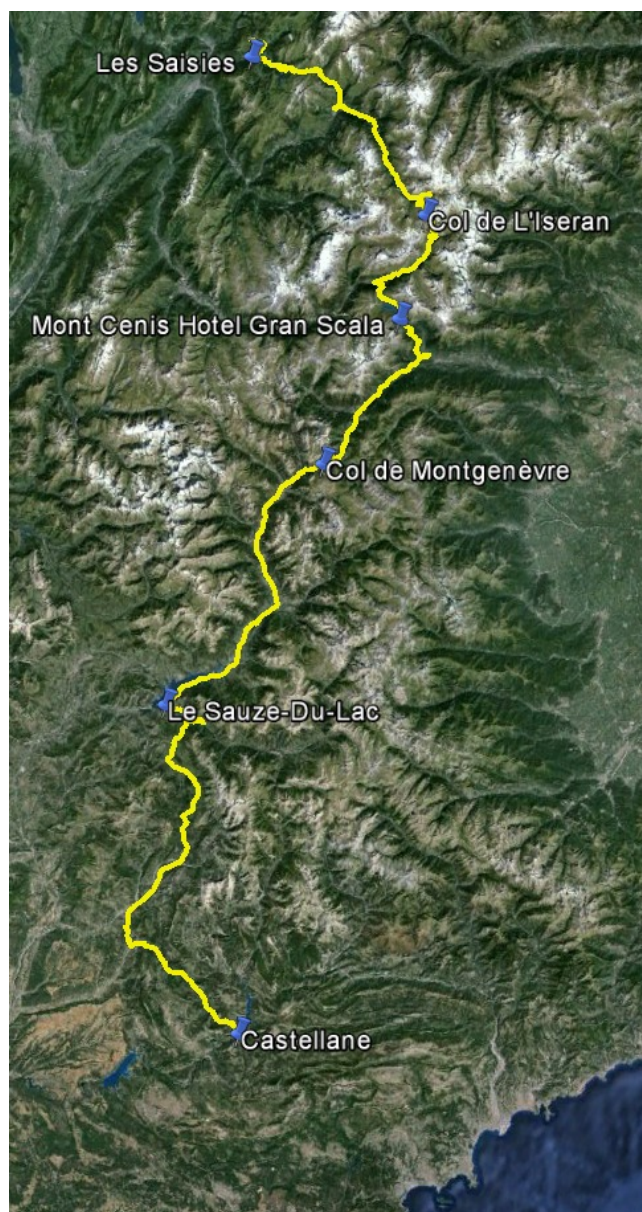
Start: 9425, End: 9687 - 262 Miles

We decide to head off before the rest of the group. Today is a long day and it will be nice to set our own pit-stops and enjoy the flowing bends of the D4085 Route Napoleon without having to keep an eye open for the other bikers in the group. It's 7:52 local time when we set off - and the early morning September sun is casting long shadows. At the moment it is behind us, but the later the hairpins and the uphill gradients contrive to make the sun appear to sit on the Armco barrier of the next bend.

However, for much of the time, the route is in the shade of the mountains, the air is still icy cold and we are considering stopping to put on the heated jackets. The ride is fast, flowing and fun.

After about an hour we enter the first big town that we have seen for a while - Digne les Bains. There's plenty of traffic around, but it is hardly rush hour. The Route Napoleon continues along the N85 in a NW direction. Our route heads North-East along the D900. If Route Napoleon is as good as that last hour, I must come back and do the rest one day.

It's another 30 minutes before the wide open valley road begins its ascent to Col du Labouret - a wide road, gently twisting along the Ravin de Combe Fère. This is absolutely superb riding. The bends come thick and fast, the surface is grippy, inspires confident riding and rewards good road positioning. It goes on like this for miles. We are 2 hours into the morning stint before we start to look for a place to stop.



Le Sauze du Lac sits high above Lac de Serre-Ponçon. The approach to it is up another small series of tight bends followed by a couple of hairpins. We met the MG owners club once before on a Pan Riders tour over Birkdale Common, above Keld. They didn't know which side of the road they should be on then either, so there was little chance that they would be any different on French Roads. We always fancied having an MG, but on this limited experience, I don't think I'll bother. They all seem to have faulty steering.

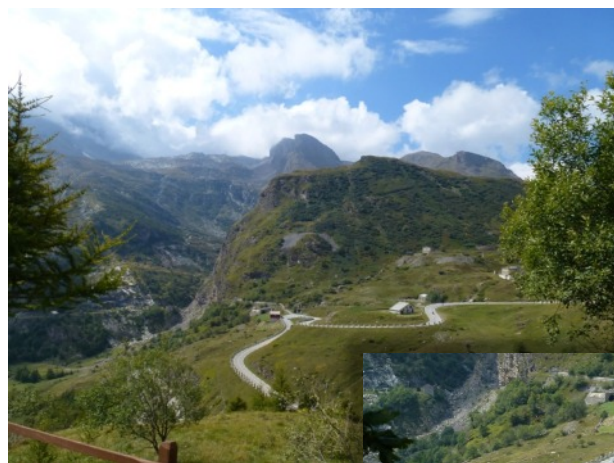
The café at the top at Le Sauze du Lac was just right. It overlooked the lake, and had a nice place to sit outside to warm us through. The sun was much higher now, but many of the roads we had been on were still in the shade. Some of the other customers were foreigners and treated the waiter as if he was stupid, compensating for their inability to speak the language by raising their voice. Occasionally they would stand up, look over the rail that surrounded the seating area and jeer at another of their MG Owners Club driving past.

We are embarrassed to be British, and quietly ordered our coffee in French, which probably didn't fool anyone.

The Ride to Col du Mont Cenis. Clearly this was once a popular destination, with many old hotels on sides of road. One of the less tired looking is near the top - the Hôtel Gran Scala - looks as



A Google Earth Image of the route taken. The Mediterranean is in the bottom right corner.



The View and the nice series of bends up to the Col du Mont Cenis.



though it might offer some lunch. Inside is a surprise, a quiet bar with tables and a counter which doesn't seem to know whether it is a bar or a cafe. Behind the bar is a large restaurant with many more people than the empty car park would suggest is possible, and views down the valley that we have just climbed. But in the bar we have a simple lunch and then go outside to inspect the nice view back down the mountain hairpins and enjoy the sounds of the countryside and the occasional missed gear change of the cars and bikes coming up the hill.

The ride from here reminds us of the excellent riding in Scotland - the quality of the roads, the riding and the way that the surrounding green hills rise from the bottom of the wide glaciated valley.

The climb to Col d'Iseran is much narrower and I am beginning to see a pattern emerging. The greater the exposure and the severity of the

drop, the less there is in roadside protection. On the Route Napoleon we had good, solid Armco barriers with nothing much to worry about at the side. The climb to Col du Mont Cenis had large concrete blocks joined with solid round steel rails. Now, as the road narrows to begin the ascent to Col d'Iseran, we get flimsy posts, and thin wire mesh fencing protecting us from a long steep grassy descent to the valley bottom. Towards the top, only the edge of the road marks the start of a very steep rocky plummet. Why bother putting a barrier there if there's a high probability of something destroying it ?



Col d'Iseran

Val d'Iser is a name that conjures up images of the glamorous jet set ski resorts. Today, it doesn't quite live up to those images. Only the very tops of the hills have snow on them, and the mountain sides are streaked with the rockfall gullies and the scars of thousands of years of glaciation. Here, the view of the mountains is one of a mess of shattered rock.

Although we feel that we have reached the valley bottom once we pass through Val d'Iser, we are still at 1844 metres. The road is better, smoother and wider now and continues to hairpin its way down the hill through much greener surroundings. This is the D902 and we are heading roughly North towards Bourg-St-Maurice following the valley of the l'Iser

river. The road climbs through a heavily wooded area via a series of tight hairpins with not quite enough room on the straights to get past the two Harleys in front, to the Chapieux at a lowly 1462m. Its hardly worth giving this one a name really - the Cormet de Roselend which follows is much more worth of a title. Lac de Roseland adds a much needed tint of blue to the landscape, before we descend through the Défilé d'Entreroches. Somewhere over to the right is Mont Blanc. For such a big mountain it does an incredibly good job of making itself invisible.

Our hotel is a Hotel La Calgary in Les Saisies - a Swiss chalet style building at the top of the Col des Saisies, and there is a garage in which we can lock away our bike. We get our gear off, have a shower and sit outside at a table, sheltered from the sun under a brolly, drinking a beer or two.

A long day, but a truly superb ride.

Day 9 Friday 5th September

Les Saisies to Hotel La Val, Rueras Switzerland

Start: 9687 End: 9878 191 Miles

We have a very light breakfast, our stomachs not quite awake, and we set off early again, although the others are already making moves towards the garage as we leave. The run from the Col des Saisie is delightful and the scenery, although we have not yet crossed the border, has a decidedly Swiss feel to it. There are sections of this route that are a delight - nowhere near the standard of yesterday's run, but there are plenty of quiet back roads with lots of alpine style twists and turns.

Late breakfast at Col de la Farclaz



Within a couple of hours we were ready for a rest and a coffee and to make up for the lack of much to eat at breakfast. We climb the innocuous Col de Montets where we cross the border into Switzerland, and then the more inspiring Col de la Farclaz, where a South facing hotel has its brollies out, looking across the road towards the mountain range. Mont Blanc is closer to us than yesterday, but it manages to hide itself again. We park in a prominent position, aware that the rest of the group are only a police stop behind us, but only one of the group goes past, and he doesn't recognise the bike.

We sit in the sun, watch the tourists go by and have coffee and croissants. The car park spoils the view a bit, but we're not complaining. This turns out to be the high point of the day, with a rather horrendous section following.

A couple of minutes down the road, we spot the rest of the group, who must have gone past while we were paying up, taking photos of the what should have been an impressive view down the valley, but the air was heavy with moisture.

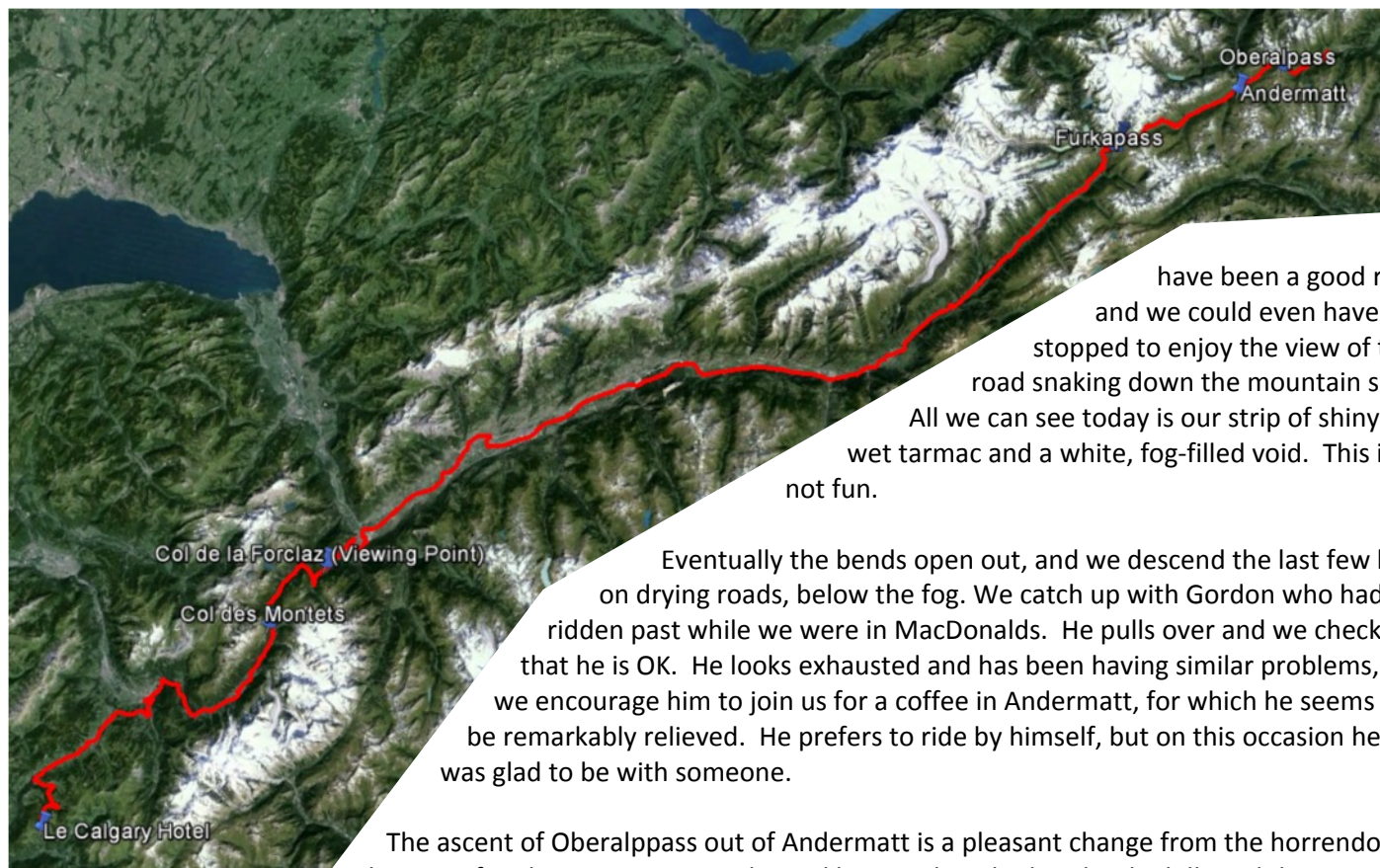
We stop for a few minutes and set off to the valley bottom. The next section is tedious and routed along the long straight road seen from the view point. No overtaking, and limited to 60 kph, it went first through one industrial area and then alongside steep vineyards on the left, then back to another industrial area. We seem to pass through a few small towns, but as it is one massive conurbation it is hard to tell where one town starts and the previous one ends. It took 1hr 40 mins of tedious, speed restricted riding on a route that I could have drawn on a map with a ruler. We need to stop, and with mountains ahead promising some relief from the tedium, a few spots of rain on the visor and a MacDonaldis on the left, we decide that it has to be here or wait until we get over to the other side of the mountain. We stop.

The ascent of Furka pass would normally be good. Wide roads with good wide hairpins, some of which are built out from the hillside on giant stilts, but the rain is now heavy, the road surface appears to have no grip at all - it is smooth, black, polished tarmac with a mirror like coating of surface rain water.

Slow progress is made on the bends and visibility is poor through the rain splashed, misting visor and the thick fog into which we have climbed. At one point I give up on my mist proof visor as it is misting in the sealed air gap and ride with the visor slightly lifted to keep the air flow to the inside.

A railway line follows us all the way up, occasionally disappearing into a tunnel, then reappearing a little later. The top of the pass is a grotty looking car park with a building which was probably once a hotel, but which now appears to be just a ruin. There is no shelter so we continue over the top onto much narrower roads with broken tarmac surface and a rain soaked, mirrored surface which looks to have absolutely no grip. The bends are much tighter and very exposed with no indication of the edge in many places, and it is just possible to see the next hairpin and the fog interferes with the perception of distance. My visor is misting even with the bottom raised slightly, and the cautiously low speed of our descent fails to generate enough air flow to keep the outside clear of rain. In weather like we had yesterday, this would

The view from near Col Del Montets
Looking East along the N9, towards Brig



have been a good ride, and we could even have stopped to enjoy the view of the road snaking down the mountain side. All we can see today is our strip of shiny wet tarmac and a white, fog-filled void. This is not fun.

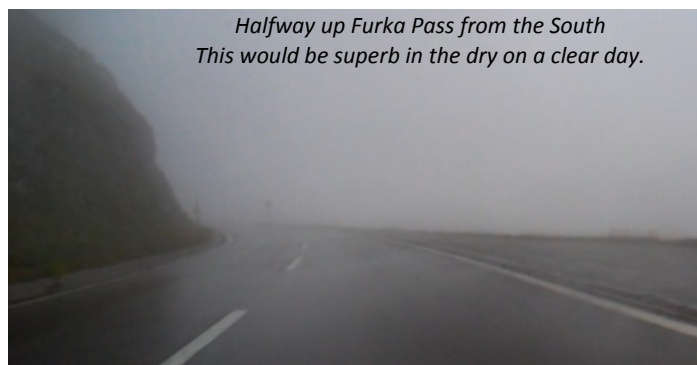
Eventually the bends open out, and we descend the last few km on drying roads, below the fog. We catch up with Gordon who had ridden past while we were in MacDonalds. He pulls over and we check that he is OK. He looks exhausted and has been having similar problems, so we encourage him to join us for a coffee in Andermatt, for which he seems to be remarkably relieved. He prefers to ride by himself, but on this occasion he was glad to be with someone.

The ascent of Oberalppass out of Andermatt is a pleasant change from the horrendous descent of Furka Pass. It is now dry and has much wider bends. The hills and the scenery at the top remind us of Glencoe, and the long twisty plateau and the descent are both good fun - it is nice to be able to take corners once more with confidence in the road surface. The main group were in the cafe and they were settled in the bar when we arrived at the hotel, the remainder came a little later, and they had not had the benefit of a dry Oberalppass, as the rain had now caught up with them.

Everyone has similar stories - poor road surface, hounded by cars wanting to go faster or coming in the opposite direction on the wrong side of the bends, poor visibility and generally tiptoeing around the corners. Bob on his Harley had experienced big problems with the wide back wheel sliding around on the tight bends, and another of the group who we had previously noted had confidence which exceeded his abilities had come to grief on one of the Furka Pass bends. Apparently the back end stepped out on him on arrival at one corner. Fortunately both he and the bike slid to a stop before running out of road, escaping with nothing more than a broken gear lever. But the feeling was summed up by one couple who shared an on-bike exchange with us. "You're trying to kill me", she had said during the gripping descent of Furka Pass. "No dear, I'm trying to keep us alive."

The room at Hotel la Val is a delight, with a large floor area, a nice sit out area, twin beds with a space for each of us to dump our stuff. In the bar, it was clear that everyone was pleased to be down safely, and revealingly, no one was talking about their macho heroics of the day.

*Halfway up Furka Pass from the South
This would be superb in the dry on a clear day.*



Pottering in Andermatt
Start 9878, End 9906 - 28 Miles !

We are at the Hotel la Val for two nights, and the suggested route for today is to include the GrimselPass, the Susten Pass, Tremola and Nufenen passes, but there are plenty of other good rides on the tour, so we have a day in the sunshine enjoying the locality. Other members of the group have the same idea and go on a train ride !



OberAlpPass is the last part of the ride from Andermatt to the hotel, and it is nice to be able to have another couple of rides in the warmth of the sunshine. Superbly tight hairpin bends, brilliant scenery and a railway line that keeps popping up alongside the road at regular intervals. It takes only 30 minutes to get to Andermatt, and we had made the reverse run yesterday on drying roads. It was pretty good then, but today the sun is out, the roads are bone dry and it is warm again. Such a pity about yesterday's ride over Furka Pass in the heavy rain and fog, but this little stretch is making up for it. And we get to do it again on the way back from Andermatt.

Andermatt is an Alpine tourist town, the cobbled streets are lined with large, often wooden, alpine style chalets and hotels. Cafes, ice-cream shops and climbing / walking / ski-ing shops abound and there are plenty of places to sit out and have a drink or something

to eat. And there are banks. It's Saturday, so none of the banks are open for normal service, but the one on the main roundabout allows you in to use the automatic cash dispensers. And here we make a find which should be a compulsory feature of every tourist town. Put all of your cash into the machine, press a button and it dispenses the same value in whatever currency you choose. And as far as we could make out, there is no charge for this service. We couldn't see why we would need any more Swiss francs, so they all got converted into Euros.



At some point these modern tourist towns must have been something before they became popular, and it never takes a great deal of effort to find out what they looked like. Walk back a street or two away from the main road and we discover a quaint, old settlement. Old churches with incredible wood carvings, and round the corner a plaque on the side of a house saying thanks to Herr Russi, who had given his life to the town. 71 years a teacher, 76 years an organist, he died just turned 101. 71 years a teacher ? Lynne and I look at each other and add up our *combined* 66 years, and decide that it was plenty. We won't be getting a 'thank you tablet' any time soon, but that's OK by us.



A substantial water course has been built to control the route of the streams from the surrounding mountains. Today, it is running fast, it is clean, crystal clear and has that pale icy blue colour that is typical of snow meltwater.

We have lunch at one of the cafés close to where we have left the bike, and then potter back. After the nervous energy expended yesterday, it is nice to have a more relaxing day.





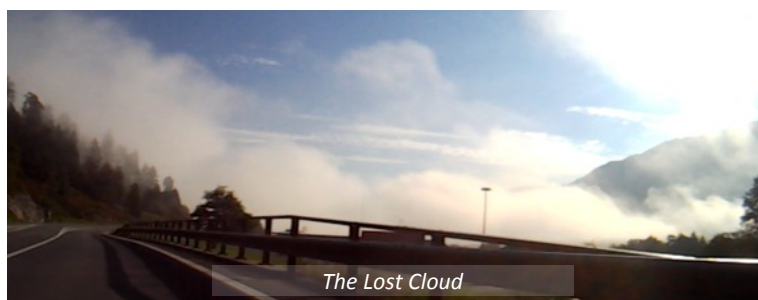
Mirrorcam: The rural setting lush green valleys of Vorderrhein on route 19 as we leave Oberalppass behind us.

Day 11 Sunday 7th September

The start of the long trek North Start: 9906 End: 10097 191 Miles

Today is the start of the 3 day trek North back to Calais. There's no two ways about it - if we go touring in the Alps, at some point we have to get home, and there aren't many ways of doing this that are nearly as much fun as the Alpine roads.

We continue the trend of leaving early and start the day with the sun shining and the remainder of the Oberalppass to descend. This ain't half bad - the valleys have that wonderful neat luscious green colour typical of Switzerland and Austria, and the road keeps to the valley side giving us a slightly elevated view of the countryside below. The sun is low and bright in front of us, and there only a few clouds in the sky. One seems to have got lost, and is rolling down the hillside and filling the valley bottom with a thick, cold white fog. We ride through it - the temperature plummets, the visor is covered in water droplets and visibility is poor. Two minutes later we are back into brilliant sunshine again.



The Lost Cloud

90 minutes into the morning we enter a small town with a very German feel to it, although we are still in Switzerland. It is early Sunday morning and our route takes us through very narrow cobbled streets. No sooner had we thought about looking for a cafe, when we come across the RatHaus. Shade from the sun, a cobbled triangle and a place to sit outside and watch the world go pass. Ideal. We spend $\frac{3}{4}$ hour there having bread rolls, croissant and preserves and a couple of coffees, watched eagerly by the owners large dog who reckons that there may be some leftovers.

Gradually, the hills disappear, and the small towns through which we pass become more frequent. We pass through a corner of Lichtenstein. The roads are still good fun, twisting their way through the valleys, and the roadside hoardings seem to indicate that either French or German will do as a language. Sometimes in the same sentence. A motorway approaches and our satnav has a waypoint which demands that we go and get a Vignette. We must be approaching Austria, and we need the vignette for a stretch of motorway which seems to go on far too long but moves us a bit further north.



Cafe Rathaus, Meienfeld

The countryside has opened out now and we are riding through rural areas with large flat fields, occasionally lined with trees. The roads are long and straight, and link together a series of small German villages. Nevertheless, it's a bit of a trudge, and the only highlight is the next break 2 hours further down the road. At Bad Wurzach we glimpse a sun brolly, and reckon it must be a cafe or something. It turns out to be a Gasthaus which is serving Sunday lunches. The owner is pleasant and helpful, has no English, and we converse in what we remember from our German Holidays - which basically means that we get to order from the parts of the menu that we vaguely understand. Wurst it is then, although goodness knows what the word in front of it meant. It tasted Ok though.



Lunch. Gasthaus, off the 465 near BadWurzach

Maybe our expectations about riding have been changed by the superb roads and scenery that we have enjoyed over the last week or maybe my preference to be surrounded by hills as we are in the Dales, is becoming more engrained as I get older. It is still sunny and dry and we are riding through open green fields. It is really pleasant. But I can't help thinking that a few more hills and bends would be nice. In comparison to some of the rides that we have had this week, this is rather uninspiring. But would we trade it for another day descending the Furka Pass in fog and torrential rain ?



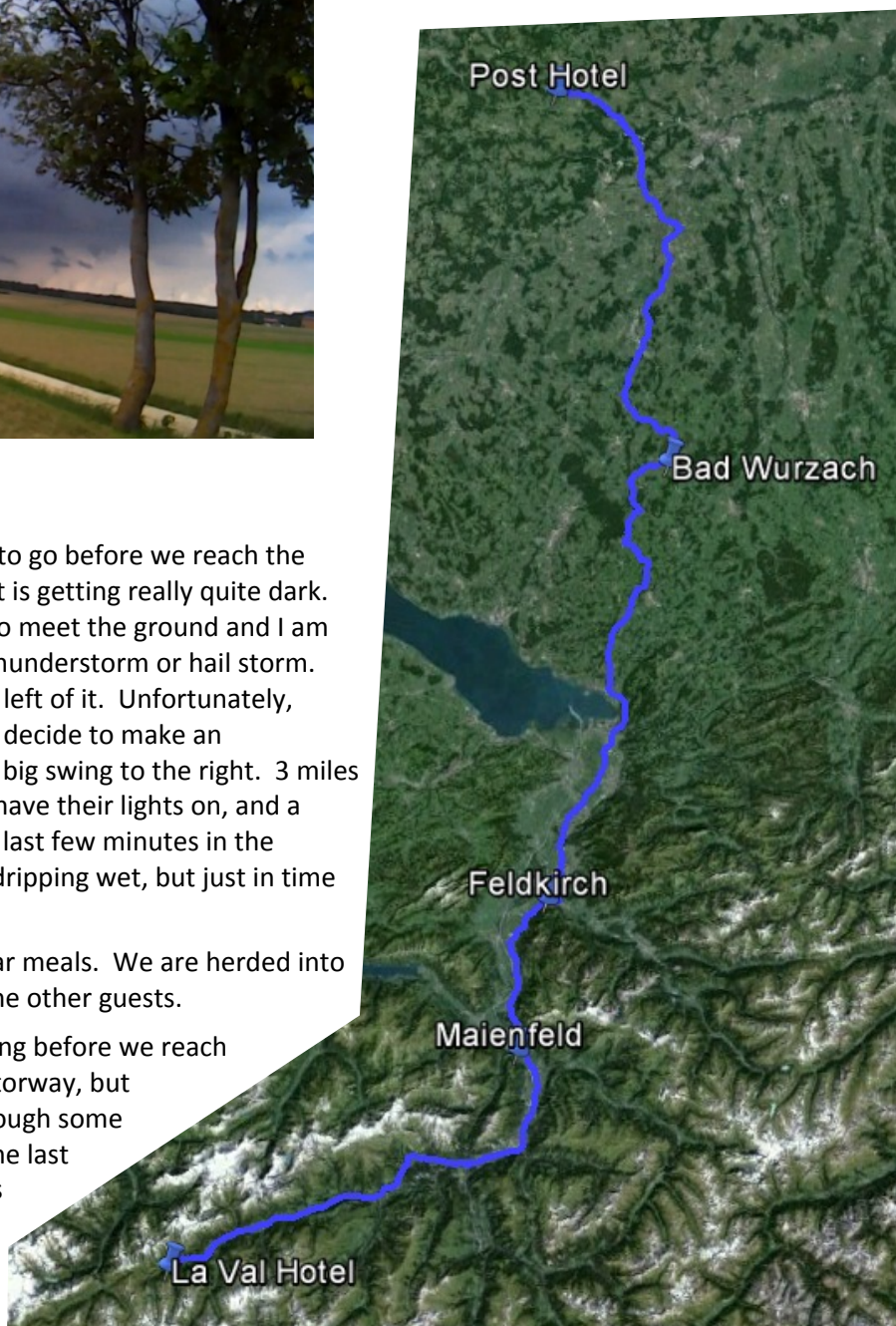
Mirrorcam: Looks like we might get a bit wet !

Probably not.

The satnav is telling us that we have 5 miles to go before we reach the hotel, and we realise that the sky to the right is getting really quite dark. The black cloud over there has come down to meet the ground and I am thinking that it is going to be one heck of a thunderstorm or hail storm. Fortunately, we appear to be heading to the left of it. Unfortunately, those bends that I had been longing for now decide to make an appearance. A small swing to the left, and a big swing to the right. 3 miles to go, cars coming in the opposite direction have their lights on, and a mile later the heavens open and we ride the last few minutes in the middle of a downpour, arriving at the hotel dripping wet, but just in time to get inside before the hail.

The hotel is pleasant enough and it serves bar meals. We are herded into a room by ourselves to keep us away from the other guests.

We have one more stop and two days of riding before we reach Calais. Out of necessity, some of it is on motorway, but routes have been plotted which steer us through some of the more interesting stretches of road. The last hotel seems to be surrounded by road works and proves difficult to get to, but it is in a delightfully rural setting, and we have our last meal together outside.



NPR Insurance Survey

Many thanks to the 10 members who responded to the request for information about their Insurance Premiums. There's some interesting information in here and it might help members when they come to look around for their next quote.

I have reproduced as much information as I can, but looking at the more detailed break down, the age of the rider seems to have much less bearing on the amount paid as other factors, so I have broadened the rider age category into just two groups 45-55 and 56 and over.

The age of the bike seems to have a much greater significance - which makes sense - Insurance companies never pay up more than the market value of the bike, no matter what you say the value is on the policy. In my experience they do not automatically update the age / value of the bike from year to year so it is worthwhile checking that you are not still quoted for a £12,000 machine when they would only pay up £3,000 (say).

| Company | Bike Age | Rider Age | £ | Comment | Other Info |
|-------------------------|----------|-----------|------------|-----------------------|--|
| Wicked Quotes / Ramesis | 1 | 56+ | 192 | Ok, No Claim | £250 excess. Legal, Personal accident and NCB protection, £1500 Accessories |
| IAM Surety | 9 | <56 | 194 | Good, No Claim | |
| Carol Nash | 9 | 56+ | 187 | Good, Including Claim | |
| IAM Surety | 10 | 56+ | 106 | Good, No Claimed | |
| Bennetts | 12 | <56 | 77 | Good, No Claim | £350 Excess |
| Carole Nash | 12 | 56+ | 128 | Ok, No Claim | Includes continental breakdown, but friends bike battery went kaput, and bike took month to repatriate, with no replacement for rest of holiday. |
| Bennetts | 13 | 56+ | 182 | Ok, No Claim | 2 Bikes covered, ST1100, ST1300, £250 +£100 Excess RAC, Legal, Personal, Helmet & Leathers |
| Bikesure | 19 | <56 | 82 | Ok, No Claim | Discounted for IAM, Comp, >4 years NCD |
| Carol Nash | 19 | <56 | 147 | Good Including claim | Not cheapest but includes many extras as standard. |
| Post Office | 25 | <56 | 78 | Ok, No Claim | 1 yr NCB, 30 days European Cover £6000 value. |

As with most things, you get what you pay for.

Personally, I stopped using Bennetts because they refused to cover more than 3 accessories on any motorbike. Carole Nash I found were very good, but include continental cover which I didn't need at the time. When I did need it, I bought it separately and discovered all kinds of things that I realised would not have been covered by Carole Nash.

One worrying ploy I discovered from my current insurer when it came to renewal - they found me a cheaper quote than the one I already had with the same under-writer and the cover looked exactly the same. Except when I came to read the detail that I asked them to send, there was just one difference. If the bike gets stolen from outside my house, they would not pay up. At all. My current policy says that the bike is kept in the garage and if it gets stolen from outside the house, I get to pay double the excess. I'm Ok with that. But the broker wasn't letting on and I had strong words about what he was trying to sell me. That would have been a very nasty surprise should I have had to claim.

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| Northern Pan Riders' Website | March 2015 |

PanTalk is an occasional magazine produced by and for members of Northern Pan Riders - a motorcycle touring club for owners of touring motorcycles.

Suggestions for articles are most gratefully received, and we are always looking for tour reports; your favourite roads; technical articles; simple modifications to your bike; your own brief riding history.

Photos help make articles more interesting about 1280 pixels wide works best for me. I can produce a map of routes taken using gdb (mapsource / basecamp) or gpx (log from satnav) format.

Please contact pantalk@northernpanriders.co.uk with suggestions or articles

Many thanks to:

Dick for the February ride report
Richard & Anne for the checking March ride report
Dave for the report of his forthcoming Sahara trip
Garry, Sally, Richard, Graeme, John, Andy for the Pub Talk stuff
John for the Alps trip, the SatNav article and a USB Snippet
Richard for the Indicator Snippet
Jim & Jenny for the delightful Mid Wales Route

Further Information about the club, can be obtained on our website:

www.northernpanriders.co.uk

www.nprclub.co.uk

Previous copies of PanTalk can also be found on the above site.

Also, random notices and comments on Facebook:

[Northern Pan Riders Pan European](#)

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