

France/Italy Part 1: Calais – Beauvais – Clemont Ferand – Millau – Florac

Bluebell the motorhome is parked up on a very pretty aire in the town of Florac, which is situated in the South of France, in the Gorges du Tarn region. The sun is shining, and its feeling hot, hot, hot!

We arrived into Calais at 4pm local time on Wednesday, and by 6pm we were pitched up on a free aire with free services (water etc) in Beauvais. It was a handy stopover for us, we didn't want to be driving too long and the

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town itself is very close to the motorway. The
aire here is lovely, and we were soon set up
with a g and t, solar panel on, etc. We had a
very peaceful night and set off for our long
slog down the motorway to Clemont Ferand.
We made the mistake of completely trusting
the sat nag, which decided to throw in the
Eiffel Tower as a special treat- we ended up
driving through the middle of Paris in the van,
something which I won't want to do again,
and wouldn't recommend – however we man-
aged to do so stress free, and got a couple of
cheeky glimpses of the famous tower!

Once Paris had been successfully navigated
it was a straight run down the motorway, we
were heading for a France Passion site near
Volvic, which has been recommended to us

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by Dad and Jenny. We've been looking forward to it for years, and had spent near enough the whole journey deciding how we were going to cook the trout that we would catch, as it was raining and we didn't think the BBQ would be a good idea. Unfortunately the BBQ wasn't the only thing the rain got the better of, the France passion site were unable to accommodate us on their grass pitches as it was water logged! Next time maybe!

We headed a few miles down the road to a vineyard at nearby Chateaugay. This place didn't quite grab our fancy, it looked very run down and in the middle of nowhere, and the approach road had pot holes that looked like they would give Bluebell a run for her money, so we did a swift turn and headed onto

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the aire in the town of Chateaugay. By now, we'd been driving a long time and were getting grouchy. Poor Keith failed to stop at the junction which had a stop sign marked right next to the aire, as we could see for miles there was no traffic. Unlucky for us, the local police were there and we got pulled in on the entrance to the aire for failing to stop! 5 mins later, and lots of eye fluttering from both of us, and they let us go, with just a warning. The aire was nice, there were plenty of other vans and we could see the castle right next door, so we had a quick cuppa and a celebratory cake to have reached our destination despite several hiccups, and had a wander round the town. It was pretty, and we found a great little wine cave inside the castle where we enjoyed trying their own wine,

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which was delicious.

Next day, we set off bright and early as we wanted to visit the Volvic source which was just down the road, and also nearby Pay de Dome, an extinct volcano which promised fab views. Once we arrived at Volvic we checked out the visitors centre and did the obligatory filling of our empty bottles in their fountain. There wasn't an awful lot to see as the source is underground, but we enjoyed it all the same- the water from there is drunk all around the world and so now next time we get a bottle, we can remember back to our visit.

Next up, half an hour down the road was Pay de Dome. There is a massive parking area

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there, and you get the train up for a very reasonable 9euros each return. Jazz was free! The views were spectacular and we loved every second up there. There was a shop, cafe and restaurant, but we enjoyed an hour of wandering, taking photos and watching the para gliders launch off the top! They have balls!!

We left after lunch and hit the motorway again, this time aiming for Millau to see the impressive bridge across the valley. We decided to come off the motorway before it turned into a toll to cross, instead opting to drive down to the town, stay on the aire and do the bridge tomorrow. However, the aire, although nice, seemed to need a degree to enter, so we left it, heading for a wild camp-

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ing spot I'd read about at nearby Roma de Tarn. The spot was fantastic, we had a private spot right next to the river, in a gorgeous valley. They had even put a picnic table there for us! We enjoyed our evening there, and really relaxed. We even cooked our tea outside! Our drive to the spot took us directly underneath the millau bridge, which was stunning, and so this morning we stopped at the viewpoint and visitors centre for breakfast and a look. It really is amazing, it's not til you stand under it that you get a sense of how huge it is!

We set off towards our next stop, which is Florac, where we are now. Our drive to get here today was stunning. Right through the heart of Gorge du Tarn, and its been fantastic. Mas-

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sive gorges, picture perfect river, it's just stunning. We've spent the afternoon chilling (or baking rather) outside the van, and we are now about to head into town for a beer. Well, it is Saturday night!

Until next time

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Until next time ☐



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