



**Geoff and Kate from Breton Bikes**

Judith. I am here with Kate and Geoff Husband of Breton Bikes in their village of Plélauff. So how long have you and your family lived in Central Brittany?

Kate. Well, uh, Geoff and I moved here in 1990: so that's 27 years. We were on our own when we first moved and our children were all born here and they've lived here all their lives.

Judith. What brought you to this part of the world originally?

Geoff We cycled and that was our main hobby in the school holidays because we were both teachers, and, uh, living in the south west it was easy to get on the ferry, come over Plymouth to Roscoff and Brittany so our first step into France was Brittany. Then we cycled down to the Loire or wherever, um, and it was Brittany that just seemed the best place. I suppose it's vaguely familiar for me growing up in Cornwall in the 1960's, there's a certain similarity but, yeah, yeah we just fell in love with the place.

Judith. And what made you stay and create a new life here?

Geoff. We came here to do our business, to run our cycling holiday business. That was all part of the plan in the first place. It wasn't a question of coming over and deciding what we were going to do; we had decided what we wanted to do then came over.

Judith. So you always wanted to have a business based on cycling.

Kate. We had various plans and then when we started cycling we thought, well, it would be great if someone could help people that wanted to come abroad, cycling, perhaps for the first time or didn't have the equipment they needed. In those days it was quite costly to buy tents, sleeping bags and the sort of bike that could carry them with them and also, advise people on where to go and be someone at the end of the phone if they had any

problems. We couldn't see anyone else doing that. There were a few people doing the hotel to hotel, all baggage carried and all the gourmet hotels and everything. But real, proper cycle-touring with camping, no-one was doing it so we thought we'd just have a go.

Judith. When did you formally launch Breton Bikes?

Geoff. Actually set up in 1989. We started....

Kate. We started advertising before we gave up our jobs.

Geoff. We had the famous BBC Holiday Programme. Kate Humble came over and did a 5-minute bit on, on our business. She at the end of it "This is going to come out in April and you will have, be absolutely inundated, so get ready for it" .

The phone didn't stop ringing literally for three days. So that had a huge effect for that year, the following year, and probably the year after that. And blurring into that was the internet kicking in. So you can imagine we had the BBC programme. We went from 250 bookings to 450 bookings which was as much as we could cope with; that was absolutely flat out. But then it didn't drop down afterwards because as the BBC effect fell away the internet effect took off.... we were early with the internet.

Kate. The point about the internet was that instead of having to advertise to reach people, people were finding us. And not only Brits; people from all over the world.

Judith. How would you describe the, the holiday side of your bike holiday service. What do you offer?

Kate. Well, people come they have a bike and paniers. If they want to go camping they have their camping gear: tents, sleeping bags, a little Trangier stove. We give them a route depending on how many miles a day they want to do. Um they have their back-up in case they have a problem. They basically go off on their own, independently. It's their own holiday, it's their own bike for a week. They are having an adventure but if they have a problem, they can get in touch. So they don't really have to bring anything with them, anything technical. If they want to stay a bit more comfortably in hotels, we can book a hotel circuit for them, and we work with lots of chambres d'hôtes and hotels in the area.

Judith. And how do you research your routes?

Geoff. A lot of driving about, cycling, people we know. It's...in the past it's not been easy there are lots of little hotels, chambres d'hôtes and gites and everything.

Judith. You say that about half of your customers are English or British. What's age? What's the demographic?

Kate. There is no [one] demographic apart from quite a lot of 40 to 60's ... early retirees.

Geoff. But there has been a change and I think it is getting to the point where it is so easy for someone to organise it themselves.

Judith. How do you think the new high speed train service will effect you?

Geoff. It's primarily publicity. I think there is going to be a lot of publicity around it. I don't think the fact that they're cutting half an hour off your journey time will change the world.

Judith. So you can do city-to-city with the train. You can do London/Paris, Paris/St Brieuc and then you can pick them up from there.

Last year you took over the management of the Campsite at Gouarec. What made you expand in this way?

Kate. It is unique in a way amongst campsites, in that is well placed enough to get better, whereas other campsites are losing business. We, uh, we think something can really be made of it. People... not just people cycling past but people will come and cycle out from this campsite because there are.....

Geoff. It is so well placed.

Kate. With all the routes, it's on the canal etc.

Geoff. We are also going to alter our business slightly to go into day hire. We've obviously got the bikes, we've got the expertise and the experience so for us it's... that's not a big step and so we are developing a big hire centre at the campsite.

Judith. And how was your first year? What was it like?

Kate. Oh, it was a learning curve!

Judith. What are your plans to develop the camp's clientele?

Geoff. Our aim is to make it the best campsite you can possibly have for cycling.

The 16, 17 and 18 of June we're going to run a vintage weekend - based really around classic cars.

Judith. Kate, Geoff - thank you very much.

