

Massif Central Tour

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After a rather damp week in the Dordogne a small group set off for a few days in the Massif Central area. We were based in Bort-les-Orgues, and the entrance to the hotel underground car park was a bit challenging – steeply down hill and at a very strange angle to avoid the building next door. Exiting was even worse, with a steep, uphill, blind junction to join the road. Thank goodness for a pillion who was willing to stand in the road and hold up the traffic to allow three bikes and a car to drive straight out!



The Auvergne is definitely an area to visit if you like twisties and scenery. The main roads are good to ride and not very busy, but once on the back roads you'll find winding, undulating roads through dense woodlands and across open ridges with stunning views of the volcanic mountain scenery.



On our first day we took a roundabout route to Puy de Dome. When we first visited here many years ago it was possible to ride right to the top, but now the roads have been closed and you must take a train to experience the views and investigate the Roman building which is undergoing restoration.





Stunning views from Puy de Dome and the Roman building.



The power station in the dam in Bort-les-Orgues provides tours, but you must book 48 hours in advance. We hadn't so weren't allowed in, but decided to head for Sancy, the tallest mountain in the volcanic chain. The ride would have been more fun in warm sunshine, but it was damp, only 3° and we were all frozen by the time we arrived at the cable car station.



In good weather you can see Mont Blanc from the top of Sancy. We couldn't even see the top of Sancy and the cable car was closed for maintenance. A warming cup of hot chocolate in the café restored our spirits and we rode back to the town of Le Mont Dore for a very nice galette lunch before braving the cold ride back.



Our final day here was sunny but still cold. We started the day with a ride to Salers, a quaint and fascinating mediaeval hilltop village, followed by a fun and scenic ride to Puy Mary. Sadly, the small restaurant there was very busy, so we decided to head to Riom where we found an excellent boulangerie café for lunch. The day was completed by a ride to the top of the "Orgues" (a rock formation resembling an organ) after which the town is named. The plateau provides stunning panoramic views across the town and the range of volcanic mountains including Sancy and Puy Mary.



Top of the "Orgues"



The finale of the trip was a meal in a French restaurant where Adrian (and the other males in our party) fell in lust with Lilou, our vivacious waitress for the evening, followed by a firework display in the town in celebration of their firemen.

We had a great holiday in the Dordogne and in the Auvergne, made special by the riding and the scenery, but most of all by the company of our fellow club members.

We took two days to ride back to Caen and, for the first time in two weeks, it was actually warm and dry when we arrived at the ferry port.

ps. if you feel in need of something to make you laugh, ask Adrian and/or Larry to tell you about the bathroom incident!