

Day 3

Everyone was up early for breakfast as we had agreed to get away on the final leg of our journey at 9am. It was quite a shock to find Harold and Andy one of the first pairs down but Harold confided that he had now altered his watch to the correct time zone. After a satisfying continental breakfast and a visit to the local Lidl for cheap bottles of water we were off.

The theme of the morning was stick together and easy does it! We only had 20 miles or so to travel and plenty of time as our flight home was late afternoon. Just outside Ancenis we hit a long hill but everyone tackled it with gusto and we soon returned to rolling fields of corn and other vegetable crops interspersed with avenues of trees that provided welcome shade from the sun. A light breeze made for delightful cycling. A few miles into the ride we had our one and only accident. Pemphil, turning to check behind him, ran off the edge of the road and in trying to return lost his front wheel on the gravel and hit the deck. Anyway, after a little tender care and emergency first aid from Joyce and Harold his gravel rash was covered up and his embarrassment had eased. We had decided to cycle through to Nantes before lunch in order to return our bikes and helmets and spend some free time in the city.

It was a very pleasant journey and we were joined for a few miles by two young boys who were cycling with their parents, but seemed determined to stick with our group. The youngest who must have been 8 or 9 was pedalling like the clappers to keep up with us and did not like it at all when he finally had to give in and stay with his parents. We continued on with the occasional water break and a short ice cream stop at a tiny cafe alongside the river. As we neared Nantes the two Alans decided to press ahead to the cycle shop to make sure that it would remain open for the main group. Denis belatedly decided to follow them. As the rest of the group neared Nantes Phil 2 had a near miss to being involved in an accident. A large van began to reverse from a parking zone without spotting us approaching. A lot of loud shouting managed to get the dozy Frenchman to stop just in time.

The group then negotiated a few streets into the city centre to drop off the bikes shortly before 1pm. The two Alans were there to greet us but no Denis! Not like him at all, surprised it took so long. We couldn't get hold of him on his mobile so Alan 2 elected to search him out. The rest of the group changed out of our cycling gear using the one nearby toilet or discreetly utilising tree cover. Everyone expressed a sigh of relief as Alan 2 rolled up at 1.30pm with Denis in tow. Denis hadn't caught up with the two Alans and had somehow missed the rest of the group as he waited for us to pass under a road bridge as we entered the city.

We had a fine lunch then hung around the restaurant chatting and in a few cases falling asleep. See the photos. Everyone expressed their thanks to Jim, our leader, for arranging such a fantastic ride and holiday. We also acknowledged the help we had received from Joyce, our translator, who had made sense of most of the menus we had encountered. After an hour or so sightseeing it was time to catch the bus to the airport for the homeward journey. A never to be forgotten holiday ended as we left Liverpool Airport in the pouring rain. We were well and truly back in England.