



This should be easy, mine's the Suzuki



Every village oozes charm and character

Who are you?



Who are you?
Chris Keogh from Sandhurst in Middlesex

What are you riding?
Suzuki GSX-R750

What's your favourite bit of kit?

My Daytona Evo Security boots. The security is amazing - but as well as the safety, they give amazing feel and comfort. You can wear these all day, on or off the bike. I've never been tired in these boots.

What's the best road you've ridden on this trip to France?

Without a doubt it's the N85 - the Route Napoleon. The best bit's the stretch south of Dignes les Bains. It's fast and swooping. I don't like heights, so for me it's even better than the Alps.

was predictable and safe, apart from the lunatics in battered old Renaults who tried their best to keep up. Other bikers were also very friendly, dropping a hand off the handlebars or jutting out a leg to wave as you pass - even the bike mounted policeman turned a blind eye when he caught us in a pedestrian zone trying to get to the crêperie.

These stops for lunch and for coffee were useful things. Talk was of brave overtaking manoeuvres and corners overshot. It wasn't an official rider training school but just

"For the next few days it's more riding, covering around 200 miles a day, in no rush"

people following you, pointing out that your arms are too stiff or how, with a big bike like the Suzuki, you will have to countersteer - useful stuff. All of us quickly improved, especially Griff on the GSX650 who was having difficulty holding a tight line through corners and was really nervous. Gradually he found more speed and more confidence, as did I on the 1250 - though this wasn't ideal for the tight back roads as it's a heavy lump to turn in and adjust. But you adapt and, slowly, I felt myself quite smitten with the big girl. I even started to like its dull looks, which mean you can

ride it with no expectation and nothing to prove. And that's a good thing on unfamiliar roads.

To make sure all of us stuck together, Bike Normandy used the 'back-marker system'. It worked like this; when John, at the front, made a turn in the road - at a junction, or roundabout - he pointed at an appropriate spot and the person behind him pulled up. That 'marker' waited for everyone to pass, indicating the way as they did so. When Jen brought up the rear the marker joined the back of the group and carried on. I was sceptical at first, thinking this system would interfere with the riding, but it worked really well, especially the way it mixed up the order so the slowest rider wasn't always at the back playing catch up. It's worth mentioning that the groups are graded, with this being a moderate weekend. But there are fast groups too - Jen's back tyre and knee slider are evidence of that. Even John, poor sod, had to concede that she's faster than him.

Then we got to the couple's farmhouse: a huge, imposing building perched high on a hill, overlooking an expansive green valley. This is the life - beers on the patio, a small group of bikers, strangers yesterday, mates today (never thought I'd say that about a pair of policemen!). Then dinner was served, home-cooked by John and Jen, with

Trip facts

Total mileage 834
Total cost of fuel £111
Cost of toll roads - zilch
Fuel stops 7
Average mpg 38.5mpg
Best mpg 45.7
Worst mpg 37.2



Our route

📍 Pretty dull in England - just transit on major roads to get the journey started. From Peterborough I took the A1 down to the M25, then rode anti-clockwise to join the M3, then down and finally across on the M27 to Portsmouth. The riding was better in France, but as John was leading the way I didn't log the precise details (that's the point of the guided tour: you don't have to worry so much about the route). On the first day we visited the St Desir war cemetery near Lisieux. Day Two involved riding the Alpes Mancelles, just south of Alencon, only 20 minutes from Le Mans. Day three saw us visit Suisse Normande and riding a road used for hill racing. We had lunch in Thury-Harcourt before returning to Le Havre to catch the ferry.