

## CLUB TOURING – A FIRST TIMERS' PERSPECTIVE

I have to admit to being somewhat apprehensive before signing up for touring the Pyrenees in May as I had never ridden a motorcycle on the continent before and although having driven a car on many occasions overseas, I had never experienced 'real' mountain roads and I also knew that I would be in the company of many seasoned tourists. I had heard tales of the challenges of mastering tight right-hand hairpin bends so I think a degree of anxiety would be natural.

For someone who gets sea-sick in the bath, I was grateful for a calm Bay of Biscay crossing. On arrival at Bilbao, we had a good ride to the hotel on the French side of the Pyrenees just in time before the rain came and then it rained for the next 2½ days or so which was not great as it was cold and even having to resort to wearing my Long Johns in bed....

It seemed ironic that the poor weather seemed to reside only on the French side and once through the 9km Somport tunnel or over one of the spectacular passes, we were basking in glorious Spanish sunshine. My photo's do not fully capture the magnificence of the scenery but some pictures below give you an idea:





The scenery is fairly obvious to state, but for me, the most memorable aspect of the tour was the camaraderie of the entire group. Tim Williams, who moved to Dorset from Reed some months ago brought his wife Sam and two friends Keith and Tina from the USA and everybody fitted in well and it was a fantastic opportunity to see others in a different light and get to know them better.

Realising that I was the weakest rider in terms of ability and although there were more bicycles on the mountain roads than any other wheeled vehicles where the absence of traffic was very noticeable, I am somewhat averse to blind hairpin bends. I chose to ride towards the back of the pack to allow the more capable riders to move at a pace appropriate to them. The drop-off system worked extremely well and the tail-end Charlies – usually Steve C or Simon – ensured nobody got lost. What did surprise me that in most part, the quality of the roads we encountered was very good and in contrast to local UK roads.

My room-mate for the tour was Ben and he was keen to maintain his fully toned body-beautiful image and can be seen having just completed a full 25 to 30 second work-out on the rowing machine in the hotel gym.....



It was a great trip and the traffic density we found on our return came as a surprise after a week of traffic absence. To summarise: a lot of leg pulling and a huge amount of fun!

Finally, a huge thankyou to Mark for setting this up and the organisation and a trip to remember for the rest of my life!

Jasper