



## Brittany Tour 2012

Two bikes, eight panniers, too much stuff, old enough to know better, young enough to enjoy the ride.

On September 1st we cycled onto an overnight ferry from Portsmouth to S.Malo and awoke the next morning to cycle off into the mist and rain but at least it was warmer mist and rain

than at home. After a second breakfast in the old town, we caught the little ferry across the bay to Dinard and then cycled south into sunshine along the old railway line route VV3.

The plan was to cycle all the way across Brittany down to the Atlantic, across to Carnac, then back north through the countryside to the north coast and return to St. Malo. We carried a tent and everything we needed to be self sufficient.



The old railway track from Dinard took us to Dinan where we joined the river Rance.

All the way to Rennes there is a wide towpath on the riverbank, excellent for cycling. Then the river Vilaine south to the Arzal Barrage has a cyclable towpath too.

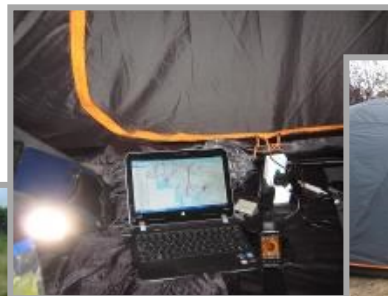
We planned to camp every night and had researched campsites and marked them on the map. In the event, all the sites we planned to stay at were open and were great.



The best were the municipal ones. They were cheap and had good facilities like freewashing machines and had picnic tables to sit at.

The more commercial sites had the benefit of WiFi but everything was more expensive and none of them had communal benches or tables.

We do not travel light!



really were carrying everything on our bikes. One of these guys was so amazed he let us have electricity for nothing.

10m of cable, laptop, chargers... it all weighs quite a bit and needs careful packing.

It did mean we could plot routes, upload photos and video and tune in to BBC iPlayer; a real home from home. We had upgraded to a four-man tent too just to make sure there was space. All in all the extra weight was worth it.

We spent 5 days travelling down to Trinite sur Mer on the south coast. We camped the first night by the canal at Tinteniac and had a great first experience of a municipal site. Then we carried on along the canal to Rennes, where we got a bit lost for a mile or two until we found the river/canal Vilaine. Just south of Rennes we had our only non-camping night, at a hotel in Pont Rean. A bit quirky but lovely room and food.



More than once I had to confirm to a bemused site manager that I really did want electric hook up and we







We arrived at the Atlantic coast and camped in a commercial campsite right by the sea for three days. The weather was superb and we left the bikes alone for a day and walked the beach path into Trinite sur Mer for ice creams.

We took a short bike ride up to

see the standing stones at Carnac too. These were fascinating and it was good to have a day to explore some of the different sites (and sights).



The day we left to cycle north it rained. The wet tent weighed loads and a northerly wind blew into our faces all the way up into the heart of Brittany at Rohan. We took shelter where we could at breaktime in the morning.



Then the sun came out and we arrived at a beautiful campsite by the Nantes/Brest canal to find the shops in Rohan were shut on Tuesdays - it was Tuesday .

However the creperie was open in an otherwise deserted town.



The next day we continued north to St. Brieuc on the channel coast. The wind stayed into our faces and the climbs felt like they went on forever. It was a bit of a featureless day apart from a really friendly patisserie at Loudeac and we rode through Plouec sur Lie, the hometown of Julie Bresset. She won the Olympic women's mountain bike gold at a youthful 40 years old just a month earlier. That's VTT (Velo Toutes Terrain) in French.



The campsite at St. Brieuc was weird. It's set in a narrow valley in the middle of town with a public path through the middle. So we only stayed one night and pressed on to St. Malo. Again we set off in the rain with a heavy ,wet tent and again the sun came out in the afternoon.

There was some of the best riding this day on country lanes as we made our



way to Pleboulle for a lunchtime stop.

Then we pressed on to find the old railway line, VV3, that we had been on two weeks before. This time we took it back north to Dinan to take the little







Crossing the bay from Dinard to St. Malo on the ferry costs a few Euros but is better than the busy roads in/out of St. Malo, especially the bridge.

We stayed a little way out of town on a commercial campsite which was friendly enough but was already partly shut down. The other sites nearby were closed for the end of the season.



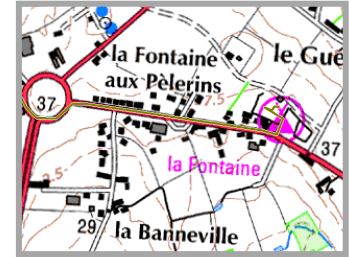
We spent a couple of days around St. Malo exploring the walled town and stumbling upon the Rochers Sculptes. Well worth checking out if you're in the area. They're a huge set of carvings cut into the cliff in the late 1800's by a priest who had had a stroke. It took him 25 yrs and then he

died. Google them to find out more (there's plenty more to the story and it's very odd). On the last day we had an early morning rise to break camp and cycle down to the ferry back to Portsmouth.



## Tips and hints if you want to try

Early September is a great time to go as the weather is still very warm but not too hot to ride all day. Check campsites in advance because a lot of the municipal ones shut after the end of August. French IGN paper maps don't show campsites but MemoryMap software IGN maps do! Google helps.



Carry a washing line if you're going to use commercial campsites - the municipal ones have drying lines the more expensive places don't.



Look for odd things, there's plenty of them along the way



Take some tools. We did not see many bike shops that were convenient for our route. You can take steps to prevent punctures by investing in good tyres. We used Schwalbe Marathon Plus. Not cheap but no punctures.

Take as much stuff as you can or travel light but definitely include Crocs.

**We have videos online which show two days of our trip. Search YouTube for 'peatvdb' and flick thru to the 2012 Bretagne movies. Enjoy!**

