

This post was published to Tony's Weblog at 17:24:11 05/10/2008

20081004 – Market Day Again

Account [Tony's Weblog](#)

Well another hot sunny day but we are sworn off the car today to avoid weekend traffic. However some idiot produced a list of every market within a 50 mile radius (must have been a women) and joy of joys there are 2 within Frejus so its off on the bikes to the Roman Amphitheatre where there is a local market – have times really changed?

After lunch we decide to have a change around. With a caravan you can't easily change the furniture or move the settee around but you can at least move it around the pitch to better get the sun – sad. Then by way of a change it's a lazy day around the caravan reading and learning French. Followed by a very pleasant bottle of French wine for less than E5 – I think this one qualifies for buying a dozen off.

Anyway we were talking about rats on leads and I think this photograph just about sums it up. In case you can't make it out it's a market stall selling jumpers stinking of dog sweat – charming. Yes it does have a ribbon in its hair, had did the owner. But I think the best of all goes to the young women with a rat sized poodle on a lead who dragged it out of the bakers shop, most embarrassed she was as she tried desperately to calm the ardor of what I can best described as a rampant rat – it was just hilarious. Did the gentlemanly thing and didn't take a photograph.



Thought for the day - will the Large Hadron Collider create planet eating Black Holes?

French Detection Rule 2 (this one could save your life so pay attention) – if they don't stop for you on a zebra crossing then there is a 90% chance they are French. Therefore learn how to identify French number plates. Perhaps I should petition the EC to ensure that all front French number plates carry a suitable government health warning!

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This post was published to Tony's Weblog at 17:24:23 05/10/2008

20081005 – Honey Festival

Account

Tony's Weblog



Well yet another stunning day. After a laze around the caravan we venture out to the Honey Festival in one of the local villages.

I didn't know there were so many honey producers and so many different varieties. It was crowded out and full of the usual rats on leads. But just because they're minuscule doesn't mean they can't walk for themselves, instead most of them are being carried around – what is the point of having a dog and then carrying it everywhere – I bet these people even end up barking at visitors.

French Detection Rule 3 – if they don't bother to let on to you or say hello in any language then there is a 80% chance they are French.

Nearly got flattened on a zebra crossing - must remember rule 2. Amazing how often they have 2 zebra crossings within 20 feet of one another. Especially as everybody ignores them anyway.

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This post was published to Tony's Weblog at 13:00:48 10/10/2008

20081006 – St Aygulf

Account [Tony's Weblog](#)

Yet another stunning day, so it's off on the bikes down the canal to the coast and then ride along the coast to St Aygulf. It's proper cycle paths all the way, none of the Blackburn dotted white line paths. St Aygulf is a quiet little village with great beaches and a very small harbor – no room for big showy yachts. We have a pleasant walk round the headland, stunning view. Then into the village where of course all the shops are shut because it's Monday.

We dine on the beach watching the local school having sailing lessons – perhaps we could have that at St Thomas's, one week sailing and the next week skiing.

French Detection Rule 4 – if they let the door go in your face or don't say thank you when you hold the door for them then there is a 95% chance they're French.

Disaster has beset us – we're coming home from this heathen land – the internets down. Poor French girl on reception just can't cope with the stress of English and Dutch complaints about the internet. Finally get told that they – being the internet provider who have screwed me in the past – will have to send someone out. Anyway I get my E20 back for the weeks card even though there is only a day left on it. This does not bode well. They have no idea when they are going to fix it – typical but believable!

Settle down for the evening to watch Casino Royal complete with French subtitle when this English geezer knocks on my door and asks if I have reversed polarity – just a typical every day question for us caravanners. I tell him no and then go off with him, complete with my magic volt detector, to see if I can help! He and his wife have just arrived and their motor home is beeping and flashing because it thinks there is reversed polarity. He has one of these plugs that also checks the mains out but this says the earth is live and causes more problems and confusion. They don't have a clue about anything electrical. Finally prove to them that it's not reversed polarity and the earth isn't live – why isn't physics a compulsory subject (not that there would be any time to fit it into the curriculum).

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This post was published to Tony's Weblog at 13:01:09 10/10/2008

20081007 - Agay

Account

[Tony's Weblog](#)

Yet another sunny day so we have the morning around the van reading etc., have lunch and then drive off to Agay for the afternoon. Cunning plan here. By the time we arrive, for once the shops will be open. Lo and behold we've got it right, there are 3 shops open!



Agay is yet another small village in a stunning bay with red rock hills (Massif de l'Esterel) in the background. It even has a train station but the TGV doesn't stop. Sand on the beach is a bit course but Wendy is adventurous enough to paddle in the Med, amazing it's not too cold for her.

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This post was published to Tony's Weblog at 13:01:34 10/10/2008

20081008 - Lavendou

Account

[Tony's Weblog](#)

Clouds today and its forecast rain. After nearly 2 weeks of constant blue sky and sunshine its almost a relieve to have a change, but then we think back to Belthorn and rescind that thought.

We have a 50 mile drive down the coast to have a look at Lavendou and Cavalier Sur Mer. We explore a few campsites ready for next year as I'm sure we'll be coming back to this area, but to be quite honest Frejus and our current site takes some beating.

Well the rain manages to keep off until tea time.

Internet still not fixed. 3 bloody days and we're no further on except that the campsite office have now lost connection. But there's just no drive or umphh to get anything done. This is France at its worse, they just resort to that gallic shrug, at the least the Dutch and especially the Germans have some drive and concept of service. As long as this lot are in the EU then we're better off keeping it at a distance.

French Detection Rule 5 – if they shrug their shoulders and say something like "it's not my problem", "what can I do?" or "what do you want me to do?" then there is a 100% chance they're French.

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20081009 – Oh Good Another Supermarket!

Account [Tony's Weblog](#)

Well it's forecast rain again today but the clouds have all scurried away and it's just clear blue skies and very hot. It was 20c at 9:00 and it ends up at 27c.

Anyway it's Thursday, supermarket day- oh joyous. This one is enormous, Wendy will never come out. Even the shops around it are as big as Blackburn shopping precinct – always thinking of it see how we miss it! Thankfully I have a good paperback and my Ipod, and when I finally find a café that doesn't sell Nescafe I settle down for a good long read and a big coffee.

Sorry no photos today, I'm sure a picture of the supermarket won't be missed.

Internet still not fixed – oh well c'est la vie!

French Detection Rule 6 – if the men are carrying a handbag then there is a 60% chance they're French – the remaining 40% are probably gay. I wonder whether that's politically correct – not to worry they'll probably never get the Internet fixed so it won't get published.

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20081010 – McDonalds

Account

Tony's Weblog

Well Internet still not fixed! I know our kids will be totally distraught and constantly checking their emails for the latest news, so it's off to McDonalds to get the latest out to the World. Free unlimited access and good speed all for the cost of a good cup of coffee (E1.20), none of this French Nescafe muck. What more can you want, trust the yanks to get it right. Just a pity I can't take my caravan on a ferry to the US – well you can actually but it's about £3,000 each way. I can see if this carries on I'll be eating here daily. Plus Wendy can trot off to this massive supermarket, surrounded by shops – bigger and nicer than Blackburn centre.

Anyway enough longing for a US trip we'll have to make do with France.

Weather is fantastic again, it's 29c.



Wendy wants to improve her market knowledge, no that's not the stock market but street market, so we set off on the bikes to a village along the coast that has a Friday market. It's traffic free all the way and the last one third is along a proper cycle path. Very civilized you might think, but of course we are in France and should learn to expect the ridiculous. No we can't ride on the cycle path, the police are there directing everyone to risk life and limb by riding on the road! Sounds crazy, but remember it is France. Apparently it's the mountain bike equivalent of tour de France this weekend so the public are banned from cycle paths. Mind you I always thought mountain bikes were for riding up and down Everest

whilst us more timid types stuck to the safety of a cycle path. But never mind I'm sure the police will be directing traffic to make it as safe as possible? Silly really remember we are in France – there having none of that, much better to just stand around chatting whilst joe public are being slaughtered by traffic!

We abandon the market and nip into Frejus via the Roman Amphitheater – I wonder how the Romans coped with the French? Meanwhile Wendy is still working down her long list of local markets ready for her appearance on Master Mind – specialist subject "Markets and Supermarkets of France".

On the way back in the site we see the van of the Internet repair man. It must be his 4th attempt this week. I'm so tempted to park my car behind his so that he can't leave until he's fixed it to my satisfaction – if only – but I don't think the French could cope with that!

Yet another relaxing day and the good news is that they finally fix the Internet – only 5 days! But the really good news is that the German guy on reception gives me a E20 card for the next weeks Internet access free – note he is German not French. In all it's not worked out too bad, I got my E20 back on the last access card even though I'd had 6 days use of it, then a free one for the following week, so its cost just E20 for 3 weeks Internet access – that of course assumes it can continue to work for a whole week.

French Detection Rule 7 – if the police just stand around chatting and ignoring public safety then there is a 60% chance they're French.

This post was republished to Tony's Weblog at 16:29:52 12/10/2008

20081011 – Mountains, well big Hills

Account

[Tony's Weblog](#)

Yet another stunning day and very hot.



Despite Wendy's moaning we set off the go for a walk in the forest. Wendy drowns herself in Deet as she is convinced she is going to be ravished, not by the French but by French mosquitoes, despite the fact that we've not seen any. Anyway we go for a pleasant but brief walk in the hill of the something or other Massif, followed by yet another exotic lunch – an apple. Yet more mountain bikers up here but at least it's the right place for them.

The flora and fauna are fantastic. But without the intrepid "Eye Spy" we are clueless – bring them back. All you seem to be able to get these days are giant tombs that require a fork lift truck to carry – hardly pocket sized. We see very little wildlife though, but perhaps that because there is a big party of Frenchmen, resplendent in combat fatigues and with truck loads of hunting dogs. They've probably shot it all and are now proceeding to consume it in their extended lunch hour. Obviously the namby pamby state hasn't banned it yet. Then again they may well have done but in true French fashion they just ignore it.



After lunch it's back to the pool. Boy are we getting some reading done. For those of you who enjoy the delights, and snails pace of Facebook, Tony is not just reading while Wendy does the housework, he is studying!

Meanwhile I attach a photo of Wendy busy at the housework.

French Detection Rule 8 – if you're taking a picture with no one around and someone walks in front of you, without so much as a by your leave, then there is a 100% certainty they're French.

Yes they (the French) are so bloody ignorant it's unbelievable. I think this calls for a missive to the EU recommending the introduction of a "Manners Hour" every day in French schools, complete with a "Manners coordinator". As for adults they should all have to attend manners lessons in their lunch hours until they can pass a basic manners test, evidenced by a "European Manners License" which must be carried at all times, especially if they attempt to leave the country. Rant over!

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20081013 - Cannes

Account [Tony's Weblog](#)

We won't bother with a blog for yesterday. It was just another very hot, sunny and very lazy day. Although we did manage a grand promenade around the site here to identify the best pitches for next year – must be coming back.

Anyway Monday dawns with cloudy skies – wot no sun! We abandon our plans to go to the beach and have a swim in the med and instead head off to Cannes.

The drive along the coast road is spectacular, albeit a little bit hair raising for the passenger as the French – here we go again – have a nasty habit – one of many – of cutting off the corners on bends. Anyway we survived it, truly stunning and the sun has finally woken up. We park up in Cannes for free. French towns seem to have this charge in the centre rule but on the outskirts it is free, so we have lunch in a pleasant park overlooking the marina and then set off for the centre of Cannes.

Now I'm sure you're all aware of what Cannes is famous for; film stars – well we didn't see any of them; film festivals – well there was an expo selling TV programs, but my trainers, black socks and shorts did not gain me free entry, although we did manage to walk the red carpet; topless bathing – well yes there was some evidence of this but in the main it was enough to make you believe in the benefits of the burka! But what most people don't appreciate is that the pigeons of Cannes should also merit some fame. They have some really colourful pigeons, not just your run of the mill grey. Sad isn't it, we've finally flipped, sat having lunch and feeding these colourful pigeons (Wendy not me) - mind you they don't seem too keen on fruit!

Anyway back to Cannes, a vibrant place, lovely sea front and the town behind it is very pleasant. Well worth the visit and so much nicer than Nice.

We end the day sat in the sun with coffee on the beach. Up to now I was quite pleased with my progress in French vocabulary. Admittedly listening and speaking was not my forte, but I have started trying to speak it. However, after ordering a "café allonge" and being offered an "Irish coffee" I really think it's time to call it a day and resort to English rules!

French Detection Rule 9 – if you're on the middle of a zebra crossing and a police motorcycle cop roars around the corner, missing you by just 6 inches, then there is a 100% certainty they're French. A bit obvious really but as Wendy summarized it – "you don't stand much chance if the coppers don't stop for you".

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20081014 – Swim In The Med

Account [Tony's Weblog](#)

Despite the forecast of clouds it turns out another spectacular day so we cycle down to the beach for lunch and a swim in the med. You can cycle most places around here on traffic free paths and with very few hills, so far we've managed 3 weeks, including trips out, on one tank.

Despite it being as scorching day the seas not that warm so I chicken out and have a paddle instead. These French must be a more hardy lot judging by the number swimming, not for me though, I'll stick to the heated pool back at the site.

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20081016 – Donkey Lovers Beware

Account [Tony's Weblog](#)

Well yet another stunning day, unfortunately it's Thursday – super market day. Fortunately I've found the ideal supermarket. Next door to McDonalds who not only serve the best and most reasonably priced cup of coffee in Frejus but also give free high speed internet access all for the cost of a cup of coffee E1.20 – god bless America!

Anyway as Wendy slagged me off on Facebook for “playing on my laptop at McDonalds whilst she shopped” – I know that those who know me will doubt this - I see she got the last laugh!

If you have ever given to one of those nutcases who used to come round the office raising money for Donkey Sanctuaries (I know that's not terribly politically correct but it really used to get up my nostrils when there are millions starving and dying – enough said) then stop reading now.

Wendy decided to treat me to some dried sausage – bless - to go with our bread and cheese tea - and nearly forgot - wine. It's one of those dry sausages you hang up by a piece of string in your hallway to greet your guests. She says it was only half the price of the others so as per Martins Money saving site she thought she try it. Now it contains “ane” and as I'm sure everyone knows, apart from Wendy, that's French for donkey. Well that'll teach me to avoid the supermarket. Actually it's quite tasty and as it's only 25% donkey it is very difficult to tell any difference between it and normal pork based dried sausage – perhaps this should be one for Martins Money Saving forum.

Well after the supermarket it's just more stress as we head off to the pool.

More pots for rags stories – what does space smell of? Well apparently the ultimate in vacuums can smell of fried steak. Should we really bother coming back!

Whilst I'm doing the grumpy old man thing why is it that every other programme on TV is about cooking, could it be cost related. Instead of Master chef, in it's many guises, we could at least have master carpenter, master potter, master banker – don't be ridiculous?

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20081017 - Grimaud

Account

Tony's Weblog

Yet another brilliant day so its off to yet another market at St Aygulf – what a waste of time.



We then drive onto Grimaud village, it's a small mountain top village complete with castle and great views over the coast. Interesting place; free parking (reminds us of Blackburn) and plenty of it; free toilets; free access to castle; pleasant walks; ancient and picturesque windmill; lovely little village with plenty of restaurants – just like Belthorn. Well worth the visit.

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20081018 – Going Native

Account [Tony's Weblog](#)

Wake up to a few clouds and Wendy is convinced it's going to rain.

We move on tomorrow so it's our last chance to go into St Raphael - Wendy wants to explore it.

So its bikes down to St Raphael, dinner in a beach front restaurant and then go shopping. Yes we've finally succumbed to the French way of life. Moules Frites and half a litre of wine, all ordered in French without being corrected. Mind you we do rush it somewhat, it only takes 90 minutes not the more normal 180 minutes. Yes there all there stuffing themselves, it's packed. Haven't a clue how you eat these. Don't you have to remove beards or something. Anyway watched the locals and soon get the hang of it. You use an empty shell to tease out the mussel - clever. Don't ask how you tease out the first one! Now for those of you who have noticed that I'm not smiling I did say we we're going native – when in France.....



You'll have to wait until tomorrows exciting episode to see whether I survive the mussels.

It's alright this stuffing yourself at lunch but not good to then cycle back on – I wonder whether you can be done for being drunk in charge of a bike. Not for me I prefer a piece of fruit, at least it doesn't put you to sleep.

By the way Wendy was wrong, weather turns out brilliant yet again.

Well we've been here nearly 4 weeks. Hardly seen any rain, every day has just been blue sky and pleasant temperature. Campsite is great with fabulous pool. Shower temperatures are a bit erratic, so we shower in the van. Pitch is good with great views. Frejus area is great. Lovely beaches and great cycling, very flat. Yes we'll certainly be coming back.

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20081020 – Contradictions & Extremes

Account [Tony's Weblog](#)

Yesterday we left Frejus after nearly 4 weeks and moved onto Sanary Sur Mer. Frejus was great and I'm sure we'll be back.

We moved about 80 miles West, yes that's 80 miles on the way home.



It's a very French site – I suppose it would be in France – hardly any English, but what a site of contradictions and extremes:

French receptionist who is pleasant, friendly and helpful. Plus she speaks good French. I can actually understand her some of the time, unlike most French people who seem to be speaking a foreign language and need to go on a Teach Yourself French course to learn how to speak it proper like I do.

French people on site who are actually friendly and try to communicate even though they don't speak English.

Swiss precision. Anyone who has been caravanning will appreciate how you have to level your van or motor home, to which end most people have a small spirit level. Well not this Swiss Motor home driver, he spends 20 minutes driving backwards and forwards to get in the best position and level – mind he did have his wife giving him grief. Then he came out and set up his table ready for dinner and all was revealed, a 2 foot long spirit level to even level his table!



But the best of all goes to the toilets. It's been a while since I made any derogatory remarks about the 3rd world toilets in this country and I notice that the EU have not taken any steps to get the situation resolved. This campsite however has obviously felt that it needs to seize the initiative and fly the flag and put matters right. They've installed electric Hygiseats – see attached photos. When you've finished you wave your hand and the seat rotates and is automatically disinfected. So here we have a country that goes from one extreme to another, holes in the ground to rotating electric seats. Now I don't want to pee on anyone's rotating seats, but whilst a major improvement in hygiene, I dread to think what they will be like in the near future; too complicated and too many things to go wrong.

So Monday we get the bikes out and ride along the coast to Sanary and then onto Six-Fours. Lovely coastal roads and views, with cycle paths but very hilly. Not Wendy's cup of tea.

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20081021 – Le Castellet

Account

Tony's Weblog



Another sunny day but not quite the clear blue skies of Frejus.

After a leisurely morning around the caravan we set off to visit the medieval village of Le Castellet. Very picturesque and of course plenty of merchandising opportunities to buy soap and lavender etc. We just managed to complete our stroll round the village before a German Wallace Arnold bus tour descends on the place.

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20081023 – Bloody Cold

Account

Tony's Weblog

It's forecast rain for Wednesday and Thursday down here so we decide to move on up to Lyon early. Might as well travel in the rain.

True to form Wednesday morning just as I start to pack up the caravan the weather forecast comes to fruition. Nothing worse than departing in the rain. Anyway it's quite a shock for us as it rains all day and it's the first real rain we've seen for weeks. At least when we get to Lyon it stops so we can set up. But my is it cold especially as we are still wandering around in shorts.

Thursdays weekly shop day and big caravan clean up ready for winter – I make myself scarce, best out the way when vacuums and cupboard cleaning. Wendy thinks the weather is awful, it's not raining but is only 16c. I remind her that we're going home to worse, including daily rain. Bit of a boring day really, especially as the WiFi connection here is as fast as an arthritic escargot – more about that later – but I suppose it's the chores you have to do.

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20081024 – Lyon

Account

Tony's Weblog



Friday we set off to Lyon for the day. Catch the bus just outside the campsite and for E4.40 get a one day Lyon pass. Then catch the metro and then catch a funicular up to the cathedral – smart move this as it means we then walk downhill into Lyon old town rather than the long trek up. Views over the city are spectacular. We then stroll around the old town, more cathedrals and churches than you can shake a stick at. Then we cross the river Saone into the main centre which is on an island between the Rivers Saone and Rhone.

Shopping areas of Lyon are very relaxing – in so far as shopping can be – with wide open, traffic free boulevards.

We go to one of the many street restaurant areas for lunch. Wendy has a massive Plat de Jour, a full 3 course meal that I have to help out with. Every time I've eat in Lyon I've always meant to try Tete de Veau (that's the head of the veal – very cheeky) but never quite had the nerve. But I put on a blindfold and get on with it. It arrives very pink and fortunately for there are no photographs. At least I didn't have a problem with Wendy pinching it. Well I manage to get through it, can't say as the taste was anything spectacular, and as long as you closed your eyes and think of Belthorn weather it's not too bad. But if it's on the menu at the Grey Mare I don't think I'd bother again.



After 2 hours (nearly achieving the French state minimum of 3 hours) we stagger out the restaurant and I want to find a park bench, newspapers and cardboard boxes to sleep on. How do they work after that assault on your stomach – not for us.

We then finish off our stroll around Lyon, including yet another visit to a street market. Here Wendy is propositioned by an exceedingly fat French geezer (unusual for the French – being fat that is), he offers her a taste of his snails and is most insistent on trying to get her to try one. But Wendy's having none of it, where's the Tete de Veau spirit?

We then catch the metro back to the bus station and the bus back to the caravan. I must say the transport system is phenomenal; all joined up; never more than a 3 minute wait for metro, bus or funicular; very clean and modern and all for E4.40 – just like the UK!

The weathers been sunny most of the day but it's certainly not shorts weather.

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