



Suffolk Riders



In this issue

Chairman's update	p1
Ardennes trip - update	p2
Touring	p5
Planning	p5
An initial foray	p6
Riding in France	p7
Rules: Riding in the EU	p9
Member's Forum	p11
Ride to Asia - part 2	p11
Your next bike!	p15
The Last Word	p16



January has seen our freedoms restricted again, with the third 'full' lockdown in force. I am sure, like me, your cravings to hit the open road continue to grow stronger by the day – especially as spring days seems to edge ever closer.

Frustrating as the current restrictions are, the COVID-19 infection rates seem to be decreasing, and the vaccination roll out is making good

headway, so we must remain upbeat.

For me, January started with another 11th- hour announcement from the Government that schools would physically shut until at least the middle of February. This has seen my wife and I return to teaching online from our spare bedrooms, using the garden furniture as extra desk space and our kitchen seemingly doubling up as the staffroom! We are fairly used to it now, and soon got back into the swing of the remote set-up, but the spring and summer 2020 lockdown definitely came with a different vibe, the weather no doubt helping.

I did manage a single 'essential' ride this month as my GS was due a service and its first MOT, since then though both bikes have been cleaned and are now tucked up for the time being.

We had our first committee meeting of the year, held by the now all too familiar zoom format. During the meeting, the committee voted James Myers as the 2021 Vice-Chair.

Plans of the virtual group night are ongoing but, as with everything at the moment, it isn't proving as easy as one would like! Once a speaker and date have been confirmed though, you will be informed of when and how you can join.

As I have previously said, Suffolk Riders only exists due to the support of its membership. In previous communications I have highlighted ways that you can support the group, but if you have any additional ideas, I'd be keen to hear them.

I will see you out on the road as soon as it is possible to do so.

Stay safe, Chris

2021 Events

[Suffolk Riders Trip to the Ardennes – update 1 – Phil Sayer](#)

Last month I outlined our initial plans for a trip to the Ardennes in May, aimed mainly at less experienced continental tourers. Our plans have now firmed up, so I thought I'd bring you all up to date.

I'm sure your first question is going to be "will we be able to go?" You've probably seen reports that Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab says it's 'too early' for the UK population to book summer holidays. Raab says 'we need to get a hold of this virus first'. Well lots of people are certainly booking holidays whatever he says. Maybe it is too soon, but the trip can always be moved to later in the year if we can't go in May. If we can go and have no plans we'll be kicking ourselves - it's nice to have a plan for a break from the tedium of lockdown, even if we have to postpone it.



Here's the plan. I've made a provisional booking for the 21st to the 25th of May at Neil and Ann Leigh's AE Aventures guest house ([Home \(aeaventures.com\)](http://Home(aeaventures.com))), which is situated in the Village of Moulin du Ruy, 10 minutes from the Legendary Spa-Francorchamps track [Circuit of Spa-Francorchamps \(spa-francorchamps.be\)](http://CircuitofSpa-Francorchamps(spa-francorchamps.be)). In the current situation Neil is not taking any deposits up front, so there's no financial downside if we have to cancel or postpone. Ann and Neil have been providing a motorcycling holiday experience that's a bit different

by using their extensive knowledge of the Ardennes, Eifel and Luxembourg regions and all it has to offer having been keeping guests amused since 2002. They offer to provide daily escorted rides at no extra charge. Neil has worked as motorcycle race track instructor at Spa and currently at the Nürburgring Nordschleife and is happy to share his knowledge and enthusiasm to all interested riders on road and on track. The cost for bed and breakfast is €55 a night for a shared room for two, and €20 for dinner including all beer and wine (sounds like a bargain!). Look them up on Google – all the reviewers give them 5 stars and say things like "Fantastic hospitality, lovely clean accommodation in a stunning position. We will be visiting again".

I've got four people interested already, so the trip is on. I'm thinking of riding as 2 groups of 4 or 5, so 10 bikes max. I will lead one group of riders and David Wood has kindly offered to lead a second group. The trip is aimed at members who have little or no European touring experience, so they will have priority, but I'm happy to fill the tour up with anyone interested if there is room. In particular I'd like to recruit another lady for the trip, to potentially share a room with Karen Peters, who has told me she is very interested in coming.

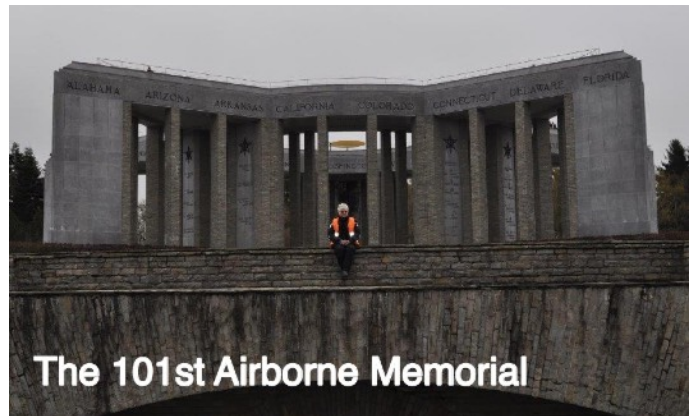
The plan is as follows: out on a Friday via the Shuttle to Spa, which is about 250 miles from Calais, so not too arduous a ride, but far enough to get to some interesting scenery and roads. I've plotted a route that takes the autoroute through France to cover the first 100 miles or so quickly, and then gets

onto more interesting roads in Belgium, which MyRoute-app says should take just over 5 hours riding. If we take an early shuttle we can be there by 6pm. My plan is to spend three days there, then come back on the following Tuesday. If you don't know the Ardennes then take a look on Google. It's got



everything – hills, rivers, steep valleys, pretty villages, and plenty of history too. It was the scene of the Battle of the Bulge in 1944, and there are tank museums to see ([La Gleize - Royal Tiger Tank & Museum \(walloniabelgiumtourism.co.uk\)](http://La Gleize - Royal Tiger Tank & Museum (walloniabelgiumtourism.co.uk))), as well as the main museum in Bastogne, which has recently been refurbished, and is very good (Bastogne War Museum – The museum of the 2nd World War in Belgium). Next to it is the huge memorial to the US 101st Airborne Division (www.101airbornemuseumbastogne.com).

What to do while we are there? Neil has suggested a tour round the Ardennes on his favourite roads. Its about 220 miles via St Vith (coffee), La Roche en Ardennes (lunch) and Huy (tea). I've also plotted a circuit of some great roads in Luxembourg that John Jenkins took us on a few years ago on his Dambusters trip. It's about 4 hours riding and goes via Bastogne, so you could fit in a trip around the Bastogne War Museum in the afternoon. If you are interested and are a MyRoute-app user, these routes are in my 'Ardennes' folder in MyRoute-app, visible to 'friends'. If you can't see them, email me on phil.sayer@suffolkriders.co.uk



Just down the road from Moulin du Ruy is the famous motor-racing circuit at Spa-Francorchamps. It is the current venue of the Formula One Belgian Grand Prix, hosting its first Grand Prix in 1925, and has held a Grand Prix every year since 1985 (except 2003 and 2006). Spa also hosts several other international events including the 24 Hours of Spa and the World Endurance Championship 6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps, and the TCR Spa 500. While we are there the Ciney retromobile sale is on at the Spa circuit, which is a giant car and bike autojumble – see cineyexpo.be - Accueil – which Neil recommends as a good rest day if you don't

want to ride every day.



The Nürburgring (Nurburgring.org.uk) is about 80 miles away on some great roads. If you haven't been there, it is well worth a visit just to look around. If you are desperate to get on a track, in 2020 you could still turn up, buy laps (€25 per vehicle), and drive straight on to the track during a Touristfahrten session. There's no briefing or need for your bike to be checked etc, although noisy cans are prohibited!

Finally if you fancy a full-on track day, there's one at Spa on the 25th, so you could stay an extra day.

Full 1 or 2 piece leathers and mandatory back protectors are required, and its about €270 for the day. Personally, I will be sticking to the (delightful) roads, but each to their own.

Cost – sharing rooms, about £100 a day all in including rooms, food, & petrol. If you want a single room about £120 a day, plus about £86 for the return ticket on the tunnel, say, £500/£580 sharing/ single all in for 4 nights (including beer and wine!).

The only thing I'd suggest you do now is to check your passport. You will need 6 months before it expires to go to Europe. Mine would have expired in June so I've just renewed it. It didn't take long but they are warning of long waits later in the year.

In summary:

- 5 day long weekend trip May 21 - 25
- Aimed at members with little or no European touring experience,
- Crossing by Eurotunnel
- Out Friday, back Tuesday
- Planned and escorted days out, or do your own thing
- Limited to 8 bikes (there is limited accommodation)
- Let me know if you are interested – phil.sayer@suffolkriders.co.uk
- And here's a link to the Brexit impact of European travel, try [U K Insurance - Brand Policy \(ukinsurance.co.uk\)](http://ukinsurance.co.uk)

I would also add that there are a few other things I would recommend considering if you are a first timer – I always take a few tools, some duck tape, a puncture repair kit (eg some plugs or an aerosol of sticky stuff that you squirt into a flat tyre) and an electric tyre pump. Also take a map, just in case...

Touring

We've had a few articles on touring from a small group of intrepid club wanderers, e.g. Brian C., who has travelled to Vladivostok and the Himalayas and points between, to the likes of your editor that found a few days going up to Northumbria a big learning curve. Keith G. suggested that we put together a section for those who might like to try, but not too far, and perhaps be inspired to take up this very rewarding pastime. Ed.

Planning is not just for Roadcraft. – Lee Gage.

Asked to describe one of my routes picked from many years of touring I looked back and there are so many and all in their own way have been good, so I thought it would be better to describe how I plan a route.

Firstly planning a route is a very personal thing and there are many considerations to be thought of. The main ones for me are: who am I travelling with; is there an end of route destination or can I be flexible; how many miles do I want for this route; is there anything interesting to visit en route.

After many years of touring with different people, I now tend to travel with the same group of friends. This is typically a group of four and none of us carrying pillions. For the most part, we have the same objectives for the trip which is around 150 to 300 miles a day on all types of road but avoiding motorways where possible Please bear in mind that motorway travel can get you from A to B very quickly, so I'm never afraid to put a section in when needed. We very much ride at the same pace and are rarely separated, but when it does happen we do not waste time waiting for each other as this can often make the gap bigger: usually caused by sat nav's interpreting routes between waypoints differently. I'll bet you've all experienced this! The good thing about travelling with a well known group is confidence in each others capabilities. None of us worry about riding on our own and we know we'll catch up at a coffee or fuel stop at some point.

Accommodation would be pre booked on a free to cancel basis, allowing us to alter plans if required. This hasn't always been the case but, with what I said above, to have an end destination means we all end up at the same place. It also allows us to choose where we stay, as opposed to taking what we can get, and, when there are four people who prefer separate rooms, this is easier.

The mileage is generally dictated by the type of roads en route which needs looking at very carefully when the end destination is pre-planned. After many years of touring and thousands of miles covered, experience and a good map are my main tools. Different road types, topography and weather conditions can make a huge difference to your average speed, so with that in mind don't be afraid to change route. Carrying on with a planned route just because you've spent time in the planning stage can be very time consuming and in certain conditions dangerous.

On most routes I research what points of interest are on, or close to, the route. I know that the four of us have mostly the same interests, so visits to car/bike museums, food markets and places with amazing views amongst other things are high on the list. There will also be unplanned stops for coffee,

photo's, views etc. So obviously take into consideration how long the planned and unplanned stops may take and adjust mileage accordingly.

The above is just a very brief overview of how I plan a route and it's based on the requirements of a very specific group. There are many more considerations used when planning a route and you must adapt and plan your route to your own and your groups needs. I adopt mostly the same principles whether I'm planning many routes for a long euro trip or even a day trip out closer to home.

Important things I have learnt over the years is always to carry a good map of the area you are going to. Use tech to plan and upload your route to your sat nav but be prepared to be flexible, get your map out and change plans if needed. Some of my best rides have been on unplanned routes. For me the planning is an enjoyable and big part of the trip so spread that map out on the table and get planning.

A novice tourer? Here's a suggestion for an initial foray . - Brian Carter.



I have chosen the town of Avallon in the area of Burgundy, it's quite a small town but has some places of interest in the vicinity, it is also close to The [Morvan Regional Park](#) which is an area of woodlands, lakes and farmland. There are some nice roads to ride in the area and the weather is normally very pleasant in spring and summer. If you don't mind rising at silly o'clock it is possible to ride there in a day, alternatively you could do as Keith suggests in the next article, and find accommodation in St Omer.

There are a few hotels to choose from in the area, I stayed at a Logis de France hotel in [Avallon](#), "[Hotel Les Capucins](#)" it's a traditional French hotel and very old, if I remember the staircase was stone. The facilities are clean, if not modern, and the owners live on the premises and serve delicious meals in their restaurant. I enjoyed my stay there, my preference is smaller older privately owned hotels, you may prefer something more modern with all mod cons – luckily we are all different and can take advantage of these choices. If you are into camping there is a campsite at the town, for more info contact Mr. Gilbert.

Some places of interest.

[Abbaye de Fontenay.](#)

[Chateau du Lugny.](#)

[Vezelay Abbey.](#)

[Les Anis de Flavigny.](#) To us oldies it's an aniseed ball factory in a Benedictine Abbey, if you arrive early there are factory tours.



[Chablis](#), where the wine comes from, isn't far away if you fancy some sampling. Try not to go on May the 8th it's a National Holiday – WWII Victory Day, not much open.

A suggested route is No. 9 on the club's [Routes and Waypoints - 2020/1](#) page.

If it is your first time abroad on your own you will almost certainly make some mistakes, don't worry it's all part of the learning curve.

The reason I use the autoroute to avoid Bethune, Lens etc is because there are just too many speed restrictions on the D roads, and it takes forever to cover any ground. You can come off the autoroute at junction 8 for Cambrai, again the D road is uninteresting, and I prefer to get to the interesting bits as soon as possible, the most interesting are further south, and also to the east, But that's something to look forward to on your next trip.

All the best *Brian Carter*.

Taking those first steps – Everyman's guide to riding to France. – Keith Gilbert

It's approximately 130 miles to Dover from Ipswich and 22 miles by ferry to France. And here's your D.I.Y. guide and route for that first ride through France.

Destination: [Buzancy](#) (Michelin Regional Map Champagne-Ardenne No.515) 220 miles from Calais.

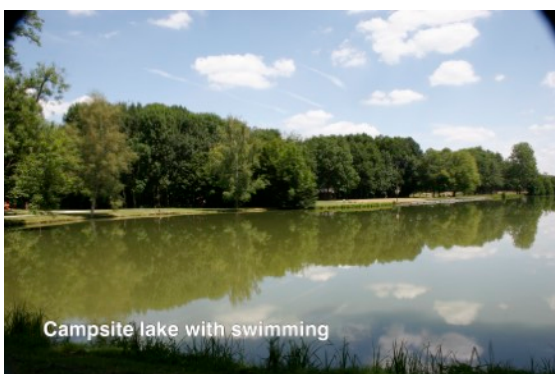
Accommodation: '[La Samaritaine](#)' at [Buzancy](#) is a campsite which also offers self-catering mobile homes and chalets to rent. 3 nights minimum stay: cost for six nights in June is 243 euros. Early booking you get 10% off the cost. Linen package comprising bed linen, small and large towels, tea towels is 25 euros for 2 persons (or you can take your own).

It's 1.2 km to village centre where there is a bakers, mini market and the [Hotel Du Saumon](#). The hotel has both double



and single rooms. A double room in June is 49 euros per night and breakfast 7 euros. Also serves evening meals. We have stayed on this campsite twice, very friendly and they speak English. If you self-cater it's an easy start to staying in France, unless of course you are fluent in French.

Bike documents etc. (see Phil Sayer's article next) in a tank bag is essential here as everything can be in one place in front of you, including your passport, ferry tickets and credit/debit card for any tolls that are required.



Channel Crossing - ferry or train – your choice.

Our choice is ferry. After the 130 mile ride via M20 to Dover, there are 2 petrol stations in Dover on way to Ferry Port to fill up. On the ferry you will be expected to ratchet your bike down securely. We

leave helmets strapped to bike. Once on board you have a choice of a sit down breakfast in the restaurant, served to you by a waiter in comfortable surroundings where we stay for the duration of the crossing, or there is a self-service cafeteria. Crossing is about 1 hr 25 mins.

On arrival in Calais the clocks go forward one hour to French time. For an 8.00 a.m. sailing UK time you need to be at Dover port for 7.00 a.m. Crossing time plus the hour difference, you should be on French roads around 10.30am. All this will mean leaving Suffolk (Ipswich) at 4.30 a.m.

The alternative is, ride to Dover the afternoon prior to sailing and overnight there. We have used [Bleriots Guest House](#) where a double room is £70-£82 depending on season plus breakfast if required. We prefer the breakfast on board which is good and passes the time. There are numerous B & Bs and hotels in Dover. We have stopped in Folkestone which is about 20 minutes ride to the ferry port.

Or get an evening ferry (often cheaper), meal on board, ride down A26/E15 auto route to junction 3 for St Omer. Lots of hotels there and you have a nice early start for the ride down to Buzancy.

A suggested route is No 10 on the club's [website](#).

Why Buzancy?

A comfortable ride from Calais 220 miles and only ten miles from the Belgium border. So many places of interest. Good roads with little traffic. If you get the [regional map No.515](#) and look at the roads shaded with green, which means scenic route, these are the ones to ride.

Must visit:

- [Butte Montfaucon Memorial](#).
- [Stenay Brewing Museum](#)
- [Sedan with its massive Medieval Castle](#).
- [Battle of the Stonne](#), one of the lesser known battles where the French Infantry tried to hold back the German Tank Division. The battle can be followed site to site. Written both in French and English.
- [Verdun](#), go via D6 Grandpre, D946 Varennes D946-D603. Look up history of Verdun.



Petrol: Most of the larger supermarkets sell fuel, and also have a cafeteria. Some still have the kiosks for fuel payment but when closed you can pay at the pump and the instructions are also in English.

PublicToilets: Not very often in small villages or towns so it usually has to be a coffee shop stop.

Lunch in France is usually a two hour affair between 12.00 and 2.00 pm so we find that is a good time to travel.

If you need any more help or guidance please do

not hesitate to contact us on keith.gilbert@suffolkriders.co.uk.

Driving or Riding in the EU after Brexit. - Phil Sayer

If you are thinking of going abroad this year, it's a little more complicated than when we were part of the EU. Here's a few things you will need:

1. Check when your passport expires. You will need a passport with at least 6 months validity left on it after the end of your trip. Don't leave it to the last minute to renew, there may be delays later in the year. You can do it all on line, but you need to get a digital passport photo. I've just renewed mine and it came back after only a week.
2. You will need a photo ID version driving licence (believe it or not, there is a member who has only just got one!). There has been some confusion about the need for an International Driving Permit (IDP). The AA site says you 'may' need an IDP; go to the Post Office site to check and the PO site says you 'may' need an IDP; go to [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) to check and it shows that for all EU countries you do **not** need an IDP. I trust that the government site is right – I suggest you take a look at [Driving in the EU - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/driving-in-the-eu)
3. Green card. Apply to your insurance company in good time (the [uk.gov](https://www.uk.gov) site says 6 weeks) before you go. It doesn't have to be printed on green paper – some insurance companies will send you a pdf and let you print it at home. You must print it out – a pdf on your phone is not valid. You also need to carry your insurance certificate.
4. Reg doc V5C – original not a photocopy.
5. GB sticker in some form – the GB symbol on a Euro number plate is not valid, but a number plate with the union flag and a GB symbol is OK. If in doubt get a sticker.

[EHIC or a GHIC](#) when your EHIC expires. If your EHIC card has not expired it is still valid after Brexit. Once it expires you can apply on line for a GHIC card, which gives same free basic hospital treatment in the EU as an EHIC card did. The online application is very simple and only takes a few minutes – I've just applied for mine. They say it will arrive in about 10 days. As no-one is travelling for months, that should be plenty soon enough!

6. Travel insurance – very important, as the EHIC/GHIC won't pay to fly you home if you are too ill/broken to ride.
7. Reflective stickers on your helmet – but the French police are lax about enforcing this one. You can buy these on eBay for a few quid.
8. A yellow hi-viz waistcoat to wear at the side of the road if you break down. You don't have to wear it when riding.
9. Reflective triangle is required for a car, but not required for a bike. Ditto a fire extinguisher!
10. First aid kit – not a legal requirement in France, although it is in Eastern Europe and some Nordic countries. Highly recommended anyway.
11. A spare bulb kit used to be required in France, now it is recommended. However, most new bikes use LEDs not bulbs. I haven't bothered with taking a bulb kit since I got a bike with LED headlights.

12. Breakdown insurance. Most important - bikes do breakdown sometimes! Make sure yours covers the countries you are going to visit.

13. A breathalyser kit used to be a legal requirement for France. However, this law has been abolished, so you can throw those kits away!

It sounds complicated but really the only changes since Brexit are the passport 6 months validity, the need for a green card, and a GB sticker if you previously had a Euro number plate.

There are a few other things I would recommend considering if you are a first timer – I always take a few tools, some duck tape, a puncture repair kit: e.g. some plugs or an aerosol of sticky stuff that you squirt into a flat tyre, and an electric tyre pump. I also take a map just in case...

Bon voyage a tous!

Member's Forum

First Ride to Asia – Part 2 – Brian Carter

We set off in the morning once again on the motorway and I have to tell you it's not like your normal motorway, from memory you travel through mountain ranges and there were third gear bends, in



places a perfect surface, and lots of fun. Passing through the Greek custom post was quite easy and we soon rode to the Turkish custom buildings parked the bike and proceeded to the first office handed in our passports and for the first and last time in my life a customs officer handed me the passports addressing me as Mr Carter and giving me all the information to pass through the checks. I reckon it was less than thirty minutes to complete the process. I had a similar situation when I first went to Albania lots of horror stories on the internet about having to go through a water filled trough and the underlying surface being like ice, the trough was dry and the process again took less than thirty minutes. Nowadays if I am travelling somewhere new to me, I research it on the internet but take some of the comments with a pinch of salt.

OK we are in Turkey but it's the European part we still have to cross the Bosphorus to be in Asia, we had decided we would avoid as much of Istanbul as possible, didn't fancy the heat and

traffic clogged streets instead we would cross on the new bridge over the Bosphorus. I guess we arrived at the lunchtime rush hour as it was extremely busy and as with all big cities everyone wants to be there yesterday, just remember I am only a simple ole country boy. An extremely impressive bridge with toll booths and me not sure how to pay, we sat waiting for someone to appear and take our money, that didn't happen and the chorus of horns were getting louder, I said to my wife hold tight I am going to wing it. So, the Pan became a missile and we launched at speed, with sirens and stuff going off, I pinned it for about ten miles and then slowed down with no police in sight, we both thought we will get our collars felt when we leave Turkey. I later found out I was supposed to buy something on line as payment, blimey did they think I was Einstein?

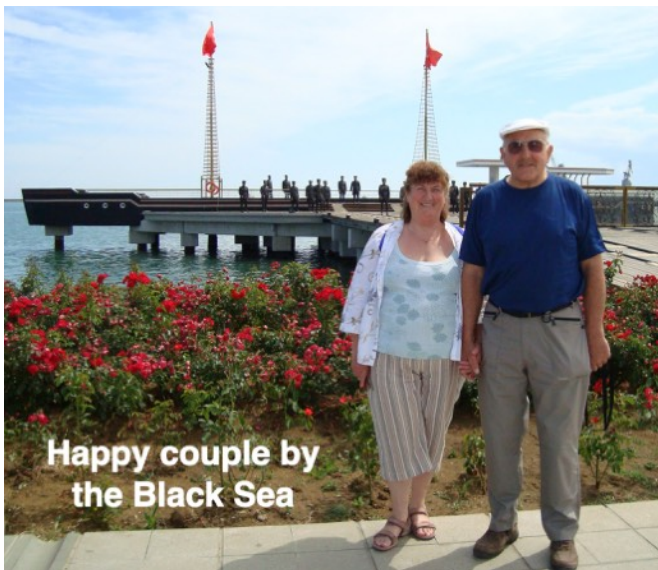
Late afternoon we rolled into Bolu following the disappearing hotel signs and I decided to pull into a service station and ask for directions. The office was full of men one of whom spoke a wee bit



of English and after a discussion with his friends he called a young lad in and told him to lead us to a hotel on his moped, he obviously knew all the shortcuts and we saw the highs and lows of the town. He went in and explained our situation at least I think he did and we were greeted with smiles and a bedroom with a bathroom. I must tell you about our first visit to a Turkish filling station to refuel, a young boy filled the tank and I went in to pay when I came out my wife was holding two paper cups of coffee, I asked where they came from, she said the young



boy had bought them and wouldn't accept payment. I pushed the bike off the pump so I could drink my coffee and as I put my bike on the stand this chap asked in perfect English where I was going, I replied I didn't know, we were just going to ride in Turkey for a week or two, he held out his hand we shook and he just said welcome to Turkey. Coming from a society where actions like those would cause one to be a little suspicious of their motives, we were left wondering what to make of it all. After spending a few days in Turkey, we realised that it was normal behaviour to offer travellers food and drink, I suppose like most places in the world there are the occasional not so nice people, but this was a pleasant surprise for us.



We wanted to see the Black Sea and the next destination was Samsun on the Black Sea coast and we there by early afternoon and again found a hotel quite easily. We walked into the town in the evening and I was pleasantly surprised by the number of young people around especially the girls who were mostly attractive in western style clothes, some wore brightly coloured headscarves, it wasn't what we had expected. The following day we walked quite a lot and it was a very busy interesting town, the photograph of us was taken by a total stranger who offered his services.

It was sunny when we left next morning to travel along the Black Sea coast road, as far as I can remember this was like most hot coastal areas a certain type of foliage seems to prosper there. We did have a rough plan of a destination, [Trabzon](#) which was in the direction of Georgia following the coast road. As we pulled off the main road to go into a small town for refreshments the heavens opened, I parked the bike in the street and we dived under a shop awning for shelter. Almost immediately the shop owner came out and beckoned for us to go in the shop and sit down on a sofa, he sold linen and cloth, then his wife and children were called down from upstairs to be introduced to us and we all had the ubiquitous cup of chai. After this friendly stop we headed for Trabzon and found a hotel, from memory I think we were the only customers that evening. There were masses of Transit minibuses everywhere and we never found out why apart from the fact that there is a massive factory in Turkey building Transits. A bit like the filling stations in the west of the country almost continuous along some of the roads, I honestly don't know how they made a living.

We both wanted to visit [Sumela Monastery](#) which is south of Trabzon, it is built on a cliff face and considering it was started in the fourth century it's an amazing piece of engineering. It was easy to find, just follow the signs. How did I do it without a Garmin Neville? Being what it is, there were tourists around but not too many. It's a fair walk from the carpark especially in motorcycle clothing but well worth the effort. I can't imagine how it was constructed without lots of deaths among the



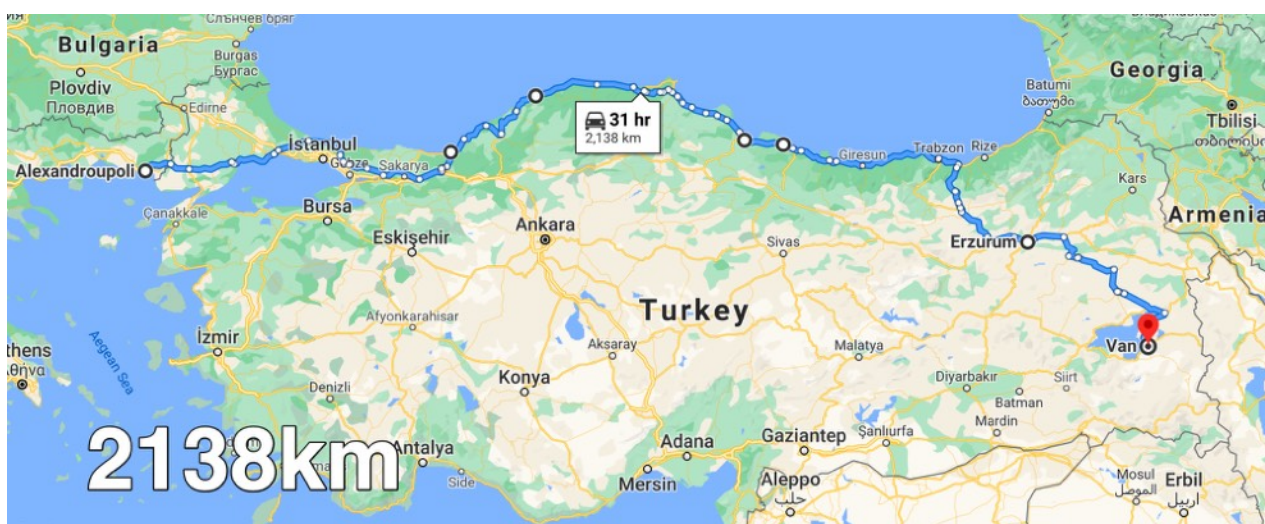
Sumela monastery



Amazing frescoes

workforce. In the car park for the Monastery we met a young couple from the Czech Republic riding a very early Suzuki GS 500, no Touratech Luggage, just a selection of plastic bags etc bungeed on. They were on their way to Armenia to visit relatives, I am mentioning this to prove you don't necessarily have to have the latest motorcycle to go touring. An older bike with a box of spanners and you can head off wherever you fancy, obviously not at this exact moment.

Looking at the map, [Erzurum](#) looked the most likely town to head for, the plan was to get close to the Iranian border and hope it would be clear enough to see [Mount Ararat](#), legend has it this is the place



2138km

where Noah's Ark came to rest after the great floods, make your own decisions on that one. We made it to Erzurum in the rain and the first hotel we stopped at there were two Turkish teenage boys outside, I guess seeing two old English people dripping wet on a motorcycle was the most interesting thing they had seen all day. They started a conversation, that doesn't happen when you get out of a car. It transpired one of them had been educated in the USA, they invited us to join them for

refreshments, but, as we all know, when you have spent most of the day riding in the rain the only thing you wish to do is get the gear off and have a nice hot shower, so we declined their immediate offer but said we would meet them in a couple of hours for a drink: they had disappeared when we came out of the hotel. We had asked at reception if there was a restaurant that sold alcohol, remember Turkey is 99% Muslim, we followed the directions and found it. We were the only non-Turkish diners there and no one really noticed. It seemed to us as if it was the restaurant of choice of the local businessmen and crooks, you couldn't help noticing how much they drank and smoked, they lit up between mouthfuls, the food was good and a wee drop of alcohol helped.

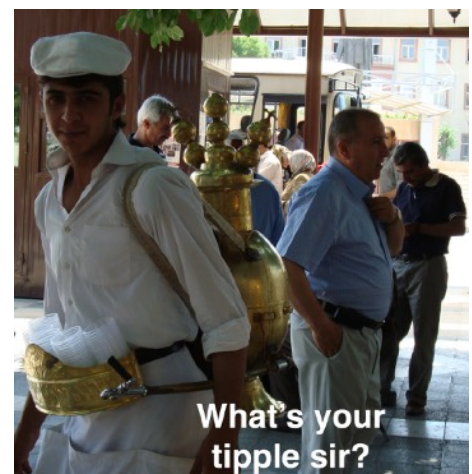
I expect you are thinking how does he remember all this stuff, well we kept a diary and when you look at photographs it usually stirs something in the old bonce and certain memories come flooding back, we also used the Rough Guide Turkish phrasebook which was helpful.



This is for Tim: back when we made & sold them all over the

After leaving Erzurum heading east the roads deteriorated somewhat which was in complete contrast to the wonderful roads, we had ridden the previous day, through the mountains and rolling hills with good surfaces. It soon became obvious that the Turkish government wasn't spending on infrastructure and housing in the east in the same way they were in the west, we all know why. This road was also a trunk road leading to Iran and there were lots of lorries and the famous Turkish nationwide coaches travelling at ridiculous speeds. It became so bad that vehicles were

wandering all over the road just to avoid potholes. We stopped for a break and checked the map and decided to head south as soon as possible, this meant missing Mount Ararat, sometimes you have to do the sensible thing. We turned south for [Van](#); the road wasn't much better but the traffic was much lighter. Once again there was a really heavy downpour and within minutes the road surface disappeared, this meant I couldn't see the potholes which was dangerous, luckily a filling station appeared on the left, I pulled in jumped off the bike and we took shelter under an overhanging roof. We heard voices and a door opened the room was filled with females of varying ages and we were invited in, we declined hoping the road would soon drain and we could be on our way. From the filling station someone was waving to us to join them this time we accepted. Turned out it was granddad, the owner, with his sons and grandsons: chai was served and we were given a brief rundown of the family history. Granddad had three wives and numerous children, some of his sons worked for him and one son taught English at the local school. We were talking about Turkey and they told us in no uncertain terms we were in Kurdistan not Turkey and that they were Kurdish, no doubt the reason for the lack of government spending. We had begun to note Army posts sandbagged in with Turkish soldiers wandering around the further east we were, they took no notice of us and when we started travelling west these posts disappeared. We probably spent more than half an hour chatting with the family, which is one of the things I enjoy about motorcycle touring, meeting the locals and finding out a little bit of how they live.



What's your tipple sir?

Brian's journey concludes next month, with a dose of Delbi belly, relaxing in Cappadocia & drama at the border. Ed.

Your next bike? – Stephen Worrall

Am I the only one who is always thinking about what my next bike might be? (*Probably, because you should be thinking about your next bike, not mine! lol*) This is especially so during these lockdowns. When I can't get out to ride my current bike there are distractions from the other offerings you see in magazines or on websites. Maybe it is a coping mechanism to deal with cabin fever, or maybe I'm drifting off into a fantasy world of riding the ultimate bike when (if) life returns to normal? Nonetheless, it is a perfectly reasonable indulgence (I tell myself), there are so many bikes to choose from!

When I change my bike I do a lot of research into the models I've shortlisted. I use matrixes and score sheets to evaluate each bike against a common set of criteria I deem necessary to meet my future riding needs. Then test the results using a [sensitivity analysis](#), only to find the best match is not the one my heart fancies! So I go back over my selection criteria, reapply the scores and come up with a different answer! Sometimes I get the same answer, which makes me think that I may have found the perfect bike! But of course such a thing doesn't exist, otherwise all the manufacturers would go out of business, apart from the one building the perfect bike of course!

Maybe it is simpler if you want to use your bike for one purpose only, such as racing, off road, or maybe just commuting. '*Rubbish*' I hear lots of racers, off roaders and commuters shout! Even if you use your bike for one purpose, there is still a choice of many different machines. So do spare a thought for the rider who wants an 'allrounder', need I say any more?

Most of us enjoy a range of riding, so there is a need to have some firm criteria to guide our choice of bike. Even if you are lucky enough to afford more than one bike to reflect your riding interests, decisions still have to be made. Maybe just being guided by your heart is the simplest. This approach I imagine suits the purchaser of a custom bike or even a classic. I keep thinking that one day when my riding is limited to going for a coffee and meeting up with some mates, or just looking cool, I can enjoy buying a bike that is totally impractical, a little extreme in design and definitely a one off! But I suspect it still won't be that easy. I can already imagine quite a long list of elements, materials, colours and impressions that my heart would be looking for!



When it comes to deciding which bike to select I begin to understand how 'collections' start!

Sometimes you decide to stick with the one you've got! – *Stephen Worrall*

The Last Laugh Word

My thanks to our coterie of regulars, the newsletter would not survive without them. If only I had decided to hop back on a bike 30 years ago, I would have loved to go touring (did loads in a car). My one foray last year to Northumbria taught me that, in my case, I need to practice with a few 2/3 day trips: 200+ miles a day for 5 days requires a lot of concentration. It also helps to be blessed with a spouse who's happy to have you out of the house (Phil the Planner), or enjoys the pillion (Brian the Explorer & Keith the Birthday Boy Wanderer): not the case in the South household.

A group of bikers on sports bikes all aged 40, discussed where they should meet for lunch.

Finally it was agreed that they would meet at Weatherspoon's in Uxbridge because the waitresses had big breasts and wore mini-skirts.

Ten years later, at age 50, the bikers now sport tourers again discussed where they should meet for lunch.

Finally it was agreed that they would meet at Weatherspoon's in Uxbridge because the food and service was good and the beer selection was excellent.

Ten years later, at age 60, the friends now on Adventure bikes again discussed where they should meet for lunch.

Finally it was agreed that they would meet at Weatherspoon's in Uxbridge because there was plenty of parking, they could dine in peace and quiet, and it was good value for money.

Ten years later, now on Harleys at age 70, the friends discussed where they should meet for lunch.

Finally it was agreed that they would meet at Weatherspoon's in Uxbridge because the restaurant was wheelchair accessible and had a toilet for the disabled.

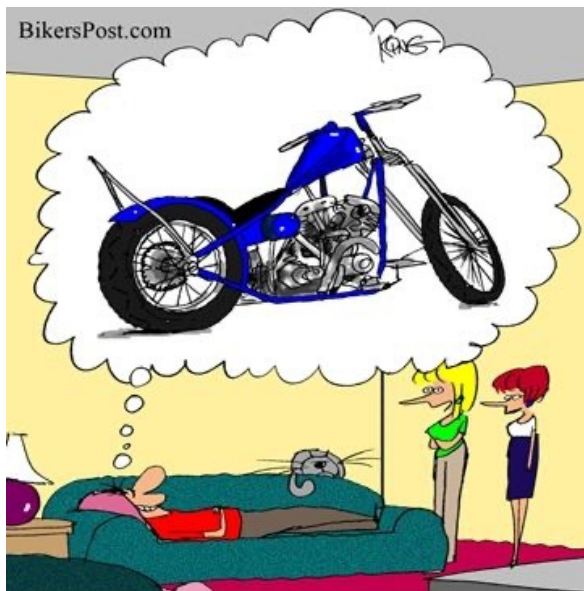
Ten years later, at age 80, riding battery powered mobility scooters, the friends discussed where they should meet for lunch.

Finally it was agreed that they would meet at Weatherspoon's in Uxbridge because they had never been there before.

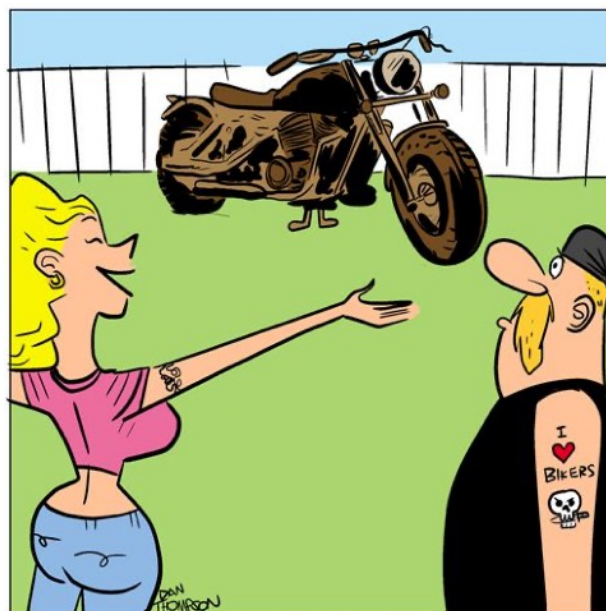
Thanks to Phil for this month's laugh – that time is getting too close. It's very lonely sitting here so any response would be most welcome. [Colin](#)



"My husband, much like his motorcycle, is a constant work in progress."



"Look, he's smiling. He must be dreaming about me."



"HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY! IT'S THE BIKE YOU ALWAYS DREAMED OF...MADE ENTIRELY OF CHOCOLATE!"