

# English Summer Trials: Daily Life

People keep asking about British trials.... but they always forget to ask about daily life during these trials! A brief recap: I watched Champion Stake 2015 (this falls into “English Summer Trials”); participated in [English and Scottish summer trials in 2016](#); participated in [English partridge trials in Norfolk](#) (autumn trials) in 2017. Now I am just back from English summer trials 2018 and I am still incredibly tired: summer trials are not really a relaxing holiday, probably they are not a holiday at all!



Grouse

I have to admit that Autumn Partridge trials, in spite of being less flashy, are perfectly suitable to the average human being, whereas Grouse Summer trials are certainly more demanding in terms of physical fitness. I do not consider myself a lazy person, and I do my best to keep in shape, but I get tired quite easily, this makes me think that to survive in summer trials with elegance you need to be a bit of a superhero. For this reason, this year I did not even dare to cross the Scottish border: my 2016 experience in Scotland was pretty intense and most of my time was spent on the road, travelling from one trial to another, often trying to reach the micro supermarket (& service station) in Grantown on Spey before it was too late. Maybe it was too much just because I [was staying](#)

[in a B&B](#) I did not particularly enjoy and from which I eventually ran away. Maybe it was so bad because I did not even have a fridge, nor a freezer or... most likely, there was simply too much to do for one person travelling alone.

This is one of the reasons that made me opt for "[England only](#)" this year, as if rural England was easy to deal with. I tried to be more organized and I booked a whole cottage: um mm err... it was a cottage suitable for five people, much more than one small sized human and her dog would have needed, but it was conveniently located and reasonably priced. Most of the people participating in British trials, indeed, do not stay in hotels, or at home, as it happens with FCI trials (at least those taking place in Italy). The Brits normally live in a caravan (some Irish even dared to live in a tent!) or rent a cottage, a few opt for a bed and breakfast. Trials take place every day (one day you have the puppy or the novice stake, and on the following day you normally have the open stake) and most of the competitors have a trial each day.



Newbiggin estate

Trials start later than Italian FCI trials: the meeting is normally at 9 o'clock (and not at dawn as awfully required here), but the venue might be far from where you are staying. In my experience, since I have always skipped the first trials, those that take place near Lauder (Scottish Borders), we have about one week of trials near Blanchland and Barnard Castle, which are villages in [County of Durham](#) and Northumberland, and one second week with trials around Reeth,

in North Yorkshire. People can choose whether to move around from trial to trial, to stay one week in one place and then move somewhere else to get closer to the next trials, or decide to remain two weeks in the same place, and drive back and forth. I chose the third option to avoid packing and unpacking continuously.

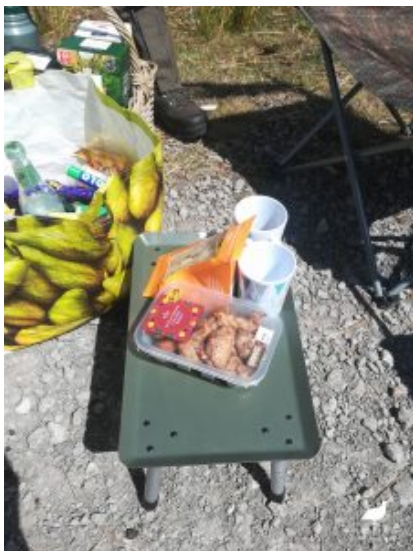
Trialers do not travel light: they cannot. Most of the people drive a pick up truck full of dogs, clothes and food. You can have all sort of weathers during a trials circuit, sometimes even during a single trial: this year temperatures ranged from 8°C degrees with high winds and rain to thirty something degrees. You need to bring summer clothes, rain clothes and winter clothes, better if in two copies, as everything can get soaked with water. You also need a hat, a rain hat, some sunscreen, a walking stick, the list of the must have is long, I am just mentioning something to let you imagine how full our cars are.

While supermarkets exist in Northern England, they can be far from where you live or close earlier than you are used to. Shops also close around 5 p.m. and you are not normally back from a trial by that time. This happens because English trials can have up to 40 dogs (20 braces) and at least two rounds take place, which means a trial usually finishes late in the afternoon(\*you are expected to stay until the end of the trial and to follow the stake on foot, all day long). There is normally a lunch break, but there is no restaurant, nor do the clubs cater food for competitors: runners are expected to bring they own packed lunches and eat them on the [moor](#), or in the car if the weather is too bad. This also means you have to arrange your own meals by purchasing them or by cooking them in advance.



Lunch on the moor

As said earlier, trials start at 9 a.m. but might be located one, or even two hours away from where you are staying. To reach Masham trial in time, I woke up at 5 a.m., had breakfast and packed everything I needed to carry with me and to met with friends on the way at 6.30 a.m. We reached the venue a bit earlier than planned, but you are somehow expected to be there well before the announced meeting time. Also, travel time on country roads is not very predictable with sheep and tractors ready to sabotage the best plans.



Lunch on the moor

That trial was sadly cancelled and, as traditionally happens, this was announced on the trial's ground, not in advance by phone, or-mail. We reached home earlier on that day but trials do not usually finish before 5 p.m. so, by the time awards are

given and you leave the moor.... you are back at your temporary home at around 7 p.m., or even later if you stop on the way to get some gas, or to grab any food for the following day.

By the time you unload the car, have a shower, feed the dog, feed yourself and maybe dry your wet clothes, is almost time to go to bed and maybe answer a couple of e-mails and messages you received during the day, in the rare instances your cellphone managed to get some signal. That's daily life during English summer trials: Scottish summer trials were similar two years ago, but with competitions taking place much further from each other and with much less service stations, supermarkets and cell phone signal on the way!

Still curious about British trials? Check the section A Month on the Moor or [click here](#).

Newbiggin (Yorkshire Gundog Club) Open Stake slideshow pictures below.

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## Accomodations, hosts and guests

To plan my trip to the UK I used two instruments: Booking.com and Google Maps. Booking.com showed me where I could stay, mostly hotels and pubs, but I wrongly believed to be a Bed & Breakfast person. Whereas in the UK everybody runs a B&B, or at least have a friend who does, these accommodations are quite unusual in Italy. I thought (wrongly – again) that B&B were sort of “friendlier” and cheaper than pubs. Hotels sounded more expensive and houses, despite being extremely attractive, looked a bit too much for a tiny single human



being and her dog. Each time I read stuff like “sleeps 6”, I imagined myself surrounded by empty bedrooms and silent sitting rooms.

Thinking of being a B&B person, I started my quest for the perfect the B&Bs. I was fascinated by the fact that, usually, B&Bs accommodate one or few guests only so, given the fact I was going to travel alone, I thought my hosts would have noticed if something had happened to me. Let’s pretend my skin had turned green overnight, I was firmly convinced the B&B lady would have noticed that. Once again, I was wrong: during my stay I also experienced a “ghostly” B&B: the place had owners, but I could hardly see them, breakfast would appear magically in the morning and no human beings would ever show up.



Briony likes pubs

Before my trip, in some ways, I would have felt safer in a house with a few people than in a larger hotel. After one month spent mostly in B&Bs , I have to admit that sometimes I did not feel safe at all in a B&B, and that the perceived advantages of the B&Bs come with a full list of real disadvantages. I came to the conclusion that, if you get along

with the B&B owners, you can have a great stay, but if you don't... heaven becomes hell! The "roommate" you cannot stand – or viceversa – has the power, it is his or her house and some territorial aggression dynamics (the same ones we see in dogs) can take place. These dynamics usually develop slowly, and manifest themselves after you have invaded their territory for a reasonable amount of time: two or three days in a B&B are usually safe, maybe four if you are brave, if you stay more It is at your own risk. You perfectly know that you are a paying guest, and your host does as well, but some instincts are just very primitive. Another problem with the B&Bs can be the lack of privacy: some B&Bs owners are professional stalkers and arrange their house and furniture in order to support their hobby.

People choosing to live in pubs are for sure smarter than me. I sort of avoided booking in pubs because I thought it would have been noisy. Pubs might be noisy indeed but, I was told, later, that they must close at 11 PM so, well I can cope with that. To live in a pub, however, you have to be one of those joyful beings enjoying a good meal and a good drink. If you keep counting calories and you do not drink alcohol, you are basically stealing a pub's room to someone who deserve it much more than you! My very limited experience as a pub inhabitant and eater, however, taught me that pub owners are usually laidback, open and willing to do their best to satisfy their customers. Pubs, moreover are extremely dog friendly and food is good, not necessarily light, but good. After all, when you had spent a whole day in the rain, all you want is something warm on your table. Pub owners tend to be professional, respect the client's privacy and be very pragmatic: once, a lady told me that no, they did not have any single rooms, just double rooms, too expensive for one people but, according to her I would have easily found someone with whom to share the room, and yes she was serious!





Riders, walkers  
and dogs are  
welcome, but .....

Please remove muddy  
footwear before  
entering the bar;

Dogs must be kept  
on a lead at all  
times

Pubs are friendly... and dog friendly

The third form of accommodation I am going to discuss are houses, more commonly known as cottages. I tend to classify myself as an awful housewife who could possibly set someone's else house on fire by mistake but, after witnessing the British housekeeping standards, I came to the conclusions that I am "average", and that Italian's expectations about housekeeping are simply too high. After one month without a kitchen, I wanted a kitchen more than anything else. I know I always claim I do not cook and that I can't cook but In reality, on the rare instances I decide to cook, I cook well, especially If I miss healthy food. I wanted a kitchen simply to assembly a decent salad or, even better fruit salad, or just to relax. I love studying and writing in the kitchen, kitchens are cozy and you have everything at hand. I do not snore, do not smoke and do not drink (which means I can drive drunk people around!) and I am quiet and clean albeit not perfectly tidy (I forget and lose things regularly) so maybe in the future someone will brave enough to share a house and a kitchen with me.

According to my standards, three, maybe four (if include hotels) types of accommodations exists but... field trailers are tough people, I underestimated their strength and adaptability. I discovered that some people were living in caravans, sometimes they were even sharing those tiny spaces with a bunch of dogs. I, indeed, had a chance to go and have a venison & French cheese based dinner in a caravan and it was good, but I did not change my mind. I like the idea you can travel with your own "house", but, I honestly, could not survive without a real bathroom with its real shower (or bathtub). Caravan people say the caravans have showers or that the caravan parks provide these services, yet I remain skeptical.





ROSELEA  
HOUSE



## Rosalea House could easily become Rossella's House

Given my doubts and concerns about caravans, you should be now easily imagine how astonished I was when, I discovered that some field trailers, despite the cold nights, the wind and the rain, were living in tents and they were doing incredibly well! Hats off to them! Still curious about British trials? Check the section A Month on the Moor or [click here](#).