The Towns Times

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Happy New Year

By our reporter Keith Towns

The Locals

In our campsite, there are approximately 100 English people living here permanently. Some are in caravans, a lot are in motor homes and there are a number of the very large American Winnebago outfits.

For £35k you can buy a static caravan and with a ground rent of £1.5k a year it's not a bad price to have a place in the Algarve.

However, the majority are retired and are living off their children's inheritance. There is one couple who have small children and run a Karaoke outfit but they are in the minority and I would imagine getting work here if you are English is very difficult.

We have also met a builder who spends the winter over here and in Spain and only works the summer in the UK.

The other night we visited an Irish bar, as it was set back from the town it was very quiet and we were the only customers. The bar owner was a nice chap but I imagine he had drunk the evenings profit away before we got there. He is from London and has been running his bar for six months. It sounded like he was yet to make a profit.

Further into the town and there are plenty of restaurants and bars run by the Portuguese in a variety of styles from English pubs to nice fish restaurants.

We sat outside a bar with a singer and listened to him while a waiter got our drinks (incidentally it was snowing in England at the same time). We only stayed for one as it was very expensive. Over here, soft drinks cost more than beer.

The Portuguese people themselves are very nice. You do come across the occasional misery but they are usually working in somewhere where they have possibly experienced the worst of tourism.

The Portuguese in the north of the country do not have as much contact with tourists and therefore could not speak English as well as the ones here in the south, which does have its good and bad points.

Zen and the Art of Installing a Satellite Dish

For those in the know, you can install a satellite dish while in your caravan. The usual reason given for doing this is that you can get perfect television reception, in English, where the normal caravan terrestrial aerial only gives one or two fuzzy channels.

However, as any man will tell you, a satellite dish is a macho thing with the size of your dish in direct proportion to the size of your car and so on.

I have a very small dish. But I do know how to use it to get a perfect picture. Some men here have VERY big dishes.

I tried installing the dish attached to our footstall but there was insufficient signal at that height. So I needed somewhere higher, but where? I know, I'll use the car and park it against the awning.



Mobile Communications

Super, it works. One small problem you might have foreseen, we can't go anywhere. Now for those of you who know me well the next part may seem totally out of character, but I assure you it is true - I did some DIY.

It did not take me 3 weeks planning, 2 weeks purchasing tools that will only be used once, and then using the excuse of the wrong size screws to put the job off indefinitely. No, the new me did the complete job in less than 20 minutes.

The problem is we need height, stability, accessibility and line of site to the satellite. Hmmm, I could spend a fortune getting a bespoke tripod affair or….. use a tree!

A hand drill, two blocks of wood used for the caravan legs, spirit level, compass and screws later and the job is done.



Sat Tree

As I say, for any normal person this is not unusual, for me it's a total change of character; I am now Mr DIY. Wherever there are leaks, wherever shelves need to be installed, if you need a screw, have no fear, Mr DIY is here!

New Years Eve

New Years Eve started off for us with a trip in the car to see the Lisbon (was Paris) Dakar Rally which passed very close to our campsite. It was the first day of the race and the cars/bikes/lorries were travelling along the local motorway to Portimao.

 Our Email Address: keith@townstimes.co.uk

After travelling along with the motorbikes passing us we stopped at the services so we could see some of the vehicles up close that had also stopped.



2 mpg

We were all watching excitedly at the occasional car passing, well okay, I was excited, Debbie sun bathed and the children played in the play area.



Check the oil please

Then all of a sudden, all the support mechanics started to look at the slip road and in they came; totally mud clad Dakar race cars. Some went to service lorries, others drove straight through, and this is the weird bit, some queued behind normal public cars for petrol. Massive, super fast race cars waiting for some old Portuguese woman to top up her clapped out Renault.

When the race cars got to the pump, the driver climbed out and stood on the roof to fill it up.



The Russian Entry

In the evening we went into the local town, Albufeira. We stopped off at the Irish bar to give him some custom (we were the only customers again) and then down to the beach where there was a massive stage for a rock concert.

The band were Portuguese and were very good, it's just a shame we did not know what they were singing. After another trip to a bar (Debbie insisted) we returned to the beach for midnight and it was packed.

At 12:00 fireworks were set off from boats in the sea in a spectacular display against a beautiful backdrop. Lots of people opened Champagne (probably Asti) and showered it over their heads.

Throughout the evening we were amazed at the good nature of everyone present. The majority of people were in family groups and if there were a collection of young men they were not aggressive or intimidating, even the very drunk ones.

The experience was exactly the opposite of what we would have witnessed if it were in England. There were more than 30 stabbings on New Years Eve in London alone. This is a very nice country.

Gallery



All they need is sand and sea



Harsh but fair



Local band



A home made motor home



They love water

Did you know?

The expression when someone 'steals your thunder' comes from the playwright and critic John Dennis who was the first to use tin sheets to create thunder sound effects for his play at the Drury Lane Theatre. The play was not very good and was soon replaced by Macbeth. Dennis was furious to find his thunder being reproduced in Macbeth without his permission and wrote 'What rascals they are. They will not run my play and yet they steal my thunder'.

All the best

Keith, Debbie, James and Hazel

Our route so far…..

