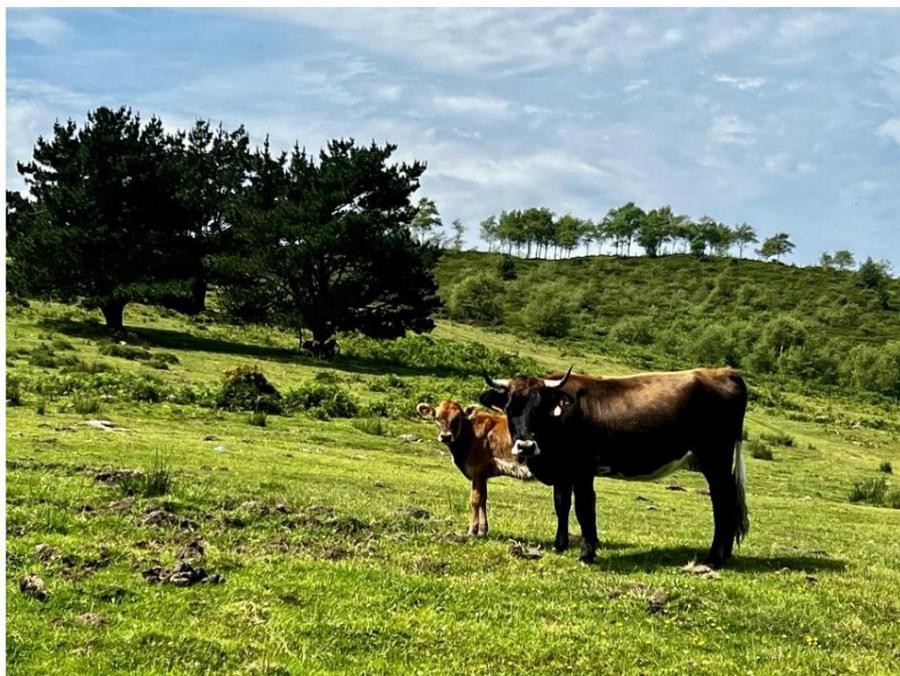


Bergkurier de EA/DL7CX/p

Family holiday with Bergfunken in the north of Spain

Part 2

Sunday, July 14th: we have been in Spain for a week and the mood could hardly be better. The weather forecast promises stable, not too hot and dry weather, ideal for a trip to the nearby mountains. The Pico de las Nieves (EA1/CT-081) with the Ermita de las Nieves is a worthwhile destination for the whole family. In general, the Cantabrian Mountains (Cordillera Cantábrica), with a length of almost 500 km, offer countless sights and an almost endless list of SOTA mountains. Past pastures and through small mountain villages, we quickly make our way along a fairly narrow mountain road to a small rest area with parking. From there, it is only a good 100 meters in altitude to the summit with the small church and the summit cross.



The northern part of the mountain range is also known as España Verde (Green Spain): to the great delight of the free-roaming cows, donkeys and horses.



The small Ermita de las Nieves stands on the field formation.

I run ahead and start setting up my antenna. It's now quite overcast and the wind is picking up, but I find a good spot that doesn't bother the few hikers. 40 minutes after we arrive at the parking lot, I have my first QSO. It's an IARU contest and as an "old" Sprinter fan, I try to get DA0HQ in the log. In the end, I reach them on 3 bands and am happy, even though it didn't work on 40m, but 5 watts is simply not enough at this time of day.



*The summit column offers a really good place for the EFHW antenna, but after 1 hour it will
Girls are getting boring, it's a pity that Nele isn't allowed to use her E-Class here.*

In addition to 20 contest QSOs, including the South American continent with Brazil, we also managed 6 S2S connections. In the end, we made over 50 QRP QSOs again. As it was only 2.30 p.m., we decided to visit another picturesque village. Nele DO7CX had made good advance plans and she was 100% right about the picturesque village of Liérganes, as it is described as one of the most beautiful villages in Spain. The girls dismount and I start packing up. Vultures circle above the summit and I even find a large feather as a souvenir.



Towards Liérganes



The medieval bridge (El Puente Mayor) over the river Miera is a landmark of Liérganes.



We are all very hungry and finally: Churros – Iberian pastries.

The evening of the European Championship football final between England and Spain was very long – an indescribable experience to experience in the original language.

Today Culture Monday: Bilbao – the capital of the Basque Country:



Besides the famous Guggenheim, the city has a lot to see.

The weather on Tuesday is mixed, so we're off on a little city tour to Castro-Urdiales.



A cloudy day in Castro-Urdiales - what does the seagull want to tell me?

Maybe it's unwise to radio a mountain today? The delicious pastries from the patisserie are eaten in time for coffee, the weather is mild and I still feel like a late activation. With Zalama (1336m, EA2/BI-001) there is a 4 point SOTA mountain just 35km away.



During the journey, clouds and fog increase, and shortly before the parking lot at an altitude of 950 m, the temperature has dropped by 5 to a cool 14 degrees.

The weather is getting worse and worse, but I'm already on my way. The path is barely visible and it's already starting to rain lightly. To make matters worse, I get a message from Jörg that during his activation of the Kulmspitze OE/OO-365 today, the shortwave was a total failure* (on July 16th *there was an *X2 flare and it caused a serious radio blackout*) !

There are still 300 meters of altitude to climb and the visibility is getting worse. I see my activation failing, but I keep walking or rather struggle upwards. With wet fingers I try to send a few text messages to radio friends to increase my chances of a few QSOs. Dirk, DD1UDW, writes back promptly: "I have to go to the gym."
" I'll go and clean the antenna, but 18:15



Luckily, I can't see the abyss because of the fog.



The contour lines on Mapy.cz already gave us an idea... steep!

I arrive at the top shortly before 6:15 p.m. The rain is getting heavier, the wind is blowing my umbrella away and I'm freezing. It's an estimated 8 degrees and when I try to put on my jacket, it's no longer hanging on my backpack. I set up in record time anyway and am shocked to find that there are hardly any stations on the band. I hesitantly call on the agreed 20m frequency and hear Dirk, DD1UDW and my long-time radio friend Pavel, OK1AW calling simultaneously and very quietly. The wind noise almost drowns out the signals, but we manage. Within 3 minutes, 5 more QSOs are made, I take down the lightning and start the descent.



On the Zalama EA2/BI-001

It's very difficult to use the smartphone with wet hands (it was already very difficult to log data), so I only realise after 300m that I'm going in the wrong direction. The descent is quite difficult because everything is muddy and covered in deep furrows.



Found again: I had lost my jacket while climbing through the barbed wire.

The car thermometer only shows 10 degrees Celsius, but the wind and rain have eased considerably. There is no dry spot on me anymore and I switch on the seat and steering wheel heating. I am back in Limpias at around 9 p.m.

It was one of my most difficult activations, which didn't necessarily push me to the limit physically - I've activated much more challenging mountains before - but the combination of extreme weather, dispersal conditions and unforeseen events challenged me.



Everything has to be dried...



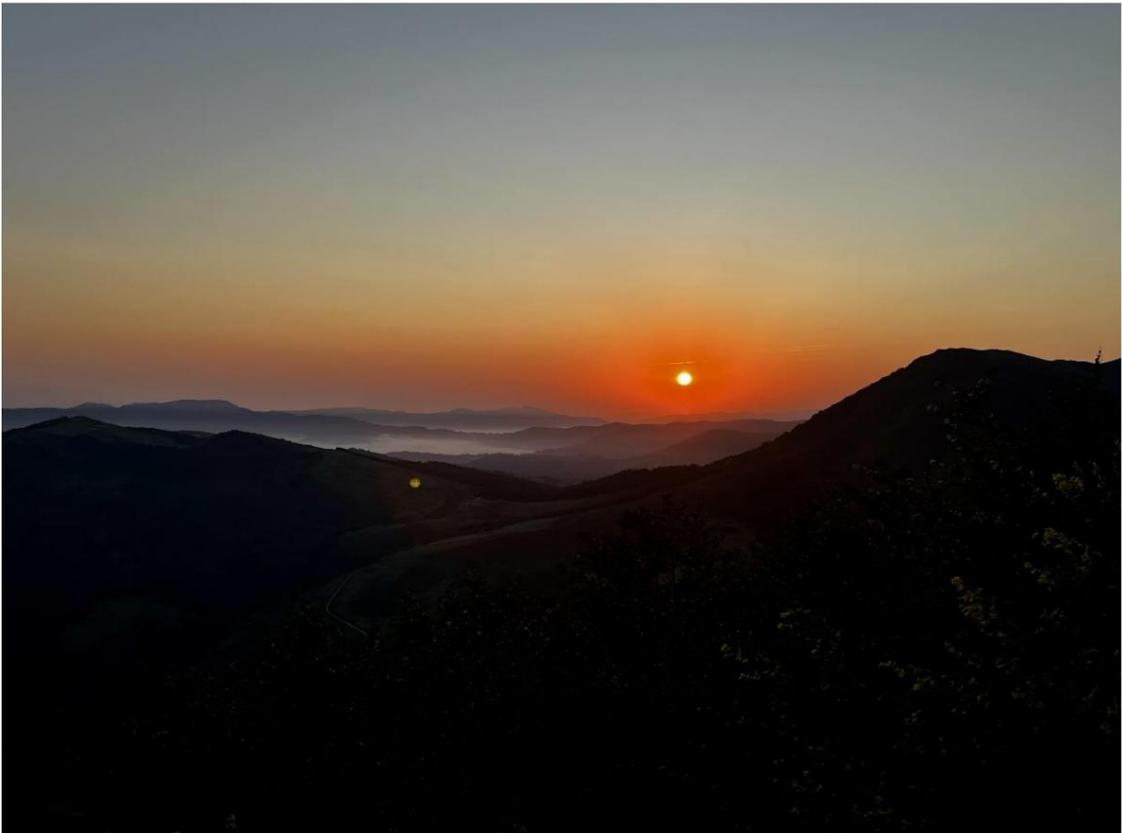
A look out the window promises good weather for Wednesday July 17th.

A day off at the beach is also nice. We make plans for the rest of the time and relax.

The next day I'm already in the car before 6 a.m., heading towards the mountains. I want to go to the Cañoneros, EA1/CT-049. The roads are empty and it's still dark, but full of fog, which suddenly disappears at about 900 meters above sea level.



Looking north towards the sea, the valleys are full of fog.



At around 6:45 I park the car and walk to the Cañoneros with the rising sun.

With the mountain in sight, the route is already longer than expected. Now I see the Zalama on the other side for the first time without fog. The two mountains are only a few kilometers apart, but are in different provinces: Cantabria and the Basque Country/Euskadi.



The Cañoneros: Wind turbines stretch along the mountain ranges and they never seem to stand still



If I hadn't taken so many pictures, I would have reached the summit even earlier

Getting up early was worth it again today; from the first light of dawn until the morning sun there were beautiful photo opportunities.



The summit marker as a mast attachment – now the sweaty T-shirt can dance in the wind.



It's about 18 degrees and not a cloud - shortly before 8 I start using the radio.

The 40m band is still usable, but with quiet reports. After 10 QSOs I make a qsy on 20m and within 45 minutes I make another 25 QSOs. Shortly after I switched to the CW range, Andrei, ZL1TM, calls me with a good signal, I am overwhelmed - my 3rd portable

QSO with him! Satisfied and with connections from Greece via Norway to the Canary Islands, I set off on my way back. After a somewhat late breakfast, I head out into the crystal-clear waters to prepare for the trip to the Picos de Europa National Park (and of course the Porra de Enol EA1/AT-068) to be rested.



Covadonga: shortly after 8 a.m. the basilica and the rock church were still in thick fog.

The 200 km west to the region of Asturias went quickly, unfortunately the access to the Covadonga lakes was already closed to cars at this time, meaning we had to take the bus. The next free places are only available from 2 p.m.! We had breakfast next to the basilica and climbed to the rock church. I had the idea of reaching the lakes and the Porra de Enol via the 16 km hiking trail. My wife and the girls wanted to spend the meantime in Cangas de Onís and then come up by bus.





No clouds, 25 degrees and far too little liquid in the luggage – but still an unforgettable Hike

The hiking route is incredibly beautiful, quite steep, varied but also quite long. After a good 3 hours with almost 1000 meters of elevation gain, I arrive above Lago Enol - it is only a ridiculous 250m difference in altitude to the summit of Porra de Enol. But my strength is almost used up and I urgently need water.



View of Lago Enol with the 2000s on the horizon

Now it's a steep climb through the juniper bushes and my body needs more and more breaks. The small station is set up at 1:30 p.m. and only my jacket provides some shade, but the view is magnificent.



Clouds usually form towards the sea in the afternoon.



Completely calm and blazing sun – after 30 minutes I have to do qrt

There are over 30 QSOs all the way to the east coast of the USA. Nevertheless, I am totally exhausted and get off early. I find a refuge between the two lakes and order an ice-cold beer and 2 bottles of water to go and look for a shady spot by the lake. I recover surprisingly quickly and after 30 minutes my ladies come by. There isn't even any phone reception up here, but somehow you can't miss each other. The lakes are a Spain-wide attraction and are well attended even on Fridays, but nobody, apart from crazy radio operators, comes up with the idea of climbing the surrounding mountains...



The calves are also looking for a place to cool down; on the right is my mountain, the Porra de Enol.

We hike together to Lago de la Ercina, which is next to the Enol. My XYL notices that the "good" jacket is missing. I send Nele to the refuge, where it is not left either. So I have to climb the Porra de Enol again, because it is still a good 90 minutes until the bus leaves. I set off against everyone's protests and, after hiding the backpack in the bushes, arrive at the top at around 4:30 p.m. - this time without activating it but with my jacket found again. I am at the bus parking lot just before 5 a.m., and the bus leaves for Covadonga 10 minutes later. From there we drive the 200 km back and decide to spend Saturday resting on the beach.



The good jacket was simply forgotten...

The stay in Spain is coming to an end. El Cincho, EA1/CT-099, is an easy and nearby SOTA mountain for the last day. As I start early, I am already standing on the small observation tower of the summit, which is thickly covered with laurel, at 8 a.m. As the sun rises, the veils of fog slowly dissolve and I enjoy this atmosphere.



To the east, the already activated Brusco and Ganzo can be seen in the veil of fog.



Thanks to the tower I was able to build part of the antenna above the trees.

You can tell it's Sunday because over 80 QSOs are added to the log in just over an hour. I can't manage the DXCC anymore, but with GW, 9H or LX, less common countries can also be found in the log. On 15m I'm battling with a very quiet station, after a few minutes I've got the call, it's a Japanese station and so I've fulfilled the WAC. As I write these lines, I'm thinking of Jarda, OK1JHR. We managed an S2S QSO this morning, both with QRP as usual. Shortly after this activation, he had to go to hospital with a serious and rare infection. All the best and you'll make it!



In Spain there will be well over 400 QRP connections with all continents – my good friend Pavel, OK1AW is in the log 26 times – many thanks and congratulations to all my chasers.

In conclusion, I can say that we were very impressed by the north of Spain. It was completely new territory and we were not disappointed at all.

High mountains, wild coasts with secluded bays, green landscapes and attractive cities beckon here. Bilbao, formerly an industrial city, has developed into a cultural magnet. In Santander, there are large sandy beaches and a unique old town. But the villages also have a unique flair.

We were particularly impressed by the Picos de Europa National Park, which is an interplay of steep and deep green gorges and rugged rocks, interspersed with blue mountain lakes.

The infrastructure is very well developed, you can get around easily and the region is not overcrowded.

We were given a very friendly welcome and treated to delicious food.

There is still a lot to see and there are still enough mountains waiting – we will be back.



On Monday, France greets us with wonderful sunny (flower) weather. We again plan to make the journey home in stages. The first highlight is Montignac with the Lascaux caves.



View from Puy-de-Dôme, F/MC-027

Next we went to the Massif Central (Auvergne) with the Puy-de-Dôme. Of course I had to go QRV. It wasn't easy to find a suitable location to set up here, because most of the possibilities are outside the 25m altitude zone. My good Daniel, DF5DG, was the first in the log after my first CQ on 20m. Although the radio conditions were bad and I had little time, I was happy with the 13 QSOs.

Bergfunken and family vacation worked very well, we had a wonderful and eventful vacation.