

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.

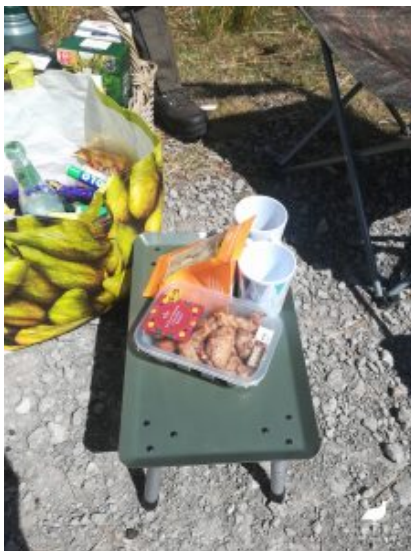
Trialers do not travel light: they cannot. Most of the people drive a pick up truck full of dogs, clothes and food. You can have all sort of weathers during a trials circuit, sometimes even during a single trial: this year temperatures ranged from 8°C degrees with high winds and rain to thirty something 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.

Dalle pulci francesi ai cavalli inglesi

Una volta uscita dall'[Eurotunnel](#) sono rimasta un po' male: non c'era nulla di speciale. Sì, finalmente ero in Inghilterra, a Folkestone per l'esattezza, ma non c'era nulla di particolare a darci il benvenuto, ci avevano mandato via dal treno ed era finita lì, nessun edificio peculiare solo una strada anonima che confluiva in un'altra altrettanto anonima, ma più trafficata. Ho già raccontato del viaggio verso il "Nord" e potete [leggerne qui](#), tra parentesi adoro quella scritta! Oggi vi racconterò cosa è successo nei pressi

dell'aeroporto di Stanstead, mi pare fosse proprio lì miglio più o meglio meno, ricordo gli aerei volare bassi sulla mia testa.



Mentre mi preparavo per prendere l'Eurotunnel, mi sono accorta di alcuni puntini marroni tra il pelo di Briony. Sfortunatamente, ho trascorso il mio semestre "specialistico" (modulo professionalizzante) a Malattie Parassitarie il che significa che so più di quanto vorrei su insetti e altre creature che infestano gli animali domestici. La combinazione puntini neri + cane + pelo era pertanto piuttosto allarmante, tuttavia ho cercato di fare del mio meglio per restare positiva. Del resto, prima di partire, avevo fatto il bagno a Briony, l'avevo pulita e toelettata perché volevo proprio evitare questo tipo di problemi. Durante tutta la sua vita, ha avuto raramente parassiti, sono pignola per queste cose, non avevo motive per temere il peggio. Ciononostante, volevo certezze! Era già pomeriggio quando ho iniziato a cercare una stazione di servizio. Il mio navigatore, e anche i cartelli stradali, ne indicavano una, ho seguito i loro consigli e mi sono persa. Può suonare stupido, ma abituata alle autostrade italiane, da cui non si esce per nessun motivo, salvo l'essere arrivati a destinazione, mi è sembrato molto strano dover uscire per poter fare il pieno. Da noi l'autostrada si paga, in Gran Bretagna no, ma è strutturata per dare al suo interno tutto quello che può servire a un

automobilista, per me era tutto strano. Seguendo le indicazioni, sono finita in un paesino, per l'esattezza nel Country Club di quel paesino: molto gradevole, ma non quello che serviva a me. Così, mi sono fermata in un angolo, ho respirato, mi sono ricomposta e non mi sono data per vinta, ho riprovato e raggiunto per tentativi il gigantesco parcheggio di un centro commerciale. Mi serviva il bagno, in estate bevo moltissima acqua, mi serviva qualcosa di fresco da bere e del cibo per cena, ma faceva troppo caldo per lasciare a lungo il cane in auto. Ho risolto lasciando la macchina mezza aperta e facendo tanti micro viaggi avanti e indietro.



Dopo il primo viaggio – verso il bagno – sono tornata all'auto, ho fatto uscire Briony e ho iniziato a scavare tra borse e valige. Obiettivo “la borsa delle spazzole” e il sacchetto delle medicine. Il primo ad entrare in azione è stato il pettinino antipulci, che ha confermato i miei timori: il cane aveva addosso decine, forse centinaia, di pulci. Eravamo partiti da casa senza pulci ed ora ne eravamo invasi, bella sorpresa! Non amo ricorrere a farmaci e sostanze tossiche e so benissimo che gli insetticidi meno potenti hanno efficacia relativa, ma qualcosa andava fatto. Ho così deciso di adottare una strategia strutturata su più fasi: il primo passo consisteva nel cercare le pulci, una per una, e spiaccicarle per essere sicura del loro decesso. Questo passaggio ha richiesto più di un'ora, dopodiché ho sprayato tutto il cane con Frontline, Rp03 (neem) e le ho messo un collare Scalibor (sono tutte molecole compatibili tra loro), capite ora perché quando viaggio mi porto di tutto? Tocco finale sprayata alla gabbia e alla macchina. Non mi piacciono

gli insetticidi, sono un veterinario olistico in divenire, ma mi trovavo di fronte ad un disastro e andava fatto ricorso all'artiglieria pesante.

Sistemato il tutto, siamo ripartire con la speranza di raggiungere Woodland, nella contea di Durham e mia destinazione finale, ad un orario decente. Credo di aver raggiunto il mio B&B attorno alle nove di sera. Sotto la luce dorata del sole tutto sembrava accogliente e pacifico, i proprietari mi hanno dato la stessa impressione. Una piccola fattoria con muri di pietra, circondata da pascoli e da cavalli, un bellissimo posto da chiamare "casa", anche se solo per un po'. (Slideshow sotto).

Ps. Se siete curiosi di conoscere la provenienza delle pulci, credo fossero francesi, omaggio dei gatti che gironzolavano attorno all'[hotel](#)...

From French Fleas to English Horses

When eventually came out from the [Eurotunnel](#) I was disappointed: there was nothing special. Of course I was in Folkestone, England, but there was nothing welcoming us: we were simply sent away our train and met no special buildings, nothing but for an anonymous road leading us to more trafficked one. I already wrote about driving in England, to The North, and you can read my impressions [here](#), I love that sign by the way! Today, I will concentrate on what happened in around Stanstead Airport, I think it was there, mile more or



mile less, I remember planes flying low. While waiting for my train, at the Eurotunnel, I noticed some dark brown dots among Briony hair. "Unfortunately", I have been a parasitology intern for a whole semester, which means I know more than I wish to know about all sort of nasty bugs infesting pets. The combination black dots + dog + hair, therefore, elicited quite an

alarming reaction, but I desperately tried to be positive. Briony had been bathed, cleaned and groomed before I left, to make sure she was not going to travel around Europe carrying any clandestine bugs. She hardly had any parasites during all her life and I am quite picky in these things, I really had no reason to fear the worst. My inquisitive mind, however, was looking for detailed answers. It was afternoon when I decided to stop at a service station: my sat nav told me that there was one (and road signs said the same) so I followed their advice and I got lost. I know it might sound stupid, but in Italy motorway' service stations are ON the motorway, not elsewhere. Since you pay to access the motorway here, you are not supposed to leave it until your trip is over: they basically lock you inside, together with everything you might need. You do not need to leave the motorway to buy some food, or some gas. So, as naïve as I can sometimes be, I could not believe my sat nav was taking me away from the motorway. I ended up in a small village, at a small village Country Club to be more precise, very pretty but no service stations. I stopped the car in a corner, recollected myself and persisted, eventually landing in a giant parking lot surrounded by supermarkets of all sorts. I badly needed a toilet (I drank so much water on the way!), something fresh to drink and a dinner for the night but... it was incredibly hot, too hot to leave the dog in the car for a prolonged time. I ended up leaving the

car semi-open and having multiple-
After the first trip – toilet -I
went back to the car, took
Briony out, walked her and then
dug among bags and suitcases to
find the “grooming bag” and the
medicines case. Flea comb came



out first confirming my fears: the dog was carrying hundreds
of bugs. I could not believe it: she was bug free when we left
from home and now she was covered with fleas! I do not like
chemicals and I know the less toxic products against fleas are
not 100% effective but, I had to do something! I decided to
adopt a multi-step strategy: part first consisted in looking
for any single bug and smashing it, to be sure of its death.
It took more than an hour... I then took Frontline spray, Neem
spray and Scalibor collar (I travel heavy for a reason!) and
placed all of them (these molecules can be safely used
together) on Briony... I am an holistic vet in progress, I try
to avoid medicines and chemicals at all costs, but I was so
shocked by all those fleas that I opted for heavy artillery! I
did not want to carry all those fleas around much longer.

As soon as she looked cleaner, I sprayed Frontline inside the
crate and inside the car and left, in the hope to reach
Woodland, in County Durham, my final destination, before the
sunset. I think I parked in my B&B yard at around 9 PM, it was
the golden hour and the place looked peaceful and welcoming.
The owners were as well, I immediately loved that small “farm”
with stone walls, surrounded by horses and paddocks, an ideal
temporary home! (Slideshow with pictures below).

*Ps. If you wonder where did the fleas came from... I think they
were a gift from some French cats roaming around the [French](#)
hotel...*

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

Alloggi, ospitalità e ospiti

Per organizzare il mio viaggio nel Regno Unito ho usato due strumenti. Booking.com e Google Maps. Booking.com mi mostrava i posti dove potevo stare, principalmente alberghi e pub, ma io, erroneamente, credevo di essere una persona da Bed & Breakfast. Sebbene in Gran Bretagna tutti abbiano un B&B (o per lo meno un amico che fa questo lavoro), in Italia, queste sistemazioni sono abbastanza insolite. Credevo, e mi sbagliavo di nuovo, che i B&B fossero più “amichevoli” nonché più economici dei pub. Ritenevo più cari gli alberghi e, le case singole da affittare, sebbene estremamente attraenti, mi sembravano un po’ troppo per un singolo essere umano di taglia bonsai con il relativo cane. Ogni volta che leggevo descrizioni del tipo “ci dormono in sei” mi vedevo circondata da stanze da letto vuote e soggiorni silenziosi.

Pensando di essere una persona da B&B, ho iniziato a dare la caccia al B&B perfetto. Quello che più mi affascinava era il fatto che, di solito, i B&B alloggiano uno o pochi ospiti quindi, dal momento che viaggiavo da sola, credevo che la famiglia ospitante si sarebbe accorta se mi fosse successo qualcosa. Che so, mettiamo il caso che la mia pelle fosse diventata verde nottetempo, ero assolutamente convinta che la signora del B&B se ne sarebbe accorta. Ancora una volta, mi sbagliavo. Durante la mia vacanza ho vissuto anche in un B&B “fantasma”: il posto aveva dei proprietari, ma non si vedevano mai; la colazione compariva magicamente alla mattina senza che io incontrassi mai alcun essere umano.



A Briony piacciono i pub

Prima di questo viaggio, pensavo che mi sarei sentita più sicura in una casa che non in un grande albergo. Dopo un mese passato quasi esclusivamente in B&B, devo ammettere che in alcune circostanze non mi sono affatto sentita sicura in un B&B e che i presunti vantaggi di questo tipo di sistemazione si accompagnano ad una lunga lista di svantaggi. La conclusione a cui sono arrivata è la seguente: se vai d'accordo con i proprietari del B&B, stai alla grande, ma se non è così... il paradiso si trasforma nell'inferno! Il "coinquilino" che non sopporti – o, viceversa, che non sopporta te- ha il potere: è casa sua e scattano dinamiche legate all'aggressività territoriale, le stesse che vediamo nei cani. L'evoluzione è di solito lenta e i problemi insorgono dopo che l'ospite ha invaso il territorio per un certo periodo di tempo: se passate due o tre giorni in un B&B siete al sicuro, magari quattro se volete essere coraggiosi, oltre il quarto giorno restate a vostro rischio! Sapete benissimo di essere un ospite pagante, lo sa anche il gestore ma, ecco, alcuni istinti sono primordiali. Un altro problema legato ai B&B può essere la mancanza di privacy: alcuni gestori sono degli stalker professionisti che sistemano la

casa e dispongono l'arredamento per meglio intrattenersi in questo loro hobby.

Le persone che scelgono i pub sono di sicuro più furbe di me. Ho evitato di prenotare nei pub ritenendoli rumorosi. I pub, di fatto, possono esserlo ma, mi è stato spiegato, che in ogni caso devono chiudere alle 23, si può fare. Per vivere in un pub, comunque, devi essere uno di quegli esseri umani voluttuosi che sanno godersi un buon pasto e una bella bevuta. Se tieni il conto delle calorie e sei astemio, in pratica stai fregando il posto a qualcuno che merita di stare lì molto più di te. La mia, limitatissima, esperienza come abitante e commensale di pub, comunque, mi ha insegnato che i gestori dei pub sono generalmente molto rilassati, di mentalità aperta e disposti a fare del loro meglio per accontentare il cliente. I pub, inoltre, sono molto amichevoli con i cani e offrono del buon cibo, non necessariamente salubre e dietetico ma buono. Dopo tutto, se hai passato una giornata sotto la pioggia, l'unica cosa che desideri è che ti portino al tavolo qualcosa di caldo. I proprietari di pub sono generalmente professionali, rispettano la privacy del cliente e sono estremamente pragmatici: una volta, una signora, mi ha detto che no, non avevano camere singole, solo doppie, troppo care per una persona sola, però, secondo lei, avrei facilmente trovato qualcuno con cui dividere la stanza. Sì... era seria!

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

I pub sono amichevoli... e amici dei cani!

Il terzo tipo di alloggio di cui sto per parlare sono le case o, come le chiamano loro, i cottage. Di solito mi ritengo una pessima casalinga che potrebbe dar fuoco a una casa altrui senza accorgersene ma, dopo aver toccato con mano gli standard di domesticità britannici, sono arrivata alla conclusione che sono "nella media" e che in Italia si sia troppo esigenti quando si tratta di lavori domestici. Dopo un mese senza cucina, volevo una cucina più di ogni altra cosa. Lo so che dico sempre che non cucino e che non so cucinare ma, nelle rare occasioni in cui decido di farlo, me la cavo piuttosto bene, specie se sento la mancanza di cibo sano. Volevo una cucina anche solo per mettere insieme un'insalata decente, una macedonia, o solo per rilassarmi. Adoro studiare in cucina, le cucine hanno un non so che di intimo e di familiare, poi si a tutto a portata di mano. Non russo, non fumo e sono astemia (il che significa che posso guidare al posto di chi si vuole ubriacare), sono tranquilla anche se non molto ordinata (dimentico e perdo cose regolarmente) quindi chissà, forse in futuro, qualcuno vorrà dividere una casa e una cucina con me.

Secondo i miei parametri, ci sono tre, forse quattro (se includiamo gli alberghi) tipi di alloggio ma... la gente dei field trials è gente dura, avevo sottostimato la loro forza e adattabilità. Ho scoperto che alcuni di loro vivevano in roulotte, spesso dividendo spazi minuscoli con branchi di cani. Sono persino stata invitata ad una cena a base di cervo e formaggi francesi organizzata in roulotte ed è stata un'ottima cena, ma non ho cambiato idea. Mi piace il fatto che si possa viaggiare con una casa al seguito, ma non credo potrei sopravvivere senza un bagno vero con una doccia (o una vasca da bagno) vera. I proprietari di roulotte dicono che le roulotte hanno la doccia, oppure che si può usare quella del campeggio, resto scettica.



Rosalea House potrebbe diventare facilmente
Rossella's House

Dati i miei dubbi e il mio scetticismo sulle roulotte, immaginatevi quanto sia rimasta scioccata dall'apprendere che, alcuni cinofili, nonostante le notti fredde, le raffiche di vento e la pioggia... vivevano in tenda e se la passavano alla grande!Giù il cappello!

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!

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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.



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](#).