



**By scooter through South-West-Europe
July 1st to September 28th, 2012
by Peet Lenel**

Beat (Peet) Lenel
Töberstrasse 23a
CH-9425 Thal
Switzerland
E-Mail [beat\(at\)lenel.ch](mailto:beat(at)lenel.ch)

Internet: <http://www.lenel.ch>

Version: 07.01.2016

Table of Contents

Germany	1
Luxemburg	1
Belgium	2
France: Normandy and Bretagne	4
Spain: Basque Country, Castilia and Leon	11
Portugal	14
Spain: From Andalusia to Catalonia	19
Andorra	30
France: Provence and Camargue	31
Northern Italy and Ticino	35
Pictures	38
Maps	47

Germany

01.07.12 Thal-Saarbrücken Yesterday was a dry and sunny, but oppressively hot day - more than 30 degrees cigrade in the shade - preventing me from falling asleep. And the buzzing noise from the computer, which had run through the whole night because I was trying unsuccessfully to secure a large file to Skydrive, had not helped either. I had't slept for five hours, when the alarm clock wakes me at five. I turn off power and water and drive off at six, still in warm weather. Up to Kreuzlingen I have no problem, I am even sweating because of the heat. After Constance, the sky is getting darker. In Engen, I see a black wall right where I want to go. I stopped and put on the rain gear. At a petrol station in Hegau I have to refuel. The sky is as black as at night. As soon as I have filled up, a torrential downpour begins. I leave the scooter in a roofed parking lot and return to the petrol station, where I drink coffee with two other motorcyclists, while the rain pelts down outside. After about half an hour, the nightmare is over and I am able to continue in less intense rain. Leaving Villingen-Schwenningen in direction of the only 25 km distant Triberg, it is getting quite cold. There is steady rain this side of the Black Forest. Despite the rain suit, I feel the water making its way through the zippers. Everywhere are branches and leaves on the ground - there must have been a mighty storm. In Offenburg I get a bit lost, but once again find the road in direction of Strasbourg. Via Kehl I drive to Rheinau where I hold towards Haguenau. On the French side, there are unfortunately no more signs to Haguenau. I just keep driving in about the desired direction. My map, although quite detailed, unfortunately could not help me either. I find the turnoff to Haguenau only after some detours and a long search. In Haguenau I refuel and eat something at a fast food before continuing towards Saarbrücken. On a long straight stretch, right at the moment when a car tries to overtake me, a radar box flashes. I'm not sure whether it measured me or the car, but at least I cannot have been more than a few kilometres too fast and the picture was taken from the front, where I have no number plate. In Bitche (yes, this is the name of the place, take note of the "e" at the end) I stop at the fortress Simserhof of the Maginot Line, a huge tunnel system with team rooms, kitchens and an ammunition train, a power station with large Sulzer marine diesel engines and an air purification system in case of gas attacks. Due to time constraints I only take the short tour, so I can proceed at 17h towards Saarbrücken. In Sarreguemines I fill up again and turn on the GPS, which brings me precisely to the hostel Saarbrücken. I pile my stuff into the room and meet my roommate, James, an aspiring music teacher from Seattle. Then I walk back to the city centre. They are just having the Old Town Festival and bands are playing at various locations. The weather is - in contrast to Alsace - beautiful and warm.

02.07.12 Saarbrücken (Völklingen/Mettlach) Early in the morning I explore the city, but everything is still closed and it is raining. I walk to the castle. At the local tourist office they tell me that everything is closed on Mondays, and I should not hesitate to just explore town. I visit the newly built banquet hall in the castle, and then I walk somewhat aimlessly around the city and buy replacements for the forgotten equipment: a kidney belt and a nylon belt. The temperature is only about 13 degrees. Because I am not yet convinced by the answer from the tourist office, I walk to their main office. They indeed make a great suggestion: To visit the disused steelworks in Völklingen. A day pass for the entry fee and the railway I get there and then. I take the train to Völklingen and look at the very impressive Unesco World Cultural Heritage Site. The steel mill was built in the 19th Century and closed in 1986. Of course, the passage of time has not gone without a trace of it. From above you can see that there are still some operating steelworks in Völklingen. In the blower hall there is an exhibition on "Asterix and the Celts". I quickly return to the station and get on the next train to Mettlach. The whole town consists only of Villeroy & Boch. I visit the not particularly interesting museum "Villeroy & Boch Experience Centre". There is no coherent company history apparent, but some interesting specimens of the current collection are on display. Behind the factory are the ruins of an old church and an exhibit of the Expo 2000. I suddenly feel very ill, so I walk back to the station and get on the train to Saarbrücken. There I manage to get a replacement for my broken watch strap and eat in a Chinese restaurant. Then I walk back to the hostel, where I meet Roby, admiring the Heidenau rear tire of my scooter - he comes from Pirna, the neighbouring village of Heidenau.

Luxembourg

03.07.12 Saarbrücken to Luxembourg It is of no use getting up early and having breakfast with Roby, because the museums don't open till 10am and until then I have to wait for better or worse. I arrange yesterday's photos and read something, but then I drive off. At the historical museum Saar I still have to wait until it opens. The exhibition on the Saarland is very well organized and interesting. In a short time one learns a lot about the changing state of Saarland affiliations and the inglorious period of the Third Reich is not glossed over. The catacombs beneath the building consist of a number of tunnels connecting gun positions of the castle hill and probably escape exits. Much later than planned I leave Saarbrücken. It's not as cold as in the morning and the sky is clearing up, so I do not have to expect rain. Now that I'm running four hours late with my schedule, I drive on the highway to Luxembourg. At the service station where I fill up, they find it very funny that I only require 2.5 litres of petrol. In Luxembourg my sat nav fails me, but I do make it to the station, where it starts working again. By two in the afternoon I reach the youth hostel where I quickly check in, leave my luggage and change into more comfortable

gear. I then walk to the Old Town, across the rocks housing the casemates, to the city where I first walk the Corniche. Then I walk to the entrance of the casemates. In the 17th Century the mountain was riddled like a Swiss cheese with tunnels and stairways. Where the bridge connects the rock to the castle, one can pass either through the bridge or underneath the bridge in a tunnel. Then I walk down to the river Alzette and over the bridge to the other side of the river, where one passes along the Abbé de Neumünster to the Tour Jacob and another castle. Through the Abbé de Neumünster I walk through the "Grund" to the elevator that takes me back to the upper town. There I walk through the shopping streets and eat at the Place d'Armes. I visit the Cathedral and see the Casemates Petrus from above. At the Place Guillaume II they show a Disney film, and I sit down for fifteen minutes to watch. Then I walk to the northern part of the city, the Rue Goergen, before returning to the Grande Rue and the youth hostel.

Belgium

04.07.12 Luxembourg-Bruxelles In warm and sunny weather, I leave Luxembourg. The directions provided by the lady at the front desk were not very helpful and so I have to consult the map again, only to find out that I happen to be just in the right place and only have to follow the signs to Arlon. A part I drive on byroads, but when there are suddenly no more signs, I ride the last piece on the highway to get there safely. From there, I drive on the A4 towards Bastogne. As I drive through town (for refuelling), I miss the onramp to the A4 and have to look for it. An American halftrack from the Second World War is on the roadside - Bastogne was affected by the German Ardennes offensive. The road is like a four-lane highway, but pretty ratty, so that the grass grows in the cracks, sometimes even on the road. I stop somewhere in between, and buy a ready meal for lunch from a supermarket. But it is like jinxed, because now there are no more resting places, where it would have tables. So I stop in Namur somewhere on the shores of the Semois river and eat my lunch there, scratching the icing carefully from my dessert. I continue to Brussels, following the directions of my sat nav. Some devil must have ridden the sat nav: Instead of leading me comfortably and quickly around the circle road, it chases me through the city center, which, given the countless construction sites, brings the sat nav to its limits. I think I had to ride twice as far as necessary. Finally, I find the hostel "Generation" where I can park the scooter in the secure backyard and carry my things in quickly. It is already four in the afternoon. The sun still shines, but there is a threat of storm clouds. I walk from the youth hostel, which is located in an immigrant neighbourhood, to the stock exchange, to the Grand Place with its magnificent town halls, the Manneken Piss, which wears a U.S. flag for a dress and has a "Yes we can" slogan on the hat (it is reportedly dressed differently every day), to the Bréguet, a modern museum that mimics the adjacent church building with modern materials, the church of La Chapelle, the Sablon church, the Musée des Beaux-Arts, the Coudenberg which is integrated in the palace building, the Royal Palace (which I had passed during my odyssey through Brussels), the Parc de Bruxelles, the (not interesting) railway station, the Cathedral (which I have to leave after five minutes, because they close at 18h), the Parliament building, back to town, through the narrow streets lined with restaurants and their intrusive touts, the Church of St. Catherine, and finally to the Klein Kasteeltje, which is now an asylum home for refugees! Via the Gentessesteeweg, which is actually an Arab souk, I return to the hostel. Meanwhile, the sky has turned all black. Shortly after I return, the first drops of rain fall, followed by a thunderstorm.

05.07.12 Bruxelles It is raining when I leave the hostel. Nevertheless, I do the recommended North Walk, past the "Petit Chateau", the asylum home, with countless refugees waiting on the Boulevard de Dixmude for illicit employment, the Citroën building from the 1930s, the chic Boulevard du Roi Albert II, up to the Gare du Nord and through the station. In the Rue d'Aerschot the hookers sit in the windows and wait for customers. I walk down to the Botanique, where the ducks and a heron are sitting with hunched heads in the pouring rain hoping that it ends as soon as possible. Even for me, the rain gets too much and I go to the metro station and buy a day pass. I ride to the Palace of Justice, once the largest building in Europe. The space has not been used particularly economically, because most of it is taken up by a huge central hall. The building exudes something archaic, outmoded. I quickly visit the chic Place Stéphanie, then I go back to the metro, which takes me to Heysel where the Atomium is. There are huge queues at the ticket counter, but I was warned and do not go inside, as the exhibition is considered useless. Another metro takes me to Clemenceau, where I visit the Cantillon brewery that produces the traditional Lambic, Gueuze and Kriek beers. Tasting the beer reveals that it is pretty sour and tastes strange. From here I take the metro to Porte de Namur, where I visit the African Matonge district. In a Pakistani shop I eat a very good Mutton Curry. In Merode, I visit the Auto World Museum. There are many wonderful exhibits, but alas, despite the abundant space, they are far too narrowly parked, so one cannot see much of them. The Trabant is imputed to have 6 cylinders and an engine capacity of 7248cc, making me wonder whether this was not confused with the capacity of its fuel tank. I walk to Parc Leopold, which was once was a zoological garden. Right behind it is the European Parliament. Unfortunately I cannot attend the session, as it is too late, but I can visit the highly technologized "Parlamentarium" museum (there is an iPod for navigation). All those technical gadgets have restrained them from concentrating on the essentials. The great wealth of information makes it thus almost impossible to pick out the relevant facts. The most instructive item was a film, although I learnt nothing new. I now walk to the metro Trône, but I notice that I am already close to the Royal Palace. Since the sky is

overcast, I can now unhesitatingly take backlit pictures. I return to the Grand Place, where, because of the knights' games, they have constructed stands. In a supermarket I buy some low-carbohydrate dinner. Then I want to return to the hostel by metro, but priding myself that I was already so versed in Brussels that I knew intuitively where to change trains, I do not look at the plan and get lost. I thus have to backtrack and change to another line. Just before the onset of a thunderstorm I return to the youth hostel. My sugar levels are fortunately low today.

06.07.12 Brussels to Ghent I say goodbye to Felipe, my friendly Brazilian roommate and stow my luggage in the storage room in the basement. Then I go to the subway station, but must realize that my day pass is not valid for 24 hours, refusing me entry today. So I return, get the luggage out of the basement and drive off. It is raining. On the internet I have made myself a little knowledgeable, as to where I have to go and so I find - without the aid of the sat nav - easily out of town. However, I have to drive on the freeway to Gent, because only this is signposted. In Ghent, I drive into the city centre and switch on the sat nav. I get an uneasy feeling when an apparently older roundabout is not recognized and the sat nav remains silent for a long time. Finally, it starts talking and sends me to the highway - in direction of Brussels! I have to drive quite a distance until I find an off ramp. I am so enraged, that I almost step on the sat nav. I have to reboot it again and now it sends me in the right direction, but via hopelessly clogged byroads. Finally, I arrive in the pouring rain in the desolate Motel Formule 1 in the industrial area, the only one which still had rooms. Meanwhile, it is already noon. I put my stuff in the room and go back into town - the motel is far out. Because it's raining, I have to keep on the motorcycle suit. I park the scooter at Vrijdagmarkt. Because today is Friday, the market is in full swing. At a food stall I buy a sausage - not to compare with the St. Galler Bratwurst. I visit the big gun "Dulle Griet", which has never been used - just as well, she might have exploded. Then I walk to the castle "Gravensteen". Despite the high entrance fee, it is pretty unspectacular. The castle was used for years as a textile factory, and so the present state is only a restoration. Ah yes, the very graphic representations of the various methods of torture are still likely to scare children of all ages. From here I walk to the Sint-Niklaaskerk which I visit inside and out, then to Belfort, a tall bell- and clock tower. Every quarter hour a carillon plays. I spare myself from climbing it and head for the Sint-Baafskerk. Inside, I have to sit down, because I'm so exhausted and I must have fallen asleep for a few minutes because it is so quiet in here. Finally, I walk to the castle of Gerard the Devil (Duivelshof). There is a monument to Hubert and John van Eyck. By Henegouwenstraat I walk back to Leiengracht and Sint-Michielskerk, which stands out from the other churches, because square panels remembering the dead have been bolted to the wall. I return to the Castle Gravensteen and the Korenmarkt, and then I walk about a kilometer north to Rabot, a former customs gate on the Lieve Canal. Now I walk back to Vrijdagmarkt, buy some food devoid of carbohydrates at the supermarket and return to the motel, which has in the meantime been populated by all sorts of Eastern Europeans. Just when I'm back, a heavy thunderstorm starts. However, it does not last long. When I want to test the blood glucose contents, I get a fright: The blood glucose meter is not in the backpack. I can only have left it at the youth hostel in Brussels. I Skype to Brussels, but the receptionist is not willing to help. That, and the noise of the drunken guests yelling and screaming keeps me from sleeping until after midnight.

07.07.12 Ghent (Brussels) A disgusting breakfast is served, rounding off the picture of the dump. The orange juice is artificial and obviously sweetened so that I immediately feel worse upon drinking it. I try to call the hostel in Brussels, but the phone is not answered. At 09:30h, I cannot stand it any longer and drive to Brussels. First of all I miss the exit from the ring road - there are no destinations signposted. In search of a gas station I get on a completely wrong highway and must make a long detour, until I get on the right track again. At least, I do find a petrol station. At half past ten I'm at the youth hostel in Brussels. Giant relief: The device has been found. I measure the blood immediately and realize that the values are slightly increased. Then I pack it very carefully this time and return to Ghent. At the hotel, I change out of the motorcycle gear and return right back into town. On the way I eat a kebab in a Turkish takeaway - a lot of meat and salad, but low in carbohydrates. I park the scooter on the Vrijdagmarkt where today is another market held. Then I walk to Joremaai, where I've seen homemade wooden motorbike with a real engine in a shop window. Then I walk to MIAT, Museum of Industrial Archaeology and Textiles, which is actually not very interesting. Sure, there are some old spinning, twisting, weaving and printing machines. But the whole thing is aimed rather at children. From here I walk to Kouter, a big square with lots of bookstores, where I buy my dinner at a supermarket. Then I walk to Van Duyseplein. The area here is dilapidated and seems to be occupied by immigrants. Many stores are empty or rented out, but closed for the lack of customers. Unfortunately, I catch the wrong road out. So, thinking to walk northwards, I walk southwards and land at the Citadel Park, which I confuse with another park and so continue southbound. I end up in Zwijnaardsesteenweg. When I finally ask for directions, I am told to backtrack all the way. Again I lose myself and have to ask for directions, until I can finally start walking back on Frère Orban-Laan. I pick up my scooter at Vrijdagmarkt, fuel it up and get once more lost in the (all completely identical) streets, so I have to turn on the sat nav to find my way back. But I get a tasty, low-carbohydrate supper: Spareribs and vegetables.

France: Normandy and Bretagne

08.07.12 Ghent to Rouen I leave Ghent at 07:30h. Already before leaving, I had dressed in the rain suit, for the sky is covered with low-hanging, black clouds. Just in direction of Tournai, the clouds are especially black. It is almost as dark as at night. I have started to understand the labyrinthine road system of Ghent and find the N60 to Oudenaarde easily and without a wrong turn or having to consult the map. Via Ronse I reach Tournai. The border is not marked, only that in Douai the cars have French instead of Belgian number plates. At times there is strong rain, then again less. In between there are stretches where it is not raining at all, despite the black sky. I drive to Arras. From Arras on the N25 to Abbeville is easy, everything is well marked. In Labroye I stop and eat a big and extremely tough steak - just to spend an hour without the rain suit in the dry. Instead of driving into Abbeville, since I got lost there last time, I take the freeway bypass up to Blangy-sur-Bray. There take the D928 in direction Neufchatel-en-Bray. The only petrol station on the main road in Neufchatel-en-Bray is closed, but a taxi driver tells me where there is another petrol station. In Quincampoy I turn on the sat nav, just as a heavy downpour starts, wetting the gadget, which certainly does not improve its functionality. I arrive at 16:45h at the Auberge du Rodec, almost an hour early, and must wait another three quarters of an hour, until I can check-in. A trainee is being instructed, so the check is slightly more complicated than usual. I change and walk into the city: To Abbatiale Saint-Ouen and the adjacent Hotel de Ville. At the Place de Gaulle is an equestrian statue of Napoleon. Then I visit the Jewish lane and the Cathédrale Notre Dame. Meanwhile, the sun is visible in between the rain clouds.

09.07.12 Rouen The weather is overcast and it is quite cold. I walk to the Place du vieux marché, where they erected in 1979 an ultra-ugly, post-modern building as a market hall and Joan of Arc Memorial Church. I walk past the Temple Saint-Eloi to the Hotel de Bourgtheroulde, which is still operated as a hotel and has beautiful reliefs with historical motifs from about 1520. In the Rue Jeanne d'Arc I find a nameless church tower, which apparently is already in danger of collapse. To the Abbatiale Saint-Ouen, which is not open to the public today, but its cloister may be visited. Then to the Rue du gros-horloge where actually a clock tower with a huge clock stretches across the narrow road. Back to Place du vieux-marché, where the postmodern Eglise Sainte Jeanne d'Arc has opened now. A gypsy in a clean suit standing at the entrance asks for "donations" - which of course are intended for himself. I then walk to the other side of the Seine, to the Shopping Centre St. Sever. In the supermarket I buy something to eat, and eat it right there. Now I walk to the Ile Lacroix. Between the commercial properties there is a small Chapel of Saint Victrice which apparently serves the Romanian Orthodox Church. Since the bridge at the other end of the island is not accessible - it leads across the island - I have to backtrack. Then I walk across to the north, along the Rue Beauvoisine up to the monument at the Place Beauvoisine, then a bit back and slightly to the west, where I visit the Tour de Jeanne d'Arc - the lady was never held in this tower but is said to have been in this tower shortly before her execution. Meanwhile, it is 14h and the Cathédrale de Notre Dame has opened. I visit the cathedral, which is very impressive in its interior, and listen to several tour guides, whose information is of varying quality. Characteristic of this cathedral is that they kept applying the latest architectural styles during construction, which is why the second series of "galleries" in the nave is designed differently in the front and the rear and the actual galleries could be omitted after discovering the retaining walls. Although it is almost 16h already, I quickly go to the Musée des Beaux Arts de Rouen. The 17th Century is dominated by religious art, while a very good Velasquez (Democritus) and many Sisleys and Monets are available. Already at 17:50h I am asked to leave because they are closing and eat a good and low-carbohydrate dinner at Flunch. Meanwhile, the sun has come out and I walk back to the hostel in the evening light, through the Rue Eau de Robec which is lined with beautiful, medieval houses. A brief note: When walking on the sidewalk, one always has to look very closely because the sidewalks are littered with dog poop. Theoretically, the dog owners are required to pick it up, but no one cares.

10.07.12 Rouen to Caen (Bayeux) Once again the sky is covered with black, threatening clouds, as I leave in Rouen. And once again precisely the road that I need to leave the city is barred without giving any directions about how to detour it. I cheat myself through, even have to push the scooter across an intersection, where the road turns abruptly to the left and crossing is prohibited. Now I'm well on the road to Caen. I drive through miles and miles of the port of Rouen - although Rouen is landlocked, it has a seagoing port, because the river Seine is passable for ocean-going vessels. At La Bouille I turn off the road and ride along the Seine. From time to time it rains a bit, but I am spared from really big downpours. In Dozule I buy, because I have to fill up anyway, something to eat - like gefilte fish - and water at a Super U and eat my lunch in a rain break at a picnic area along the main road. I barely finish my food as it starts to pour again. I think that the rain is somehow characteristic for the landscape. Finally, after four instead of the expected two hours I reach Caen, which I bypass and head straight on to Bayeux. I arrive there by 14h and visit the Tapestry Museum. The exhibition with audio guide is done excellently. The carpet tells the story of William the Conqueror and is made of embroidered wool on linen. When I come out, it's already past three. I walk to the Cathedral, which has a peculiar mix of Romanesque and Gothic styles. The original Gothic cathedral was in fact destroyed in a war and later constructed using the Romanesque arches in the Gothic style. I stroll through the village, get a map from the tourist office, and return to the scooter. Via byroads - sometimes I have to ask - I ride to Tracy-sur-Mer, from where I can reach Longues-sur-Mer with

its German gun battery. Some of these guns are still in good shape, however, one has, after the capture by the Allies, exploded through carelessness. At the scarp there is still a German command bunker. The beach is so steep here that a landing would not have been possible anyway and I do not think that today's road to the beach was already there at the time. I continue to Colleville-sur-Mer, where Omaha Beach begins. Here the German fortifications are still around, there are several bunkers, machine gun nests, mortars and cannons. However, the entire fortification was only occupied by 38 men who might have been slightly in the minority on D-Day. Above, there is a huge and minutely manicured American war cemetery. With its perfect round-cut trees, the geometrically designed grave fields and the kitschy-informative Monument in the centre it offers a special sight. Just at this moment, the flags are lowered in a solemn ceremony in which apparently some American officers are present, however, too young to have been there at the time of WW2. I'm running late with my schedule. After 19h they do not admit guests at the youth hostel and it's almost 18h. I skip visiting the museum and rush back to Caen. About five kilometres from Caen I turn on the sat nav. Once again, it takes me through the whole city, whereas the youth hostel would have been reached much more comfortably via the bypass road. I check in, a few of the guests from Rouen are already there. Then I drive fast to the E. Leclerc hypermarket where I buy some food.

11.07.12 Caen Once more, the sky is covered with low-hanging, dark clouds. I say goodbye to Edgar from Poland, who is riding the huge distance to Holland with his 1000cc BMW motorbike, and walk into town. Upon leaving the mouldy and smelly Eglise de Vaucelle, unadorned except for its beautiful, modern windows, I meet Maxim, the French Canadian, who is sharing my room at the hostel. We decide to do the sightseeing together. We have to walk for several miles ahead until we get to the Tourist Office. There they shower us with maps and information on attractions. First, we visit the castle of William the Conqueror. From the huge fortress are probably only the original perimeter walls original. Inside is a very modern building, the Museum of Fine Arts. We explore those wall sections that are walkable. Then we go to the Abbaye-aux-Hommes, the monastery, where we visit the church, which includes Romanesque and Gothic architectural styles. From here we walk, past the ruins of the Church of Saint-Etienne-Le-Vieux, through the pedestrian area of the city centre. In a "Subway" fast food restaurant we eat something, because it's lunchtime, and continue to walk northeast. The Eglise du Sépulcre is closed. The Abbaye-aux-Dames is largely Romanesque, with some gothic elements. Its layout does not correspond to the Romanesque architecture, though. We walk to the tour Leroy, where we take the bus No. 2 to Caen Memorial, a huge museum of the Second World War. Admission is, despite the discount vouchers, still extremely high, but it seems to be worth it. The exhibition is in four languages, logically structured and really informative about the events during the Second World War. The time goes by very quickly - I'm especially pleased that at the end of the exhibition, to illustrate the Cold War, there is a Trabant motor car. By bus and tram we return to the youth hostel. We drop at a supermarket, but it is already closed. The one at the terminus is just about to close. They have absolutely nothing that contains no carbohydrates, so I limit myself to a piece of cheese, which probably does not fit well either - actually now almost any kind of food is forbidden to me. It is striking that in Caen there are almost no historical buildings. The reason is that the city was largely destroyed in World War II during the Battle of Normandy.

12.07.12 Caen to Cherbourg When I am just about to leave the hostel, I meet a Swiss motorcyclist from Thun, who got here all alone and even has been to Provence. Since we have to tell us a lot, I leave much later than planned. The sky is not only completely covered by clouds; it is pitch-black in the direction of Cherbourg. I continue in good spirits and with no rain gear on as the rain wall hits me with incredible force at the freeway on-ramp. Within seconds I'm soaked to the bone. I leave the freeway at the first opportunity, pull under a bridge and put on my rain gear. Then I go on in direction of Bayeux. Here I turn to Longues-sur-Mer and follow the coastal road. I go to Omaha Beach in Saint-Laurent-sur-Mer, where I visit the monument - they are just about playing the national anthems of the members of the Allies. Then I visit the private Musée Mémorial Omaha. They show a fairly good film and I see a genuine landing craft. Then I continue in the pouring rain. A village further in Vieuxville-sur-Mer there are a few rotten landing craft in front of another private D-day Museum. In Grand Camp Maisy I buy something for lunch and fuel up. The rain is still pouring. I continue to Carentan where I leave the main road and continue on byroads to Sainte-Marie-du-Mont, where Utah Beach begins. Some D-Day troops landed here. I skip the museum, because they all show roughly the same (and I'm falling behind schedule), so I continue along Utah Beach, where I see German bunkers. In one place, there is a monument. Behind the monument, you can look directly at Utah Beach, where a piece of the concrete pier is still visible in the water. In St. Marcouf I visit briefly the German battery of Azeville and Crisbecq and then cruise back to the highway, which takes me in an extremely arduous journey in the pouring rain to Cherbourg. At a garage I am getting accurate directions on how to find the hostel, but I still turn on the sat nav and find the hostel right at the designated location. Unfortunately, the hostel only opens by 18h, so I still have an hour (in the rain gear) to explore the city. At a supermarket I buy some food and I have a look at the ritzy theatre. The wind is so fierce that it destroys my umbrella within seconds. By 18h I return to the youth hostel, where I not only get a bed, but some space in the drying room to dry my completely wet clothes. In the kitchen I met Jean-Paul Alonso (www.feuilledupic.blogspot.com), with whom I am discussing the great problems of mankind.

13.07.12 Cherbourg to Le Mont-St-Michel to Saint-Malo I leave Cherbourg late because I am chatting with Jean-Paul, who invites me to his holiday home. When I'm leaving, the sky is covered with dark clouds, as usual, and the daylight is struggling to get through them. When I see a coastal road signposted, I cannot resist following it. In fact, the clouds open up a little. Despite the dark clouds there is no rain, and sometimes there is a ray of sunshine. I drive via Landemer towards Cap de la Hague. I stop at the Manoir du Tourpe, but I have no time to visit the exhibition. In Omonville I drive into the harbour, where there is even some sunshine for a few minutes. At the Cap de la Hague another tourist spontaneously offers to take a picture of me and my scooter on the Cap. I walk around the cape and drive on, for I still have a long journey ahead of me. I pass along the nuclear reprocessing plant at La Hague. I have to search a bit to find the turnoff to Les Pieux, but eventually I succeed and I drive fast towards the Mont-St-Michel. Sometimes there is a bit of rain, but I am spared from a rain storm, despite the extremely menacing clouds. In a supermarket I buy something to eat, gag it down in a jiffy and drive on. That was good, because I'm still way behind schedule. At this point, the road no longer runs along the coastline and is not very picturesque. By 14h I arrive in Le Mont-St-Michel. The (mandatory) parking lot is about three kilometers away. I park the scooter and walk to the bus station, where I get a free shuttle bus, an idiosyncratic construction with front and rear cabs, allowing it to go in both directions. At le Mont-St-Michel there is extreme tourist hype. Busloads of tourists are unloaded here and the town is literally blocked by them. I avoid the tourists and walk the stairs direttissima up to the monastery. There I cheat myself through all those who are undecided whether to spend the nine euro entrance fee to the monastery in addition to what they have already paid for the bus trip. The tour of the monastery, although there are lots of other tourists and tour groups, which always gather at the narrowest points, is very interesting. In the guardroom I buy the ticket. Via the Staircase "Grand Degré" I reach the first terrace, from where you get to the west terrace in front of the abbey church. This church is decorated in the Romanesque style, except for the chorus, which is Gothic. The Cloister (the top floor of the Merveille) is probably the masterpiece of the plant. From here you have access to the underlying refectory, a vast, unadorned room. Just below it is the guest room, which was used for the reception of the kings. I continue to the crypt of the thick pillars, the St. Martins crypt, the ossuary with a medieval lift and the chapel of St. Stephen. The final stages are the foyer and the knight's hall, the lowest floor of the Merveille. I do a tour of the surrounding wall, as far as it goes, then I go to the little church in the village and walk back to the Bus stop, which brings me back to the village. When I return to the parking lot, I have to ask for the ticket vending machines, until I find them behind a construction site! I ride speedily towards Saint-Malo. When I get to the highway, nothing seems to be right. After some searching, I realize that I went back the wrong road and am 10km from the expected onramp. So continue fast on the highway towards Saint-Malo, because I need to arrive before seven o'clock, otherwise the reception, which is usually only open from 5 to 7 pm, might close. In Pontorson I buy my dinner at a supermarket because the youth hostels are usually located far from the city centre and the shops, then I cruise at 90 km/h on the highway to Saint-Malo. I get very annoyed when it suddenly starts to rain heavily and I have to put on the rain gear, which also throws me back by another 10 minutes. Suddenly, all traffic stalls, probably an accident. I follow a motorcycle zigzagging through the traffic jam. This brings me to the exit Saint-Malo. Shortly before Saint-Malo I run out of fuel, probably because of the fast travel, and I lose some more time refuelling. Nevertheless, I get - thanks to the sat nav - in time to the youth hostel. It is a sad, huge, factory-like building. Many permanent residents as well as guests are obviously socially disadvantaged and there are crowds of rampaging children, to whom no one puts any limits. Outside it is now pouring cats and dogs, so I'm happy to be in there. My roommate, Blaise, gives me advice on what I should visit in Saint-Malo.

14.07.12 Saint-Malo Today is the French National Holiday. I walk on the Digue to the historic city centre. It is freezing cold and the sky is overcast. The Americans destroyed Saint-Malo in 1944, after the Germans had entrenched there. There are hardly any historical buildings left. When I get to the historical centre, the sky opens up and the sun comes out. I visit the narrow streets where there are way too many cars. On the city walls, I walk around town. Impressive is the Grand Porte with its two massive gate towers, inside almost more than from the outside. The castle, which also serves as a town hall and a museum, is closed to the public because there is a private National Day ceremony held. At the tourist office I get a map. I walk to the Fort National, which is accessible only at low tide and take a guided tour. Even here all above-ground buildings were destroyed during World War II and later rebuilt. I cannot visit Grand Bé, because the tide is already too high. I visit the Romanesque-Gothic Cathédrale Saint-Vincent, which was rebuilt in the seventies, after the devastations of World War 2. I buy something to eat, and consume it at the Robert Surcouf monument, a famous pirate. The only remaining historic building, the Hôtel Magon de la Lande in the Rue d'Alseld, is not yet open. So I stroll a little through the old town. Near the tourist office, an enormously large and luxurious sailing yacht and a former steamboat, apparently now run on diesel, are anchored. I visit the memorial to Jacques Cartier, the discoverer of Canada, and see the peculiar Piscine de Bon Secours, a concrete barrier in order to bathe without being hit by the waves. As I sit on the parapet, I must have fallen asleep in the sun, which I have been missing for so long. It is already 14:30h and pirate's residence in the Rue d'Alseld is opening. The guide is extremely interactive and funny, but you have to understand French very well, to catch all the allusions. I learn that the Malouins were all pirates, who each received patents from the king to war against Britain and were entitled to sell the so captured ships and cargoes to the highest bidder, after paying the taxes. In the house of the pirate there were numerous secret stairs that

served for eavesdropping on conversations. Under the house, even below the level of the sea, there were two floors of ventilated storage rooms for the official merchandise and several secret rooms for untaxed goods. I walk on the Quai de la Bourse and a retractable bridge that is just about letting a ship pass, to the Cité d'Alet, where there is a huge German fortress, which is now called Memorial 39/45. Located on the Corniche d'Alet is another German fortress whose steel dome has been riddled with allied bullets. Equally impressive is the Tour Solidor, perched above the marina on the west side. There are also the ruins of a cathedral. I walk back to Saint-Malo "Intra-Muros", where they are busy with preparations for the national day. Meanwhile, there are so many people that it gets too much for me, so I walk back to the hostel, buy a meal in a supermarket and eat it in the sunshine in front of the youth hostel. The seagulls are waiting for the bones, as soon as I turn my back, they already caught them! At 23h I get dressed again and go watch the fireworks of the national holiday. It's freezing cold outside.

15.07.12 Saint-Malo to Quimper It has cooled down even further at night and there is pouring rain. At least it is not snowing. Even upon leaving I need to dress in the rain gear. I take a wrong turn somewhere and get completely lost, but a friendly man gives me very specific instructions which lead me without any problems to the right road. I drive past Dinard and then on the road D786. In Fréhel I drive in direction of Cap Fréhel. Suddenly the sky clears and the sun appears. Unfortunately, Fort la Latte is closed, but Cap Fréhel is open and I walk between the old and the new lighthouse to the Cape and back. Yellow and orange flowers are blooming everywhere. The road runs along the coast for a time, the view is great. Upon returning to Fréhel, it's raining again and I have to get back into the rain gear. I drive pretty quickly, because riding in the rain is no fun. In Yffiniac, I leave the highway and look in vain for the road to Plaintel. I fuel up and return the highway and indeed, the next off ramp is Plaintel. However, the road is closed and no detour is signposted. Only after some trial and error I find the right direction. The rain has slowed down again. It's Sunday and everything is closed. So I stop somewhere and eat a piece of sausage. At this very moment a downpour begins. In Gourin I run out of fuel and the petrol station refuses my credit card. I drive to another petrol station, which is also automatic, but fortunately my credit card works there. In Corlay I stop a short while at the castle. Now I drive quickly to Quimper, where a triathlon is taking place and I have to bypass the city centre. Thus I drive on the D785 to Pont-l'Abbé and to St. Guénolé where I visit the Point de la Torche. It is warm and the sun is shining! There are a lot of surfers here, but also a huge German bunker. Then I go on to Penmarch, where I visit the Phare d'Eckmühl, a lighthouse. Over a long spiral staircase I climb to the platform, from where one has a beautiful view of the coast. The lighthouse was apparently built by Louis Nicolas Davout, Duc d'Auerstaedt, Prince d'Eckmühl. Near the lighthouse there is a small classic car meetings, there is a 1936 Hotchkiss, a Peugeot 301, a Sunbeam Alpine and a few more beautifully preserved vehicles. At the Tour Carrée, a ruined church, I stop again briefly. Then I return to Quimper, where I am greeted kindly at the hostel and may even put the scooter in the garage. I visit the old town, whose Cathedral St. Corentin is glistening in the evening light.

16.07.12 Quimper Breakfast consists only of sweetened food, so I quickly go into town and buy some oatmeal and milk from a supermarket, return to the hostel and eat breakfast. The purchased amount should last for a week. Then I return to the city centre, which is situated on the north side of the river Odet, and furthermore crossed by the river Steir. In the cathedral there is prayer, so I cannot visit it. The Tour Neved is the last remaining tower of the city wall. The Jardin de la Retraite is still closed, although it should already be open. One must be careful where to step on: The sidewalks are - as in Saint-Malo - covered with dog poop and it is not advisable to step into it. The market hall appears quite dead for a morning, hardly a stall is open. At 9:45h I return to the cathedral, which is now open. The Gothic nave has a slight kink, meaning it is not built on a straight line. It is alleged that this was done deliberately, to symbolize the inclined head of Christ; I would rather guess bad building ground. Then I visit the Musée Départemental Breton, where there is a very interesting exhibition of Breton culture. At the market hall I eat a carbohydrate-free lunch, and then I walk to Locmaria where there is the Jardin Médieval and some nice gardens along the River Odet – once more one has to watch the ground when walking. Here I sit down and rest, then I explore Locmaria. There I discover the Fayencerie Henriot, where I participate in a guided tour. Not much going on here, the labor costs are too high and thus only a small quantity of high-priced pieces are produced. The formerly 200 employees have been reduced to 26. I climb Mont Frugy from where one can only with difficulty spot the city, as the trees are so dense. Finally, I walk back into town, where I visit the meanwhile open Jardin de la Retraite and then the church of St Mathieu – built in 1896 in the purest Gothic style! Meanwhile, the sun has come out. A good idea is that all properties for sale have to inform on their energy efficiency. Since the Internet at the youth hostel still is not working, I return to a cybercafé in town. At half past seven I am expelled because they close.

17.07.12 Quimper to Nantes I get up early, eat my special breakfast and would actually be ready to leave, but the hostel receptionist is not here yet. So I walk into town to the Super U supermarket, where I have a coke light as a coffee substitute and buy a bar of soap. Then I walk back to the youth hostel where the hostel receptionist has meanwhile arrived and I can take the scooter out of the garage. As I leave, a drizzle starts. The rain is getting stronger, so I have to put on the rain gear. The first stop is in Concarneau, an artists' colony. The city is built on an island surrounded by a fortified wall, so that from the outside, it appears just like a castle and only upon get-

ting inside one discovers that this is the Old Town. It is market day and there is a myriad of market stalls on the mound in front of the Old Town. A funny little (functional) lighthouse, with a toilet and a telephone box below marks the entrance to the harbour. I continue to Quimperlé, a city on a island in the river Ellé. The church is unique: Round, with a platform for the community, below it a life-size sculpture of the Entombment of Christ. At a very old-fashioned petrol station where the well over 80 years old patron collects the money personally I fuel up and continue on the highway - to Nantes there are no clever alternatives and the route via byroads would account for an extra 100kms. At Auray I leave the highway and drive to Carnac. There I attempt to find the Super-U, which is not so simple, because it is situated at the opposite end of the village. I fuel up and buy something to eat. I gulp it down in a short time, because this is just a pointless waste of time, now more than ever, since I am only allowed to eat abominable food. The sun has come out and the rain has stopped. I drive to the Menhir fields. These are gigantic compared to the rather small English ones around Stonehenge. For kilometres several rows of megaliths are placed. Originally, it should probably have been six or seven rows. The fields are interrupted by streets and houses. The outermost area is called Kermario, there is also an observation tower and some megaliths are arranged differently from the others, perhaps a grave. In the meantime it is 14h and I have to continue. Because the sky is still dark, overcast and threatening rain, I return to the highway and hope to drive away from the rain. I am proceeding apace. In Missillac, I search in vain for a petrol station, but I find one in the next village Pontchâteau. The last piece is easy. Around 10km before Nantes I turn on the sat nav, which takes me once more through the city centre to the youth hostel. I check in and walk into town. The sun is shining again and the gray clouds are gone. I visit the Jardin des Plantes, where peculiar artworks by the "The Fawn, the Ford, the stretching & the Rose" are displayed, including a sunken car. Then I walk to the Château des Ducs de Bretagne, where I walk around the perimeter wall. Then I walk to Cathédrale Saint Pierre Saint Paul. It is still open and the facade is illuminated by the evening sun. I go in and admire the king's grave and the tall gothic central nave. No one would think that it was bombed in 1944 and burned down the 1972. Then I walk criss-cross through the city centre, past the Place Royale and the Place du Commerce. In a Turkish café I eat a kebab (little bread, lots of meat, thus allowed).

18.07.12 Nantes Although it makes no sense, my internal clock drives me out of bed and thus I stand by eight o'clock in the city centre, whereas it only really wakes up at ten. At the Place du Bouffay I admire once again the strange artwork by Leandro Erlich, "the final move" which depicts a removal elevator and the corner of a building apparently weightless. Next door is the communal work of art "Le Voronoï", a strange, silver-colour structure in the branches of a tree. I walk to the Ile de Nantes, where one can see from a distance the large cranes "Grue Titan". Before I see him, I hear him already, the mechanical elephant from "Les Machines de l'Île". He is running, shouting, trumpeting and spraying water. Which does not agree entirely with Jules Verne's design: It does not walk, but is advanced hydrostatic wheels. And it runs on diesel, not on steam. Instead, it has a salon in its stomach and on its back a viewing platform. At the museum, some peculiar creatures are shown: The model of a walkable tree made of steel (in front of the hall is already a branch of it), a mechanical heron, a mechanical caterpillar, a mechanical ant, a mechanical fish and several mechanical insects. Everything is only partially mechanical and needs an enormous amount of operating work. Next to the museum is a giant German bunker, the "Blockhaus". I walk to the carousel, a peculiar thing with fantasy animals from the depths of the ocean, which can be operated by the visitors. Then I walk to Titan Crane, from where one can see the other side of the river with the museum warship. I walk back across the bridge and buy in a grocery store something to eat and to drink. Then I walk to the Jules Verne Museum, which is in a fine residential area beautifully perched above the river. The museum itself is pretty pathetic, there are no interesting exhibits of Jules Verne. From here I walk into town, where I visit the church of Notre Dame de Bon Port (1858), held in the purest Romanesque style, the passage Pommeray, the Place Aristide Briand and the Cours Cambronne (a park between two rows of houses). I try to book a cruise on the Loire, but no luck, it is cancelled because there are not enough passengers. I visit the Place Royale, where a huge climbing mountain is situated, and the Church of St. Nicholas (1844), the Hotel de Ville and again the Cathedral Peter and Paul - not without casting a brief look at the Place Maréchal Foch, because I still want to visit the catacombs. They have been converted into a museum that focuses on the creation, destruction and reconstruction of the church and shows the church treasures. I walk to the castle and visit the Museum of History. This is superbly structured, with a completely logical progression, clear, concise text and few but meaningful exhibits, but unfortunately I do not have enough time to see everything to the end. On the way home I buy a large meal at the grocery store, including a 2.5 dl bottle of wine (to do justice to Salim's proposal).

19.07.12 Nantes to Île de Ré to La Rochelle By one o'clock in the morning I am awakened by deafening guitar riffs. Some residents of the row of houses next door have chosen this optimal time to practice electric guitar at full concert volume. I close the window and clog my ears. After about 20 minutes, the nightmare is abruptly over; I suppose that someone has called the police. I am leaving very early and immediately find the road to La Rochelle. The weather is fine. In les Sorinières I leave the highway to get to the road D137. I allocate Pont-Saint-Martin to a false spot on the map and head for it, only to find that the direction is wrong. Thus I have to back-track. Then I find the barely marked entrance to the D137 and can stay there up to La Rochelle. I continue to Angoulins where there is a "flunch" restaurant where I can eat from the buffet of vegetables, as much as I want, without compromising the level of sugar. I prefer vegetables to nothing at all. I return and drive to the Ile de Ré.

The huge, high, curved bridge from the mainland is not free, but only a modest three Euros are charged. I go first to the Abbaye Notre Dame Chateliers, which was destroyed in the Hundred Years' War. Then I look at the (unfortunately closed) Fort La Prée, which was partially built with the stones of the monastery. I drive to La Flotte, which calls itself the most beautiful village in the world, although this appears to be immensely exaggerated. The next village is called Saint Martin de Ré. It is a real jewel. The centre is connected by bridges on an island in the middle of a picturesque fishing port. Now I go on quickly to the Phare des Baleines, the whale-lighthouse. For a small fee one can climb the stairs up, although, many old people and small children cause a significant congestion on the narrow staircase. The view is not great, because this part of the island is dominated by water areas, maybe for the shellfish industry. I return to La Rochelle, where my sat nav has great difficulties and behaves completely erratic. Nevertheless, I find the hostel - with a map this would have been much faster. I deposit my luggage and go right back into town. This is about half an hour's walk, because one has to walk around the harbour. There is a regatta; the sailing boats are just about to leave. The towers Tour de la Lanterne, Tour de la Chaîne and Tour Saint-Nicolas are illuminated by the evening light. There is an incredible amount of tourists in the city; hordes of them congest the sidewalks. I walk up to the Tour de la Lanterne and back. Then I wait for the (battery-powered) ferry to Minimes. The journey takes considerably longer than the walk, no time gained. At the hostel, the cook notices that I put the tray back again as I only see pasta and spontaneously prepares a big plate of vegetables with eggs and cheese for me. By 22h the cafeteria is transformed into a disco and I have to grab my computer and leave. When I ask at the reception for a suitable place to write my diary, I am immediately given the keys to the meeting room. Today I have almost done 3000 kilometres since leaving home and am thus already 1000 km above budget. The rear tire looks awful; it melts like ice in the sun. I just hope that it will last another 3000 kilometres, but it does not really look promising.

20.07.12 La Rochelle Strange characters hanging out in the breakfast room, are they drug addicts or alcoholics who get a free breakfast for lack of control? One begs for five Euros, another one asks ultimately and threateningly for "the key". I thus take good care of my bags, because I have to change rooms and the reception area is still closed. I cannot carry the luggage in one go. Fortunately, nothing is taken. The sky is gray and foggy. It's raining. I walk to the Place du Marché and look at the old market, which is very busy this morning. Fresh fish, mussels and prawns are offered. Despite the rain, I walk to the Chemin des Remparts (the foot path along the old city walls, of which only a trench is left). I look at the Cathedral St. Louis, which was built in 1700 in the Romanesque style to mark the Counter-Reformation. Since the rain builds up, I visit the Maritime Museum, which consists mainly of the France II, a former ship for meteorological observations, which was taken out of service because of changes in the data collection. The propulsion is diesel-electric, which is quite strange. I participate in a two-hour guided tour, stroll around the city and visit the Church of St. Saviour, which was also built around 1700. Then I try to get internet access at the Media library, but they require an extremely time-consuming registration procedure that would take about two hours to complete. I decline with thanks and return to the hostel. There I change the room and because of my early check-in I get a lower bunk - a boon to my knees. Then I walk to the fairly distant Carrefour. Walking there, I realize that my shoe soles are already gone. I buy a lavish dinner: Prawns, clams, coleslaw and a 2.5dl bottle of wine. When I consume it in the youth hostel, I am scolded that no wine may be consumed on the premises (even though it is sold at the bar). I gladly acknowledge this, because I have anyway almost finished drinking the contents of the tiny bottle. La Rochelle is a tourist town, where there is actually little more than the three towers to see, but it is quite pretty. At the moment, the roads riddled with summer sale stands and people buy like crazy, although the goods are still pretty expensive. Here, too, the pavements are littered with dog turds, although dispensers for bags are placed everywhere.

21.07.12 La Rochelle to Blanquefort Yesterday, the roommate in the bunk above me arrived at midnight with noise and light, and at half past six he gets up again with even more noise to wake everyone in the dorm. So I awake early and get ready for departure. It appears that the day is going to be beautiful and sunny. I drive towards Île d'Oléron. It takes longer than I thought. Crossing the bridge is free. In Château d'Oléron, I stop at the fort, which was bombed during World War II and almost completely destroyed, because the Germans had entrenched themselves there. I continue to Boyardville and want to look at the Fort Boyard, but it looks quite distant and I find no way to drive closer to it. I return. In the meantime, the bridge is almost impassable due to a huge traffic jam. I finally get over it and drive to Fort Louvois, another fortress surrounded by the sea, built in 1700 as a protection against the English. The fort consists of a tower and a horseshoe-shaped courtyard with casemates and guns. I join the guided tour, which is to start at 11h. Then I continue towards Royan, on the way I quickly get a salad from a grocery store. In Royan, I have to search a long time for a petrol station. Then I drive to the ferry, where a mile-long line of cars is queuing. I overtake them until the road is too narrow for it. Then I turn off the engine and push the scooter on the sidewalk, right up to the ticket office. I easily get the ticket. As I see that I'm too far behind when they start loading the ferry - I have to get on before the cars do - I push the scooter on the bicycle path to the ferry. Thus I catch the ferry on time. On the other side is the Gironde, where for a time one only sees livestock. Then one gets to the Médoc, all vines. Every couple of hundred meters there is a "château", sometimes a slightly tarted up country house has to do. I stop at the impressive Château Lafon-Rochet and take a guided tour. The wine is made completely different from how I am accustomed: First the berries are carefully freed from all other components such as branches and leaves. Then the wine is fermented without the

skins in stainless steel tanks. Only now the red colour is achieved by pumping it through the red skins. The wine is aged in oak barrels and then blended. Therefore, the grape varieties are not indicated on the label. I continue, pay a short visit Château Laffite Rothschild, which is closed, and a few other châteaux which are impressive, but were probably only built to be shown on the label. In a supermarket I buy something for dinner and drive to Blanquefort, where I check into the youth hostel, which is actually a dilapidated former motel.

22.07.12 Blanquefort/Bordeaux The youth hostel is hardly occupied; I am the only guest in my room. Thus I was not disturbed at night and had a good sleep. After breakfast, I search the local supermarket, which is supposed to be open on Sundays, but cannot find it and drive to the next village to E. Leclerc, of which I definitely know that it is open today. I buy a few simple things that do not need refrigeration for tonight's dinner, because there is no guest kitchen and there are no catering facilities. I return to the hostel, stow the groceries in my room and drive towards the city centre. Somewhere there is a T-junction and no further signs, making it necessary to switch on the sat nav. This leads me via the usual detours to the tourist office, which is actually open and where I can obtain a map. I park the scooter right there and start exploring on foot. The weather is perfect and the sun is shining. I visit the Place de la Bourse, where water sprayers are creating a huge puddle mirror (Miroir d'Eau) in front of the buildings. Then I visit the Place Parlement and the closed church of St. Pierre. I continue with the cathedral and the Tour Pey-Berland, the associated tower, which was built a few yards apart because of the poor ground. In the cathedral, a religious service is held, which is why no visit is possible. In the Jardin Public, I sit down and watch the young ducks. On the banks of the Garonne there is a unique exhibition in an inflatable hall, "50,000 Manières nouvelles d'habiter la metropole". What the show really wants to convey remains unclear, they probably need to burn some funding. Further on, there is a market with all sorts of tempting sweets (especially les Cannelés, a local specialty) and outrageously expensive cheeses in all shapes and flavours. I walk along the "Quay des Marques", the former warehouses, which are now exclusive shops of branded goods. A huge, liftable bridge across the Garonne is nearly completed, it lacks only the central piece. I walk back through the Chartrons quarters (the wine merchant's quarters) and visit the Musée du Vin, which is rather disappointing. I then visit the Eglise Saint-Louis de Chartrons, which is of a more recent style. I visit again the Cathédrale St André, which is now open for visitors. I am literally mobbed, to make use of the free tour. A young German woman tells me that the single-nave church was built in 1100 in Romanesque style but was later increased massively in the Gothic style and ultimately, because of static problems, provided with the usual gothic side struts. I stroll somewhat through the city and have a look at the few exhibits of the permanent collection of the Musée des Beaux-Arts that are still available, some exhibits are referred to as looted art, as they were expropriated during the Nazi era and are now waiting to be restored to their former owners. I walk to the Place Gambetta. When I see that the entrance of the cathedral is now getting some sunlight, I quickly get there in order to make a photo, although this is a huge detour. Then I walk back to the scooter and drive towards Blanquefort. After some searching I find the Palais Gallien, which actually represents the remains of the Roman amphitheatre. It must have been nearly as big as the Coliseum. Once again I stop at the Parc Bordelaise which appears somewhat scruffy and unkempt; one building has even collapsed and was only cordoned off. Near the entrance is a house that seems to be built with a jigsaw and is still inhabited.

23.07.12 Bordeaux I notice that I am running out of clean shirts, so I want to my laundry. This cannot be done in the room, as there is no plug for the sink. So I ask at the reception desk and they immediately offer to wash them in the washing machine. Soon, the laundry is clean and I hang it – for lack of other alternatives – on the wire mesh fence of the adjacent winery to dry. Then I drive into town and park the scooter on the Cours Victor Hugo, opposite the car park. A funny detail: It appears as if an old Jaguar had broken through the side of the parking garage and now hangs in mid-air - of course it is attached. I walk past "La grosse Cloche" (a town gate with bell and clock) and the church of St Michel (with separate belfry) in direction of the river Garonne, where there is just a big market. I buy some sewing thread to mend the umbrella that it was torn in Cherbourg. Here, the trams change from overhead to ground-level power supply, because the old town, protected as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, may not be defaced with ugly catenary masts. Then I walk over the Pont de Pierre, whose construction began in 1810 by Napoleon Ist and was an engineering feat at the time, to the other side of the Garonne. There I visit the church Ste Marie de la Bastide, which was built in 1880. The whole church is said to have been built on a wooden raft, because the soil is so soft. The bell tower was also built apart, but subsequently connected to the building. I visit the botanical gardens, which is watered in a peculiar way by ponds and has a section with water plants. Then I walk back across the bridge to the centre and on to the shopping centre Mériadeck where I buy something to eat and consume it in the adjacent park. With horror, I notice that the soles of the hiking shoes I purchased just six months ago have worn away completely. So I walk back into town, where there is just summer sale and look at shoes in different shops. I ended up once more with a pair of Merrells - hopefully they last a bit longer. Now I visit the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, which is housed in the Palais Lalande and is in fact nothing more than the historically accurate restoration of the palace. By six pm I return to Blanquefort.

24.07.12 Blanquefort to Anglet (Biarritz) I leave Blanquefort at eight, but do not find the road from Eysins to Martignas-sur-Jalle and drive a few detours, until I find it nevertheless. Past Merignac airport, I drive to Martignas-sur-Jalle and Pierroton where I get lost again. Via Marcheprime and Mios I drive to Mimizan and then to

Léon. There I quickly visit the lake, but there is nothing special, except for legions of tourists. I drive along the coastal road, which effectively runs a few miles inland, so one rarely gets to see the sea, but fragrant woods and heaths. The sun is scorching; the heat is 27 degrees centigrade. I drive to Capbreton, where there are so many Swiss and German, that one really only hears these two languages, possibly plus Dutch. I am going directly to Biarritz, where I park the scooter in the old port and secure it well, to discover town on foot. At the Musée du Mer I get a map. So I can explore the city which has only a few sights, namely some churches dating from the 19th Century. The weather is great, the sea dark blue, ideal photo weather. When I am just about to leave, sirens sound from everywhere and two fire engines dash past me. I drive off, but notice a helicopter hovering at the same height as the rock (i.e. the same as I). I stop and take - like all the other tourists - a photo. Someone seems to have drowned while swimming and now they are overreacting. I go on to the hostel in Anglet, which I only find with the help of the sat nav, and have to wait for a long time at the reception desk because others were apparently there even earlier as I. Just as it is my turn, an Englishman is dashing ahead of me, alleging that he had been waiting for two hours and I was to give up my place in line for him. I refuse and he gets very angry, but has to accept it. Once checked in, I get back on my scooter and drive to La Barre, where I walk on the Quay to the outermost point. Then I go to Bayonne, where I really wanted to see the fort. But there is a huge traffic jam. Some accident must have happened, because an ambulance with howling sirens dashes ahead. I turn right to where the traffic runs smoothly again and follow the signs to the Carrefour centre. There is - what a lucky surprise - a "flunch" restaurant. So I can finally eat my fill with vegetables, without the fear of glucose. To return I must follow the directions of the sat nav, because I cannot locate my position on the map. The hostel is a bit peculiar, half camp-site and half hostel, with a disco bar. That will make sleeping a bit difficult.

Spain: Basque Country, Castilia and Leon

25.07.12 Anglet to Pamplona I am probably the only one at the hostel who has slept tonight, the others returned only in the early or late hours of the morning. Biarritz is not a place to sleep, when partying all night is the rule. But I want to cross the Pyrenees and must be ready for the scenic ride. Breakfast is only at 08:30h, and as I got up an hour early I have to wait. Then I gulp down breakfast in a rush, hand in the room keys and drive off. When I stop in the city, to get my bearings, I get chatting to two postmen, which give me the crucial tip to follow the signs to Cambo. I immediately find the correct road and get via St. Pée-sur-Nivelle to Ainhoa, a small village. It would not have been necessary to fill up again: Just after the border there are a couple of huge service stations, because the petrol in Spain is about 20 percents cheaper than in France. I drive up to Urdax, where I visit the caves of Urdazubi-Urdax. Everything is done perfectly with a sound and light show. The comments of our leader were actually not necessary, and I did not understand him anyway, because he speaks with such a strong Basque accent. I drive on, the road is becoming a highway, which is brand new and does not appear on my map. There are several super-modern tunnels. In a supermarket, which suddenly appears between two tunnels, I buy something to eat and drive on. As there is no resting place for a long time, I leave the highway and accidentally find immediately a perfect resting place in the woods, with beautiful benches. I eat my lunch, read a little and then go on. After a short time I reach Pamplona, where I go twice around in circles until I realize that my sat nav wants to use a meanwhile closed exit. At the "Aloha Hostel" I am received warmly. It's brand new, and compared to the previous ones super-comfortable. I leave my stuff there and walk into the city, the Plaza del Castillo. The sun is scorching, it's 32 degrees centigrade. I walk up to the Corallillos, where the bulls are locked before running of the bulls through the city (Recorrido del encierro), then I walk the route the bulls cover when running to the Plaza de Toros. On top of the historic city walls I walk up to the Rincon del Caballo Blanco, while at the Portal de Francia I walk back into town. I walk a little back and forth across the city until 5pm, when I visit, just as it is opening, the Fortin San Bartolome, which has an exhibition about the fortification of the city. Everything is brand new, done with the most sophisticated computer and video technology. I learn that Pamplona was originally formed from three adjacent cities that were warring factions. Today's city walls have grown over time and were constantly adapted to the latest needs, until they became obsolete because of the advances in technology. I walk back to the hostel, have a little chat with the other guests, then I walk around town, looking for Carrefour City, which was described to me by the other guests, but I cannot find it. Therefore I walk back to the centre, visit quickly the cathedral of Santa Maria la Real, before it closes, then I walk back and polish off a giant pizza at the pizzeria downstairs, thinking that all alternatives would contain more carbohydrates. I do not know how long I will maintain this diet yet, but I think I'll soon stop.

26.07.12 Pamplona Although I am aware that nothing is doing in town before ten, I get up early out of a habit and squander some time. My glucose levels, which was yesterday as high as ever, has calmed down a little, but it is still in the red. I walk into town, re-visit the Cathedral, where mass is read in a side chapel. Then I wander around the perimeter walls, making a detour to the Puente Santa Magdalena, then I walk to the Parque de Taconera and to the Ciudadela. Today is even hotter than yesterday, more than 30 degree centigrade already in the morning. I buy some carbohydrate-free food and eat it in the Ciudadela. Then I visit the Church of San Lorenzo, which is now open, and walk to the Plaza de Toros, where I sit down and read a bit. I return to the hostel, where I do some computer work. At five o'clock I walk back into town and visit the Museo de Navarra, where there is an

excellent exhibition of various paintings and works of art, especially numerous frescoes and Roman mosaics. By 19h they close, I quickly buy something carbohydrate-free at the grocery store and eat it at the hostel. It is unbearably hot and the sky is covered with dark clouds, it will probably rain soon.

27.07.12 Pamplona to Bilbao I wait a long time for breakfast, but when the caretaker just does not come in, I go looking for a shop to buy milk. But the shops are still closed. He comes in at nine, his bus had not turned up. I am leaving half an hour late. First I have to refuel, and then I find the road out of town surprisingly well. The sun is shining, the mountains are beautifully lit, and sometimes there are sunflowers or crops that are being harvested. In between more forests. The ride through the forested Sierra de Aralar is particularly impressive. In the villages there is a lot of metal industry. In Ormaiztegui I pass the Irizar bus factory. In Beasain I make a short stop, to get my bearings. Immediately a policeman (also with Honda scooter) stops and offers to lead me to the right road. So I am led by a police escort. From here it is all straight ahead. In Bergara I stop at a supermarket and buy some food. When I unpack it, I realize that it is completely inappropriate and eat very little of it. The rest I have to throw away, because it contains too much carbohydrate. I continue to Bilbao, from Durango there are many industrial plants and it is getting more urban. When I refuel, I turn on the sat nav and in a couple of minutes I arrive at the Bilbao Good Hostel, which is less than a kilometre away from the petrol station. When I check in, they want me to pay €8 per day for the scooter. I am not willing to pay this and finally we agree on €4, which is still too much, since it does not occupy a parking space. I check in and go by metro - the Bolueta station is right next door - to the Casco Viejo, the old town. The city is located in a river valley and the town is not like Pamplona bright and cheerful despite narrow streets, but looking bleak and forbidding. The churches are still closed. I walk across the Puente del Arsenal to the magnificent railway station (1902), which turns out to be only a shell, because inside it is all new. On the other side of the river is the magnificent Teatro Arriaga (1890). I walk through town to the Mercado de la Ribera, which has an Art Nouveau exterior, while the interior is all new. Then I go to the closed church of San Anton. I walk back through the city to Puente del Arsenal, across it and along Lopez de Haro to Plaza Moyua, passing by the Palacio de la Diputacion Forestal. Turning north I get to the Guggenheim Museum, which must obviously have been built by Frank Gehry. The Puente Principes de España has been integrated into the structure. Outside the museum is a five meter tall sculpture of a dog that is planted entirely with flowers. I walk across the bridge, ride the elevator down and walk along the banks of the Rio de Bilbao to Zubizuri bridge (built by Santiago Calatrava), which heads directly for the Isozaki Atea building, another monument of urban architecture. While returning to the Casco Viejo, I take a quick look at the Church of San Vincente de Abado. I walk to the Carrefour at the Puente de San Anton, buy a carbohydrate-free meal for dinner and walk back, when I notice that the Iglesia de los Santos Juanes is open now, so I can visit it now. The design is called Baroque, but there are no similarities with southern German Baroque. I walk to the Catedral de Santiago, which is also open now. The architecture is Gothic and there are a few statues with the typical expression for this region in the interior. Meanwhile, it's raining pretty solid. By metro I return to the hostel where I eat my dinner.

28.07.12 Bilbao I get up as late as possible and ride the subway into town. It's raining hard. Everything is still closed. Despite the web page said so, the museums do not open by ten. So I walk to the Mercado de la Ribera, where I buy some delicious chorizo and immediately eat it. Then I walk a while back and forth across the city and to the Mallona to take a picture of the rainy city. At 11h the "Euskal Museoa", the Basque Museum, opens. On the ground floor, huge dolls, similar to drum majors for Carnival, are exhibited. On the upper floors there are items of the shepherds and fishermen of the Basques, ceramics and on the top floor a giant model of the province of Biscay. Then I walk to Carrefour, quickly buy something disgusting but carbohydrate-free for lunch, gag it down and walk to the Guggenheim Museum. The most spectacular item is probably the titanium-panelled building itself, designed by Frank Gehry and completed in 1997. Inside the rooms are covered in part with stone slabs. The largest room on the ground floor is occupied by a monumental steel plate installation by Richard Serra, "The Matter of Time". On the outside there are two sculptures by Jeff Koons, "Puppy", the planted dog and "Tulips", a tacky bouquet of polished and coated stainless steel. Most space is devoted to the special exhibition of David Hockney, an English scene painter, who also worked in the United States and whose landscapes are extremely colourful. He made his latest creations with an I-Pad. He uses the application "Brushes" to design images and prints them afterwards in large format. Furthermore, there are many works of avant-garde art, especially photography and video installations. Some of them I've already seen in the United States. In the evening I walk to Zabalburu where Carrefour is still open, and buy something for the next day, because I do not expect any supermarkets to open. Then I walk back to Plaza Moyua, where I take the subway back to the hostel. The sky is still covered with dark clouds. My roommate is Rose from Holland, who will walk the Camino de Santiago from here.

29.07.12 Bilbao to Burgos It is drizzling when I leave Bilbao. I ride in the rain, but get quickly to Balmaseda. Soon I need to put on the rain gear. It is bitterly cold and dark. The area is beautiful, but in the fog and rain, I cannot really appreciate it. I cross three "passes" of 700, 730 and 1000 meters above sea level. In Villalta I see an abandoned village and want to make a photo, but a dog bites me in the ankle, even tearing the rain suit. I drive off in a hurry. The rain stops and the sun peeps out. In a quarry I stop and gulp down my diet. In Burgos, the

youth hostel "Gil de Siloe" turns out to be the student housing of the college of technology, which is rented out in summer during the semester break. I check in, park the scooter and walk along a creek (that it is sometimes more than that, is revealed by the high water marks in the old town) on the Avenida de los Reyes Catolicos to the city centre. There is a flea market held in the Plaza de España. I buy a roll of adhesive tape to mend the casing of my sat nav. Then I walk to the Museo de la Evolucion Humana, where the skeletal remains of the Homo Antecessors, which were discovered north-west of Burgos in the caves of Atapuerca, are exhibited. The museum is brand new and they spared no expense, everything is top notch. Then I walk towards the city, where I stumble onto the Feria Ceramica Alfabur 2012, and look at the ceramic products on display, although most of them are not to my taste. Through the Arco de Santa Maria, I walk to the cathedral, which I don't want to visit yet. I walk via the Plaza del Huerto del Rey and Plaza Mayor through the Old Town, then to the Arco de Fernan Gonzalez and up the mountain to the Castillo that I visit. There are really only the foundations left and the Pozo, a draw well, which is about 50 metres deep and has a spiral staircase down to the base for cleaning purposes. Through the forest I walk back to the hostel where I'm eating supper with Leon and Maria Luisa from Madrid - wonderful because it is all low-carbohydrate.

30.07.12 Burgos In the morning I dawdle a bit, because the Carthusian monastery opens only by 10. I pay the hostel, whereas I am partially refunded because the kitchen is closed tonight. Then I fuel up the scooter and ride to the monastery situated northeast of the city. Not many parts of the monastery are open to the public, only the church and the museum. The entrance area is dominated by the founder of the order, St. Bruno, the area for the ordained monks by the tomb of King Juan II and Isabel of Portugal, by Gil de Siloe. I continue to the cathedral where I listen to the remarks of the audio guide. I wonder how much of the far too detailed explanations will stick. Clearly for maintenance reasons, all organs are played in sequence. The splendour of the chapel and the main church is overwhelming, but one has to take into account that many of the people buried here thought they bought their salvation and the magnificent cathedral was also a demonstration of power of the Catholic Kings of Spain. I return, buy something at the supermarket for lunch and for dinner. I walk back into town and visit the Antiguo Seminario Mayor which is in place of the former Jewish quarter, the Solar del Cid, Arco de San Martin, Puerta de Sevilla (Jews' Gate), Palacio and Jardin de la Isla, Salesa Real, Palacio Arzobispal, Hospital de Barantes, Antiguo Palacio de Justicia, Facultad de la Teologia until I am back at the Cathedral. From here I walk to the Monasterio de San Juan, which is illuminated by the sun, then back to the hostel.

31.07.12 Burgos to Leon At breakfast I seem to be the only guest at the youth hostel, because they are about to close for the season and prepare it for the students returning to their term. I easily find the way out of town and drive on the N120 towards Osorno. Left and right of the road there are harvested grain fields and yellow sunflower fields. The Camino de Santiago passes over long distances along the road, so one can see the sweaty pilgrims hiking. At a rest area I eat my lunch. In Quintanilla de la Cueva I stop to take a few pictures, when I see a sign "Villa Romana La Tejada" and follow it. To my surprise I discover a tin shed built over the foundations of a Roman villa, which was decorated with mosaics on the floor. Unfortunately, almost every mosaic was broken in the Middle Ages, because the people were searching for the bricks of the hypocausts, which they used to build houses. I am advised to visit the second Roman country house, the Villa Romana "La Olmeda" in Saldaña. This is a huge detour, but I decide to do it. In the end, I get a bit lost, because in my direction the place is not signposted. The corrugated iron hall cracks and crackles in the heat and there are hundreds of birds that have somehow managed to enter. The mosaics are in fact almost all intact and of much larger dimensions, it must have been a palace-like, multi-storey building. I drive back to the N120, refuel after Sahagun and find the shortcut through El Burgo, which again follows the Camino. In Leon I turn on the GPS, but it seems to go all crazy. Not only is its accuracy very bad, it seems to constantly lead me around in circles. I turn it off, park the scooter and ask for directions to the tourist information - not everyone here knows where it is, only the third person I ask. The tourist office is closed until five pm and so I wait until it opens. My hostel, which is the Miguel de Unamuno, also a student accommodation of the University, is just a few hundred yards away right in the pedestrian zone, so probably this is why my sat nav behaved like this. I put up at the hostel and walk back to the scooter. As the police have just passed, I may assume that for the next five minutes there is no more checks and drive across the pedestrian zone and against the direction of a one-way street to the hostel - afterwards no-one will ask how I got there. I visit the Catedral de Santa Maria de Leon, which is held in a pure early Gothic style and was reconstructed largely in the 19th century. The audio guide once more chatters away. In the course of this renovation the choir was set in the centre of the church to provide more light to the altar. In the evening, I eat in the old town and visit the Plaza Mayor, the Cathedral, San Isidoro and the Puerta Castillo which are all lit up.

01.08.12 Leon I get up late and visit San Isidoro. The Romanesque church is held with some Gothic elements. The museum is already open; on the one hand there is a Baroque style library upstairs. Many of the mounted volumes have visibly suffered and the parchment at the back of the books is crumbling away. On the other hand there is a cloister with excellently preserved paintings from the 12th century. The cloister, at least the ceilings, were Gothicised. There are many Roman artefacts such as tombstones, bricks and water pipes - Leon was a Roman garrison town and its name is derived from "Legion". I walk to the market, where I buy some chorizo at a booth and chat with the owner, who has spent time in Lucerne. In a small shop I buy peaches and a glass of as-

paragus. Via "Las Cercas", I walk on top of the Roman and medieval perimeter walls. In the Church of Nuestra Señora del Mercade they are just holding a funeral. I eat lunch in the Jardines El Cid. Then I walk quite a distance to the west to San Marcos, a former monastery of the Knights of Santiago, where I visit the strange late Gothic (16th century) church which has only a few windows and its adjoining rooms. The cloister with its elaborate rib vaults is beautiful. In a supermarket I buy some lunch for tomorrow. Via the Plaza de la Inmaculada I walk back to the hostel. After a siesta, I walk to the Edificio Torreon, where they hold an exhibition on an educational institution, then to the Palacio del Conde Luna, where there is a free exhibition "Raices, el de un legado reino Leon 910-1230". I even walk to the Convento Padres Capuchinos and along the Las Cercas (city walls), then return to the Jardin El Cid, where I read a bit. In the youth hostel I eat dinner with an elderly lady from Barcelona. They serve fish and spinach, which is perfect for me. Dark clouds have been threatening all evening and there is a grim weather forecast for tomorrow.

02.08.12 Leon to Santiago de Compostela I am leaving very early, even have to eat my own cereals, because breakfast is not yet ready. The drive through the mountains is freezing cold; on the descent the thermometer shows 13 degrees centigrade, near Astorga it shows 9 degrees and this is already much warmer than earlier on. I am shivering from the cold. At 10 AM I'm already in Astorga, where I visit the Palacio Gaudi (the interior is decorated in mock-gothic style, with glazed tiles as ceiling ribs), the cathedral and the adjacent museum, which is downright crammed with church treasures and precious vestments. The choir stalls in the Cathedral take up so much space that there is no more space for the parishers. But this was not very important in the olden days. Outside are richly decorated entrances. At the tourist office they explain where to find a petrol station. I fuel up there and drive on towards Ponferrada. The road goes uphill and downhill, but is very good, actually a lesser highway. In a small mountain village, Bendillo, I stop to take photos. At a rest area I eat some of my dry sausage. In Monforte I drive to the monastery (now a parador, a state-owned hotel) to have a closer look at it. Then I look for a location for a good picture and stop at a supermarket to buy water. I drive on, and easily find road no 533 to Chantada - in the meantime what appears as a byroad on the map has been upgraded to a highway. By 18h I arrive pretty tired in Santiago de Compostela, where the sat nav goes once more all crazy, until I find the hostel. I check in, change into street gear and walk right back into town, where I visit the Igreja San Bieito, the Cathedral, where I touch the silver statue of St. James at the shoulders and visit the crypt with the silver coffin of St. James. I stroll around town, visit the Church of Santa Maria Salome, watch a clown at the Praza da Quintana and visit the Convento de Santa Clara. In the youth hostel I prepare a Tuco and make the hostel bookings for Portugal, as my tires still seem to hold up to Lisbon.

03.08.12 Santiago de Compostela Today my father would have turned 98 years old. I get up early, go to the cathedral, which is almost empty at this time and can, without having to queue, ascend again to the St. James statue and then visit the tomb. I can even shoot photos without anybody complaining. In front of the cathedral I listen for a while to a German tour guide who knows a lot and tells it well. Then I go to the tourist office to ask for the best sights. First, I have to go to the market. At ten, when the ticket office for the roof visits opens up, I buy a ticket for the one o'clock visit. Then I walk to Seminario Menor, where I have a good view of the city, and take a few photos. The church is not worth mentioning – Baroque style. Next stop is the Parque de San Domingos de Bonaval where they are busy making television recordings. I walk back to the market and through town, finding nothing that I could eat, but I pass a demonstration of trade unionists. Since it is almost one, I return to the cathedral. The roof visit is actually a highlight, as only from here one can imagine how the pilgrims must have felt in the Middle Ages, when they arrived dirty and lice-ridden here on the roof, burned their clothes and washed, to be outfitted with new clothes to attend church. The incineration vessel with the iron cross is still there, and there is a mark directly on top of the tomb of the apostle. I return to the hostel, where I call the Honda representative in Lisbon. They don't have the tire in stock, but they will order it. At five I walk back into town, visit the Casa do Cabildo whose renovation was recently completed and which is said to have the best view of the cathedral. There is an exhibition of old photos of Santiago. Next I visit the Museo das Peregrinacions where there is a large model of the cathedral, and computer animations (even a pilgrim game) of the original Romanesque cathedral, before it was converted to a baroque exterior. Then I visit the Museo de la Catedral de Santiago, where there are a fully renovated 12th Century stone choir, countless church treasures and a large collection of tapestries, including those designed by Goya. Included is a visit to the cloister of the former monastery where sarcophagi dating from the 12th Century are stored. From the terrace of the building, there is a good view of the Praza de Obradoiro. When returning, the phone rings and Honda Lisbon tells me that the tire has been ordered and will be ready when I arrive on August 8th. I feel pretty relieved. It is only a little more than 500 kilometres to Lisbon and the old tire will certainly last that long.

Portugal

04.08.12 Santiago to Porto When I leave in Santiago de Compostela, the sky is overcast, threatening rain. Moreover, it is very cold, once more the thermometer showing 13 degrees centigrade. Deducting ten degrees for the wind at 80 km/h, this leaves me with three degrees. The navigation to Pontevedra and Vigo is not a problem. The

area is mountainous; the road goes up and down repeatedly. From O Porriño, I ride on the freeway to Tui, where I leave it again and cross a single lane bridge into Portugal. On the other side is Valença, which has a huge, well preserved perimeter wall. I stop and take a few photos of the fort, before continuing towards Porto. The itinerary calculated by Google Maps proves to be too complicated and not picturesque, so I stay on the N13. Just when it starts raining heavily, I stop at a grocery store and buy something to eat. In Viana do Castelo, there is suddenly no more street signs, so I get lost. I ask for directions at the petrol station where I fill up, but am sent in exactly the wrong direction and need to backtrack to the highway which is the only road to get to the other side of the estuary. I find, however, the N13 again and drive through pretty tourist villages towards Porto. Remarkable are the many Chinese-operated China-import stores. In Vila do Conde, I notice an aqueduct, which I inspect a bit closer. It was built in 1714 for the Mosteiro de Santa Clara, but now it is in ruins. I continue to Porto, where I arrive at five in the afternoon at the Yellow House Hostel. I park the scooter at Axa insurance because in the street of the hostel there is no motorcycle parking. Then I walk to the supermarket where I buy my diet food, then I walk into town, past the modern metro station Trindade, the Baroque Igreja da Trindade and look at the most magnificent city hall. I visit the vaunted Estação de São Bento with its interior ceramic plate images (Azulejos). I follow a sign "information", leading me through a district on a steep mountain slope, where everything is littered and I encounter dark figures, so I do not feel safe. On the top there is a super-modern tourist office, where I am told about the main attractions of Porto. In the opposite cathedral they just hold a wedding. When the bride and bridegroom leave, they are pelted with rice. Then I walk to the Igreja de S. Lourenço and descend to the river, where it is getting touristic. I walk to the "Ponte Dom Luis I", a steel bridge with a car lane at the bottom and a tram lane at the top. On the lower deck I cross the Rio Douro and walk past the Porto wineries. On the Quay I meet Omar Ruiz-Diaz, a Paraguayan/Canadian who is wandering for years with a bicycle and two one-wheel trailers around the world. Sandeman winery is unfortunately closed. I return, ascend the stairs up to the Jardim do Morro and the viewing platform at the Mosteiro do Serra da Pilar. The buildings down the slope are already partially or completely disintegrated or collapsing. Apparently, those works are no longer in use. Since it gets cold and dark suddenly, I walk back to the hostel where I prepare my Tuco.

05.08.12 Porto Porto is a city that seems glued to the steep slopes of the Douro River estuary into the sea. Most roads are cobbled; some are so steep that it is surprising that cars can still drive there. The alleys between the houses are dark and cramped. Even in the centre of town, there are houses with broken windows or walled doors, or both, yet on the top floor someone seems to reside. And there are collapsed houses in between the intact ones. That there is no money for the upkeep is obvious in every other house. In the narrow streets one encounters folks who have the appearance that they have never worked in life and don't know anyone who has. There is an enormous church density, like in Spain, there is a church practically on every corner, often with blue-painted tiles, called Azulejas, on the facade. Despite the obvious economic decline and the immense filth, the city has charm and exerts a fascination that is hard to explain. I start the day with a visit to the Mercado do Bolhão, which turns out to be closed today, Sunday, in spite of the contrary assertion of the Tourist Office. The Majestic Cafe, which was built in 1921 in the Art Nouveau style, is also closed. I visit the Igreja dos Clerigos which is not worth mentioning, the Livraria Lello e Irmão, built in 1906, the twin churches Igreja dos Carmelitas and Igreja do Carmo, which are decorated with Azulejas. I walk to the Praça Carlos Alberto, then back to the two churches where the one-hundred years-old tramway is just about to arrive and a Volkswagen meeting is taking shape. There are already some beetles and VW buses from the 1960's there. I walk to the Natural History Museum and the Centro Portugues de Fotografia. In front of this building, there is a bird market. At some stalls it says: "No Photography", which, given the circumstances of how the animals are kept, is not surprising. Nearby is the Igreja da Nossa Senhora da Vitoria, which was built in 1539 on the land of the Jewish quarter. Not far away is a rather dilapidated and rubbish-strewn observation terrace which offers a good view of the city. When descending, I see a collapsed house. I walk to the Mercado Ferreira Borges, which was hollowed out and completely redesigned. The adjacent Instituto dos Vinhos do Douro e Porto is closed today, but not the adjacent Palacio da Bolsa, where I participate in a guided tour. The sumptuous Arab Hall - 20 kilos of gold leaf were allegedly used for the walls and ceilings - is overwhelming. Next door is the Igreja de S. Francisco, which I visit, as well as the (mandatory) Museum of Sacred Art and the Catacumbas, where up to the mid-19th Century the wealthy were buried. In a small restaurant I eat a carbohydrate-free lunch. The owner is from Rio de Janeiro and we chat a bit about Brazil. The Alfandegas (former customs office), where the car museum is located, are unfortunately still closed. So I walk to the Cathedral, which only opens at half past two. I do not want to wait that long, so I walk to Sandeman Winery, where I just arrive at the beginning of the English guided tour. We visit the cellar - the wine is only processed here, the actual grapes come from an area behind the coastal mountain range, which has a less stable climate but is ideal for viticulture. There is a tasting of white and red Porto, whereby I like the Tawny Red best. By now, the cathedral should be open, so I climb once more the steep stairs to the mountain. It is indeed open now. The cathedral is obviously Romanesque; with Gothic and Baroque additions. I also visit the cloister, which is adorned with Azulejas, and the museum, where the splendour of the chapter house stands out. Then I walk back to the Alfandegas, where the Museu de Transportes is now open. There are a few very well-preserved cars; the best of them is an Alvis, and a few funny small cars. Unfortunately, the museum is so poorly designed that the beautiful exhibits are not displayed to their advantage. At the end, I visit the Museu de Alfandegas in the

same building, which is about the history of the customs building. Then I walk back to the hostel where I prepare my dinner.

06.08.12 Porto to Coimbra I wake up too early, but cannot get back to sleep and get up. Until breakfast I surf a little on the internet. As soon as I downed the breakfast, I leave. I follow the route that I worked out last night with Google Maps. This works not too bad. I end up somewhere on the highway, from where I leave one exit too early, and therefore have to make a small detour, until I find the N1/IC2. Then I just need to follow this road. Once it is a narrow country road, then a four-lane highway, but it is always one and the same route, so I cannot go wrong. Around noon I arrive in Coimbra and quickly check in at the Dream On Hostel, which is located in a very respectable suburban neighbourhood. I walk into town, where I am looking only for something to eat. Not so easy, because most menus that I see are full of carbohydrates. When I already want to give up after 45 minutes search, I find a tiny restaurant in the Old Town, which offers grilled fish with salad, which I can eat. It is an excellent meal, albeit with much bones. Well rested I then visit the Igreja de Santa Cruz (1131), which is based on a Romanesque structure, the Mercado Dom Pedro V, the Igreja St. Tiago, which is closed, the old cathedral Sé Velha (1184), on the exterior with Moorish looks and battlements, but on the interior Romanesque, and the new cathedral (Sé Nova, 1598), whose interior also appears Romanesque, but is indeed Baroque. Then I visit the "Paço the Escolas" the university where there is an pricy and chaotic visit to the sumptuously baroque Biblioteca Joanina, the Prisão Académica (a private prison for as long as the university had its own jurisdiction) with the narrow spiral staircase Escadas de Minerva, the Baroque, completely tiled Capela de S. Miguel, the gloomy Sala dos Capelos (auditorium), the Sala do Examen Privado which is all lined with paintings and the Sala dos Arqueiros (armoury for the university guards). Access is via the Baroque Porta Ferrea. I even walk to the aqueduct, which is dating, however, from the 16th Century. Then I go shopping at the supermarket (I buy too much food), and prepare a huge, carbohydrate-free dinner.

07.08.12 Coimbra Coimbra consists of the hill on which the University is perched high above the city, the old town which descends to the banks of the Rio Mondego and the other parts of the city, which are also located in the upper part. The cobbled streets are steep and even in the narrowest of lanes there are cars squeezing past and under the windows, there are washing lines with clothes to dry. Apart from the university and tourism, the city seems to have little industry. I walk to the 16th Century aqueduct (apparently based on a Roman aqueduct) and through the botanical garden. Since I take a wrong exit, I find myself suddenly in an unknown area, just walk on, eventually coming past an abandoned factory and along the Parque Verde do Mondego to a footbridge, where I cross the Rio Mondego and walk to the Convento Sta- Clara-a-Velha. Although it is already ten AM, the monastery is still closed. I walk past the Portugal dos Pequenitos (a Swiss Miniature in Portuguese) to the Convento Sta Clara-a-Nova and back to the Convento Sta Clara-a-Velha, which has in the meanwhile opened. The Romanesque abbey suffered repeatedly from floods, was last repaired in the 17th Century and then abandoned. For lunch, I walk back to the hostel, because I have to use up the foodstuff I bought. I walk to the post office, which proves to be permanently closed and have to find another post office - far from the centre - where I can buy stamps for my postcards. Then I visit the old cathedral (Sé Velha) in detail. Meanwhile, the Museum Academico is open. It can only be visited by a guided tour; it was in so far impressive, because I've rarely seen so many extraneous items. The content corresponds to the trophy case in the school gym of my village. My guide chatters and chatters, even though there is really nothing to say about these trivial items. The next stop is the Criptoportico at the Museo Nacional Machado de Castro. This is probably the most interesting part of all Coimbra, the basement of the former Roman city. Then I visit the Torre de Almedina, from where there is, contrary to my expectations, no view. After quickly going to the grocery store, I return to the hostel. In the evening I pay another short visit to the Sé Velha, to take more photos.

08.08.12 Coimbra to Lisbon I am really sorry to leave the pleasant Dream On Hostel in Coimbra. It was a very welcoming, comfortable place. Everything spotlessly clean and adorned with flowers. I ride in 15 degrees centigrade and heavy fog, until my fingertips turn blue. In Batalha I see the cathedral from the road and cannot just drive past it. I stop and buy a ticket for the tour. The former monastery Mosteiro da Batalha was built in 1388 to demonstrate the victory against the Spaniards and the Portuguese independence. It is built in the Gothic style. A special feature of the monastery are the two cloisters built side by side, both two stories each, with monks' cells on the upper floor. In the apse of the church, the founder João I was buried with his wife, Philippa of Lancaster, and his sons with their wives. The first cloister is still contains a monument to the Unknown Soldier with a guard of honour. I continue to Fatima, where I visit the sanctuary. They have built a huge facility, for hundreds of thousands of visitors, and actually downright inundated by pilgrims. I visit the basilica with the tombs of the three shepherd children Lucia de Jesus, Francisco Marto and Jacinto Marto to whom the vision of the holy virgin appeared, the Capela das Aparicoes and the Church of the Holy Trinity, an ultra modern monumental work, however with a very attractive design. In the underground, there are numerous chapels and pools and the exhibition "On the path of light." I realize that I am running late and have to drive on. For the next 20kms, I drive past quarries. The remaining route is daunting: While the last panel read "Lisbon 85 km", there is another one after half an hour's drive which reads "Lisbon 80 km". And I certainly did not drive around in circles. In Rio Maior I get low on fuel, so I have to leave the main road and look for a petrol station. Shortly thereafter, however there was one

right on the freeway... Slowly it is getting more urban, when I approach Lisbon. At a food stall I eat a "Sopa de Pedra" and a forbidden sandwich. In Vila Franca de Xira I have to ride through the cobblestoned city. Then I turn on the GPS, which steers me on the highway. Finally I arrive at "Motorway Honda" in Lisbon. The new rear tires already waiting for me, but what a disappointment: They got a far-east cheapie, however at the price of a top brand. Finally, I end up spending more than 100 Euros for a rear tire and oil change. When I want to pick up the scooter, I discover that the tire was mounted backwards. They don't get annoyed, but I have to wait for another hour to get the tire turned around. In a rush I have to go to another bike shop that sells small chain sprays, because mine is almost empty. Finally I can go to the hostel, which is actually right in the old town. For the scooter there is a car park nearby. Because it is already late at night, I have to dash to the supermarket to buy my diet, because after the sandwich I may not have any more carbohydrates.

09.08.12 Lisbon I am one of the first ones in the hostel to rise and go to Miradouro, from where there is a good view of Lisbon. Then I walk down the steep road along the Elevador da Gloria to the Praça Restauradores where I get a better map at the tourist office. I continue to the Praça Rossio and Praça do Comercio. Since the entry fees are generally enormously high, I return to the tourist office and buy the hugely expensive Lisbon Card, which promises free admission to most attractions and free travel on public transport. With the tatty ancient tram I ride on the steep road through Alfama up to the Castelo de São Jorge. Here I experience the first disillusionment: Instead of a free entry, I get only a discount EUR 1.50. I drive to the Cathedral, which I visit. Here, the discount amounts to EUR 2. I start realizing that I shall not be able to get much value out of the Lisbon Card, because instead of free admission, it only gives marginal benefits. The cloister of the Cathedral is quite dark. In the upper arcade is a museum of the church treasures. In a small restaurant I eat a carbohydrate-free lunch. I walk to the Praça do Comercio and look for the Casa dos Bicos. The house is not signposted, so I have to ask for directions until I find it. The entire facade is covered with sugar-cone-like adornments. I then take tram No. 15 to the Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga. This is really worth seeing. Apart from the huge exhibition of paintings (particularly outstanding, the tests of St. Anthony by Hieronymus Bosch) there is an exhibition of Portuguese painting (with a picture of Lisbon in the 17th century) and a special exhibition on "O Virtuoso Criador Joaquim Machado de Castro 1731-1822" with his sculptures. I ride the bus to the Museu dos coches, where the royal carriages are exhibited. It is striking that all coaches are equipped with leather strap suspensions; leaf springs appear to have been introduced only in the early 20th Century. I continue to the presidential palace, with its absurd Museu da Presidencia da Republica. On display are gifts that the Presidents of Portugal have received, portraits of them and documents. I continue to the Mosteiro do Jeronimo. Even from the outside, it stands out with its exuberant splendour. It is said to be the second best preserved monastery in Europe. In particular, the two-storey cloister is very richly decorated. Finally I visit the Museu de Marinha, which is also housed in the monastery. In addition to ship models, there are the king's splendid galleys, three seaplanes and three steam water pumps of the harbour fire brigade. Finally, I walk to the Torre de Belem, which unfortunately is already closed, but is nevertheless pretty, illuminated by the evening sun. By tram, I return to the Praça do Comercio, where I explore yet Chiado and Alfama, before walking back to the hostel.

10.08.12 Lisbon I'm looking for the entrance to the metro station Baixa Chiado, but I do not find it, so I walk to the Praça do Comercio, where I take the No 28 tram to Alfama. The tram does not budge because of a traffic jam. A huge bus is completely wedged in and a truck standing on the tram tracks is calmly offloading building material. The driver remains completely calm, not even ringing, just waiting until the road is clear again. I visit the Igreja São Vicente de Fora, which is part of the monastery of the same name. Then I walk to Panteão Nacional, which roughly appears like a Portuguese version of the Voortrekker Monument, a pompous building with cenotaphs and tombs of famous Portuguese personalities. I walk to the Museu do Teatro Romano, which contains a few pathetic remnants of the Roman amphitheatre, making it difficult to imagine how it looked like. Then I walk to adjacent Museu Antoniano where there are some religious objects which can only be associated with a lot of imagination to St. Anthony, who is said to have been born on the site of the adjacent church. With the subway (this time I find the entrance, it is not easy though with a map where the subway symbol is printed across three streets) I ride to Campo Grande, where I visit the Museu do cidade. This museum has a lot to offer on Lisbon's history, the great earthquake of 1755, a model of the city in 1755 and a few very historic interiors. With the subway, I return to Chiado, where I visit the Museu do Chiado (Museu Nacional de Arte Contemporânea). There is a very interesting exhibition "Art Deco in Portugal". Above all, the works of Antonio Soares are worth mentioning. He made very good Art Deco paintings, but afterwards he did socialist realism and finally succumbed to the kitsch. By bus I want to go to Ajuda, which is not so easy; I have to wait for half an hour until it appears, then it moves at a glacial pace. I would have been faster on foot. I visit the National Palace of Ajuda. From the front, it looks like a European royal palace, very impressive, from the back, it looks like a typical Portuguese ruin, left unfinished at random. The interior, however, is very refined and it surprises me there are hardly any visitors. The furniture is surprisingly complete and in excellent condition. Unfortunately, one of the large rooms on the second floor has sustained substantial water ingress damages and it does appear that anyone is doing anything about it. I wait again for a long time for the bus to Belem. There I visit the Torre de Belem. Busload upon busload of tourists squeezes at random up and down the very narrow spiral staircase, which is why one constantly feels embattled. The view is not great; it's more about having been to the top of the tower. Much more interesting are the

underground gun decks and the prison below. Finally I visit the National Museum of Archeology, which features a special exhibition entitled "Quinta do Rouxinol: Roman kilns in the Tagus estuary" as well as a treasury with incredibly solid gold jewellery from pre-Roman times, a small exhibition on pharaonic Egypt with the usual ill-preserved mummies and an exhibition on "Religions of Lusitania", highlighted by two non-Roman warrior statues from the first century. Now I'm done and on top of that I just managed to recover the purchase price of the Lisboa Card, visiting the main attractions of the city in a very short time.

11.08.12 Sintra I leave early in the morning with the suburban railway through the bleak suburbs of Lisbon to Sintra. Most stations are badly tagged by gangs and vandalized. Once I get a glimpse of the aqueduct. After 40 minutes we arrive in hilly and green Sintra. I walk to the Palacio Nacional de Sintra, which has a peculiar look with its two weird fireplaces. The interior, from the beginning of the 16th Century, is very pompous, after all it was a palace. In the kitchen, one can see the two large chimneys from below. They are like reversed cones placed on the kitchen, certainly very convenient. I walk to the Quinta da Regaleira. At the end of the 19th century a wealthy Brazilian made his dream come true and created a magic garden, with lots of paths, stairs, turrets, fountains and ponds, as well as some underground caves and tunnels, some of which are several hundred meters long. In the upper area, there is the Fountain of Initiation, which consists of a spiral staircase that leads deep into the earth and is connected with some of the underground passages. The chapel, which is actually very small, has a balcony, a gallery and a crypt, which is in turn connected to an underground passage to the garden. The interior of the main house is built in the Manueline style – like an iced cake. The greenhouse and the carriage house are not accessible. With a heavy heart I leave this wonderland and hike to the Castle of the Moors, which is a few miles away perched on a hilltop high above Sintra. The buildings are crumbling and the only remains of the stables are parts of the walls. The perimeter wall is still intact, as well as the - unfortunately not accessible - water tank with two ventilation holes. Interesting is the "traitors' gate", a narrow opening in the wall where in case of a siege a messenger could squeeze through and call for reinforcements. From the towers one has a good view of Sintra and the Palacio Nacional de Pena. This monument, about half a kilometre away, is my next destination, although the entrance fee of € 13.50 is provocatively expensive. This palace is not very old, but there was already a 16th Century monastery on the site, which was used in the 19th Century as the basis for the palace built by the Prince Consort. From close-up, one notices that the palace is huge and has many floors. Much of the interior is done in the Manueline style, but there is also trompe l'oeil paintings painted on plaster and plaster reliefs in the Mudejar style. The furniture is - as it should be for the royal family - kept magnificently. There is some serious visible structural damage that can be attributed to lack of maintenance in recent years. Now it is about to be fixed - if the crisis does not stop it. Because I have not been able to take good photos of the palace, I go back to the Castle of the Moors, where I am re-admitted with the same ticket. I wait until a cloud moves in front of the sun, and then take a snap. Using the map, I look for the most direct route to the train station, from where I go back to Rossio.

12.08.12 Lisboa to Almogrove (Algarve) I say goodbye to the friendly hostel owners and drive off. I easily find the entrance to the huge two-storey bridge "25 de Abril", which spans the Tagus river in enormous height. Below run the trains, above are the cars. The road charge is only payable in the opposite direction. A lucky coincidence. I continue to Setubal, through the suburbs of Lisbon, with no open space. In Setubal, I just manage to catch the ferry to Troia which crosses the estuary. From there I ride on the narrow headland, unfortunately seeing little of the sea on the left and right, because there are too many bushes and trees. On the left there are deciduous trees, on the right conifers. In Comporta the headland ends and I stop to take pictures. In Torre I have to stop again, as every telephone pole has a stork's nest and there is even one on a silo. Left and right of the road there are rice fields. After a while they make a place for a desert. In Melides I eat lunch at a small restaurant, at first the host wants to know nothing of carbohydrate-free supplements, but when I tell him, that I am suffering from diabetes, he immediately organises beans. So I can eat quickly and go on. In Sines, there is actually little to explore and therefore I go on to Vila Nova de Milfontes, which is a tourist town for a beach holiday and has no real interest. I drive another ten miles to the south to Almogrove, where the hostel is located. There, I drive past the youth hostel and do not even notice it, because there is no sign. Only a nearly faded flag indicates the YHA membership. I only find it after asking for directions in the village. I leave the luggage, then I take the scooter to the beach, where I walk up to the fishing harbour Lapa de Pombas and back. Everywhere there are the highly weathered, jagged, sharp rocks, on this coast one should rather stay at a distance in a storm, or the ship will be downright sawn through. Only now, I can check into the hostel.

13.08.12 Almogrove to Faro I have breakfast with my friendly Portuguese roommate, then his group leaves by bicycle while I walk to the beach to have a little swim. The water is freezing cold, despite the warm air and the surf is very strong, which is why I do not swim properly and only splash a bit in the water before I return to the hostel and check out. Shortly after Almogrove I fill up again on fuel, then I go on to Lagos. The landscape is getting hilly around Odeceixe. Time and again there one notices irrigated fields. In Vila do Bispo I fuel up, buy something to eat at Lidl and drive on. Around noon I arrive in Sagres, where I visit the fort and eat my lunch sitting on the wall of the fortress, admiring a beautiful vista. The Fortress of Sagres actually only consists of a wall that protects the headland towards the mainland. Towards the sea, the rocks form a natural fortress, so that

only the gun positions had to be built. In some places there is a "Furna", a hole in the rock, which goes right down to the sea. I continue to Cabo S. Vicente, which represents the south-westernmost tip of Portugal. One can enter the fortress, but the lighthouse is still operating and therefore not open to the public. Some of the tourists are utterly amazed about my St. Gall license plate, a German from Stuttgart even insists to take a photograph. A little further, there is another fortress, of which only a wall remains. I continue to Lagos, a pretty big town, focused only on tourism. The harbour has a long, narrow driveway, which may even be crossed by ferry. I miss the exit to Portimão and find myself suddenly on the N120 back to Sines. I have to turn around, go back to Lagos where I find the right exit this time and drive on to Portimão. There I go to the city centre, which has a few historic buildings, but not much else of interest. So I drive on. Since Lagos, coastline is covered in tourism infrastructure, houses, hotels, service companies. There are shopping centres, small towns with white houses, which are probably rented out to tourists during the holiday season, and an enormous amount of traffic. Time and again, I have to overtake huge traffic jams, just following the local motorcyclists, which zigzag through the cars. Nevertheless, I make it around six pm to Faro, where I find the hostel immediately. I check in and go to the supermarket, where I'll get the ingredients for a great dinner.

14.08.12 Faro As I suspected, Faro is a small, sleepy town with a huge airport. All the tourists for the Algarve pass through here, constantly aircraft are landing. Not so long ago, Faro was a sleepy fishing town, which had acquired some wealth with a few canneries. I wait in front of the tourist office, until they open and I can get a map. The Sightseeing, for which I have budgeted a full day, could have been done without any problems in two hours: Arco de Vila (northern gate); Sé Catedral, which was originally Romanesque, then Islamized and then Gothicised, with its small ossuary and museum, Old Town, Arco do Repouso (Eastern Gate) with some historical city walls. Igreja de São Pedro, Igreja do Carmo, where an entire chapel was built of human bones. They are decaying, which is not apt to improve the chapel building. I visit the Museu Marítimo "Ramalho Ortigão", which actually is more of a fishing museum, but has two huge, fantastically minute models of ancient sailboats and a small single-cylinder steam engine, which was probably once powering a steam launch. At noon they close and I have to leave, but may return on the same ticket after lunch. I thus sit in the park "Alameda Julio de Deus" next to the youth hostel and read. A man sits down beside me and feeds the pigeons. Shortly before three I return to the city and visit the Museu Regional de Algarve, which has little to offer. Then I return to the Museu Marítimo to finalize my visit. Now I've seen everything worth seeing. I buy some fish from a supermarket start to cook a big pot of fish soup. Then I go to the "Arco" where a "Recital de Guitarra Portuguesa" is taking place. The artist plays on the twelve-string Portuguese guitar (which I have already seen in Coimbra), and then he plays short video clips on the topic - very entertaining. I return to the hostel, where I eat my fish soup - guaranteed carbohydrate-free.

Spain: From Andalusia to Catalonia

15.08.12 Faro to Seville I load the bike before breakfasting, as the painters are already back at work and take up the entire front of the hostel. If I do not move the scooter now, it shall soon be splattered with paint. It is hard to understand why such utterly irrelevant painting work is done during the main holiday season. The notoriously clogged N125 is still passable early in the morning. Up to Vila Real de Santo Antonio, I make good progress. The weather is cool and drizzling. That's very pleasant after the great heat. In Vila Real de San Antonio, I drive on the highway, because there's just this one bridge between Portugal and Spain. Fortunately, after violent protests by the local population, this bridge has been excluded from Portugal's idiotic electronic toll system – they require a chipcard and either a Portuguese bank account from which the tolls are debited or cash payments in advance, which must be made days if not weeks in advance. Thus I get easily to the Spanish side of the river. I drive fast, wanting to reach Seville shortly after noon. In Lepe I have to refuel and tighten the chain, as Motorway Honda in Lisbon have not even be able to adjust the chain to the correct tension. I drive on. In Niebla I am impressed with the Almoravidic-Gothic city walls, built on Roman foundations. Somewhere in the suburbs of Seville, a motorist stops me to inform me that he was born in Heiden and recognized my St. Gall registration plate. In Seville, my sat nav turns completely crazy. Apparently, many roads are not in the same place as before. It gives me absolutely absurd instructions, for instance to turn left when there is no fork at all. Eventually I still manage to find the hostel. I walk into town. Today is a holiday and not only are all the shops closed, but even the Cathedral is not open. I visit the Alcazar palace, which is heavily influenced by the Arabic architecture, but also has gothic elements. It is surrounded by a large, well-kept, landscaped garden, with a less maintained pool. I stroll through the city. In a church immediately adjacent to the cathedral, a woman carrying a miniature dog enters. The beggar at the door runs after her and tells her that animals are not allowed in the church. She wants to ignore him while he gets abusive. She walks right into the arms of the caretaker of the church, who repeats the same message much more diplomatic. When she is just about to leave, there sits the beggar and the argument starts anew. The end I did not get, maybe they are still arguing. I walk to the Plaza de Armas, which is being converted into a shopping centre, the Plaza de Toros, which is unfortunately already closed and the Torre del Oro, which is lit by the evening light. Then I walk back to the hostel.

16.08.12 Seville I am waiting for the small supermarket across the hostel to open, so I can buy something for breakfast. When they do open at nine, I quickly buy something, eat it in haste, and walk to the Casa de Pilatos. This mansion in Mudejar style has been built in the 16th century and was rebuilt twice since. It combines the Gothic and the Mudejar style, with a strong preponderance of the latter. I walk to the Cathedral. After a half hour's wait it is my turn to buy a ticket of admission. The cathedral is huge, downright intimidating. It has a large number of side chapels which probably served to finance the construction of the church. The tomb of Columbus has four Spanish kings carrying the coffin of Columbus, because after the Spanish kings had tightened their purse strings and Columbus had to live in poverty, he vowed never to be buried in Spanish soil. Thus, by not burying the coffin, this request was honoured. In the treasury, there is once more absurdly precious jewellery on display. I walk to the Plaza de Toros, where I participate in a guided tour. It was only completed in the 19th Century, after 120 years of construction. Now, it also contains two small museums. I visit the Archivo de Indias, where documents relating to the colonization of the Americas are on display. There are even some letters written by Christopher Columbus, and some appointments to nobility of conquistadors. Now I walk to the Plaza de España. The building, built in the 1920s, looks impressive in the bright sunshine. Only when approaching one notices that there was obviously no maintenance for a good many years. The building is now used by government agencies. I walk through the adjacent Parque de Maria Luisa, where I run into the Museo de Artes y Costumbres Populares, which I visit. It is above all a crafts museum; an entire room is dedicated to embroidery, another one to the porcelain factory "La Cartuja". Now I am tired and hungry. I walk to a supermarket and buy some food. When I unpack it in the kitchen and want to eat it, the meat smells strange. I ask the concierge, who confirms my opinion. So I return to the supermarket, complain and indeed get my money back. Later on, I return to the city, to take pictures of the illuminated buildings.

17.08.12 Seville to Cordoba Having my own breakfast stuff, I can get ready and leave early. I have no trouble finding Avenida Kansas City, but then it turns where it is not supposed to and I get uneasy and turn on the sat nav, which leads me to the first signposts of the road to Cordoba. There is scorching heat. I drive past green fields, citrus orchards, corn fields, small plants I cannot identify, perhaps orange tree saplings. The trip is going smoothly; everything is signposted, although I am riding on byroads. The castle of Almodóvar may be spotted ten miles before you get there. I have to visit this building, of course, although I'm clad in motorcycling gear so when I stop I immediately start to sweat. I climb each tower, getting all sweaty, because the heat is unbearable. I then go on, coming swiftly to Cordoba. The last 400 meters to the hostel I have to explore on foot, as it is located in the former Jewish quarter of the Old City, which is obviously a pedestrian zone, although this is not much respected. Upon finding it, I return to the scooter and push it to the youth hostel. I get there all sweaty. I check in, unload my luggage and leave the scooter in a motorcycle parking. Then I visit the Mezquita, a large mosque that was converted 800 years ago into a Christian church. Gothic and Islamic architecture are completely interconnected. Next I visit the synagogue, which was re-discovered in the 20th century; next to it is a statue of Maimonides with a plaque. I visit the Torre de Calahorra Museum, which is not particularly informative, and whose illogical audio guide system only can cause you to wonder, the Puente Romano, the Caballerizas Real (the Royal Spanish Riding School) and the Capilla Mudejar de San Bartolome, a Mudejar-style chapel, albeit largely restored. I eat – as a treat – my dinner at the Mensa of the youth hostel.

18.08.12 Cordoba Cordoba is a Mudejar-style city located on the knee of the Guadalquivir River, with narrow streets, oriental arches and Gothic vaults. Its origins date back to Roman times, and then it became Visigothic, Omayyadic and lost its importance in the times of the Taifa. After the Reconquista it regained central importance as a royal residence. This morning, I visit the Alcazar de los Reyes Cristianos, which contains a mixture of Gothic and Mudejar style elements, outweighed by the former. There are large and beautiful gardens, although not historical, but a restoration. Then I visit the Baños del Alcazar Califal. These Arab baths are the only remains of the palace of the caliph and are now underground, as the area was filled in for the construction of the palace. They were only rediscovered in the 1960s. Then I visit the Andalusian house. In the basement there are some Roman mosaics, while the superstructure is newer. It looks more like a second-hand shop than a museum house. Next I visit the Mausoleum Romano, a circular building without ornamentation, in the middle of a road divider. Then I walk to the Plaza de Capuchinos, an elongated square with the Capuchin monastery on one side. Here I visit the Iglesia de los Dolores, whose altar is adorned with a lifelike statue of the Virgin Mary. Past the Casa del Bailia I walk to the Palacio de Viana. There are 12 courtyards to admire, each with a different design, as well as the sumptuously adorned rooms in the upper floor of the palace, which are full of treasures: Expensive tapestries (Gobelins and designs by Goya), paintings by famous painters, furniture and books from the 16th Century and more. I walk now, past the Convento Santa Marta to the Templo Romano, a ruin of a Roman temple complex surrounded by such a idiotic lattice that you can barely see through. At the supermarket I buy some water and chickpeas for lunch, eat them quickly at the hostel and continue with my sightseeing. At the Plaza Santa Victoria I notice an imposing entrance. I walk to the Plaza de la Corredera with its symmetrical rows of houses and the picturesque Plaza del Potro, with its historic homes - unfortunately, the art museum is just about to close. Past the modern, steel-clad Puente de Miraflores I walk to the Puente Romano (which has been in service for 2,000 years), and the Puerta Sevilla, which had been demolished in the 19th century and rebuilt in 1958 and was possibly part of an aqueduct from the Omayyad period. I walk to the Puerta de Almodovar. As the sky is overcast now,

I can take a picture of it without worrying about the shades. , Past the impressive Mudejar gate at Angel de Torres I walk to the Museo Arqueologico which above all has a lot of interesting finds from the Roman period. In the basement of the museum are the remains of the Roman amphitheatre, of which unfortunately there is very little left, but this is very well explained. I continue to the picturesque Arco del Portillo - the houses that were joined by it have collapsed long ago - and make a photo in the courtyard of the Cathedral, before I return to the hostel and do my big laundry.

19.08.12 Cordoba to Gibraltar I have hardly slept, because someone had turned off the air conditioning in my room, so it became oppressively hot, and I was so excited by the prospect of driving to Gibraltar. I am the first at breakfast and leave at half past eight. I have to fight my way out of town through myriads of often completely pointless traffic lights. Somewhere, I take a wrong turn and suddenly find myself on a road which strikes me as wrong. I stop to consult the map, when two cyclists stop and willingly explain how to find the right road. Because I miss another turn and go via Palma del Rio, I have to make a further detour of 25km. Nevertheless, I already arrive at 10:15 in Ecija. The sky is overcast, it's still pretty cool. Left and right of the road are citrus trees and harvested grain fields. As I am not sure whether there are sufficient petrol stations, I have to refuel constantly. I drive past Osuna, El Saucejo (where there are miles of olive trees, so beautiful that I have to stop and take a photograph) to Almargen where I ask for directions to the petrol station. The directions I get are so dead wrong that I get even more lost and have to ask again, until I find the petrol station located far outside the village. I continue to Cueva del Becerro, where it's time for lunch. When driving through the village, I do not find an open restaurant, so I stop at the restaurant next to the petrol station. There, I eat a very tasty meal, definitely not appropriate to my diet, though. A Spaniard asks me in broken Swiss German if I was from St. Gallen. His name is Francisco Ortiz, he has worked for 39 years for +GF+ in Schaffhausen and during this time, he has built a huge mansion here. After lunch, he shows me his collection of vintage radios and offers to put me up any time I pass by. I have to continue, because my heavy motorbike gear is getting very hot when I'm not driving and I am almost melting away. Through most beautiful mountains I drive to Ronda, a pretty town, whose historical centre is located on a mesa, which is separated by a deep, narrow gorge ("El Tajo") from the rest and connected by bridges. I drive over the spectacular Puente Nuevo. The road takes me through a picturesque countryside. The temperatures are still extremely high, certainly around 40 degrees centigrade in the shade. I am sweating. At every Mirador I stop to take a picture: Mirador del Pino, from where one has a view of Ronda and Rosalejo, Mirador del Fraile, Cañada Honda Mirador, Mirador de los Castaños, from which you can see Bandalid, Mirador del Genal from which you can see Algotocin and the Mirador de Gaucin. After the village of Gaucin, the landscape is less spectacular and I go on quickly to Jimena de la Frontera and San Roque. Here I have to fill up again - water for me and fuel for the scooter - then I drive along the coast, passing huge refineries, to Gibraltar. The border formalities are straightforward. In Gibraltar, I turn on the sat nav, which leads me to a roundabout and claims that this was Line Wall Road. The second attempt brings the same result. I'm perplexed. I ask in a nearby pub where one of the guests explains accurately how to find Line Wall Road. Finally, I arrive at the Emile Hostel 45 minutes late and just before I have completely melted away in the heat. Eventually I can take off the ridiculously hot motorbike gear and have a shower. I walk through town, which is like extinct on this Sunday evening. In the Synagogue, Rosh Chodesh Elul is celebrated. The rock is glistening in the evening light. I am sinning again and eat at Burger King, to avoid an even more damaging Pub Meal. My glucose level is completely normal, though.

20.08.12 Gibraltar Gibraltar is like stuck to the flat parts of the rock. It has one of the highest population densities in the world, almost 30'000 people live on the small area that is level enough for being built on. Gibraltar suffers from excessive traffic, apparently missing a traffic concept. The housing developments seem to have grown at random, many soulless apartment blocks which were apparently built in haste. The mountain is pierced by many military tunnels on several levels, whose total length is said to surpass that of Gibraltar's road network. Most tunnels are still classified as military zone, as well as large parts of the rock. Since there is no breakfast at the hostel, I go to the giant Morrison's supermarket, buy some yogurt and eat it with my cereal. Then I drive to Europa Point, the southernmost tip of Gibraltar. Due to the fog one cannot see Africa. I drive all around the mountain, which has been made possible by a long tunnel. Then I drive to Jews Gate, where I have to pay the £ 12 entry fee and may now go up on the rock. The first stop is at St. Michael's Cave. A large limestone cave, the largest of space has been developed as a theatre hall. During World War II, it served as a military hospital. I continue to Apes' Den, where I watch probably for an hour the monkeys playing. Many have babies. These do not have any fear of contact, but when one of the older sees the baby touching me, he shows his teeth. I drive to the Great Siege Tunnels, which were the first tunnel built, created in the 18th Century during the siege by the Spanish and French on the north side for gun emplacements. I continue to Moorish Castle, where there is little to see except a small Moorish bath. Once more I return to Morrison's where I buy some food for lunch. Then I return to Europa Point, where one still cannot see Africa. Since my ticket is still valid, I return to the top of the rock, park at St. Michael's Cave and walk to the upper cable car station, where I watch the monkeys play like human children. Then I go to the WW2 tunnels (www.rockandfortress.com) which have to be paid for separately, another eight pounds. Our guide, called "Smudge", has done military service in these tunnels. He tells us about the hard soldiers' life during World War II. They had to dig out tunnels and caves to accommodate 5'000 soldiers, along

with army hospitals. It was only completed in 1968. I quickly visit the Gibraltar Museum, where I just manage to see everything, especially the Moorish bath, before they close for the night. Then I return to Morrison's and buy dinner and tomorrow morning's breakfast, using up all the English coins.

21.08.12 Gibraltar to Malaga Early in the morning I am ready to leave, but I have to wait for the owners of the hostel, because last night I put a big yogurt for breakfast in the fridge. Yogurt I may still eat. When they come in, I quickly eat my breakfast and leave. Crossing the border is not a problem. I drive through La Linea. After a while, the signposts change to A7, but I am following the N340. When refuelling, I ask for directions, but I am still right. As the attendant had told me, there is a difficulty in Sotogrande, because a huge site is only accessible to residents and I have to circumnavigate it. I manage this via byroads and get back on the A7, which is now an eight-lane highway and also classified as such. At times, the road passes right at the seashore, with its sharp-edged volcanic rock. Only in the famous beach resorts, there are sandy beaches. In Estepona, San Pedro Alcantara and Marbella I deliberately drive through the town centres. San Pedro Alcantara still seems the most liveable while Marbella is a big, threatening city, without the charm of organically grown places. So I don't even stop, but carry on to Malaga, where I arrive around noon. The sat nav once again seems to be going completely crazy. Again and again, it goes silent and then screams turn around! turn around! when I fail to turn, which is a bit weird because it wants me to take a one-way in the wrong direction. I thus take some detours to get to the hostel, very agitated about this crappy sat nav. At Casa Al Sur Hostel I am warmly welcomed. I can park the scooter right outside the entrance. I quickly change and walk back to the city, where I only find after much searching a carbohydrate-free meal. Then I visit the cathedral, which was never completed, despite the enormous duration of the construction. Inside it appears baroque, although construction only started by the end of the 15th Century. I then visit the Museo Picasso Malaga - Picasso was born here - where hundreds of his works, many of them early works, are exhibited. However, I have a crisis, either the glucose level is too high or it's because I did not have coffee in the morning. I can hardly stand upright and there is no seating in the museum. When I retire to the reading room, I promptly fall asleep, but don't feel better afterwards. I visit the birthplace of Picasso, where many of his potteries are on display and a special exhibition about his relationship to classical art. Then I return to the hostel. However, no one is there, so I explore the western part of town, buy some meat and spinach in a supermarket and prepare a healthy, but as usual unsavoury meal.

22.08.12 Malaga Dense fog looming over the city, yet it is humid and hot. I climb up the hill to the Gibralfaro Castle. Built by the Moors, the castle has been almost completely restored and there is a small museum. One of its exhibits is the uniform of Infantry Regiment No. 3 Reding, the Swiss Guard. Despite walking on the perimeter wall around the castle, there is little chance of getting a glimpse of the view because of the fog. The castle and the Alcazaba are connected by a double wall, the Coracha. I descend to the entrance of the Alcazaba, where there are still some of the inner buildings, whose passages immediately disclose the Moorish style. There are pretty courtyards with fountains, ponds and streams throughout the castle. Here, too, I walk as far as possible, on the perimeter walls, but again without obtaining a view of the city. A fountain is made of a Roman bath tub. Then I visit the Roman amphitheatre, which appears to have been pretty small. I walk to the Palmeral de las Sorpresas, the modern and attractive "Waterfront", and the Paseo de la Farola on the other side of the harbour. Then I walk towards the hostel, quickly grabbing a disgusting, but low-carbohydrate kebab on my way there. In the hostel I get the scooter and drive to the Museo de Malaga Automovilistico. The museum turns out to be one of the best car museums I have ever visited. All cars are in mint condition. They are almost exclusively top rarities, of which only a few are left on earth. Many of the vehicles I have never seen before. For steam friends there is a 1910 Stanley Steamer. Then there are a lot of luxury cars, particularly the impressive Mercedes-Benz 540k, the two Cords, the two Lancia or the propeller-driven Helicron 2. I drive back to the hostel, park the scooter and walk back to the Alcazaba, where I attempt once more to take pictures, because the sun is gone now and there is no more shade, and then I walk to the Museo de Vino. Despite the very expensive entrance fee there are only few exhibits. At least one can sample two varieties of Malaga, the difference to port wine is small, though.

23.08.12 Malaga to Granada For some reason I wake up late, get ready and drive off. I easily find the road out of Malaga and drive towards Colmenar. The road climbs steeply and switchbacks up the mountain, the view is fantastic. I can see now that the fog over Malaga stops as if drawn with a ruler in two to three hundred meters altitude. The road climbs up to 900 meters above sea level. In Colmenar I refuel and ask for directions. After a kilometre or so, I realize that I must be driving in the wrong direction and looking at the map, I am on the right road, but in the wrong direction. I turn around and ride now in direction of Granada. Again and again, I stop to enjoy the view. There are cork oaks on the roadside, their bark peeled off. In Axarquia I see a ruined castle from a distance and follow the sign "Castillo de Zalia". Unfortunately, there is less left than what it looked like from a distance, however, the proportions must have been huge. Returning from the ruins, I meet a German woman with whom I chat for a long time. I continue to Alhama de Granada, where I have an excellent lunch, which is specially made low-carb. The Castillo is not open to the public, so I visit the Plaza de los Presos, where I get a map at the local museum, then the Iglesia de la Encarnacion, which is closed, though, the Hospital de la Reina, which is now a school whose courtyard is open to the public, the fountain Caño Wamba of 1533, the partially collapsed church Iglesia de las Angustias, some (probably several hundred years old) collapsed houses around it, the Mus-

lim underground granary Mazmorras and the (closed) antiguo Convento de los Carmelitos Calzados. There is a good view of the valley cutting deep into the mountain, right next to the village, which is built on a rocky outcrop. Down in the valley, ruined flourmills are crumbling away. Driving on I miss a turn - it is labelled without street number - and drive far into Santa Cruz del Comercio, until I realize that something is wrong. I need to backtrack, making a detour of certainly more than 20km. Now I do find the turnoff to the Embalse de los Bermejas, a reservoir. The landscape is incredibly beautiful and the light enhances its colours. After La Malaha I cross the last ridge and get an impressive ride into Granada. This time my sat nav finds the Hostal Meridiano easily. I check in - here I have a single room - and visit the Cathedral and the Capilla Real de Granada with the Museo de los Reyes Catolicos. Then I walk to the Mirador de San Nicolas, where I have a good view of the Alhambra in the evening light. The ticket to get in, however, I have to book via the Internet and I can only get in on Saturday afternoon at 17:30 clock - the more convenient hours are sold out for months.

24.08.12 Granada On the morning I visit the former Judería, today called Realejo, that hardly contains any historic buildings and certainly nothing reminiscent of the Judería. I walk through the Albayzin Sacromonte where the gypsies live in caves, some of which have masonry entrances and doors. Mostly, a curtain must do. The entrance areas are all littered and the area looks terribly impoverished. I walk to the Palacio del Dar al-Horra, which is closed for the week. Since the Museum of the Cuevas is closed for the siesta, too, I walk back to the hostel and also hold a two-hour siesta. Then I visit the Monasterio de San Jeronimo. Its colourful ceilings and small plaster figures do not correspond to any known style. The tomb of Gonzalez Fernandez de Cordoba, designated only by a tombstone in the ground, is located here. Then I walk to the Basilica de San Juan de Dios (where I have to walk around the whole block to find the entrance), held in the Spanish Baroque style (we would probably say Rococo). The interior is excessively decorated, all covered in gold- and silver-leaf. The tomb of San Juan de Dios is a single orgy in gold leaf, silver and gold, precious stones and the finest marble. In each ornament, a little relic is included. It is almost impossible to explore all the details. I continue walking past the Royal Hospital, to the Cartuja de Granada. Particularly impressive are the paintings representing the martyrdom of Carthusian monks. One monk is pierced by a spear, the other holding a rifle. The vestry is even more richly adorned than the church, the walls covered with baroque stucco, below they used the finest marble. Upon returning, I visit the Iglesia San Ildefonso, where there is a coach from 1765 in a niche of the nave and the ceiling is held in Mudejar style. Through the Puerta Elvira I reach Calle Elvira. I buy a ticket for today's flamenco evening. On the way back I walk past the Palace of Gonzalez Fernandez de Cordoba, which unfortunately is crumbling. By ten in the evening I visit the Flamenco show in "Le Chien Andalou". This is a very small cellar stage of only 2x3 metres. The show is fantastic; you get the feeling that everything is improvised. The guitarist and the singer keep making eye contact to synchronize. When dancing, the beat is struck with the heels. I am amazed at their stamina, because the show is two hours!

25.08.12 Granada In the morning I visit the Bañuelo (Baños Arabes), Arab baths, which are well preserved, with the exception of the basin, because in the 19th century a laundry was located here. Then I walk to Museo Cuevas del Sacromonte, which is open now. The exhibition is, to put it mildly, weird. There is an exhibition on other cave dwellings in the world and of the geology, flora and fauna of Granada. The explanatory texts consist of 40 closely written A4 pages, making your decision, not even to start reading, easy. But there are also a few cave dwellings, which are at least partially furnished, to give you an idea about how they might look inside. On my way back I noticed that the yesterday closed Palace of Dar-Al-Horra is open now, so I pay a visit. There is no entrance fee, but inside there is absolutely nothing, although this could be a nice tourist attraction. For lunch, I return to the hostel and prepare some carbohydrate-free food. I'm sick and tired of this unsavoury diet, though and I do not know how I will still be able to keep it up. It seems that I have to atone for all my sins already now. Then I walk to Alhambra. Hundreds of meters of queues of those who already have a ticket and wait for entry. By two pm sharp I'm through. I start my visit with the Generalife, whose flowered courtyards look pretty. Then I walk through the gardens to the Alcazaba, the fortress at the other end of the ridge where I climb all the towers which are open for visitors. The sun beats down mercilessly, but in the direction of the Alhambra, so it is nicely lit. Then I visit the Palace of Charles V, which now contains several museums. Below is the archaeological museum, which contains many pieces that were found here, giving you an idea of the objects that were once upon a time used in the Alhambra. There is also a special exhibition "Luz del Sur" of avant-garde artist Jean Scully, whose minimally designed paintings are probably not to everyone's liking. At the top floor there are two art exhibitions: A special exhibition to the local painter Sorolla, "Jardines de luz". These paintings are very conventional, the exact opposite of Jean Scully. Furthermore, there is the permanent exhibition of paintings, which is well structured and makes a clear reference to Granada. Finally it's 17:15 pm, and I queue up in a long line of people waiting to visit the Palacios Nazaries. When it is my turn, the ticket fails to open the electronic gate. It has no tolerance and I'm five minutes early because the queue has moved a bit faster than what I estimated. So I need to wait for five more minutes until I can try again. Inside it is packed with tourists who preferably take pictures of each other as a trophy to take home. In actual fact, the palaces not in a very good condition, the stucco work is mostly faded and some even crumbling or blackened. The walls, doors and window lintels are covered with plaster reliefs. The lower part of the walls is covered with tiles or coloured plaster mosaics. Delightful are the views of the city through the ornate oriental windows. If there were not so many tourists, the premises would

be more enjoyable. Upon leaving the Palacios Nazaries I visit the Palacio del Partal and walk past the Torre de los Picos, Torre de la Cautiva and Torre de las Infantas back to the entrance, from where I descend in between the palaces and the Cuesta del Rey Chico back to town.

26.08.12 Granada to Lorca I am leaving shortly after eight in Granada. Unfortunately, the itinerary I compiled last night proves useless. All arterial roads are under construction, the road signs removed and the roads blocked off. I do not find out of Granada. So I ascend the mountain until after Huetor de Santillan. My map ends here, however, because there are no more roads visible. I ask a local who explains very clearly and systematically, how I can reach Guadix on byroads. I make notes and drive on. In Beas de Granada they just celebrate a fair. Young people still psyched up from the night throw a beer bottle at me, shattering on the floor – if my tires got punctured, this would be the end of my trip to Spain. The arterial road is also blocked - by the bumper cars. I finagle myself around it and go on to Quentar, past the beautiful Pantano de Quentar (a dam) and via a beautiful mountain road to La Peza. There is - to my greatest surprise - a petrol station. The attendant tells me how I find the turnoff to the village of Guadix. I easily get there, once more across a range of mountains. There are cave dwellings everywhere; often the top of a cliff is occupied by an entire strip of cave dwellings, which are obviously larger and more comfortable than the gypsy caves of Granada. In Guadix I cannot find the byroad to Baza, so I have to drive on the highway. After Baza I want to take a byroad to Cullar. I guess I took the wrong exit. The comfortable wide tar road suddenly becomes dirt road. I'm already gone too far to turn back. So I'm following farm roads for several kilometres until I come to a paved road that leads me directly to Cullar. From there, it goes quickly to Orce. I stop and eat an incredibly luxurious lunch - it's Sunday and I just ordered the Menu del Dia - not even very expensive. The road continues past many comfortable cave houses, there is even a cave hotel. I continue to Maria, past beautiful mountains and a ruined castle, perched on top of a mountain. One can notice more and more pig farms, what you can not only see, but also smell. Velez Blanco I see from afar, with its well-preserved, white castle, which has a very unusual ramp to the entrance and looks like a fairytale castle. Unfortunately it is not open, so I cannot visit. I continue to Velez Rubio. The driver of a buzz bike reams me because I do not stop exactly on the (long gone) stop line. I drive fast towards Lorca. Shortly before Lorca I have to ride again on a lousy gravel road for a few miles, because the main road is closed and they marked this as a detour – quite nasty. I find the Hostal Residencia Juan immediately and am received very kindly. Freed from my heavy motorcycle gear, I go to the castle "Castillo del Sol". Effectively only two towers, both of them closed to the public, and a few water tanks are still left. In the courtyard, they have built a parador, a state-owned hotel. The five euro entry fee was more or less wasted. The city itself appears lifeless, but maybe on a weekday, this is not much different. In a shop in the Muslim quarter I buy two cans of food for dinner. I notice hypoglycaemia.

27.08.12 Lorca to San Fulgencio to Alicante Since there is no breakfast at the (otherwise fine) Hostal Juan, I check out early and look for an open store where I can buy something to eat. But no such luck: Lorca is still sleeping deeply, although it is almost nine in the morning. I ride in direction La Hoya. I do not find a sign-posted turnoff, but in La Hoya I find a turnoff that about matches the direction to take. When I ask for directions at a petrol station, I'm already on the right road and just have to continue straight. I reach Fuente Alamo de Murcia, which I avoid. In Balsapintada I find no more byroads and drive a few miles on the highway. Then I ride through Pozo Aledo to San Javier and right through town to the adjacent San Pedro del Pinatar, all blocked by a huge traffic jam because of the many tourists. Finally, I can go on and reach via Torre Vieja and Guardamar del Segura the village of San Fulgencio/La Marina, where I visit Finn and Lisbeth Dittmer, friends of Julius Egloff, whom I had met in 2008 in the United States. After a good lunch and a pleasant stay, I continue to Alicante, whose castle may already be seen from several kilometres' distance. On entering Alicante I do see the OAMI, but have to go on a long time, until I am able to turn around and take at least a few photos of the exterior of the OMPI, the European Trademark Office. I drive into Alicante and find the Xhostel without any hassle, park the scooter and walk to the Plaza de los Luceros, the Plaza Calvo Sotelo and along the Paseo Tomas y Valiente (next to the Marina) to the Casco Antiguo, then climb the steep hill to the Castillo de Santa Barbara, which I reach at dusk. On top of the old city walls, I descend to the hostel.

28.08.12 Alicante In the morning, I walk to the Central Market and buy, only to take part in the market, a ring of chorizos. The butcher is very disappointed with my small order and makes it a bit larger, so I end up with quite a lot. I have to return to the hostel to put them in the fridge. Then I walk back to the old town and visit the Concatedral de San Nicolas. The interior is very simple and there is a cloister. I re-visit the Basilica de Santa Maria. Then I walk around the castle rock to the Museo Arqueologico Provincial MARQ, which actually has a very good exhibition. The special exhibition "El Tesoro de los Barbaros" is about a huge looted treasure from the year 268, which was found during excavations in the Rhine - probably an Alemannic ship was sunk by the Romans. Of interest are the Roman padlocks that already used the same technology as today. The exhibition was organized in conjunction with the Museum of Speyer. The permanent collection offers a well-organized history of the region from prehistoric times to the present. Some of the exhibits are sensationally well-preserved. By two PM I am asked to leave because they close for siesta. In a small restaurant I break all diet rules and eat a hearty meal. Then I walk to the Plaza de Toros, but the bullfighting museum is also closed. Despite the midday heat, I ascend via the steep city walls to the Castillo de Santa Barbara to see the Castillo in broad daylight. With the elevator,

which is free on the way down, I descend and visit the Museo de Arte Contemporaneo MACA, where admission is free. Already the modern building that includes an old part is worth a visit. There is a collection of 20th century works of art, even a Jesus Rafael Soto (I have visited the museum dedicated to him in Venezuela). One floor is dedicated to the local artist Juana Frances, whose art I am not able to appreciate at all and one floor to the local artist Eugenio Sempere, who, experimented with geometric trompe d'oeuils and reminds of Jesus Rafael Soto. I walk to the nearby Museo Bellas Artes Gravina MUBAG, the lower floor is dedicated to the local artist Emilio Varela, whose sometimes very faint paintings look almost transparent, and the upper floor is dedicated to Joaquin Sorolla, whose pictures I have seen already in the Palace of Charles V in the Alhambra. Meanwhile, it is six PM, so I walk back to the Archaeological Museum, where I complete my tour and then to the Museo del Toro, where the local Toreros receive their place of honour, as well as a motley collection of art. Past the modern Centro Cultural Las Cigarreras I walk back to the hostel where I cannot participate in the paella party, but have to stick to my diet. Amazing is that most of the local attractions are free and when they do charge, the admission fee is very modest. Normally one has to pay everywhere, even in the churches, six to eight Euros entry fee.

29.08.12 Alicante to Valencia The morning starts badly. My Belgian roommates return at four in the morning. Two of them have a loud chatter; a cell phone is ringing all the time, while a third one is noisily repackaging his stuff. So I cannot sleep until they leave at six in the morning. When I get up at eight and turn on my netbook computer, the Internet Explorer is hijacked by the snap.do virus. I do not have a tool to remove it and it takes an hour of hard work to manually delete all its entries from the registry. Only now I can leave. It is one of the hottest days so far, well over 30 degrees centigrade, the air seems to boil. I drive past the ugly tourist destinations of San Juan d'Alacant, Villajoyosa and Benidorm. The train to Denia, a small diesel railcar, seems to be always on par with me. I continue west to Altea, Calpe and then through the mountains past Denia. In Gata de Gorgos I stop in the middle of town next to a bench and eat my lunch there. I drive past Gandia and Sueco where I turn off to Las Palmes and El Perello. The last piece cuts through a national park south of Valencia, but unfortunately I don't get a glimpse of the L'Albufera Lake. Driving into Valencia, the Ciudad de las Ciencias is a landmark seen from afar. The monumental, ultra-modern buildings are very pretty, but so big that it is impossible to make a decent photo of them. I drive to the Casa Sergi, where I am kindly received. For the Tomatina, which took place this morning, I am of course too late. I walk to the Ciudad de las Artes y de las Ciencias, then through a beautiful park located in the former riverbed to the city centre, visiting the Lonja de la Seda (Silk Exchange), an UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Church of Santa Catalina, the gothic-baroque hodgepodge Cathedral (where I miss the Holy Grail, because it is exhibited in a side chapel), the directly adjacent Real Basilica de Nuestra Senora de los Desamparados, which is built in the most magnificent Baroque, the Plaza de la Virgen, where people are feeding the pigeons, the Torres de Serranos which on the inside look like the an Iranian gate and finally the peculiar Iglesia de San Lorenzo Franciscanos where all the statues stand on clouds that look like expanding foam. I travel by bus back to the hostel.

30.08.12 Valencia I ride the scooter into town and park it at the Plaza Alfonso el Magnano. I find the parking lot, by just following another bike. I walk past the Palacio Marques de Scala to the Almudin. A homeless man is camped in front of it. Apparently, a particular type of tents was distributed, as all of them seem to use one and the same type. I continue to the Real Basilica de Nuestra Senora de los Desamparados that I visited yesterday, and again the Cathedral. This time I can take a look at the Holy Grail, even though there is a service. Past the Palacio de la Generalitat I walk through the Old Town, whose facades were decorated with moody, funny and socially critical paintings - obviously intentional. I look at the Torres de Quart, which are almost identical to the Torres de Serranos. Then I go to the Museo de las Bellas Artes. What a wonderful museum, what a beautiful exhibition! I particularly enjoy the exhibitions on the Pintores de Entresiglos and on Antonio Muñoz Degrain. There are also very good works of enormous value of classical painters (Goya, Hieronymus Bosch, etc.), especially a self-portrait by Velasquez. In the Central Market, I buy tomatoes and sausages for lunch, which shall be troubling me the rest of the afternoon. I eat them on a small bench, where the greater part of the tomato lands on the ground. I visit the Plaza de Toros, then the Mercado Colon, which now houses a few restaurants and flower shops and a cultural centre. Then I walk in the opposite direction to the Plaza San Agustin and the Universidad de Valencia. Unfortunately, due to construction work, one cannot get close to the historic buildings. As it starts to rain, I drive back to the hostel, leave the scooter there and to the Ciudad de las Artes y de las Ciencias, where I visit the Museo de las ciencias. This is geared more towards children, but they have already managed to destroy about half of the experiments on display. For me, the high entrance fee is a waste, because I don't find the museum interesting.

31.08.12 Valencia to Cuenca I say goodbye to my friendly host Sergi in Valencia and leave at eight in the morning. Finding my way out of town proves to be very easy, as for once there is a logical traffic concept, making navigating quite simple. The first 50km are on a second-class highway (Autovia). After that, there is a well-developed road. In Casinos and Titaguas I have to refuel - to my greatest surprise. Even at a glance this seems an extremely high consumption. Because there are no more petrol stations after the last one, I start to get nervous if I would still make it to Cuenca with this unusually high consumption, so I drive into a village and ask for the nearest petrol station. It is not far, I am assured. Funny thing is that one of the men in the village square suddenly

responds in broken Swiss German. He has worked for 12 years in Zug at VZUG. I find indeed a petrol station in Carboneras de Guadazaon. I refuel and notice that the consumption was no longer so high. They let me remove the air filter there, but without result, as it is clean. I chat a long time with the woman at the till, who has been to Switzerland and Germany. Then I go on. There are only 30km to Cuenca. There I put up at the Hostal Avenida. The concierge recommends a restaurant "La Barrica de Miguel". So I go there to have lunch, but it is not very good. Then I walk to the Casco Antigua, which is perched on a steep rocky ridge. I visit the Convento de San Pablo, now a parador and not open to the public. Across the 100-year-old bridge Puente de San Pablo I return to the city centre and visit the predominantly Norman-Gothic Cathedral, built in the 12th Century on the foundations of a mosque. I am early enough to visit the Diocesan Museum. This is quite amazing, as there are three floors crammed with works of art: statues, tapestries, carpets and in the basement there is a vault where the gold and silver items, mainly monstrances, are displayed. The lighting is so bad that one can see almost nothing. When I come out, there are drumming sounds: the Feria de San Julian, the city's patron saint, is about to be celebrated. In white robes, looking like Greeks, the procession is dancing backwards through the streets. To move on, the last dancer has to run to the front, to slide in backwards again. I visit the Iglesia San Pedro, which inside is round with a circular passage above, otherwise unadorned. Then I climb the meagre remains of the Castillo, walk past the (closed) Archivo Historico, which has received a bad reputation as a place of the inquisition, the (closed) Iglesia San Miguel, the Torre Mangana, the (closed) Museo de las Ciencias, the Plaza Carmen the (closed) Iglesia de San Andres, the Iglesia El Salvador (where I leave at the beginning of Mass) and the Palacio de Justicia. Through the Parque del Huecar I return to the new town.

01.09.12 Cuenca to Toledo When I get up I feel sick. The nasty roommate in Alicante, who had kept me awake from four to six in the morning, had passed on his bad flu to me. I have headaches and joint pain and do not feel at ease. I drive on the A40, as the N400 seems to have gone up in the A40. This of course is very nice, because I do not have to deal with navigating, as it is all signposted to Toledo. On the way I buy awfully expensive vitamin C that I take immediately. Already by two in the afternoon I arrive at the YHA hostel Albergue Los Pascuales in Toledo in the old town and can park the scooter directly in front of the entrance. I walk to the Central Market, then to the Cathedral (built 1227-1493), which I visit. For once, the audio guided tour is useful and interesting. The cathedral is almost submerged by the art treasures that are piled up: The Lion Porte and the emperor organ, the incredibly expensively furnished chapter house, fully decorated with paintings of bishops and ceilings and doors in the Mudejar style, the Sacristy with paintings by Titian, Caravaggio, El Greco, Goya, Raphael, Zurbaran, Velasco, Van Dyck, Bellini, Bassano, Reni, Rubens, Seghers. The ceiling was painted by Luca Giordano, he is said to have immortalized himself as a man with spectacles. How funny! The style of El Greco, who worked in Toledo, is unique. His casual brushstrokes and partially abstracted motives – in the 17th Century - anticipated the coming developments. After eating lunch on a small bench in the supermarket, I visit the Museo de Santa Cruz. The building, a former convent, is quite unique. Cloisters and stairs are held in the Mudejar style, but the massive, pillar-less interiors that are connected at the intersections of the naves. A prominent exhibit is a tapestry with motives of the zodiac. The exhibition of artists of the 20th Century is interesting, too. A child is about to pull down a painting and the attendant screams "stop!", but the mother does not respond. What would have happened if the child had destroyed the painting? I walk to the Mirador, where there is an excellent view of the Hospital de Tavera. Then I walk to the town gates Puerta del Sol, Puerta de Alarcones, Puerta de Bisagra and Puerta de Alfonso VI. Across town I walk to the synagogue de El Transito, which was used as a church for a long time and was now lovingly restored, so the remaining Hebrew inscriptions can be read again. Finally, I walk to the Puente de San Martin, where many wedding couples have their pictures taken.

02.09.12 Toledo I walk to the Jesuit church of St. Ildefonso. I do get in for free, but the ticket office is not yet open and thus the towers are still closed. I then visit the Museo de los Concilios Visigoda y de la Cultura, which is also housed in a former mosque converted to a church. Here I climb up to the spire, but the view is obstructed by a double pigeon-mesh. The museum shows mainly Visigothic funerary objects such as belt buckles. On the way to the Mezquita Cristo de la Luz I pass a statue of Garcilaso de la Vega. The mosque, the oldest in Toledo, was Christianized and on one side, a semicircular apse was added. Next to the mosque is a stretch of Roman road. From the terrace there is a beautiful view of the Puerta de Bisagra. The Iglesia de los Jesuitas and the Iglesia del Salvador are still closed. At the Church of Santo Tomé there is the painting "El Entierro del Señor de Or-gaz" by El Greco. This painting lacks the light brush strokes and abstractions that characterises him, yet is detailed and lifelike. I walk to the Synagogue of Santa Maria la Blanca. After the expulsion of the Jews it was profaned and converted into a church. The interior is completely held in the Mudejar style with only a few Mogen David, indicating its use as a synagogue, but with many Hebrew inscriptions. From outside, the building looks low-key and unadorned. Finally, I walk to the Monasterio de San Juan de los Reyes. The huge Franciscan monastery has a very large church with two unique galleries on the columns in front of the altar, and one on either side a richly decorated frieze. The church is late Gothic style, but the ceilings of the upper cloister are in the Mudejar style. A part of the monastery is still in operation. My next stop is the Puente de San Martin, which is now lit by the sun. I walk along the river Tajo. In two places, there are remnants of a former bridge. From the Puente de Alcantara I return to the upper town. I eat lunch from a grocery store and walk to the Museo del Ejercito in the Alcazar. The museum is gigantic in size and I have only two hours. I linger a bit at the tin soldiers, the

weapons and the history of Spain, in particular the war of succession. At least I get to know the entire building. At three they close for the day. I walk to the Iglesia del Salvador, which is now open. The former mosque (even temporarily even main mosque) was converted into a Christian church. Destroyed by a fire, it was rebuilt, so that not much of the mosque is left. The conversion which took place a few years ago was partially unsuccessful, on the one hand it looks awful and on the other hand there are visible water leaks. I walk to the Iglesia de los Jesuitas San Ildefonso, which is now open for visitors. The interior is well preserved, in typical Jesuit Baroque style, with square columns and a dome. I climb the spires, from where there is a spectacular panoramic view of Toledo. From here one can see, however, that the roof is badly damaged and partially even collapsing. I hope this will be repaired before an accident happens. I now want to explore the area north and west of the hostel. The Iglesia Santiago de Arrabal is now open, outside the church looks like a mosque, but the interior is dominated by Gothic arches, although some Moorish elements are present. I walk to the Church of Santa Leocadia, then past the Palace of the Nuncio to the Puerta del Cambrón, descend to the Puente de San Martín, and climb a spot from where I can take some nice photos of Toledo. By 22h I return once more to the centre to take some night photos.

03.09.12 Toledo to Madrid I get up late, because I have to buy some stamps at the post office. Then I leave. The A42, an Autovia (second-class highway) takes me on to the shortest route directly to Madrid. This time my sat nav works fine and it leads me right to the Living Roof Hostel, which is centrally located and has a motorcycle parking in the vicinity. I check in and walk right back into town. On the way from the Plaza Callao to the Puerta del Sol I visit an electronics store to look at the GPS sat nav systems. There I meet an Argentine veterinarian with whom I chat a long time. I walk to the Puerta del Sol, then to the Plaza Mayor, which is surrounded by rows of houses, and only reached by passageways. I walk past the Basilica Pontificia San Miguel to the Catedral Nuestra Señora de la Almudena. Construction of this huge church was begun in 1879 and completed in 1993(!). The ceiling paintings are abstract, modern and held in very cheerful colours, not really matching the otherwise neo-Gothic style church. I also visit the crypt, which actually represents a complete basement church and already has accumulated a sizeable number of tombs. Next to the cathedral some monumental building, that will dwarf the cathedral, is under construction. Then I visit the Royal Palace. Actually, the entry would be free on Wednesday, but only for EU citizens, and such I am not, so I have to pay, but don't have to wait for Wednesday. The apartments are sumptuously equipped, even exceeding what is expected for kings, which shows that Spain has once upon a time been the most powerful nation in the world. The ceiling paintings are by Tiepolo and Luca Giordano. An unusual sight is the royal pharmacy, actually more of a museum for pharmacist's containers. The Royal Armoury contains above all armour, some of which was commissioned long after its military benefits. I visit the Parque del Campo del Moro, the Jardines de Sabatini, where a pop concert must have been held, because the stage is still there, and walk to the Plaza de España, where there is a large monument to Cervantes, showing Don Quixote and Sancho Panza. From here I walk back to the hostel. I'm not so well, but I really have no time to rest and stay in bed, because this would ruin the whole itinerary.

04.09.12 Madrid At night I feel very ill. When I wake up in the morning, I feel even sicker. But that has to step back now, there's no time for being sick. I walk to the Prado Museum, which opens, according to my travel guide, at ten. I get there in time and stand in a long queue, which is processed fairly quickly, though. The collection is huge, and I am aware that I will, with a little luck, manage to visit the permanent collection, but not the special exhibitions. The focus is on the famous Spanish artists Goya, Velázquez, El Greco (who actually was Greek) and others. As might be expected, a good part of it is religious art. Since yesterday I suffered not only from influenza, but also from extremely annoying intestinal problems (which certainly had their origins in the diet) I have to do without food, the only safe method to get this under control. Lunch is two cups of rooibos tea without sugar. In the afternoon, I feel much better, which does not mean much, because my condition is permanently fluctuating. I am, despite the enormous effort to view it all, almost sad as I enter the last room and walk in plain sunshine back to the hostel. In the evening, I feel very sick, so I go to bed quite early.

05.09.12 Madrid In the morning I am still feeling ill. Nevertheless, I get up. I have breakfast after a day of fasting - with some forbidden bread, then I walk into the city. I walk to Callao and then past the Teatro Real to the Iglesia Catedral de las Fuerzas Armadas de España (Yes, this does exist!) whose interior is nothing special. I visit the Plaza de la Villa, the Plaza Mayor, and then I take part in a tour of the Monasterio de las Descalzas Reales. The monastery is, as usual, richly decorated and has a collection of paintings of famous artists. Especially valuable is the huge collection of Flemish tapestries from the 15th Century, which have been preserved perfectly - during the Napoleonic Wars and the Spanish Civil War, they rested undetected in chests. The monastery is still in operation, which is why only part of it can be visited. Our guide speaks with Argentine accent! Interestingly, the Hebrew inscription on a statue of Christ was made at a time when there were no more Jews in Spain; it was probably written by Christians. I visit the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza. The collection is very different from the Prado: Much less religious art and perfectly ordered by art periods and styles. I then visit the Carmen Thyssen-Bornemisza collection, which is, however, not integrated into the rest of the collection. There are a lot more paintings of individuals, even from the early 15th Century, when it was still a novelty. Then I visit the huge Parque del Retiro, where the Monumento Alfonso XII is a highlight, as it is lit up by the sunshine. At the Palacio de Velázquez, there is an extremely avant-garde art exhibition "Nacho Criado - Agentes Colaboradores"; broken

glass and scrap are somehow arranged. It is continued in the Palacio de Cristal. I walk up to the Estatua del Angel Caído, then past the Real Jardín Botánico and the Prado across town to Calle Fuencarral, a friendly pedestrian zone, which leads me to the Museo Municipal. The exhibition consists of a few pictures of the city and two huge city models, one of the 19th century city centre, which is so well made that the projected images of a camera moving over it look like a real flight over the city.

06.09.12 Madrid At four in the morning, my roommates return and make a hell of a noise. At eight it is me that gets up and I have the satisfaction that I now probably disturb them, too. I walk to the Palacio de Liria, which is now a cultural center. Then I walk to Temple of Debod, which was built about 200 BC in Egypt, and given to Spain as a token of appreciation for their help at Abu Simbel. I descend to the Plaza de España and walk right across town to the Museo Nacional Reina Sofía, which is just about to open for the day. The exhibition is gigantic in size. On four floors there is modern art from the late 19th Century to the present. The best-known work exhibited is "Guernica" by Pablo Picasso, but there are many more works by famous artists. Some works are very avant-garde. Almost eight hours later I leave the museum and walk past the Mercado de la Cebada to the Basilica of San Francisco El Grande, where I participate in the guided tour. The church was built in mid-18th century. The enormously large art gallery with works by Cano and Zurbarán belongs largely to the Prado. Via the Plaza de España, I walk back to the hostel.

07.09.12 Madrid to Zaragoza I get up early, but I have to pack my stuff and have breakfast, so it gets almost nine until I can leave. I use the sat nav to get out of Madrid, but this is once more not working right: it keeps losing the satellite and goes silent, just as I come to a major intersection, then it tells me to turn right, even though this is dead wrong and I am no longer able to turn back. I must have done a detour of about 10 km. Finally I find the village of Los Hueros from where I am supposed to find the byroad for my onward journey. Of course this is not possible, because there are no street signs. Only when I see a obviously wrong route number, I turn around and ask for directions at a workshop. There, I learn that I have to turn around. With this information, I find the road easily. Via Pozo de Guadalajara I drive to Sacedón where I refuel. In Alcocer I turn off the N320 and drive towards the Alto Tajo Nature Reserve, the headwaters of the river Tagus. The area is beautiful, there are bizarre rock formations. The road gets worse and worse until there is a single patchwork of four different colors and lurches like a dirt road. The only petrol station in Villanueva de Alcorón is no longer in operation. In Zaorejas I get - although the gauge still shows sufficient fuel - a bit queasy, so I ask for the nearest petrol station. Which is in Molino de Aragón, I am told, about 50 kilometres away. No problem, there is still enough fuel to get there. I drive on the sharp-cornered road through the beautiful natural park. I arrive in Molino de Aragón, without having to use the last drop of fuel, and can fuel up again. The fortress, that occupies a whole mountainside, can be seen from afar. I leave the N211 and find a small restaurant where I eat excellently, but of course, without regard to the diet. Then I go on, with a full tank and a full belly. Via Tortuera I drive on a good road towards Zaragoza, which is now well signposted. While I was driving through mountains before, here it is a highland plateau with large, harvested fields and withered sunflowers, which will probably soon be harvested for their seeds. Shortly before Daroca the descent begins. Daroca itself is a pretty town with a historic core and city gates from the 13th and 16th Century. I ask for directions to the petrol station and learn that I have to ride across town on the uneven cobblestone streets to get there. Now, the road follows the highway, I can open the throttle. By 18h I arrive in Zaragoza. Zaragoza seems to have copied the Zurich road concept, because it is so harebrained. There is a wide roadway for the tram and the pedestrians, while for the cars have only a very narrow single lane with high curbs. Not even a bicycle can overtake a car. Once again, the sat nav packs up, on one hand it constantly tells me "route is recalculated" followed by completely contradictory statements, on the other hand it chases me constantly into one-way streets. In the city centre it just gets stuck. I turn around and try a different road to the city center, but the sat nav wants me once more to drive down a one-way street in the opposite direction. At the end I push the scooter through a street blocked off by construction. Nonetheless the sat nav fails to recognize the street and only when I ask for directions, I realize that I am already in the correct road (of course there are no street signs). I do find the hostel, quickly go to the grocery store and may park the scooter in the backyard of the hostel.

08.09.12 Zaragoza At five in the morning, I wake up because of noise and voices outside. Four Dutch girls have returned all drunk to the hostel. While three of them discuss at the top of their voice and keep pushing the table across the courtyard, while the fourth is barfing on the floor. When it does not stop for a long time, I complain. I'd better not done that, for now they feel justified and scream that this was a hostel and noise at night was socially acceptable. I plug my ears and try to sleep, which I succeed but after an hour, when the noise suddenly ceases. In the morning I therefore sleep a little longer, and then I go to the peculiar Iglesia de San Pablo Apostol. From the outside, it looks like a mosque and the spire looks like a minaret. Inside the church is decorated in gothic style. It was built from 1118 to 1259 as a Christian church in Mudejar style after recapturing Zaragoza. In the church it is dark and it lacks the usual electric lights. The bottom of the altar is adorned with highly detailed three-dimensional wooden carvings. Now I walk into town, to explore the Central Market and visit the Basilica del Pilar, a huge Baroque church with the Shrine of Nuestra Señora del Pilar, which is much smaller than expected, but covered by a monumental dome inside the church. The museum contains jewellery that was bequeathed to the Señora del Pilar, huge treasure of gold, diamonds and silver. I visit now the Catedral de la Seo,

which is right next door. The layout of the church is peculiar, mostly 90 degrees to the other church. Especially the Capilla de San Bernardo is striking; its entire interior is carved from alabaster. On the upper floor, there is the museum of tapestries, where valuable tapestries from Flanders are on display. They are in an exceptionally good condition, their colours are still bright and in each rug there are many pounds of gold thread. The next attraction is the Museum Caeseraugusta Forum. Under the Plaza del Pilar there are the remains of the Roman Forum and parts of water and sewerage pipes. An attempt to visit the Aljaferia fails, because they are just closing for siesta. I skype with Yvonne and resolve her PDF problem via remote maintenance. I walk to the Convento de Santo Selpucro, whose one side is still a medieval city wall. Along the Ebro I walk to the modern Plaza Europa. Now, the Palacio de la Aljaferia is not far off. I visit there. The palace in the Mudejar style was based on a Moorish palace, established in 1118 and rebuilt in its present form visible from 1488. The current shape is far from the original one, as the building was constantly in use as a fortress and a palace. In the courtyard there are still some Moorish arches and the Mudejar ceilings from 1488 are still in good shape, but the rest has been reconstructed in recent years. In the courtyard there is the Parliament of Aragon, a pretty small building. I walk to the Plaza de Toros and the Plaza del Pilar, where the large cascading fountain is now running. I stroll around town, past the Palacio de los condes de Morata o de los Luna (1551) and the Mercado Central. I have a hair cut.

09.09.12 Zaragoza to Barcelona I get up very early. When breakfast starts, at eight AM, my scooter is already packed and ready to leave. I easily find out of Zaragoza. There are no confusing turnoffs or signalizations. At a petrol station outside Santa Isabel I stop to check the tire pressure. The attendant and his acquaintance have great pleasure in my scooter, making me stay for half an hour and chat. The remaining route is very easy to find because up to Lleida I can stay on the N11. The landscape is extremely barren and desert-like. Shortly before Lleida I have to ride a short piece on the highway, then I can return to the N11. I turn off to the N240 to Tarragona. To reach Valls, I have to cross the 1000 meter high Porto de Lilla with its tight hairpin bends. In Valls, a few kilometres from Tarragona, I turn to El Vendrell. The road is quite narrow and leads again on a small mountain, only 300 meters high. Just before Barcelona I stop at a kebab stand and eat a kebab, a nice touch is that I am given some water free of charge. By three PM I arrive in Barcelona at the Pere Tarrés Hostel. I am a bit terrified when I notice that the rooms seem like sardine cans. There are eight people per room and no space for luggage. Just hoping this all goes well. After checking in, I walk to the Palau de Pedralbes, whom I had seen on the way coming in. The gardens are very nice, but smaller than expected. I am not keen to visit the ceramics museum in the palace, so I walk to the subway station, buy a multiple-ride-ticket and ride into town. I get off at Liceu, in the middle of the Ramblas and walk to the tourist office in Plaza Catalunya, where I get only the following information: "Here's the plan, take a tourist bus. Two days are EUR 31, that covers everything, more you don't need to know". I walk back to the Cathedral. Because of the fair, which is being held, I can visit free of charge. A huge building in the Gothic style. Then I walk to the Palau de la Musica Catalan (Lluís Domènech i Montaner, 1908) and then walk down the Ramblas to the Mirador de Colón. At the harbor, there is a swing bridge to the huge shopping centre Maremagnum. Although it is Sunday afternoon, it is chocker block full and all the shops are open. A catamaran ferry – probably from Mallorca – is just entering the harbour. In the square there is a flea market. I'm tired from the long day and ride the subway to Maria Cristina, from where I walk back to the hostel.

10.09.12 Barcelona I take the subway into the city to the Basilica de la Sagrada Família. The queue is more than a hundred meters long, but I join nevertheless. Cranes and construction everywhere. After less than an hour I'm up front and can buy my ticket. Inside the cathedral is very modern and also very incomplete, lacking lamps. The columns are made very complex, with a different profile at the bottom than further up, where they are "sprouting" and support the ceiling with three branches adorned with symbolized leaves. In the crypt is a museum and a model workshop. On the site of the basilica there is also a model school, which only was built this one time, though. I continue to the Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau, which is under reconstruction. Unfortunately, I am too late for the English tour. I am given a leaflet and told to explore it on my own. I gladly do that and walk off. Somehow I end up all of a sudden within the hoarding, which was not constructed very systematically. As I am just about done with my visit, the tour guide discovers me and snaps at me to get out instantly, which I do without hesitation. I walk to the Casa "Les Punxes" by Antoni Gaudí, which is not open to the public. Then my Antoni Gaudí tour leads me to the Casa "La Pedrera" (which in English means "the quarry"), an Art Nouveau building with a very peculiar facade. Even the interiors are styled accordingly. The entrance fee is absurdly high. The next stop is the "Casa Batlló", another work of Antoni Gaudí, with an equally high entrance fee. This building is fully styled and has no straight lines. My last stop is the Parque Güell, designed by Antoni Gaudí, where he also lived himself. I visit his relatively small house, the Casa de Gaudí. Then I explore the paths of the Parque Güell, which lead over grotto-like bridges, matching the style of the turn of the century and showing parallels to Sintra. From here I walk about five kilometres back to the hostel.

11.09.12 Barcelona Today is the Catalan national day "Diada Nacional de Catalunya". Most shops are closed. I take the subway and walk to the L'Antic Hospital de la Santa Creu, which now houses the National Library of Catalonia. In the patio there is a garden. Antoni Gaudí died in this hospital, after he was run over by a tram. I ascend the hill to the Castillo del Montjuïc. The mountain was called "Jew's Mountain", because the Jewish cemetery was located there until 1392. The Castillo is freely accessible and I explore it. In the former moat, a

beautiful flower garden was planted. I descend again and visit on my way down the Jardines de Brossa where, probably during the Olympics, some sculptures were installed in the 1970s. I walk to the Palau Güell, another Gaudí building and buy a ticket. Until my visit begins, I quickly explore the Plaza Reial, which is similar to the Plaza Mayor in Madrid, set amid a row of houses. The tour of the Palau Güell, an early work of Gaudí, is very interesting. Many of his techniques he already used here. Especially impressive are the basement stables, then probably a technical masterpiece. In the central hall, he installed an organ as well as a "cabinet chapel", namely a cabinet housing not only an altar, but also four lodge seats. On the roof, there are Gaudí's typical turrets to clad the chimneys and the water tank. I am now seeking the "Great Synagogue" in Calle Marlet, but cannot find it. Of the Cathedral, although I had already visited it, I have seen but a small part of it. Now I buy an entry and may also visit the cloister and the museum in the former chapter house with the "monstrance of Barcelona", a huge silver monstrance on a silver chair with a gold and silver crown. Particularly interesting is climbing the roof, with its steel walkways and a good view on Barcelona. Back on the road, the marches for the Diada Nacional de Catalunya are getting denser. I walk to the Palau de la Musica Catalana, which is already closed, and Casa Calvet, where I keep passing through dense marches. The Catalonians seem to want independence from Spain, but the many hammer-and-sickle flags give rise to the suspicion that they probably want to set up a communist state. Everywhere are television cameras. The protesters are peaceful, some of them sitting in cafés or shopping. I hear cries of: "Fora fora, fora, la bandera Española" or "In, Inda, Indapendencia". There are old and young. As all of this is getting a bit too tense, I walk to the Ramblas, buy some quick dinner at a convenience store and then ride back to the hostel. The diagonal street, one of the arterial roads of the city, is lined completely with buses. That's why there are so many people marching.

12.09.12 Barcelona I start the day late, because everything opens late. Take the metro to the city, where I visit the Museu d'Historia de Barcelona. This excellent museum shows a general view of the history of the city, but in the basement there are in situ excavations from Roman Barcino, the predecessor of today's city. The foundations of a laundry, a Garum factory, a cathedral, a wine press and a bishop's palace can be visited. Then I walk to the "synagogue" in Calle Marlet No. 5. But there are only two vaults; now it is obvious to me why so many experts believe that it is too farfetched. The cashier is so busy that I quickly look around and then leave. I eat in a small Chinese restaurant, where something happens that I usually try to avoid: They rip me off. The advertised price of the menu doesn't contain the drink, which, as a rule costs between 0.60 and 1 euro. Here it is EUR 2.50. In addition, they add 20% VAT, although the advertised prices have to include it. And the helpings are small. So I end up paying a lot more than I would have paid at a good restaurant for a decent meal. I blame myself, I should not have went in there. I visit the Museu d'Historia de Catalunya, which can be well described as one of the best museums in Spain, even if this claim is made by other museums. The history of Catalonia is described completely logical and in catalun, Spanish and English, supported by a few choice exhibits. Since I still want to make reservations, I hurry back and quickly buy some food at the supermarket. But when I arrive at the hostel, the Internet is dead, and there seems to be no effort made to get it back working. The next bad news: The bottle of wine I left in the fridge was stolen. There are no public internet access points in the area. It just rounds off the picture of this hostel. At the Grupeto bar, not far from the hostel, I find both red wine and internet access. André, the owner, offers a drink so we chat for a long time. He thinks Andorra is like "El Corte Ingles (department store chain) in the Pyrenees."

Andorra

13.09.12 Barcelona to Andorra la Vella After finding my way out of Barcelona easily, I miss the turnoff at Granollers and am already gone too far when I notice it. So I have to ride on the Autovia via Vic to Ripoll, where I drive on a scenic route across the Pyrenees back into the parallel valley, where my planned route runs. In Guardiola de Bergueda I take an excellent meal, which of course is not in accordance with my diet, but leaves good memories of Spain. The toll for the five-kilometre Cadí tunnel is an outrageous 10.13 EUR. At 16h, I arrive in Andorra, where there is a real border control, but I am just waved through. Along the road there are big shopping centres that are wedged into the narrow valley between the road and the Riu Valira. The second location is Andorra la Vella. I drive to the hostel, which is high in the mountains and brand new. After checking in, I drive right back to Andorra la Vella, where I park the scooter at the village entrance. I walk to the Casa de la Vall and the Consell General, who are situated on a multi-storied foundation built around fifty meters from the valley ground. The place is like the centre of a big city, tall buildings with shops selling luxury goods, perfumes, cheap electronics, illegal weapons (such as machine guns, tasers, and telescopic batons), or devices to open locks. There are several banks with large office buildings. The standard of living seems to be extremely high, of which the high number of expensive cars and motorcycles on the roads bears evidence. The food is more expensive than in Spain. I visit the Parc Central, then I walk down Avinguda Carlemany to look at the church-style glass building Caldea, actually a spa. Now it's cold and I return to the hostel, where I meet the only other guest, a Finn. Outside, a gale is howling. It's cold.

France: Provence and Camargue

14.09.12 Andorra la Vella to Carcassonne At half past eight I say goodbye to Henrik, the Finn, who is driving his 600cc Yamaha to Fribourg, and drive off. Since I do not want again to pay a high road toll, I avoid the tunnel and cross the 2408m high Port d'Envalira, being rewarded with a stunning view, but with near-freezing temperatures, and without any winter clothes. On the other side of the mountain there is the village of Pas de la Casa, where I fuel up again. The staff have great joy that I was riding my scooter all the way from Switzerland. I am driving in the freezing cold via L'Hospitalet-près l'Andorre (where apparently all the houses are being demolished) to Ax-les-Bains, and then over the Col de Chioula (1431m), with a stop at the ruins of the Cathar Chateau de Montailou to the village of Quillan. There, I refuel. In Couiza I turn to the Chateau d'Arques. The keep and a residential tower are excellently preserved. I stop at the Chateau de Serres, which is not open to the public. Then I turn off to the Cathar Chateau de Peyrepertuse, without being aware of how far it was. I briefly stop at the historic Les Bains Doux in Rennes-les-Bains, and then I go on and on. When the castle still does not appear, I ask for directions. I am told that I was still to go for another 40km. I continue, although my fuel gauge drops. At last I see it standing proudly perched on a ridge. I climb the steep access road and visit the Chateau de Peyrepertuse which, although largely ruined, is unique because of its location. In the distance, the Mediterranean Sea can be spotted! The castle was built by the Catalonians and later used by the Cathars as a retreat, without success, though. Fortunately, and against all advice from people I asked, I find a petrol station near the castle, where I can fill up. Relieved from this worry I drive towards the Gorges de Galamus. This is a natural spectacle of the highest class, a deep and narrow gorge, some of which goes down about 300m vertically. The road is only one lane with passing bays. A gale blows constantly through the canyon, so I have to be careful not to get too close to the edge, because the scooter is under a constant threat to be blown away. I can only stop to take pictures when the wind stops blowing. I drive up to the Ermitage Saint-Antoine, then I turn around. In a curve, the wind is blowing so strong that I have to stop and stabilize the scooter, or else it would be blown away. Now I drive rapidly towards Carcassonne. When I realize that I will not make it until eight, I call the youth hostel and announce my late arrival. No problem. In Carcassonne, the sat nav is leading me on a footpath. Instead, I leave the scooter at a parking lot and ask for directions to the youth hostel, having to carry my entire luggage throughout Old Town. I eat my dinner at the youth hostel, a local specialty, cassoulet, which consists of beans with boerewors, a very heavy dish.

The Cathars were a Christian sect from the 12th to the 14th century in southern France, Italy, Spain and Germany. They were prosecuted by military actions and by the Inquisition as Heretics and wiped out. The Cathar belief is a dual form of Christianity, which regards the materialist world as wicked, in contrast to god in heaven. The Languedoc in Southern France became the most important area of the Cathars, because they were well-liked, creating shallow hierarchies, not asking any church taxes and having a positive influence on the chaotic circumstances (Source: <http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Katharer>, besucht am 21.10.12).

15.09.12 Carcassonne Early in the morning, there is not much going on, so I explore the "new town" Bastide Saint-Louis (founded in the 13th century). Thus I walk towards Pont Vieux, past the Manufacture Royale de la Trivalle and across the Pont Vieux. The weather is cold and windy, the sky covered with dark clouds. I visit the tiny Chapelle Notre Dame de la Santé, which once belonged to the hospital. On the large square, the Gambetta Square, a weekly market takes place where one can buy cheap clothes. I walk into the Tufted-scale city. On the Place Carnot, there is a farmers' market and I cannot resist buying some vegetables for dinner. I continue to the Port du Canal du Midi, which forms a unit with the Jardin André Chénier and the train station. I return on the Rue A. Tomey and visit the Church of Saint Vincent, which has a huge single-nave interior. Otherwise, the church is rather poorly equipped compared to the gold and silver fireworks of the Spanish churches. In particular the sponsoring of the side chapels by wealthy citizens does not seem to function like in Spain. Another church is the Cathédrale Saint-Michel, which again has a single nave and appears sombre and really poor. At the Portail des Jacobins I enter again into Bastide Saint-Louis, past the Hotel de Rolland, where just a wedding takes place, to Square Gambetta, where I take pictures of the Hotel de Murat, the bastion of Montmorency, Saint-Martial and the Tour Grosse. I walk back into the historic centre, where the Chateau Comtal is now open. Since today all entrance fees are free, it is invaded by hordes of people, making a proper inspection impossible. I squeeze through the largely 19th Century restored castle; all the wooden parts are from this period, and not necessarily historically accurate. Then I walk on the city walls to Porte Narbonnaise. In one of the towers is the tourist office, housed in a fascinating area in the Gothic style. In the middle of the room is a deep well. I walk through all the streets of the Cité. The streets are crowded with tourists, so that you can barely walk. Since it's sunny now, I walk to an elevated point outside the Cité to take photos. Meanwhile, the Basilique St. Nazaire has opened, so I can visit it. This church has three naves with Romanesque arches, but is otherwise gothic, a good example of an incomplete gothic conversion for reasons of cost. Now I walk between the inner and outer perimeter walls around the Cité. I visit the somewhat peculiar Musée de l'Ecole. Then I return to the Bastide Saint-Louis, on the way I visit the almost austere Eglise Notre-Dame de l'Abbaye. In the Bastide I visit the Musée des Beaux-Arts. The collection is extremely heterogeneous; obviously they have collected for years at random. The local hero Jacques Gamelin, to whom an entire room is dedicated, was obviously very modestly talented. A large picture of

"Dante's Inferno" by Henri Jean Guillaume Martin, with its sophisticated lighting, is probably the most interesting exhibit. The special exhibition of Max Savy on the ground floor can hardly be described as art, as the paintings are similar to those made by third-class Paris street artists. Now I buy some food for tomorrow's dinner. From the Pont-Neuf one has a wonderful view of the Cité, which is illuminated by the afternoon sun.

16.09.12 Carcassonne to Nîmes Despite favourable conditions, I did not sleep well, maybe the flu is returning. I have to walk twice from the hostel to the parking lot (outside the city) to load all my luggage onto the scooter. That's pretty tough. At half past eight I'm leaving. The road is not a problem. Already at ten, I arrive in Beziers. In a "Casino" supermarket I fuel up and buy some very expensive food. Then I go on, but suddenly there is no more street signs. A glance at the map shows me that I had to take the direction of "Sète". But because of the lack of signs I catch the right street, but in the wrong direction. I make an illegal u-turn and drive through the reeds - on the map it shows a lagoon - in direction of Sète. There I follow the signs, but I had better driven through the centre, because they lead me in a detour around town before I arrive on the road to Montpellier. In a small village I eat the sandwich I purchased in Beziers. Then I go on to Montpellier. Everywhere there are traffic jams. In Montpellier, my fuel gauge is low. Because I've seen a shopping centre along the highway, I turn off in search of a petrol station. But however much I search, I find nothing. I ask someone for directions, but when I get there, there is nothing. I try it on my own now, but nowhere in Montpellier there is a gas station. Finally, I find an credit-card operated petrol pump at a supermarket in a suburb. I fill up and drive back to the highway. Nearly an hour I have lost. On the highway, I notice a petrol station in the opposite direction, which was hidden by the trees between the lanes. Now I drive quickly towards Nîmes. In the outskirts of Montpellier I can switch back to the main road. In Nîmes, my sat nav actually does find the youth hostel, for a change. I walk to the Jardin de la Fontaine, which I find to my greatest surprise. There, I find only with great difficulty the Tour Magne, a Roman tower. Then I walk to the Maison Carree. Today they are celebrating the Jour de la Patrimoine, therefore there is a stage and folk dances are performed. Some "shepherd" dance on stilts. I continue to the Cathédrale Notre Dame and Saint Castor, which appears to have a single nave, but it is almost entirely Romanesque and the side naves were simply converted into chapels. Only the ceiling is Gothic. I continue to the Musée du Vieux Nîmes, where some ceramics and other handicrafts items are on display, all without any meaning. Then I visit the Musée d'archéologie, which has many well-preserved Roman objects, mosaics and frescoes on display. Everywhere in the city there are music bands and sales stalls, like a fun fair. I visit the Porte Auguste, then I walk back to the Jardin de la Fontaine, where I visit the temple of Diana. I feel really rotten, my body aches and dizziness is plaguing me, so I return to the hostel. Today, I shall not eat any more, maybe this will help.

17.09.12 Nîmes (Avignon) With the scooter I drive into the city and park it near the Roman amphitheatre "Les Arènes". Yesterday this was closed, and it is still not yet open, so I quickly run to the Porte de France, a city gate from Roman times. Then the amphitheatre opens up and I book the audio guide tour and follow the instructions. They mainly inform about the type of games held here, and the different types of gladiators, but also that in the Middle Ages all the arches were bricked up and a village was built in the arena, perfectly protected against intruders. Then I get back on the scooter and drive to Remoulins where I want to visit the Pont de Gard. I am very troubled upon learning that the entrance fee is 12 Euros, just to have a glance at the Pont du Gard. The last time - some 30 years back, I was able to ride the bike right under the bridge, for free of course. Included would be the entrance to several museums and attractions for children, in order to add something like legitimacy to the high entrance fee; I visit none of them, but go on to Avignon. I visit the ruins of the Pont Saint-Bénézet, the actual "Pont d'Avignon". But I don't buy an admission, because it makes no sense to walk on it if it is better viewed from the outside. Then I climb the Rocher des Doms, a rock high above the bridge, where on top a garden was created. I visit the Cathédrale Notre Dame des Doms, which appears sombre and barren. Thereafter I visit the Palace of the Popes, a huge palace from the time when the popes resided in Avignon, with large representation halls, towers and some no longer existing defences. Then I explore the old town: La Place de l'Horloge, from where I walk all the car-free streets of the city. I find the synagogue, which unfortunately burnt down in 1845 and was rebuilt in the same year. Upon returning to the scooter, I notice the Palais du Roure and the Eglise St. Agricole, which I visit both. On the way back to Nîmes I stop at a large supermarket, which is frightfully expensive. As I write this diary, the Belgian beside me at the same table gets on my nerves, he is arranging some very nasty affair via Skype with two Moroccans, and apparently he is to marry the sister of the one. He then skypes with this woman who is fully veiled in a hijab and barely understands French, saying constantly in pidgin French "I'll make you a baby", "you are beautiful" (which is impossible to judge in view of the veil) and "we will laugh a lot". I do not think the two will ever have much to laugh together.

18.09.12 Nîmes (Arles) I drive from Nîmes to Arles. The traffic is fluid and the route well marked. In a short time I arrive in Arles, where I leave the scooter in the city centre. In a few steps I'm at the Roman theatre, which is still closed, and the amphitheatre, which I do visit. It is far less well preserved than the one in Nîmes. On the one side, all ranks have been removed and there are no upper ranks at all. This amphitheatre was also used in the Middle Ages as a fortress, where a whole town was built inside and towers were built on top of it, one of which still stands. It must have been an extremely dangerous time. I then walk to the Thermes de Constantin, who is in a poor state of preservation, for the entire area was built over and now all that still remains are a few walls and

floors. But there are still some remains of Hypocausts. They were entirely built of brick, so no wonder that in the Middle Ages all Roman floors were riddled systematically in search of bricks. I now walk to the hotel de Ville with its impressive Romanesque hall, through it and to the Cathédrale Saint Trophimus. The interior is largely Romanesque, with some Gothic extensions. Once more, the church is dark, the ceilings without plaster and very little furnishing. In two places, Roman sarcophagi from the fourth and fifth centuries were reworked into altars. I now visit the meantime opened the semi-circular Théâtre Antique. Again, the site had been built over for hundreds of years, so not much original substance has been preserved. Especially the higher ranks are completely missing. It was huge and offered seating for 10,000 people. I visit the art exhibition at the Chapelle Saint-Anne, but do not like the exhibited paintings of Jean-Pierre Petit. Then I visit the Cloître Saint Trophimus, actually the cloister, and the halls of the monastery attached to the cathedral. The premises are currently under renovation. There is a collection of 17th Century tapestries from Felletin (in competition with Flemish tapestries) in prime condition. The chapter house upstairs is conspicuous by its bright sandstones. Now it is lunch time and all the attractions are closed. I walk through the pretty little town and visit the Espace Van Gogh in the Ancien Hotel-Dieu (1573), where the painter Van Gogh was twice looked after. At a supermarket I buy something to eat, which I devour at the Thermes de Constantin on the embankment of the river Rhône. Now it's two in the afternoon and the cryptoportiques re-open. Massive underground arcades supported the Roman Forum above and have still preserved their function. The last stop - because the Arles Antique Museum is closed - is the Musée Réattu, which is housed in the old hospice of the Knights of Malta. Modern art of varying quality is cleverly displayed and excellently explained. I am particularly impressed with an exclusive collection of Picasso drawings. There are many dresses from Christian Lacroix, but also those that were designed by Picasso himself. The photo exhibition by Christian Milovanoff I consider trivial and not artistic. Now I rush back to the scooter and the numerous one-way streets make me drive through the whole town to get back out. Because of an overgrown road sign (which I cannot read) I drive in the wrong direction onto the ring road and must take the exit and turn back after a kilometre. Then I quickly return to Nîmes, where I take a few photos of the Maison Carree. I still feel ill.

19.09.12 Nîmes to Marseille I am leaving early. Thanks to my two previous daytrips I now know the route through the endless construction sites and barriers of Nîmes and find the exit road to Arles immediately. When I fuel up at Carrefour, the cashier has no change for 50 Euros. She has no cash stock! I must therefore wait until she has received sufficient small bills and coins to return my change. I drive along the narrow, very busy route. A truck overtakes me without looking at me, running me off the road. Fortunately, the road here has a hard shoulder. The truck behind him must have seen it, yet he does the same, probably just for fun. I honk and shake my fist. The joke is that I pass both of them at the next red robot so that they have won nothing by this highly dangerous manoeuvre. I drive through the increasingly industrial landscape. There are heavy and petrochemical industries. Shortly before Marseille I have a short piece on the highway. In Marseille, I take a wrong turn and get into an industrial area where on both sides of the street, gypsies and sans-papiers live in tents. I quickly find the hostel Chateau Bois-Luzy. It is located far outside the city. Fortunately, the receptionist is there, so I can check in. I want to take the metro into the city, but the hostel is so far out, that it is not on the map. I ask the caretaker at the youth hostel, who gives me a very brief explanation that proves to be all wrong. I then ask a passer-by, who also gives a misleading statement. Only when I end up once more in the wrong place, I find someone who gives me proper directions to the subway station. I ride into the city centre, where I come out right at the tourist information. There I get information about the sights. The mistral is blowing so strong that the passers-by are bombed by rubbish (from the unspeakably wrong constructed bins) and dog turds. To start with, I visit the neoclassical Palais de la Bourse (1860), located right across the road, where the Musée de la Marine is on the ground floor. The entrance is free and there are many beautiful models of ships, unfortunately without any technical information. In the reception area there is also a Turcat-Mery torpedo motorcar, which was built in 1927 in Marseille. Now I am starting with the self-guided tour of the historic center. In the Quartier Le Panier I visit the Vieille Charité, which now houses a museum complex. Then I walk to Cathédrale de la Major, built 1852-1893. The style is neo-Romanesque-Byzantine and the craftsmanship is of outstanding quality. However, this meant that the costs were exceeded several times until the construction was stopped and the cathedral left unfinished. The docks below the cathedral as well as the Fort Saint-Jean are under renovation, so that entering is not possible. Here they are building something gigantic. I walk through the construction sites to the other side of the Vieux Port, where I walk via the Place aux Huiles to the, unfortunately closed, Abbaye St-Victor, which is more like a castle, then to the Notre Dame de la Garde, built by the same architect as the Cathedral in the same style and perched high on an ancient fortress built on a rock towering above town. The whole church is covered with commemorative plaques, some of them oil paintings depicting the dangerous situation from which the donor was rescued. In the crypt, there are more votive plaques and an entire room to light votive candles. Even on the terrace of the church there are votive tablets. The mistral is blowing so strong that you have to hold onto the railing for not being blown away. When walking back to the subway station Castellane, I visit quickly the synagogue (1864), which however is not open to the public. On the way home I buy some food at the supermarket. When I notice that I am charged 53 cents more than the published price, I complain. I now have the satisfaction that my 53 cents paralyze the entire supermarket for 15 minutes, because the already overworked cashier has to call the head of department, who has to check in the shelf, and then return the call, whereas the cashier has to interrupt her work and

pay me my 53 cents. I just hope that they have learned their lesson - which is that advertised prices hardly ever agree with what shows up at the till.

20.09.12 Marseille In the morning, I ride with the scooter to the Cité Radieuse Le Corbusier, which most websites regard as a prime sight. It is a block of flats, only conspicuous by the oval-shaped supports it stands on. It is possible to visit the third floor and the roof terrace. This is what I do. On the third floor there is a hotel, the restaurant and a bakery, while the remaining businesses have apparently been closed down. The terrace is in poor condition, it is apparent that the building is not maintained anymore. The fireplaces remind of Gaudí. I drive back to the hostel, but I miss a turn (the sat nav says, left lane, but there are three lanes, which one?) I have to drive five kilometres on the highway, until there is an off ramp. I leave the scooter at the hostel and ride on the Metro into the city, where I walk to the wrong ferry, because the quay is completely blocked off by the construction work, and I only saw the arrow pointing to that ferry. I have to walk all the way back through those impossible barriers and now find the ferry to the Île d'If and the Île Frioul. The journey takes about half an hour. On the Île d'If I visit the Chateau d'If, where Alexandre Dumas' character Edmond Dantès was supposed to be imprisoned and dug a tunnel to his fellow prisoners Abbé Faria. The two cells are actually there and one can visit them. Even the tunnel was dug for the tourists' sake. I do have a crisis there, because the flu is bothering me. Therefore, I drink a lot of water. I take the ferry to the neighbouring island Île Ratonneau, one of the two islands of the archipelago Frioul. On the islands, there are very few motor vehicles, which is very pleasant. I walk to the northernmost point of the island, and visit the various fortifications that were built on the island and destroyed in 1944 by the Allies. Then I walk back to the Digue de Berry, the connection between the two islands Ratonneau and Pomègues, and to the southern end of the island of Pomègues. There are several fortresses, and except for the southernmost one they all still are military territory. The weather is fantastic. I have to hurry on my way back, because the ship departs at 17:30h. By subway, I return to youth hostel, where I discover to my dismay that my dinner, which I put in the fridge yesterday, is no longer there. So I have to walk 2.5 km to the supermarket to buy something for dinner. I do not feel good, thus I go to bed early.

21.09.12 Marseille The kitchen is closed when I want some water to dissolve my vitamin tablet. Apparently, someone did not do the washing up. Effectively a pan is lying there, and to my shame, I must confess, it was me. When I did the washing up last night, I did not realize that I was not cleaning the one I had used. Of course, the other person must have been delighted, but did not grant reciprocity. I am making reservations before I go into the city. Now it is fixed, I am going home via Genoa and Lugano. It is a little shorter and in Grenoble there must be some event, because everything is booked solid. With the subway I ride into the city, where I walk on the Boulevard de la Libération up to the Musée des Beaux-Arts. Like everything else, this museum is also being reconstructed. Marseille will be the European Capital of Culture next year, hence all the prestigious projects are realized with high priority, while the construction of the highway to my hostel was stopped at 90% completion. A referendum can hardly be the reason in France. On the way back I visit the Eglise des Réformés that - contrary to its name - is obviously Catholic. Now I walk to Fort d'Entrecasteaux, which - in contrast to the adjacent Fort Saint-Nicolas - is open to the public. In a small restaurant I eat a good lunch for little money. Then I walk to the Jardin du Pharo. The weather is perfect, the sun is shining. Past the Anse des Catalans I walk to the Porte de l'Orient, which is blocked off - obviously dilapidated. The Vallon des Auffes, which is spanned by a bridge, is looking very pretty. I continue to the southern tip, where people bathe in the Anse de Malmousque. As far as it is possible I walk along the coast, passing the recruiting center of the Légion Etrangère, which is built on the site of an earlier fortress. I chat with the guard on duty, but against all horror stories I am not recruited. From here, one can see that all the islands along the coast are heavily fortified. Via the Place Saint-Eugène I walk up to the Vieux Port district and then along the Boulevard de la Corderie. I check again the Abbaye Saint-Victor, and today the church is open. From outside the complex looks like a castle, and was also meant to be a fortification. Inside the church looks like a Gothic church. Impressive are the catacombs, which are almost the same size as the upper church. In fact, these represent the first church that was built into the hillside. When they built the new church, they simply reinforced the ceilings of the old church and built the new one on top of it, while they filled in the ground around it. The tomb of Lazarus - the legendary first bishop of Marseille - is particularly impressive. Almost all the sarcophagi in the catacombs are of Roman origin. I visit the Jardin P. Puget, and then I walk back to the city centre. In a pharmacy I buy a few extra vitamin C tablets to be safe on my way home. Then I take the subway back to the hostel.

22.09.12 Marseille to Nice I manage to leave at eight in the morning, since an early breakfast is served. I use the sat nav up to Peypin, from where the directions are signposted. The weather is sunny, but chilly. The road goes through the mountains, where - it is Saturday morning - many amateur cyclists are on the road. The road is well signposted. I follow the signs to Brignoles and then to Fréjus. I have to cross the Col du Testanier, where I have to pass a series of unspeakably bad driven motor homes, because their completely pointless braking manoeuvres are a permanent danger to me. I am now feeling really bad, and a few times I have dizziness because of the difference in altitude and my ailing health. On the other side of the pass is Mandelieu-la-Napaulle where I fuel up at a large casino supermarket and buy some food. I continue to Cannes and Antibes. By two in the afternoon I get to Nice and after a few problems - the sat nav keeps losing the satellite - I find the hostel. This seems to be fully

booked. I check in and go to a grocery store, where I buy food for today and tomorrow and a dirt cheap, but excellent bottle of wine. Then I quickly return to the hostel, put everything in the fridge, and go back to the city where I park the scooter at the beginning of the pedestrian zone. I walk on the Avenue Jean Medecin down to the Place Massena (where you hear almost only Russian and English), then I walk along the Quai des Anglais. In front of the Palais de Justice they show how threshing was done in the olden days. I visit the Church of St. Jacques "Le Gesu", the baroque interior is 17th Century. Through the Old Town I walk to the Place Garibaldi and along the tram up to the Palais des Expositions. From there I walk over the hill to the Musée Marc Chagall, and then back to my scooter. Interesting is the Eglise Sainte Jeanne d'Arc, which was built in 1913-1934 and takes clear allusions of Antoni Gaudí. In the kitchen of the hostel, which is shared with the professional chefs, I prepare my diet dinner.

23.09.12 Nice On waking up, I feel really sick. But I know that staying in bed is no option, I would feel even worse. So I get up. The battery shaver is no longer working, somehow it turned itself on and the battery has run flat. I take the shuttle bus to the tram and take it into town. I walk first to the Eglise Russe, which however is closed. Then I walk to the Place Massena and to the Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain (MAMAC), which is still closed. So I climb the steep hill where the castle once stood, called "Le Chateau", where I have a good view of the city. Directly below the observation deck is a large artificial waterfall. I walk back to MAMAC, which is now open. The special exhibition on the first floor is dedicated to Yves Klein, James Lee Byars, and Anish Kapoor. All three are avant-garde, with minimal design elements. For me, something like a revelation of the lack of imagination. In the other stories, the works of many famous artists of modern art are on display. An entire room is dedicated to Niki de Saint Phalle. There are several works by Jean Tinguely and even one of my cousin Daniel Spoerri. At a "Subway" sandwich bar I eat a sandwich, then I walk to the nearby Cathedral, where they are just holding a service. Across the hill I walk to the Musée Marc Chagall. The entrance fee is extremely high, almost 10 Euros. It offers a very small, but high-quality collection of paintings by Marc Chagall. In addition, they show a nearly one-hour film on his life. It is a pity that the mosaic in the courtyard can only be viewed through a (dirty) window. I climb the hill to the district of Cimiez. First thing I visit the not very well-preserved remains of the Roman arena and the adjacent Matisse Museum, which shows a cross-section of his life's work. Then I sit down to a free concert in the park by an orchestra which is obviously made up of amateur musicians. As time runs out, I have to continue, as the museums close by 18h. I visit the church of the Monastère de Cimiez. There are painted ceilings, which are quite unusual in France. Next to it is the Cimiez Cemetery, where I visit the tomb of Henry Matisse, whose lid is covered with stones and pine cones. There is still time to visit the Musée Archéologique where one can on the one hand look at the Roman ruins of Cemenelum - most of them were Roman baths - and on the other hand at exhibits from the Roman period and a special exhibition on shipping. I manage to find the narrow path between Cimiez and the neighbourhood where my hostel is and return on foot.

Northern Italy and Ticino

24.09.12 Nice to Genoa I am one of the first at breakfast. My flu is a little less severe than yesterday. I am leaving by eight. It's raining. The road is like lathered with soap, rendering all braking manoeuvres useless. Morning traffic in Nice is - although anything goes with a scooter - totally congested. I'm unshaven for the lack of batteries and the Casino supermarket is still closed, just as the Intermarket is. I drive on. At some point, there is no more road signs to Monaco, so I follow the signs "Monaco par Corniche". They lead me to a pass - unnecessarily, because I could have followed the shore. In Monaco, I park the scooter and have a quick look in a shopping area, but then I go straight on, because today I have a long journey ahead of me: the 200km to Genoa are all the way through built-up areas. On leaving Monaco, a policeman spotted me driving twice around the roundabout, because I missed the right direction. He takes me out to check my papers, but he really just wants to know how I am going and where I've been. Obviously, he's bored. I willingly tell him all he wants to know. Then I go on, in direction of Menton, where I stop outside the fortress. After a photo, I have to continue. In Ventimiglia, I buy sandwiches in a supermarket (I know, forbidden food), and eat them (thus) with double pleasure at the beach and then read in my book. But the sky is covering up with dark clouds and there is thunder. I quickly pack up and drive on, hoping to escape the storm. But the storm catches up with me, I am riding right into it. The rain is so dense that I cannot see anything at all. I peep over the rim of my fogged-up glasses and ride despite the rain, which is so dense that one cannot see further than two or three metres. There is up to 20cm of water in the street and the bike floats when you drive through, making you lose control for a moment. It is one of the worst rain storms I have ever experienced. When a lightning strikes directly in front of my scooter, I get a huge shock and have to stop in San Lorenzo. Under the porch of a shopping arcade I wait until the worst is over. As soon as the rain subsides a bit, I drive on. Despite rain suit I'm soaked. In Alassio, the sun comes out again. The rain also did something good, it cleared the slick layer of dust from the road. In Albenga I refuel. The attendant is pissed off with me because I did not give him a tip. I had to refuel myself, but I insisted on paying cash, which is unusual in Italy. On the one hand almost all petrol stations are automatic; on the other hand, they accept only Italian credit cards. Shortly thereafter, in Bergeggio, a huge big doe suddenly runs from the left right in front of the scooter. Fortunately I am slow and can stop, avoiding a collision and hooting the animal off the road. I can even warn the

following vehicles, but I fear that the animal just returned to the road. No idea what a doe does in a tourist town, maybe she has escaped from a zoo. Still, it says "Genova 99km". I don't get ahead, because - as can be seen from the map - the entire Ligurian coast is occupied by villages, so that the sign cancelling the 50 km/h zone is on the left and the new 50 km/h sign is on the right. I just hope that I don't get caught in one of the numerous speed traps. A group of bikers overtakes me; it seems they are on the road together. When they stop upon getting into Genoa, I do the same to turn on the GPS sat nav. But the sat nav leads me to the highway, where I immediately turn around. Then it loses the satellite in the middle of the route. I keep going ahead and all at once see the hostel signposted. This is located far from town, in the upper outskirts (ie on top of the hill). There is no kitchen, no meals, no refrigerator and it is far away from any restaurant. I am told that the supermarket was located one kilometre downhill. But one kilometre downhill there is far and wide no shops. I try the other side of the mountain, with the same result. Only after two kilometres, I find a tiny Carrefour Express, where I buy some food which I prepare with greatest difficulties with the only existing cooking instrument - a microwave oven. There are no plates or glasses or anything.

25.09.12 Genoa The sky is black; it is dark as night and cool. I travel by bus to the city center, which is about four kilometres away. In Piazza della Nunziata I get off. I visit the Neoclassical-Baroque church SS Annunziata del Vastato, whose interior reminds me of Spain. Then I walk to the harbour "Porto Expo", where a giant steel spider carries the roofs of the exhibition building and a elevator to the observation deck. A replica of a galleon is moored ahead. Just off the highway bridge is the beautifully painted Palazzo San Giorgio. In Via Ponte Reale there is a plaque in memory of Daniel O'Connell, the Irish freedom fighter. I visit the Church of San Pietro in Banchi, which got this name because originally there were money changers located in its basement shops. Nowadays, there are many book stalls. I walk to the main square, Piazza De Ferrari, where the water of the fountain has been dyed red for some reason. Directly adjacent is the Palace of the Doge, the Palazzo Ducale, which I visit. There is no-one at the tower when I visit, but actually they do charge an entrance fee. Some famous prisoners have been locked up in the prison cells. I visit the San Lorenzo Cathedral. It is striking that the Romanesque arches are not attached and without the typical Romanesque structure of rows of ever narrowing vaults. In the Chapel of San Giovanni, which was like in Spain privately financed, there are some good paintings and sculptures. The Baptistery, for which a separate entrance fee is charged, is equipped with a huge font of alabaster and a few irrelevant paintings. I walk now somewhat aimlessly through the old town, and end up at the Chiesa di San Donato, where there is a beautiful triptych in a side chapel. Not far from there is the monastery of St. Augustine, which has a peculiar triangular cloister. Now I have reached the Porta Soprana, a medieval city gate flanked by two towers. Right behind it is the Chiostro di San Andrea and the Casa di Colombo, which I visit despite the high admission fee. This is supposed to be the humble birthplace of Christopher Columbus. The objects are not worth mentioning, but it gives you an idea under what conditions he grew up. Since I have to go urgently to the bathroom, I eat at McDonalds, where a clean toilet is included. Then I walk the Via XX Settembre down to Ponte Monumental and to Brignole Station, then I turn back. I find the Mura del Barbarossa, which may even be climbed by a flight of stairs. Through the Galleria Mazzini, a 19th Century shopping arcade, I walk to the Monumento a Vittorio Emanuele II in Piazza Corvetto, then past the Palazzo Doria Spinola to the museums of the Strada Nuova. First I visit the Palazzo Rosso. Since I am the only visitor they seem to be having, I get a personal service, but also a minder. The painting collection is not too impressive, only the paintings by Van Dyck, and several other Flemish masters, as well as a few Renis are really top-notch, but many of them have a local reference. From the roof of the palace, which I am allowed to visit, there is a beautiful view of all Genoa. I visit the second palace, the Palazzo Bianco, where there are some more Rubens and Van Dyck paintings. At Palazzo Tursi there are coins, ceramics and Spanish painters like de Ribera and Zurbaran. Three Flemish tapestries with themes from the life of Alexander the Great and a curious exhibition of two Paganini violins (he was Genoese) conclude the exhibition. Now it is nearly six and pitch-dark. I take the bus back to the hostel.

26.09.12 Genoa to Figino I wake up at five in the morning, because a violent thunderstorm rages over Genoa. Just when I think that it was over, it returns. Nevertheless, I get up, eat my breakfast and get ready. When I leave at eight, the rain has stopped and I ride in the dry. My GPS sat nav, which seems to be dying, is churning madly: In quick succession, it says "turn left", "turn right" and "recalculating route." It is obvious that it has lost the satellites. This is certainly due to the peculiar topography of Genoa, which consists of tall houses and narrow streets. In the absence of other instructions, I follow the road signs to the motorway. And indeed, near the highway onramp I find the SS35 road to Tortona. The road climbs the steep mountainside in hairpin bends. The dust and the rain form a slippery lather, rendering the brakes useless. The speed limit is everywhere 50km/h. I reach Tortona without problems. There, I have to consult the map to find the onramp to the SS211 to Novara. The speed limits are now higher, the roads are better, and they are faster and easier to ride. After Novara I stop in a village to read a traffic sign, when I suddenly feel a sharp stab in the neck. An insect, possibly a wasp, must have crept into my collar and stung me. There is a swelling and the pain is spreading throughout the muscle. I drive towards Lake Maggiore. Just before Arona I turn to Varese. I have to go through the city and continue to Ponte Tresa. Despite the dark clouds there is no rain, there is only a drizzle from time to time. In Ponte Tresa, I cross the border into Switzerland. I visit Ute and Jo Munzer in Magliaso, who invite me to dinner. Unfortunately I have to turn down their offer to spend the night there, because I have already made a reservation at the youth

hostel Figino. Shortly before eight I drive the short distance to Figino near Lugano. It's already dark when I get there, so I drive past the youth hostel and have to turn around. The insect bite is still very painful.

27.09.12 Figino Shortly after one AM, two men, probably originating from Albania, arrive drunk in the dorm, switch the light on and start without regard to the other guests a loud conversation. It certainly takes an hour until they go to sleep. I get up at seven. The sky is overcast and it is rather cold. I walk into the woods and read there for an hour on a bench. Then I walk back to the hostel, get the scooter and ride around the peninsula to Melide, then to Campione, which has little to offer besides a huge and ugly casino. I then drive to Lugano-Paradiso, where I park the scooter and walk into town. In the Coop restaurant I eat my lunch - meanwhile, the sun came out and I can sit on the terrace. Then I read a little and drive through the Colina d'Oro and Agra in direction Figino. I explore the shopping centre Grancia, before I return the hostel. The two unpleasant guests are now asleep. I finish reading the book, and then I walk on the road to Morcote, where I arrive just after five in the afternoon. Since it is getting dark at seven, I have to be back by then, but the trail says: "Figino 2:30". So I quicken my steps and am quite amazed when I get back to Figino by 18h!

28.09.12 Figino to Thal I am leaving around nine in Figino. The sky is overcast, the weather is cool. I drive on the highway to Bellinzona. At the Ceneri I see the first sunrays. After Bellinzona, the road is sweeping up to San Bernardino and the sun is coming out slowly. Even from a distance one can see the castle of Mesocco. I stop, visit the castle (they fortunately don't charge an entrance fee) and take some photos. It is so cold that your breath is steaming. I go on, stopping in San Bernardino to fuel up. It is nice and warm in the tunnel. Soon I am on the other side, where I stop again in Hinterrhein. I drive on to Landquart where the fuel gauge indicates an empty tank. I fuel up and buy a sandwich at Migros. Now I continue to Thal without a further stop. I arrive there at 14:30h, refuel again and go to my cottage. The rose bush has grown so much I can no longer get into the house. I need to remove a giant spider web and the Rose, to free the entrance door. Then I need to trim the hedge that has grown on all sides and impedes the bicycle path that runs next to my house. Finally, I get again on the scooter and ride through the perpetual traffic jam to Lindau to bulk purchase some food.

*** This concludes my journey ***

Pictures



Entrance, fortress Simserhof of the Maginot-Line, Bitche



Unesco world cultural heritage Völklinger Hütte, Völklingen



Casemates Bock, Luxemburg



Atomium, Heysel, Brussels



Vrijdagmarkt, Gent



Medieval houses in Rouen



German guns, Longues-sur-mer



Castle of William the Conqueror, Caen



Le Mont-St-Michel



Tour Solid, Cite d'Alet, Saint-Malo, France



Point de la Torche, St. Guenolé



Place Terre au Duc, Quimper



Carnac Menhirs, Carnac



Les Machines d'Ile, Ile de Nantes, Nantes



Fort Louvois (le Chapus), Boucefranc-Le Chapus



Place de la Bourse, Miroir d'Eau, Bordeaux



View from Rocher de la Vierge, Biarritz



Catedral de Santa Maria la Real, Pamplona



Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao



View from the castle, Burgos



Catedral, Leon



Catedral, Santiago de Compostela



Porto



View from the Paço das Escolas, Coimbra



Basilica, sanctuary of Fatima



Tramway in Alfama, Lisboa



National Palace, Sintra



Almogrove



My scooter in Cabo de S. Vicente



Sé Catedral, Faro



Catedral, Sevilla



Mezquita Catedral, Cordoba



Gibraltar



Alcazaba, Malaga



Cuevas, Sacromonte, Granada



Palacio del Generalife, Alhambra, Granada



Castillo de Santa Barbara, Alicante



Ciudad de las Artes y de las Ciencias, Valencia



Feria de San Julian, Cuenca



Toledo



Plaza Mayor, Madrid



Aljaferia, Zaragoza



Basilica de la Sagrada Família, Barcelona



Diada Nacional de Catalunya, Barcelona



Andorra



Port d'Envalira (2408m), Andorra



Chateau de Peyrepertuse (Cathar castle)



Carcassonne



Les Arènes, Nîmes



Pont du Gard, Remoulins



The Rue du Vallon, Marseille



View from „Le Chateau“, Nice



Porto Expo, Genua



On San Bernardino, Hinterrhein GR

Maps

