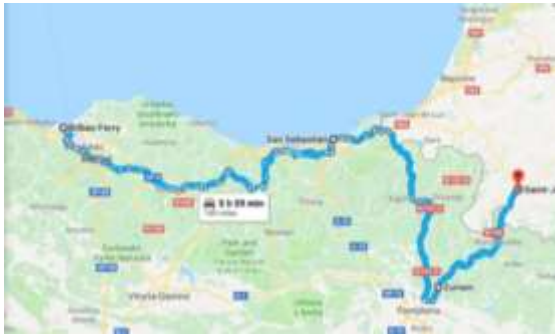


Here are excerpts from our Chairperson, Joff Christie's diary about a 2500km road trip, which he made with Kenny Hair, starting in Bilboa and finishing in Santander.

Day 1: Bilbao to St Jean-Pied-de-Port



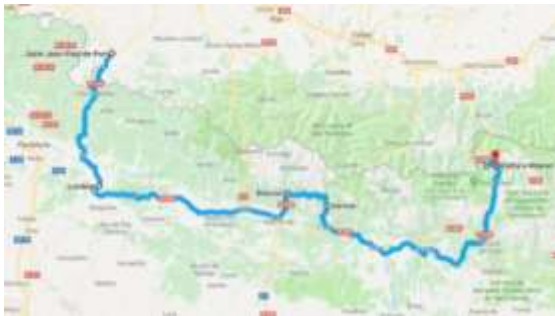
190 miles: A8 Bilbao to San Sebastian, N121 to Pamplona, N135 to Spanish/French border, D933 to St Jean-Pied-de-Port (France).

We arrived in Bilbao with an ambient temperature of 24°C, which seemed very fine, but by the time we had transited the city, avoiding the toll roads, both us and our bikes started to feel somewhat overheated. However, once free of the city's busy urban traffic, we were soon onto lovely twisting roads and beautiful coastal scenery and mountain tunnels. We took advantage of refreshments at the hilltop café's, one with amusing rituals and where we were fortunate to meet other like-minded bikers. The route comprised 2 distinct parts; Bilbao to San Sebastian and San Sebastian to St Jean-Pied de Port, which was just over the French border.



Kenny takes a break to admire the coast on N634 coming into San Sebastian.

Day 2: St Jean to Vielha e Mijaran



240 miles: D933 from St Jean-Pied-de-Port to French/Spanish border then N135, Na140, Na1720, Na150 to Lumbier, Na2420 and N240 to Jaca, route N330 to El Puerte, N260 to Castarne and N230 to Vielha e Mijaran.

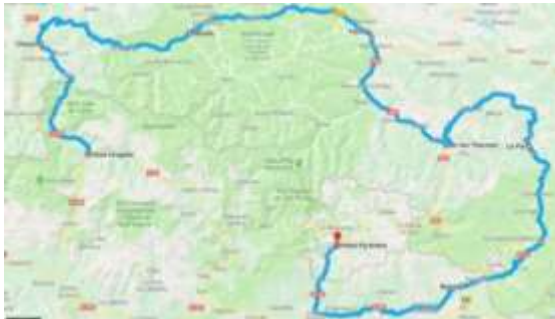
Travelling from the French Pyrenees' to the Spanish side of the mountain range, we were blessed with blue skies and the sun for roads which simply kept on delivering bend upon bend as we both ascended and descended the N-240 and N-260 roads, well known in all the motorcycling tourists' guides. We stopped at the café *La Morara* – a relaxing area with really good nosh; we recommend their *potatas bravas* as well as their other tapas dishes. Once "refuelled", we cracked on toward our destination, again a great riding road with more challenging bends and mountain views which left us with permanent grins on our faces. Eventually we reached Vielha through a long tunnel and certainly felt we had earned glasses of gin and tonic before sampling the local cuisine for dinner.



A highlight of the tour, La Morara for a potatas bravas and tapas lunch in Sos. 40 minutes ride from El Pont de Suert on the N260.

Here are excerpts from our Chairperson, Joff Christie's diary about a 2500km road trip, which he made with Kenny Hair, starting in Bilboa and finishing in Santander.

Day 3: Vielha to Andorra la Vella



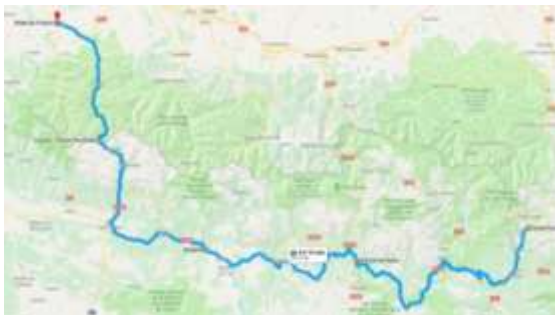
230 miles: N230 to the Spanish / French border, N125 to Chaum, D33 and D618 to St Giron, D117 to Foix, D118 to Ax-les Thermes and southward to the French /Spanish border at Puigcerda, N116, N152 and N260 to La Seu d'Urgell, N145 to Andorra.

We took a route north from Vielha into France and headed east before turning south and re-entering Spain via Bolvir to Andorra, which was to be the most southerly destination of our trip. The route took us through some spectacular French scenery with St Georges Gorge and the long sweeping bends between Bolvir and La Seu d'Urgell being the most memorable. From scenery which had been very sparse of shops or petrol stations, Andorra was a complete contrast with top end car dealerships, high end shopping, a destination for spenders seeking serious retail therapy. Our day ended with a plunge into the pool (the water was freezing), quickly followed by a G&T, some retail window shopping and dinner. The day was an absolute highlight - a cracking day's riding, and a most refreshing destination.



Passing the time in Andorra

Day 4: Andorra to Oloron Ste-Marie



230 miles: N145 south to La Seu d'Urgell, N260 west to Sabinanigo, A136, D934, D920 and D918 to the Spanish / French border, N134 to Oloron Ste-Marie.

Another long route which we split into two parts Andorra to our favourite roadside taverna, La Morera, for lunch then onwards to Oloron. Although we had covered some of the roads previously, travelling along the foot of the Pyrenees in the other direction presented new riding challenges which were just as exciting. Once in France on the N134 the countryside was typified by agricultural lowlands all the way to Oloron Ste-Marie. Both of us agreed that the route was again a super day's ride, however I believe we'd want to change this destination and hotel if doing this again as they were not particularly pleasant. This was the end of the Pyrenees section of our tour, with the Pico mountains coming up next on our visiting plan.



Cable-stayed road-bridge on the N145 after leaving Andorra.

Here are excerpts from our Chairperson, Joff Christie's diary about a 2500km road trip, which he made with Kenny Hair, starting in Bilbao and finishing in Santander.

Day 5: Oloron to Reinosa



280 miles: D936 from Oloron to St Palais, D933 to St Jean-Pied-de-Port, D933 to the French/Spanish border, N135 to Auritz, Na1720, Na150, N234, N120, Na6120, Na601, Na122, Na6340 and Na6120 to Los Arcos, N111 to Logrono, N232 and N623 to Reinosa.

Our journey today would take us westwards across less exciting roads of the French Pyrenees to once again enter Spain. There we encountered generally long straight sections of road which crossed large agricultural plains including the wine making region of Rioja to reach our next destination of Reinosa. The day was to be the hottest we had faced at 32°C. Festivals are held in Spain between 27th - 29th September and as luck would have it, we experienced a lively festival ambience at Reinosa, where we were to stay for two nights. I might add that we really got stuck into the festival spirit by enjoying one or two (or was it a few?) libations accompanied by our favourite Spanish tapas dishes, patatas bravas and chicken wings – mmmmmmm!



After a poor experience in Oloron, the Hotel San Roque in Reinosa offered a much better experience and fully met our expectations.

Day 6: A Loop in the Pico Mountains



210 miles: South route along Ebro Reservoir, N632 north to Entrambasmestas, clockwise route taking in 263, 262, 142, 263, 262, 142, 264, 260, 261, 266, 681, 680, 258, 510, 151, 513, 151, 152 and N32 then back west on south road by Reservoir Ebro to Reinosa.

After a great breakfast at the hotel we headed eastwards to ride in the twisty, mountainous roads of the Picos. Here we encountered a frequent hazard which we had experienced in the Pyrenees but not to anything like the same magnitude and that was animal deposits. These "cow grenades" would splatter everywhere if hit - not nice for a following biker. Here, the livestock seems free to wander on the roads between pastures – a point which we hadn't appreciated before traveling in the region.



Sharing the road with farm livestock – watch out for pieces of flying cowpats!

Here are excerpts from our Chairperson, Joff Christie's diary about a 2500km road trip, which he made with Kenny Hair, starting in Bilboa and finishing in Santander.

Day 7: Reinosa to Santander Ferry



200 miles: N611 south to Aguilardo de Campo, CI-626 to Cervera de Pisuerga, Guardo, Cistierna, N621 to Sabero, Ca282 to Los Espejos de la Reina, Ca180 to Tama, Ca 135 to San Estabar, N131 to Colombres, N303 and A67 to Sandander.

After enjoying the partying in Reinossa for a second night, we were ready for the final day's riding in Spain to the ferry port of Santander. Check-in time was 16:30hrs, so our last days ride had to be planned with contingency options to ensure we didn't miss it. We planned to use recommended motorcycling routes and as with the all previous days, the weather was another scorcher, 30°C ish. We again encountered "cow grenades" which with the warm road surface made them particularly sloshy, so focused riding was required, particularly for the one following. Notwithstanding that unique hazard, we felt most at risk when we joined the A8, where we were subjected to heavy road traffic for the first time on this road trip and the numerous episodes of poor driving practice that come with it.



Quiet road, great road surface, stunning scenery and beautiful weather – perfect!

Reflections on the Trip



Joff Christie

Overall distance travelled	2960 miles
	Abn – Abn
Spain / France distance	1560 miles
Average fuel cost:	Eu 1.32 / litre
Cheapest fuel:	Andorra
Most expensive fuel:	France
Average hotel costs:	£45/night
Average meal costs:	£35/day
Favourite Routes:	Day 3 routes
Least favourite routes:	Day 5 routes
Favourite destination:	Andorra
Least favourite destination:	Oloron Ste-Marie
Did Advanced riding help?	Absolutely



Most bizarre – put your underwear in a box if you want a soul mate.