

# ESPAÑA

April 2017

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**It was a dark and stormy night and the Captain said to the First Mate, "Mate, spin us a yarn"... and thus he began. "It was a dark and storming night..."**

It was indeed a dark and stormy night crossing the Bay of Biscay. Some of the seafarers on the lower decks didn't fare too well but mid-ships on deck 7, where I was quartered, wasn't so bad. Once clear of Bilbao I was soon amongst the hills and countryside of northern Spain before crossing the plains of Navarra in warm sunshine. I hadn't done any particular research but simply plotted a route south using a Michelin map. Following green edged routes as best I could to the east of Madrid I was thoroughly rewarded with fantastic roads and glorious scenery almost all of the way south. Mountains, high passes, steep sided gorges, medieval villages and castles. Deer and huge vultures hunched roadside, devouring a dead carcass added to the spectacle.

My overnight stops included Cuenca, one of Spain's most important cities and a World Heritage Site; although I didn't know that until after I'd arrived. Built by the Moors during the medieval period the Citadel hangs from the cliff edge over the Huécar gorge; a real find.

There were some short bursts on autovias and boring main roads but not for long and only out of necessity. I was mostly on good tarmac, sweeping high and low through National Parks and scenic areas.

At one point I topped out on a high plateau, riding through what can only be described as a plantation of wind turbines, hundreds of them and a real commitment to alternative energy generation. This fact wasn't lost on me as back in the UK electricity was being generated without burning a single ounce of coal for the first time since the Industrial Revolution in 1882. After three and a half days of glorious riding south through parts of Spain I didn't even know existed, I was delivered up to the contrasting Costa del Sol.

He was very animated chap of Indian origin, leaping out of his Italian registered van and skipping across the petrol station clutching a satnav. "Do you know how to use a satnav?" he squealed. "Why?" I asked, because "I need to get to Italy". If I was trying to get to Italy I don't think that I'd be riding south through Spain in the direction of Gibraltar. I showed him the route on my map and entered Milan into his satnav. He seemed grateful enough.



*Cuenca*

**Read more overleaf...**

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**Contact Gordon**

Email [gordon@linbeck.co.uk](mailto:gordon@linbeck.co.uk) for a chat or advice on your next motorcycle adventure.

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## ESPANA (continued)

Marbella was OK but I was soon restless, eager to get back on my new GS Rally and cover some more miles. I was very pleased with my recent purchase; it's slightly lower, lighter and less bulky than my GS Adventure, although it doesn't cover as many miles on a tank of fuel but that's manageable.

My route north followed much the same as last year's return from Morocco. Up to Guadalupe, across Extremadura, on over the Sierra de Gredos to Valladolid and into the Picos mountains. The bonus this time was that my ferry didn't sail until 8.30pm in the evening so I was able to ride a full circuit of the Picos de Europa before heading to Santander and the ferry home.

What started out as an alternative mode of travel to flying, turned into a fantastic ride, both down and up, through mostly unknown Spain, well unknown to me at least. It was clear that I'd not been on any obvious tourist route as I saw only Spanish number plates for most of the time. I've every intention of repeating trips like this in future, venturing into less popular areas in search of gems and lesser ridden roads.

I've learnt over the years that I cannot make up characters as wonderful and entertaining as the ones I meet on my travels. Whether this trip's character ever arrived safely in Italy I'll never know, let's hope so.



Guadalupe



Picos de Europa



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