

Gary and Beckie's Alpine Trip 2011 Warwick to St Gervais les Bains.

Friday: 2nd September

Our holiday began at 7am and we travelled without any problems to the channel tunnel. Unfortunately the tunnel was having technical problems and we had a 2 hour wait for our train. It did seem that they could have let us know more about what was going on, but eventually we were on the train. We arrived in France for 2pm French time. Fuelled up we set off for our first stop to "Bar sur Seine", 426km. We used the tolls for the trip down and on the bike the toll prices are far less than in the car. (Remember to go to the manned kiosks). We arrived at our hotel a little later than planned, but before it got dark. Our hotel "Hotel the Cadole" was clean and an ok stop off for that



purpose only, we even had a garage for the bikes. The restaurant though was quite pretentious and overpriced. We ate and went to bed for a well earned rest.

Saturday: 3rd September

We awoke to peti dejeuner. Not the best and certainly peti... We left at around 9am. We decided to not take the tolls down for the rest of the trip to our base for the week, another 457km. So we followed the D971 to "Dijon" and then the D905 to "Dole". A very nice stretch of road, with some spectacular scenery with vast expanses of fields with huge blue skies surrounding us making good progress we continued around "Dijon", missing out the town's traffic. We then proceeded to "Poligny" where we stopped for a quick drink and a stretching of legs. After another fuel stop we proceeded on our route to "Gex", where on the way we stopped for lunch in "Sousan", at a small Auberge by the side of the road. Where we were welcomed and had a very nice lunch. Beckie found a kitten to play with and the owner's son decided to come and sit at our table to chat. He must of been about 5 years old, with no English and us with very little French, we managed to smile and chat for a while. When we left we were wished well

and asked to return soon, a very pleasant place and lovely people. Then on to "Gex", where after hours of sun and clear skies, we found our first rain. Slowly at first, it drizzled a bit. We made our way through the foothills and into the lower Jura we made our way up and down our first hairpins and alpine style roads. Where we stopped to rest and plan our remaining journey in a lay by. We chatted to 2 German bikers on a 14 year old triumph and a Old shape BMW GS which were I must say in impeccable condition. Unfortunately I needed to visit the little boys room, so off I went into the trees, what I found there will remain with me for a very long time and will not be spoken about on these pages, as it may frighten small children and those of a nervous disposition...

Then after we set off again, fuelling up in "Gex", and after a trip around the houses to find a fuel station. We left "Gex" in a slight drizzle... then the heavy rain began. Well wet undies again for another trip, we eventually stopped, donned our waterproofs and off we set. The satnav was playing up a bit and trying to send us into Switzerland, which we didn't want to do, so after a short detour, we were going in the right direction. By this time our gloves were soaked through. My new summer helmet leaked, it doesn't like any more than a shower, and ended up on the towel rail to dry out.

So by now its 6.30 and I get a phone call from the owners of the apartment where we are planned to arrive to ask when we will be there to collect the key. As I could only hear it ring in my pocket so we decided to stop. Which we did in the next motorway services. Then the fun begins. We call them back and say we are an hour away, all good and see you soon. So back on the reliable new Honda!!!! And nope, it won't start. Arrrgggg, so thinking it's the battery we try a bump start or 2... No good. I resign myself to calling the RAC recovery to get a jump. Well all going ok so far, but as I'm on the toll motorway, I have to call the French recovery services and they have to come out. I have limited if not poor French and they had even more limited English, fun on the phone! Eventually we are on the same level and we have a 40 min wait. Beckie then remembers that I've had this problem before when I originally picked up the bike, where the fuse box moves in its carrier, so seat off, push it back in place and hey presto, it starts, so wet through and with a bike now running, I call back the recovery team and cancel them. All sorted. We now are running late and have an hour to go in torrential rain. We arrive at our destination after some cool twisty uphill corners in the rain. We arrive and have found a beautiful apartment overlooking the town and valley below. We can even see Mont Blanc from our balcony, or we will when it stops raining. A great base for a stunning week ahead, we hope!!!

Sunday 4th September

Off the bikes for a rest....

Woke up to a light drizzle and this continued through the day, as we were off the bikes not a problem. It gave us the day to dry off our wet gear. The town is small and has enough cafes and restaurants to keep us fed through the week. A good choice on our part. Here's hoping that tomorrow is a drier day.

Monday: 5th September

And so to our first venture out into the Alps. We decided to travel up the "Route Des Grande Alps" to "Boige" and on to the D22 to "Chatel". The day started a little damp and overcast, but as we left the lower valley from "Sallanges" to "Cluses" it looked like it would brighten up. The road winds up the valley slowly



Climbing through "Tangines" to "Les Gets" and on to "Morzine", We are met by sweeping curves, big hairpins with clear roads all the way. A few stops for drinks and a fuel up in "Les Gets" on the outward trip. We get to the D22 and on to "Chatel". A smaller road but just as good, good tarmac and open bends to play on. We get to "Chatel" just after midday. Realizing that Beckie has left her passport in the apartment, we

decide not to chance crossing the border into Switzerland, so we turnaround and head back. The weather by this time is cooler, the sun is now in the sky and I decide to try out the video. We stop in the small village of "Abondance" at a little cafe with a few French guys who think we are mad to be travelling in the cold! Well for us it's pretty much normal. So a hot chocolate later and with the video up and running, we set off back to "St Gervais" The route is the reverse of what I described earlier. We have a little tussle with 2 Swiss bikers, who decide on inappropriate overtakes and then stop for fuel 2 minutes later...bizarre. We get back in good time to pop up the town and have lunch, before Gary crashes out with a glass or 2 of wine before bed. And so onto tomorrow, (South)!!!

Tuesday: 6th September

Today we decided to do the "Col du Petit St Bernard via the "Cornet de Roseland" We kicked off at



9.00am and set off to "Megeve" and "Flume", these roads were smooth and sweepy, Through trees and open country. Although quite busy we kept a reasonable pace and eventually turned off

On to the D925, to the "Lac du Roseland" which is a beautiful clear blue lake which had to be seen to be Believed and once on the "Roseland" road, we were



alone, smooth roads and hairpins galore, with open and easy bends to start the day. We got to the lake for some photo's. Which don't do the lake justice. Once up top at the "Comet de Roseland" we stopped for coffee and a chat with an English couple who were 2 up on a kwak doing the Alps. After our stop, we travelled off to "Bourg St Mourice", the road slowly tightened and the hairpins got smaller and smaller and steeper and steeper. In amongst the trees we weaved through 10 or so tight steep bends going down the valley into the "Bourg", WOW..... We arrived at St Mourice and fuelled up for our next stage up to the "Peti St Bernard pass". But first lunch, a pizza and calzone in the town. Very nice too, a couple of hawk moths

came and buzzed around the flowers, I attempted to take photos but they were just too fast for me. So we set off up the valley and onto the road to the pass, again open roads with nice hairpins interspersed With long winding bends up the mountainside. 20k's later and we are up at the Italian border and the "Peti St Bernard pass", where we eventually find a suitable place to park and have a coffee, we seem to be getting a lot of good coffees, it won't be the same when we get home! We set off back down the pass and we set a good pace, before stopping at "La Roslaire" for photo's. Where we meet up with an impatient trucker, who decides to overtake us while we are waiting to exit the car park...! He sets off at a cracking pace and we sit patiently behind while he tailgates a Fiat before passing it. He



soon stops at a hotel to deliver, it's hard to fathom some people's mindset sometimes! We continue downhill, Passing the fiat smoothly with a wave and a thank you. We arrive back in "St Maurice". So to the return trip, we decide to get back on to the main road and pick up the pace. We arrive in "Alberville" and pass through without stopping, a short trip through the town and not too taxing roads we get to "Ugine", where we stop for a drink and a Wee. Well nearly a wee, Beckie later tells me she couldn't go as it was a hole in the ground and smelled beyond belief. So we leave "Ugine" with me unaware of the next stop for a proper wee. The road from "Ugine" to "Megive" is twisty and winds through the gorge over small bridges and under open sided tunnels. One near miss as a biker coming the other way is on our side of the road and is far too close to Beckie for my liking. We continue on and head through "Megeve" up the valley and onto "St Gervais". A brilliant day, with amazing roads and scenery. The

whole day was about 170 miles. Can't wait till tomorrow and our next adventure.

Wednesday: 7th September So today we decided to visit Switzerland. We set off around our usual time of 9.30am. Travelling east over to "Chamonix" and past the entrance to the "Mont Blanc tunnel", we swept over the hugh and very tall viaduct and down the valley. Entering "Chamonix" I thought it to be too touristy and a little shabby, not like other towns we had visited so far. Think of "Blackpool" in the alps! Passing through, with a quick stop for a photo of the valley ahead and the mountains surrounding us. We travelled on to Switzerland and over the "Col de la Forciaz" now that's a set of hairpins with magnificent views down the huge valley below, where "Martigny" sits flat and spread out over the valley floor. It's amazing what a bit of frozen water can do, given a few thousand years and a bit of pressure... We arrived in "Martigny" and promptly missed our turn. Strange the signs change colour in Switzerland just to confuse you.

Eventually back on track to "BEX" where we



decided that a photo opportunity was too good to miss. Beckie in "Bex"!!! Well I managed to have my finger over the lens and chopped off a corner of the photo. From "Bex", we decided to do the rest of the road up to "Chatel", from the Swiss side and back down the valley to "Les Gets" and "Morzine". We stopped for lunch and had the hardest sandwich going...bread to break your teeth on. So back on to the roads, I still think there's little to surpass the "Route des grand alps" for superb bends. We had the obligatory mad French man in a post van, strange how they like to sit right up your arse and overtake at inappropriate moments. I will give him credit, following me through a 3 car overtake downhill with a sharp left-hander approaching and still getting in. not bad. We did stop a few times for drinks at various local cafes and the best crepes so far in "Les Gets". Well back at the apartment now and looking forward

to another day out there, somewhere in the alps.. (Addendum): Wednesday night, Beckie was not well, , a bad night. So we had little sleep and so in the morning we slept in.

Thursday: 8th September

I went up the town at about 10.00 for some bottled water and to see what was about, leaving Beckie asleep on the sofa. It was market day and the town was buzzing with stalls and smells of cheese, fish and meats. I returned to the apartment. About 11am, Beckie suggested I went out for a ride so she could get some sleep. So I suited up and set off. I decided to try out some of the lesser roads, just to see what they were like. Heading out south to "Megeve" I arrived at the entrance to the village of "Flume". I turned Left on to the D218s and set off to "Les Sailes", a bumpy road, which it turns out is the actual "Route de Grande Alps" following the hill side up the valley with a couple of nice hairpins a pass a museum of Fairies and other mythical folk! The views are spectacular, but few places to stop safely, even on a bike. I'm passed by German biker who has his head down and obviously doesn't want to see the scenery. I eventually arrive at "Les Sailes" a pretty town that I can only assume is there solely for the ski season. It is full of cafes and restaurants with ski hire shops and chalets galore. Looking at the runs on the hillsides I determine that most of them are greens and blues, assuming the reds and blacks are over the tops on the other sides. I pass through the town without stopping, turning right at a sign for "Sal de Bisanne". This road is smaller still and climbs to 2000m. I stop and take a photo of the mountains ahead of me. The valley is stretched below, but a sign warns me of roadworks and detours ahead. not sure of where these will lead me and not wanting to get lost. I turn around and head back to the town. Which is just a pretty in the opposite direction. As I descend I see a turn on my left signed to "Flumet" which it turns out takes me into the town. I descend through pine woods and with a few easy hairpins arrive at the last kilometer before the town. I now meet up with 6 very tight and close hairpins, In first gear the bike is still wanting to run away with itself, a combination of back brake and throttle control and I arrive in "Flume". Then off back to the apartment, 20k of good road. I arrive in "Megeve" and I keep forgetting that after every roundabout there's a set of pedestrian crossings, as I ride out of the 3rd one the car in front stops abruptly proving that the Honda does have good brakes!!!! Must remember next time. Then right at the last roundabout and off to "St Gervais" picking off cars and motor homes on the way. I arrive back to an awakened Beckie. We decide the afternoon is now for chilling out and making sure Bex is

sorted for tomorrow. As I write this, she is taking a catnap and I am relaxing in the shade, as it's turned out quite hot today. Let's see what tomorrow will bring.



Friday: 9th September

This morning, well 2.30 to be precise I was awoken to Beckie sitting up in bed and asking for a "Peti Pencil", well back to sleep!!!! Back to our normal

waking time, we sorted ourselves and set off to the "Col de L'Iseran. We decided to crunch the miles down to "Boug St Maurice" on the N90, this is still an excellent road, dual carriage way for most of it, but still fantastic scenery and sweeping curves. We stop for fuel and I set the camera going.



We set off down the N902 to "Val d'Isere", the road is open and fast, bends galore. We arrive at Val-d'Isere, which is described as dull and too commercialized, well in the summer it seems to be quite nice, although expensive for a quick drink, as we find out on our return journey. From there we set off up to the Col. The road is good, with a few bumps and some roadwork's to sort the

road for the on coming winter, the bikes quickly reach 104 degrees sitting waiting to go through the red lights. its hot must be 26 to 30 degrees. we are sweltering, wanting to keep moving. We ride on up and up we arrive at the Lac du Chavril, wow, blue and beautiful. We stop for a few photos of the lake and the



dam. We then set off up to the Col, the scenery is now above the tree line and open expanses of rock and escarpments. it's a place of rugged beauty. As we approach the last few hairpins, and there are a few, My video camera falls off the bike.... it's dangling about, but safe. so the last section I don't get to video. I later find out the batteries dead anyway.

We stop at the top and take a few photos. then return the same way we came. Apart from a few mad French drivers and one woman who if she got any closer to my arse would have been able to get out and sit on the bike with me. Strange, I'm in traffic, can't go any quicker, with hairpins ahead and still they think its ok t try to pass. it's no wonder the French authorities are adding all these new laws. We stop at Bourg St Mourice again for some lunch, where I have the most amazing pizza, oh

boy that was so good. Still today was an amazing day for the road and scenery. We are sad to say goodbye to such a fantastic place. There's always next year...

Saturday: 10th September We wake up early, already packed and ready to go. We hand over the keys and set off at 8.00 for our mega 600 mile ride to the channel tunnel. The morning is cool and bright, and we make good time out of the alps as we go further north, we drop into the flat lands and the temperature rises. Our initial full tank to full tank stops are now not possible, we are hot and need to take in water more than we need fuel. We are stopping every 70 to 100miles. The journey to the last toll on the A26 is fairly uneventful, until we arrive at the booth to pay, The "Douane" French customs ! Beckie is leading and pays first. While I'm paying, the officers are speaking to Beckie, and asking where we are travelling from and to. For some reason they don't believe we have come from the French alps and are going to the UK in one day. So we are pulled over to the side. We are now asked to open all our cases and bags, They go through our dirty underwear and clothes, I have to explain my tool kits and my camera equipment, they even go through my toiletries. Then they find the "Yorkshire Teabags". These get a good sniff and after a bit of explanation, they leave us to repack and set off. We continue on to the last toll and after missing the sign for Calais, as we are looking for the manned booth, a quick U turn in the booth area and on we go to the tunnel. We arrive in time for our train. After 15 minutes we somehow manage to get on the earlier one, so arrive in the UK 20 minutes early. It's so cold and dark in Folkstone and we turn up at our hotel. Sleep.....

Sunday: 11th September

We awake and have breakfast, then set off for a quick jaunt home up the M20, M25 and M40. Jumping off at J10 to get back to riding on UK roads. A nice change from motorways. Back home at 1.00pm. So the trip has ended and we have many good memories and had a fantastic adventure. Where shall we go next year?