

Dolomitentour 1998

The preparation:

After the Free-Bikers Sonthofen had founded themselves in December 1996, I thought about it in the course of 1997, whether it would be possible to organize a joint club trip of several days.

So I thought about it and came to the Dolomites. I have always been there a lot and I can say that I know the Dolomites! I also found a guesthouse right away, as I already knew the Garni Jasmin in St. Kassian from previous stays.

When I announced my thoughts in a large circle, there was general agreement. As date we fixed the Ascension weekend 1998. Now it was up to me to determine more precise tours. It was more or less clear to me where I wanted to go with the others, but details still had to be clarified.

One route was to lead from St. Cassiano over the Val Parole Pass, the Falzarego Pass and the Giau Pass. The further way was planned via the Passo Staulanza, the Passo Du-ran, the Forcola Aurine and further on via the Passo die Goberra and the Passo Broccon to my personal highlight the Passo Manghen! The way back to St. Kassian via Cavalese and Canazei to the Pordoi-Joch, via Passo di Campolongo to St. Kassian.

Now the only thing left to do was to check if everything was free and well passable.

So one Saturday in late April/early May I drove from Sonthofen to St. Kassian. On site I made the last arrangements with the pension landlady, had lunch and then drove the aforementioned route. Shortly before the Passo di Goberra I found a good restaurant where we could have lunch with the club and where there were no parking problems and I drove on. At the driveway to the Passo Manghen the sign "chiuso" (Sch..) hit me. I drove up as far as I could, but had to turn back at a barrier that was not to be avoided. So a detour via Val di Cembra or Val di Fiemme - no problem. After dinner in Predazzo, around 20:30 I thought about whether I should set up my tent somewhere and spend the night or go home. Okay, you still need about 1 ½ hour to get to the Brenner Pass and from there about 3 hours to get home - so let's go. Although it was getting dark slowly, it was a great pleasure. The Sella-Joch, both uphill and downhill no traffic - just great. In Val Gardena and on the old Brenner Pass road no traffic at all! Only shortly before Innsbruck I had to overtake three cars, that was it. Also over the Fernpass and finally down the Oberjoch all without traffic and great to drive. Although I was only home for a short time from 01:00 o'clock, I enjoyed every kilometer - in total it was 918 km that day!

So on this day I did the outward journey, a day trip and the return journey from the club tour - motorcycling can be so much fun (☺!).

Then it was about finding out the number of participants.

Astonishingly fast 22 participants (with a total of 18 mopeds) were together - quite a lot - I hadn't had any experience with bigger motorcycle groups yet - let's have a look!

Die Durchführung:

The outward journey took place on May 24th 1998. First there was a general meeting point at Grüntenblick in Agathazell at 09:00. Some had had breakfast there before and then we could start. After I had noticed during an earlier tour with him that Ingo (with pillion) was probably the "slowest" of the group, I took him directly behind me in tow and started walking.

From Sonthofen via Hindelang up to Oberjoch. On this section and also further through the Tannheimer-Tal I had to realize that Ingo always stayed far behind. So I had no choice but to slow down a little bit. In Weissenbach at the gas station the others complained that at this speed (60 - 80 km/h) it would take us a very long time to get to St. Kassian. When I asked Ingo, he said that he thought he had to wait for the others and therefore drove slower. After that was cleared up we went on - faster. Over Reutte and the Fernpass to Telfs and over country roads to Innsbruck. Suddenly Petra was missing! We made a stop just before Innsbruck and talked about it. Suddenly Petra was back! She had let herself go and then she drove onto the motorway. When she noticed that she was alone she left the motorway and met us right there again - coincidences do exist!

From Innsbruck we drove on the eastward side road via Ellbögen to Mattrei and the Brenner Pass. Some of the participants were not even aware of this side route before - like many others, they had always driven over the old Brenner Pass road - but they found it much more scenic!

At the Brenner there was a refueling stop. Since I wanted to go to a well-known café directly afterwards - still at the top of the pass - I told the others and drove the few meters ahead. All the others came slowly after - all the others - uh, no Wolfgang and Martina were missing at first. But then they also came, shouting loudly that they had been left alone and that they didn't know where we were. Only when driving on they would have seen all the motorcycles with "OA" and would have reached us again.

As said, experiences with large groups must be collected first.

From the Brenner Pass we took the motorway to the exit Brixen. Afterwards we drove (well - maybe the better expression is "hurry") in direction St. Andrä up to the Würzjoch. This route was also unknown to some. But everybody (I emphasize ALL) was on fire for this great track! Up to St. Andrä you can simply ride your motorbike to your heart's content - little traffic, wide, well-built road, clear, wonderful curves and then gaaaaaaas!

Shortly before the pass Würzjoch we stopped at the Edelweiss hut (I knew it from before) and all faces were beaming in view of the great route.

Afterwards, St. Kassian (via St. Martin and La Villa/Stern) was quickly reached and everyone was able to occupy their rooms with fittings.

In the evening we went together for dinner.

The second day (May 25th 1998):

After breakfast we left at 9:00 am.

First to the first 2000m, the Passo di Valparole (2192 m). From there down (!) to Passo di Falzarego (2105 m). The Passo di Falzarego is one of the few passes on whose top it goes further up to the next pass (here the Passo di Valparole) - this is, as far as I know, only 5 or 6 times in the Alps. We continued in direction to Cortina d'Ampezzo and then in wild hunting up to the Passo di Giau (2233 m). Up there I announced "free riding" for the first time. Since then this has proved to be very successful. "Free riding" means that the group pressure is lifted and everybody can ride according to his own taste - fast, slow - just as one wants. At the top of the pass we all met



again. Afterwards the way led us south down into the valley, there we turned left and again we went up, this time to Passo Staulanza (1773 m). Down into the valley and there was the next ascent. The Passo Duran (1601 m) belongs to the smaller variety. Little traffic, narrow road, but wonderful to ride! In Agordo we had a coffee break (☺ oder is better called cappuccino break in Italy? ☺). Then over the Forcola Aurine (1299 m) and the Passo di Cereda (1369 m) - lunch break. As already mentioned in "The Preparation", I had discovered a restaurant in Fiera di Primiero directly on the road with enough parking spaces and good seating and led my group there. After lunch, some participants decided to shorten the further distance a little and drive back to St. Kassian via the Rolle Pass. The others continued the planned route with me. Over the Passo di Gobbera (988 m) and the Passo di Brocon (1691 m) we continued to Telve. Behind the village I was quite curious if the further way was still closed, as it was during the preparation, but no - everything was free! Yay!!!



The route from the south up to the Passo Manghen (2047 m) is still one of the most beautiful things the whole Alps have to offer!

So again "free riding" was the order of the day and the wild hunt began! At first I was in front, but soon Werner came from behind - he is simply faster, you have to admit without envy - and I let him pass. Later on Alex came with his Africa Twin and took his ride. After the top of the pass there was a coffee break again. All others arrived one after the other and everybody was enthusiastic. PassoBrocon

Down into the valley we went on towards Cavalese, via Predazzo to Canazei and up to the Pordoi Pass (2239 m) and over the Passo di Campolongo (1875 m) to Corvara and finally to La Villa/Stern, where we met the others who had gone over the Rolle Pass in a pizzeria (at the turn-off to St. Kassian - I have been coming back to this pizzeria again and again over the years and can only warmly recommend it). After the meal we went back to St. Kassian and the next morning could come.

The third day (May 26th 1998):

With the weather we were lucky again and so we could start at 09.00 o'clock after breakfast. The tour was supposed to lead first over the Gardena Pass and the Sella Pass to Canazei and then to the Karer Pass and Lake Karer. The track was quite free and therefore nice to ride. To the Grödner-Joch and the Sella-Joch up to the "free driving" was announced again and everybody could drive the wonderful curves with full pleasure. So motorcycling is simply fun. At Lake Carezza, as is common there, there was a tourist crowd.



Finding a parking space for 18 motorcycles was not so easy here. The Karer Lake is simply a wonderful gem that is always worth a detour. The mountain range of the Latemar is reflected in it and gives a picture that could not be painted more beautiful.

After this visit we went up again to the Karerpass and then left to the Niglerpass and direction Seis am Schlern. Although I hadn't announced "free riding", Wolfgang and Harald wanted to "give it a go" - unfortunately not successfully. Harald's motorcycle turned left into the bushes - much to Harald's regret. A later analysis showed that he had probably shifted down one gear too far and instead of the 2. he got the 1. The result: Stamping rear wheel and slipping away. The damage was quite good, but in such a way that it could still go on. Due to this interruption I had to shorten the planned tour a bit, so that we first went to an inn near Seis for dinner and then drove down to Waidbruck. From there, a road that swings up in wonderful curves leads to Lajen. The further way to Gufidaun is rather narrow (a participant told me later: This was no road, this was the E5 - for insiders, this is the long distance hiking trail from Lake Constance to Venice). But the route is asphalted throughout and offers wonderful views down into the Eisack valley. From Gufidaun it went into the Vilsbachtal and then up to the Würzjoch. The Würzjoch is so narrow from this side that two cars have problems to pass each other. So my surprise is understandable, when suddenly a big trough kipper came towards me! I managed to pass it quite well, but I thought to myself "Those behind me will be happy! Nevertheless, everybody passed it more or less well and went on up to the Würzjoch. A few kilometers before the top of the pass the obligatory stop at the Edelweiss Hut was announced again. Afterwards we went on up to the Würzjoch and via Antermoia and St. Martin in Thurn down to the Gadertal. The further way to La Villa/Stern and back to St. Kassian went without any special incidents.

This day ended with the common meeting and dinner in the "Störes" in St. Kassian.

The return journey (May 27th 1998):

After the breakfast and the farewell from the family Mangutsch, which had looked after us during the 4 days quite cordially and friendly, we left shortly after 09:00 o'clock again for home.

The way led us first via La Villa/Stern down into the Gadertal valley, which we followed until the confluence with the Pustertal valley (from Toblach to Brixen). Up the Brenner Pass we turned right again in Matrei and escaped the heavy traffic on the old Brenner road. Wolfgang, as the last of our group, was unfortunately a bit unlucky. In Matrei a traffic light changed to yellow and Wolfgang drove through - mistake! He fell into the hands of two Austrian motorcycle policemen, who took 350 öS (about 50 DM) from him - much to the chagrin of Wolfgang, who was quite annoyed and ranting loudly. Via Innsbruck, the Fernpass and Reutte we went up to the Gaichtpass and to the Oberjoch from where we reached Sonthofen safely again.

Conclusion:

It was a lot of fun! As I conclude from the reactions of the others, so do they! To lead a group with 18 motorcycles is certainly not easy, but it worked out very well for us - after some small problems in the beginning. A tip for others: Everyone tries to stay with the bike in front of him. The person behind is not important at first! Only when you leave the main track, you have to check if the person behind you is on. If this is not the case, turn off and wait there, so that the person in the back can see "This is the exit". Then you can drive on. So if everyone waits until the person behind sees where it goes on, nothing can go wrong!