

4th Vincenzo Adventure Tour - 2004



In 2001 Simon Davies and myself decided to join the first Vincenzo Adventure Tour to Espinho Portugal, this event came about after Frank Dehler of the German Lancia Club. 'Lancia Club Vincenzo' had helped 'Clube Automóvel De Espinho' set up a Lancia Section of their club, which encompasses everything from Go-Karting to Off Roothing with Classics and lots of other motorised passions, in between.

Having been to a number of other events on the Continent organised by Frank we knew it would be a good event. Not having my 1966 Fulvia 2c Berlina up to a standard of reliability I would like, along with the time we had available we decided to fly down. Not to put too fine a point on it was a great event and we decided then and there to attend the following years event. However, due to an accident I did very little driving for the next two years although I understand others picked up the UK Banner.

This brings us to early 2004 when I received notification from Frank that he would be organising the 4th Adventure Tour at the end of September/beginning of October. I straight away contacted Simon and as I was now as confident as anyone can be planning a long journey in a 38-year-old car, we put our names down for the event.

Prior to the trip I serviced the 2c but was unhappy with the tendency for the coolant temperature to climb the gauge on very long inclines and heavy traffic, so I decided to remove the radiator shutters, no doubt Spain and Portugal would be a lot hotter than at home along with the mountainous/hilly terrain expected on the tour.

Not being sure of what 'Fay' would do on a tankful of fuel I hunted around for what used to be known as a 'Paddy Hopkirk explosive safe fuel can'. This for those too young to remember, has the inside of the can stuffed with a metal mesh which I believe won't support combustion, and I seem to remember an advert where someone dropped a match in it and it didn't explode, very impressive but I don't think I would like to try it first hand. To my surprise after hunting around on the Internet I found it is still available although no longer under the Paddy Hopkirk name, a query elicited three "mails from local companies who stock it! Why don't they advertise? As it's the only way I would carry petrol other than in the car's tank, I duly purchased the 10ltr can along with the peace of mind of knowing that at least I shouldn't run out.

Frank had worked out a route that would have meant getting across to Holland, meeting up with the Dutch then driving down to meet up with Frank and others at Müllheim where Frank lives, then to Lyon and across to Toulouse, Biarritz then into Spain to Santander where he was arranging to meet others coming from the UK by ferry at the very pretty setting of the lighthouse at

Vincenzo Adventure Tour, Espinho, Portugal

Diary of a two week trip by Brian Hilton



Cabo Mayor Santander. From here travel onto Sigueiro near Santiago de Compostela where others of the party would already be waiting. The following day we would all run together to Espinho and the Hotel Solverde which is about 10 miles below Oporto to meet up with others who had flown down, two from Ireland, two from Germany and one Brit.

It was a big trip, and after looking at this route, the distance involved and the daily mileage, I decided that this would be too far and too fast for the 2c, so I devised a fairly direct, non-motorway route through France. This didn't work out as completely as I originally intended!

The Journey

Day 1 - September 25: We left my home early and headed for Dover, and the first moment of concern when we stopped at a service area for a spot of quick relief to find that 'Fay' didn't want to tick over, but we carried on to Dover to catch the Catamaran to Boulogne recently reopened for cars after P&O ferries stopped using it a number of years ago. A quick 50-minute journey later we were at Boulogne. While the way out of the port is not very clearly marked we were quickly on the A16 motorway towards Rouen, which we soon exited near Etaples, (well known to British Tommies in the 1914-18 Great War as 'Eat Apples' where a huge training camp was established) looking for fuel! We had tried to obtain fuel from 24 Hour, credit-card-only selfserve pumps by the Peage, but still on the motorway, but were unable to get the pumps to accept any of Simon's or

my own cards? Does anyone know why these won't accept our cards? This wasn't the only time we encountered the problem. Eventually after a tour around Etaples we found a petrol station and filled up 'Fay' and the emergency can: from this point on I felt considerably relieved, now secure in knowing we had a reserve of about 50 miles to play with.

A blast down the A16 to the Baie de Somme service area for food where we came across a number of UK Jags and other makes parked. On returning to the car we spotted an AA Van, after enquiring of the driver and his mate, bit far from home aren't you? They informed us that they were support crew for a classic car rally heading for the Loire area.

We wished them luck and set off once again in the general direction of Portugal, not sure whether we were brave or daft for committing ourselves, to a what turned out to be a 3,342 mile round trip in a 1966 Fulvia 2c with 1091cc dragging around a large saloon body, on what I believe must have been the furthest journey she had ever been. It certainly was in my ownership since I had got her back on the road in November 1999, after she had been gently declining for the previous 24 years, and prior to that a working life of only nine years and 26,000 miles recorded, as the last tax disc ran out in January 1975.

Leaving the motorway, by now the A28, we headed towards Neufchâtel-on-Bray then Gournay-on-Bray where we took off across country to Les Andelys - Evreux - Dreux. To Chartres for a very welcome night at an Etap Hotel we had booked online. 381 Miles.

Day2: 8.30am and we were on our way South again, crossing the Loire at Blois after a couple of laps of the ring road trying to find our way across the river, Montrichard and the Le Cher - Loches and the l'Indre, both rivers famous for their Chateaux. Stopping only long enough to grab a Baguette, butter, Auvergne Blue cheese and a tube of Pringles crisps along with a gallon bottle of mineral water (90 cents) before the supermarket shut for dinner.

On the way to Châtellerault we stopped long enough to eat some of the recently purchased food, after which it was foot down again as we were heading for Dax just above Bayonne and the Spanish Border. Passed 'Futuroscope' on our way to Poitiers. Around the Poitiers bypass on the N10 we spotted a Ryanair Boeing 737 taking on a load passengers, a day trip to Futuroscope. Pushing along at anything between 60mph and 80mph depending on the conditions, with 'Fay' singing like a bird, we carried on down the A10 towards Angoulême at which point, due to the time and the distance we still had to cover to Dax, I made an executive decision to head for Bordeaux rather than the original cross country route I had planned which would have taken us around Bordeaux on D-roads.

As it turned out the motorway traffic was much lighter and it was a lot easier to get around Bordeaux than the last time I came this way, about eight years previous.

Even so the journey to Dax wasn't a very nice one as it was pouring with rain, getting dark and miles and miles of pine trees with a flat and uninteresting landscape.

Arrived at the Etap Hotel about 7.30pm after a long and tiring day, after booking in we had a very nice meal at an adjacent restaurant and retired to bed worn out! 423 miles.

Day 3: Away again by 8.30am to Bayonne and St. Jean-de-Luz and the French/Spanish border at Irún. We had been told by Frank that it would be wise to stay on the A8 motorway through to Santander and beyond, as Northern Spain has a lot of hills and mountains so using non-motorway routes would take forever. We therefore stayed on the A8 to Santander only stopping for fuel and relief, wishing the horrendous lorry traffic would disappear. At one stop we were eyed up by a lovely coloured feral cat who was obviously after any food we had to spare, we duly offered Auvergne

blue and Pringles as this was all we had left over from the previous day, this was duly scoffed with great relish.

By now the weather had turned hot and sunny as we headed off for our meeting point, the lighthouse Cabo Mayor Santander. This being Monday we had already agreed with Frank that we would meet him and his party on Wednesday at the Motel Punta Cana Sigueiro, where we had booked to stay two nights. We decided to go and have a look at the lighthouse as it was supposed to be worth seeing.

As we drove into the car park, right in front of us was a very nice Flavia Zagato, on checking our list of entrants we found that it was crewed by Dr. Paul Bishop and Valerie Brookfield, no one was in the car so we wandered up to the restaurant/bar and enquired of a likely looking candidate was he Paul Bishop? Before he could answer, a voice came from next table, saying no, I am, on the voice turning around I immediately recognised Paul, although I knew him by sight but not by name, introductions all round and we sat down to have a drink with them. It transpired that Val and Paul intended staying around Santander and meet up with Frank on Wednesday, so with a 'see you later' and a quick look around (it is a beautiful spot) a couple of photos we were off again heading for the Parador Hotel at Ribadeo, we certainly didn't intend roughing on this trip! By Aviles and the end of the motorway we had finally lost most of the lorry traffic, but not all, we were now on the 632 which is mostly one lane each way, so patience behind the remaining lorries was called for.

On arrival we got our key and headed for our room only to get in the lift and find our room was four floors down! Quite intrigued, and wondering if it was going to be like the 'Black Hole of Calcutta', we found that we had a spectacular view across the small harbour and bay. For want of a better description, the Hotel hangs down a cliff face with most of the rooms looking out over the bay. Wish I could afford to stay in hotels like this all the time! Definitely recommended. 418 Miles

Day 4: Having now broken the back of the journey, today was going to be for sightseeing as we only had about 100 miles to go to Sigueiro. All the way along, the north coast had been very pretty, but the only word to describe today's tour of the north west coast and it's large and tiny bays is spectacularly beautiful, with golden sand and blue seas to overload levels. Near Viveiro, after a very winding, narrow hilly drive with many long, steep drops to the sea, we stopped at the tiny village and bay of Porto de Bares, with one caravan on the beach and a view shared by only half a dozen or other visitors, we sat and drank coffee in a bar looking over this glorious vista. Passing through Ortigueira a further 30 miles took us to the lighthouse at Cabo Ortegal, also recommended by Frank as worth seeing, once again he wasn't wrong. This is about 10 miles off the main 642 which follows most of the coast and drops down to Ferrol. The drive once again could be classed as interesting, with a winding hilly road with steep drops, but the views are worth it. By now the time was getting on so we headed straight for Santiago de Compostela and the Punta Cana Motel which involved us in about a five mile climb uphill, a very hot 'FAY', and an enforced stop with the bonnet open, as the temperature gauge needle was trying to climb out of the instrument's casing.

Arrived at Punta Cana (another story) with an individual underground garage for all with direct access to our room. Here we met up with Jennifer and Ken Manley in their Montecarlo and Anne and Chris Moorey in their Thema Turbo who had journeyed down after crossing to Bilbao on the ferry from Portsmouth. 171 Miles.

Day 5: Although not particularly religious, I'm very interested in the Pilgrims and the routes to the Cathedral of St. James at Santiago de Compostela, many of the pilgrims have walked or cycled 500 plus miles and to see them arrive is a moving experience in this day and age. For some time I have held a dream to walk the Pilgrims route, although whether or not I manage it



in the future is another question, nonetheless I was here, albeit by car. We had expected it to be hard to park with it being a tourist destination; we expected it to be even harder after being held up for a huge convoy of police vehicles while travelling to the city. However, following the signs for tourist parking we were soon parked up in a multi storey, just minutes from the centre of the city.

Police were everywhere and in the big square outside the Cathedral there was a large grandstand, microphones, cameras etc. As it was quite misty we took ourselves off into the Cathedral which was heaving with police with 'gongs' galore.

We then discovered that St. James is the Patron Saint of the Spanish police and a service was being held, but we never really ascertained the reason for the later display and parade given by the Spanish police.

As it was very misty we went and had a coffee served up with very large croissants, we then went to see the museum dedicated to the pilgrims, in the meantime, totally missing the whole parade including displays by the mounted police, the police forces marine section and the police dogs that were driven in the display parade sitting on a platform mounted on the bonnets of three police vans! The only thing we did see (through the low cloud) was the flypast by the helicopters.

By now the mist had lifted and we managed to find a good spot in the park from where we could obtain good photos of the Cathedral.

With hot, tired feet we headed off back to the car and decided to drive to Noya about 25 miles away on the coast, shouldn't have bothered as it was totally unprepossessing, although the drive itself was through some long steep hills, on the way back, 'Fay' was getting a bit warm when we spotted a garage with a DIY car wash, so after again receiving the long forgotten at home service, of a petrol station attendant who actually put the petrol in for you, I washed and leathered her off, something which she had great need of, after all our travels. At Santiago we took the motorway

north for Sigueiro, only to find that there wasn't an exit travelling north, only southbound, so we had a 15-mile diversion we weren't expecting.

Late that night, Frank and the others of the party from Santander arrived, Paul and Val in the Flavia Zagato, Peter Tyndale and his son Mark in the Thema V6, 8.32 look alike, (forgive him that one as he has the genuine article), Frank in Wolfram's Thema, Hans and Mrs. Robionek in their Lybra SW, all who were pretty tired after a very long drive, as well as being hungry, so at 10.30pm most of us went into Sigueiro, the new arrivals just drinking. Meanwhile Punta Cana came up in the conversation with the man behind the bar whose eyebrows proceeded to reach for the ceiling when we answered his question as to where were staying! 95 miles.

Day 6: All of us drove into Sigueiro for breakfast where it was decided we would all head off in the direction of Portugal and the Hotel Solverde but do our own thing, setting off I found that I was the last (and theoretically, slowest) car away, on pulling away I heard a funny clanking noise, thinking I had run over a drinks can I carried on only to stop about a mile down the road when it occurred to me that I had topped the radiator up that morning, horrors, had I put the cap back on? Forgetting to do so is not an unknown situation with my memory and advancing years; true enough after turning the engine off and opening the bonnet, I hadn't put it back on, hell! Looking down I spotted it lying on top of the starter motor, picking it up elicited a flash of sparks combined with the engine turning over and frightening the life out of me, really must get a couple of new boots to cover the starter terminals!

By this time everyone else had disappeared over the horizon, my intrepid navigator/map reader Simon then came into his own as the routes around Santiago are to say the least, less than straightforward, heading off down a motorway as instructed I was surprised to find on the lane coming from our right a





Thema Turbo, 'hello Chris', which pulled out in front of us with the rest of the Lancias slotting in behind us, this got even more confusing at the next junction as Chris and all the others sailed straight on while we turned off! Soon we were on our way heading for the Portuguese Border followed by Hans and the Lybra SW which we had caught up with and passed, everything went well until Tui near the Spanish/Portuguese Border when the Lybra SW peeled off to the right and we parted company, not having caught sight of anyone else we decided to stop off the motorway once over the Border, which we did. About 10 minutes later Paul and Val turned up in the Flavia along with Peter and Mark in their Thema, Paul was having a bit of a problem and needed to flush some muck out of the radiator by pulling the hose off and flushing through before refilling, something he had to do a number of times previously after flushing the system before leaving home.

Just like policemen, you can never find one when you want one, so it was with a garage, but after a few miles we found one, we took the opportunity to fill up with fuel at 98 cents a litre (68p) while Paul gave his radiator a seeing to.

We then set off together and eventually found a pleasant bar for

topping up food and drink. Back on the Motorway heading for Porto, Simon and myself got our signals crossed resulting in the four cars having a look at downtown Porto (not advised) before we found our way back onto the motorway looking like we knew what we were doing all along, we were heading for Espinho and the Hotel Solverde with us in the lead, as we had the dubious pleasure of half remembering how to get there from our last visit in 2001. This went completely to pot when we found that the roads we remembered were being, or had been ripped up and replaced by a completely new motorway. As once again it was getting dark we hunted for clues as to where we were, right on top of a junction I suddenly spotted a garden centre I had been looking for, we dived off past this landmark and from there I knew the way to the Solverde, Phew!

We booked in and met up with an old friend, Adriano Almeida, from our first trip, who works for the Solverde Chain and had made all the arrangements, can't be bad, 5-star Hotel at 3-star prices, well done.

In the meantime, Richard Dixon and his companion Nicola Bates had arrived after flying in from Ireland, Markus and Margot Wenig from Germany and Geoff Holmes from the UK had also arrived by air.

Chris Petter and Willemijn in the Beta Spider and Jasper Reinders and his lovely lady in a Thema TD had arrived from Holland via a holiday in Spain.

Later on we were all taken to a seaside fish restaurant, 'Barco Boador' by Clube Automóvel de Espinho, I was really looking forward to this as last time we had a great meal of freshly caught fish that was superb, suffice it to say, as I do not like shellfish or things like octopus in any shape or form, didn't eat a lot that night! But everyone else really enjoyed the meal.

Back to the club's headquarters for a few drinks (Port, what else) and a chat then back to the hotel.

From our side we were only short of Brin Edwards with Peter and Mary Marsh who were coming in Brin's B21. Brin had been to the Brittany Rally the previous weekend with the French Lancia Club in his Fulvia 1.3 Rallye S, dived back home swapped the Fulvia for the B21 and was expected late as he was coming over on the Thursday to Santander and meet up with us that night at the Solverde. How the best laid plans of mice and men, etc., on the way with the B21 to catch the ferry at Plymouth, the new electric fuel pump fitted for the journey packed up! and Brin had to get someone to rush the Fulvia to him still hot from its Brittany trip, whereupon a rapid change of cars occurred and way to catch the ferry to Santander.

The ferry arrived late, for which very dubious explanations had been put forward by P&O leaving Brin, Peter and Mary with one heck of a blast at illegal ground covering pace to reach the hotel at the planned time.

We got back to the hotel late, to see Brin's Fulvia which came as quite a surprise as we were expecting the B21, this along with what appeared to be a blood bath all over the bonnet had us worried and even more puzzled when we found no damage to the Fulvia? This would have to wait until next day for an explanation. Total Mileage to Espinho: 1660 miles.

how the grapes are grown in the Douro valley, which was followed by some serious Port wine tasting, back on the coach for a scenic drive following the river Douro back to its mouth and then along the coast to the Hotel Solverde.

Day 8: Up early, breakfast, wash and fuel 'Fay' then to GTA, the local Lancia garage and one of the event's main sponsors. Arrived to find more Portuguese old friends that we had met on our first trip. Lots of lovely Lancias lined up including Paul and Valerie's Flavia Sport, my Fulvia 2c, Ken and Jennifer Manley's Montecarlo, Chris and Anne Moorey's Thema Turbo, Peter and Marc Tyndale in the Thema V6 8.32 look alike, as Peter's real 8.32 is currently in bits. Jasper, Chris, and their ladies, respectively in a Thema TD and Beta Zagato, Frank and Wolfram's Thema, Hans and Mrs Robione in their Lybra SW, Richard Dixon and Nicola in a Thesis they had hired (one way to get to drive one!), Markus and Margot in a new Ypsilon kindly loaned by GTA, the local contingent consisting of one each, Aurelia, Appia, Flaminia, plus a gaggle of Fulvia coupes, Deltas old and new, Themas, Lybras, a Thesis, giving a pretty fair spread of Postwar vehicles, but unfortunately, none of the pre-war models.

Adriano led off in his usual style, catch me if you can! With 1091cc I was struggling in the acceleration stakes, but once I had wound her up we were OK.

Heading up the motorway proved to be one heck of a charge, with the Portuguese leaving us for dead at the toll booths as they mostly have prepaid gadgets in the cars that allow them to drive straight through in a reserved lane while payment is taken straight from their bank account, meantime we're stuck waiting to pay, which meant another charge to catch up again, I did see 90mph once on the speedo without too much trouble! Admittedly with a bit of a down hill gradient. Chris who was chasing me in the Beta Zagato obviously thought I was going fast enough and was content to stay behind.

A bit of confusion occurred as we pulled off the motorway and we watched Brin and his crew blithely sail through the reserved lane of the toll booth without even attempting to pay.

After we had sorted ourselves out we proceeded to Penafiel, and Quinta Da Aveleda for one of the world's oldest Port manufacturers, we were shown the vineyard, along with the family home dating back to the 1600's with lovely gardens and fountain before tasting more wine, but not too much as we were driving.

We headed off for lunch at Monte D'Assumpção where there is a monastery and a wonderful viewpoint over the valley below. A superb meal of typically local food was served, and Richard Tice and his



No driving today!

Day 7: Coach trip to Guimarães birthplace of the Portuguese Nation, very old city and castle, wreathed in mist most of the day but a lovely place, strolled around taking in the sights, flopped out with everyone else at tables outside a bar in a square, I did notice one or two drooping heads! Then onto a local restaurant where once again a very nice meal had been arranged.

Back onto the coach heading for Porto and the Port wine cellars, at the Ramos Pinto wine cellars we were shown around what used to be the old offices with mementoes from the company's earlier days, then onto the wine cellars and a film of



Portuguese wife explained what we were eating, as I'm pretty squeamish about what I eat I am not sure I really wanted to know, as chicken gizzards don't really appeal even if they are very tender!

After lunch and a look around the cars and the views we were off to see the Monastery De St Bento, having had far too much of a relaxing lunch, we managed to get our rights and lefts mixed up and proceeded about six miles in the wrong direction with two other cars in tow. (Don't follow me I'm lost!) eventually realising our mistake we went back to our start point. On reaching the monastery and finding all the other cars, I told some of the others we wouldn't do the afternoon run which was back up the way we came. I simply felt that travelling in convoy up hill it wouldn't be long before 'Fay' would be doing an impression of a kettle. We decided we would head back to Espinho as we were going out to dinner for 8.30pm and it was now getting on for 4.00pm.

Heading back for the motorway I had a brainstorm and turned up towards the long hill, persuading myself if I had a run at it on my own without being in the convoy I should be able to keep enough revs up to keep the temperature to a reasonable level. This indeed proved the case, although surviving the Portuguese wedding party's cars zooming down the hill in the middle of the road was a near run thing.

Following the route book we headed off towards the Douro Valley but eventually we lost the route, and as the sun was beginning to set, headed back to the hotel, arriving at about 7.00pm to find out that the afternoon's run had been abandoned by everyone else at the monastery!

With best bib and tucker and with Peter and Marc as passengers (Peter having had to abandon his Thema V6 with expensive noises emanating from within) we set off for the Espinho Tennis Club for dinner and presentations.

It must have been down to the weight of those two in the back as

when we arrived at the tennis club, I was informed that the near side rear tyre looked a bit sick, exceedingly flat at the bottom, with a pit crew of Simon and Richard working in harmony and me handing out the tools the wheel and tyre were soon changed.

A very pleasant evening was had by all with speeches from various people including a representative from Lancia Portugal who thanked us for coming! Makes a change to the attitude in the UK by Fiat Group. Some of us then headed for a bar on the beach (amazingly cold) where we sat freezing, chatting and drinking various beverages until about 2.00am. On returning to the hotel, Chris fancied his chances on the Grand Piano but management had other ideas.

Day 9 - We were supposed to go karting but due to a mix up it didn't happen, was I pleased! So I took myself downstairs and had a massage to iron out the kinks that had by now set in with a vengeance.

2.00pm and we all met up for our final lunch together to round off the weekend. The standard of the Solverde Buffets has to be seen or eaten, a great meal was had with Goodbyes to all our Portuguese friends for another year. This wasn't the end for us though as a visit to a classic car exhibition, very conveniently on in Oporto, had been arranged. This turned out to be an excellent decision with lots of Lancia and many other classic cars on show or for sale including an Appia Vignale, Flaminia Touring Convertible, a B21 and an Aprilia.

The Autojumble was well worth a look and to my amazement and delight, I found a new, old stock 2c script for the back of the Fulvia, the only script on the rear I hadn't been able to replace.

Back at the hotel we had a very late, very nice dinner, and afterwards in the lounge were in stitches at Geoff Holmes' anecdotes, wandering back to our rooms about 3.00am with aching sides. 179 miles total during our stay in Espinho.

Day 10 - Early breakfast, farewell to whoever else was still around and off to GTA who had kindly offered to have a look at the flat tyre for me. GTA found that the inner tube had been pinched during our excursion into a large pothole; with inner tube repaired we were soon on our way heading south for about 50 miles to Busaco, battlefield site of the Peninsular War where 1810 The Duke of Wellington with British, Portuguese and German Legion Troops beat the French under Massena and this allowed the allied forces to retire behind the fortfield defence lines of Torres Vedras which had been built, completely unknown to the French, outside Lisbon.

Busaco is a National Park and has a monastery and what was a royal palace, now a hotel, where Wellington spent the night before the battle. After seeing the Wellington Memorial, we tried to work out the layout of the battle, but this was difficult, as it was then gorse and scrub, is now heavily wooded.

There is a small military museum; this Monday it turned out was a public holiday, so typical, 1800 miles, and one of the things I really wanted to see was shut!

My disappointment was partly alleviated on entering the hotel for something to eat and drink. I was astonished to find huge tile murals of scenes depicting various aspects of the battle, very impressive, no wonder Portugal has a reputation for beautiful tile work.

Leaving Busaco we headed off, up hill and down dale, some very steep dales! Heading for IP5 and the Border with Spain at Vilar Formoso, we had been warned that IP5 passes through the mountains and was an extremely dangerous road, we were advised to be patient, as it is single lane each way with occasional extra lane uphill for passing with a 50mph speed limit, headlights to be on at all times, and no overtaking except in designated places. Unsurprisingly "Fay" struggled once or twice up the hill

when balked by slower traffic and was unable to maintain her momentum. One particular point was about a four mile climb which had her threatening to do her impression of a kettle again, so we pulled off in a parking area to let her, and us cool down, as by now the outside temperature had got to about 90°F and I was missing my Thema's climate control.

Half an hour in the shade of a 40 footer helped matters, and had us on our way again.

Sailing through the Portugal-Spain border point without stopping we were beginning to think that perhaps there were good points to the EU, only to be pulled off along with all other traffic at a roadblock, by the Guardia Civil, who proceeded to search the car but then decided they didn't really want to see my bag of dirty laundry.

Search over we were on our way to Salamanca passing the Fortress of Ciudad Rodrigo, taken by Wellington's forces in 1812.

Arriving at Salamanca about 7.00pm tired and cooked, we headed for the first available hotel we had spotted from the bypass, which proved to be very acceptable. After dinner we decided to have a look at Salamanca, but gave up due to the traffic, so perhaps another time. 258 miles.

Day 11 - Got outside the hotel to find "Fay" surrounded by half the coach of Dutch tourists on their way home, who had stayed the night at our hotel. They were all very interested and surprised to hear that we had driven to Portugal and were now driving home as well in this 38-years-old car, and were very impressed when we told them that our cruising speed was about 75-80 mph, half an hour later we caught them up and couldn't resist a blast on the horns and a wave as we went past at just under 90 mph!



All through a very hot day we travelled across Spain heading for the Pyrenees, bypassing Valladolid and Burgos. Heading for Vitoria-Gasteiz (two names, Gasteiz being the Basque name). About eight miles from Vitoria (English spelling we turned off to see another battle field (1813) and headed for the village of Trespuentes where a bridge vital to the battle was taken by the Kempt's Brigade of the Light Division after being informed by a Spanish peasant that the bridge was virtually undefended, this poor fellow was one of only a few casualties, having his head removed by a cannonball a short time later. It is incredible, and very hard to picture how this peaceful sleepy village and bridge would have looked with tens of thousands of soldiers from both sides fighting here. The French forces now outflanked by the taking of the Trespuentes bridge, along with the next bridge on the road to Mendoza, fell back on Vitoria which soon became blocked, leading to the French abandoning 151 Guns out of 153, and what is reputed to be the greatest amount of treasure ever found on a battlefield, when the French abandoned the baggage train with all the treasure they had looted from Portugal and Spain.

Pushing ever north east we bypassed Pamplona, of bull running fame, and took the pass through the Pyrenees to Roncesvalles and onto St.Jean-Pied-de-Port on the French side of the Pyrenees. While it was a long climb up the pass which is one of the old Pilgrim Routes on the way to Santiago de Compostela. No doubt it would have been quicker to use the motorway up to Bayonne but this was a fantastic drive up and coming down the other side was great driving with fantastic scenery.

Found us a Gite de France for the night at Larceveau a few miles beyond St.Jean-Pied-de-Port. 369 miles.

Day 12 (Wednesday): The good weather had broken and we woke up to pouring rain. Orthez, Mont-de-Marsan, Bergerac, Perigueux were

passed in the rain, stopping only for fuel, refreshments, and Prunes d'Agen on the way to Oradour-sur-Glane near Limoges, a Memorial to French civilians massacred in 1944. We arrived here looking very seriously for fuel owing to a garage 10 miles back not having any sans plomb, although we still had 10 litres in the can I didn't want to use this until absolutely necessary. Finding a filling station at a little local supermarket, we filled up to find that going by the tank's stated capacity we had less than two litres left, at least I now know that my maximum range is 190 miles on a tankful!

After a very sad walk around the memorial we had a cup of coffee and walking back to 'Fay' in the rain, where Simon spotted something lying in a puddle by the passenger front door, on picking it up, he found that it was his passport that he must have dropped as he got out about two hours previously - very lucky.

We had hoped to make Chartres for the night but owing to the stop at Oradour-sur-Glane this was looking extremely unlikely. While I drove, Simon pored through the Etap Hotel Guide to see what was available on our route. Châteauroux at about 110 miles away on the motorway looked attainable so Simon using his mobile phone (they have their uses) rang ahead and booked us a room for the night. On arrival it was evident that this was a new site and being just off the motorway was just right for us. Later, after poring over the maps, it became apparent that we had a good chance, if we pushed on, of getting to Boulogne a day early and might even get home that day if we could change the ferry date and time. 380 miles.

Day 13 (Thursday): On our way at 6.30am in fog! It seemed that the weather conditions could mess up our plans for a run all the way home today. Began to think the gods had really got it in for us when the driver's side wiper rubber decided to progress up the screen while coming out of its holder, not really being keen on stopping on the hard

shoulder of the motorway in fog, I managed to find a wider bit of the hard shoulder the far side of an emergency telephone box, and very soon had swapped the passenger wiper assembly to the drivers side; bit annoyed as I had only recently bought these supposedly original Flavia/Fulvia wiper blades off Ebay from America.

By the time we came off the motorway above Orléans the fog had started to lift. Slow drive across to Chartres on mostly single carriageway.

The miles piled on, Dreux, Evreux, onto Rouen which was a nightmare getting around as you follow the riverbank on very congested local roads, finally we hit the motorway towards Boulogne knowing that we needed to get to the ferry terminal by no later than 1.30pm to have any chance of catching the 2.00pm ferry.

As an aside, after getting home it was in the papers that Totnes Town Council weren't going to arrange any celebrations in 2005 for the Battle of Trafalgar, Lord Nelson's famous Victory, as they didn't wish to upset their French Twin Town.

Obviously the French are not so worried about being beaten by the English in battles as the wimps in Totnes are, as we passed a huge sign on the side of the motorway advertising the Battle of Crecy!

Made it into the ferry terminal at Boulogne by 1.15pm and for a £10 fee, which we had expected, were on the 2.00pm Seacat ferry to Dover.

It was a very clear day by now and from just outside Boulogne the English coast was visible, 40 minutes later we had a marvellous view of Dover Castle sitting high overlooking the harbour and town.

A fast dash up the A2/M2 soon had us up to the M25 when it suddenly dawned on me that we hadn't filled up with fuel since Rouen, which was a long way back! One quirk of the Fulvia's low fuel light is that without sticking your head up and peering over the edge of the instrument cluster it can't be seen in daylight, at night it isn't a problem as you see the red glow, seeing the red light and checking the mileage since the last fuel stop it was readily apparent that we were running on fumes as we came up to the tolls at the Dartford Tunnel with a mile tailback; all the way through the tunnel I was sweating blood and knowing what a nightmare it is to get off to the services and equally what a pig of a junction it is to get back onto the M25 there, we carried on for about another half a mile and making sure the road was clear pulled across the run on from the services etc., onto the hard shoulder, and finally used the emergency fuel in our can after carting it around for about 3,000 miles, no regrets though as it had afforded great piece of mind, mainly across Spain.

A quick dash off the M25 at Harlow soon rectified the fuel situa-

tion and in another half of an hour we entered the village where I live. Diane had no idea that we were that close to home, as I had told her the previous night that we were aiming for Boulogne, not wishing to worry her if we didn't make it all the way home for one reason or another.

I rang Diane, who asked where we were as by now it was only 4 o'clock and I normally didn't ring her until about 7.00pm, I replied 'put the kettle on' we'll be home in 5 minutes was met by a stunned silence, then, where are you? Around the corner I replied. On arrival home two minutes later the kettle was on, and so ended a fantastic trip of 13 days and 3,342 miles in a 1966 Lancia Fulvia 2c Berlina. 490 miles.

Apologies to my co-driver / navigator for not relinquishing the steering wheel to him as was originally intended as I was enjoying myself too much, but many thanks for his excellent navigation (most of the time!) and very welcome company.

Facts

These big European Tours are great fun, educational and highly interesting. Add great company and fantastic cars so what more do you need? You can do them even in older Lancias, which seem happy in keeping up with modern traffic; don't hesitate!

3,342 miles covered
 Fuel put in tank. 566.14 litres
 Less 20 litres left in tank.
 Total fuel used = 546.14 Litres
 In imperial gallons = 120.14 (more or less) = 27.82 mpg over 3,342 miles
 Average miles per day for total holiday = 257
 Average miles per day actual running days = 304
 Best days run = 490 miles
 Total cost of fuel = 639.65 Euros = £453.66
 Fuel cost = 0.135745p per mile

I haven't bothered to work out the cost of the eight night's stay in hotels or the food costs.

We could have gone by Ferry from Portsmouth or Plymouth to either Bilbao or Santander, and there probably would have been little difference in the cost.

But, It was a great trip, I really wanted to drive all the way to see how well 'FAY' performed, a journey not taken without a little trepidation.

Diane had let me loose, and being retired, I now had the time; and last but not least, a great mate to come with me who had arranged his holidays to suit, and like me wished to meet up with friends made previously in Portugal and elsewhere amongst the Lancisti.

