

Boating ... caravanning on the water. Caravanning boating on the land?

As many of you will know I am having a little sabbatical from boating and am using a touring caravan in the interim. It set me thinking; what are the differences – or similarities - between the two. My thoughts are below. What do you think?

Boating	Caravanning
Watching the weather in case it's too windy	Watching the weather in case it's too wet
Search for a suitable place to berth	Search for a suitable place to camp
Do a passage plan so you don't hit anything	Do a route plan so you don't hit anything
Approach the harbour slowly as it is unfamiliar	Drive slowly in the camp site as it is unfamiliar
Search for the best place to berth	Look for the best place to pitch
Secure the lines	Wind the legs down
Set out your 'knick knacks'	Set out your 'knick knacks'
Get the kettle on	Get the kettle on
Go out or stay in for a nice meal	Go out or stay in for a nice meal

So, I was beginning to conclude that the only difference between caravanning and boating is that one you do on the water and the other you do on the land.

It's not as clear cut as that though is it? A bigger boat is like a small house with all mod cons such as running water, central heating, sinks and fixed beds, TV and video, fridges and drinks cupboards etc. But then a caravan has all these things too.

Now you all know what it's like to take your boat away so I thought I would describe what it is like to take a caravan away and then you could draw your own conclusions about the similarities or differences.

I am thinking back to my summer holiday in the caravan. We went to a site near St Gilles Croix de Vie in the Vendee in mid Western France. We booked a crossing Poole to Cherbourg – a crossing we have done several times before in our own boats so it brings back a number of memories. We watched on deck as the Barfleure move off from the mooring and through the harbour and reminisced about taking one of the 'Castaway's' along a similar route and looking up at the people on her. This time we are the people being looked at!

Past Poole Boat Haven – not as close as usual – Salterns and then the Ferry. Past Old Harry and then out to sea and the middle bit (as tedious on your own boat as on the Barfleure but you are not the one looking at the engines and water and listening for that 'wrong' sound.

Eventually France and Cherbourg come into view but it takes an age to get there – just like when you are on your own!

Pretty soon the call comes to go down and get the car. Plug in the electric leads (taken out to make sure the battery doesn't go flat) and we're ready to go. Soon it is our turn to leave the ferry. Usual French customs check – 'What's that, it an 'van. A waived finger and we're off.

Out through Cherbourg and up the hill and we're on our way to night one. We had opted to stay not far from Pontorson. We tried a first site. Now, remember. We have an X5 and a 25 foot caravan – 40 or so feet all in. The site said it had 2 'emplacements'. Well, having driven round the site – needing people to move cars simply to drive round the perimeter – I couldn't see those

emplacements. I went back to the bureaux (not capitainerie!!). She walked with me (I wasn't going to drive round again!) and she pointed to a small area of grass between the table tennis and a Peugeot 206 and a pup tent. I said maybe – for a 10 foot 'van and not at 40 euros a night – we moved on!!

A brief try at Camping Haliotis – yes really – 'desole pas des emplacements pour ce nuit' – we set off on the road to Mont St Michel. Martin went ahead into the next site with Liz and the manager said OK – 'but don't tell anybody'. (In France the local mayor/site owners often ban 4 wheel 'vans [travellers in France use 4 wheel 'vans]).



Still 40 euros a night and very small but we had a place to stay. Down with the legs. Locate and fill the water – crikey I could have spat in the Aquaroll (water carrier)

faster. Food on, beer opened, sit down aaaaaaaah!

Up in the morning, shower (Yes in the 'van) and on our way. On our way to a site near ST Gilles Croix de Vie (60 miles N of La Rochelle and 30 N of Les Sables D'Onne).

Nice site, well run, majorly big emplacements (pitches) – biggest I ever experienced in France. 'Approved' by the Caravan Club so be OK.



have

should

were not

–

Well it was time to set it all out. We moving for 15 nights so it all came out barbeques, awnings, coolboxes, collapsible chairs, big loungers, Chloe's chair, satellite dish and lead, water bottle, waste bottle, electric lead, rotary washing line – Liz can I have a beer – No! – Wheel lock on, hitch lock on, handbrake off – ssssssssssssssh the beer is opened.

We had chosen this site as it had internet access so I could get my work and also speak to our son, Matthew, who was in Los Angeles. It had, but you either bought it by the hour (5 euros) but use 5 mins and you still used the hour or you could pay 90 euros for the week. Good job I didn't as when we tried on our later nights the reception on our pitches was very weak.

Well, I need to work so what could I do. Well in France McDonald's and other locations offer free WiFi (or weefee as the locals call it) and a combination of my computer and Liz' ipod sorted it. 'I'm loving it'!

The advantage you have over taking your boat to a port is that you have your car with you – unless you are Roman Abramovich. Usually on the first day we look to have a bit of a 'chill'. Visit the local supermarket, stock up on provisions, sus out the local area – than back to the site for a barbeque and a few drinks.

Next day to the swimming pool and now it's make like it's Spain. 'Starfish in the sun'. ½ hour on the front, half hour on the back. Not for me though. Sometimes I can last 15, 20 or even 30 seconds lying in the sun before I have to have a walk round so that was it for me. Standing up, having a walk, watching Chloe go down the slides – or play in the kids area.



We managed to visit a few of the local sight. Sable D'Onne, Roche sur Yonne and La Rochelle – boy would I like to have sailed into there! What a lovely place. We went there for the day and what a lovely port and town it was. It would just be a bit of a challenge to sail there from Poole – especially in a 2 week holiday!!

Well pretty soon the time had come to go home – but I have to say that 15 days does make you feel you have had a good long time away. Early start and if we get on with it we can make Cherbourg in the one day. So, it's up at 7.30 and on our way for 9.00 a.m. Crikey it's like making a tide.



Moving on fairly quickly and we are soon confident that we will make Cherbourg in time for the 7.00 p.m. local Barfleur ferry and so we give ourselves a leisurely lunch. Not bobbing around at Studland but in a service station near Fougères Nice chunk of fresh baguette, some cheese and a wine great, does it get any better?

Still a long way to go though and we get on our way and made good time with a stop off at Auchan outside of Cherbourg and that's when it started to feel like being in Poole. Walking down the aisles in the supermarket we spot Liz' Mum and Dad over on a day trip

Getting on the ferry – and I stopped to let a Galaxy go in front of me (see later) – and Liz said 'I'm sure I saw Taff'. Time we were on we saw Ian and Jude (from the Cobb's Quay shop) and their tribe and then we did see Taff and Gill Snow. Coincidence or what.

Looking to get off we went to the car deck and got in – but the people in the Galaxy in front didn't. The deck cleared leaving the Galaxy and me!! They got back and got in – not a word – and shot off. They then had the audacity to push in front of me in the customs queue!!

There's something special about sailing through Poole harbour whether on your own boat or on Barfleur. We had a close up view of the pilot boarding, saw the lights of the Haven Hotel and the Quay as we came up and docked.

Brings back a lot of memories

Jonathan Saunders

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Cobb's Quay Bertholder's Associations