

THE E-type



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E-type to Provence

Maikel Lemke brings us part one of his memorable trip around France

My first contact with the beloved E-type was at the age of six back in 1972. I was playing at my cousin's house and discovered this tiny but well-shaped maroon Matchbox model car. I decided that it would enjoy a much better life on my nightstand than in this crowded box inside his wardrobe. So it was that the E-type became the first thing I saw in the morning and the last thing before I went to sleep.

The years passed by and, despite all the warnings such as, "Never buy an English car – you have no workshop and the Imperial sizes always create a problem", my love continued. After an apprenticeship at a Volkswagen garage, I continued to study mechanical engineering in my home town of Osnabrück, which had a partnership with the university in Coventry. The same year I was doing my Bachelor degree in Coventry, my local cycling friends told me about the E-type 30th anniversary at Donington Park. That was a 'must' and I still get goosebumps thinking about this event. There were hundreds of E-types and the grand finale was a proper 'catwalk' of them all around the race track. An unforgettable thrill. I still remember it as one of the best days in my life.

Having left university and worked on my career, I somehow lost focus. It came back in 2013, when, by mistake, I won an online auction for a modestly described Jaguar E-type 2+2 that was in Glasgow. Convinced that my maximum bid of £12,000 would not be the winner, I learned better when the message 'You won, pay now!' came up.

My bidding was not discussed with my wonderful wife beforehand and I found myself in a tricky situation. The first



• Top: the E-type pictured at Châteauneuf-du-Pape during Maikel's dream tour of Provence

• Above: Maikel's passion for E-types started at an early age, and was confirmed during the time he spent studying in the UK

thing I did, I asked: “*Amoré*, do you love me?” The answer was: “What did you buy?” Some of you might have experienced a similar moment...

When the shock had settled, I took the plane to Glasgow to get the paperwork done. I met a real gentleman, who explained he had to let his dream – to restore and drive his own E-type – go, due to family circumstances. When the car arrived home, my wife had a look at it and did not say a word. I got the message!

I stripped the car and found out that it was all matching numbers. Chassis 1E77010BW is listed in *Factory Original Jaguar E-type* as the first 2+2 with open headlights. So, of the 2,643 LHD 2+2 S1 E-types, this is car number 2,010, built on 10 January 1967. The S1 continued for another 500-odd cars and then changed to S1.5.

Not knowing what I had in front of me, I decided to do a nut-and-bolt restoration. I am a car mechanic with a degree in mechanics and economics – the rest I would learn in all the literature I collected about E-types! To describe the total restoration of this car would need an entire book, suffice to say that my brave wife saw the effort I was putting in and was impressed by how well things turned out. I did not even mention my dream to tour around Provence with her in the Jag. It would have sounded silly, I thought, because it required a lot of determination and



- Top: Janna helping out with the interior trim during the car's restoration
- Above: the early stages of the trip were struck by poor weather

even more fantasy. However, my wife is very skilled working with tools and she is even more pedantic than me. I convinced her to help me with the interior so she could always say she worked on the car.

To cut a long story short, we started the restoration in 2014 and got the car registered in summer 2017. By then, I had confessed my long-term dream about cruising around Provence. We started to plan our trip and test the car. Do not think reassembling a car does not create further challenges! Even with

a professional judge coming round frequently to document my work for the final evaluation, you will always have plenty of test-drives to do and even more corrections to be carried out to make it totally perfect and reliable.

It requires goodwill to believe a salesman who tells you that everything has been checked and sorted – I prefer to trust my own craftsmanship. Too often I have listened to conversations about broken-down cars in the middle of nowhere, overheating, brake failure, low battery, water inside the cabin, fuel smell, exhaust fumes – you name it. Obviously nobody likes such things and certainly not 1,000 miles away from home.

So, we were test-driving a lot, over short and longer distances. The engine was rebuilt with standard pistons and the crankshaft fitted with new main bearings. Having completed about 400 miles, the valve noise increased and we had to take the cylinder head off. There was no chance to get it fixed in 2017 to start our tour but, even after some frustration, it was a good decision to postpone our tour to autumn 2018. In this way, we had even more time to make the car perfect and to plan our route properly.

I have been to Provence a couple of times riding my bike, so I knew some places I wanted to visit again. While I was more the technical guide and director of the tour, Janna planned the route. We decided that on flat terrain with wide roads we would not drive more than 500km a day, and the hilly and small side-roads not more than 300km. Another major concern was parking. Nobody wants to leave their car downtown on the street. We both prefer old castles and monasteries rather than modern business hotels, so the parking often resolved itself. Such accommodation usually has

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- Right: the spectacular historic centre of Strasbourg
 - Below: parked up outside the Hotel Le Sauvage in Besançon at the end of the second leg



E-type to Provence



- Top and left: arriving in Clionscat, a small village not far south of Valence
- Below: Maikel and Janna posing in front of the natural rock arch that gives its name to Vallon-Pont-d'Arc



enough space for secure parking.

Stage 1: Osnabrück to Frankfurt

We left on a Saturday, late afternoon. It was raining cats and dogs, plus a strong wind came up, so we were happy to do only 360km that day. The last 150km were stressful because German motorways often have no speed limit but thousands of miles of roadworks.

Now we were in the darkness with heavy rain and the lanes diverted to the opposite side of the motorway – no road markings and crazy van drivers overtaking. That day, I was again very happy to have the first E-type with open headlights. With scratched headlamp covers, which may not even be watertight, I would have been blind in the middle of the road. It was a great relief having dinner with the first stage completed.

Stage 2: Frankfurt to Besançon

We started right after breakfast towards Besançon, a small village in France surrounded by a river and with an old monastery. We chose to stop at Strasbourg after 250km. Having seen pictures on the internet we were very curious about it and



were not disappointed at all. We thought it was only a tourist place, so we planned to make a couple of hours' stop to decide whether to come back or not.

Wow, the architecture is most impressive and, despite all the tourists, Strasbourg kept its charm. You still get traditional food at normal prices and the canals are amazing. We are used to historical buildings but this place is definitely special and worth a visit. If you are just spending a few hours here, you can drive right to the centre where the cathedral is and park in one of the public car parks. Everything is within walking distance.

We set off again in the early afternoon after having had a typical Flammkuchen and a Croque Madame, we continued to the final destination of the day at Besançon. Our residence, Hotel Le Sauvage, was an old monastery above the old city. Very charming building, perfectly maintained and restored, private monitored parking and still within walking distance to the lower

historic centre. After freshening up, we explored the centre and found one very special place – the old Brasserie du Commerce. Worth coming here.

Stage 3: Besançon to Clionsclat

The third leg was more of a transit stage to get closer to our main destination, Provence. From Besançon, we left on the back roads heading towards Clionsclat. The roads were smooth and the landscape picturesque, with very little traffic. We passed Bourg-en-Bresse, and made a big loop around Lyon because they have emission controls that did not comply with our E-type. So, better avoiding police and enjoying the scenery.

At Vienne, we hit the River Rhône and immediately saw the vineyards. Rolling down along the Rhône from here, you can feel that you are entering a different way of life. We stayed on the small roads and passed through small villages before we arrived

● Above and right: leaving Vallon Pont d'Arc and heading along an unforgettable route that included the Gorges de l'Ardèche





• Left: a place of pilgrimage for any wine enthusiast! Maikel and Janna enjoyed a superb dinner here before heading off into a balmy summer's evening (below)

at Clionsclat, an ancient village in the upper Provence. The entire place is made of old stone and gives you the feeling of being in the Middle Ages. Here, the clock stopped ticking. There were a couple of very nice restaurants and a few art and design shops. It is all about 'coming down' and this is one of the best places to start. Our hotel, La Treille Muscat, was extremely cosy and provided secure parking. They have an excellent restaurant, and if that was closed you went to the other one. It was perfect for recreation, and that is what we did.

Stage 4: Clionsclat to Orange

I knew Janna would love this day. After breakfast, we drove to Mirmande – only 15km away. It's one of the 100 places in 'Les Plus Beaux Villages de France'. A short walk and a cappuccino got us ready to continue to one of the most scenic drives I know. We could not wait to reach our first 'must-see' spot – Vallon-Pont-d'Arc. It is the start of an unforgettable drive along the Gorges de l'Ardèche towards Saint-Martin-d'Ardèche.

Coming from Vallon, you reach the Arc after a steep climb that is like a rollercoaster. It's best to park your car and walk down to the river, from where you can see Arc, and there's also a pleasure drive on top of the canyon with plenty of viewpoints to watch the canoes on the river. Along the way, you will also find a very nice restaurant to have a break, as we did.

After a scenic drive of about 45km, with several stops for taking pictures, you reach St-Martin-d'Ardèche, which is already wonderful, but you want to cross the single-lane bridge to reach another famous 'Les Plus Beaux Villages de France' – Aiguèze. Finally, at the end of an unforgettable route, we reached our base for the next three days. Janna had found a very pleasant and tasteful old farm, Chambres d'Hotels Mas Julien, in between the vineyards 4km from the ancient town of Orange and 4km from Châteauneuf-du-Pape. The latter was on our to-do list because since 2000 we have been in the wine business and run our own wine bar at home. I am a sommelier and Janna did

several harvests with some winegrower friends in Italy. If you're interested in good food and fine wine, this is the place to be.

Stage 5: Orange via Avignon and Châteauneuf-du-Pape

From our nice old farm, we started the next day by visiting another ancient place many of you surely have heard of – Avignon, former Papal residence for about 190 years. We usually don't visit every church or cathedral, but were been told by good friends to do it this time, and we did without regret. At the entrance you collect a tab, which guides you all the way with sound and pictures. We have seen plenty of these monuments, but this one was guided in the most professional way you can imagine. Those who have been there will confirm it, others who go there will be happy to have done so.

What we did not do was visit the famous bridge. Instead, we visited the small village on the other side of the river and we recommend the oil mill, which you will love for the food and interior. Parking in Avignon again was very easy. There is a very central parking place right next to the main historic market square. For a few Euros you are safe, and only steps away from the entrance of the castle.

On the way back, we stopped at a restaurant in Châteauneuf-du-Pape. Needless to say, the dinner was excellent and the wine even better. We drove home under a full moon and with the temperature at 29 degrees. [View On](#)

To be continued! Part two next month

