

MEDITERRANEAN

SIGGY AND HEATHER | TRIP AROUND THE MEDITERRANEAN | MONDAY, 10 JUNE 2013

Walled Towns

It was a rather full-on day today. We visited two medieval walled cities - Aigues Mortes and Carcassone and just for extra excitement we took an impromptu tour of the back streets of Montpellier.

After a sleep in and chat with fellow campers we finally got started late around noon. We traveled slowly through the Rhone River marsh country. The sunny day made it especially pleasant. Not having enough time to experience Aigues Mortes yesterday, Heather was determined that we would not miss it today. We shopped in a large supermarket and then left the van and rode our bikes in. Like many other similar villages the fortified walls stand out strongly and beckon you in for a look.

First settled in the 13th century its cobbled streets, like similar places we have visited, added to the charm of the place. We certainly felt the cobbles in our bones as our little 16" bike wheels and shock absorbers tried to dampen the up and down movement. The narrow streets were lined with the usual cafe's and restaurants and clothes and trinket shops. Outside the walls was a lovely canal resplendent with canal boats. We spent some time riding around till we realised the day was rapidly drawing to a close.



continued on next page



Motorhome Eruption

Over the last week or so we have seen more motorhomes than ever before. Whereas earlier in our trip we seldom saw another van the situation has changed dramatically. Most of the caravan parks and aires are chock full of vans.

We think we know the reasons why. Firstly there are travelers like us - tourists who travel by motorhome (more and more are

now doing this). Then there are the European grey nomads. Have van will travel.

Add the really bad weather in northern Europe to the mix and suddenly everyone in a motorhome is driving down south. So we have the French and people from other European countries all heading our way.

We are glad not to be here in school holidays.



The quaint streets of Aigues Mortes

CARCASSONE



As soon as we hit the freeway we realised we don't like traveling this way

When we asked Emily how long to our next destination we were shocked to find it was going to take us over 3 hours. That's because we asked it not to take ferries or toll roads. Big mistake. On the outskirts of Montpellier the road was blocked. We knew there must have been a serious accident by the many ambulances and police. We were directed off the main road and into the suburbs. There we spent a boring hour or two cursing and swearing as we drove round and round in circles. Emily eventually found the way through and we hurried off on a toll road to Carcassonne.

Carcassonne is yet another walled city - walls within walls in fact - over 4.5 kms of them. From a distance the place looks absolutely huge and awe inspiring. Pointed witch-hat turrets everywhere - 52 of them. UNESCO world heritage listed and over 2500 years old.

We found a caravan park and quickly hopped on our bikes for the 3 km ride into the town - it was 6.30 pm by the time we arrived. It was difficult to get a snap of the whole place in one photo. Inside was terrific.

The sun was low in the sky as we entered and the light made the defensive walls and buildings glow. The cafes and restaurants were doing a busy trade as we cycled slowly by. We loved the place. So much to see and admire.

It was too late to walk on the walls but we still had a great time looking around and into side alleys and back streets.

The ride home was through the extended town below the embattlements. It was late and we almost stopped to buy dinner but choose instead to get back to the van and cook up our own storm.

WALLED TOWNS SEEM TO HAVE A FASCINATION FOR THE NOWAKS

We have not really done much homework as to where we intend to go next. We are keeping an eye on the weather after other campers have told us of the bad conditions in central Europe. We have had excellent weather to date and don't want to spoil this.



Inner and outer walls of Carcassonne



PHOTOS



Aigues Mortes



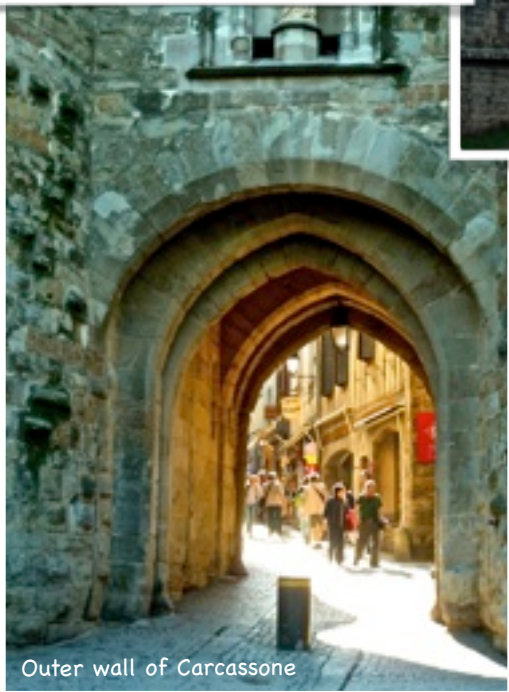
Aigues Mortes



Carcassonne



Inner and outer walls of Carcassonne



Outer wall of Carcassonne



Carcassonne roofscape