

Hervidores a España

For those of you that can't speak Spanish (like me) it translates to "Kettles to Spain". As that's what's happening this May, a group of us, six in all, are venturing across the Bay of Biscay to hit land again in Spain at Bilbao. I've done this a quite a few times now but always on modern bikes, but for this event we're all on our trusty (hopefully) Kettles. So with a total of at least 240 years worth of action between them we'll see how they all perform. The crossing from Portsmouth to Bilbao has been arranged by Skid, our Treasurer and Membership Secretary. It's a near on 36 hour crossing, as apparently the Sunday sailing pulls into Roscoff for a crew change. So by the time we've got into the harbour, done a crew swap and back out to sea again; it must add about 12 hours! Pity, but there you go. As there are six of us we have two cabins, a two and a four berth. Having done these before I know just how much room there will be with four in that cabin, there will be no cat swinging, not unless you want to rap it's head on at least two cabin sides. Snoring will have to be banned for both nights, as will the exhausting of internal bodily functions. Once in Spain we will be riding a big loop of a circuit down to the right of Madrid, looping underneath it and then back up to the North via the western side of Madrid. Most of this (if not all) will be non-Motorways; sticking to A and other minor roads. The route and where we are going to stay is down to me, having had some experience of this previously. We won't need tents or sleeping bags as we're staying in pre-arranged hotels and not just any hotels but, Paradors. These are probably one of the only good things that Franco started, during his reign of terror. They are a bit like a Spanish version of our

National Trust, in that most of them are in old buildings that have been restored or in some cases, rebuilt. From convents to castles, old houses, monasteries, etc. some dating back to the 14th century. They are fantastic places; not cheap, but as we're sharing rooms, the cost isn't too bad at all. I managed to get a good deal using Keytel, the UK agent for the Paradors. A very helpful young lady there, helped to get the best deal possible. With breakfast, it works out to about £50.00 per head per night; so £350 for the seven nights, which is about the same as the ferry return crossing is per head. One advantage of pre-booking is that we can arrive virtually at any time. If you do want to do a similar trip there are about 90 of these hotels spread throughout Spain, so you can pick and choose where you go and stay; I thoroughly recommend them. Each day's ride will be about 175-275 miles a day as the crow flies but, will actually be a fair bit more than that, as we'll be riding mostly A and B type roads and many of these meander a fair bit. So you can add at least 50 miles more. The only bit of motorway riding will probably be on the trip to our final hotel, before we have to catch the ferry back. A bag full of essential spares will be taken between us, as will a good selection of commonly required tools, just in case. There'll be a good spread of models on the trip; I'll be on 1 of 3 Ms, there's a K, an A and a B. As they are old machines I have taken out an insurance that will get me and the bike back in the event of a major catastrophe as we won't be finding any dealer network able to help us in Spain! I'm really looking forward to this and can't wait!

Nick Lowe Club secretary