

MEDITERRANEAN

SIGGY AND HEATHER | TRIP AROUND THE MEDITERRANEAN | FRIDAY, 7 JUNE 2013

Lazy day

When we show fellow campers the places we have been over the last two months they are surprised that we have not stopped in many places for long. It's as though we have traveled at too high a speed. Many campers tend to find a suitable place (or keep returning to the same location) and then prop for many days to take in the sunshine and chill out totally. They come for "the weather and the sand". We tell them that we can sit and prop at any time when we are home. We have sunny weather for long periods and we have ample sand and surf. We feel it would be a pity to sit idly by and miss what else the area has to offer.

Having said that we decided to stay in this place an extra night and I am sitting writing my newsletter listening to Heather cursing outside in the sun. She has guidebooks piled up high next to a detailed map of this country. She is frustrated because there are so many places of interest that we could experience in France. Horse riding tracks, bike tracks and walking tracks. Little villages, intriguing history and the speciality products all catch her eye. Heather would like to do everything all at once and immerse herself in the very essence of this country. I simply nod and agree with what she says. To make a comment would not help. Everything we do will be great I guess.



continued on next page



Finding hidden gems

It is great to talk to people on the road. Many are very experienced travelers who are only too willing to share their knowledge and tips about what to see and where to go. We always enjoy listening to what little gems they have found and share with us - a free camping place, a village with something special, a view or some back street cafe. We usually take our map over to their camp site and hey presto we have an itinerary for the next day or so.

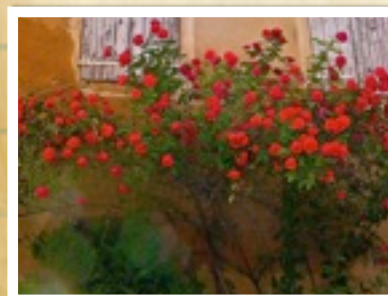
Guide books, such as Lonely Planet, are also great in that they sift out the best places and use no-nonsense language to let you know about interesting experiences, eateries and camping places.

Then there are the local resources found in tourist offices. Some are very useful but some of their schematic maps can be very perplexing. It all helps to make the local experience so much more memorable.



Rogues gallery high up on Notre Dame Provence

FORCALQUIER



Now that we are back on the mainland we may even slow down a bit.

The town we are camping in is Forcalquier. It is a typical village in north eastern Provence. The area coming into Forcalquier was very mountainous but we have left the heights far behind. The town has a citadel, a gorgeous old town with typically narrow alleys and a lovely old church (in fact it's got a few churches).

There is something grand about hearing church bells ringing slowly - much more so than the screeching we were forced to experience from mosque loud speakers in Turkey.

ITINERARIES ARE GREAT BUT SOMETIMES IT IS BETTER TO SIMPLY FOLLOW YOUR NOSE.

We slept in and then rode our bikes in to town. The caravan park is only a kilometer away so the trip in was easy going. We found the tourist office and, with the supplied guide map, we did a circuit of the town.

There were many stairs to climb but the view from the top of the citadel was very pleasant. We lingered here for

some time. Then it was down to the town proper to look around. Wonderful.

We spied a bread shop. The French seem to know the secret of making descent bread. Trouble is it takes a long time to choose which one you want - will it be square (great for toasting), round, as thin as a toothpick, with cheese, with olives - and so on? Heather almost whiled away her whole morning in the bakery trying to choose the "right" loaf we would have for brunch. The funny thing is that bakeries have a sign out the front "PAIN".

And so it was back to the van for a general clean up, a clothes wash and a swim for Heather - in the caravan park pool no less. I just took off my shirt and relaxed in the sun. There was even time for a short nana and poppy nap.

I guess Heather's sighing will continue well into the night as she maps out our itinerary for the next few days. I might get around to helping her if there is any time left after completing my newsletter.

Life is difficult when you are on a road trip.



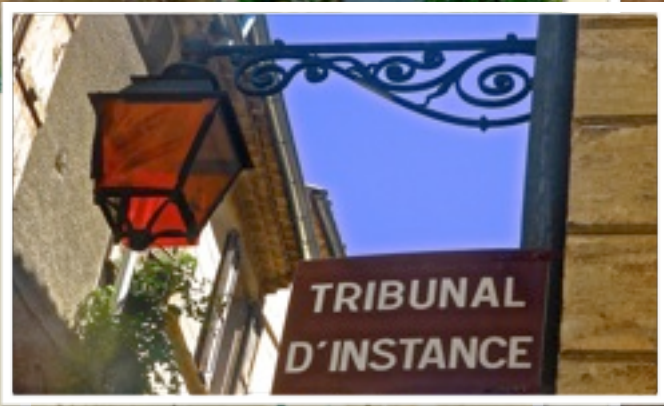
View from citadel across Forcalquier township



PHOTOS



Part of Forcalquier citadel walls



MEDITERRANEAN RAMBLING

Holland, oh Holland, what a great place
Full of Dutch people, not much space.
Belgium too, quite a smallish nation
We will be back here at the end of our vacation.

We drove on to Luxembourg, such a tiny land
But we loved it there too, it could never be called bland.
Then on to Deutschland, my grandfather's home
I lapped up the ambience and then we continued our roam.

We slipped into Switzerland almost by stealth
This country is prosperous, its people have wealth.
It was next in to Austria with its mountains up high
We loved the Tyrol, bright snow against blue sky.

Slovenia beckoned, so much to admire
Bled in particular, a huge hit with its island church spire.
And so on to Croatia - oh what a revelation
Its history, its geography, its people, what a great nation.

Touching Italy in Bari we then ferried to Greece
And loved it, especially that upland northern piece.
Over to Turkey, an intriguing land of extreme
Attractions really lovely but filth in between.

Back to Greece and its gorgeous fingers
In Pilion, Sithonia and Mani everyone lingers.
Then off to Italy's boot where we got a real kick
We enjoyed every minute here, its got our big tick.

Across the strait to the island of Sicily
You have to be sharp here or you could lose yourself easily.
Next it was Sardinia, where we were most surprised
A real eye opener, not what we had surmised.

But Corsica, oh Corsica, its the place we've liked most
Its wilderness, its beauty, whether interior or coast.
Next to the France mainland, its provinces to explore
Provence, Dordogne, Champagne and so much more.

So who knows what's ahead and what will be in our sight
That's part of the excitement, part of our delight.
Our Mediterranean road trip has been choc full of fun
We started with freezing weather but now we have sun.