

## 20120615 – Great Cycling

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Friday – hot and sunny.



Lazy day around the caravan.

This caravanning lark certainly has its fair share of weirdos and interesting characters. Sometimes sites can be a bit depressing, like a waiting room full of aged Dutch couples, who have been given a caravan and told to depart the country and not come back until you're ready for a nursing home. But here, on our very French site, we've got a retired English couple, who seem really ordinary, until you talk to them. Apparently they can only come away for a

maximum of two weeks as they don't want to leave their Siamese cat for longer and they start to pine for it as well. But, it gets better. Apparently this cat has its own bedroom, so that it can have its own space, a real prima donna and really rules the roost, doesn't like other animals or children stealing its limelight.

Egyptian tomato growers go out of business. This just has to be the biggest laugh religious fanatics have ever come up with – it's just totally insane.

*A Salafist group called the Popular Egyptian Islamic Association has come under fire after sending out a warning on Facebook urging its followers not to eat tomatoes because the vegetable (or fruit) is a Christian food.*

*The group posted a photo on its page of a tomato – which appears to reveal the shape of a cross after being cut in half – along with the message:*



Eating tomatoes is forbidden because they are Christian. [The tomato] praises the cross instead of Allah and says that Allah is three (a reference to the Trinity).

[God help us]. I implore you to spread this photo because there is a sister from Palestine who saw the prophet of Allah [Mohammad] in a vision and he was crying, warning his nation against eating them [tomatoes]. If you don't spread this [message], know that it is the devil who stopped you.

Saturday – Rain in the morning; grey afternoon and as usual sunny evening.

Thank Dawkins for rainy days it gives me a chance to get some work done. Morning on school issues and agendas; afternoon on paid ARC work.

Has anyone ever bothered to look at the educational material out there that's free. There's not much I like about iTunes (it's an abomination of bad HCI) but I have to say the number of free courses out there from famous universities is amazing. You name it and it's there. How can anyone with an Internet connection ever be bored.

As we're still wading through West Wing I thought it was about time I better understood American Democracy – mind you it's a bit late as we're nearly at the end. Great video course, just awesome, and it's free. Meanwhile I can learn Javascript (don't ask it's nerdy) direct on the web with W3 schools and even test out code interactively – awesome and free.

Great bottle of St Estephe. Awesome taste but we – yes I even let Wendy have a sip – can't just identify what the flavour is. Have to buy some more.

Sunday – hot and sunny.



It's market day – joy. Cycle into Chateau for the Sunday market. I think the whole of the population of Ile d'Oleron must be there. It's a big market and it must be horrendous in July and August. Somethings obviously amiss on this Island as the market starts at 06:00 (ungodly hour) but doesn't pack up until 15:00, how will they survive without a 3 hour lunch? Is there hope for France's economic survival yet?

Meanwhile it's Fathers day and apparently I qualify. Received a rather amusing yet informative card on Dad's life lessons:

*Economics – I'm not made of money you know!*

*Logic – because I said so!*

*Philosophy - if life was fair we'd all be riding around on bicycles!*

*Stamina – You'll sit at the table until you finish those sprouts!*

*Religion – You'd better pray your Mother doesn't find out!*

*Geography – We're not lost! We're taking the scenic route!*

*Biology – I'm not sleeping I'm resting my eyes!*

*Sportsmanship – You didn't beat me I let you win!*

*Delegation – Go ask your Mum!*

*Maths – How many times do I have to tell you?*

Lazy, sunny afternoon. Just finished a “Thousand Splendid Suns” well worth the read. With my Fathers day Amazon vouchers I'll be able to load the Kindle up with even more. Such a pity you can't swap / share.

Monday – warm and sunny.





Wendy's getting severe withdrawal symptoms – 4 days and no Eastenders thanks to the interminable football.

After lunch we have a bike ride down to a bird sanctuary. Much further than we think but finally make it. A bit disappointing really, a run down Martin Mere full of ducks and geese and an excess of horny Peacocks. The male Peacocks seem to spend most of their time posing for the females; screeching and then walking backwards towards them whilst wagging their arses. In the meantime the females moved on but

because they're walking backwards the males can't see this – most amusing. Typical females, more interested in the food- need to get some Oysters down them.

Now I know I keep going on about France becoming the next Greece and here's just one example of why. We're in the middle of nowhere, there's two guys cutting and strimming the grass.

Why? Who pays them? What possible reason can there be for it? How do they afford it?

Tuesday – grey day.

Go to checkout. Interesting conversation. She's French but speaks German so it was a right hotch-potch of French and German. I think the German won and we got our messages across.

Nip up to E.Leclerc to get some of that St Emilion and St Estephe (if I drink enough of it I might be able to figure out what the lovely flavour is).

Well we've been here two weeks now and the whole island seems obsessed with oysters. We're both Philistines and agree with Jonathan Swift who said, "He was a bold man that first ate an oyster". There a gourmet special and here there seem to be 4 main types – Pousse en Claire, Speciale de Claire, Fine de Claire Verte and Fine de Claire. Of course rumour has it that they're an aphrodisiac and indeed there may be some truth in that as a team of American and Italian researchers analyzed them and found they were rich in amino acids that trigger increased levels of sex hormones. Despite this they're not for me. I've tried them and they seem tasteless and look revolting.





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