

# BRITTANY JOURNAL 1990

## Tuesday, June 19

For the first time on one of our many overseas bike trips we flew from Sacramento Airport, not San Francisco.

John at the American Airlines counter was very helpful. He called someone to bring us bike boxes. He gave us his undivided attention while we were checking our bike boxes and our luggage. He applied for American's frequent flyer plan for us. And he gave us all vouchers for free drinks and earphones.

Our flight left Sacramento at 1:55 pm and arrived in Dallas at 7:20 pm. Our connecting flight for London was on time leaving at 8:15 pm.

While we were waiting at the gate to board, Jane and I were called back to the desk at the gate where our boarding passes were collected and torn up. We asked why and the lady said, "shhh," and gave us new boarding passes in business class.

Wonderful... We boarded first and were handed glasses of champagne and flight kits. Dinner was served on real plates and drinks were in glasses, not plastic.

## Wednesday, June 20

The plane landed at Gatwick thirty minutes ahead of schedule. American Airlines is proving much nicer than last year's TWA flight. The first shuttle bus from the Copthorne was much too small for the bike boxes - but Irene and Jane took it while Marsh and I waited for a bigger bus. The Copthorne was as nice as ever - staff all super courteous in spite of extra demands we put on them with our bicycles.

The afternoon was nice, and we decided to

go for a walk in the village of Copthorne which is situated just across the A264 to the north from the hotel. We found a charming old stone church set in a wooded churchyard with many old headstones tilting and leaning every which way. Then a quarter mile or so farther along we found a genuine English pub. I had a pint of real ale, the ladies had tea. It appeared that we were there as the after-work-before-dinner business was dropping in.

Dinner at the Copthorne was a typical English buffet, and very nice. Among other things, there was roast leg of lamb with mint sauce.

## Thursday, June 21

After experimenting with the weird British phone numbers and getting several wrong offices, I managed to talk to both BritRail and Brittany Ferries for information on how to get to Plymouth and how to take a ferry from Plymouth to Roscoff.

Brittany Ferries took my Visa number and booked us on both trips with staterooms for the overnight return trip from St. Mao to Portsmouth. Fare from Plymouth to Roscoff was £28 per person; from St. Malo to Portsmouth £30 per person and two-person cabins were £31 each. The total for the four of us was £294 - considerably more than my original estimate!

BritRail suggested we take the train from Gatwick to Reading and then change at Reading for Plymouth.

We rode our bikes from the Copthorne to Gatwick which was quite an experience. When we got to Gatwick airport we could

see where we wanted to go on the other side of a big chain link fence, but could not find a route upon which bikes were allowed.

We stopped and asked at a little police station outside the fence, and a lady constable explained in great detail a very complicated route. After many trials and errors we found a young man who knew the way in on a bike - by way of a little footpath that went underneath a freeway interchange to a lift that went up to a highway overcrossing.

A sign in the lift said it was not to be used by people who had been asked to leave the country. Curious.

Anyway, we rode nine miles to go four! As we got to Gatwick, it started to drizzle.

The train ride to Reading took two hours, then we had a two hour wait at the Reading train station. By this time the rain was really coming down. Some other cyclist's came into the train station and one said, "Thank God for Gore-Tex."

From Reading we rode the fast train which meant that we put our bikes in the mail car right behind the locomotive. Marsh suggested first class, and a good thing, too, because the only four seats on the entire train were those with our reservation slips on them. People were sitting in the aisle and in the vestibules.

The Plymouth station was all under construction. There was nobody to ask directions of or to buy a map from. And it was pouring rain. But a friendly man in the station heard us talking about how to find accommodations and the ferry landing, so he gave us his city map and showed us on the map where we could find a B&B and the ferry.

We took a room in the Deva B&B a couple of blocks from the ferry landing. We then walked up the street in the rain to a small restaurant named the "Port O' Call" where Jane and I had curry. The proprietress would not take Visa, so we paid her in cash. After dinner, the proprietor of the B&B

U.S. currency after she called her brother-in-law who was a banker so she could figure the exchange rate.

was out front in the doorway with a tenant who happened to work at the Brittany Ferry landing. They were both quite agitated about the speeds at which cars were driving on the street in front of the B&B.

## **Friday, June 22**

We got up early to go to the ferry. The landlady had brought us breakfast trays the night before. There was cereal, milk, rolls, butter, jam, juice.

We rode to the ferry in the rain. Marsh and I went upstairs in the ferry office building to get our tickets. We were quite a spectacle in our rain gear, helmets, gloves.

The ferry proceeded at 18 knots for 5-1/2 hours across a very rough channel. Many passengers were sick - including Irene. We landed in Roscoff at 2:30 pm French time.

We went directly to the Tourist Office in Roscoff where we were told of a B&B belonging to Msr. and Mdm. DePray. The girls in the Tourist Office were rather vague about how to find the place, but they said, "It discovers itself." We poked around the neighborhood for some time looking for the street. At one point I was attacked by a big black dog with big white teeth that had ripped the leash out of an old lady's hand.

After finally finding the B&B and showering and changing, we walked to town in a steady drizzle. The town was very Breton, with a stone church that had an ornate steeple. There was a residential area of very old stone houses with very modern globular plastic street lamps.

After looking around for a good restaurant, reading menus posted out front - we finally found a nice looking place with reasonable prices. Jane and I had seafood.

casserole. Marsh and Irene had mushroom omelets. After dinner we walked back the mile or so to the B&B in a cold, driving rain blown by a wind coming right off the Atlantic.

## **Saturday, June 23**

Msr. and Mdm. DePray were very hospitable. Breakfast included croissants, toast, cereal, cafe au lait, jam. They came out with us while we were loading the bicycles - Msr. even brought one of the bikes around from the garage for us. We took pictures of them in front of their house.

No rain this morning. In fact there was a little sunshine filtering down through the light overcast. We rode in to St. Pol-de-Leon and were impressed by the size of the Ancienne Cathedrale whose foundation was built in the 12C; its nave, aisles, facade and towers in the 13 and 14C; the side chapels, chancel, apse, and remodeled transept in the 15 and 16C. I went around to a garden in back and was impressed with the flying buttresses and pinnacles around the chancel.

From the cathedral we could see Kriesker Chapel (*14-15C*) a couple of blocks to the south with a beautiful spire, so we went there after looking inside the cathedral. For 7 francs we were allowed to climb the spiral staircase in the spire almost to the tip from where there was a beautiful view of the town and surrounding countryside all the way to the sea.

About ten miles south of St. Pol we were looking for D769 when an English woman cyclist came along; she was looking for the same road. She joined us for a few miles and we learned she had a PhD in biology and was working at Roscoff. She was from Portsmouth originally. She was bright, independent, and attractive. I was disappointed when she turned off on the road to Morlaix where she was headed for a day ride.

But it wasn't long until the beauty of the countryside made up for the loss of the young woman's company. The D769, with no traffic, wound through cultivated fields on the west bank of the Penze River. There were views of high bridges and, in the distance, villages with their towering

church spires that reminded me of the stories of WWI that told of artillery spotters using the steeples for lookout towers and also as reference points for their targets.

This was France! And we soon found a Frenchman. He was working in an artichoke field. And, when I stopped to take his picture, he left his work and walked up to the road to talk to us. Jane had a grand time speaking French and visiting with him.

At Penze we stopped briefly at a little tea shop then we went through Penze and turned off on the unnumbered road toward Penhoat. We'd gone about a mile when Irene realized she had left her helmet back at the tea shop. Marsh went back for it, having to climb a pretty good hill. We waited at a beautiful spot along the little back road where it was rimmed with ferns and fireweed and paralleled a much smaller Penze River.

At Penhoat we looked for the Chateau, but could not find it. We were not too interested in leaving the main road to go exploring to find a ruined castle.

We rode through a forest on a little road whose side ditches were overgrown with ferns and then we came out into open cultivated land where, at Coasvout, the road made an abrupt right angle turn to the west which was not shown on the map. This was followed by a T-intersection with a road to the south. So we stopped at a farmhouse and asked the way to St. Thegonnec.

Our pronunciation was either very bad, or the man and his teenage son had never heard of St. Thegonnec. I guessed that a steeple in the distance belonged to the village of Guiclan which showed on my map, so we turned on the road to the south and in no time we crossed over N12 right where we were supposed to be.

St. Thegonnec, Guimiliau, and Lampaul Guimiliau all proved worth visiting. The Calvaries were very impressive. Lunch in

a small restaurant in St. Thegonnec was nice - Jane had Soupe de Poisson and I had bread, cheese, and wine.

We rode on to Landivisau where the i, the Maine, and the police Station were all closed. We looked for the hotels listed in the red guide, but they seemed to be closed up. A lady in a Citroen stopped and asked us what we were looking for, and she recommended L'Hotel au Relais Du Vern - a brand new modern hotel about two miles out of town on the main highway. It was nice with a good dining room, but we were too far away to walk around the town center after dinner.

## **Sunday, June 24**

While we were checking out we asked the manager to phone ahead to Ploudalmezeau for a reservation. He got us booked into the Hotel Voyageurs there.

We rode north from the hotel, cut across the highway and found a road paralleling the east-west freeway through an industrial park that eventually hooked up with D230, a quiet minor highway through rolling terrain covered with a patchwork quilt of fields. We saw several groups of French cyclists out for Sunday rides. The weather was cool and overcast.

We got to Chateau Kerjean just as it was opening at 10:00 am. The caretaker opened a gate and let us take our bikes into a little storage room while we visited the chateau. It was not ornate like the baroque chateaus of Germany nor was it grand like the Chateaus along the Loire, but it had some interesting architectural elements and was worth stopping at.

When we left the chateau, we rode southwesterly towards St. Derrien on D229 - another quiet back road. But we were riding into a stiff headwind. At St. Derrien we turned onto D32 northwesterly toward le Folgoet, and the wind was more on our left but still offering resistance.

In le Folgoet we had lunch in a little bar across the street from the 15C Gothic Cathedral. The bar was filled with people from the area who were visiting and drinking after church services.

Because of the wind, we decided to skip Plouguerneau and go directly to Lannalis. In Lannalis a light rain started falling and, at the same time, Jane had a flat. It drizzled the rest of the way to Ploudalmezeau where we went into a bar and had tea and beer. the Hotel Voyageurs turned out to be right across the square from the bar. Because it was Sunday, the hotel restaurant was closed, so later we went back to the same bar and had pizza for dinner. The hotel room was not great. The bed sagged in the middle and the floor squeaked, but the bill was only 170 francs (about \$30).

## **Monday, June 25**

We left Ploudalmezeau on a cool, foggy morning and went directly to Portsall where there was a little harbor and a lighthouse. From Portsall we took D27, the Route Touristique, along the ocean. At Tremezan I watched a group of youngsters start out on a sailing lesson in their little Chabot sail boats. The road twisted and turned with vistas of rocks and surf through the fog. At one point there was a little roadside chapel that looked as though it had been there for several hundred years.

For the first ten miles the coast road was a minor road with no traffic, then it joined a little more important road that wound through beachfront villages. From then on there was an occasional car.

In le Conquet we watched some fishermen mending nets then we went to a creperie where we had crepes and cider. In the creperie we met both a Welsh couple who were cycling and a couple of young Frenchmen that were touring together. We visited Pointe St. Mathieu and these four people all turned up there.

From the Pointe we rode to Plouguenvelin

where we found a Hotel Atlantique/Marianna right across the street from the beach. After checking in, showering, and changing, we went out to the front patio for drinks - the weather had improved - and the Welsh couple and the two young Frenchmen showed up here.

Dinner was in another building removed from the main hotel. I had ray, Jane had turkey (escalope de dinde). The bordeaux was inexpensive and good. The fish soup tasted burnt and the room smelled of smoke. The dessert was wonderful: Tarte Tatin (hot apple pie with caramel sauce) - umm!

## **Tuesday, June 26**

From Plouguenvelin we rode on D789, a red road, which was straighter and flatter but with more traffic than the roads we had been experiencing.

We rode into Brest on a busy street that cut through the part of the city closer to the sea. We crossed a large bridge through the naval base and went to the town center and to the

The i was very crowded and had a long line out front. After we stood in line a few minutes, someone told us that the line was for circus tickets, for tourist information we could go right in. A girl inside phoned Crozon and made hotel reservations for us in a Hotel Des Grottes. She also told us that there was a ferry at 12:30 and one at 5:30, so we went directly to the ferry landing and caught the 12:30 ferry.

The ferry landed on the Crozon peninsula at Le Fret, a tiny village but big enough to have a little restaurant where we had lunch - soupe de poisson, bread, cheese, yin rouge. We rode from there to Crozon where we asked in the i where the Hotel Des Grottes was. An impatient woman told us to go back to an intersection and the signs led to all the hotels.

It turned out that all the hotels were in the next town, Morgat. We rode down a long, steep grade to Morgat, which was a beachfront village with several hotels. It turned out that Hotel Des Grottes was all closed up with a big, mean-looking dog guarding it. We went a little farther and came to another where the Hotel Julia was recommended to us.

We checked in, showered, and went for a walk along the beachfront. Morgat turned out to be a pretty beach town with 45-minute boatrides through nearby grottoes.

Jane and I went in a little shop where we bought a handmade Breton bracelet and necklace for me to bring home to the girls in the office.

When I unpacked my shirt, it still reeked of barbecue smoke from the restaurant at the Hotel Atlantique in Plougenvelin.

Dinner at Hotel Julia was superb, but slow - it took two full hours. For entrees, Marsh and Irene and Jane had salad with sauteed chicken livers in it while I had fish terrine. For viande I had baked fish in a delicious green sauce; Jane had Poulet d'Indienne (chicken curry). Vin blanc was Gros-Pointe from the Loire Valley and very good.

## **Wednesday, June 27**

We rode without panniers to Crozon and then out to Pointe de Espagnols on untraveled roads. We rode into Camaret, a busy little fishing port that was very picturesque - without doubt the high point of the trip so far. There were lots of seafront bars and restaurants. We stopped at one and had some drinks. Marsh found a stand along the beach that had popcorn cooked with sugar instead of salt. It was great; the sugar caramelized so it was a little like caramelcorn. I finally had moulet mouliniere (mussels) at the bar where I was having a beer and Jane had soupe de

poisson. Marsh and Irene found some pommes frites.

After lunch in Camaret, we rode on to Pointe Penhir where there were a lot of tourists. The Michelin Green Guide gave Penhir three stars, but we all thought it was over rated. There was a great concrete monolith, though, a memorial to the Bretons of the Free French forces of WWII.

From Penhir we returned through Crozon, where a big market was in full swing, to Morgat from where I continued on alone to Cape Chevre.

At the tip of the Cape were a signal station and a monument to WWII aviators. The ride out was nice. There were several little villages hunkered down in a landscape of rocks and stunted heath. I stopped at a house that boasted a sign "Degestation de yin" and tasted a white and a red wine, neither of which was worth buying.

I noticed on these headlands, as on all the other headlands of the Crozon peninsula, old military works that were probably WWII gun emplacements and machine gun nests.

On my way back from Cape Chevre to Morgat, I stopped at a bar in a little village and had a glass of beer. There were three young women in the bar - sisters I think - who apparently were in charge of the place but they acted like I was some kind of an intruder. Maybe the fact that I spoke English caused them embarrassment with their English.

Back in Morgat before dinner we all took a boatride to the grottoes. Marsh and Irene ended up in a different boat from ours. It was just as well for them because our boat had problems with reverse gear. The dinner at Hotel Julia was excellent again. This time I had the curry and Jane had the fish

## Thursday, June 28

Jane had been having trouble shifting onto her large cog, so before breakfast I took her bike out and worked on the derailleur settings - apparently the rear derailleur got bent in toward the wheel while in the airline bike box.

After breakfast we went back up that hill to Crozon again, then we went easterly on D887 until we came to the local road that went southerly toward Pentrez.

It was a beautiful morning with big, fluffy clouds. I actually got out a polarizer for blue sky pictures and put on my sunglasses.

We had a long, fast downhill to Pentrez and on to La Plage La Greve, a beautiful beach.

We skipped Locranon and took the road from Plouvez-Porzay directly to Douarnenez, a village that I had read about in Nevil Shute's *Most Secret*. Douarnenez was bigger than I had expected it to be. It was a very busy fishing port with big fish industries on the wharfs.

When we arrived, the weather turned dark and cool with a little drizzle, so we went into a bar and had some lunch. In a little while the sun came out and it was nice again. Before we left, we had the i make us a hotel reservation in Audierne.

As we were entering Douarnenez, Jane's front brake cable broke right at the lever. I had a replacement cable, but nothing to cut it with. We went into a Renault agency, and I asked the mechanic in English if he had a pair of "dikes" that I could cut a brake cable with. He smiled and walked to his toolbox and got out a pair of "dikes" and handed them to me. Jane immediately struck up a conversation with him, and he turned out to have been born and raised in New York.

Along the way from Douarnenez to Audierne I stopped at the early 13C church in Pont Croix, a beautiful Romanesque church with an incredible carved porch in a

medieval neighborhood with cobbled streets. I couldn't stay, though, because the rest of the group didn't see me stop and they continued on.

Audierne was a pretty seaport town with school kids everywhere waiting for buses to take them home after school (about 5:00). In talking to them, Jane learned that school is from 9 to 5, ten months of the year.

The Hotel Cabestan, where we had our reservation, turned out to be not in Audierne but in Esquibien about two miles away. The hotel was small, clean, and comfortable with a very nice manager. But being two miles Out of town, it kept us from walking around and exploring Audierne which seemed interesting as we passed through.

## Friday, June 29

We had a typical French breakfast at Hotel Cabestan - half baguettes, croissants, butter, apricot and strawberry jam, cafe au lait - all in a very nice dining room. Weather was cool and overcast; there had been rain during the night.

We pedaled down a hill into Audierne, around the harbor, and across a bridge. Then we headed southeasterly toward Pont L'Abbe. Pont L'Abbe was another charming French village with a castle, a cathedral, a boat basin, some narrow cobbled streets, and the ruins of a 13C abby.

Lunch was in the patio of a little restaurant. Interestingly, in the middle of the patio was an open stall containing a urinal from where its users could continue there table conversations.

The afternoon ride to Quimper was through beautiful countryside. We turned off D785 and took a parallel country lane a little to the east that gave us seven or eight miles of riding through a tunnel under the canopy of

large trees. There were some nice, large homes scattered here and there.

We entered Quimper on a big, busy, dual-carriageway, but in the town center we turned into narrow streets bustling with people. The i was in a big, modern building that looked like Danish-modern with open beams - a building that looked very out of place in the medieval town center.

The 13C Gothic cathedral has very impressive twin spires. However, the cathedral, being in mid restoration, was surrounded by scaffolding. Around the Cathedral were cobble streets and corbelled three- and four-story half-timber buildings. And people everywhere!

The i sent us to the bed and breakfast of Madame Stephan, a little lady who explained everything to us: how to use the toilet, the bidet, the shower; which bowl she would put the milk in, the coffee, the jam, etc.

We changed and went to find a restaurant. While walking around we passed the Hotel de Ville from which native music was emanating. We went in and saw some sort of ceremony which included folk dancing.

We ended up in a Spanish restaurant named l'Astragala. Jane and I had paella.

After dinner Marsh and Irene headed back to the B&B while Jane and I continued walking around the old quarter for a little while. Then we had a climb back up the very steep hill to the B&B.

## Saturday, June 30

After taking some pictures of Mdm. Stephan and her home, we went back to the Cathedral to visit the museum. It turned out to be closed because of the renovation project. We were allowed to visit part of the cathedral's interior, but half of it was blocked off.

There was an art museum in the square that

was open, however, and it turned out to be very nice with a lot of Breton pottery on display.

The ride to Concarneau was along D783, a red route. Considerable traffic. Some rain. We got to Concarneau before lunch. Because the weather looked ominous, we found a hotel - Hotel Voyageurs - and called off anymore riding for the day.

It was just as well, because Concarneau was a very interesting seaport with an old walled city. There were lots of tourists. A museum of commercial fishing was very interesting.

Jane and I had lunch in the covered patio of a little restaurant Le St. Patrick while it continued to rain rather heavily. After lunch the weather improved to cold and windy for the rest of the afternoon.

At one point, I watched an elderly man and a boy venture outside the breakwater in about a 10-foot boat with a little outboard. As soon as they got into the chop, the boat was thrown every which way and they were obviously in grave danger and terrified. They managed to turn their little boat around and get back into the sheltered harbor. They almost swamped from following waves before they learned to sit as far forward in the boat as possible.

A twelve-meter boat with a very professional looking crew left the harbor a little later, and even that boat was thrown around by the rough seas and strong winds.

By the time we went to dinner, the weather had turned so cold and windy that the walled city was almost deserted.

We went looking for a restaurant named La Bagatefle that was recommended in Irene's guide book. We went to the address given in the book but found a restaurant named "Du Petit Chateau." We later discovered that the terrace of this restaurant was La Bagatelle.



During dinner, the waiter played Irish sea chanties on a stereo. I had mussels, fish, muscadet, tarte citron, and grand cafe.

## **Sunday, July 1**

We were awakened at 5:30 am by the ungodly noise of a garbage truck - on Sunday morning! It stormed all night with gale force winds and driving rain, but morning brought lighter winds and thin overcast with hints of blue sky here and there.

At breakfast we met a French couple who spoke perfect English. They were very excited about oil paintings by a local artist displayed in the dining area. They showed us one they had bought and considered a real bargain for about 200 francs.

The ride to Pont Aven was through pretty countryside with fairly light traffic on the D783. Pont Aven was very picturesque and very touristy. No Americans, though.

I thought the art museum was somewhat of a disappointment - a small collection by contemporary local artists - but Jane enjoyed it. Pont Aven, according to the guide book, was home to a famous school of painters founded by Gauguin in 1888.

The town is beautiful with the River Aven running over a rocky course right through its middle. The stone walls along the river are adorned with hanging flower pots. There are old mills with water wheels.

Northeast of the town the river flows through the Bois d'Amour (wood of love) before entering the town where it cascades over large rocks and through mill races finally leveling off in a tidal boat basin in the southerly part of town.

We bought some bread and cheese and walked up the river through the woods to find a spot for lunch. Fertilizer factories along the east bank of the river spoiled the effect.

We met a couple who were irate because they had rented spin fishing equipment in town, but were confronted with "fly-fishing only" signs all along the river. There English was so perfect that I thought they were from England. The river seemed polluted, and later Jane remarked that she'd never eat a fish caught in one of these rivers.

We rode on to Clohars-Carnoet where we stopped for tea and coffee, then we turned north thru the Foret de Carnoet toward Quimperle. The little road through the forest was busy with Sunday drivers.

Quimperle was a pretty town with a river running right through the middle of it, too. Because it was Sunday, the river was [closed](#). [so](#) we settled for a hotel right on the main entrance to town, the Hotel Brideux.

We changed and walked around the town. Part of it was on top of a hill where there was a 13C Cathedral - Notre Dame de l'Assomption. We had dinner in a little restaurant - Lavache Enragee - in a narrow street just up the hill from our hotel. The dinner was very good, and the waitress was very nice and very beautiful - I have a hunch that she and her husband were the owners.

The lower part of town - which I visited alone later in the evening - had a 12C church named Ste. Croix surrounded by little cobbled alleys with half-timbered and corbelled houses. One that had been an archer's house was an attraction open to the public - but not late on Sunday evening.

## **Monday, July 2**

Jane had a slight case of the touristas yesterday - today I'm having some symptoms.

It rained all night. At 9:30 we put on our rain gear under the awning of the Hotel Brideux. I started off on the road toward Hennebont, D62, but after a few blocks I realized I was all alone, so I turned back.

A young Englishman called out to me and said that the rest of my group had not turned the corner to the east but had kept going north. Fortunately Jane and Irene and Marsh had not gone far in that direction, and we got reassembled and started in the right direction.

At Pont Scarff the road changed from D62 to D26 - talk about confusing, we had thought the map had a misprint. Jane had another flat in Pont Scarff, and my pump gave me a lot of trouble.

Marsh and Irene went on ahead to the in Hennebont. Still raining. We got a room in Hotel Centre because it was very close to the i. The hotel turned out to be very nice. They gave us two connecting rooms with one bath. We changed and went down to lunch - brochette orientale topped off with apple tarte.

After lunch I walked to the Poste to mail six rolls of film. Then I went to the castle. The rain was coming down in torrents - the gutters were overflowing and the gargoyles on the castle were spewing water. The girl at the registration desk in the castle loaned me her parapluie (umbrella) so I could look at the ramparts, but I was already soaked in spite of my gore-tex jacket. I went back to hotel and waited for it to stop raining.

At about 4:00 it let up enough that we ventured out and returned to the castle. Jane loved the museum in the castle which had mannekins dressed in Breton costumes. There were also historic Breton artifacts - tools and kitchen implements and furniture.

We had dinner in the hotel at 8:00. Mine consisted of cucumber and tomato salad, white fish in a cream sauce with minced chives, and a baked pear with chocolate stripes and strawberry whipped cream. Fabulous! Both lunch and dinner menus were 40 francs each. Eun quart carafe de vin rouge de maison was 8 francs. Marsh and Irene had chicken with a sauce that looked wonderful too.

## Tuesday, July 3

Morning brought us a bright blue sky without a cloud in sight! We crossed our fingers while we ate breakfast and packed to leave, because we've learned by now that the weather can change in an instant.

We started the day planning to go to Josselin - a forty mile ride. The ride to Baud on D724 and to Locmine on D1 17 was nice going - quiet country roads and clear, cool weather. But at Locmine we went Out to N24, a main highway that had been converted to freeway most of the way. It was very scary. Traffic was really fast, and the shoulder had a rough chip seal that was still loose chips in places.

After a couple of miles we were feeling very vulnerable on the shoulder of the freeway, so we got off onto the old road where Jane's rear tire promptly went flat. fixed the flat just over the guardrail from the freeway, then we headed for the little village of St. Allouestre. We then followed a circuitous route of unnumbered back roads that wound right through a couple of farms between house and barn.

We criss-crossed N24 a couple of times but kept gaining easterly progress, a little like a sailboat beating into the wind. We went through the village of Guegon where the grounds of a pretty church were being set up for some kind of outdoor production with stage, lights, and bleachers.

We approached Josselin from the south, and as we came down a long hill we got a nice view of the Chateau and the Canal de Nantes a Brest passing beside it.

When we got to Josselin we had logged 45 miles, but nobody seemed tired.. Josselin proved to be worth the effort of changing the itinerary.

We found a Hotel du Chateau right across the canal from the Chateau and got rooms there. After changing, we visited the

chateau and took a guided tour —just the four of us with our own English speaking guide. Because it was about 5:00 there were no other visitors.

A family actually lives upstairs in the chateau, and our young woman guide explained to us that after the last tour each day, they came downstairs and occupied the rest of the chateau.

The town around the chateau was wonderful with half-timbered, corbelled houses and cobbled streets. The weather was also ideal - about 65°F with scattered clouds. We had beer in a sidewalk cafe, and then we went to a little pizzeria for dinner.

### **Wednesday, July 4**

I went out early and walked along the canal to take some pictures. It was beautiful. Calm water with reflections and mist coming off the surface in places. Canal barges were lined up at the quay in front of the chateau. And a boat was being passed through the lock.

While we were eating breakfast in the Hotel du Chateau it started to rain. We left Josselin and headed northwesterly on D778 on our way to Pontivy. By the time we had gone ten miles to les Forges, the rainfall became pretty heavy, so we stopped in a little bar and had tea.

We dallied around for some time, but the rain did not let up, so we put our rain gear back on and headed for Pontivy. We turned on D 12 then on D2 and rode to Royan where we crossed the canal again - and where I stopped and took pictures of a church and a boat coming through a lock. From Royan we headed almost due west toward Pontivy into a driving rain that sometimes stung our faces.

In Pontivy while looking for the i we came across a Hotel l'Europe that displayed a two-star emblem. Jane and Irene went in, liked it, and got rooms. We were shown a

solarium in back where we put our bicycles. We changed and at 2:00 had the hotel's lunch menu which was very nice.

We went to the castle and paid 25 francs for a tour which was disappointing, even though it included exhibit on witchcraft.

A little later the rain stopped so Jane and I went to the Notre-Dame-de-la-Joie church, a 16C flamboyant Gothic cathedral. It just happened that a violinist and a pianist were in the church rehearsing for a concert to be held later in the evening.

From there we walked though the town center where we saw old half-timbered houses. In the square a group of people were rehearsing a reenactment of something - some were dressed as soldiers with guns, some as farmers with pitchforks, one as a prisoner - none seemed to take it too seriously and the director was getting upset.

We had crepes and cidre for dinner. July 4 came and went with no fanfare. We had thought it might be Bastille Day or something.

### **Thursday, July 5**

When I looked out window at 6:30, there was not a cloud in sight. After we had eaten breakfast and paid the hotel bill, Marsh discovered that he had a flat. I went to the Poste and mailed film. By then it was turning cloudy and windy.

We left Pontivy on D767 intending to go to Guingamp. By the time we got to Mur-de-Bretagne the sky was dark and threatening, and there was a strong north wind. So we decided to turn easterly on D35 and D81 toward Loudeac. At that point Jane discovered she had a flat tire, her fourth.

The little villages of St. Guen, St. Thelo, and Treve were pretty. The countryside was very rural. We saw no more than three or four cars.

In Treve there was a young man standing at an easel painting a picture of a church across a lake that had poplars planted in a row all along its shoreline. I asked if I could photograph him, and he replied by asking me what an American was doing in such a remote place. He was from Cincinnati and had rented a house in Grace-Uzel, another tiny village a mile or two to the north.

In Treve, at 2:00, we decided to stop for lunch. The little restaurant was surprisingly good to be located in such a tiny hamlet.

When we rode into Loudeac we passed a big field full of little yellow shelters. Each shelter contained one great big dairy bull. Apparently the place was an artificial insemination center. But we found no one to ask.

In town we stopped at where a Hotel Les Voyageurs was recommended to us. It was a two-star hotel that proved to have a very good dining room but only so-so rooms. There were two Englishmen and an Irishman staying at the hotel on holiday from their jobs as engineers on the tunnel under the English Channel.

Marsh was becoming very concerned about a noise in his rear hub. When we had checked into the hotel, he removed the wheel and we found that it did not spin properly. We took the wheel down the street, and some boys about twelve told us where to find the bike shop. It was a Peugeot dealer who just happened to have the right size cassette bearings so we could replace the damaged bearings.

## **Friday July 6**

Woke up at 6:45 to a clear blue sky. At 9:30, after breakfast and after stopping at La Poste, the sky clouded over and we had mostly overcast with a cool strong breeze.

We rode back through Treve, retracing our last few miles, then we turned to Grace-Uzel, Gausson, Ploeuc, and St. Carreuc on

D27 toward St. Brieuc.

Ploeuc was a pretty village with a large square. We sat outside a hotel-restaurant and had tea and coffee. Marsh went to a little bank and cashed \$200 worth of travelers' checks. He came back and asked Jane to go help him with translation. The girl in the bank had given him only \$120 worth of francs! She admitted her mistake and gave him the rest of his francs, though.

Lunch in St. Carreuc was a real experience. It was family style served by a very efficient and nice lady. The menu of the day was veal roast with sauce and pommes frites. The entree was a big platter of prosciutti, salami, bacon, pickles. The fromage platter was brought around and then the dessert tray.

The countryside was very nice. There were vistas of fields with villages and church steeples off in the distance almost anywhere you looked. Light was constantly shifting making for frustrating photography.

We arrived in St. Brieuc about 4:00. The did not prove very helpful. Traffic was very heavy, and the layout of the town was incomprehensible even with the map we were given. It seemed every street was one-way the opposite way we wanted to go.

After circling the entire business district we found the Rue de la Gare where there were supposed to be hotels. We found a little no-star hotel named the Hotel Paris-Brest.

After showering and changing, we went back to town center to hear a concert of traditional music. While Marsh and Irene looked at some of the shops, Jane and I walked to old town near the 13C St. Stephen's Cathedral where there were some very nice half-timbered houses.

At 7:45 we met Marsh and Irene and went looking for dinner. We went to a creperie run by three very pretty women who tried to charge us 65 francs too much. This was

the third "mistake" today (hotel this morning tried to charge us for desserts that we did not have, and bank did not give Marsh enough francs).

There were four 16-year old English boys who had arrived in St. Brieuc on bicycles at about the same time we did who were everywhere we went. They said they were looking for the "action". We finally saw them drinking beer at a sidewalk cafe.

## **Saturday, July 7**

The little old Hotel Paris-Brest had a clothes line in back, so I was able to wash and dry a Jersey. After breakfast we went out to the bikes and Marsh's combination lock refused to open. We tried and tried to get the combination to work. Luckily our landlady was able to produce a hack saw so we could cut it off.

With that chore done, we returned to a shop in the town center where Irene bought a sharp looking peach and black warm up suit that she had seen the day before. Jane tried on a nice looking sweatshirt, but she decided at 269 francs it was too expensive.

We rode easterly out of St. Brieuc through Langueux, Yffiniac, Hillion, Morieaux, and Planguenoual on D34, a quiet back road. At one point we dropped down into a deep ravine where the road crossed a stream coming out of the outlet of a concrete arch dam.

We had a nice lunch in Planguenoual - I had coquile, roast beef, house wine, coffee, fresh fruit. Between Planguenoual and Le Val Andre we came on an ecole de equitation where we watched 13 to 14 year old girls taking riding lessons inside a big old Butler building.

We rode out to Pointe des Guenes for the view from the headland, and from there we saw a man running a harness horse in the surf— perhaps to strengthen the horse's legs?

At le Val Andre we checked into the Grand Hotel du Val Andre. Very nice! There were men in ties and ladies with heels, gloves, and hats going in and out. The young woman desk clerk was very pretty, very well dressed, but a little distant and impersonal.

After cleaning up, we went for a long walk along the beachfront promenade. At one point we sat in a sidewalk cafe where we talked to an Englishman who was in Brittany looking for a retirement home. We finally ended up in a pizzeria where we had dinner.

## **Sunday, July 8**

After breakfast we went out to the garage to get the bikes, and Jane had another fiat, her fifth! I patched it, and then my pump exploded when I tried to inflate the tire. Thank God for Irene's Zefal HP pump which always works flawlessly.

When we rode from le Val Andre to Erquy, the weather turned from cool and overcast to hot and humid. Along the way, we turned in at the driveway to Bienassis Chateau and looked around - it had not yet opened for the day.

Erquy was a beachfront town similar to le Val Andre. Church was letting out as we passed through and it was very busy. As we left Erquy on D786 we met scores of motorcycles with sidecars headed towards Erquy.

We took D34 to Sables-d'Or-les-Pins and then on to Pleherel Plage where we ate in an elegant restaurant jammed with the after-church crowd. The food was excellent - I had coquile again, followed by fish, cheese, dessert while rest of group ate salads.

Cape Frehel and Fort La Latte were interesting and crowded with tourists - I don't think either attraction deserved the two stars that the Michelin Guide gave them.

St. Cast-le-Guildo turned out to be very big. We rode into town and asked a man on the street if he knew a hotel. He said L'Hotel des Dunes was good, so we went looking for it. We rode at least another mile before we came to the part of town along the beach and found the Hotel des Dunes.

After changing, we walked around town a little bit. We ate in a fairly nice restaurant called Les Arcades - Jane and I ordered oysters (huîtres) and were disappointed that they were still in the shell raw.

We met our first American tourists after dinner. This couple was unhappy with the food and the lodging. Apparently their trip was arranged by a travel agent and their lodging was all prearranged and prepaid, so they were stuck with it.

## Monday July 9

After breakfast the weather was cool and cloudy. The main route out of town was occupied by a market which we rode right through.

Along the way, I liked Notre Dame du-Guildo and le Guildo which sat on each end of a bridge across the Arguenon River - boats, old buildings, and a castle. From there we went to Tregon and Ploubalay where D786 went north to St. Briac and D768 continued on towards St. Malo. Talk about confusing!

We stopped for tea and coffee in St. Briac-sur-Mer and watched people at market. One man came along with an apricot colored toy poodle named "Elvis Presley".

We went on to St. Lunaire where it was cold and windy so we decided to skip Dinard and go directly to St. Malo. The view of St. Malo from the bridge across the Rance Estuary was very impressive - traffic was very heavy and very fast on the bridge but there was a vista point.

In St. Malo, we stopped in the town

outside the walls of the old town and had lunch in a small, nondescript restaurant that was excellent and reasonable in price, the plat du jour was veal croquettes wrapped with veal and bacon. Jane and Irene ordered the hors d'oeuvres cart and that, too, was good.

Inside the walls (intro muros) the Hotel L'Univers where Jane and I had stayed before said they had no place for us to put the bikes. We went next door to the Chateaubriand where we were given choice rooms overlooking the sea once we agreed to have the 95 franc menu in the hotel dining room.

When we got to our rooms, Marsh went right to sleep. Jane and I went out and walked around the town until 7:00 then went back to join Marsh and Irene for dinner. We went to a creperie for dinner. After dinner it was too cold to do anything but go back to our rooms.

## Tuesday, July 10

We split up and went shopping in the morning. At noon we went back to hotel and moved our luggage into a locker in the lobby, and then we went into the hotel dining room for our last dinner in France.

Later when we paid our hotel bill, there was a problem because we chose the 60 franc menu and had drinks. We thought we each had a 95 franc credit. The desk clerk tried to tell us that we were to have the 95 franc menu only, and that any drinks were extra. We made a fuss and they relented.

At 5:00 we went to a crummy fast food place. I had microwave pizza, and Marsh had a microwave cheeseburger. A girl came in with a puppy that peed a huge puddle on the floor, so we got up and left.

At 6:30 we went to the ferry landing and checked in. The ferry did not get underway until 9:10. It seemed to take forever to load a few cars. The weather was nice as we

departed, but there was no sunset like the last time we made this trip. We slept soundly in our little cabins until 4:30 am then we got up, had our last French breakfast, and prepared to disembark.

### **Wednesday, July 11**

The boat docked at 5:40 am. We rode from the Portsmouth ferry landing to the train station with three boys from Yorkshire who had cycled for a week in France. We took the 6:42 Victoria Station Train and got off at Three Bridges at 8:30 am. We rode our bikes to the Copthorne and were there by 9:00.

At the Copthorne they had a couple of rooms made up and they let us move right into them. We changed back into our riding shorts and had a nice ride through East Grinstead, Turner's Hill, Lundfield, Hayward's Heath, Cuckfield, Balcombe, Pound Hill, and back to the Copthorne. Old Hollow Road from Pound Hill to Copthorne was totally unsigned or unmarked, totally beautiful, totally overgrown with nettles, vines, trees - it had an occasional mansion sitting back from the road.

Back at the Copthorne, we showered, changed, and went to the cocktail lounge (pub) for a while before dinner. Dinner was the buffet in the garden room.

### **Thursday, July 12**

Thursday morning we ate breakfast then packed the bikes in their boxes and arranged with the shuttle driver to take us to the airport on the ten o'clock bus. Everything worked out well. We were able to maneuver the boxes into the bus through the rear emergency window opening (this was a different bus than the one that picked us up upon arrival).

Our plane was almost two hours late leaving Gatwick. The LiOl 1 had diverted to Gander on its way to England because a

stewardess got sick (had a stroke, they said) so it was late arriving at Gatwick.

We were two hours late arriving in Dallas, so American Airlines had already booked us on a later flight than our original connecting flight. When we went to the gate, the original flight was just leaving. The standbys had all been loaded and it had room for only two more. Marsh and Irene were being met at Sacramento, so they took those two seats.

American bought Jane and me dinner and put us in first class seats on the next flight - we also had our bikes and luggage on that plane, so it was convenient. When we arrived home at about midnight Phil was waiting with our pickup truck, so we were able to take our bikes and panniers home with us.

Marsh and Irene only had to wait for their bikes and checked luggage to be delivered to their home the next day. All in all, I think American Airlines did an excellent job!

And so ends another fantastic bike trip in Europe! More than ever I believe France is my favorite. The roads, the weather, the terrain, and the accommodations are ideal for cycling. And there is the extra bonus provided by the food, the wine, and the energetic French people the touring cyclist comes in contact with.