

# FABULOUS FRANCE

2,700 kms travelled in France over 16 days - entirely hoodless!



Alpine MG Kiwis  
Viv and John



A happy roadside picnic

This is exactly what my wife Viv and I enjoyed from July 4th to 20th 2019, with huge thanks to our good friends Roger and Pat Mayo, stalwarts of the Exeter Area MG Owners' Club in Devon, and thanks to magnificently fine, hot weather.

We sent an email to Roger and Pat in July 2013 when we were visiting England (we are from New Zealand), and soon found ourselves going on a club run. Since then, we have been firm friends. Two previous summers spent shearing sheep in Devon meant we had other friends to visit there, but we had never met any MG people.

Having a daughter living in Waikato, New Zealand, Roger and Pat visit annually and have been part of several MG events and tours with us in recent years, usually driving our second MGF. When, in October last year, they mentioned Exeter MGOC were organising a July tour of France, our antenna went up. They would be driving their MGB roadster and offered us their nice MY2000 MGF to take part. What an exciting opportunity that was, somewhat tempered by the fact we would be suddenly driving on the 'wrong' side of the road, never having done it before, and in someone else's car. It certainly demanded concentration but proved much easier than expected and very satisfying in the end.

After an overnight ferry from Portsmouth to Caen, we drove off into Normandy at 7am on 5th July. Exeter Club members Nigel, Anne, Bob and Lorraine in their MGBs and their friends Alan and Bev in their Morgan took off on a 320kms run south to Saint-Satur where they were staying for two nights, but we, along with Roger and Pat, took a more leisurely approach. One reason was to spend a very interesting day exploring the D-Day beaches but we also wanted to adjust quietly to the right-hand side of the road. We went just 80kms to Falaise that evening and caught up with the others with an easy drive the next day.

We enjoyed a very full day of driving on Sunday 7th to the city of Macon, using very nice country routes with very little traffic. We moved on the Monday to arrive at Annecy for three nights. If you don't know it, it's a beautiful place known as the 'Venice of the Alps' with canals and a lovely historic town area on the shore of Lake Annecy.

On Thursday 11th, we drove to Saint Jean de Maurienne for another three-night stay. From there we conquered six mountain passes. The highest was Col du Galibier reaching 8,978ft, often used by the Tour de France which was due there later in July. The other passes were Col de la Croix de Fer, a real beauty, Col du Glandon, Col du Télégraphe, Col de la Madeleine and Col de Chaussy which has an amazing almost sheer cliff descent with 17 hairpin bends. This area and Lake Annecy were the focus of the trip

and thoroughly exceeded our expectations. From there we headed back west for a night at the pretty town of La Clayette and then a stay at Guéret on the way to the Atlantic coast for three nights at La Rochelle, a very historic and beautiful place. One night at Vannes eased the journey to meet an early afternoon ferry at Roscoff for our return to Plymouth and Exeter on 20th July. The stages for this tour were very well planned by Bob and Lorraine and all credit to Roger and Pat that their MGs performed faultlessly for us. We are very grateful to have been able to share in this adventure. We love life in our beautiful spacious homeland which is fabulous for MG driving, but one thing we can't so easily do is go touring in foreign lands. France is a spacious and beautiful country too, with a very comprehensive road network. We were able to use nice quiet country roads with very little traffic much of the time, seeing scores of little villages and avoiding motorways almost entirely. We passed through large areas of gently rolling farmland with beautiful sunflower crops and harvesting of superb-looking grain crops in full swing, all in great contrast to the mighty Alps region. We found the whole experience a huge privilege. In England, before the French tour we stayed a few days with Elizabeth and Neville Hill near Worcester and enjoyed a Herefordshire MGOC Sunday run. We had met them at Swavesey in 2013 at the MGOC 40th celebrations and in 2016 they attended the MGF Festival we organise at Mangaweka, New Zealand. It was also good to catch up with our friend Rachel Dean, keen MG Manawatu member and Mangaweka resident until returning to England permanently in 2018 and settling in Wingerworth near Chesterfield.

The day after returning from France we enjoyed a Sunday lunch run with the Exeter MGOC folk. This run on 21st July was exactly six years to the day since our original club run with Roger and Pat, capping off a wonderful month of MGing.