



# A Trip to France

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We did our first French trip last year on our 1999 GL1500, based ourselves in Brittany, and managed 850 miles in a week. It doesn't sound like many miles to most wingers, but we enjoyed it and after a 25 year break from biking, considered it as quite an achievement (physical failings taken into account).

We started planning this year's trip in November '08, the intention being to travel along the North of France from Roscoff to Calais, back to Folkestone, visit family in Kent, then back to Cornwall. Our accommodation was to be pre-booked as Jen is not one to be looking for B&B in strange places!! So three two-night stops were duly found and booked. 1<sup>st</sup> stop near Dinan in Brittany, 2<sup>nd</sup> stop Honfleur in Normandy, final stop St Pol sur Turnoise in Nord Pas de Calais.

We caught the night ferry from Plymouth after finishing work on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> May. Next morning we drove the scenic route around the Rose Granite Coast from Roscoff to Jugon les Lacs, beautiful scenery and really quite hot when not on the move. We stopped for coffee at St Michel en Greve, commented (in rather poor French) to an attractive lady motorcyclist, how hot it was in bike gear, to which we received a rather quizzical look, and the suggestion that it wasn't hot at



all. We found our lovely accommodation (despite the best efforts of Geraldine Garmin to lead us astray) and were made to feel most welcome by our English hosts. The next day we toured the Emerald Coast, taking lunch at a popular place called Frehel, having bought picnic provisions the previous day and fresh bread that morning. We saw quite a few Wings in the area as we toured around, presumably finishing their holiday after the French Treffen, held at

Dinard the previous week-end. After a pleasant evening meal in nearby Jugon les Lacs, and a reasonable night's sleep (despite the loudest snoring I've ever heard from the occupants of the adjoining room) a good breakfast set us on our way to our next stop in Honfleur. The weather started off misty, but the sun soon put paid to that and we drove on in brilliant sunshine. We had planned to take the most direct route but changed plans and went through some lovely countryside around Deauville and surrounding areas. There are some really spectacular houses/châteaux around this area with plenty of B&B available in rural locations. On to our Premiere Classe Hotel in Honfleur, basic but adequate, not far from the spectacular Pont de Normandie, I've got to drive over that bridge, I said to Jen. So after a walk around the not so scenic areas of Honfleur we set off to drive over the bridge. On approaching said bridge, I was frantically looking for the bike-lane to go through the toll booths, from behind came the hooting of a French

July 2009

D&C. Page Five

coach driver, keen to be on his way. I, being English, chose to ignore him, still trying to decide where to go. More hooting from Monsieur Le Coach, looking in my mirrors I see Monsieur indicating the bicycle lane on the right, toll-free for bikes and motorbikes!! With a wave of thanks to our helpful coach driver we proceed across the bridge, great fun but how do we get back? Across the Seine, then the Grand Canal du Havre, great, but how far do we go before heading back to Honfleur for something to eat? Eventually we find our way onto an industrial road on the grand scale which takes us back (thanks Geraldine) to Honfleur and food!! We had a pleasant meal at a harbour-side café, an enjoyable stroll around the picturesque town of Honfleur, then a short ride back to the hotel.

Next day, after a considerable breakfast (all you can eat for €4.50) we set off to visit the Pegasus Bridge, the Normandy beaches, finishing with the Bayeux tapestry. The sights we saw that day will stay with us both for a long time. The atmosphere, preparing for the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D. Day was one of those that “you had to be there” to appreciate!! We had decided not to be there for the 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> June, concerned about being able to get to see what we wanted to see. We both agree that we made the right choice! It beggars belief that there are still so many 65year-old US military vehicles still in existence, all restored to immaculate condition, all driven by GI uniform-clad drivers and passengers. Absolutely brilliant!!

We made our way from Pegasus to the beaches, stopping at Sword beach for a picnic lunch in brilliant sunshine, yet again!! Sitting on a bench, enjoying our lunch, looking along Sword beach, it was impossible to imagine the horrors that took place 65 years ago at this very spot. One thing was for sure, it was no picnic back then!!



We made our way along the “Overlord Tour” to the US Military Cemetery, overlooking Omaha Beach. This was possibly the most moving time of our whole trip! So many young men and women, buried under foreign soil, dead in the name of freedom (and still it goes on, will we never learn?) Back at the bike, we spoke to a couple of guys parked alongside us with their BMW’s. They thought we might be in time to get to Bayeux in time before the site of the Tapestry closed for the night, but we’d have to get a bit of a wiggle on. Off we set, open the wing up a bit here and there (where it was safe), get to Bayeux with an hour to spare. Ideal; kit off, into the Cathedral, walk all round- no tapestry!! Ask an elderly French lady, Tapestry? Non, Tapestry elsewhere. Follow directions as best we can, time running short. Get there with 5 mins to spare before last entry of the night! Great; another one of Jens’ “must dos” can be ticked off the list. I found it fascinating as well, even though I don’t really do “old” history. We found a café in Bayeux for an evening meal, then made our way back to Honfleur, had a couple of beers in the hotel room, packed the bags ready for the last leg of the trip to St Pol sur Turnoise in the morning.

*Part Two of the Onion seller on a Gold Wing will appear in next month’s Newsletter.*