

## **Cycling from La Murette**

This is just a note to assist or possibly hinder you in your cycling endeavours from La Murette; it's based on a fortnight stay we had in August 2014.

### **French motoring**

Astonishingly these people still insist on driving on the wrong side of the road! We drive on the left in order to mount a horse from the left without getting tangled up in your sabre, one day the French will concede the wisdom of this approach. Other things to watch for include amber right indicating arrows at traffic lights that allow you to filter into the crossing traffic if you happen to be turning right at the light. On the minor roads crossroads often have no designated priority, these are demoted by a triangle sign featuring a black diagonal cross in the middle, watch for these as no one and everyone has right of way at the same time.

Anyone who cycles in the UK will be able to regale you with stories of (sometimes appalling) mistreatment by British motorists, France is different. Cycling is the national sport so instead of trying to kill you French motorists will treat you with a great degree of caution, generally they will give you plenty of room when passing and not cut you up for example. If you mistakenly find yourself on a fast road however they generally won't slow down as they approach you from behind so they may pass at high speed which can be unnerving. Do what I did and put your wife at the back.

### **Roads**

Cycling is verboten on N/E roads but exercise caution because it isn't impossible to find yourself on one by accident. The slip roads could be better signed with say "Defence de cyclism" but they aren't so basically if the route indicator is green – you shouldn't be on it.

'D' roads, some of these can be quiet if they follow parallel to the route of an N road (the D 712 where it follows the N12) but most will be busy and filled with fast traffic (some of whom may be Brit's so be warned). As a general rule they should be avoided if possible.

Given the above advice you are pretty much consigned to using the very minor roads to go from place to place. This is great news because you get to see small pretty French villages and countryside that you just pass by on the more major roads. These roads are by and large empty apart from the odd tractor or maniac/drunk avoiding the gentlemen of the Gendarmerie on the major routes. This makes for excellent cycling; we spend most of the fortnight two abreast in no danger whatsoever.

The smallest routes of all are the Voie Vert, they vary from converted railway tracks to 1 ft wide paths through the woods, motor traffic is banned and maps for them can be picked up locally. Most of the routes are really only suitable for off road bikes but the arrow straight section of former railway line running broadly from Dinan to Dinard is fine for road bikes (20Km or so)

### **Navigation**

Aha! Given the minor roads you'll be using navigation can be a nightmare, you need to have local maps. I suggest the IGN map sheet 1017 E (Broons) and 1117 O (Dinan/Caulnes) these are 1cm=250m. Also Michelin sheet 309 1cm=1.5km. The maps are quite expensive but are essential and available from the Total station on the D712 West of Caulnes. This sounds daft but a handlebar

mounted compass would be pretty handy as we found ourselves on several occasions on the right road but heading in the wrong direction (doh). Road signs on the D roads will only indicate the more major villages or villages with significant road junctions, this isn't surprising because there are simply so many 'two horse' villages in the area. Once you are on the minor routes the signs are very small (1ft x3") on posts 3 feet high actually on the junctions but they do show the way to the next villages generally however small the hamlet might be. You may find that the signs only face one direction so you have to stop and crane round to read them and sometimes there are no signs, but this is part of the charm of the whole experience. Expect to get lost. Our most successful strategy was to work out the route beforehand village by village to achieve the final destination so at each stage we knew what village we were to aim for next.

### **Terrain**

Not as flat as you might imagine but none of the hills are fantastically demanding. What they call undulating I guess.

### **Where to go.**

Most of what we did involved heading north or North West. Who knows what lies south of La Murette?

**Decathlon** – theoretically the shop for all of your cycling needs. The one at Dinan was pretty poorly stocked, however.

**Dinan, Dinan and DINAN.** What a knockout historic town; a walled city on top of the hill and an historic port in the valley below. If you use the D 766 (don't) it's about 20Km but it's longer on the minor roads. We went into Caulnes and crossed the D766 to Guitte (signposted Guenroc) and then village hopped as follows:

Guenroc

St-Maden

Go past Tregrit

Trevron

St- Carne

And into Lehon

Past the hospital on the left and then follow left up into the old walled town of Dinan. It's a bit of a climb and the upper section is cobbled.

**Jugon les lacs** – Local beauty spot, guess what it's a big lake. You can get a bit of the way along the shore on a road bike but to circumnavigate it you'll need an off roader. The village is very attractive (they all are locally) and you can get a pedalo out on the lake. I think we started by going to Broons on the D712 and staying on the 712 to Dolo and thence to Jugon. So basically we broke the rules by going on a D road – but the N12 is taking all the traffic. 20 Km or so.

**Fort La Latte** – A fairy castle near Plevenon north west of La Murette. We cheated and took the car to Pleherel Plage then pedalled up to Fort La Latte taking in the impressive lighthouse at Cap Frehel. The round trip back to the car is probably only 18Km and the bulk of it is on a good quality cycleway following the D34A. To really appreciate the dramatic coast here though you need to walk along the coast path and not use the bikes- it is pretty awesome and good beaches.

**Lancieux** – Cheating again I'm afraid we only ever drove here. Very nice beach and bands playing in the evening at Lolly Papaya a sort of bar at the west end of the beach. But we did cycle from here up to Dinard and Le Minihic via St Briac and St Lunaire. The latter two are very nice seaside towns and worth a visit. The coast roads D786 & D114 can't really be avoided but the traffic isn't fast because it's crowded say 30 Km round trip. Only one sizeable hill neared Pointe de la Vicomte. We ate us sandwiches on the jetty at le Minihic – there's a very steep but mercifully short climb back up from the jetty to the town.

**Louison Bobet Museum** – A must if you are into cycling – a charming little museum dedicated to a three times Tour de France winner. They've got a couple of his bikes all the jerseys etc etc. Well worth a look. It's at St Meen Le Grand – signposted from Caulnes and it's very little distance but I can't remember how far.

That's all folks.

Steve Beswick