

Campervan travels with Paul and Chris

Campervan travels around Europe Turkey and Morocco with some notes about our van. It also lets out fa to.

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From Normandy to Nantes in a few days

Tue 30 Sep

Like Whirling Dervishes we attacked the domestics, hardly a problem when you live in a 6'x10' space and good weather means you only wear light summer clothes. However, a restocking of groceries and a beach walk followed by a swim in the indoor heated pool on site rounded out the day nicely. The site itself was very pleasant with good private pitches, although the hedges were in need of a trim as they did stop us enjoying the view across the valley. The facilities were clean and modern.

Wed 1 Oct

Wednesday was a move on day via some sites on the Normandy beaches. Batterie de Merville was the first stop. Overlooking the Orne estuary and Canal entrance at Ouistreham at the eastern end of Sword Beach. It fell to the 9th Para to secure this site. The mayor of Merville said after the battery was taken "because they did not know it was an impossible task they accomplished it" A fitting tribute to the bravery and determination of the those who made the assault despite their strength being considerably reduced because many of the paras were dropped in the marshes which Rommel had ensured were flooded as a form of defence. At the end of the day it fell to a handful of men to accomplish the task. The Battery itself was not only a set of reinforced concrete bunkers it was surrounded by wire and heavily mined. Aerial attacks which were supposed to breach the outer defences were only partially successful. Notwithstanding all of that the battery was taken. Inside the bunkers the jagged peppering of holes in the steel roof, which helped support the 2 mtrs of reinforced concrete, told the story of the power and effect of the grenades that had exploded within the bunker.



A Dakota recovered the Balkans and restored serves as a memorial to the aircrew and the troops involved.



From there we travelled by the coast road, much to the annoyance of the sat nav that wished to take us miles in land to our next port of call at Arromanches which was the western end of Gold Beach (the other landing place of British troops)

(Juno - Canadian was between the two and Omaha and Utah -American were to further to the west.) Stories of bravery and courage abound and each place marks out remarkable feats. on the day and the days that followed. What is almost unrealised is that success was due in no small part to the preparations and planning that took place before and after. The bravest troops need to be resupplied with ammunition, fuel, and food. At Arromanche the story of resupply can be seen No decent harbour was available to our forces so something needed to be invented. The Mulberry Harbours were concrete cases that were floated across the channel and then filled with water and sunk leaving sufficient above water to provide landing and also to form

an arc around the bay to offer a weather protected haven for ships to unload. With the passage of time many have broken up or been removed but some are still in place and the size of the harbour can be easily gauged.



The two black lines in the water are Mullbery Harbour remains. They stretched around the bay with the eastern side being a similar distance behind us

Also at Arramanche there was a 360° cinema that showed the first 100 days after 6th June. It was all film shot by war correspondents and official photographers, backed up by sounds of battle, in many case original soundtracks. It included German war clips and also showed the impact of the landings on the civilian populations. It was a good presentation.

Respects paid and debt acknowledged it was time to move on, so we headed in land to the Aire in Bayeux. Oh no! Another fete and the another Aire closed. this time no advice on where to go. Fortunately France Passion came to the rescue and we found a site a couple of miles out of town on a cidre farm. Camping fee for the night 2 bottles of cider and a bottle of apple juice. and so we spent the night in the apple orchard. Unfortunately an error of parking meant we were under a tree and we suffered the occasional thump of apples crashing down on the roof.

Thu 2nd Oct

The weather has turned cloudy but still dry so a cycle into Bayeux for a days sightseeing (why do we not go site-seeing?) was on the agenda. Bayeux cannot be visited without seeing the most remarkable tapestry. Nearly a thousand years old it tell the story of William the conqueror (and his brother Bishop Odo who commissioned it) in a graphic and remarkable way, it is as good as a newsreel. the characters are surprisingly alive with their posture and shaping used to display their feelings and emotions. The top and bottom border have a charm and humour of their own and the whole tapestry gives a tremendous insight into 12 century life and its workings as well as the remarkable needlecraft of those who embroidered it. It was our second visit to see the tapestry and if we pass through on another occasion we will visit again it is a great €9 worth. Bayeux cathedral proved an interesting place with the lower half being classic Norman architecture with round arches while the upper part is Gothic with pointed arches. It also boasts another of Cavaille-Coll's organs but this is a small one with only 2900 pipes as opposed to St Ouen with its 3900.



Note Norman arches (round) and Gothic arches(pointed) above

The final discovery in Bayeux was a local pastry which tasted like Malvern pudding on a pastry base, quite delicious (if you like apples and a set bechamel custard) it was just right for tea time.

Fri 3rd Oct

Weather looking autumnal. Decision made miss out the Loire. So off we set south through the mist until 200 miles later warm sun allowed us to eat al fresco supping the wine from the vineyard in which we were camping. Not sure if its a wine that travels, but it made the 100 mtrs from the cellar to our dinner table okay. The site we are on is another one from the "France Passion" book. The sites are on farms restaurants vineyards and basically you trade a nights stay for produce of the farm/vineyard, there is no obligation to buy, but why wouldn't you? Along with the Cider from the last site we are now stocked up with few bottles of Muscadet Sevre et Maine. Next stop Bordeaux for some reds?

Labels: [Bayeux](#), [France Passion](#)

Posted by [Paul and Chris](#) at 20:52

