

The ultimate road trip by Stuart Fuller

Last season only the brave band of the die-hard such as PJ, Gary, Deaksy and Cynical Dave headed to the Herne Bay and Ramsgate, our two longest away trips (bar Guernsey of course!). January's not the best time to head to the Kentish coast but add in some fog and freezing conditions as well as a 7:45pm kick off time in the case of Herne Bay and you can understand why only a Ford Focus' worth of away fans made the trip.

Whilst this year we at least had the privilege of heading to Herne Bay in August to kick off our campaign, our longest road trip to Ramsgate is once again in the cold and bleak winter. The longest road-trip the Rooks have ever had to make was back in our brief sojourn in the Conference Premier when we had to take on Barrow AFC, a 700-mile round trip undertaken by just a dozen or so fans in March 2009. But even our 212-mile round trip to the furthest point of South-East England this season pales into insignificance when you look at some of the other potential trips in Europe.

In the 2015/16 Champions League Group Stage Benfica had to travel to Astana, the capital city of Kazakhstan, just a short 7,717-mile midweek round trip. It's possible that this season the Kazakhstanis may be paired with fellow Portuguese side Marítimo, who based on Madeira some 4,500 miles away in a tie that would set a record for the furthest apart sides paired together in a European competition.

In the next few years that could possibly be broken again, if not absolutely smashed. Russian side Luch-Energiya Vladivostok are banging on the door of the top flight, whilst ongoing petitions from Greenland to be accepted into the UEFA on a similar basis to fellow constituent of the Kingdom of Denmark, Faroe Islands, could see top club sides such as B-67 from Nuuk playing in the Champions and Europa League. The distance from London to Vladivostok is 5,100 miles whilst to Nuuk is 2,100 miles. From the two potential European outposts it is actually easier to fly across the International Date Line but is still nearly 3,000 miles.

The most extreme clubs who have played in European competition Norway's Tromsø to the North who have played 27 UEFA home games at their Alfheim Stadium. The city of Tromsø's coordinates are 69° 40' 58" N, which is inside the Arctic Circle.

The most Southerly-based club to play in Europe has been Spain's Las Palmas who have played five UEFA home games at their Estadio de Gran Canaria. Las Palmas lies in the Canary Islands, coordinates 28° 9' 0" N, which lie off the coast of Morocco and are further south than Cairo.

Russia's Sibir Novosibirsk, located in Siberia and once a key stopping point on the Trans-Siberian Express, played two UEFA home games at their Spartak Stadium Novosibirsk. The coordinates are 82° 56' 0" E, making it about as far east as Nepal and thus the most furthest east.

The most westerly UEFA games were played by the Portuguese side Santa Clara who played two UEFA home games at the São Miguel Stadium in Ponta Delgada. The main city in the Azores, its coordinates are 25° 44' 50" W, meaning it lies about as far west as Cape Verde.

Confine the search to only the clubs who have competed in UEFA competitions and the longest possible would be a 5,030-mile trip for a match between Sibir Novosibirsk and Tenerife.

The rules as to who can and can't play in each domestic league mean that there's the possibility of some ridiculous travel. Whilst Guernsey are currently the highest placed English side (yes, I know Canvey Island is technically off-shore) to play off the British Island, technically a side from the Falkland Islands could rise through the English pyramid and take their place in a UEFA competition.

We aren't alone. Sides from overseas territories are entitled to play in the Portuguese and French domestic cups. Santa Clara's base in the Azores is a long way west, but the situation in France is even more startling, given that sides from Mayotte, Reunion, Guadeloupe, Martinique and French Guyana could all theoretically qualify for European competition as French Cup winners.

Should current French Guyanese champions Matoury ever have to take on Luch-Energiya Vladivostok in a European game, it would involve a round trip of the best part of 24,000 miles.

I couldn't see even Gary and PJ packing up the cheese and pickle sandwiches and a flask of tea for a journey like that!