

Allo Allo Glo

The Hawkeyethenoo Tour De France

With Jules & Verne, Hamish MacTavish, Pudsey Bear, Hamish McNish
Oh & Mr & Mrs H.

For those readers not fluent in the French language, listen carefully as I will say this only once, the title of this tour de Le tripe translates into
Hello Hello Glo.

Days 1 to 5

Getting to be a bit of a menagerie in Glo II, it's a good job these guys pack light because as usual Mr & Mrs H have not. We board the time machine, well the P&O ferry (there is an hour time difference) on Monday at 4.20am for the
Allo Allo Glo Hawkeyethenoo Tour de France.

I understand that you may have been waiting with bated breath for the continuation of the Hawkeyethenoo travel exploits so here they are better late than never. As you read this, we'll that is IF you read this you will find us on day 5 of our journey, due to the complete lack of an Internet connection we have been unable upload the journal to the web site, today however we eventually get an uninterrupted Internet connection, but during the upload there is a major disaster the like of which I have not seen before. For some reason during the transfer from pages to the Internet I loose the whole lot, the whole 5 days, the whole 3000 plus words, to say that I am not happy is a slight understatement, but shit happens (I should know). Yes I know I am the first one to bang on about backing up your data, but without an Internet connection it's difficult to back up to the cloud. Anyway onwards and upwards, stiff upper lip and all that bollocks, forgive me if I condense the 5 days as my memory is not what it was (and there is very little point in asking Mrs H).
So here we go.

Day 1

We arrive at Dover ferry port at about 11pm and even though our ferry (it's not really ours it belongs to P&O) is not due to depart until 4.20am we trip up to the checking in desk to try our luck, however they are a bit smarter here than you know where (if you don't please ask and I will tell you the story) and are told to come back at 3am and not before.

So off we go and we find a suitable parking spot on the sea front to grab a couple of hours shut eye, we awake at 2.30am have a quick cup of tea and arrive at the checking in desk at exactly 3am smile nicely at the same lady that we saw before and drive up to the holding area. We are ushered on board, park up, grab a some essentials you know phone, iPad, camera, money we leave Hamish MacTavish, Hamish McNish and Pudsey to look after Glo while the rest of us proceed up many many many stairs (how bloody high is this boat) to the seating areas, Jules & Verne say that they

did not notice the many many many stairs (wonder why that was). We do the usual wander around to find a suitable seat, wander around the shopping area, have a look out on the open deck, decide its too cold and return to our original seat.

We arrive at Calais about an hour and a half later, now is it six or seven o'clock, did we gain or loose an hour who cares at this time of the morning. We turn right and drive towards Abbeville after a couple of hours we stop to catch up on some well needed shut eye. We arrive at Abbeville in the early afternoon and after a walk around the town, a visit to the Cathedral and a spot of food shopping we return to Gloria and set off for the sur mer town of Le Tréport we find the Le camping municipal, here we go first attempt at booking onto a French camp site, I arrive at reception and it goes something like this, bonjour, bonjour, parlez-vous Anglais non, oh bugger, un la nuit deux person et motor home s'il vous plait, ah oui Le passeport, oh bugger again it's in Glo, un minute s'il vous plait, return with passport, merci emplacement deux cent soixante-dix payer demain, merci au revoir, merci au revoir. Thank god that's over with now to find the pitch, we find the pitch now to find the electric hook up, now this could win a round of the worlds hide and seek championship. Ok hook up found only problem is that's its that far away from Gloria it would have Mo Fara puffing for tugs, after joining every lead we have it just reaches Gloria's electric socket.

Ok power, water, level pitch, time for food a little drinket and an early night, so goodnight one and all sleep well.

Day 2

after breakfast it's time for a trip to the facilities, showers are good, only cold water in the sinks and what is it with the French and toilets, choices are a hole in the floor or the smallest loo you have ever seen its about 9 inches high, it looks like it came from a model village, do they not know that it's the 21st century or do they just not go.

We drive into Le Tréport and park Gloria in a car park with a number of other motor homes most of which look like they have been there all night, oh buy the way that's lots cheaper than the 19 euro we just coughed up for last nights stay. Le Tréport is a pleasant enough seaside town with lots of cafe's, restaurants and the usual seaside tat shops, so after a walk around its back to Gloria and our next destination Caen.

We arrive at Caen at about 5.30pm and the place is rammed with rush hour traffic so rather than trying to get into the town centre we carry on to Bayeux, we arrive at about 6.30pm time to find a place to park up, though does not prove as easy as originally thought, after driving around for ages we can not find a suitable parking spot. We drive down another road and see a sign for rural camping so off we go down country lanes, eventually we find the site, well field, bonsoir quel est Le prix pour une nuit, ah Dix euro, merci madam, thank you my bum £10 to park in a field with one loo (no seat) and a shower which I find out in the morning that you need to put a token in it, that I have not got. Anyway beggars can't be choosers after dinner and a few drinkets it's time for bed, but not before 4 more motor homes pull up with Italian plates they our obviously together as they park their vans up in a square formation perhaps in fear of being attacked by the Indians. Actually that would not have happened either they would just have found reverse gear.

Well that's it for today a bit thin on content I know, but as I said my memory is not what it was and I would like to catch up to real time so goodnight all sleep well.

Day 3

After breakfast I decide to use the (limited) facilities the shower is vacant so in I go undress soap and shampoo at the ready turn the shower on, nothing not even a drip, so I try the usual fix you know give it a clout still nothing. I get dressed and have a look around and then I find the reason a coin box fairly well hidden with the pipes going in and out on route to the shower. Ok so you have to pay, not happy but I find a euro only to find that the box takes tokens not coins, oh stuff this a wash it is.

We drive into Bayeux centre and find a parking place with lots of other motor homes, 3 euro for 5 hours sounds good value to me only one problem have not 3 euro in change. Ok off to get some change what's the quickest and easiest way, I know find la Boulanger and buy a baguette, the queue at the bakers is out of the door and there is a lady wrapping baguettes quicker than I can ask for one. Baguette bought and change in hand I return to the car park purchase the ticket and then it's off into town.

Then it's on to see the Tapisserie de Bayeux, now sometimes I can be a bit of a Philistine when it comes to the arts and history so nine quid to see a bit of cloth, oh well here we go. We join the long queue and are handed an audioguide that will tell us the story of the tapisserie as we view it. Now I have to say this is one very impressive work of art it's about 70 meters long and dates back to the 11th century it is a wonderful sight and considering its story it is amazing that it remains in tact on display for us all to see.

After a spot of lunch in a cafe (do the French do any other baguette than ham and cheese?) we navigate our way back through the shops checking every window in case we missed something and return to Gloria. Next stop is going to be a moving one and at this stage I do not realise how much, the Bayeux war graves.

We arrive at the Musee Memorial de la Bataille de Normandie, on one side of the road is the museum and on the other side is the cemetery the largest Commonwealth cemetery of the campaign and contains the graves of 4,648 brave souls who gave their lives to free this country from the German occupation and to enable us to be free. We spend a lot of time walking around looking at the graves and the register of names, it is a heart reaching and tearful experience to walk through this immaculate cemetery with rows and rows of brilliant white gravestones all standing proud and to attention. Bayeux was taken by the British armed forces the day following the landings and was the first French town to be liberated. Of the 4,648 service men buried here 3,935 are from the British Armed Forces and we must never forget them.

Right enough now before I set off again, we are not staying in a field for ten quid tonight so it's time to find somewhere to park up we had seen a motor home car park not far from the museum so off we trot and park up, there are a few other vans there but as we are cooking dinner they leave one by one and we are left alone. There is a gate on the car park and we begin to wonder if it will be locked at some time, shall we stay or go, I vote for stay and see what happens, Barb's not so sure about this idea (understatement) but we stay and no problem. So that's it for another day more tomorrow goodnight one and all sleep well.

Day 4

When we awake we have been joined by another happy camper and no locked gate, after breakfast we depart Bayeux and head off to our next destination Mont Saint Michel. The journey is only a short one and takes about an hour so not to get caught out again we take the opportunity to go campsite hunting before we go exploring. The first site we find is all singing and dancing, swimming pool, play area, lots of kids and 25 euro a night, not for us. Then we find a motorhome site for 10 euro a night this will be ok if we can not find anything else, a bit further past mont st mick we find another motorhome only site this looks brand new is immaculate and is 9 euro 90 a night but no showers so thats off the list, what is it with these people, so that means we are taking the second option.

You can not drive to mont st mick so they operate a park and ride system, so we queue up for the car park it would appear that we have chosen the same day to visit mont st mick as the rest of Europe and his dog. Eventually we get to the motorhome car park, WHAT 20 euro to park are they having a laugh (makes Liverpool one look cheap) so we are not parking there, on the way in we had noticed a number of cars and motorhomes parked down a country lane (we know why now) so we follow there example and park up for free. Obviously we walk through the car park and make use of the ride bit of park and ride.

From a distance mont st mick resembles Lindisfarne and looks beautiful in the sunshine, we join the thousands and squeeze our way through the narrow streets, which unfortunately in my view have been spoiled by the sheer number of cafe's, restaurants and tat shops, you can not move for them.

Without them the place would be amazing, a lot less profitable but amazing. What is it with the human race considering we are fairly intelligent beings, why when we are walking through narrow streets jammed packed with people do some idiots think that it is a good idea for four or five of them to stop in the middle and have a chat, and then to top it off, get upset when people push pass them, absolutely bloody amazing the total stupidity of some folk. (Best stop now sounds like I am off on one) we leave mont st mick and I either need to return earlier in the morning when there may be less people there or just admire its beauty from afar.

We head back to the chosen site and check in, yes it is 10 euro a night, but the electricity is 3 euro 50, the showers are 3 euro, so it's going to be shower with a friend but we will say no more about that. What is they say "there's always more than one way to la peau Le chat" we pay up and plug in everything we have electric.

Time to sit out in the afternoon sun and relax with a beer, some wine, some more beer and some more wine, we sit out watching the setting sun and take some photographs, not sure what they will be like as the wine was starting to take effect so they may need some help from photoshop.

Well that's it for yet another day, goodnight all and sleep well.

Day 5

We have ordered a baguette from reception so I trot over to retrieve it, there is a different lady on duty who no speako the lingo so here we go, bonjour madam, bonjour (not a very happy one), j'ai reserve un baguette, quoi (she is not helping me out) so I place a piece of le papier around a baguette and point at my name on the order list, bloody hell light blue touch paper and retire, she goes off on one Le grande stile. Takes the baguette from me and puts it back on display, then takes a very similar baguette from a bag and gives me that one, all the while talking loudly at me in French, not a clue what she is saying and care even less, merci madam have a nice day, get a life miserable bitch.

After breakfast it's shower with a friend time now that's a laugh, funny but I will say no more on the subject.

Now today's instalment is not going to take too long or be very interesting as we have decided to stay here another day and do precisely nothing, nowt, buggar all. Most of the day is spent sitting in the sun, reading and finishing off this drivel. There is allegedly wifi available in the office but we can not get on line, we ask my new friend who shrugs her shoulders and says that she does not understand why it is not working, strange that.

Later in the day I walk past the reception area and spot a fellow camper tapping away on a laptop so I return to Gloria and get George the iPad, trot back to reception and amazing the wifi is working, funny hey, so time to upload the blog to the web site and that is when disaster strikes, gone the whole 5 days work, 3000 plus words gone forever not to be retrieved no matter how hard I try. Happy me, well no not really and I go and blame my new friend behind the reception desk as it must be her fault, only kidding I don't really.

I spend some time people watching, there are some proper strange folk around when you start looking, the Italian guy next to us is a dead spit for Kevin Rowland From Dexies midnight runners, he has a large rat, ok a very very small dog and when he and Mrs Dexy go out on their bikes he puts on a vest with a pouch in, that the dog goes in and sits on his chest, get a life mate.

Then there is another guy walking over to the loos, he is getting on a bit and looks like a cross between Harpo Max's and coco the clown he is completely bald on top and has a strip of frizzy curly hair at the back of his head about 2 inches deep running from ear to ear that's about 9 inches long over his shoulders. If he was wearing a hat you would think the hair was attached to it like one of those joke Scottish ones, he must not have any mirrors at home.

So the rest of the evening is spent rewriting this little lot and trying to remember what happened and where, so that's it for today I will send the first five days as one episode, so goodnight one and all from a unhappy little bunny, don't worry I'll get over it.

Day 6

Right so today's plan is to drive to St Malo and then to carry on the journey south down to La Rochelle, the trip to St Malo is only a short hike away at about 50 kilometres so its only going to take an hour or so, well that's the plan.

We have ordered a baguette from my mate and manage to retrieve it from her without a battle this morning, she must be mellowing with the Hawkins charm, what a load of rubbish its a different madam and Barb went to get it. After breakfast we pack everything away into Gloria's many hiding places (so many Barb can never remember where anything is) top up and empty Gloria's water systems, say farewell Au revoir to my best mate, like heck and depart.

We arrive at St Malo at about 10.30am find a parking place and walk into town looks like a great place it's a walled city and its sea defences and battlements suffered severe damage during the Normandy landings but has since been carefully rebuilt to its original glory. We walk along the battlement walls and it is blowing a gale the waves are hitting the wall and coming over the top so you have to time it so that you do not get soaked. Well some of us do this to avoid getting soaked but there is a lady not a young one who deliberately stands where the largest waves are coming over while her friend (some mate that is) takes photographs of her getting soaked, it's 11am and she looks like a drowned rat, are people daft or am I getting boring.

We wander around looking at the architecture oh and the shops and there is lots of them, we stop for a coffee and do a spot more people watching as we sit in the street drinking our coffees, question, why is it that it is more expensive sitting in the street drinking your coffee, than inside the air conditioned building, don't make sense to me but we do it anyway.

After coffee we do a spot more sight seeing, shop looking and generally walking around, time is getting on and we need to do some food shopping and also get some lunch so we return to Gloria and go hunting for the intermarche we had spotted on the way into town, luckily we find it without to much of a problem. We do our shopping including some expensive fizz at 1 euro 70 a bottle (I treat that girl to good at times) then it's back to Gloria for a baguette, oh god no not another ham and cheese baguette, no dear don't be silly it's cheese and ham.

It's now 4pm so our plan of getting to La Rochelle is completely scuttled, well it's a five hour drive and we don't fancy doing that, so it's plan B, now I did not know that we had a plan B and neither did Barb, so we make one up. Plan B is to drive for a couple of hours and find a Aire de Service (that's the motorway services to you and me) to park up at. Sounds like a good a plan as any so off we go, after a couple of hours we stop at the Aire de Service pick a suitable spot and park up, right time for dinner and we are having chicken and chorizo paella, well we would have been if some twit (being me) had picked up the chorizo, so it's just chicken paella anyway it was pretty good if I do say so myself.

After one and I do mean one biere blond it's time to write this and then an early night, for no other reason that we want to get an early start in the morning to get to La Rochelle, so goodnight all sleep well.

Day 7

Early start it is we awake at 7am, after a coffee the plan is to drive for a while and then find a McDonald's make use of their wifi and have a spot of Le petit déjeuner, so after a bit of faffing about we find a Mackey D. Now this must be the quietest Mackey D in the world, it looks closed. It's 9.30 on a Sunday morning and there is one car in the car park, when we go inside there is no one else in there just us, never seen the like of it before. We go to the counter and soon find out why there is no one there, they DON'T do sausage and egg mcmuffin, bacon and egg mcmuffin or any other type of mac hot breakfast, what is the world coming to.

The choice is either a chocolate muffin, some dodgy looking cereal bar or some other strange looking thing, chocolate muffin for two a coffee and an earl grey tea it is, good job they have got wifi. While we are there a few other customers arrive some of them English and I bet Barb that the ask for a sausage or bacon muffin, boy are they in for a surprise. Correct they all come in and ask for one or the other and are in total disbelief when they find what's on offer, it was pretty funny their expressions now I know what I must have looked like. Get a grip Macfrance bring on Le mcmuffin, oh and the coffee comes in an egg cup and it was not an espresso. Anyway we did use the Internet and managed to get most of the things done that we needed to do, so back on the road to Le Rochelle.

We arrive a La Rochelle at about 1pm and after passing and ignoring a number of car parks and signs stating that this is the place to as le centre ville will be full, we arrive right in the centre of le centre ville and find a car park with no height restrictions right by the harbour and park up to someone from Wales well there was a Welsh Dragon on the number plate. Now the usual problem with these wonderful car parks bang in the middle of town, is the price, but dear readers not so here 3 bucks to park good value as Gloria is parked like an Audi, BMW or Merc yes that's right using two possibly three parking spaces.

As we meander around the crowded streets full of restaurants and cafe's oh and shops but guess what it's great 99% of the shops are closed on Sundays even the supermarkets, VIVE LE FRANCE. It's great to remember that people can enjoy themselves without shopping on a Sunday the town was still packed with people eating and drinking without carrying shopping bags.

Time is getting on so we need to look for somewhere to stay, options campsite, roadside, car park, so drive around to have a look, there is a campsite close enough to the town centre to throw a stone at, and as the other options are a bit ropy in town centres the campsite wins. Before we go to the campsite we want to find a big M so that we can use their wifi again plan was to FaceTime a couple of people and say hello, the only person who wanted to talk to us was Sharon so we said hello had a bit of a chat told her where we are then the connection got a bit iffy so we say our goodbyes.

Back to the campsite my turn to book in, this time it was much easier as I knew what to say, oh and the mademoiselle on reception spoke English, however she did think Liverpool was in Ireland which confused me even more as she had my passport and driving licence. Anyway pitch booked for one night but we think we are going to stay another night, as we plan on hiring a couple of bikes tomorrow and have a ride around the rest of the town.

Now that should make for interesting reading, Barb on a bike when they drive on the wrong side of the road, god help us all, the big question is do I lead or follow I have not got a clue which will be

the better of the two evils. We are going to have a couple of drinkets and then off to sleep as this is all very tiring, so bonne nuit one and all sleep well. Watch out for what should be an interesting read tomorrow or the next day depending on what Internet connection we can get.

Day 8

We awake just after eight o'clock not a great sign of life around the site so its time to get to the showers before the rest of our fellow campers, or possibly a bit more important get to the loos before them. The Caravan club don't have much competition regarding the facilities they offer, these are basic to say the least, the showers are hot so can't complain to much well until you use the loo, I don't think I will ever understand this hole in the floor lark or the French toilet facilities in general.

Le Boulanger arrives at the site at 9am so I walk over to his van to purchase du pan eu chocolate et une baguette, then its of to reception as we are going to stay another night, that should not be too difficult to arrange as the receptionist parlez de anglais. Only I did not recon on the computer being down (same shit different address) as we are talking the receptionist apologises because she can't not think of an english word, as she was thinking in Spanish, I compliment her and say that she is very clever being able to speak French, English and Spanish. Her response is that she is not fluent but also speaks a little German and Japanese, ok I am impressed, I compliment her again, she smiles, laughs a little and blushes, I will pop back later and see if the computer has come back to life au revoir.

So the hunter gatherer heads back to Gloria with his purchases from la Boulanger, time for breakfast and a little sit down, we ready ourselves for our trip into town and our bike ride, don our protective gear, boots, padded jackets, knee protectors and helmets, don't be daft, it's t shirt, shorts and trainers. First stop Macky Dee's for Internet access to upload the last 2 days journal, success uploaded and now up to date, just need to take some photographs as so far not many have been taken.

We stroll into town and arrive at the bike hire establishment well a shed outside the tourist information centre with lots and lots of yellow bikes outside. The Monsieur at the desk explains that the first two hours are free and then it's 1 euro 10 for every extra hour, good value for money me thinks, oh and that will be 150 euro deposit s'il vous plait, there is always a rub.

We select two of the finest and tell the Monsieur the numbers, Barbs is 1292 and mine is 1187, he hands me two keys great they have got engines, no they haven't they have got bike locks. We each don our sturdy steeds, let the mayhem commence. We ride towards the town centre and head towards the shops we get there and most of them are closed, it turns out the French shop keepers must go out on the pop on a Sunday and they don't open until 2pm on Lundi, what a result no shopping until 2pm Vive Le France.

We cycle round for a while and spot a little bar well away from the tourist areas so we tie up are steeds, padlock the to a rail, and pop in for a swifty, no parlez de Anglais in here so due biere blonde s'il vous plait as usual you don't get a full glass when you order draught biere and they serve it in small glasses so it does not last long, so it's the same again. Now there might not be much in the glass but its powerful stuff so bike riding should be even more fun later, we empty our glasses

and its time to leave, l'addition s'il vous plait, ah oui 16 euro s'il vous plait, ah oui merci, cheap beer here, no wonder he was wearing a bi-metal Rolex Daytona, I had thought the job must be paying.

We stroll around for a while longer grab a sandwich, no not cheese and ham, amazing chicken and egg (not sure which came first) then it's off to find our trusty steeds, they where still where we had left them, that's a blow said Barb. We ride along the promenade taking in the sights, there are lots and lots of boats here and I do mean lots of big expensive boats, this more than likely explains why the place is a tad expensive, because what do boats mean, boats mean money. You could also be forgiven in thinking that all the restaurants and bars may be part of a cartel as all the prices wherever you go be sea front or back jigger are pretty similar, heaven forbid that anyone would do something like that, it must just be me being bad minded.

Barbs now had enough of this cycling lark so we return our steeds back to the ranch, they are pleased to see us, well anyone returning a bike as all the ones that where there this morning have been hired out and they have more people waiting. Paying the 4 euro 40 that we owe them is easy, getting the 150 euro deposit back proved a little more difficult as the Monsieur on duty does not know how to refund money to a card, glad we did not arrive back there at 6.30 with the world and his wife when they closed, now that would have been fun.

While we are looking around the harbour we notice a number of boat trips on offer one of which is to Fort Boyard so we go to inquire I ask the guy at the desk if Richard Obrien will be there, non, how about Time warp dancing on the trip, non, how about the fit bird with the big boobies, non, on top of all the no shows it is going to cost 38 euro so we decide to give it a miss, the guy does give me a strange look as we walk away. We walk back to Gloria for a sit down in the sun and a couple of biere blonde that cost 40 cents each not 4 bloody euro each, Barb has opted to open a bottle of vin rouge the expensive one at 2 euro a bottle, and they wonder why people drink at home.

The plan was to eat out this evening our afternoon nap started a bit late and therefore finished a bit late so we decide to give it a miss, next problem what do we have as we have not done any food shopping today, but we have eggs, bacon and cheese what more do you need. Bacon and cheese omelette it is (may as well keep up the ham and cheese theme) after dinner it's a couple more biere blonde for me and Barb is struggling with her 2 euro bottle of vin rouge, I keep telling her it will get better but to be honest I don't think it will.

That's it for today's instalment, tomorrow we start the drive down to Bordeaux the vineyard region (oops that may be dangerous) its a fair distance so wether we get there tomorrow or end up somewhere on route we will have to wait and see it all adds to the excitement, but for now good night one and all sleep well.

Day 9

Usual routine this morning, breakfast, shower, get Gloria ready for the trip ensuring that everything is stowed away for galactic light speed travel as we will be using a toll road today. It won't really be light speed as we are sticking to 82kph to ensure best fuel economy and do our bit to save the planet.

We stop off for lunch at the Aire de service and have a picnic of yes you guessed it cheese and ham baguette, that's all the ham eaten so no more cheese & ham for a while, thank god, oh but there is cheese so it could be cheese without the ham yippee.

The journey to Bordeaux was not as long as expected and we approach the outskirts of the city in the early afternoon and it's hot about 28 degrees thank goodness for air con. The sheer size of the city takes us both by surprise it's Massive with a capital M, it's London size if not bigger, how else can I explain it, Bloody Huge. Now that is one of the problems when you just plot and bash rather than doing any research into where you are going.

We head for the centre ville it's heaving with people and traffic, our first mission which we accepted is to find the Office de Tourisme de Bordeaux to get some info on campsites and car parks as in previous places we have visited there have been special car parks for camping cars (Gloria's) so we have assumed that as this is a massive gaff there will be designated gloria car parks. We find the Office de Tourisme de Bordeaux and as there is nowhere to park Barb jumps out and I drive around while Barb gathers the information required and we head for the car park she has been directed to. We find the car park and it is far from Gloria friendly looks like it's specially made for French mini cars, we squeeze just, find a space, well a number of actually and park like a proper Audi, BMW, Merc driver and use 4 bays this time.

We are parked by a massive square in which there is a fountain and what a fantastic fountain it is, the pictures do not do it justice, it is amazing and big, very big J&V are very impressed, we continue into town did I mention that is hot well it is very hot. The place is crowded with people and there are lots more shops unfortunately this time they are all open, but we don't visit that many, even Barb is taken aback by the amount of them. The architecture is wonderful but it's not the afternoon for sight seeing it's hot, sticky, crowded and uncomfortable, being slightly sexist for moment there are some, no make that a lot of very attractive females walking around which makes sight seeing even more enjoyable.

Right enough of that time to find somewhere to stay, the plan is to find somewhere and park up so we return to Gloria and navigate our way through the car park to the exit barrier which if possible is smaller than the entrance, we get out in one piece, straight into the rush hour traffic. We drive around for a quite a considerable time without finding anywhere to park up. In the end we ask Sylvia for some help and she tells us there is a camp site 7 kilometres away so off we go, we get there just before 8pm and it looks very nice (got its own restaurant don't you know) we book in and while I park Gloria and connect her to the electrics, Barb checks out the restaurant, Barb returns and we have a table booked for 8.30, blood and sand best get a move on as it's 8.20, quick wash and change and the quickest van set up of the trip, and we are at the restaurant.

We sit outside overlooking a lake with a mummy duck and her ducklings waddling around on the grass bank, and what's the first thing on the menu la canard, I can't can I, no I can't. I have a starter of carpaccio of beef with foie gras and truffle bits, we both have rib eye steak for our main course,

Barbs must have seen the grille for a minute if that, followed by a chocolate soufflé and a strawberry something or other which we share. Complimented by a bottle of vin rouge a couple of large beers, and finally a couple of coffees to finish. Pretty flash for a campsite don't you know, sorry they don't call it a camp site they call it Le Village du lac.

A short stroll back to Gloria for a little G&T nightcap and then bed so good night one and all sleep well.

Day 10

Today has a do nothing day so the content may be a bit thin, after breakfast it's the usual shower and stuff routine then it's sit outside in the sunshine read a little, doze a little, surf a little, internet that is not actual surfing, however there is a pool, its time for a cup of tea, gosh this proper lazy.

Best pad this out a bit so I will tell you a tale from yesterday, we where driving down a fairly main road camp site hunting and in the distance we could see lots and lots of caravans so logically we thought camp site, as we approach however it started to look like a pikey encampment, we drove past and yes it was pikey camp and when I say there where lots of vans there here hundreds of them and we do mean hundreds. I suggested to Barb that if all else failed we could join them as there where Union Jack tents and flags flying, Barb looked at me as if I had lost my senses. So we continue on hunting a site or parking place with no avail. This is when we asked Sylvia for assistance and she very kindly tells us of the site we are on. However as we follow her instructions she is leading us back towards the pikey site, Barb thanks that's where she is leading us too, so I say we'll perhaps it is a camp site just a very badly organised one, and it might be better than nowhere.

Sylvia's instructions take us closer and closer to the pikey site and eventually she tells us to turn right off the main road, right along side the pikey encampment, now Barb cannot see Sylvia's screen so is unaware that we still have another 6 kilometres to go. So I slow down and pretend to pull into the site, Barb is silent (unusual I know) I accelerate away and tell her that we still have some distance to go (my left arm is still smarting from the blow) she said bloody hell I thought that you where serious about staying there, not likely was my reply. Barb is much happier when we arrive at Village du lac and even happier when she finds that they have loo seats, even if they are communal loos.

After lunch it's a bit more sitting out before its time for a siesta (tiring stuff this you know) then it's planning time, if I don't get Barb to a vineyard for some wine tasting I am going to be dead meat.

We go to reception to use the Internet, they do have wifi around the site but slow does not do it justice. The connection is quicker in the reception area, first point of call tourist info office, they do various trips from the office in the city centre, only they are 85 euro per person, blow that for a giggle. We find a smaller vineyard that does tours twice a day one at 10am which you need to book on and one at 3pm when you just turn up, we try to book onto the 10 am trip but its either fully booked or the site is not working so decision made we are going to the 3pm trip, Barbs not to happy as her expectations of a trip with the rest of the world are not very high.

I can not believe how long that took what with a slow Internet connection and a near complete lack of French, it took forever. It took that long that's it's time for dinner and tonight we are having the French classic cassoulet de porc, this should be interesting as the instructions are in French. I finally fathom out what to do and not to long later it's ready now if your not sure what it is, it is a peasant dish containing various beans, a sauce and a big fat sausage, so what have you got beans and sausage. Now Barb usually likes dishes with beans and pulses but this is not quite to her liking so we won't be having that again although I did like it, can't please all the people all the time. Time for a bit of reading, blog writing, a little drinket and then to bed, it is surprisingly tiring this lark you know, so goodnight one and all sleep well. Vineyard tour to look forward to tomorrow.

Day 11

Today's events are going to be shopping, planning our next location to visit and oh yes a vineyard tour, we have ordered a baguette and deux pan o chocolat from the very nice young lady in the shop for breakfast which we have with coffee and the usual Rice Krispies. After breakfast we pack Gloria ready for a fairly short journey so things are not battened down for intergalactic light speed travel, you know 82kph.

We leave the site at about 11am and head off for the Auchan supermarket in Bordeaux and after only one wrong turn find the car park and a suitable size space in which to park Gloria. This is not a supermarket it is a shopping world it's big, huge, enormous extremely large, god this is going to take forever it is not just the size of the supermarket it's the fact that before you can get into it you have to pass every other shop known to man.

It does have a couple of advantages one being there are lots of shop selling boys stuff, Gizmo gadgets everywhere its like Aladdin's cave but boy is the stuff expensive it certainly is. After fighting our way through all these shops and stopping to look at the biggest football table I have ever seen (see picture) I think it's 21 aside, we get into the actual super market. It could take you an hour to buy a litre de lait in here, and we start again clothes, gizmo gadgets, everything you can think of (well nearly) right come on we came to buy food oh and some booze. It does take a while longer to shop as you have to figure out what things are (see another picture) there is no way I am eating any of them, best value items, vin at less than 2 euro a bottle, biere at 6 euro for 24, ok purchases made and sufficient for few meals its time to return to Gloria for a spot of lunch, before we head off for the vineyard.

We arrive at Chateau Siran (did I say that they produce MARGAUX this is our favourite wine) at 2.30 we are informed by a very pretty madmoselle that the tour does not start until 3pm, that's ok with us we will wait and come back at 3pm, her English is fairly good so there is no communication barrier. I wander around the grounds taking some photographs, the place is beautiful, old, tranquil, chic. At 3pm we return and the madmoselle introduces herself and we introduce ourselves, she tells us that we are the only people here for the tour and that she will be showing us around (double bonus) she starts by showing us the Chateau which has been in the same family since 1896, it must be amazing to have a family history living in one house (bet they have got more than one) going back all that time. She tells us that unfortunately she is not part of the family but that it is a wonderful place to work, she tells us that they are only a small vineyard covering 37 hectares, sounds big to me, they are unusual in so much as there land is split into two different types of soil, her English falters for the word for the type of soil, alluvial says Barb, ah oui, with a how did you know that you smart arse, look, she continues and is now starting to ask Barb questions and is obviously impressed by her knowledge (Barb has been reading a lot about grape squashing).

Then it is into wine making part of the establishment and the madmoselle explains how the wine is made, I have to admit that I did not know how complicated, time consuming and labour intensive the process is, it is far more complicated than distilling spirits which I would never have known before today.

After the tour is finished the madmoselle asks that as there only two of us would we like to see something special that is not part of the tour, yes please, oh yes please. She explains we are going to see the owners own wine cellar and that she will need my assistance to open the door, it is like a

safe and weights two and a half tons, bloody hell what's in here. We open the door and descend the steps into the cellar, it is actually a nuclear bunker for wine, not people, that the grandfather had built in 19?? because of the 5 mile island nuclear scare and the French government had built a nuclear power station 20 kilometres away, and he wanted to save their wine collection. When we go in we see why it is fantastic they have a stash of bottles of their own wine from every year going back to 1912, it's just amazing, then we go down to another level and here there is a further locked cabinet with the owners special collection including some bottles of Chateau du Rothschild God knows how much this little lot is worth, some of it is priceless.

We return upstairs close the massive nuclear proof door and then into the tasting room, we are to taste three wines culminating with a Chateau Siran Marguax, bet I know which one of the three I am going to like best, and I bet I know which is going to be the most expensive. There are two sinks in the tasting table and before we start we are given the option that we can swallow or spit the madmoselle says that she will spit because she is at work, I am not so I don't, we start with a Bordeaux which is very nice but a bit heavy, the second is good, but as expected the Margaux was the best, now there's a shock.

After the tasting we have a little smell test, they have 47 bottles of different fragrances that you find in wine, now when Oz Clarke or Jilly Goulding and now that other cock with the silly hair doo on Saturday kitchen go off on one about the various smells in a wine glass I was always confused as I could only ever smell alcohol, but after you have done some smell testing you can see where they where coming from. Ok tour over time to leave the madmoselle to do what ever it is she does when she is not giving guided tours. We thank her and she thanks us, it really has been a very enjoyable tour and free well apart from the wine we purchased, still cheaper than the tour through the Office de Tourisme and I am sure far better and more individual, it was great I want to go back tomorrow.

It's back to reality and back to Village du lac, we sit outside in the sunshine looking at our routes for the next couple of days tomorrows first destination is Saint Emilion which is only about an hours drive so just a short trip today and the plan is to stay for two days. For now though it is a couple of biere blondes in the evening sunshine and prepare dinner of boeuf lasagne.

After dinner we go for a walk around the Village du lac watch the ducks by the lac along with some other critters which Barb thinks are rats but I assure her that they are water voles, I am not that sure but it kept Barb happy. While we are walking around the site people watching and generally nosing at other people's equipment we notice an AA van parked outside a chalet, so if your ever waiting for more than an hour for the AA to come and rescue you that will be because someone has gone on holiday to Bordeaux in the van.

That's about it for today, and a very enjoyable day it was, now it's time for a bit of reading, blog writing and then bed, so goodnight one and all sleep well.

Day 12

Today we are leaving Bordeaux and heading for Saint Emilion which is only about an hours drive away so after a trip to the shop to see the very nice young lady and to collect our baguette and deux pan o chocolat, it's time for breakfast, then shower and stuff, then prepare Gloria for the trip. We

depart at about 10am and the first stop is the Auchan supermarket that we went to yesterday, why you ask.

Well we are going to buy a Mifi Internet dongle as we are sick and tired of a pants Internet signal, hopefully this will sort out the problem. We arrive at the Auchan and the Orange shop, here we go bonjour, bonjour parlez vous Anglais, non, oh this should be fun, un pass lets go Mifi s'il vous plait (along with a bit of pointing, smiling and shoulder shrugging) the purchase is made. Next problem will be to get the thing working as all the instructions are in French, but I will deal with that problem later, now it's time to find our way out of Bordeaux, over to Sylvia and she does a very good job of getting us out of the city and on our way to Saint Emilion and directs us right to the front gate of the campsite.

It's booking in time again and it's my turn, ok passport, driving licence in hand let's go, bonjour, bonjour deux nuit deux person et camping car, would you like two nights for two people with a motorhome, perfect English so booking in is easy, although you do feel a right twit when that happens. During booking in the madmoselle informs me that there is a swimming pool, boating lac, tennis courts, ping pong (tables that is) volley ball court, bike hire and they also supply free transport into Saint Emilion at 10am & 2pm. Given the options I book us onto the 2pm bus into the village. We top up Gloria's fresh water system and set up camp, this looks like its going to be the best site we have been to so far, with large individual level pitches surround by hedges the electric connection is not a marathon away and it is 10 amp and wired correctly (double bonus) so we are set up in no time.

We have a spot of lunch and then wander down to reception to catch the minibus it holds eight people and there are too many people for one trip so we wait for the bus to return it only takes about 10 minutes we sit in the shade looking out over the lac. The bus arrives back in no time and we set off for the village, by the noises the bus is making its a good job it does not have to go far, during the short drive we pass through the local vineyards and all you can see is vines and more vines leading to the horizon, we arrive at Saint Emilion in about 5 minutes and are told that the minibus will collect us at 6pm.

The village is old very old and has buildings dating back to the 12th century and is a UNESCO world heritage site, it's a pity the prices in the bars don't date back that far but more about that later. The village is amazing to think some of these buildings date back hundreds and hundreds of years and are still in daily use today, we meander around the cobbled streets taking in the architecture and our surroundings there are some fantastic sights. There are wine shops everywhere you go and this stuff is not the 1 euro 70 a bottle stuff available at the Auchan, some of it is seriously expensive although it is possible to purchase some for 8 euro. There is free tasting available in all of the vintners well when I say free you are expected to buy some, though if you have the neck you could leave totally pissed and not buy anything.

We have four hours to spend in the village and after two and a half hours have done it seen it bought the T shirt, so what shall we do, let me think I know we will have a biere blonde, now we should have known better as when we were walking around I spotted a fairly nice looking hotel so I had a look at the tariff board cheapest room 390 euro up to god knows as the suite prices were on request, there was also a menu on display with starters from 64 euro. Now they are not frightening prices but they are expensive enough to put most of us off, so we have decided to try and find a little bar down a back street somewhere, do we find one, do we heck, we go back to one of the bars

we passed earlier and go inside. We explain that we are just having a biere no food so we are given the drinks list, well at 8 euro 50 for a 50cl biere they can keep it, we say thanks, no thanks and leave. Now it would appear that the cartel is in operation here as well as everywhere had the same price not a cent less, considering that the biere in the Auchan costs 49 cents for 50cl and they are selling it for 8 euro 50 that is over 1700% profit. Now I do not think profit is a dirty word but 1700% is pay day loan territory and they should be made illegal, and along with the bars in Saint Elmilion are just taking the *iss. You may have gathered that we forgo a biere blonde for now.

The bus arrives just before 6pm and the short trip back to the site goes without incident, we return to Gloria open the door and then open the fridge to retrieve a couple of 49 cent biere blonde, Vive Le Auchan. Time to sit outside in the evening sun (bloody hell it's hot) and partake in one or possibly two more biere blondes. Then it's time for dinner and tonight it's prawn paella, we have the prawns and the paella rice but not much else so me thinks it may be a bit boring, however I have a plan, and a cunning plan at that. I leave Barb to enjoy the sunshine and go into Gloria's kitchen (kitchen your having a laugh) and unbeknown to Barb I purchased a tin of fruits de mer paella from the Auchan the other day. First problem decipher the instructions ok it's in two parts dry paella rice and then the tin containing the fruits de mer ingredients, ok you cook the rice as usual fry it for a couple of minutes add some water and then add the contents of the tin and cook for a further 15 minutes. So rice cooked open the tin, oh my god what's in here Barb won't eat this, but it does smell good so in it goes and 15 minutes later voila it's ready I add the prawns and cook through, Barb says that smells good, if only she knew. Time to plate up I do Barbs first, fishing (pardon the pun) the bits that one, I know Barb will not like and two, the things that I am not sure what they are and that Barb will ask "what's this". Barbs first question is what's this so I come clean and explain what it is and that I have removed the things she will not like (well most of them) we are eating al fresco and luckily it's getting dark. This is good says Barb what's in it, we'll chicken, squid, prawns, peas, peppers (not too sure what else), well it's very tasty says Barb and finishes the dish, that was a right result, Vive Le Auchan.

After dinner it's a few more biere blondes, Barb reads while I type up the blog, then it's time for bed zebedee, so goodnight all sleep well.

Day 13

Today has been nominated as another, do bugger all day, I have just broken through the 10,000 word barrier if I was playing candy crush or similar I would have received a congratulations banner but not from Apple. Anyway usual start to the morning pack bed away, breakfast, shower and stuff then dishes. Just a quick note on the facilities here, they are A1 new, clean, no holes in the floor and loo's with seats.

Barb is going to read while I attempt to get the Orange Mifi dongle up and running a regain some form of Internet connection, this should be fun as yes you guessed it the installation instructions are in French and a bit more complicated to follow than some cooking instructions on a tin. Oh well here we go, remove back, install SIM card, battery in and charged hey that was easy, now for the difficult bit, I turn it on (no that's not the difficult bit) and it powers up and shows that wifi is available so iPad on and it's found the dongle ok need a pass key to connect the two together, where is the pass key, on the English one that I have you press a button on the side of the unit and the number comes up on the display, no buttons on this unit. I look through all the instructions that

came with both the dongle and the SIM card, nothing that I can see resembling a pass key. Looks like a fall at the first fence for Hawkeye then no no that's not possible it can't be that difficult they can not have hidden the pass key that well, and no it's not and no they haven't, the pass key is typed on the back of the bloody unit doh and double doh!

Ok now we have an Internet connection lit says in the instructions to go to a specific Orange web page to register the device and they will send a password to this web page, web page found easy peasy, password found non, no chance this is proper French and I have not got a clue, but never mind we have an Internet connection and we are able to connect all our devices. Right lets get on the Internet see what's happening in the world, check out Facebook and eBay, check some mileages on google maps, check and send some emails, no capital NO chance the connection is crap no 3G and just about a signal, it must just be the area we are in, I suppose we are in a very large field surrounded by fields in the middle of not a lot, well hopefully that's the problem and it will get better when we get nearer civilisation, bit like being in Scotland.

Time to go for a walk around the lac and see what we can see well we some water and some ducks, some vines and some more vines its a very pleasant leisurely stroll the afternoon is hot with a little breeze to cool you down and there is plenty of shade from the large trees through which the sun shines leaving mottled patches of bright light on the ground. We return to Gloria and its time for lunch we have just purchased a baguette well I think you could use it for a rounders bat this rascal could break teeth. No cheese or ham today good old egg mayonnaise and tomatoes (on barbs) on the baguette of all baguettes washed down with a little biere blonde and a glass of red. The red does it, it's time for Barb's siesta, tell you what you can not beat an afternoon nap, said Barb when she awoke then we sit in the afternoon sun just chilling out, well not exactly chilling because its pretty hot but you know what I mean. Not a great deal more done today, it gets to 8pm and we have not eaten yet and we don't really know what we want so we end up with English version of a cassoulet, beans on toast. We are on the move again tomorrow not to sure where to so will keep it as surprise, to us all until tomorrow.

That's about it for today so goodnight one and all sleep well, be back tomorrow

Day 14

Some of you will have seen some of today's events on Facebook but we may as well start from the beginning, the day starts as usual pack bed away, breakfast, dishes, shower and stuff and pack stuff away as we are leaving the site today to head off towards Limoges as we are going to visit Derek and Anne tomorrow. Stuff stowed away levelling ramps away, mains electric disconnected we paid last night so all we have to do on the way out is empty and refill Gloria's water works.

Ok off we go, oh no we don't, I turn the ignition key and click, just a click no whizzing of a starter motor just a click, oh sod it the battery's flat. Barb checks with reception no problem we will be there in a minute and jump start you, well thank you but I would rather they jump started Gloria. They trip up with a little old battered Renault van first problem can't open the bonnet, the release cable handle is broken, un la minute monsieur, she pops off and returns with a pair of archaic pliers gives the cable a yank and the bonnet opens, then she produces a pair of jump leads that looked like they came off the arc (if they had jump leads on the arc) this should be fun. First attempt no chance, rev the nuts out of the Renault for five minutes and vroom Gloria fires into life, time to disconnect the jump leads golly gosh they are a tad warm, warm they have nearly melted, merci madam au revoir.

Lets go and don't stall it, we do the emptying and refilling bit with the engine running and depart the site, the plan is to have a drive around look at a couple of the vineyards and see if any of them are open, but as its Sunday its unlikely as there is not much open on a Sunday in France. We drive around looking at the various Chateau it's amazing how close together they are and how many of them there are. There is not a great deal happening in the fields at the moment but in a few weeks time there will be frantic activity picking the grapes which is all done by hand, it must be a great sight to see and very tiring to do.

With the vineyards closed we head off towards Limoges we have planned two stopping points on the route, first Bergerac to see if John Nettles is in, then Perigueux for no other reason than its there and its on the way, and then find an Aire de service to park up for the night. After driving for about 40 kilometres we find a supermarket, we need some supplies so we pop in, this is another shopping world with lots of other shops surrounding the supermarket, thankfully they are all closed today, there is however a restaurant and decide to have a spot of lunch after we have done our shopping. It's a great experience looking at the different produce they sell some of it looks great while other stuff looks decidedly dodgy but it is very interesting seeing the different culinary delights of the region. We return to Gloria with our purchases, load the fridge and the cupboards with stuff and put a number of bottles of fizzy champagne ish booze under the seats, this is the good stuff and here it is 1 euro 45 a bottle.

We return to the restaurant ish place for lunch it's a sort of self service you help yourself to your starter, desert and drinks, draught wine, white, rose and red in various sizes of carafe, take them to the till tell the person on the till what you want for your main course they give you a receipt, you eat your starter take your receipt to the chef and he prepares your main course. The guy on the till is extremely helpful and explains the whole process, and says that we need to sign up for a loyalty card to make use of the wifi, thinks for a minute and says forget that I will just give you the password but will we give him the piece of paper back before we leave, great give this guy employee of the month award.

After lunch I return to Gloria to retrieve our iPads and leave Barb to look after the carafe of wine, when I get to Gloria I think lets see if she will start, will she, will she heck, oh bugger. I don't think we are going to find a jump start here and secondly there is obviously something wrong as the battery should have charged up during the journey. So I phone Fiat AA assist get put through to the UK and give them all the details and our location, the guy says he will pass the information through to their French agent and give me a ring back, ok talk soon.

I return to the restaurant and give Barb the news, not a happy bunny one that Gloria won't go, two that I tried to start her (Gloria that is) and three the carafe is empty. Fiat assist phone back the job has been passed through to France and they will phone me back when they have an eta, I think France, Sunday afternoon, this could take a while. Time for a coffee, now the Facebook friends will have read some of this already, yes I do know what FIAT stands for and I broke all my own rules by firstly buying something French and secondly by buying something Italian, and I am also reliably informed by someone who should know that Gloria is both a Fiat and a Peugeot as they are one in the same thing, that said its only a flat battery and that could be made by anyone.

Anyway moving on the first call to Fiat assist was 1.30pm French time, at 2.45pm we receive the another call saying that they have been given an eta of 3.30pm, I think that's not bad another 45 minutes, oh he says that's 3.30 uk time, 4.30 French time, ok thanks for the info bye bye. We could

be pissed by the time he arrives and sleeping in the supermarket car park at this rate, best have another coffee instead. Twenty past three and the van arrives, I leave Barb in the restaurant and go over to Gloria, we say bonjour shake hands, this guy no speako the Anglais one little bit, this could be fun, we establish that the battery is flat, easy turn the key and click, he opens the van there is nothing in it other than a pair of jump leads and a battery. We connect the jump leads and Gloria fires up, the jump leads and the battery go back in the van and the door closes, looks like all I am going to get is a jump in a car park and nothing else, I fathom out that I need to take her to the Fiat dealer, we say au revoir and off he goes, no paperwork nothing.

Luckily Barb has not ordered another carafe, so we set off for Bergerac when we get there, there is not much we can do as we can not turn Gloria off in case she won't start again, anyway the shops where closed and John was out, so we carry on to Perigueux when we get there same script really shops closed and John does not live there, so it's onto Limoges, we have exchanged a number of texts with Mr Kirkwood and he has given us the address of the Fiat dealer in Limoges and that dear readers is where you find us, parked up in a car park, next to door to the Fiat dealer, Barb says that I have taken her to some lovely places however this is not one of them.

I wonder what the queue be like at a Fiat dealer first thing one a Lundi morning, long I would imagine given their track record, well it's time to upload this and then an early night ready for tomorrow, so goodnight one and all sleep well.

Day 15

We awake earlier than the alarm this morning, could it have something to do with sleeping in a car park on an industrial estate, anyway we survived without getting raped in our beds, kettle on and time for a cup of coffee, wash and a shave (me that is not Barb) now does the dealership open at 8am or 8.30, just after eight I walk up and the gate is open, return to Gloria tell Barb that they are open and we walk back to the dealership together. It is a large modern dealership and the service reception is empty, no queue, I am amazed, it's also empty of staff. After a few minutes the service guy appears, bonjour, bonjour parlez vous Anglais, non, oh this should be interesting, just in case there was going to be a major language barrier I translated the problem into French on my iPad, if it gets really bad the iPad will talk to the service guy in French (technology what a wonderful thing) but we do not need the technology. I just about manage j'ai un problème avec mon véhicule de la batterie continue à aller à plat, ah oui, and with a bit of pointing and gesticulating we manage to ascertain the location of Gloria well Le vehicule, he does not know she is called Gloria and I thought it best not to try and explain. We arrange that I will meet up with a technician at Gloria Le vehicule, give her a jump start, drive her round to the dealership and then start the booking in process.

Luckily last night I wrote down all the details they may need, name, address, vehicle details, this helped the process greatly the only problem is that the la batterie only has two years warranty so one will have to pay, would not happen with a Honda. Looks like there is a letter winging its way to Fiat when we get home, may as well act like a proper customer and moan like heck, in fact why wait I can send them an email from here. Oh and while I am in moan mode, coffee in plastic cups and you have to pay 50 cents for it or 40 cents without sugar, if we had served coffee in plastic cups

and even thought of charging our customers we would have been taken outside and shot, well at lest received a severe beating.

After an hour or so the service receptionist comes over and tells us Gloria well Le vehicule is ready, so I go over to reception and am presented with the bill now they are having a laugh 259 euro for a battery!, it's hardly surprising that the main dealers are loosing business to the non franchised service centres, the email going to Fiat will know be worded stronger and getting to them quicker than I had originally intended. Anyway Gloria is fixed and ready to go, so we set off towards Derek & Anne's going to take about an hour to get there so I give them a ring and let them know our eta.

We arrive at Chateau Iceton (Derek & Anne's) around 11.30am after, hugs, kisses, hand shakes and bonjour's we sit down for a good old chat, then it's time for lunch which we have outside in the sunshine along with a couple of bottles of wine. After lunch we look around the garden, which Barb would love to have, it massive mate. It is a tad hot to do any thing so we sit outside under a large tree for shade, chatting putting all the problems of the world to rights, and I think we did a pretty good job of solving most them. If not the worlds then certainly the UK's and France's, and certainly better than any of the politicians can do, that may have had something to do with the wine but our solutions fixed the problems.

Anne & Derek have asked us if we would like to stay and we have taken them up on their offer and are staying for a couple of days, we have decided to go out for a meal this evening however this is proving a bit difficult as it is Monday and there are not a lot of places open,

Derek finds somewhere open so after a quick shower we depart for the restaurant, they live in a rural area so it's about a twenty minute drive, during the journey we see some wild deer in the fields, they must not be as good at hide and seek as the ones in Scotland. The restaurant is in a hotel and their are only a couple of other people dining so it is quite quiet, Anne's decides on le salade de canard and the rest of us have various cuts of boeuf all washed down with a bottle of vin rouge.

After dinner we return to Chateau Iceton and after a bit of tv and a bit more of a chat, and wait for it I refused the offer of a night cap what's up am I not well, it's time for bed, so goodnight one and all sleep well more tomorrow.

Oh PS Barb wanted to add this following for the gardeners amongst you.

Hi this is me Barbara I am here with Paul and the crew - yes you don't hear very much from me but I would just like to say a few words about the flora and forna . I just love the way every village, town or city you go to, all put on a great floral display. Be it a large garden, no garden, a roundabout, or a town square they all take great care to make it beautiful. I will be takin back lots of ideas for next year for both my garden and marie curie.

Day 16

I am last up and when I get downstairs Derek has gone to the local Le Boulanger for baguette and croissant when he returns we have breakfast and discuss the days events, we have no particular plans other than I would like to go and see the Ellis family who we stayed with some years ago with Sharon, Mick and Anna. So this should be a great lazy day, the only other thing that we need to do is go to les Eco-Gloutons to collect their vegetable basket, when Derek checks his emails he has one from Steve Ellis explaining that he will be at Eco-Gloutons displaying and selling a selection of his

beers, so we will be able to kill two birds with one stone, so to speak. I get in touch with Steve and Sarah through Facebook and let them know that we will see them there tonight.

I have been doing a bit of Internet surfing and route planning, and when I venture into the garden someone has let Barb loose with a pair of garden loppers, where there was once a huge green bush there is now three foot of twigs growing out of the ground, and she has not finished yet there is another large bush being devastated and that also goes from being eight foot high to three foot in now time at all. I take them off her before there are only twigs, a barb assures us that this is what they need and that they will grow better next year. It's then time to tidy up and take all the debris to one place to be burnt at a later date as it is too hot and dry to be lighting fires today.

While this has been going on Anne has been busy preparing lunch, so we just have time for a quick wash before lunch which is also washed down with various wines, ok time for a sit down and relax, Derek chooses a spot under the large tree but it is far to hot for Barb, Anne and I and we go inside into the cool of the living room. Barb decides its time for a afternoon nap and retires to her bed. Anne and I watch the news and discuss the rights and wrongs with the world and again we come up with some great fixes for the worlds problems.

After a couple of hours Derek rejoins us he had his afternoon nap in the garden and was now far to hot and had retreated indoors, Barb awakes and joins us refreshed after taking Duncan (no nuts) for a short walk it is time to set off for Eco-Gloutons. It is only. Ten minute drive and when we arrive there is a great family atmosphere with children playing in the field while vegetables are collect and various artisan breads, cheeses and Steve's bieres are sampled and orders placed for collection next week. It's great fun and a great atmosphere I just wish I could understand more of the language and take more part in the conversation (well you best get learning the lingo then) we chat with Steve and Sarah and before we leave we arrange to go to their house tomorrow to see them and Steve's mum and dad.

The farewells take a bit longer that the hello's it really is very friendly and makes buying vegetables a much more fun than going to Tesco's, we arrive home at 8.30 it's taken 2 hours to buy a basket of veg but its the enjoyment is a wonderful experience. Anne prepares dinner as we set the table and open some more vino. After dinner we watch some tv "New Tricks" have not seen this for a couple of weeks in fact haven't seen any telly since we arrived in France. Tonight when I am offered a nightcap I accept and I am presented with a large brandy a very nice brandy it is too.

It must be the country air we are all tired so its time for bed, me first before I fall asleep on the sofa, so goodnight all sleep well.

Day 17

I am last one up again, lazy sod, and this morning Derek has already returned from Le Boulanger with today's baguette and croissant and its not long before we are having breakfast. After breakfast we collect our stuff together and pack it away back into Gloria, now I need to get her out of the drive it is a little tight but she emerges onto the road without too much of a problem. We take a couple of photographs say are thanks and our goodbyes along with kisses and handshakes, we depart Chateau Icton with a smile in our hearts, we want to thank Anne & Derek for their hospitality we have had a wonderfully enjoyable couple of days and where made to feel extremely welcome. Thank you Both and we look forward to seeing you soon at a wedding hopefully, come on Pete get your act together and while we are at it what are you waiting for Mick.

So the plan is to call in at Chateau Ellis say hello and buy some of their bieres, how long should that take, say an hour, no chance three and half hours, it's was lovely to see them and we were welcomed like long lost friends, we sit and chat for ages buy some of their bieres and have a look around the brewing room. They ask us if we would like to stay overnight and have a BBQ with them, but unfortunately we do need to get a move on and get some miles, sorry kilometres under our belt as the next leg is 586 kilometres.

I don't want any of you blushing but it has to be said that you are a lovely family and it is our loss that we could not stay thank you all for your hospitality, I will send you a picture on the 22nd, good luck with your new venture, and Paul I hope your bill at Fiat is not too large next week.

There is not much to the to the rest of the day we stop for fuel grab a quick bite to eat and continue down the main road to ? The main roads are great mainly only two lanes but with drivers who have good lane discipline and not a great deal of traffic on them, but they are fairly boring. After about 260k just under half way, we find somewhere to park up for the night, we have come off the main road into a town and found a campsite, but it's ferme, there are two other vans parked up on pitches outside the site, so we join them and that is where you find us now. Hopefully we should be at our destination about lunch time, so LAKE GENEVA here we come, early night required so goodnight one and all sleep well.

Day 18

We set off for Geneva with the expectations of a three hour drive and arriving there at about 1 o'clock and all was going to plan until we need to change motorways we get to the intersection and its closed with a diversion sign pointing the way we are heading only this is now going in the wrong direction, Sylvia can not come up with any better ideas than "make a u turn" so we follow the diversion signs limited that they are. The diversion goes on for miles and miles and keeps going, Sylvia can not find another route and we can not see an alternative on the map, so we follow the diversion, this is like calling Barrow in Furness a cull de sac, it carries on for miles then the signs stop typical bloody French, Sylvia now comes up with a plan and eventually we get to the A20 and heading in the right direction.

The diversion must have taken us at least 2 hours and we where still 50k from where we should have joined the A20, sel a vi, we continue on to Geneva and after an un scheduled stop because of the added time and distance (I am knackered) we start the crossing from France to Switzerland the road is a fantastic piece of engineering consisting of tunnels which make the Mersey tunnels kids stuff and the are free and then suspended roads / bridges on the mountain sides with considerable drops (sylvia says we are 600 meters above sea level and barb asks me if this is higher than 600 feet, i do wonder at times) it continues for miles and miles and its amazing I wish I could have taken a video of it.

We finally arrive in Geneva at about 5pm it is mad busy, we drive into the city, big big mistake, it's rammed and there are road works on the road along the lake side, to carry out the road works they have narrowed the lanes so narrow in places that Gloria can not get through without giving way to the oncoming traffic (fat cow) now the plan was to find the tourist information office to find a campsite, but that ain't happening so its down to Sylvia to save the day, she tells us that there is a site not far out of town so of we go. The site is right on the lake not cheap but considering its location it's not surprising and there is none of that roadside camping in Switzerland, don't you

know. I opt for a lakeside pitch for two nights with a plan of getting to Rob and Gisela's on Monday so we pitch up, another different electrical connector but they have them in the office, so electric on, level, and water systems topped up, it's now about 6.45pm all set up for the night, well that is until I close the drivers door will it shut, well in short no it bloody wont.

There is a problem with the door lock mechanism, looks to me as if the cable is stuck, so smart arse thinks he will remove the door trim and have a look, oh no he won't, torch bit required and I don't have any with us (best bring the whole tool kit with us next time) so first call to Fiat assist at 7.20pm now this gets pretty boring with lots of phone calls from one very unhappy customer, eventually the guy arrives at twenty past midnight, now I had stipulated with Fiat assist that they needed to send someone who knew what they where doing. Although very helpful this chap try's to fix the problem with a Swiss Army knife, gives up after a while and says it needs to go to Fiat or was it Inverness, thanks very much monsieur I knew that 5 flipping hours ago. Another unhappy customer call to Fiat Assist I tell them to stuff it I will tie the doors shut and stay where we are and if we get raped in our beds it's their fault, so goodnight one and all sleep well, I am going to bed.

Day 19

I am going to give you the abbreviated version of today's events as it gets a bit boring.

So guess where I am going after breakfast, correct the "Fix It Again Tomorrow" dealer, Barb decides to stay and chill out at the campsite, I set of following Sylvia's directions its only 14k away so should not take long first mistake due to the traffic I get there at about 11.30am. I go to service reception parlez vous Anglais, non, here we go again, I eventually explain the problem, and after a while I am told to come back at 1.30, I say that I will wait, oh, 1.30 arrives and I am told to dive to the back of the building turn right and ask for monsuir Valahz, it appears to me that this guy is either the service manager or the warranty guy, anyway it's up to him if the repair is covered my the warranty, first problem no Anglais and I do mean completely no Anglais, he wants to see every piece of information I have regarding Gloria, eventually he agrees that it will be a warranty repair, then pops of to the parts dept to check stock, what a surprise they do not have one and can not get one until Monday, Ok see you Monday 2pm, oh Ok. This conversation took forever.

I return to the campsite to a not happy BH, another day lost thanks to FIAT I can not believe its taken all day to figure out they do not have the part in stock, while i was away we have been joined by two more le camping cars, a small one on the right from Germany and a bloody huge one from Poland on the left, I am sure that Britain has been in this position before but I don't think I will mention it, we sit outside in the sunshine looking at the wonderful view and open a bottle of wine followed by another and things get a bit clouded after that so goodnight one and all sleep

Day 20

Right I have now broken through 15000 words and have I had any congratulations from Apple, in short NO, Candy Crush would be telling me what a star I am and shouting winner, winner give yourself a gold star, Apple being a bit more reserved must be waiting until we get through the 20,000 word barrier.

Staying at the campsite entitles you to free use of the public transport system so after breakfast and the usual bathroom activities (BH is happier here as they have separate male and female facilities) we walk up to the bus stop. The buses are massive double bendy bendy buses and run like a Swiss watch, no one checks your ticket you just get on via any of the four doors. We are in town in no time at all, time for a bit of sight seeing and widow defiantly window shopping, the first thing I notice is the amount of flash cars there are, Ferrari's, Maserati's, McLaren's to name a few and they are like bottoms every buggers got one, its fairly obvious that there is some proper cash here. There are expensive watch shops everywhere, alongside expensive everything shops and expensive hotels and restaurants, alongside C & A. Recession I don't think so, they are not having any of that lark here thank you very much.

We wander around looking at the shops and taking in the sights, as we are going to the Patek Philippe museum for a guided tour at 2.30pm so we need to get some lunch before then. So we start the usual restaurant hunt eventually we find one not too far from the museum and looking at the menu we don't need to take out a second mortgage. We sit outside in the street, I still don't get this lark, Barb chooses pepperoni pizza, and I plump for the La Catalan burger served medium but still pink, you don't get them like this in McDonald's washed down with a glass of vin rouge and a large biere, and very good it was. When I asked for a white coffee I did think that the waitress was going to have a mild heart attack.

We head off for the museum and get there just in time for the start of the tour, now if you are ever in Geneva you GOT to go to this museum, I can not put into words how utterly fantastic this place is, the collection is just stunning, with time pieces going back to the sixteenth century it's amazing and the condition of every item is immaculate and in full working order, they have a craftsman working in the museum maintaining all of the time pieces his knowledge must be invaluable, talking of value the collection must be priceless, and to think this is a private collection belonging to Patek Philippe. The tour takes one and a half hours and after the tour we spend another couple of hours looking at the exhibits, we could stay here all day.

After the tour we just have time to go the Patek Philippe shop before they close, to say that they are security conscious is a slight understatement the first door is automatic but does not open as you walk up to it, it waits for about 20 to 30 seconds presumably while they check you out, it opens and then closes behind you then the second door opens again about 20 to 30 seconds later. Well we are in must not have looked too much of a threat, not sure they thought we could afford anything though, however we are welcomed and invited to have a browse.

There is a large room to the rear of the establishment with very plush furnishings and lots of potential customers trying on a selection of the precious watches, so we will not be going in there, it is said that you never actually own a Patek Philippe you are just a custodian of it for the next generation, tuff luck kids. We say our thanks and depart, exiting takes the same fuss as entering.

Time to return to Gloria via our free bus service, don't see anyone on here with a PP on their wrist, when we get back to the site it's time to relax sit outside and enjoy the view with a glass of vino. We can see lightening in the distance and it is starting to rain so we retreat inside. We are treated to a magnificent electrical storm with thunder shaking the ground and lightening bolts dancing across the lake and filling the sky with brilliant white light. It's a great storm, it goes on for at least an hour we sit watching through Gloria's windows at the amazing sight in awe of nature's amazing powers. Then rain boy did it rain during the rain storm which was not going to stop, there was a firework display on the other side of the lake, which would of been cancelled in the UK for Health and

Safety reasons but not here even in Switzerland, it continued as if in battle with the thunder and lightening.

That's about it for today we will see if we can get any sleep as the rain dances on Gloria's roof, well she needed a wash, so goodnight one and all sleep well.

Day 21

The weather is a tad overcast this morning and there are lots of campers drying out their belongings and the insides of their tents after last night's downpour, even the happy campers are quiet this morning which is surprising. Now I don't think I have mentioned the happy campers before but there must be 25 or 30 of them all in one tent, cosy me thinks. It is apparent that they are on some form of religious retreat due to their singing and happy clapping at all hours of the day and night. Now this morning seems to be the culmination of the proceedings with them all gathered together some of them wearing white coats on the grass in front of the lake. We suspect that the ones in the white coats are in for a dunking in the lake, and after a fair bit more singing and clapping our suspicions are confirmed and the 10 wearing the white coats are in the lake and submerged much to the delight of their friends, now I had thought the ones in the white coats were the sane ones but it would appear not. After another song some more happy clapping, the wet ones dry off, they pack their tent and bugger off, peace at last.

I don't think that I have mentioned Mr Magoo from Poland either, he is parked next to us and is the dead spit for Quincy Magoo I kid you not, he and Mrs Magoo are in a motor home, no it's not its a house on wheels it's huge. It's obvious that Mr & Mrs Magoo are not on their way to England to work all hours for the minimum wage. This is one seriously well hung pole well you know what I mean, going by the web address on the back of the house he owns a couple of hotels in Poland I did enquire if he had any other business interests, but he just smiled and said nothing.

Just as we are about to walk to the bus stop, it starts raining again so we abandon the trip until the rain stops, which takes about an hour. We eventually catch the bus and we get off at an earlier stop than usual to enable us to catch the boat to the other side of the lake. This boat trip is also included in the free bus ticket we were given at the campsite, once on the other side we walk lakeside towards the centre ville, there are lots of boat trips on offer and we decide to take one that lasts just over an hour. We are the only ones on board and are only joined by a few more passengers before we depart, this is possibly due to it being the last sailing on a Sunday afternoon and the fact that the weather does not look favourable. We set off up the right hand side of the lake, taking in the views and the various lake side chateaus, and then we sail past chateau Gloria (see pic) just after we pass Gloria we cross the lake for the return trip, the weather is closing in and you can see the storm clouds rolling down the lake behind us and by the looks of it traveling faster than we are. There are some fantastic chateau's and the biggest of them all belongs to Baron Rothschild it's the stinking big gaff at the top of a hill.

When we return to the landing stage the weather has caught up with us and it's piddling down and by the looks of it it's going to get worse, we take shelter in Starbucks with the rest of Geneva, it's rammed, we are served with the largest dearest medium coffee and tea going, both of which are served with milk the guy nearly had a heart attack, AU LAIT he responded, oui, he walks away

shaking his head and returns with coffee and tea carrying them at arms length as if they were contagious.

The rain lightens so we do one quick and head out into the streets looking for a restaurant that will not require me to remove my shirt, anyway it would appear that like France, Geneva is shut on a Sunday night, all the bars and restaurants that last night were chaotically busy are tonight closed up tight. There is a restaurant next to the campsite so we decided to head off home and eat there, when we go in there are only a couple of other customers in there, we are shown to a table, no Anglais here either, we order our food and a bottle of vino that is a tad dearer than we have been paying in the supermarkets but he did not look like he was going to be very pleased if I had got one from Gloria. The food was pretty good and we return to Gloria to dry off and sleep so goodnight one and all sleep well.

Day 22

The Return of the Fiat Dealer

It's Monday and the day that Gloria's door lock is going to be replaced, or will it I am a tad sceptical, one whether the part will have arrived and two will it fix it and if so for how long. I am up at sunrise and go down to the lake to take some photographs, Mr Magoo is wandering around so we say hello and good morning, well we smile and gesticulate to each other.

The guys from Pickford's had been round and helped pack up his house on wheels so it looks like he is moving on today as well.

After breakfast and the usual washroom antics, we start to prepare Gloria for intergalactic travel, which of course can not take place until we have been to Fiat, as we are unable to secure all of the airtight doors. We have decided to mooch around the site until 12 o'clock and then head off to the

Fiat dealer to see about Gloria's repairs, so after packing everything away, emptying and replenishing Gloria's waterworks we leave the site and this time we can drive up the ruddy great hill rather than walking up it.

The drive to the dealership takes about 40 minutes so the plan is to find a supermarket on route and top up with supplies before continuing on to Germany, any way is there a supermarket on route, no, is there a supermarket anywhere around the garage, is there heck so we give up and go to the dealership to wait for our 2pm appointment. Two o'clock arrives and I go in to see monsieur Francois Vadala, ah bonjour, bonjour well at least he remembers me that's a start, we figure out that he is going to see if the part has arrived, here we go, oui it's here, bloody hell no stop wait a minute don't get carried away. He gets all the paperwork and takes Gloria into the workshop and returns about ten minutes later with another guy who by all accounts speaks a bit of English, why now do we need English, doesn't look good to me. We fathom out that the 3rd year English warranty is not the same as the Swiss warranty and that he can not claim for the repair through their system. So we will need to pay them and then claim the money back from Fiat when we get back to the UK, don't you just love surprises, ok let's get it fixed.

About an hour later Gloria appears from the workshop and Monsieur Vadala gives me the keys and explains that we should drive around to the reception area, go to the cashier and settle the invoice.

Now Monsieur Vadala has obviously never met scousers before, so we get into Gloria start her up check all the door locks are working and then bugger off at light speed never to be seen again. Don't be silly as if I would do that, how could you think such a thing, we go round to the caiss desk smile, pay up, gather all the paperwork say mercie and au revoir and then we bugger off. We have given Sylvia the first leg of our journey and she starts giving directions after a couple of turns we cross the border back into France and at the first roundabout there is a supermarket and it sells fuel, good as the fuel in Switzerland is pretty expensive, I fill Gloria with go go juice while Barb goes in to replenish food oh and wine supplies. We continue the journey and after 15 minutes we are back in Switzerland on our way to Germany. You find us parked up at a motorway services with about 300 kilometres to do tomorrow, I need to get some sleep now, so goodnight one and all sleep well.

Days 23 to 28

Hi guys well we survived another night sleeping on the motorway services without being raped in our beds but that's only to be expected as we are in Switzerland don't you know. We have woken up early thanks to the noise this is one seriously busy service area, after a cup of coffee and the usual stuff we set off down the motorway. When we check with Sylvia we have 345k to cover before we get to Rob and Gisela's so we best be getting a move on.

The motorway is pretty boring and the scenery is not that interesting so there is not a great deal to report and other than a couple of rest stops and one for a little snoozet that's about it until we arrive at Chateau Langford. We arrive at approx 3pm, as the rest of the trip is family orientated I am going to sign off this blog as it may be a bit boring for you so until next time, farewell for now.