



The BMW Club
United Kingdom & Ireland



The BMW Club Southern Section

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Dordogne & Loire 2026 - Part 1

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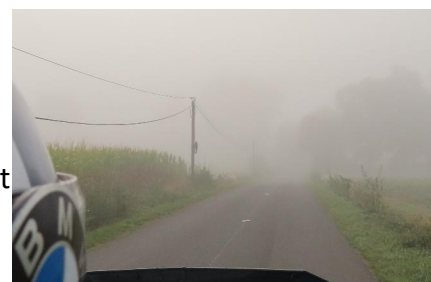
Date: September 2026

Part 1: The Dordogne

On Monday we met Erica and Peter & Nicole in Portsmouth for check-in to the overnight ferry to Caen. Peter nearly didn't make it – his ticket was for 2027! A few minutes later and a few £s lighter the booking had been changed, and he and Nicole were able to join us on the correct ferry.



Our ride to the Dordogne started with good roads when we left Caen, but we soon encountered thick fog and a temperature of only 11°. Eventually the sun broke through and we warmed up, but we were then on miles of dead straight roads on our way to our overnight stop in Saumur. Paul joined us there. The next day, after more dead straight roads (this part of France is quite boring to ride, but at least there's very little traffic) we finally hit some better riding and arrived at Tim & Sarah's on Wednesday at about 5 o'clock. Duncan had arrived earlier and was already cooling off in the pool - the temperature had risen to 29°.



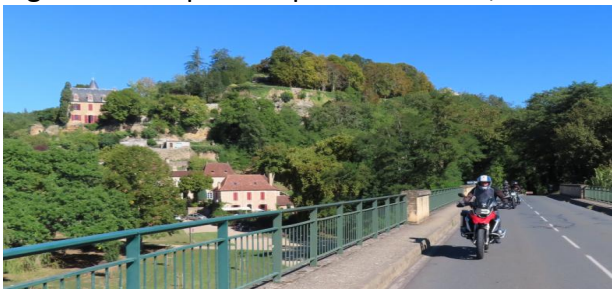
On Thursday afternoon Tim led a ride to a paper mill at the Moulin de la Rouzique. The mill was built in 1650 and was one of thirteen in a small area but is the only one still working today. It is housed in a beautiful building, and the tour showed us how rags are processed to become paper. Our guide spoke very quickly in French and English, but we were able to follow the gist of what she was saying. It was now 33°, so we all enjoyed a cooling ice cream before setting off on the ride back.



Tim hadn't planned anything for Friday so Mike and I decided to visit the Grottes de Maxange. We were joined by Duncan, Peter and Nicole. Paul and Erica had decided to go their own way (or relax by the pool). We arrived at the caves



late morning and the next tour wouldn't be until 2:30, so we returned to the nearby village and had a very leisurely lunch. At the caves the tour guide spoke in French only, and lots of it. Our printed English version seemed very brief in comparison. But the "unique concretions" in the cave were interesting to see and we all enjoyed the tour. We'd taken a winding route to the caves, but the temperature had risen to 37°, so we took a more direct route back to the gites for a dip in the pool and a nice, cool beer.



On Saturday Tim led us to the Château des Milandes – sort of. Although he got us very close, he couldn't quite work out the last few kms and we crossed the Dordogne river at least four times on the same two bridges. With Mike and Paul's help we eventually found the Château, where lunch was the first call. After lunch we did the self-guided tour, learning about the rags to riches to rags life of Josephine Baker who was an exotic dancer in the 1920s, human rights activist and a member of the French Resistance in WW2. The castle and its grounds are beautiful, and after the tour we watched a display of raptors. Next, we had an ice cream then a good ride home – we didn't get lost this time!





Sunday was pizza day and we were free until about 3pm, so everyone went their own way until then. Some stayed by the pool, some went into nearby Bergerac and Mike and I decided to go out on our own. We took a winding route to the Cingle de Tremolat, but the parking bay at the viewpoint was closed so we carried on, through the village of Tremolat to Limeuil, at the confluence of the Rivers Dordogne and Vezere. After a coffee and a wander round the village we made our way back to sample Tim's delicious home-made pizzas.



Monday saw us leading a ride to Brantome – a village we have visited many times but still enjoy. We were joined by Erica, Duncan, Peter and Nicole. Unusually, Brantome wasn't busy, probably because a lot of the shops close on Mondays! We had a leisurely lunch by the river, then explored, taking in the sights of the very impressive Abbey and the peaceful river setting. Yet another ice cream was consumed before we began the return journey. In the evening we were driven to Tim and Sarah's local restaurant for a delicious meal.





When we awoke on Tuesday the weather was overcast and not so warm. Tim led us to a park by the river in Cubjac, where we could see how low the water level had become – a normally pretty weir had become a dried ledge with water only seeping into the lower level. Sarah brought us a tasty picnic of cheese and ham, then we followed Tim to the Velorail station. What fun! Pedalling special cars along a stretch of disused railway line wasn't too hard because they were electrically assisted, and the harder you pedalled the faster you went. The track

was very slightly uphill on the way out, but on the downward return journey the cars really flew along! Duncan, Paul, Tim and Mike were in one car, Nicole, Peter, Erica and I were in another - and we went faster!



Sadly, we had to leave Sarah and Tim on Wednesday morning. We'd all had a great week, and they had looked after us so well, providing plentiful breakfast and dinner every day with limitless beer and wine. Tim had led us to interesting places along winding D roads with no traffic and faster N roads with minimal traffic – it's a great area to ride. And we'd only had rain one night!



Sarah and Tim are now in the process of converting some of the gites to become their accommodation and selling the farmhouse, so this will be the last Club trip that they will host, although they will still have one gite available. I'm sure that all members who have stayed with them over the years will join me in thanking them for their super hospitality in the past and wishing them all the best for the future.

