

This years Motocamp in Poppi in the province of Arezzo, south Tuscany, Italy, about 25 miles east of Florence was in a country that I had not visited before so when entry forms arrived just after Christmas I entered and began to plan.

My club, Fosse Riders, usually goes to the Tententreffen in Loppem near Brugge at the end of May early June and as I am retired the Motocamp coming just over two weeks after the Brugge camping rally it seemed that coming home for a fortnight was a ferry and fuel expense that could be avoided by staying on the continent. What to do in that time?, the charity that I volunteer for had been supporting a town in southern Albania for some years and I had only been a couple of times on flying visits so the chance to spend more time touring seemed a possibility. Ferries from Bari in Italy to Durres in Albania £105.00 return overnight with seven days would give time to explore and get back to Italy with time to spare before the Motocamp.

Thursday June 1 st Dover-Calais ferry at 9 am and on the campsite in Loppem for three nights. The Zedelgem Touring Club organises rideouts around battlefield sites and memorials and Brugge is a three euro bus ride from the campsite so I visited Brugge twice, doing the tourist things like the Chocolate museum, Lamp museum and the Frites (potato chips) museum so if you want to know how these things evolved these are the places to go!

On Sunday the rally closed and the rest of the Fosse Riders went home, I rode south to Dijon to Camping Du Lac Kir for the night at 8-30 Euros then on to Nice at camping Los Pinedes which turned out to be a bad plan. The very good campsite was on the west of Nice and I arrived on the coast at evening rush hour on the east side of the city and left the campsite in the morning to ride through the morning rush hour to get to the coast road to Italy and perhaps see Monaco.

By 10.30 I had covered about 50 miles in heavy traffic so onto the motorway and hang the cost, reaching Siena at Camping Colleverde for one night at 22-50 Euros on a sloping site with hard ground. Up and away early on Tuesday via L'Aquila to the Adriatic coast and down to Bari for the overnight ferry to Durres in Albania and as I had used the autoroutes I was a day early, no problem said the agent you can go early and return a day early. I was on board by 8.30 and asleep in a reclining seat by cast off time at 11.30.

The roads in Albania have improved in the two years since I was last there except the road through Durres which was being resurfaced about 50 mm thick but the manholes had not been raised, the first one made me concentrate on avoiding the rest. My destination was Gramsh 60 miles south east and as the road had been improved by Statkraft a Norwegian company who have built a dam across the river Devoll north of Gramsh and are building another further upstream I arrived in about one and a half hours not the three I had expected.

Four nights in the Hotel Tomorri on the town square at 3,000 Lec a night (about £20) cheaper than Italian campsites, double bed, shower and continental breakfast plus time for some clothes washing. I visited some of the people and projects the charity had helped and explored the surrounding countryside. The man who had been our man on the ground to ensure materials and equipment went where it was intended had got married and moved to the capital Tirana where he is teaching English at the university so two nights in a small hotel enabled me to meet him and his wife and baby boy in their 6th floor flat and tour the city.

With the ferry back to Italy not leaving until evening so I went north to Kruja the birthplace of Skanderbeg the national hero of the country up in the hills 20 miles from Tirana, on the way I passed a campsite at Nord Park behind a hotel with a swimming pool.

Returning to Durres ferry port I was surprised to find that there was no boat of the company I had booked with so I had to pay another company for an overnight ferry along with several others.

Back in Italy I rode to Rome for a bit of site seeing after camping at Village Flaminio for 21 euros. In the morning I made an early start to see if the fabled Rome traffic was as hairy as rumored, so I put the Colosseum into the sat nav and joined the commuters for the Grand Prix that is the morning commute! well what has been called the oldest roundabout in the world was reached without any problem and several other landmarks were visited with only one near miss when a scooterist went from my left across my bows and zipped off down a slip road on the right with about two feet to spare.

Pisa up the coast was next and at Torre Pendente camping village only 800 meters from the leaning

tower I pitched the tent and had a swim in the camp's pool then walked to the tower complex for the touristic photo shoot and tourist watching. Returning to the campsite I found Moz and Brad, two Mayflower club members that had been in Morocco the year before, had camped across from me,

what are the chances of that? It was St. Ranieries' day over the weekend with fireworks on the Friday

night and a boat race on the river on Saturday evening with a lot of festivities and parades.

Sunday morning off to Poppi via Florence to fuel up arriving at the Motocamp about 2.00 pm to get a good tent pitch under some trees at the edge of the field as the weather was getting hot, 30 to 35 degrees, The optional extras to the program on Monday was a bus trip to Arezzo with a guide to show us around and on Tuesday another optional bus trip to Siena which some of us Fosse Riders took and wandered free around the city taking in the sights.

The Official registration was on Wednesday when all participants are recorded for award purposes and the total number of entrants was 340 according to the program from 20 countries.

Thursday a guided rideout to a Franciscan sanctuary at La Verna where St Francis of Assisi received the Stigmata in 1224.

Friday a ride to the Castle of Count Guidi overlooking Poppi for lunch alfresco in the cobbled main street, at the beginning of the run the Triumph went onto two cylinders and on returning to the campsite a fouled spark plug was found to be the problem, once a flake of carbon was cleaned off back on three cylinders. There was live music after the evening meal on the three main nights and a local bar did a good trade with those who didn't want music!

The rest of the Fosse Riders went straight home on Saturday but I went north through the Brenner pass through Austria at Innsbruck to a campsite near Garmisch-Partenkirchen where I woke up to a thunderstorm and diarrhoea both of which had abated by midday so I packed a wet tent and rode to Friedrichshaven, camping by lake Constance at CAP-Rotach for 12.50 Euros where the Zeppelin NT (new technology) flew overhead while I was pitching camp. On Sunday morning a visit to the Zeppelin

Museum then off to France on the way home stopping at Colmar campsite then a municipal campsite near Lille at Violaines before a wet ride to Calais and ferry to Dover arriving home at 5.15 after a bit of shopping. 4,419 miles in 28 days through 6 different countries.