

MORE CYCLING IN FRANCE



BIMBLING THROUGH BURGUNDY

©Penny & Damian Buckley

June 2008

OUR ROUTE, FROM AUXERRE TO DIJON
via Chablis, Vézelay, Château-Chinon, Autun, Beaune
and an outing to Nuits-St George



DAY BY DAY SUMMARY

Day	Date	From → To	Distance Cycled (kms) (mIs)	
1	15 June	Bournemouth → Auxerre via Calais	--	--
2	16 June	Auxerre → Noyers sur Serein	70	41
3	17 June	Noyers sur Serein → Vézelay	51	31
4	18 June	Vézelay → Villiers sur Yonne	30	18
5	19 June	Villiers sur Yonne → Cuzy (by Mornington Croissant) Cuzy → Lormes	29	18
6	20 June	Lormes → Château Chinon	73	45
7	21 June	Château Chinon → Autun	57	35
8	22 June	Autun → Beaune	60	34
9	23 June	Restday in Beaune	--	--
10	24 June	Beaune → Dijon	66	41
11	25 June	Trip to Nuits St Georges	72	45
12	26 June	Dijon → Auxerre (by train)	--	--
13	27 June	Auxerre → Reims	--	--
14	28 June	Reims → Bournemouth via Calais	--	--
		TOTAL DISTANCE	508	315

Pre departure

Our feet are itching to get on the pedals again for another ride in France. We plan to use the Lonely Planet 'Cycling in Burgundy' routes, 'Classic Burgundy' and 'Wine Lovers Circuit' - sounds like a winner already. We shall load the bikes into the car and drive to Auxerre, leaving the car, and ride off into the sunset. It will be a Holiday with Bikes as opposed to the fully paid-up Adventures of the Loire trip or Manche - Med. By this, our fourth long distance ride, we have become quite blasé about preparation but are full of excited anticipation about spending a day with Damian's cousin, David and wife, Liz, on their boat on the Canal du Nivernais. We'll book the first and last nights but leave the rest till the morning of each day.



Kit check

Day 1

Sunday, 15 June

Bournemouth → Auxerre via Calais

Bournemouth to Auxerre is nearly 500 miles - a long flog in one day. En route between St Quentin and Reims, we're astonished to receive a call from Tim telling us he is the Ibis Hotel at Charles de Gaulle! We seriously consider making a detour; it would be such fun to meet him, but although, we are approximately level, we are also some 50 miles to the east of him. We reluctantly decide this is a step too far which would necessitate breaking the journey - why didn't he tell us earlier?!

We last visited Auxerre in 1990. On that occasion, we met Nikki as she returned from the St Peter's Italy trip. In those far off, pre-mobile days it seemed very daring to arrange to meet in a foreign country. Eighteen years later, Auxerre is just as attractive and, as always, we are delighted to be back in lovely, lovely France. As we walk along the riverbank to find our supper, we come upon the spot where we had a picnic lunch with Nikki after our successful rendezvous. In fact, we have dinner on a boat not far from the spot.

I home straight in on the goats' cheese salad. The Burgundy version is subtly different from its cousins of the south west. Here the cheese is lighter/fluffier and served on a slice of pain d'épice (spiced bread) with a honey dressing and pine nuts, it sounds a strange combination but it is sublime!

The weather forecast is not great, indeed mine host bemoans the late arrival of summer. We consider spending an extra day in Auxerre which, as we have no fixed schedule, is entirely possible and sounds tempting but we can decide tomorrow.



Street sign

Day 2**Auxerre → Noyers sur Serein****Monday, 16 June****69 kms / 41 mls**

We note from the paper that the forecast is wall to wall rain in the département de Yonne - a gloomy prospect but we press on with assembling the bikes which, for travel, had front wheels removed. The weather doesn't seem too bad and we set off; destination Noyers-sur-Serein. Unfortunately, accommodation is limited to a B&B just out of town. This is not the ideal because of the problems of returning after a lovely French meal and wine; the usual story of beggars and choosers applies. As we leave Auxerre the sun shines and is in the perfect position for the photos.



Bridge over the Yonne, Auxerre

This ride will take us through the great appellations of Burgundy, just as great as those of the Médoc through which we rode on Manche-Med. We're soon cruising into Chablis where, the guide tells us, "just to smell the cork of the crème de la crème of the grandest of Grand Cru - Grenouille - will probably be beyond our wildest dreams". Huh, I see! Chablis is a delightful, and not surprisingly, prosperous town, much of the road traffic is machinery for tending the vines - weird looking machines, riding high off the ground.



Our B&B, Moulin de la Roche, is only slightly out of town and I am reminded of our B&B at Thoury on the Loire trip between Orléans and Chambord. Thoury, though, was **well** out of town and was the B&B from hell. Moulin de la Roche is a handsome, former mill, lovingly restored including the working mill machinery. Monsieur is pleasant and willingly books a table for our supper in town. He even offers to take us into town, suggesting we call him when we are ready to be collected. This is quite above and beyond anything we expect but demonstrates the great kindness of people. We gratefully accept the lift in - we are **starving**, but feel we cannot ask him to turn out again, besides, we are happy to walk

back. It is mid-summer and light till about 10.30 pm, a great advantage to holidaying at this time of the year: it is great to be walking. We have boeuf bourgignonne, an unseasonal choice for mid June but this is strangely unseasonal weather.



Moulin de la Roche, Noyers sur Serein

Day 3
Noyers sur Serein → Vézelay

Tuesday, 17 June
51 kms / 31 mls

Breakfast is a rather limited affair but that is the way in French B&Bs. It has rained overnight and it feels cool and fresh. We ride back to explore Noyers, a pretty town with an abundance of delightful corners.



Images of Noyers sur Serein

We leave Noyers bound for Avallon and tonight's destination, Vézelay. We both feel we are making rather heavy weather of the cycling. It is, after all, only 30 miles for the day not really arduous, and nothing in comparison to 60 miles a day of previous trips - can it be we're getting old?

The road from Avallon to Vézelay is hard and the last 8 kms might warrant *LSA classification but while it is quite steep, it is relatively short, so does not really earn it.



Vézelay became a UNESCO world heritage site in 1979. It is not unlike Le Mont St Michel. Think towering edifice to Christianity at the summit of steep narrow road. The Basilica is the resting place for the remains of Mary Magdalen; it is awe inspiring. Without wishing to sound unduly pious, I am struck that, wherever I go in the world, I can find myself part of this great, wonderful Christian tradition. I feel proud and a little bit humble, it is so big. Naturally enough, Vézelay became a place of pilgrimage and was a main assembly point for the Chemin de Compostela. In the twenty-first century both of the above still apply; there is an active community of Franciscan nuns. It is also a 'honey pot' site for tourists.

* *Lung Searing Ascent*

We have booked into Les Glycines, the Wisterias, whose frontage is covered with a magnificent 150 year old wisteria. It is charmingly French, no dusty flock wallpaper here, and Madame has won our appreciation by agreeing to do our washing.

By the time we have finished supper, Vézelay is much quieter. In France, it is only in the big cities that there is any sort of nightlife. We are often surprised that even towns of modest size are pretty empty by 9.00 pm. The day visitors have gone and the residents are safely tucked up in their houses. We walk round the ramparts of the Basilica at sunset - the views are fantastic.



Day 4

Vézelay → Villiers sur Yonne

Wednesday, 18 June

30 kms / 18 mls

We have agreed to meet Liz and David at the bridge over the canal in Villiers-sur-Yonne where they are moored and we're excited at the thought of spending a night on the Mornington Croissant. What a brilliant name; tribute to Humphrey Littleton and I'm Sorry I Haven't a Clue. Liz told us that people have been surprised and not a little disappointed to discover that the person emerging from the boat has turned out **not** to be 'Humph'.

Before we leave Vézelay, we allow ourselves a couple of hours to finish looking round. As always, we are struck by the talent the French have for creating a flowery, tranquil space in the most unpromising of situations, no corner is too small not to be prettified with geraniums and petunias; not even weather, flaking paintwork nor crumbling stonework can manage to diminish the whole charming picture.

Vézelay is celebrating music this weekend and the town is suitably decked out to proclaim this. I spot this doorway where the 'writing' is in mares' tails. Who would think that most hated and pernicious of weeds could 'morph' into something so delicate and artistic? Congratulations to the person who thought of it!



The sun is shining and we are cruising through 'big sky' country until we somehow end up travelling at least two miles along forest tracks. Fine for off-roaders, not so good for us. OC Maps chose the wrong fork, where none was marked, but when we eventually surface into the daylight it is exactly where Damian expects. The countryside round here is very reminiscent of north Germany, east of Braunschweig. We both think back 36 years, about the rhubarb field from which we scrumped pounds of fruit and I made jam.

The last part of the ride is along the Canal du Nivernais: memories of last year and the Canal du Midi rush back - that really was the most wonderful adventure. We see the Croissant moored at the appointed bridge.



Liz and David welcome us aboard their lovely boat which David has planned himself and fitted out expertly and beautifully. It seems that no detail has been overlooked or luxury spared. Cruising the canals of France seems to me a most agreeable way to pass the summer.

The sun is shining and we spend a happy afternoon on the aft deck under a parasol sipping Pimms, interrupted occasionally by a flock of orphan ducklings who require feeding. David's sister and husband, who have a gîte nearby, join us, so Liz rustles up more Pimms.Bye-bye brains!!

Day 5

Thursday, 19 June

Villiers sur Yonne → Cuzy (on Mornington Croissant)

Cuzy → Lormes

29 kms / 18 mls

We wake after a most comfortable night; our cabin is so well appointed with en suite bathroom and fully functioning appliances. Thankfully, I am not expected to co-ordinate pumping water with my foot while lathering my body with soap! This seems incredible; my last experience of sailing, before we were married, was hideously primitive. Then, the only running water was that rushing past the side of the boat. David attends to admin tasks like connecting up the hose to the pipe on the bank to fill the boat's water tanks and we're off.

Our progress down the Canal du Nivernais is stately and happily I am not required to do anything but enjoy the view. It is so relaxing; I love it! We negotiate locks and a lifting bridge. Liz's task is to race on ahead by bike to arrive at these obstacles before the Croissant gets there. We sit there and watch it all happen!





Our destination for the day is Cuzy. We shall have lunch and take our leave of the Croissant, heading for Lormes in the Morvan. It's incredibly tempting to stay sitting on the sunny deck sipping Pimms but we do have some sort of schedule to keep to. It is not far to Lormes but the last 6 kms are a steep hill, again not quite LSA but, again, we make a bit of a meal of it.

Hotel Perreau turns out to be typical of the genre, a Logis with all the hallmarks of past glory, flock wall paper, faded red velour chairs and customary stygian "lighting" in the bedroom but we have a big bath - heaven - and later an excellent meal, these are the important things for cyclists.

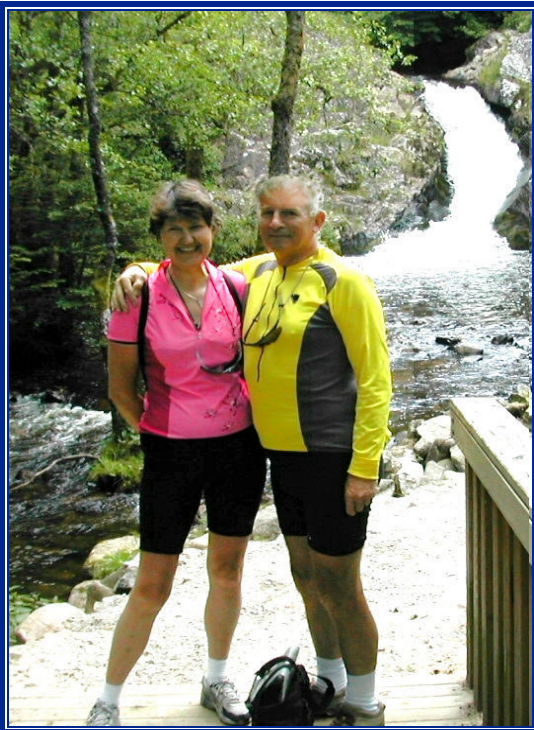
After supper we walk round the town. Sadly, many shops ceased trading some time ago, and the town has a rather dusty, dejected air. Over the last ten years, on our travels round France, we have noticed a growing trend for individual, specialist shops to close. This is only mirroring the situation in England where faceless consumer "paradises" are luring us out-of-town.

Day 6
Lormes → Château Chinon

Friday, 20 June
73 kms / 45 mls

It's a cloudy start and a portion-control breakfast but Monsieur is willing to give us more of everything. We get away at 9.45 am, not very good but we do not have the same pressures on us this time as Manche-Med. The Undiscovered France guide says 'nothing good ever came out of the Morvan' this seems at best, rather uncharitable and at worst a complete untruth. The countryside has had National Park status for 25 years and, particularly at this time of year, is lovely.

We are bowled over by the profusion of wild flowers - vetches, orchids, nettles, etc, etc that are part of early summer. While comparisons are always odious, there seems to be more variety here than we find in the New Forest or Dorset countryside. However, we do miss the harvest of free goodies which a September ride brings - plums, grapes, apples, blackberries even peaches. We cycle many kilometres alongside the River Cure as it tumbles through glitteringly sylvan glades and bucolic pastures of grazing Charolais cattle.



***Beside the Cascade
de Gouloux***

We arrive at St Brisson at lunch time. It's another rather sad village with several properties, once serving the commercial needs of the village, now up for sale. L'Hostellerie Le Beursonnière looks much like the rest of village, slightly past it, we guess it enjoyed its last makeover circa 1955.

We are both sad to see so many French villages in this area dying. The French post office, the PTT is a stand-alone enterprise and sets its opening hours according to local need. It can still be found in the smallest of villages. We have seen bars, butchers, drapers, ironmongers and more fall victim to the super markets. Astonishingly, hairdressers seem immune to the malaise and no village worthy of the name is without this last bastion of commercial endeavour. It is like Burton, Shapwick, Milton Abbas et al, all having a hairdresser of their own.

As we are leaving, a young German woman arrives on a bike, wanting to know the way to Corbigny, which we know is not far from where we left the Croissant yesterday. She is cycling to Compostela. Last year she cycled Frankfurt to Dijon and is covering Dijon to Compostela this year. She is interested in our venture and general 'mode d'emploi'. For our part we are full of admiration for her fortitude at undertaking the journey alone. There are times when we have needed each other not only for moral support but also to share the enjoyment. Stephanie seems to be using the archetypical shopping bike with wire front basket and her whole route to Compostela is on one map sheet (for comparison, we have five for our bit of Burgundy!). We are happy to give her a tourist map on which Damian marks her route fairly accurately. We swap email addresses and a photo and guess that she may belong to a religious order; she has that unfurrowed countenance of someone who has not had children.



***Giant clog at the
Gouloux Clog-makers'
Museum***

We leave St Brisson missing the Museum of the Resistance which I would have liked to see but do pass the wood carving museum.

We decide to make a run for Château Chinon, the final 6 kms of which fully qualify for LSA status and shreds our knees and bottoms comprehensively. However, this will be as nothing in comparison to the climb to Mt Beuvray tomorrow where the ascent is 20%. This is steeper than anything on any previous ride, we will need not just 'granny' gears but 'great granny' gears.



Day 7
Château Chinon → Autun

Saturday, 21 June
57 kms / 35 mls

Le Vieux Morvan is probably going to win 'worst-of-trip' award - stingy breakfast where the croissants look as though they have come from a multi-pack. The most interesting fact Château Chinon can lay claim to, is that François Mitterand was mayor here before becoming President of France. The only item mentioned in the guide is the Daliesque fountain which is certainly wacky, whether it will still be working in 100 years is debateable - only time will tell.



Daliesque fountain

Today we have the mother and father of all LSAs up Mt Beuvray, to the excavations of roman fortifications of Bibracte. Julius Caesar once visited and, if he did, then Penny and Damian are not going to miss out; we're fully confident it will be worth all the effort. At 800 m high, we can only just manage to push the bikes the last part of the way and even briefly consider both of us pushing one bike at a time. Sadly, and this probably marks us out as Philistines, the massive effort on our part is not worth it, the whole thing seems to be vastly over-hyped. There are, however, fine views from the top.



***Memorial at the top of
Mont Beuvray.***

***On this hilltop are the
ancient roman
fortifications of Bibracte***

The payback of the hard ascent is the long effortless descent all the way to Autun. Tonight we are in another Vieux Moulin on the banks of the Arroux.

Autun is celebrating La Fête de la Musique this weekend and all restaurants and bars have a musician or group to entertain the clientele. To accommodate the crowds, benches and tables are laid out in serried ranks in front of every establishment. Everyone but everyone, from grannies to babies, are out to see and be seen; rarely have we seen a French town so thronging after 8.30 pm. The air is balmy and it is great to be sitting out. We finish up at the Irish Pub - a ubiquitous establishment, popular in many continental towns and start talking to a German couple, a Lebanese girl and a Frenchman. Interestingly, it is the women and Damian who speak anything other than their mother tongue. The German couple are cycling from Paris to Nuremburg, carrying their tent and equipment with them - as always this seems a hard, uncomfortable way to spend ones holiday and, to my mind, certainly not fun.

Day 8
Autun → Beaune

Sunday, 22 June
60 kms / 38 mls

Breakfast at Le Vieux Moulin is a portion-control affair and a request for more food elicits a fleeting look of astonishment. It's a beautiful dining room but we suspect dinner would have been all hushed reverential tones had we eaten here last night.

All the signs of gaiety that was Autun last night have vanished. It is as if it never happened. Where do all those benches and tables spend the rest of the year? We are finally away by 12.30 p.m., somewhat late, as we have 34 miles to cover to Beaune. As we leave the outskirts of Autun, the wonderful smell of barbecues overtake us. Briefly, I wish I too could be sitting on some shady terrace enjoying a bbq. The weather is oppressively humid and it feels as if we are pushing through warm syrup.

We are bowling along and I spot the German couple of last night pedalling up behind us. We chat briefly and Damian and I try to lift their bikes, incredibly each set of luggage and supplies weighs 25 kilos. This makes our 8 kilos each seem like a day trip; I have no desire to do it their way.

Our entry into Beaune is along the prettiest of back roads between the vines, passing Chateau Pommard. Beaune is the centre of the Burgundy wine trade and it guards its supremacy jealously. We learn that land hereabouts is measured in 'parcels', much smaller than a hectare, to allow

for differentiation between soils, orientation and the amount of sunshine, wind and frost to which the grapes exposed.



***The road
into Beaune***

Day 9
Rest Day in Beaune

Monday, 23 June

Beaune is too interesting a town to whistle through and we decide to take a rest day. First, though, we change rooms for some air conditioned luxury; Last night was suffocatingly hot. First stop has to be the Hotel Dieu, the Hospice founded in 1443 by all round good egg, Nicholas Rolin. The Hotel Dieu has the eponymous glazed tile roof captured on a thousand post cards. It is stunningly beautiful and we are somewhat surprised to learn that, way back in the 15th century, sick people were looked after so well.



***Corner of the
courtyard of the
Hotel Dieu***

Looking to the other end of the Hotel Dieu



Trompe l'oeuil on a wall in Beaune

We spend a lovely day enjoying this beautiful town devoted to wine and all things vinous. The streets are populated with shops and caves for dégustations of the premiers crus. This is where the wine auction by candlelight takes place, not that the proceedings are illuminated by candles but bids last only as long as it takes for two small candles to burn. How long is it before the Health and Safety Mafia get wind of this reckless exposure to fire and ban it?

***Some great
names
of Burgundy wine***



Tomorrow we must make an exceptionally early start as it's 60 kms to Dijon and, if the weather is anything like today's, we must have the major part of it safely under our belts by lunchtime before the severe heat of the day.

Day 10
Beaune → Dijon

Tuesday, 24 June
66 kms / 66mls

We have achieved an all-time personal best and are on the road at 8.30 am. If it becomes as hot as yesterday, it will be essential to stop for at least two hours at lunch time to keep out of the sun.

We have the standard portion-control breakfast: extras are given with bad grace. We are soon bowling along quiet roads enjoying again the flowers, which have been such a feature of this trip. Unfortunately, while Damian is capturing the ultimate shot of an orchid, requiring the help of his charming lady assistant, she catches a foot in a trailing stem and falls headlong into the road. This is not clever and I am well aware it could have been much worse - happily the only real casualty is my glasses.

For the run into Dijon, we join the canal de Bourgogne which provides an excellent piste cyclable for 30 kms at least, right to the centre of Dijon. I love bowling along the waterside, reminding me so much of the Canal du Midi on our Manche-Med trip.

***Beside the Canal de
Bourgogne***



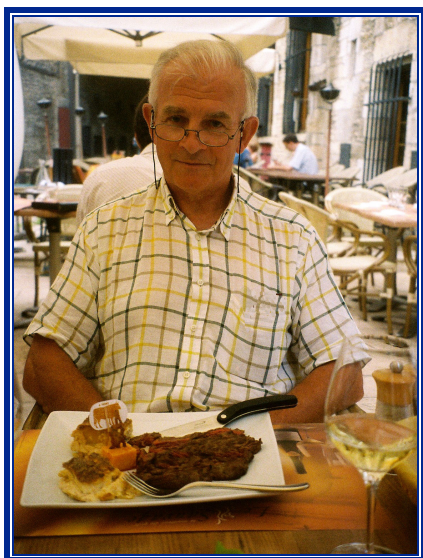
Passing one of the locks on the Canal, we see the Amaryllis, a complete floating gin palace only just able to fit inside the lock length and width-ways. It is astonishing in every way. It has a swimming pool, and deck with teak table and chairs. As we arrive the two-man crew provide the floor show as they deal with the nitty-gritty of boat/lock management. At the other end of the boat, in the galley, a couple of girls are bustling around. I am **amazed**: in the middle is a stateroom, with beautiful table where the family, including baby in high chair, is having luncheon. It is unashamed, jaw-dropping luxury; the canal boating equivalent of the luxury boats which moor up in St Tropez harbour. However, while it is undoubtedly luxury on the grand scale, I can't help feeling the occupants are missing so much, closeted away inside. I thought half the fun was getting close up and personal with wet ropes and engaging with the éclusiers - have I got that wrong?



Dijon is the only major city of this trip and finding the centre is relatively easy, perhaps we're just becoming more proficient? For some reason that we never discovered, there seem to be only two available beds in Dijon tonight, one so absurdly cheap it must come with its own bed bugs and the other at an out-of-town commercial centre. This turns out to be Dijon's equivalent of York Road, Baltimore and Fleetsbridge industrial estate, Poole; ports and storms come to mind. Damian takes us to the Hotel Kyriad faultlessly. If he earned the Légion d'Honneur for map reading on Manche-Med, it must now be 'avec palme' for negotiating Dijon. Once achieved, I am excited, and secretly rather proud, to think that we have mastered another French city, à vélo.

Before abandoning ourselves to our supper, we plan the next two days and our return to Auxerre. There are several permutations, but all hinge on the optimum way of seeing the sights and not having to carry our panniers with us or make an extra trip back to the Kyriad to collect them. The solution seems to be a ride to Nuits St Georges tomorrow and to see Dijon in the morning of the following day. The critical and, at the moment, unknown key of the plan is, can we book the room for another night. There is no Plan B.

We have a great, if rather pretentious, supper. Damian has ordered his steak to be cooked à point these past 37 years, but Hotel Sauvage sees the need to stab a cow-shaped label, with the legend 'à point', in to a cube of pinky-orange-coloured polenta and place it beside the steak! De trop or what!?



Steak à point

Day 11
Trip to Nuits St Georges

Wednesday, 25 June
72 kms / 45 mls

Happily, we learn that we can have the room for another night; Plan A is a 'flier'. In addition, Monsieur has spoken to the Kyriad in Dijon, fortuitously, just opposite the station, and negotiated that we can take our panniers and leave them there for the morning. This is wonderful; he even offers to take them in his van whilst we do something else, but we need the confidence of knowing that we put them there.

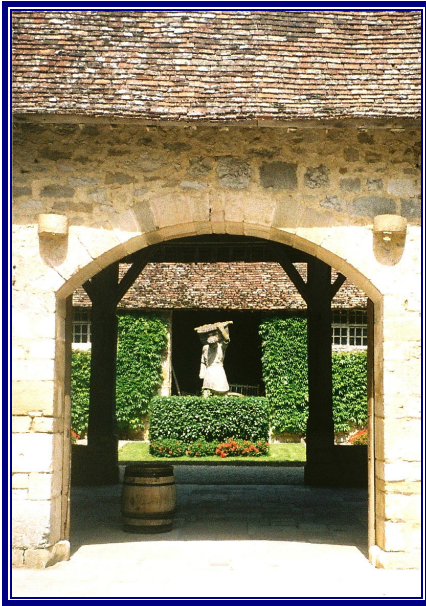
Today we set off on the Route des Grands Crus. I am full of excitement and feel this is the Burgundy equivalent of cycling up the Médoc to Pauillac. I love being amongst the vines, so carefully tended, and bowling along little country roads, passing through towns and villages. We stop for a visit at Clos Vougeot. This lovely chateau has been part of the landscape for 800 years. It is now home to the Brotherhood of the Tastevin Knights. To the uninitiated, these chaps take themselves rather seriously, all regalia and arcane practices but all no doubt harmless and not much different from Masons, Catenians, Cubs, Scouts or any other like-minded group of men - it's obviously 'a man thing'.



On the Route des Grands Crus

We make a 30 km detour to see the Monastery at Citeaux. After leaving the Route des Grands Crus, the countryside is mostly arable and rather dull - definitely not worth the effort. Next stop is Nuits St Georges, an attractive

town. The signs of prosperity built on wine are evident - roads paved with setts, plenty of flowers and stylishly decorated Domaines and Caveaux offering dégustations. Also, happily, a noticeable lack of property for sale.



***The Grape Picker at
Clos Vougeot***

Bronze statue of grape pickers



Day 12

Thursday, 26 June

Dijon → Auxerre (by train)

It is the last day of our adventure, but getting back into Dijon will be adventure enough. I love the excitement of being in major cities. To date we have conquered Nantes, Tours, Bordeaux and Toulouse. It is good to see that so many cities are taking positive steps to accommodate bikes. Gone are the days when to ride a bike might have been considered slightly cranky. We leave the panniers and bikes at the hotel and have about four hours to look round on foot.



The Cycle Rank - part of Dijon's green transport plan

Dijon is a lovely city and I cannot resist a visit to Galleries Lafayette, though I do feel uncomfortably conspicuous in Lycra when most shoppers are looking stylish and soigné. We have a long lunch in Place Emile Zola, a lovely, typically French square, with shady lime trees, fountain, tables and umbrellas, all overlaid with warm sun and that wonderful French buzz. I love it and could sit for hours watching the Dijonais at leisure. Eventually, we pick up the bikes and head for the station. There is still a slight frisson to train travel with bikes; will there be racks, will there be space, will there be enough time to get on board. We settle down and a slight delay in

departure provides the ideal opening gambit for conversation. One of my fellow travellers tells me that his father lives opposite Paddy Ashdown's French property; it's useless information but allows us both to practise our other-than-mother tongues. We're soon back in Auxerre and anxious to know if the car still has four wheels and windscreen wipers. Fortunately, it has all these, unfortunately, the battery is completely dead - thank heavens for insurance!



Pretty Dijon architecture



Day 13

Friday, 27 June

Auxerre → Reims (by car)

We plan on breaking our return journey at Reims, Champagne Central. Before leaving Auxerre on a brilliant day, we walk the Cadet Roussel trail, following the arrows in the pavement. We first walked one of these trails in Boston, USA. There, the Freedom Trail is particularly good. We're not slavish about doing these signed routes but they have been carefully thought out by tourist offices, to take in the most interesting buildings of any town. We see pretty angles and corners we might otherwise have missed, as well as the medieval Clock Tower and Cadet Roussel fountain.



Cadet, because he was the youngest of the family, Roussel was a bailiff in Auxerre in mid 18th Century. The song about him became famous as a marching song for soldiers during the French Revolution.



As always, the town is dressed overall with flower baskets and troughs which, I note with amazement, are watered manually by three men and a mobile water bowser. How marvellous that the French consider the beauty of their town worthy of the pay of three men. I would be happy if my council tax was spent this way.

We leave Auxerre at the end of another great holiday.



As we walk round Reims looking for our supper, we recognise the statue in the niche as Jean Baptiste de la Salle. The founder of the Order which taught the children at St Peter's.

Day 14

Saturday 28 June

Reims → Bournemouth via Calais

This really is the end of the holiday. We make a quick shopping trip to the Carrefour and high-tail it for Calais, managing to catch an earlier boat getting us home in slightly better time. Another lovely adventure come to an end.

What can we do next? Someone on this trip suggested the Jura mountains. 'Jura' sounds OK, it's the 'mountains' bit with which I am having the problem. Perhaps we should try the Danube river or perhaps we shall just take a gîte in the south of France - we shall see.



***Some of the lovely
wild flowers***

Postscript

Nearly two months after returning from France, we receive an email from Stephanie, the young German girl who we'd met in St Brisson. She had arrived successfully in Compostela and gone on to Finisterre. She sent us this picture taken of her at the 'End of the Earth'

