



Portugal 2011  
27<sup>th</sup> March – 14<sup>th</sup> April

By Scooby Gill

## Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> March

How is it possible to take so long packing for a simple camping trip to Portugal? Even with a pre-prepared list from our last trip the packing process seemed to extend into days in one form or another. I envy those that just chuck everything into the car moments before leaving but then I suppose I don't envy those moments they might have of thinking 'damn I forgot this or damn I didn't do this'. So that is what leads to the precision and lengthy process of packing. I always mean to take less stuff than last time too but that rarely works out. I end up packing the same stuff, sometimes more, on the whim of 'you never know'. This trip was even more like that for me this time because I had the added complication of having a herniated disc. Contemplating camping when it is uncomfortable to lay on my back or sometimes sit properly was a bit of a worry for me so I went extra pillows, painkillers, an extra duvet for padding and my grandmothers old 70's style sun lounger which had enabled me to sit quite comfortably in the garden in the preceding days so I knew it was a safe bet and much more comfy at the moment than the normal procedure of sitting on the floor whilst camping.



Then there was food packing. We knew the vegan food we could get in Portugal was very nice and yet we still felt the need to go through our food stores at home to see what we could take with us. It would save us money we thought but we both also knew that we would still end up buying those different things we found in the local supermarkets. I imagine half the food we take over from the UK will just come back with us. We never learn. So what do we do on the way to catch the ferry in Plymouth but go to the Waitrose supermarket on the way? We don't have a Waitrose near us in Cornwall so normally pop into this one if we are in the area, as they do different stuff we quite like including a particular type of fruit smoothie. Let's just say we will now have more than enough food for the journey and the trip but I must say the bottle of red wine we picked up there turned out to be a very good addition to our journey on the ferry.

So we were finally off and leaving the nightmare of packing behind us. We'd even managed to remember the clocks going forward to British Summer Time the night before so there were no slip ups with timing the next day. The ferry was due to leave Plymouth at 3.30pm but was 30 minutes late leaving due to the fact that there was a submarine in the way. As Plymouth is actually a dock for nuclear class submarines, I guess even something as huge as the ferry we were on didn't want to mess with that.

Our cabin was compact but bijou and near the front end of the ship. Phil had assured me that the journey was due to be calm all the way, so being at the front end didn't worry me so much.

The weather was warm but slightly misty when we left but we stayed up on deck for some time as we cruised out of Plymouth Sound. We managed to find some chairs and put them on top of the uppermost deck where no smoking was allowed (the deck below seemed to be smokers alley). I think even talking about smoking in any form should have been banned on this deck though as an annoying man preceded to pace up and down right next to us talking very loudly on his phone about the catastrophic problem of the duty free shop having run out of Golden Virginia tobacco. We meanwhile were attempting to enjoy the peace and scenery. Phil then started with the random thoughts and questions that were to become a regular occurrence on this trip starting with 'If the world is spinning so fast, why doesn't everything fall off it'? A basic gravity question really but never of us could think of the answer we had probably been taught at school because, until we had met the loud talking Golden Virginia tobacco panicked man, we hadn't really thought of a good reason for why things didn't fall off the world and out of our sight. From that point on though we decided to write our random thoughts and questions down, not only to educate ourselves to such things, but also to give the world an insight into our random intellect. I thought I remembered something to do with gravity and the pull of the sun and moon and the effect that has on the tides to which Phil said that

was a different 'kettle of fish'. Random thought number two quickly followed from Phil as he questioned what the hell 'kettle of fish' meant.

Gravity is the force that draws an object or living thing downwards. The word comes from the Latin *gravis*, meaning "heavy". Objects that have mass pull on each other. We call this 'pull' gravity. The strength of the pull between two objects depends on two things. The first is the mass of both of the objects. The larger the masses the stronger the pull of gravity. The second is the distance between the objects. The larger the distance the weaker the pull of gravity. Both of the objects will feel this pull equally. The formula for the strength of this pull is:

$$\text{gravity} = \frac{\text{first mass} \times \text{second mass}}{\text{square of distance}}$$

square of distance

Whatever!

Nobody is really sure where the expression comes from, but we do know that the phrase *a kettle of fish* was originally a literal term. These days, especially in Britain and Commonwealth countries, we think of a kettle as a small enclosed container with a handle and spout for boiling water to make our tea. In the eighteenth century, though, a kettle was any large vessel used to boil stuff in.

There was, it seems, a custom by which the gentry on the Scottish border with England would hold a picnic by a river. The custom was described by Thomas Newte in his *Tour of England and Scotland in 1785*: "It is customary for the gentlemen who live near the Tweed to entertain their neighbours and friends with a Fete Champetre, which they call giving 'a kettle of fish'. Tents or marquees are pitched near the flowery banks of the river ... a fire is kindled, and live salmon thrown into boiling kettles".

What puzzles scholars is how this literal reference became an idiom — assuming, of course, that the phrase comes from the custom, which is far from certain. There is a clue in early examples, in which the term was used in the sense of a mess, muddle or confusion caused by one's own misguided actions. For example, in Captain Francis Grose's *Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* of 1811, it's explained like this: "When a person has perplexed his affairs in general, or any particular business, he is said to have made a fine kettle of fish of it". And a little later, Thomas Chandler Haliburton of Nova Scotia used it the same way in his *Clockmaker*: "There's an end to the Clock trade now, and a pretty kettle of fish I've made of it, haven't I? I shall never hear the last on it".

Could it be that the contents of the kettles of fish looked messy after the fish had broken up under the influence of the boiling water? It would make sense of the early examples. But that's just a guess.

Subscriber Henk Rietveld wrote to say that he had heard, while working in Newfoundland, that kettle of fish was a corruption of quintal of fish, a measure either of 100 pounds or a hundredweight. This is possible, since quintal was also known in the forms kintal and kentle in Newfoundland and New England, the last of which could easily have been misheard as kettle. It can't be ruled out as a possibility, since the quintal was the usual way of measuring fish catches. Against it is the important point that the idiom kettle of fish seems to have been known first in Britain but that kentle is an American form.

With Plymouth Sound now falling out of sight and into the mist and the wind at sea picking up, we decided to take a stroll around the ferry to suss out the 'lay of the land', or should that 'the lay of the sea'? That didn't take long as we had been on this ferry before and we quickly found ourselves back at our cabin and settling in for a bit of a read of the multitude of reading options we had packed. After a while, my 'reading' reverted to eye closing as the gentle up and down swell got the better of me. A couple of hours or so later I woke up and remembered the bottle of wine we had bought in Waitrose and my earlier thought of quaffing it on the top deck in an air of sophistication whilst watching the sun set over a smooth sea as we glided gently towards a paradise of sun, sea, sand and no packing. So, just as Phil was settling in for a proper snooze, I guided his attention towards such thoughts.

It wasn't quite as I imagined on the top deck. The sun was missing for a start and the wind had picked up, along with the swell but the wine was very nice (a Spanish Rioja suitably). My first random thought of the trip then occurred in the form of 'Why doesn't the sea get more salty if only fresh water gets evaporated from it?' Another one to write down and research later. We stuck it out for a while and then retreated to get the rest of the bottle and take it to a quiet bar area to watch the fading light from the comfort of inside.

The sea is salty because of all the dissolved minerals that are in it. Water is a universal solvent and when it is mixed with rocks all over the earth it dissolves minerals. There is a finite amount of salt that water can hold before it starts to percolate out and drop to the sea floor. This is why the ocean doesn't get saltier and saltier.

The evening entertainment was just beginning in the busier bar area next door. A woman started belting out 80's pop songs and the like. With the wine finished, Phil decided another drink would be traditional and promptly went and got a beer for him and a whisky and ginger ale for me and we settled in for more 80's renditions whilst concocting more random thoughts. Whiskey is one of those things you kind of grow in to. I would never have even considered it years ago but now enjoy it every now and then and Phil and I have even tried different varieties to discover that, like wine, they are often completely different. So it prompted the question; what's better, single malt or blended and why? Also, why do we grow into liking stuff like whiskey, beetroot, celery and olives?

Given that the fewer components that are in a particular bottle of whiskey usually means a more careful selection of those components, the best way to get a high quality product is to move up to single malts.

As you grow older, your taste buds change. You develop a taste for different things, and you lose taste for certain things. That is why foods you didn't like in your childhood, you grow a liking to in later life and vice versa.

With those thoughts in my head my back and leg were getting stiff and decided to take a limp around the bar area in a circuit. It occurred to me afterwards that the combination of swaying ferry and limping probably made me look like I was really very drunk. Honestly I wasn't. After limping back and telling Phil that if my back wasn't better when we returned I had to consider other options for treatment, we then went into a discussion about osteopathy and chiropractic treatment. The conversation didn't last long though as never of us knew the difference between the two so that got noted as another random question that needed answering.

A Chiropractor is a person who is interested in how a person's body works, but views the workings of a body primarily through the spinal and muscular systems. Usually a Chiropractor focuses on pain relief and injury recovery. He or she will use spine and joint adjustments, massage, electrical stimulation and rehabilitative exercise to help a patient heal as well as working with the patient in other areas of his life (primarily diet and exercise programs).

An Osteopath is a person who is interested in a person's entire body. An Osteopath does not focus only on the muscular and spinal system. He or she will examine a person's entire body to determine the root of the patient's problem. The osteopath is usually visited in a patient's effort to combat pain or injury, but osteopaths have been known to treat other problems as well. Treatment from an osteopath can involve massage, physical therapy and body adjustments.

The singer in the bar had now been replaced with a magician with suitably mysterious music. We couldn't see him from our position in the bar next door but the spattering of applause every now and then indicated his tricks were to the satisfaction of the audience. We were getting tired now and with the drinks finished and one final thought to explore we left the bar and headed for the cabin. So with the final thought of 'why do you not get any female magicians who then get the chance to cut male assistants in half?' we turned to sleep.

Female magicians? You mean there are women out there who actually perform magic professionally? Yes - and they are gradually multiplying like bunnies from a hat.

There are approximately 100 full-time female magicians in the world. Women overall are a minority of the magicians who perform today. For centuries, men have run the gamut in the world of magic; historically, women have been the magician's assistant; pushing props on and off stage; getting shoved into boxes, being implemented in a myriad of torture devises; dancing and often, making the magic work while the magician gets the applause. Now the shoe's on the other foot. However, instead of wingtips they are high heel pumps! Female magicians, also known as magiciennes, now have men do their bidding.

Well, there you go, they are out there!

## Monday 28<sup>th</sup> March

Sleep hadn't been easy. Phil's prediction of it getting calmer the more south we headed didn't bear out. The swell increased and, although not unbearable, a few times our cabin at the front of the ship took an occasional big launch up and down as well as a bit of side to side action. At times it had also been difficult for me to get into a comfortable position on the slim bunk bed. I was on the top bunk because, quite fairly, the bottom one was longer for all 6 foot 2 inches of Phil but this did mean that a visit to the loo in the middle of the night warranted Phil's help to get me down the ladder. Phil also had to contend with his usual habit of waking in the early hours and not being able to get back to sleep. The impending 10 hour drive was obviously playing on his mind. However, we got up eventually around 9am leaving me, or so I thought, enough time for a good shower and then for us to head for a leisurely breakfast. As we headed to the cafe we were already travelling up the estuary towards Santander and had obviously made up the time we had lost leaving Plymouth late. So breakfast was slightly a rushed affair with barely enough time to fill our flask with hot water for the journey later, before our car deck was being called. We were practically the first off the ferry at around 11am British/Portuguese time.

We had gone through our maps and checked our route online before leaving home several times but a useful leaflet from the ferry had instructed us about a new motorway that now existed out of Santander and this wasn't marked on any maps we have previously looked at. We were relieved there was a potentially easy route out of Santander as the last time we had come, we had totally screwed up somewhere along the route and found ourselves down the narrow backstreets. This time however, we managed exceedingly well to get out of Santander and on to the easy dual carriageways and there began our ten and a half hour journey down to the Algarve.

We had the radio on most of the way. Most of it seemed to be talking and we couldn't understand a word so I am not too sure what we were achieving from this but occasionally we would come across some music, most of which was British or American. We even listened to a classical channel for quite a while and I tested Phil's knowledge of such music only to discover even the basics were missing there. Everything to him was Rachmaninov. One of the radio stations was called Radio Cope and this very much signalled our attitude to the journey as cope we had to. Phil continued to drive and I continued to navigate.

The scenery was a combination of dry looking mountains, with distant snowy tops and then flat plains with acres and acres of either grazing or arable or olive and cork. The profusion of storks amused us along the way with ever increasingly interesting choices of nest building sites including electric pylons. There were even man-made stork nest frames along the roads in one area. They didn't however seem as popular with the storks. At Palencia we saw a distant statue of possibly Jesus, much like a scaled down Rio de Janeiro version. Phil commented that it was either Jesus or his mum which for some reason amused me highly. Not sure what devote Catholics would think about the Virgin Mary being simply referred to as 'his mum'.

Only one random question came up during the whole trip and that was 'Why are grey hairs thicker and spikier than normal hairs'?

There is no solid data to show that gray hair has a different physical structure that makes it feel more kinky and unruly. In fact, we've seen experiments that show if you have people close their eyes they cannot feel a difference between gray hair and "normal" hair. Why do people think gray hair is so different? There are probably two reasons: First, we know that as you age, the follicles produce less of their natural lubricating oils. That can make hair feel dry and coarse. Second, gray hairs are just easier to notice because of the color difference. Think about all the hairs on your head that are unruly but they are the same color as the rest of your hair so you don't notice them.

So not long into our journey the rain started. We referred to the saying 'the rain in Spain stays mainly on the plain' but seeing as we had rain pretty much the whole way, we weren't convinced there was any truth in that. On climbing up a hill towards a tunnel, the rain was really belting down when we heard an uncomfortable noise from the front passenger side tyre. Our initial thought was that of a flat tyre and the thought of taking everything out of the boot in the pouring rain to access the spare was not a desirable one as Phil pulled into an emergency lane to take a look. Fortunately the tyre was fine and fortunately it was nothing of much note that would impede our journey. There is a plastic bolt somewhere near that tyre that needs something doing to it sometime. The key word in the last sentence is 'sometime' as apparently it has needed 'something' doing to it for a fair while now and I even mentioned it briefly before we left. Phil being somewhere between the Cornish 'dreckly' and the Spanish 'mañana' hadn't done it and so after a brief rearrangement of the bolt away from the tyre, we left the emergency lane as Phil proceeded to beat himself up for being a slacker. I on the other hand remained smugly quiet, just pleased that there was nothing seriously wrong.

With the rain increasing and time pushing on, I began to doubt the wisdom of carrying on right to the bottom. The thought of staying in a cosy room entered my mind like a demon and I quietly started to suss out some options from the Lonely Planet. However, we pushed on and it even stopped raining for a short while.

We fuelled up for the first time near Fratel on the A23 just down from Guarda. It was an auto pay pump so no chance to practice Portuguese yet. With 130 miles to go, it started raining again and we started to notice some flooding. Meanwhile James Blunt piped up on the radio "its 72 degrees and no chance of rain". Taking the piss surely? Thankfully as we hit the Algarve, the rain had stopped and we were nearly there. Now it was getting on for 10pm and we wondered whether the gates of the campsite might close at 10pm and whether we would be consigned to camping rough somewhere. With only a few minutes spare, and for the first time during the whole journey, I got us lost just outside of Lagos. It was quickly corrected after a bit of grumpiness from both of us but we would not get there before 10pm now.

We arrived just after 10pm to find the gates open and not due to be locked until midnight. However, the reception was closed and there was nobody in sight. We knew from our previous trip that the campsite has a key access barrier so just assumed our luck had run out. As we were just turning around in an area behind reception and contemplating either sleeping in the car (how we would have achieved that is unclear) or pitching a tent somewhere random in the dark, we noticed an area that we could pitch for the night within the campsite. The note on the reception door saying find somewhere and then they will find us in the morning hadn't made much sense until then. So pitch we did, shortly followed by quickly slinging our stuff inside and crawling in after what had turned into an 11 hour drive. For a while we couldn't sleep. Perhaps it was the fact that we were still for the first time in two nights with no swaying ferry or vibrating car. Or perhaps it was just relief but eventually sleep did come.

### Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> March

Having heard rain in the night, from inside the tent, the weather still seemed overcast when we awoke. The birds however, were in full song (along with a couple of very loud people passing by at one point) and it was clear that they had something to sing about as the first yellow spots of sunshine started to hit the outside of the tent. We got up and went to reception to check in and claim our usual spot inside the campsite proper. We also met the Welsh owner of the campsite and had a brief chat with him. I had forgotten about the rule of music forbidden on the campsite and ironically I was wearing my Howies 'put a little music in your day' t-shirt.



Unfortunately our usual spot was taken by the Germans! We then spent a frustrating time trying to find an alternative. We settled on a spot only to be told by the German man on our usual spot that it was no good as the rain can be bad there (or that is what we gathered he was saying as we spoke no German and he spoke no English). So we continued searching only to return to just up from where he had said and a spot he had suggested. Finally we pitched, settled in for food and a cup of tea and a spot of relaxing in the increasing sun. I should also add at this point that part of this particular campsite is set aside as a nudist area and it is the area with the best pitches. We are not averse to getting 'our kit off' so this doesn't worry us in the least so along with the increasing heat, off came our kit! After relaxing rather too long in the sun and being stupid enough not to fully appreciate how long and how red we had become without sun cream, we decided it was time to haul our sorry red arses out.

Phil had mustered enough energy to go and look at the surf and we promptly headed for nearby Zavial. It took us slightly longer to get there due to the intensive road works occurring along the main road with their extremely long waits at the red lights. Progress along the smaller roads was also slower due to Phil quite wisely remembering the fast and random driving skills of drivers approaching from the opposite direction. We did indeed meet a few such cars, mostly full of surfers in FWD's with expressions of 'get off the f\*\*cking road because I'm a surfer and far more important than you' on their faces. This prompted me to ask Phil why are most surfers' arseholes (present company excepted). He didn't have an answer and I'm not sure that Wikipedia will either.

Surfers with bad attitudes are like graffiti vandals with overloaded minds aggressively chasing their fix of identity and recognition. In both versions, the surfing lifestyle is twisted into a joy-less, anxiety-driven fear of outsiders.

*This was the only thing, after searching on-line, I could find about the attitude of surfers and this was mostly in respect to localism. Perhaps I am being unfair because, after all I have met many really nice surfers now. However, that is on an individual basis. There is something that happens to surfers when they come together that makes them arrogant, distant, unfriendly; as if they know something special and they are not willing to share it. Maybe they do, who knows, but I am just thankful that Phil is amongst the bunch of good guys who I have met who surf the waves rather than the lifestyle.*

The waves at Zavial were loaded but also far from ideal so we pushed on to Barranco which is approached on a dusty track rather than anything that much resembles a road. This track seems to go on for ages and each new bend, however many times we have driven it in the past, seems to disappoint that we were not finally at the beach. After about 10 minutes however we were there amongst the hippy wagons, surf mobiles, dreadlocks and packs of dogs that are Barranco. The surf looked more promising and Phil eventually took the plunge and I even managed, between trying to keep the dust from blowing in the car and watching the everyday life of the Barranco dog packs, to get shots of every wave he caught.



With Phil with his first surf of the trip under his belt, we headed to the supermarket to get some fresh veggies and then back for a quick cook up before dark. I took a moment to text

my sister to say Happy Birthday and then bellies full, I did a quick download and viewing of photos before we headed for an early read and bed at around 9.30pm.

The night's sleep started pretty well and I was even pretty comfortable with all my extra padding for my leg and back. Then around 3am we heard a weird

noise outside, like a rasping. Phil was on his way out to investigate with his head torch when he realised that the guy in the tent behind was obviously having a wee. This didn't account for the noise but then the noise stopped shortly after and we returned to try and sleep. However, the guy then proceeded to talk and sing loudly. We had heard him briefly during the day before but on the whole he was extremely quiet and we assumed his companion even quieter as we hadn't heard anyone else. We had even been concerned at 9pm because we had been getting in and out of the car and shutting the doors and didn't want to be too noisy. It turned out however that there was nobody else with him.

As the talking, singing and whistling continued we formulated various conspiracy theories. Was he displeased that we had pitched close to him and was doing it on purpose? This theory continued until Phil had had enough and shouted to the whole campsite 'Shut Up!!' twice. With no affect, I then pleaded 'please stop the singing' but with equal affect. Although we couldn't understand him as he was speaking in German, we started to listen to what he was saying and the way he was saying it or singing. That is when we formulated our other theories. He was either sleep talking, on some kind of trip or just plain crazy. All of those options lead me to persuade Phil not to

interrupt his ramblings as I wasn't sure where that would lead so we just continued to lie awake and listen. He took a photo with flash at one point, hit stuff at other points, spoke in English of magic crystals and pure energy and did some counting in English but generally from his tone of voice asked himself in German lots of questions and made lots of lists. This went on for seemingly hours with only a few quiet moments here and there to make us believe it was all over, only to be disappointed. We now knew he was definitely on his own as there were no other voices and nobody would put up with that in his tent for long. We also dispelled the theory of him doing it on purpose as nobody could maintain that amount of craziness for that long surely. So the other options left weren't that great either and lay there listening we did. The irony of spending so long looking for an ideal pitch also dawned on us but we vowed to move the next day, however frustrating that was.

### **Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> March**

The German man's ramblings continued through the birdsong of sunrise and into the heat of the morning. So yes, he was a confirmed nutter and yes, we were going to move. A brief conversation with the owner, after we expressed our disappointment of a sleepless night, revealed that the man had been there for a month in his tent, had had a 'burn out' a few years ago but was harmless.

We ate a huge papaya each for breakfast with a cup of tea followed by some fruity soya yoghurts we had found in the supermarket last night. We then lazed around for quite a while and whilst Phil read one of the many books he brought with him I had a journal catch up on our little net book. After a while Phil managed to get enough energy together to do his running exercise up a nearby hill whilst I continued on the journal but sulked about the fact that I too wanted to be able to get up and do something physical but was prevented by my stupid herniated disc and resulting sciatic nerve pain down my leg. By the time Phil returned he looked however like he had done enough exercise for both of us but credit to him, with sweat pouring off of him, he then continued with further stretching just to finish off. On the small hilly pathway where he had been running he told me he had found loads of wild herbs and we earmarked these for an accompaniment to future dinners. Meanwhile, the crazy German continued all his wittering behind us. I even saw him up at the wash block a little later and he was busy talking to himself then so his craziness wasn't just confined to whatever he got up to in his tent. When I saw him he was wearing a long sleeved jumper and shoes but nothing on his bottom at all. He was happily letting it all hang out and air. Being a nudist campsite though, that isn't at all an unusual site and indeed many of the men seem to do the same. So seeing him in this capacity isn't what, in this environment, earmarks him as a little strange ironically. It is his constant wittering that does.

Finally we decided it was time to stop lazing around anymore and to do the inevitable moving of the camp to outside the exclusion sound zone of crazy man. As we were more than unwilling to repeat the tour of the campsite that we had done several times on arrival at the campsite to find a pitch, we decided to move to the location that we had originally picked but been put off by the German couple telling us that it was no good in the rain. When the German couple saw us moving there we explained that we'd rather take our chances with the rain than spend another night listening to the crazy German who talks and sings all night. They seemed to find this hilarious and we got the impression that they had had dealings with him and had failed to warn us of this when they suggested a better camping position in the rain that was right next to crazy man.

Once finally moved we settled in for some more relaxing but I did do my physio exercises for the first time on this trip. They seemed pretty easy to do which was encouraging and overall my leg and back had been pretty good considering the long car journey down (even though the physio had said avoid sitting for too long!) and sleeping in a tent. However, after doing the exercises it all seemed to go downhill and I wondered about the wisdom of doing them full stop. If I felt good after sitting for long and sleeping in a tent, why mess with that!! All in all, it is difficult to know what to do for the best. I'd stopped taking the painkillers because they made me constipated and I'd had good days and bad days when I had taken the anti inflammatories so wasn't convinced they were doing much either way too. Was suddenly walking in flip flops up a steep hill to the wash block making it worse and it was nothing to do with the exercises? Who knows!

After a while we decided to eat. It was just after 2pm and having our main meal now would save us rushing to cook before dark this evening and would leave us free to stay out longer. So we had a leisurely late lunch followed by yet more relaxing. The sleepless night was obviously taking its toll. Either that or the holiday mood had finally grabbed us and we were just being extremely lazy.

Finally the time came to check the surf at Barranco and so we bumped and dusted our way down the track only to find tiny waves. So we bumped and dusted our way back up the track and headed towards Sagres to look for surf spots. We tried first at Martinhal and there was no surf but I remembered that there were two geocaches quite close by and had the details with me so we decided to look for these. One of these was very close by just behind the beach and we found this quite easily and also dropped off a travel bug that our friends Jo and Ben had asked us to send on its way. The second one was on the next beach further east but was still a relatively quick walk across rocks. Phil went to

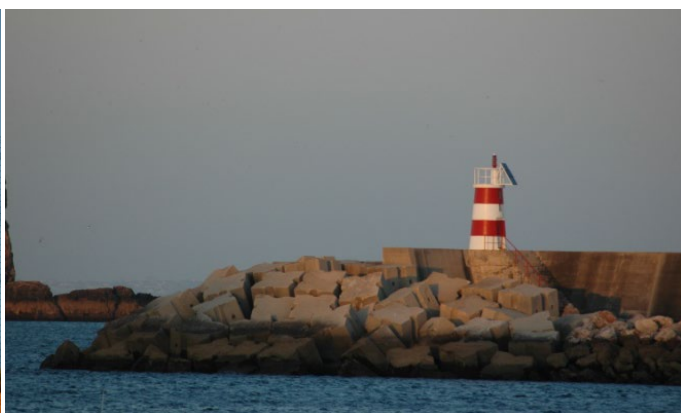


find it though as it was up a steep climb and I

wasn't sure I wanted to chance aggravating my leg any further but he found it easily and brought it down for me to write in the log book before going back up to replace it. When we returned to the first beach I spent some time taking photographs as one portion of the beach was covered in stone sculptures where people had just piled stones balanced on top of each other. We had seen this kind of thing in other places, including a beach in Ireland, but never to this extent before and so it made quite an unusual site. By now, and once wearing my walking boots, I was beginning to walk better again so felt quite positive about this.



After the caches we headed into Sagres. It is a funny place and we are not sure we are that keen on it and much prefer being near Salema. Perhaps it is better in the main season but it just seems a little sad at the moment and not very welcoming. We checked a couple of surf spots and I stopped a few times to take photos before the sunset got the better of us. Driving along this stretch we had realised that the areas along here seemed much closer together than we remembered before. Perhaps it was because we had spent a lot more time driving up and down the west coast too but it was a pleasant surprise to realise that we could get to the places we wanted to along this south coast without seemingly driving for too long at all. This was also a relief in terms of the cost of driving. Diesel is cheaper here (about £1.20 per litre as opposed to £1.39 in the UK when we left) but still quite expensive if you end up doing lots of driving around. As it got dark, we headed back to the tent for snacks before retiring to the tent for a read and bed.



### Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> March

We enjoyed a peaceful night's sleep without the constant crazy chatter and singing from our friend. Every now and then we heard the loudest outbursts but nothing to really keep us awake too long, although there was always the background idea that he would start wandering around and being crazy. We got up around 9am and the tent was already very hot. We had seen on the forecast before we left that the temperature was due to be around 24 degrees today and it turned out that the forecast was pretty much spot on. Regardless Phil decided to do his running exercises and stretching whilst I went and had a shower. Then I got breakfast on the go whilst he went and had a shower.

We knew it would be unwise and uncomfortable to sit around today as, even in the shade; it was super hot so we decided to head for the supermarket in Lagos for supplies of fresh fruit and veg but also to look for any interesting and different things we could find. The supermarket had pretty much the same stuff we remembered, including the organic vegan Portuguese wine we really liked. After stocking up we headed to overlook a beach nearby and have some lunch whilst it was still fresh (we wanted some fresh alfalfa and salad and olives etc). The water looked beautiful but Phil said that it was still very cold (colder than the UK sea in the summer even). Regardless there were people in swimsuits messing about in the sea. The background to the beach was less nice with the usual newly built high rise holiday apartments that seem to be filling Lagos.

With lunch eaten we took a drive over to the west coast near Villa do Bispo to check the surf. We ended up at Cordoama to find nice waves so Phil decided to go in. I gently climbed a nearby viewpoint overlooking the surf point to take photos. Phil came out of the sea and we left at 6.45pm and back to the campsite for a light dinner in still warm air.





### Friday 1<sup>st</sup> April

It was an extremely windy night with the tent taking, but holding up to, a battering. The beach shelter, which had the stove and gas bottle in it, also took the force of the wind and would have probably disappeared somewhere had it not been for the extra weight of the contents. Although it lost us a little sleep, on the plus side, at least we were unable to hear the mad rantings of our German friend. Whether unsettled by the slight loss of sleep or not, I was in, it seemed, for a bad day with my back and leg which was a great disappointment to me as I had believed it was on the mend.

We had a quick breakfast and headed to Salema for the first time on our trip. It was nice to see it again and also this time to see it completed after the road works and building works that were going on in the main square the last time we were here. It looked nice, if not a bit confusing in terms of the direction that you drive to enter the various bits of car park, as Phil found out as we parked up in the complete opposite direction to every other car in there. We took a brief walk along the seafront, which doesn't take very long. Here we discovered that many of the old seafront houses were or had been 'done up'. Although they still looked nice, there was something less charming and more clinical about it now.



We then headed east to the next beach at Boco do Rio. This was the area we were going to pitch our tent and free camp the first night if we had been unable to get into the campsite. On arrival here today we were pleased that this hadn't been the case as the area seemed more flooded and wet than we remembered and although the pitch that we had set up camp on for one night on our previous visit was not flooded, we are sure that the increase in water in the general surrounding area would have meant us battling a hoard of mosquitoes as we set up the tent. Not something we would have relished after an eleven hour journey!

After staring at the sea here for a while we drove further east and ended up at a beach called Cabanas Velhas. To our surprise there were pretty good waves here and really close in so also perfect for good photos. It had to be done and with a brief watch of how other surfers were faring, Phil got in there. I took a gentle walk up to a viewpoint overlooking and found a comfortable rock to perch on to take photos. Phil had a really good surf.



On getting back to the car and changing we met an English guy who had also just got out. Phil asked him about this particular surf spot but the guy was really quite full of it and into telling us more about how he had a house out there so that he could spend quality time with his family because his job took him away working in the States and China. He also added how he had left his wife with a paintbrush in her hand to do some decorating whilst he dashed off for a surf. We both commented to each other after he left that it was more like his wife and said 'don't you be long' but as he was the 'man of the house' he felt the need to tell a different story to others. Basically he was a bit of a cock really and we kind of regretted talking to him. Either that or we are just unsociable gits!

So with a good surf under Phil's belt, we continued up the coast and into Luz for a walk around. We walked along the seafront and then went to find the health food store. Last time we were here it was in a tiny little place around one of the backstreets but we knew it had moved shortly after our last visit and we knew where to so we headed straight there. It is funny when places move to bigger and better premises. More often or not they lose their charm and this is what had happened to this little shop. It was now aisles of supplements and scented candles and overpriced food items that we could get in the UK. We bought very little and left disappointed.



We headed back to the campsite to cook again in an effort to not have to race the darkness and fight off the mossies later. After dinner and clearing up we returned to Boco Do Rio to watch the waves and download the photos from earlier whilst we sat in the car. Phil was pleased with the results and we both congratulated ourselves on the decision to bring our little net book in order to not only write this journal but also to be able to download and view our photos regularly. Congratulations over with, it was back to the campsite and to the tent to read before bed.



### **Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> April**

After the windy turmoil of the previous night, last night was extremely still, almost too still. Through the silence we could hear matey chundering away to himself about this and that. I heard the German couple getting ready to go just after sunrise, even though the gates of the campsite don't open until 8am. Luckily Phil with his earplugs had heard nothing of their retreat. Now 'our pitch' was clear for an English takeover. I went up to the wash block for a quick wee only to see our German madman with his bags packed. In a desperate panic about the idea of him moving pitches to 'our pitch', I quickly returned to camp to warn Phil and we quickly moved the car down in a 'towels on sun bed' German style pincher movement, only to look a little silly as he walked past us and said goodbye. Even as the sound of his wheelie suitcase faded into the distance, I imagined his return very shortly in an 'only joking' way. Shortly after my heart jumped as I saw him running

back up the hill, armpits dark with sweat. He ran straight past and up to his old pitch only to return shortly after with his pitch number that you are meant to hang from your tent. I sighed a sigh of relief as he disappeared back down the hill again.

We seemed to take forever moving pitch and settling in but finally we felt like we had fully got to the point of feeling at home again. We had breakfast and settled in for some serious relaxing but with a bit of postcard writing thrown in too. At one point Phil saw something resembling glass on our car windscreen to discover it was a glob of dried resin from the nearby tree. It took quite a bit to get off. In the process Phil discovered the windscreen wipers were also stuck down quite well. In previous days we had taken the piss out of the German couple (obviously not to their faces!) about their fastidious cleaning and upkeep of their pitch including lifting the windscreen wipers every day when parked up. Now we discovered why they had done this, so that the sun didn't dry them to the windscreen, and we had more respect for German 'engineering' and less piss taking in mind!!

At about 2.30pm we finally hauled our lazy arses out, posting our postcards on the way. We were heading for Zavial to check the surf and Phil wasn't disappointed. It wasn't his best surf but enough of a surf to satisfy him and also to get a few photos. We returned for a quick dinner and beers before bedtime. We were feeling so lazy that washing up could wait till the morning.



### **Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> April**

Last night it absolutely pissed it down. Rain, rain, rain, pretty much all night. It had been forecast so wasn't too much of a surprise but we couldn't hide our disgust at the fact that rain was normally reserved for Cornwall not the Algarve!! This wasn't what we signed up for even during the night, particularly so as it was still raining in the morning. We stayed in bed waiting but couldn't delay the inevitable and finally got up and out of the tent. We showered and then washed up from last night.

It was the kind of day for catching up with a few emails from home (sad as that is to admit!). Phil was in the process of getting a board made and was mid conversation via email with the glasser before we came away so was keen to find out what stage the board had got up to. I was happy to give a quick check up on emails and also to top my phone up a bit more on-line as I wanted to put in a call to my mum and dad later to reassure them we were okay. They had been worried last time we came to Portugal as our postcards took so long and also this time they were concerned about my back, so a call home to reassure was in order. I had to admit to them that today was another bad back day but that I had had some good ones too and it wasn't spoiling the holiday, just changing the way we had to do things a bit.



On the way out of the campsite we stopped off to drop off some recycling at the bins just outside the entrance. Across the road in the cliffside we saw a Hoopoe bird pop into a hole. We had seen a couple of hoopoe's around the campsite briefly but never enough to capture on film. With this one in a definite position I readied my camera only to sit there staring at the hole for at least 10 minutes to no avail. Short of sitting there all day, we decided to move on and down to Salema to see that the sea was a total millpond. So after a brief stop in the supermarket back on the main road for bread, we decided to go for a drive up the west coast.

By now the sun was shining a bit more than earlier. We drove up towards Aljezur, taking a short detour to Arrifana for Phil to look at the surf. It was okay there but slightly cross on-shore winds so he wasn't fussed about going in so we continued to the headland for a spot of lunch in the car overlooking the sea. Phil decided to pull the car up really close and facing downhill on the cliff top and I had a really funny moment and had to ask him to pull onto another bit of the car park as I felt that the car would go over the edge. I was a right 'girly' about it but he humoured me and we moved somewhere 'safer' and I was able to enjoy my lunch a little better. We watched whilst some tourists came along to take some photos of, presumably, the view. They very vigilantly set up tripods in the wind with their small cameras with reasonably small lenses and I had to wonder what an earth they were taking photos of with such over the top equipment, but everyone to their own and I'm sure, my parents included, wonder what an earth goes through my mind with some of the 'holiday' photos that I take so maybe I shouldn't criticise.

After our cliff top lunch, we drove to Barranco to check the surf but found it to be too small and too crowded so again Phil wasn't fussed about going in so, with the danger of sounding like we are constantly eating our way through our holiday, we headed back to cook an earlyish dinner of curry, the first time our usually frequent dinner of curry had crept into our holiday cuisine. As I hadn't had it for a while I was really relishing it and very nice it was too. After dinner and washing up we decided to return back down to Salema for a gentle walk along the beach and the seafront. During this walk, my leg was pretty good and again the ups and downs of this damn herniated disc had shown themselves but thankfully on the up this time. We sat for awhile on the seafront watching all the local cats. I distinctly remembered this from our last visit when, after dark, the seafront slowly got invaded by cats who appeared like ghosts in the streetlight. They appear from under and out of boats, round street corners and under fishing pots, all collecting in gangs to hiss and chase each other before wandering onto the beach to rummage for fish leftovers or chase moths. It is most amusing and very much like an edition of Aristocats. After about 30 minutes or so of watching cat TV, we left for the campsite and our tent haven for bed.

#### **Monday 4<sup>th</sup> April**

With no rain thundering down on the tent, it was a more restful night's sleep. We had also both let out some of the air from our thermo rests and this seemed to make it much more comfortable on the slightly harder ground of our new pitch. It had been a lot colder. Phil had zipped the main door of the inner tent rather than just the mesh but he still said he had felt cold in the night.

The day was quite overcast and windy to begin with but then turned into a gloriously hot day. We both went up to the washroom together and whilst we were there the owner turned up and had a chat. He used to be a farmer in Wales. He started initially talking about the mad German and said that he was into crystals and ley lines and that apparently a lot of Germans came to this area because of the ley lines. Then he got onto talking about mobile phones and power lines and how it hasn't been definitely proved whether they do harm or not but then the subject moved onto food. His grandchildren are over visiting at the moment and he mentioned that he wasn't too impressed with the way they ate. He made a sudden mention of vegans and we admitted that we were vegans and had been for nearly 25 years. He made a comment about us not wearing leather and that we must be strict. Then the usual vegan questions came up about what did we eat but he was quite positive in a lot of ways saying that chemicals that get used in farming these days and medications for animals is really bad and that, along with factory farming, go against everything he considered farming to stand for. With the world put to rights we headed back to the tent for late breakfast of peanut butter and banana toasties and linden tea, and very nice it was too. Then we settled in for some serious relaxing in the sun and before we knew it was 3.30pm so we decided to have a late lunch/early dinner because, after all, all this relaxing was making us hungry but it also meant that we could go out and not worry about coming home in time to cook dinner before dark.

We decided to go for some reason in Lagos direction, stopping off briefly in the supermarket there to pick up fresh fruit and veg for tomorrow. After we headed to Prai de Maei but didn't stay long as it wasn't very nice to be honest. We turned back west but decided to investigate the road that we missed turning off from the unfinished A22 motorway road on the first night we arrived. Unhurried and unstressed about our long drive and our arrival time, we managed to find the road and were very pleased that we had missed it on the first night as it took a lot longer winding our way along it than the map indicated. However, this evening it was a pleasant drive and we did find the prospect of a veggie restaurant/restaurant with veggie options in one of the little villages along the way so that will be worth considering in the days to come possibly.

With some of the evening left we headed for Ingrina to look at the surf whilst we ate a dessert of chocolate puddings we had bought in the supermarket earlier. Then we thought about going for some beers at the beach bar at Zavial but it was closed so we returned to Ingrina and sat outside for a couple of beers whilst watching the surf and talking of travels. There was an English couple on a table next to us and a dog was hanging out with them. We thought initially it was their dog but it wasn't. The guy gave it a bone from his joint of meat he had on his plate and the dog carried it off and really enjoyed it. From that point on the guy was the dog's best friend and he kept putting his paw up at him. Luckily the guy seemed quite fond of it.

Whether it was the beer talking or not (although he only had two very small bottles) Phil decided that the ants were quite friendly in Portugal. It seemed that the habit of random statements may be returning after an absence of a few days. With that very random statement regarding the attitude of foreign ants in our heads, we headed back to read and bed.

### **Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> April**

A good night's sleep was followed by breakfast of a lovely tasty mango and some fig soya yoghurts that we have never seen in the UK. After clearing up I decided it was about time I washed my hair so went up to the wash block for a hot shower whilst Phil lazed around reading. When I returned I stated typing up more of this journal for a bit before we headed out, stopping off for a brief check of surf on the internet and emails at the campsite reception.

We headed to check the surf at Cordoama but here the tide was too high and the swell too northerly. Three surfers were out but not really getting any waves so we decided to take a drive up the coast to Amado but here it was closing out too much despite there being quite a crowd of people out there. We headed back to Zavial where it was huge and out of control and even Ingrina was much the same. So it was back to Cabana Velhas but the tide was too high and nobody was out so we moved on to Luz where we wondered about cooking an earlyish dinner on the seafront. Phil had earlier packed all our stuff like our stove and cooking stuff in the car in case we wanted to cook out. However Phil wasn't too keen on setting up our 'kitchen' here as it was quite windy and there were loads of people around. Instead we investigated the fort at Almadena which stands on the headland between Boco do Rio and Burgau. We found it to be reasonably sheltered, with a bit of car positioning, and we had the place to ourselves so we set up the 'kitchen' and set to cooking the best meal that we both agreed we had had on our trip; a simple tomato pasta accompanied by a spot of nice red wine. We were also able to listen to our music and enjoy the view with the sea on either side. The only thing missing was the sunshine which did a disappearing act after a while behind hazy clouds but it didn't spoil it too much at all. It had pretty much been like that all day so not too disappointing for the evening.

After, we packed up but the washing up could wait until tomorrow morning and then we drove overlooking the sea at Salema whilst I continued to type up a bit of this journal. With darkness falling quickly this evening (about 8.30pm) we left to return to the campsite and a quick teeth brush at the wash block. We noticed there was another tent two fields up and opposite the wash block so we were no longer alone in this section of the campsite. We retired to the tent for a read and before we fell asleep we noticed that the wind was picking up and we were pleased that we had parked the front wheels of the car just on the front of the beach shelter to keep it from blowing around in the night. I fell asleep quite contentedly with the knowledge that I had had a good back day today and felt a glimmer of hope that I might be getting better.

### **Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> April**

Another extremely windy night lost us both a bit of sleep. Why we are not sure as the tent was very secure, as was the beach shelter due to our forethought the evening before. You could hear the gusts of wind approaching from across the valley and most seemed to blow over the top of our tent so we were pretty sheltered behind the surrounding trees. But still there was a certain amount of tent shaking and noise to keep us wondering.

The day started overcast when I got up to walk to the wash block and once out of the tent, the wind seemed as if it had sounded worse than it was. When I entered the wash block, which I hadn't mentioned yet but are communal male and female, I got a real shock to discover that the wind had blown back our crazy German friend after a three day absence. It must have been his tent that we had noticed last night opposite the wash block. When I returned to our tent I greeted Phil with our new piss taking (courtesy of the German crazy) call of "pure energy" in a thick German accent and he replied from inside with an equally piss taking accent "magic crystals" but then I had to break the news to him that he'd better get used to hearing that as he was back! What was funny is that only last night I had typed up Saturdays journal and had said he had left never to return. Little did I know then. I had also woke up in the night and imagined hearing his wheelie suitcase trundling back up the hill but it couldn't have been him then as he was already set up in his tent by then. He is currently the same distance away that he was on his original pitch so hopefully we won't hear too much of his witterings. Last night the wind had been too strong anyway but imagine if we had woken up in the night to hear him, thinking that he had left!!

We had breakfast of tofu scrambles, cleared up and set off after surf. It was starting to brighten up a bit now. The surf was good at Cabanas Velhas and Phil had a really good session and I was pleased as I had captured pretty much every wave on camera, despite being distracted by a dog who decided to hang out with me, and was particularly happy with one shot. We decided to go and have a drink in the beach cafe after Phil's surf and used their electric to plug in the net book and download, look at, edit the photos and back up the ones we were keeping. Our car charger for our net book had broken only after one days use so we had to take the opportunities when we could to give it a boost. We found out afterwards too that they had free wireless internet so that was useful for the days to come.



We also noticed they did a green salad with almonds and fancying a bit of raw food, we decided to order two with a chips to share. It was really nice and, along with the freshly squeezed orange juice, a real treat - 'Simple but effective', which is a little saying that Phil and I have been using on this trip for the food that we have sampled, that along with 'I do like this Mediterranean lifestyle' (even though effectively we are not on the Mediterranean!).

I was also in a good mood because my leg had continued to do pretty well, that was until after our lunch when we decided to go to the Baptista supermarket in Luz and suddenly without warning it starting to cramp up again for no reason that I could think of. It was so disappointing and more than a little distracting. After the supermarket we went to look at the sea at Luz and



it was totally different to yesterday. We sat for awhile before leaving to return to the campsite for a hot shower and then a leisurely dinner with wine. The wine seemed to increase our talking in thick German pigeon English which is a habit that we should really wean ourselves off of otherwise we might do it at an inappropriate moment without thinking and there were plenty of Germans staying here too.

A rabbit put in an appearance on our pitch tonight as we sat having dinner. It was much cooler this evening so we sat with jumpers and trousers on but mysteriously there didn't seem to be any mossies around. We cleared up and, as it was now getting dark we retreated to the tent to read and sleep.

#### **Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> April**

The night had been reasonably still and warm, following on from the rather chilly evening before. We occasionally heard the distant mumblings of craziness from two pitches up but the thing that kept me awake was a strange animal noise, the likes of which I had never heard before. My theories on what it was changed throughout the night, although I never came up with a clear theory on the type of animal it was but only hoped it wasn't 'our rabbit'. At first it seemed like it was just some creature that comes out at night and generally makes noises. Later on in the night it sounded a bit more frantic and I started to wonder whether it was in distress and thought about going out to investigate. I was worried that the blue pellets we had seen on one section of our pitch (left by the German couple who left on Saturday after three months), might have been more than just insect repellent and maybe were rat poison or something. But then a while later and towards dawn I heard another noise that the noise outside responded to so then I became convinced that it might be just lost and now found or even in the midst of mating. After it got light enough I had a bit of a look around but all was quiet and I couldn't see anything obvious so I walked up to the wash block for my morning wee.

Crazyman Pure Energy was up at the wash block and we exchanged a good morning before he let out a crazy laugh as he went into the wash block ahead of me. Either I am particularly funny looking just after I've got out of bed, which is a distinct possibility, or it was just him being his usual self this morning,. Either way, I peed quickly and got the hell out and back to the tent. I couldn't continue to sleep but Phil was for a while so I read. My leg was pretty good this morning and it made such a difference to my mental state. Shortly after we got up and had a leisurely breakfast.

It is funny the little routines you fall into on holiday. You'd think you'd want to get away from routine when on holiday but it just seems to happen naturally. It seems other people may be the same too. Every morning a couple drive down the hill at around 9.30am with their little Border terrier, which we refer to as a 'Tilly' dog because we have friends with one called that, running alongside the car. They always wave mostly because I have met the man in the wash block a few times first thing in the morning and I make a fuss of the dog. The man is always just wearing a shirt but 'hanging loose and free' below (which many of the naturist men seem to do here first thing in the morning) and I find it ironic that he normally comments on it being a little chilly this morning. Tilly dog, who is always with him, greets me at the door. All of this has become pretty normal believe it or not, and hence now our little waving greeting as they drive past and we watch Tilly dog clicking his tiny paws racing along with them.

After washing and clearing up, as our routine now seems to dictate, we pack everything we need for the day into the car and head up to the wash block for teeth brushing and for Phil to brush his hair. Then we leave directly from there, just stopping briefly to drop off any rubbish and recycling in the bins by the entrance to the campsite. Today we headed straight back to Cabanas Velhas and again it was good so Phil went for a surf whilst I sat again on my overlook and took photos. After we repeated our visit to the beach cafe but this time we only had juice and chips. We downloaded the photos again and edited them before making use of the free Wi-Fi to do a quick check of emails.



An English couple had stopped us earlier to ask if we knew where they might be able to hire surfboards. Phil suggested asking the surf school that was currently on the beach. They were told either Lagos or Sagres as the surf school didn't rent them themselves. Phil agreed Sagres was a safe bet and also mentioned that this beach was nice and sheltered for beginners. As we sat in the beach cafe, they returned with boards and hopefully for a good surf experience.

We finished our drinks and checking emails and I also rang H at work because I'd had an email saying my Nematode biological slug control had been sent despite me requesting that it wouldn't be until I got back. As it needs to be kept in the fridge till used, I asked H whether she would mind looking out for it at work and putting it in the fridge. We also had a quick catch up which was nice, although thankfully not too much about work as to take my mind away from my holiday. I also warned her that I might not be back as my leg still wasn't in a state to consider returning so they might want to plan for that. H mentioned that the weather hadn't been brilliant up until today over there but that they were due for a scorching weekend hopefully.

Phil contemplated another surf at Cabana Velhas but decided to try Cordoama instead so we drove over there and overlooked a viewpoint. It was extremely windy! We went





down to the beach and the waves were lovely but the really strong winds put Phil off so he decided against going in. I was quite relieved as it looked pretty full on out there and there were no other surfers out. I took some photos of the waves and on the beach and Phil watched as one solo body boarder went out, under the direction of land based friends. Phil was concerned as his friends were guiding him to the worse possible place to go out with lots of underwater rocks. Phil was on the brink of saying something when the body boarder returned after one small wave and thought better of it and came in.

We decided to head back to pick up some fresh fruit and veg and go back to the campsite to cook an early dinner. We had curry again this evening but this time made with chick peas and locally produced kale. Of course this had to be accompanied with a touch of organic red wine and interspersed with watching a touch of Ant TV whilst talking in thick German accents to each other. The latter two occupations had developed over the past few days into forms of entertainment. Very childish and not the usual forms of entertainment but we had to work with the material we had to hand. The ants had kept us amused whilst we watched them scurry and carry from hole to hole, run away from other ants about a tenth of the size of them and generally do random things we didn't quite understand (like move lots of blue pellets left over from the German couple to around the outside of their holes). We had resorted to child like fascination with their activities but I'm glad to say we didn't resort to child like cruelty and kept our fascination away from sticking stuff down the holes other than the odd crumb of food just to see the excitement that ensued. The thick German accents were equally childish but we got so used to hearing them that it almost became a bit like when we moved down to the West Country and imitation soon becomes habit. Besides it was more like flattery as most of the time it was sparked off by some efficient task we had just completed.

Random questions began again today, with the first one wondering about how far into the earth your ownership of land goes? It is impossible sometimes to know where these questions come from but at least we both find them interesting, even if nobody else does!

Any land you own is subject to local planning laws but it is yours both above and below ground. You would have to gain mining rights to dig down very far.

The Earth's crust is on average about 20 miles deep on land and then you reach the mantle - very basically molten rock under enormously high pressure. You'd have a surprise if you could dig down that far and so would everyone who lived close by, what with the new explosive volcano you'd created.

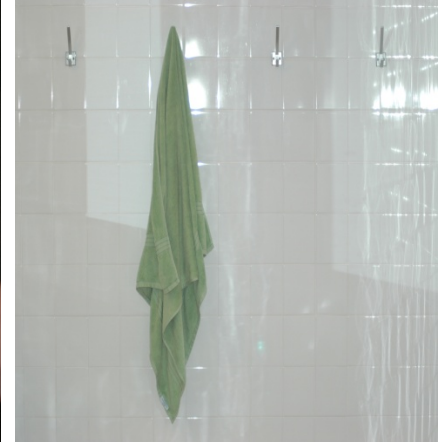
You'd still be about 6800 miles short of worrying any Australian though.



After dinner we decided to set off and look for a cache at Figueiro Fort. Unfortunately we couldn't find the right road to it and after the increase in the odd snappy word between us as yet another dead end and reversing episode ensued in fading light, we decided to give that one a miss. We found ourselves on a back road to Zavial we hadn't been on before so we decided to carry on for a quick look at the beach and to see if we could find a geocache I had details of there. After parking up, we walked to the beach past the beach cafe. I saw it was open and looking in saw somebody in there who looked familiar and then said to Phil "I think I know that lady". With that she

saw me looking and came rushing out. It was Michelle Ribeiro, an ex student from where I work. She lives and works in Portugal as her mum lives there. Phil was puzzled by her northern English accent though, which I had become used to whilst she was at college, but she explained to him that her grandmother was from northern England and that was the only explanation anybody could give for it. Her brother however couldn't speak a word of English and was totally Portuguese!! Very strange. After a brief chat we headed off to find the cache which we did very easily.

Back at the campsite, and whilst brushing our teeth in the wash block, we discovered a huge cricket on the wall. I tried to take a quick photograph and then Phil touched its back and it was off with one big leap. With that brief excitement over with, we retired to the tent and bed.



#### Friday 8<sup>th</sup> April

The night had been a windy one again but at least there had been no more animal noises to cause stress. I woke up just before dawn. We had both had vivid dreams. Phil's dream was about meeting a surfboard shaper in California which amongst other weird moments included the shaper, Reni, telling him he would be good at glassing because he is trained in upholstery. All of this was probably triggered by Phil having anxiety about his new board that he has been waiting for for a year now and should now finally be ready, after much hassle, when he returns. I meanwhile had a simple little dream about my plant at work not being watered and all shrivelled up when I returned. So a simple little work anxiety dream for me. Phil said that despite weird dreams he slept well.

Crazy man exchanged a very cheerful good morning minus any additional laughter today. The battle of the ants showing on Ant TV continued this morning. This prompted a random question – Do animals get pissed off in a human “oh for god sake” kind of way?

There is no scientific consensus on emotion in animals, that is, what emotions certain species of animals, including humans, feel. The debate concerns primarily mammals and birds, although emotions have also been postulated for other vertebrates and even for some invertebrates.

Animal lovers, scientists, philosophers, and others who interact with animals, have suggested answers but the core question has proven difficult to answer since animals cannot speak of their experience. Society recognizes that animals can feel pain, as demonstrated by the criminalization of animal cruelty. Animal expressions of apparent pleasure are ambiguous as to whether this is emotion, or simply innate responses, perhaps for approval or other hard-wired cues. The ambiguity is a source of controversy as there is no certainty which views, if any, reflect reality. That said, extreme behaviorists would say that human “feeling” is also merely a hard-wired response to external stimuli.

Shortly after breakfast we set off to check the surf via our usual recycling bin route. Phil always continued up the road a little way to turn around after visiting the recycling bins and this started a little catch phrase from him of “ I’m not going the wrong way” which he seemed to enjoy in his own special little way. “Dust” was another little word we used a lot at will and at random but when we are surrounded with it at times, it very much has become part of our lives at the moment. The car is covered in dust, inside and out, we brush dust out of the tent every day and will often chow down on some whilst eating such is its invasion of our lives. Still, there is a fair amount of B12 to be had from a bit of dust so from a vegan perspective it isn't all that bad



Phil had a successful surf at Cabanas Velhas and I had taken some decent photos of the session too so we were both happy with the mornings 'work'. On the way back to the campsite at Boco do Rio, we saw an owl by the side of the road. We managed to turn around and, using the car as cover, I got a few shots before it took off. We then drove back to the campsite to have some cooked lunch. We keep our camping spices in old 35mm film canisters and Phil seemed to become mildly outraged by the fact that the one spice he would need would be the last one he pulled out and opened up. Today I enraged him further by offering, without looking, to pick out the correct pots he required. I did so first time to both our amusement and astonishment. Phil suggested I played the lottery on returning to the UK to which I pointed out that I already did and hadn't had much luck so far with that so maybe sticking to spice pots was the better idea.



After lunch we stuck around our camp for a general laze around in the sun as today it was actually really warm and sunny. My leg hadn't been too bad today, despite the initial stiffness. After as much sun and lazing as we would take we decided to return to Cabanas Velhas to check the surf again but the tide was now too high so we continued on to Zavial and Ingrina but these were also no good. At Ingrina we watched a couple for a while as they talked to a local camper van owner who had their camp set up there. It seems there were discussing a dog that we had noticed there a few times. We had initially thought it was just with another camper van that was there at that moment as it seemed to be constantly sat outside the door and there were bowls put out for it. However, that camper had left and the dog was still there. It seemed it just 'lived' there and quite successfully blagged off of whichever campers were camped there. The couple however were showing a particular interest. They were Portuguese and had a car load of dogs already it seemed so perhaps there were contemplating picking this one up too. However, they then drove off and left the dog but because they had made a fuss over it, it ran after them up the road. They stopped and tried to get it in the car but it didn't then seem to want to. We left shortly after but I had an idea that they might have been back for it at a later time or at least check on it such was their concern. I hoped so but then again, much like our adopted cat at work, this dog looked really healthy and seemed to enjoy its freedom so I wasn't overly concerned by its plight.



We decided to chance the dust and bump down the track to Barranco to check surf and it paid off as Phil had a nice little session there. I managed to photograph the odd wave here and there in between writing and typing up this journal. On the way back up the track we got caught behind a convey of cows being herded up the road seemingly by just a small troupe of dogs, one of which was heavily pregnant. The farmer was just sat in his truck watching the proceedings so basically the dogs were on their own with the management and the movement of these cows. Hence progress was painfully slow as the dogs passed through another dog's territory and got distracted here and there by doggy greetings and general dog activities such as cocking their leg. We finally reached the road after a long and slow journey behind the cows and we headed for Ingrina beach bar for an evening drink.

We sat reviewing photos and stroking the bar owners huge dog that slumped itself down beside us. Beers drunk we headed back to the campsite for a quick teeth brush but skipped the shower we intended to have because we really couldn't be bothered (dirty stop outs that we were!). We did however give our extremely dirty and dusty feet a good wash and then rolled into bed.

### **Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> April**

After a good night's sleep we got up, washed and had a quick breakfast of mango and tea before heading off to check the surf at Cabanas Velhas. Unfortunately it was flat so we decided that we would head for the mountains today. The road to Monchique, a lovely little town up in the mountains that we had been to before, is very reminiscent of the road to Ojai in California so I found myself getting a bit confused about where in the world we were. I did secretly wish we were heading to Ojai as there is a great little cafe there that does lovely vegan food. However, Monchique is still a lovely town, despite the lack of a vegan food cafe and we had brought our own food for lunch which we enjoyed after driving right to the top of the mountain and overlooking the coast.

After lunch we drove back down the mountain into town and tried to find somewhere to park. This wasn't easy as trying to translate the road signs was basically impossible with the useless phrasebook I had. Eventually we did manage to park and understand the sign enough to think we wouldn't arrive back to find a parking ticket or the car towed away. We decided to have a wander around the public gardens in the centre of the town. We hadn't done this the last time we were here and hadn't even noticed the gardens for some reason. We had the whole gardens to ourselves and thoroughly enjoyed the warm sunshine and plants. I even managed to find some beauty in graffiti which was being partly obscured by wisteria. Returning to the town square and a few photos later, we sat down at a cafe in the middle for an orange juice and olive snack. Phil is not really an orange fan but surprisingly decided to have a glass of juice and loved it which I found really quite bizarre. It was really nice just watching the world go by in the warm sunshine. There was also free Wi-Fi in the town square so we were able to quickly catch up on email news and check surf reports for the next couple of days or so.



On the drive back down from the mountains we got into a discussion about farting, like you do. You've got to wonder sometimes what goes on in Phil and I's head but maybe that is why we get on so well as we think these kinds of conversations are normal whilst others may not. Anyway, we decided that it would be better if you could choose the smell of your own fart like for instance, old ladies could fart the smell of lavender whilst Phil would probably quite enjoy a really nice curry smell. I on the other hand would prefer perhaps amber or sandalwood or even the smell of a lovely pine forest. Either way, Phil then asked me what toilet water was. Not being much of a woman when it



comes to understanding women's things and assuming he meant the perfume toilet water rather than the stuff that sat in the bottom of a toilet, I had to admit I wasn't entirely sure beyond the former answer of something perfumy. It did however lead us to want to seek the answer of what it was and why it was called that. As if on cue, and sticking with the toilet style humour, we passed a sign on a building which read 'Arsus Toldos'. Now we definitely had to find out what that translated to!! Obviously on a roll, we then went on to discuss the virtues of the mediterranean diet and how both of our number twos had been of a colour that the doctor would certainly be proud of!! Basically it was a bizarre journey down from the mountains!!

Eau de toilette is a lightly scented perfume used as a skin freshener. It is also referred to as "aromatic waters" and has a high alcohol content. It is usually applied directly to the skin after bathing or shaving. It is considered a "weak" perfume. Toilet water is defined as a dilute perfume. It was originally composed of alcohol and various volatile oils.

Toilet waters are usually named after a principal ingredient; some being Geranium Water, Lavender Water, Lilac Water, Violet Water, Spirit of Myrcia and 'eau de Bretfeld'. Because of this "toilet water" is sometimes referred to as "flower water. It is often used as a "body splash" that is applied liberally, especially after showering.

The original meaning of "toilette" is the routine of personal hygiene that most people perform each day. For many, that includes a dash of "eau de toilette."

Well, I drew a bit of a blank with Arsus Toldas for a definitive answer. However, I have a rough guess. Toldos means awning, sun blinds or sign. Arsus could not be found in any dictionary so I am guessing it is just the name of the awning, blind or sign company. Still makes me snigger a bit though.

After a quick trip into the supermarket at Lagos as we passed and then to fill up with diesel at Budens on the way through (as it is the cheapest fuel we have seen around at 1.39 Euros per litre) we returned to the campsite. On the road just before the campsite we had a narrow escape with a woman who was driving the car in front suddenly changing her mind about turning off and swerving. Luckily, Phil's reactions were smart enough to avoid her but not after a few swear words were offered up to the world of Portuguese driving skills.

As usual as we cooked, we enjoyed a lovely glass of organic wine (this time CARM). I was a bit distracted by the overcast sky hoping it wouldn't rain mid cooking but Phil assured me it wouldn't despite gathering dark clouds. He was right, it didn't and we enjoyed a leisurely dinner in the end and it even cleared up a bit. I however was a bit upset about the fact that after 3 good days with my leg/back, I had earlier in the supermarket had a bad cramp. It was possibly due to walking up and down a few hills in Monchique.

After dinner we headed off for a shower. The great advantage of unisex wash blocks is that you can share a shower and hence the cost of the token you need to use to get hot water. The time one token gave us was ample time for both of us to wash and for Phil to wash out his wet suit if required. I was unable to persuade Phil to go to the campsite bar for the first time for a game of chess or to have a drink whilst I typed up the journal and looked at photos. I thought it might be nice to be sat upright for a change and perhaps be a bit sociable but Phil wasn't really in to that so instead we returned to the tent for a read and then an early sleep at around 9pm.

## Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> April

We awoke quite late this morning just as the sun was building strength through the trees. My leg was a bit stiff so I hobbled up to the wash block for a quick pee before returning to the tent for a while where we read until it started to get too hot and we were forced out. It was lovely outside as there wasn't a cloud in the sky but it was still windy as ever. We had a good cooked breakfast of tofu scrambles and garam masala tea. Both of us were in no hurry this morning and, despite the long sleep, we were a bit dopey.



After checking Salema and Zavial for surf and finding no prospect, we decided to go and start gathering the goodies we wanted to take home with us. Unfortunately, being a Sunday, Baptista in Luz was shut so we weren't able to gather everything we had wanted and that would have to wait until tomorrow.

After we went to do a geocache at Boco do Rio. This was down a slight incline on the cliff side so I donned my hiking boots and took it easy all the way. Despite this I still managed to jar my back and cause my leg a lot of pain just by turning my foot slightly on a rock. This was hugely frustrating for me and felt like a step backwards so my mood when we continued on to another cache at Ingrina wasn't at its best. However, stubbornness got the benefit of me and we walked, all be it slowly, to find the cache.

On our trip back to the campsite we had to endure the ongoing road works. We had learnt that the change between the lights is so long that even after they had gone red on our side you could still get through. Many of the locals did this on a regular basis and we caught on pretty quick so you could always tell if somebody was a newly arrived tourist as they always just sat there whilst a whole line of traffic overtook them to jump the red light. As Phil did it this time he uttered "they'll learn" under his breath. The emergency services were frequently seen putting their lights and sirens on just to get through the same lights!!

We returned to the reception at the campsite to log the caches we had found, to check emails and to check to see if we had won the lottery so we knew whether we would have to go home and back to work or not. We also had another look for campsites up near Santander to see where we would be aiming for on Tuesday evening. Unfortunately we hadn't won the lottery but we did find a selection of campsites. On returning to our camp, we saw the welcome return of the rabbit as we pulled in.

We cooked an early dinner in the sunshine and had a few beers before it got too dark. Inspired by the beer I came up with an internet postcard sending idea a bit like Moonpig.com where you choose an appropriate postcard on-line for that area, write whatever you want and it automatically mails it for you. There are probably loads of flaws in my idea or it has already been done but at the time and under the influence, it seemed quite reasonable! After clearing up we sat and listened to the radio for a while in the car, hoping that nobody would dob us in for listening to music on the campsite! It was also a bit chilly this evening which was a bit disappointing. After a while we retired to the tent to read. Problem was that Phil had just finished his last book so he went to listen to his MP3 player only to find that his battery was dead and the spare batteries were in the car. He couldn't be bothered to go and get one so he went to sleep instead.

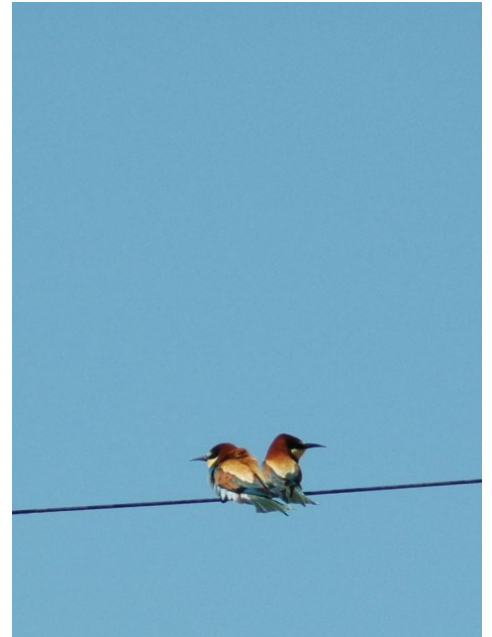


## Monday 11<sup>th</sup> April

Today was a scorching day from the off and our last full day here in Salema and Portugal. We savoured the bird song as we lay in the tent first thing. One bird was calling with the same note three times in a row and was sometimes answered with a shrill call back and I could hear something much like a blackbird but it was strange not hearing seagulls which are our normal wakeup call at home. We stayed in the tent for as long as we could before the heat and the need to go for a wee got the better of us. There was not a cloud in the sky and we sat having a simple breakfast of baked beans on toast in the shade and the slight breeze to keep cool. After finishing breakfast we remained in this position enjoying this outdoor living, reading and relaxing. We would miss it when we returned home to live in a house despite the fact that you had to accept having permanently dirty feet.

Another camper arrived walking with just a backpack. He headed over to the spot we had first camped in and we felt like warning him about the crazy German but it seemed that he might have been sufficient distance away from him to hopefully not hear his rantings.

After all this lazing around we thought we'd better actually do something starting with settling our bill with the campsite so proceeded down to the reception. There we got a lovely surprise as not only did we get a 30% discount due to the amount of time we had stayed but they also gave us a bottle of wine as they said that we were now regular customers (this was our second time here!). We chatted to them for quite a while and then headed out via our usual 'from the car' recycling route to Zavial to check the surf. However it was no good so we decided to chance the long bumpy ride to Barranco one last time on this trip. Unbelievably we got caught behind the cow convey again, this time going in the opposite direction. After being waved past by the farmer, Phil managed to get past most of the herd before a van coming in the other direction stopped in the most inconvenient place and we had to stop whilst the rest of the herd caught up and went past us again, one slightly bumping in to the side of the car. Eventually though we managed to get past and were not as delayed as last time. We only hoped that the surf was good and by the time we would be driving back that they had reached their destination! Unfortunately there was no surf but we thought we would have a paddle and a walk along the beach whilst we were there. I had realised that I hadn't even paddled in the sea since I had been in Portugal this time but then realised why as the water was really cold!! There were kids body boarding in the sea and there was a dog in there with them kind of chasing them around. We assumed that the dog was to do with them but when it then attacked one of their boards and broke it we realised that it wasn't. It was quite insistent and I attempted to get it off of the boy's board but it turned around and growled at me. I'm not normally unnerved by any dog but this one looked serious so I backed off and thankfully it did too. The little boy went running up the beach to his mum and the dog then disappeared. With that we returned up the bumpy Barranco track one last time. As we did so, a random thought arrived. There was loads of bamboo in the fields surrounding the track so we wondered whether bamboo was native to Portugal or not? That thought was momentarily interrupted by seeing some amazingly colourful birds perched on the wires at the side of the road. I managed to snap a few shots from the car as we stopped, before they flew off.

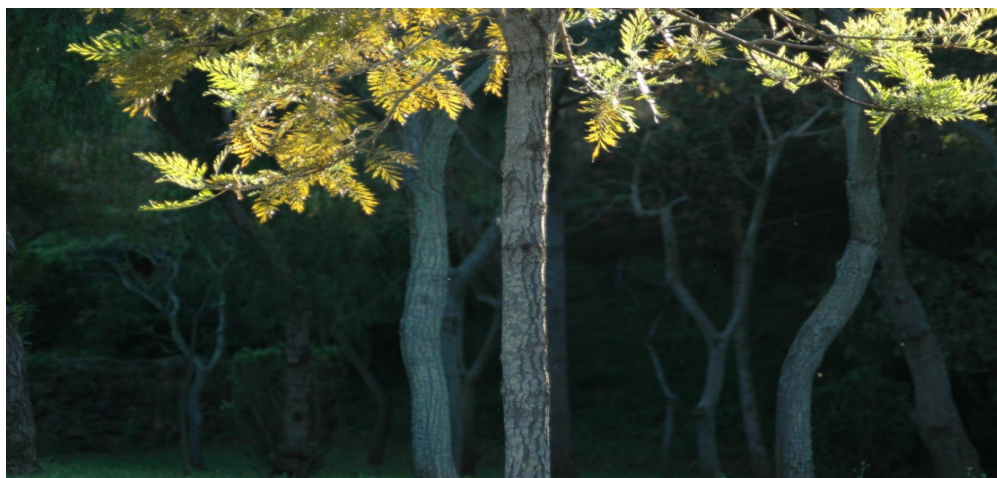


Bamboos from China and Japan were introduced in Europe in the early 1800s. By the turn of the century over 100 different bamboos, mostly temperate varieties were known. The first bamboo gardens of Europe were established and bamboo gained popular recognition as a beautiful exotic garden plant. Temperate bamboos originate in China or Japan, where they have been growing in the wild or cultivated since time immemorial. For Europe the introduction of bamboos meant the introduction of exotic plants. The latitude of Western Europe indeed is much higher than in the bamboo homelands. Also the climatic conditions differ considerably. That is why in the South of Europe (Spain, Italy and Portugal) bamboos can grow to their original height (some up to 20 m), while in Western Europe they do not grow as tall.

After leaving Barranco we continued on to finish our last bit of shopping at Baptista in Luz. We also got some stuff to have lunch and sat on the front eating it and then went to explore the coastline between Luz and Lagos as we hadn't done that yet. We ended up though basically in the golf resort and failed completely in finding a beach before ending up in apartment land in Lagos so not a great result beyond now knowing what is there. So we headed back to the campsite. We took our pitch number marker and barrier key back to the reception and then had a shower. We met the couple with Tilly dog at the wash block so chatted to them for a while whilst petting Tilly.



Back at the tent we weren't quite ready for dinner yet so Phil read and I took photos here and there. I noticed there was a new hole in the earth bank on the end of our pitch and we wondered what kind of creature was now our neighbour. It distinctly looked to me like the trail coming out of it was kind of snake like but I could be wrong. We had pasta dinner with of course wine and were quite late clearing up so we were washing up by moonlight before retreating to the tent to read before bed.



### **Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> April**

We were up at 7am and the mossies greeted us at the net door of the tent. There were loads of them and we knew there was reason why we hadn't been getting up this early. The sun must have chased them away before we normally awoke. It didn't help that it was quite cool and damp outside and we had to pack away a damp tent. The car looked much fuller than when we arrived and whether that was a reflection on our early morning and not so precise packing or on the amount of food, olive oil, olives and wine we were taking back I'm not sure. We did a quick teeth clean and last check around our camp and then we were off. The gates to the campsite were not quite open so we had to wait for a few minutes before they automatically opened at just after 8am.

We stopped briefly for a diesel top up and then set off into our days drive up to the north of Spain. It was actually now turning into a nice warm day as the sun started to climb out of the valley. With nothing more than the open road, each other and the scenery to amuse us, it wasn't long before we started asking random questions again. What did Barranco mean? It was on loads of signs as we drove past but was once more not in my really useless phrasebook. As we drove back into stork territory we started to wonder if we ever got or ever did have storks in the UK and why did they build their nests so high up in trees (although we did see one that had a nest only about 8ft off the ground)?

Barranco translates as 'ravine' and not as 'river' or 'bridge' as we had been assuming to a certain degree.

White storks could be about to breed in Britain for the first time in almost 600 years. The birds have started to make a nest in the Calder Valley, West Yorkshire, and appear to be involved in mating rituals, experts say. The last record of storks breeding in Britain was at St Giles' Cathedral, Edinburgh, in 1416.

An RSPB spokesman said: "Storks usually live in central Europe. It's extremely rare to see them nesting here." The pair, which were first spotted last weekend, began building their nest on a pole carrying power lines next to the Calder and Hebble Navigation canal near Horbury Bridge. "Unfortunately they chose a very risky place to do it," said the RSPB spokesman. "The power lines are off at the moment due to temporary maintenance work, but if they were switched on it would be disastrous." So the RSPB, in conjunction with Yorkshire Electricity and British Waterways, has erected a replica pylon with a nesting platform next to the original telegraph pole. "The storks have started collecting sticks for the new nesting site," the spokesman added. "We're just keeping our fingers crossed that they'll breed successfully."

The new arrivals have caused quite a flap among bird watchers and local residents, with dozens of people flocking to the site to catch a rare glimpse of them.

And in regards to building nests high –

The higher the building, the greater the views the storks have of their surroundings and the more likely they are to spot the next meal for their voracious chicks.

The flowers seem to have come out more since we had driven down so it was a slightly more colourful backdrop that raced past us. We had wanted to know what the common white scented flowers were that grew everywhere in the Algarve but seeing as we hadn't taken any photos of them, it was going to be pretty impossible to 100% identify them.

We kept going past those signs that warn about being too close to the car in front. Not only was this ironic as there was hardly any traffic on the main motorways but they also sounded much nicer in Portuguese –

1 marca perigo – 1 mark dangerous

2 marcas segurança – 2 marks safe

We stopped at a service station on the motorway to use the toilet and to have a bite to eat. You could clearly hear all the birds singing in the surroundings and there were hardly any cars passing on the motorway. This was really quite weird but I found myself thinking how much more I would stop at service stations in the UK if they were like this and not full of overpriced food items and chavs. Service stations in the UK are the last thing you want to relax you on a long journey.

It wasn't long before we were crossing the border into Spain at Vila Formosa. We wondered whether people living on the border and the surroundings spoke Portuguese or Spanish or both. Unusually we were stopped and this is the first time that this had happened but the stern Spanish border guard just took a cursory glance at our passports and briefly in the back of the car through the window before waving us on with all the charm that he could muster, which wasn't much to be honest.

We made good progress through Spain, stopping only briefly once more for the toilet and another snack. As we hit the mountains towards Santander the clouds started closing in and at 3300ft we had a bit of rain but hoped it was just a mountain thing. We arrived at Virgen Del Mar, the area we had pinpointed a campsite in, at just after 7pm. At first we thought the campsite was closed but when we went around the corner of the road, we found that we had been looking at the rear gates and we found the reception on the seaward side. There was however, nobody at reception but eventually we found a bell and rang this in the vain hope somebody would appear. A woman appeared outside with a little girl in tow. She didn't speak a word of English and our Spanish was pretty much non-existent. Even my attempt to ask her whether she spoke French in French, a language I could at least understand the basics enough to hold down a conversation, met with a shaking head. Via various amounts of sign language, pointing, laughing and putting the odd word here and there together, we managed to get a pitch and she told us to just pay in the morning when the reception was open.

We had initially planned to go out into Santander for dinner at a veggie restaurant that we had found on the internet but with the fading sunset, we decided to do a quick cook up. We were joined by a large hairy alsation dog who was intent on turning on the RSPCA look in order to gain some tasty morsels from us. For once I was the firm one telling Phil not to encourage it as he tossed it the odd titbit here and there. We had to keep our wits about us as the dog would have dived in there at the earliest opportunity but it was a nice dog so we let it hang around a bit for entertainments sake. We think it was the campsite dog as it later took off after a guy that worked there when he called to it. After finishing our food we cleared up and were relieved that the long journey was over. From here and once we had boarded the ferry, we were just over an hours drive from home. With that strange thought in our heads, we hit the sack.

### Wednesday 13th April

We had both slept extremely well. Phil snored and had dribbled on his pillow so the drive up must have really taken it out of him. I got up at 8am to go to reception as I was sure the woman last night had told me to go and pay at this time. However, it was closed and a note on the door said it didn't open until 10am so I got back into the tent to attempt a few more minutes of kip. Santander was a lot nearer than we had first thought and from somewhere in that direction there was a jack hammer getting into its stride so I aborted any further attempts at sleep. Phil was unusually oblivious to this and continued to snore away so I got up and decided to chance a shower. An English couple in a motorvan opposite had told Phil the night before that the showers were lukewarm. At first I thought this to be correct but with great disappointment stuck it out only to then discover with great delight that it then came through as really nice and hot. It probably took about 5 minutes but it got there in the end. I reported this back to a sleepy Phil and he decided therefore to chance a shower too whilst I continued to pack up for the ferry trip later. This included making sure that we had a big bag of food for the whole journey in anticipation of the typical French habit of offering bugger all food that was vegan let alone veggie (Brittany Ferries are crewed by a French crew including all the chefs).

When Phil returned we had a random breakfast of garam marsala tea and lemon and parsley cous cous but it filled the hungry gap for a while. I then went and paid at reception whilst Phil packed a bit more. The tent was really quite wet and we had dried it as much as possible in the sun whilst we ate breakfast, but we would make sure that we would unpack it again, thoroughly dry and clean it 'German style' on returning home.

We left the campsite at the required midday deadline and headed west up the coast for a bit of an explore starting near Licenres. We had almost the whole day ahead of us before we caught the ferry later in the evening so thought we would make the most of it. There were quite a few surf spots of interest to Phil but all were too big and cross on-shore for him to consider going in. The huge waves did nothing to calm my nerves about a potentially rough ferry crossing later and neither did Phil who seemed to show a small delight in warning me that it may not be very smooth.





After a couple or so hours of exploring we turned back, filled up with cheap diesel to counter the shock of returning to the land of overpriced fuel and headed back towards Santander. We wanted to explore the seafront area and found a good parking space right on the front via El Sardinera. We walked along the front from here enjoying the park areas along the way and slowly made our way eastwards towards the castle grounds. The castle was on a promontory and seemed a very popular place for both visitors and locals alike. The only thing I didn't like was that there were pens with penguins, seals and ducks (although I'm sure the ducks were probably just making use of an old pen and could actually leave if they wished). The seals pen was really close to the crashing waves of the sea and I thought it sad that they were teased by the freedom of the sea whilst surrounded in their concrete cell.



We headed back to the car via a little supermarket and bought a few items for a late lunch/early dinner at 5pm. I had decided that in anticipation of a rough crossing it would be better to eat whilst still on firm ground so we did so in the car whilst watching the world go by. After a while I insisted that we should think about making a move for the ferry port. Phil thought it was too early and wanted to walk more but I was worried that we didn't know exactly how far and how long it would take and whether we would get caught up in any traffic jams or even get lost. So we arrived, in my haste, at the ferry port 45 minutes before we really needed to and then they seemed to take forever to load us but eventually we were on board and able to relax.

Our cabin was once more about as far up the front as you can get and with the weather still quite stormy, I was already forming in my head the idea that I would be hunched over the big white telephone for most of the journey. However, I was equally eager to chase away the travel sickness demons so after a brief settle in to the cabin and with departure from Santander pending, we grabbed the bottle of wine we had brought on board and headed out on to the top deck. It was surprising how dark it had become since boarding but it was still pleasant as we drifted off in the relative calm of the estuary watching the lights of Santander sparkle away. Our calm moment was interrupted by a sudden blast on the ship's horn which was directly behind us. It was so loud and sudden that we both jumped out of our skins and did a bit of unflattering swearing. Didn't spill a drop of wine thankfully though!

As soon as we left the shelter of the estuary the wind picked up and there was a bit of up and downy business so we retreated to the bar area to finish our wine and people watch from afar. This lasted as long as we could put up with the really bad magician shouting away in the background, which wasn't long, and then we headed back to the cabin to download the rest of the photos from the day, review and edit photos in general and listen to one of the ferry's radio stations. I didn't last long as I fell asleep shortly after beginning all of the above and the next time I woke up, all the lights were out and Phil was asleep on the top bunk.

The night continued to be quite rough and being near the front of the ferry you could fully appreciate every peak and trough. It certainly made going to the toilet in the middle of the night an interesting event, especially as my leg seemed to have fully stiffened up but at least I was on the bottom bunk this time and didn't have to negotiate the ladder from the top one.

#### **Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> April**

We both couldn't believe the time when we woke up. We thought we hadn't slept very well but obviously we must have done as it was getting on for 9am. Phil had had some bizarre dreams indicating a good night's sleep. We still lazed around for a while and it was easier lying down anyway than walking around as it was still quite rough. Eventually though we both showered, enjoying the luxury of a hot and private shower location within a couple of steps as opposed to a walk up a steep hill as was at the campsite from our pitch.

At about 11.30am we ventured out to see what the day was like. By then it had thankfully calmed down a bit but walking was still quite interesting. We went on to the top deck, away from the smokers as the smell could easily send me off feeling sea sick. The top deck is fully no smoking so is ideal for escaping the smoke as well as having the best views. It wasn't bright sunshine but it still wasn't a bad day and it wasn't as cold as we had expected. We stayed up there a few minutes and the strong wind blew dried my washed hair a bit. On returning inside we investigated the shop but this didn't take long as there was nothing there amongst the fags, booze and perfume buying throngs to take our fancy. It was not making me feel that great either so we continued to walk for a while.

After feeling better, we went to look to see if there were by chance any food options for us. The only thing was a tomato pasta dish and it actually looked quite nice. I asked, practising my French in the meantime, whether it had any meat, fish, dairy or eggs etc in it. There seemed to be uncertainty, not about my French I might add, but about whether there was anything in it that wasn't suitable so we decided not to risk it and returned to our back up snack bag in the cabin. A hot meal would have to wait until later when we had reached home. We then 'hid' away from the noisy bingo playing masses and remained in our cabin listening to music, editing photos and doing a journal catch up until the announcement was made that we were approaching misty old Plymouth. In just over an hour's time, we would be back in our Crantock, reminiscing about the windy warmth of Portugal.

## **Journey Times**

Santander – Salamanca = 3 hours

Salamanca – Portuguese border = 1 ½ hours

Portuguese border – Santarem = 2 ¾ hours

Santarem – Salema = 3 ¼ hours

Total journey time (after taking only two quick stops) = 10 ½ hours

## **Route from Santander to Salema**

At Santander take the A67 and then onto S20

At Torrelavega join the A67 again to Palencia

At Palencia take the E80 (A62)

Go through Valladolid and Salamanca to the border at Vilar Formosa

At the border take the A25 towards Guarda

At Guarda take the A23 to Torres Nova

TOLL ROAD – At Torres Nova get on the A1 towards Lisboa (Lisbon)

PAY TOLL (2.20 Euros) - and then get onto the A13 (IC10) towards Santarem and Almerim

TOLL ROAD – The A13 goes into the A2 all the way to the Algarve

PAY TOLL (22 Euros) – Take the A22 to Lagos

Turn off for Lagos and follow the N125 to Salema

## **Route from Salema to Santander**

From Salema take the N125 to Lagos

At Lagos take the A22 towards Faro

TOLL ROAD – Get on the A2 towards Lisboa (Lisbon) which turns into the A13

PAY TOLL (22.55 Euros) – At Junction 6 at Almerin take the A1 towards Santarem/Porto (IC10)

TOLL ROAD – Take the A1 towards Porto

PAY TOLL (2.20 Euros) – At Junction 7 take the A23 towards Guarda

At Guarda take the A25 towards the border

At the border take the E80 all the way through Valladolid and Salamanca and to Palencia

At Palencia pick up the A67 to Torrelavega

At Torrelavega get on the S20 (A67) to Santander

## Stuff worth taking home from Portugal

### *Olive Oil*

Olive oil is on the whole much cheaper in Portugal. Some of the cheaper olive oil (Selectao was such an example) is still extremely nice and worth stocking up on. More expensive olive oils are extremely good quality and cheaper than most olive oils in the UK. The upshot is that if you really appreciate a good olive oil it is worth stocking up.

### *Olives*

Again, really good quality. We found that even the cheaper ones like the brand Cimarrom were really good. Well worth bringing a few jars home if you like your olives.

### *Wine*

We researched Portuguese vegan wines before we went there. There were three types that we knew were vegan and all were found in various supermarkets. They weren't necessarily less expensive than decent wines in the UK but they were certainly very nice. The wines we brought home were –

Quinta do Coa Vinho Tinto (Organic)

Casa de Mouraz Tinto, Dao (Organic and Biodynamic)

Douro Superior – Carm Organic 06/07 (Organic)

### *Beer*

Sagres is the local brew and, as per research before we left, it is vegan. It is really quite palatable and seeing as it is very cheap too, well worth bringing a few bottles home. We preferred the darker brews but the lighter ones are really nice too fully chilled.

### *Japanese Delight Premium Kombu Seaweed Teriyaki*

This was a little delight we found in the Lagos supermarket. You just add vegetables and noodles to this kombu and spices extravaganza and you get a really wholesome dinner on your plate. Not the cheapest thing in the world but nutritional tastiness isn't always cheap.

### *Garam Masala Tea*

Interesting tea we had never seen anywhere else.

### *Chocolate covered almonds*

Not extremely cheap but cheap enough for a tasty treat.

### *Roasted hazelnuts*

Again not really cheap but cheaper than the UK and tasty too.

### *Free lemons and oranges*

On the campsite there were orange and lemon trees. Well worth having a look and taking a few home. Locally sold lemons and oranges were really cheap too and they tasted a whole lot nicer than supermarket bought ones from the UK.

### *Granovita Vegetarian Pate*

Never see it in a small tin in the UK and it was really handy for travelling for lunches etc.

## Portugal Breakdown of Costs

Approximate total cost for holiday

**£1,547.00**

Cost each

**£773.50**

<b>Travel</b>	<b>£875.00</b>
Ferry	£500.00
Europe breakdown cover	£50.00
Fuel	£283.00
Tolls	£42.00
<b>Accommodation</b>	<b>£ 232.00</b>
Camping	£232.00
<b>Food and Drink</b>	<b>£427.00</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>£ 13.00</b>
Internet	£7.00
Postcards	£6.00