



Europe in an EV

A couple of decades ago we promised ourselves an extended road trip holiday round Europe. The fantasy then was we'd buy an old Jag for the trip. This year, 20 years on, we were really fortunate to have the time to make the trip happen - although rather differently... and we found ourselves driving around Europe in a 2018 Renault Zoe - ie a small electric vehicle (EV) with around 170 mile battery range when the wind is behind us.

Lots of people along the way told us how brave - or crazy - we were to be trying this, but as older electric cars become more available on the second hand market, and their prices become a bit more in line with conventional cars, our experience might be of interest to those of you who are wondering whether it is practical to make the switch away from rising fuel prices.



In our 2018 Zoe our fastest charge capacity is 22kW, and only the older Type 2 (AC) points are available to us. New EVs charge at triple this rate (on DC power), and there are huge numbers of these newer charge points going in across the UK and Europe - along with the old style Type 2s.

Having a smart phone and finding apps can be essential for getting occasionally reluctant charge points going. Our favourite apps in Europe were: EV-Way - top of the list for starting charges in remote French car parks where it otherwise seemed impossible, and JuicePass - doing the same vital work in Italy, and getting us onto EnelX chargers through Greece. QR codes rather than apps often unlocked a reluctant charge point when all else seemed to be failing. And once or twice a ChargeMap RFID card made the magic that brought a charge point to life. We were never without a charge point when we needed one - though that did take a bit of planning. And we never ran out of charge.

If we were travelling a long distance and needed to stop for a day time charge (rather than just charging overnight) this generally took us around an hour. And we enjoyed the charge time - wandering around small towns, eating picnics, watching the world go by for a moment. Charging generally cost us about £10, so around £10 - £15 for £170 miles of driving.

For a while in Greece and Italy the combination of heat and accumulating mountain climbs reduced the Zoe's full charge capacity to just 144 miles. Happily downhills topped this up impressively on a couple of occasions.

And all this time the Zoe carried all our camping kit, the cool box, bedding, bags and cases. And despite this she still managed to charge our phones and keep us in air-con comfort with 42 degree heat outside without it depleting the battery too significantly.

In all we traveled 3233 miles across Europe from Fownhope to the Greek island of Tinos, and back again. The Zoe climbed mountains and navigated her small way through endless miles of tunnels under Alps and Apennines as lorries thundered past. She sat on ferries in 40 degree heat, and was the third, least complaining and most reliable of our small team.

The experience showed us how easy it is to get around in an EV now, and how rapidly the infrastructure support is developing both here and across the continent. And we loved the journey.

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