

# Driving from Gib to Germany

**Danny Britto lives on the island of Gibraltar. Last year he decided to take his drive-from-wheelchair Mercedes vehicle to get the joystick serviced by the German manufacturer, EMC. The planning and the journey itself were a personal triumph for Danny so we asked him to tell us more about the trip.**



## **How did the idea of the trip come up?**

Over a beer, at a party! After talking with a friend, who agreed to come with me, we decided to go and meet the people from EMC. We chose October because it is a good month for travelling, the weather is good and there's not so much traffic. This also gave me time to plan.

## **What route did you take?**

We chose a long route, because it is different and I wanted to visit Paris. It was a good route and I'm looking forward to doing it again one day.

## **What preparations did you need to make?**

I had to do a full service on the van and look for accessible hotels en route. All this took time, especially finding the right hotel for me with a wheel-in shower.

## **Tell us about the trip...**

### **Day One**

We had a 5am departure and our first destination was San Sebastian in Spain. We had breakfast in Caceres at a very smelly rest stop (I won't be stopping there again!) Otherwise we only stopped for petrol and, at a cruising speed all the way, we arrived at our destination at 4pm. We stayed at Playa de la Concha in San Sebastian which in low season cost 180 euros per night. It's in the heart of San Sebastian with fantastic views of the beach and the city [www.hlondres.com](http://www.hlondres.com)

Dinner that night was the speciality of San Sebastian, Pinxtos, small portions of food like Tapas, eaten in a local restaurant. The accommodation was good and clean. It had a wheel-in shower although there was a beam to the left-hand side which meant it was a bit uncomfortable.

### **Day Two**

We left at 6am for Paris. We stopped in France for breakfast – a strong coffee with croissant and rolls. By the way the croissant were magnifique as they say in French! In France the speed limit is 130 kph and there are plenty of speed cameras but we were going much faster than in Spain. What stunned me most about the motorways in France was that they are wide, with plenty of space to overtake and the asphalt is smooth, like silk. The 'beast' was gliding on the motorway. We stayed in Paris because I had never been there before and I wanted to see that mega-structure, the Eiffel Tower.

As we were in Paris we knew that a hotel was going to be expensive and we paid 315 euros for one night. It was in the heart of Paris, 10 minutes walk from the Eiffel Tower and right on the Champs Elysees. We booked a garage parking space so the van would be safe but in fact it wasn't high enough to accommodate my vehicle so the girl from the reception desk told us we could leave the van at the front door – which was fine by me!

[www.lamaisonchampselysees.com](http://www.lamaisonchampselysees.com)

The room was good and big with a large shower and plenty of space to manoeuvre. The entrance to the hotel has a small step but you can go over it without any problem. Although our room was on the ground floor, you had to get the lift (well a cargo lift!) to reach it. It is an old building, transformed into a hotel. We had dinner in the hotel restaurant and I decided that, as we were in Paris, we should have champagne. Well you know what happens with the fizzy and I was in a happy mood quite quickly. The hotel's speciality is gin cocktails so I had a gin and tonic and then we headed off on foot to the Eiffel Tower!

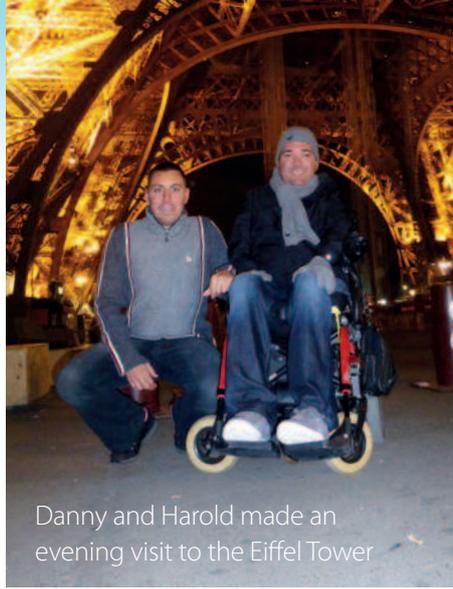
Getting back to the hotel was an adventure; we got lost and ended up at the Arc de Triomphe. I couldn't

remember the way back but I remembered the hotel address was in the Champs Elysees so we carried on walking and asked a few people on the way. French people generally seem to lack the ability to be friendly but, eventually, we stopped a girl and she told us she worked in the same street and she would take us there. So, there you go, we got back to the Hotel at 2:30 am and the next day we had to drive to Germany!

### Day Three

We got up at 11am, ready to drive to Germany. We weren't in a rush because we were near our destination of Koblenz, Germany. Before we left we had a brunch of omelette and croissants at the Baserie du Palais – well you only live once (well in my case twice)! At 1pm we headed out towards Germany. A five-hour drive.

We had booked an Ibis hotel in the City Centre but the Ibis wasn't very accessible, the room was small and the bed was small too. We weren't going to stay there. Luckily enough the guy on



Danny and Harold made an evening visit to the Eiffel Tower

Reception helped us a lot, he called all the hotels around the City to find an accessible hotel (that's what I call service – German efficiency). We were waiting around and hungry so they offered us mini sandwiches – so that is what we ate for dinner that night! We were stuck at the Ibis until 11.30 pm but he found us somewhere in the Middle Rhine Valley, a World Heritage Region, and situated on the banks of the Rhine just across the river from Koblenz Old Town. He even

arranged a taxi so we could have a look at the room first. The hotel was fantastic, large rooms and a big wheel-in shower. So we stayed here for five nights at 190 euros a night. [www.diehls-hotel.de](http://www.diehls-hotel.de)

I found Germany fantastic, very accessible. The people were very friendly and helpful. We didn't get to see very much of the area because we were very busy with the van and testing the joystick, but we had a great time. However, I am looking forward to returning in 2015.

Out of 10 I would give this trip 11 marks. That's how much I enjoyed it. The only thing I would do differently is allocate more days – 10 days is too short, you need more days to rest and do a bit of sightseeing. I am very grateful to have a friend like Harold. We have known each other since we were 10 years old and he's an excellent friend. On this trip he had to help me with everything and I couldn't have done it without him. Finally, I have to thank the people who helped me in Gibraltar, without their support and some additional funding I couldn't have made this trip.

**Danny Britto C5/6**



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