



Touring cyclists find solace in the strangest of places: bus shelters, drainage pipes, essentially anywhere that provides a shelter

from the elements. For Huw and I, one dark and stormy evening as British shores were lashed by the furies of our first named storm of the year, the bins at the Port of Dover were our happy place.

Peering out between the giant vestibules of rubbish, we watched the horizontal rain batter idling cars in relentless waves of water. Wipers were on full tilt, as someone in hi-vis oilskins directed the vehicles and their nice, warm and dry inhabitants onto a ferry that glimmered through the storm's haze.

"We're soaked and freezing. Let us on!" I yelled at the traffic manager guiding vehicles off the grid and onto the ferry, but was ignored. Or perhaps not heard? After half an hour of these conditions, cold had set in and we couldn't stand it anymore. Together we barged our way onto the concourse, forcing them to notice us. Finally, chased by juggernauts carrying their wares into the EU, we boarded.

Riders on the storm

We weren't even meant to be on this ferry, leaving from this port or heading to Calais. It didn't matter. We were glad just to be inside and heading to France. Four hours earlier, we'd met at Lewes train station, ready to take the next train to Newhaven for our intended ferry to Dieppe. Ferry company DFDS called just before we boarded the train with the unwelcome news that our ferry was cancelled due to Storm Amy.

As 40-somethings with family commitments who live in different countries within the UK, finding a weekend away is a rare and special

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thing. We weren't going to let a storm stop our French trip.

"Are ferries running from Dover?" I asked.

DFDS confirmed they were and that our tickets were valid for the 00:30 crossing. Which is why, three train changes and some bin sheltering later, our holiday began.

We had about half an hour's worth of sleep, before a ferryman insisted we wake and pack up our still drying clobber. Through the ferry window, the harbour walls of Calais rose sickeningly up and down, drizzled in orange lamplight. It was half three in the morning and we needed more rest. Perhaps in the ferry terminal? We stumbled bleary eyed down to the hold and our securely fastened bikes.

We were in no hurry to leave the safety of the ship, but as the last lorry left it was 'once more unto the breach'. As we inched off onto the tarmac, a van with amber flashing lights pulled up. A man shouted something at us, which we assumed by his gesture was something along the lines of: "Come with me if you want to live!"

He set off at 10mph. Battered by rain and wind, we struggled to keep up. Terminal plans were

Below: Celebratory Belgian bieres in Veurne's Gothic market square – only halves, mind you



Photos: Sam Jones and Huw Poraj-Wilczynski