

European Alps – The big loop

or how to travel 5800 km in 17 days

by Rudi Przybylski, Honda ST 1100 ABS/TCS Pan European

Introduction:

It all started with the fact that at some point I came into possession of the book "Traumreisen in den Alpen". The route presented there, which once circumnavigated the Alps, had been my passion ever since.

Increased suggestions from the "Free-Biker Sonthofen" did not show any interest at first. But last year Werner Kroll was ready to start this tour with me in summer 2000. As the tour planning progressed, Lothar Zauzig (Sonthofen), and Dietmar Schumann (Munich) joined us. Due to the adverse weather conditions, the tour started on July 18th 2000.

So the evening before, the things are packed and stowed away on the motorcycle. Meeting point was the "Grüntenberg" 18.07.00, 09.00 o'clock. Dietmar was still sitting at breakfast when Werner and Lothar arrived. The first thing Lothar noticed about the BMW K 1100 LT with Munich license plates standing in the garage was the wicked rear tire. Since no alpine tour could start with it, a new rubber was mounted on the "rubber cow" (Dietmar will surely forgive me - especially since this animal was sometimes quite fast on the road (see "The participants")) at the Reifen-Schubert in Sonthofen. Then it could finally start properly. The following route description is largely based on the route shown in the book and is attached.



Tuesday, July 18, 2000, day one:

The tour of this 1st day led first via *Margarethen, Hofen, Beilenberg* and *old towns* to *Fischen* and over the **Riedberg Pass (1420 m)**. Then via *Hittisau, Großdorf* and *Schwarzenberg* on towards the Hochtannberg Pass. Turn left at *Bezau* and then drive via *Reuthe* and *Bizau* to *Schnepfau* is a matter of course for connoisseurs of this route. In Au we turned off to reach *Rankweil* via *Damüls* and the **Furkajoch (1761m)**. Switzerland was reached near *Meiningen* and we continued to *Altstätten*. Suddenly Dietmar was missing. After a long time of waiting and turning around, it turned out that the BMW lived up to its name "Bring me tools". A terrible crash and clacking at the rear wheel didn't mean anything good. It's amazing that every time we drive a BMW, something breaks? So the trip was immediately interrupted and lunch break was taken. In the restaurant we tried to find the nearest garage via the ADAC. After several attempts it turned out that about 25 km away in *Sankt Gallen* help was to be expected. Dietmar was so brave to drive this distance. In *Sankt Gallen* the oil seal on the cardan drive had gone and the oil was already covering parts of the rear tire. In the workshop it turned out that the rear wheel bearing was completely destroyed - how Dietmar made it to *St. Gallen* is still a mystery to me! An immediate

repair was not to be thought of. So we said goodbye to Dietmar and arranged to meet the next day in the evening in *Lungern* at the lake of the same name (between *Lake Lucerne* and the *Bernese Oberland*) - if the BMW would be afloat again. So Lothar, Werner and I drove on. From *Sankt Gallen* via *Teufen* the route led to *Appenzell* and then via *Urnäsch* and the **Schwägalp (1278m)** (on the *Säntis*) on to *Wattwil*. Over the **Rickenpass (794m)** and *Kaltbrunn* the route finally led to *Siebnen*, from where the route branches off over the **Sattelegg Pass (1190m)**. At *Sihl-See* this first day was finished and the tent was set up. Although I had set up my tent in Werner's garden before the tour and we tried out if it was possible to stay there with 3 people - it looked like it - things turned out differently that evening. To spend the night with three persons in the inner tent - illusory! So Lothar moved his utensils into the awning and hoped for dry weather.

Wednesday, July 19, 2000, day 2:

Along the *Sihl lake* we first went to *Oberiberg* and the **Ibergeregge pass (1406m)**. In *Schwyz* it was time for a little treat: turning left into the *Muota valley* and then over the **Pragelpass (1550m)** to the *Klöntaler lake*. A very nice but little known track, which is closed on weekends, because it is mostly so narrow that two cars have problems to pass each other. A cappuccino break was made at the *Klöntaler-See*. We continued to *Glarus* and over the **Klausenpass (1948m)** to *Altdorf*. A must in Switzerland is surely the round over **Sustenpass (2224m)**, **Grimsepass (2165m)** and **Furkapass (2431m)**, which is spectacular in terms of landscape and driving. We didn't miss this and drove back to *Altdorf* via *Andermatt* to almost circle *the Lake Lucerne*. Via *Brunnen*, *Vitznau*, *Weggis*, *Küssnacht* and *Meggen* we went to *Lucerne*. On this route Werner had problems with his starter for the first time - a problem he could only solve after returning to *Sonthofen*. The traffic in *Lucerne* was plentiful, or rather very plentiful, so it took us quite a long time to leave the city. Via *Horw*, *Hergiswil* and *Alpnach* we went to *Sarnen* at the lake of the same name. From there it is not far to the *Lungern-See*, where we finally met Dietmar again - during lunch break we had already found out by mobile phone that the BMW was ready for action again. Dietmar had already set up his tent - because of his snoring it had been decided from the beginning that he would set up his own tent and as far away from us as possible. At the campground we could benefit for the first time from Dietmar's cooking skills, which were of great benefit to us during the whole tour. But not only his cooking skills



Camping, 01.08.00

impressed us, also his extensive provisions, which he had stowed away on the BMW. Whether sausage in all variations, whether ham, jam, honey, spices, garlic sauce, coffee, etc., he simply carried everything that one could need for camping. Camping cooker, dishes etc. of course also. By the way, the honey he had brought along had already leaked and had already looked around in the top case of the BMW. Finally,

for this day it has to be mentioned that the camping site was the cheapest of the whole tour! Since the campsite was "closed" on Wednesday and also the next

morning nobody was at the cash desk (we left shortly before 9.00 am), the overnight stay was free of charge.

Thursday, July 20, 2000, day three:

Over the **Brünigpass (1008m)** we drove to *Brienz* at the *Brienzer lake*. A workshop at the roadside gave Werner hope for the solution of his starter problem. Unfortunately, this was only a workshop for mopeds and other smaller mopeds; the owner had nothing to do with motorcycles, let alone with their electrics. But the tip to go to a Honda garage in nearby *Hofstetten* was very good and we went there immediately. The workshop is hard to find in the village, but highly recommended! It made an extremely positive impression and Werner's problem was tackled according to plan. The state of charge of the battery, the charging and all other areas were checked. Unfortunately, the fault in the alternator, which was only discovered later, was not found and so we continued along *Lake Brienz* to *Interlaken*. There to the left a detour to the center of the *Bernese Oberland*. First we drove to *Grindelwald* to face the *north face of the Eiger* in an impressed way. Only when one stands so close to this wall, one can understand approximately why so many mountaineers lost their lives here. Through *Grindelwald*, we then continued uphill for a few kilometres before the further road is closed for public traffic. The *lower* and finally the *upper Grindelwald Glacier* that we could admire during the drive are already a big natural spectacle. Back in the valley we went to *Lauterbrunnen* - there is the huge *Staubbach waterfall* - and to the end of this trough valley to *Stechelberg*. There the cable car to the *Schilthorn* begins, on top of which there is a revolving restaurant. This mountain was once the central scene for spectacular stunts and high mountain shots in the James Bond film "In Her Majesty's Secret Service" with Georg Lazenby.



Werner Kroll/Rudi Przybylski

The journey back went to *Interlaken* to follow a small road in the direction of *Beatenberg*. Turning right we reached *Habkern*. For those not familiar with the area, the world and the road come to an end here, but for the initiated there is the possibility of taking a small toll road to *Beatenberg* and from there - also via a small toll road - to *Sigriswil* above *Lake Thun*. This detour is recommended for everyone, as it offers wonderful views of

the lake, but also of the *triumvirate of the Bernese Alps: the Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau*. Via *Thun*, the route continued to *Spiez* and into the *Simmental*. Via *Erlenbach* and *Zweisimmen* it then went on to *Saanen*. There a small road branches off to the left which leads via *Gstaad* and *Gsteig* to **Col du Pillon (1546m)**. At the other end of this pass is *Les Diableres*, a very well-known winter sports resort. Turning left again we reached the **Col de la Croix (1778m)** and finally *Villar-sur-Ollon*. On the way into the valley we turned left and reached a small camping site, which was the end of the day. The weather was still excellent until here!

Friday, July 21, 2000, day four:

First the journey went into the *Rhône valley* to *Bex* and further to *Monthey*. At **Pas de Morgins (1369m)** we crossed the border to France. Via *Châtel* and *Abondance* we went to **Col du Corbier (1234m)** and then to *Morzine*. Here we made our first

acquaintance with the - at least by German standards - miserable signposting. In retrospect it is recommended to concentrate on the numbering of the roads. - Instead of driving over the Col de Joux Plane as intended, we drove to *Lac de Mines d'Or*. This lake is located very nice, but it is a dead end and we had to go back to *Morzine*. From here we drove via *Taninges* ("Route de Grand Alpes") and *Samoëns* to the *Cirque du Fer à Cheval*, a 4 km long and up to 700m high, waterfall rich rock wall arena. After the lunch break the trail led us via *Cluses* to the **Col de la Colombière (1613m)** and on towards *Annecy*. 8 km after *Thônes* we turned left towards *Lac d'Annecy*. After about 4 km we turned left again to reach the lake at *Talloires*. Circumnavigating the lake to the south we went via *Duingt* to *Sevrier*. Here the road to the **Col de Leschaux (897m)** begins, further and further south via *Le Pont* the road led to the **Col de Plainpalais (1173m)**. Then turn right and on a northern loop over the **Mont Revard (1448m)**, which offers a magnificent view, to *Aix-le-Bains*. In *Chambery* we got acquainted again with the "modest" signposting. The way to **Col du Granier (1134m)** could only be found because we asked for directions at a gas station - thanks to Dietmar's language skills. But even with this description finding the way was pure luck!



Lac d'Annecy, 21.07.00

Shortly before *St. Pierre-d'Entremont* this day was also over and a small, very modest campsite at the roadside was the finish. After the tents had been set up, Dietmar got the big fright. As usual, he had inflated his "playground" (his air mattress is 2m x 1.4m wide) with the help of a blower connected to the motorbike, when suddenly the air escaped. Dietmar already feared that the air mattress was broken and thought about how he

could get a new one. To his great relief, however, it turned out that he just hadn't closed the lock properly.

Saturday, July 22, 2000, day five:

The 5th day brought a new challenge to my talents as a "scout":

GRENOBLE! Via the **Col du**

Cucheron (1139m) and the **Col de Porte (1326m)** the path led further

south. A small turnoff to the right over *Sarcenas* gave a nice view over

Grenoble. Once there, we immediately

turned right in order to get over the *Isère* to the N 532 on the other side of the valley.

There we could not miss the further way in direction *Villard-de-Lans*. Behind *Villard-de-Lans*, the *Gorges de la Bourne* is an impressive canyon that pleases the heart of

each vacationer. Via *Pont-en-Royans*, we went to *Auberivès-en-Royans*, and then left in direction to *Combe Laval* and to the *Col de la Machine*. This route is certainly

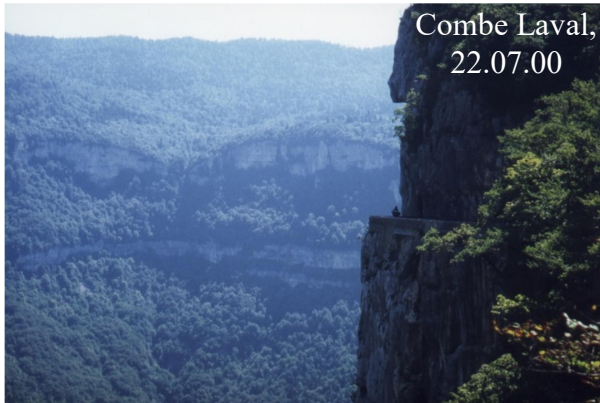
one of the highlights of the whole tour. The deep view at the *Combe Laval*, the

vertically sloping edge at which the road runs - magnificent! At **Col de la Machine**

(1015m) a photo stop was obligatory: "Four machines at Col de la Machine!". Further



View from Mont Revard, 21.07.00



south first over the **Col de Lachau (1337m)** and then over the spectacular **Col de Rousset (1254m)** to *Die* and *Châtillon*. In *Menée* at the foot of the *Col de Menée* we turned left to reach the *Cirque d'Archiane*, a 14 km long rock basin with walls up to 1000m high. Here we felt like we were transported back to the "Wild West" and expected the appearance of an Indian horde behind every bush. Over the **Col de Menée (1402m)** we went on into the valley to *Clelles*. At the end of *Mens* we had to turn back, because Dietmar wouldn't have made it to the next village and had to fill up with petrol. Thus, we searched the place for a gas station - we finally succeeded - and afterwards we immediately did the shopping for the evening. On the way to *La Mure* we would have had the opportunity to watch a bungee jump at a high bridge - maybe I would have jumped myself - but my fellow travellers didn't want to "take another break" and so we reached a camping site with a small lake a few kilometers later near *Valbonnais*. Thanks to Dietmar's language skills we were soon assigned a place. We were just about to set up the tents when our "place-assigner" came and sent us about 40 meters further, because on our place a big group would pitch the tent. As "compensation" we got some shower coins. The campground is very spacious and was very busy (many Dutch people), but nevertheless recommendable because of the location and the small lake. Dietmar and I went swimming in the lake by the way. Dietmar probably overestimated his endurance though and turned back quickly while I swam to the other side and then to the end of the lake - very refreshing.

Sunday, July 23, 2000, day six:

And the journey continued. Following the valley, the path led us first to le *Bourg-d'Oisans*. Via *la Grave* and the **Col du Lautaret (2058m)** we reached *Briancon*. There we turned left, direction **Col d'Izoard (2360m)**. Werner almost went straight on, but noticed my turning at the last moment and the ascent began. A short time later it started to rain for the first time, so we put on our rain suits. But at the pass we took them off again, because the sun came out again. During the descent we met a lot of cyclists who took part in a bicycle race. After the lunch break *Guillestre* was the next



destination. From there to *Embrun* and to the *Lac de Serre-Poncon*, which we circumnavigated westwards over the **Col Lebraut (1110m)**. In *Barcelonnette* finally the **Col d'Allos (2247m)** started, a pass - as I think - which would have to be closed for motorists, so that one could really enjoy the route by motorcycle. Nevertheless, it is a very nice route that offers enough possibilities for a motorbike to overtake and is recommendable for every motorcyclist. But for cars it is so narrow that there are mostly problems to pass oncoming traffic. Shortly after the top of the pass I let the others drive up to take some nice pictures from above. Almost on my own way down a car driver got me from the moped. At a narrow place I saw some cars coming towards me and stopped immediately (!), because I already noticed that the first one came directly towards me. Only a few centimetres in front of my front wheel he turned to the right and drove with a short "Pardon", called through the open window, further uphill - well, nothing happened. In *Colmars* a hardly to find road without any signpost branches off to the left to **Col de Champs (2045m)**. The road is quite uneven, but still very nice and since the asphalt is okay on the descent, this pass can also be recommended to everybody. After the villages *St. Martin-d'Entraunes* and *Guillaumes* we went to the *Gorges de Dalius*. According to the travel guide, this canyon is considered as the most beautiful after the *Grand Canyon du Verdon* - a rating that surely cannot be denied - impressive! The slate rock is red-brown to purple and the road runs high above the river bed partly through tunnels or regular archways. Following the N 202 we finally reached a camping site at the *Lac de Castillon* shortly before *Castellane*. Because of the beginning rain Werner and Lothar decided to pitch their own tent - a wise decision! Early in the morning around 5:00 o'clock - it had been pouring all night long - I noticed some moisture next to my air mattress and decided to get to the bottom of it: I was lying in a bathtub! A large part of the tent was under water. But the tent was tight, the water did not run off! So I cleared out the tent, moved all things into the anteroom and dried the tent. Afterwards I could sleep on calmly.

Monday, July 24, 2000, day seven:



The morning welcomed us with beautiful weather! But the water for washing was very dirty, because, however, parts of the rain had got into it. Also Dietmar was allowed to dry his tent first, but the puddle of water was not as big as before. Werner and Lothar decided to sleep in their own tent for the rest of the tour. After breakfast and taking down the tents, we headed for a highlight of the French Alps, the *Grand Canyon du*

Verdon. Via *Castellane* we reached this wonderful spot. For me personally the *Grand Canyon du Verdon* belongs beside the *Combe Laval* already described above to the most beautiful things this tour has to offer! The tour around the canyon went without any problems and was a pleasure despite the heavy traffic. The goal of the day was *Sospel*. So we continued via *Comps-s-Artuby* and *la Bastide* on the D2 towards *Vence*. Via *Grègolieres* we reached the **Col de Vence (963m)** - a motorcycle route par excellence. I would have loved to turn back and enjoy the route again! From *Vence* to *Carros* the way was still easy to find, but since we decided to go around *Nice*, we had to find the way to the *Col de Braus* on very small, but as it turned out, very beautiful roads. Via *Aspremont*, *Tourrette-Levens* and *Contes* we finally reached the **Col de Nice (402m)** and *l'Escarène* at the foot of this serpentine **Col de Braus (1002m)**. If I would have got 10 DM for every bend we drove that day, I would have got a considerable sum of money!



just before Vence, July 24th

Tuesday, July 25, 2000, day eight:

Over the **Col du Pérus (654m)** and the **Col de Bruis (879m)**, *Saorge*, the *Gorges de Bergue* and *Gorges de Paganis* we went in direction of the **Col de Tende (1871m)**. We did not want to drive through the border tunnel but climb the old *Tende pass road* with its 48 narrow bends on the south ramp. Although the uphill stretch is almost exclusively gravel road, but nevertheless - in retrospect - a must(!) for every motorcyclist. The descent into the valley to the north is completely asphalted and nice to ride. Shortly before *Borgo San Dalmazzo* we turned left to *Valdieri*. There a very small road branches off to the right, via **Madonna di Colletto (1305m)** towards *Festiona*. The fact that the Giro D'Italia passed this way this year certainly speaks in favour of this route, as we could see from the countless coloured inscriptions on the road. After the lunch break in *Demonte* we reached French territory again at the **Col de la Maddalena (1948m)**. After 17 km downhill, the road to the **Col de Vars (2109m)** branches off to the right. Via *Guillestre* we came back to *Briançon*, where we had been two days before. In express train speed with about 120 - 130 km/h we stormed the **Col du Lauteret (2058m)**. Over the **Col du Galibier (2646m)** and the **Col du Télégraphe (1566m)** we came to *St. Michel-de-Maurienne*. There we started our search for a camping site. The first one we went to was, concerning the sanitary facilities, "under all sow", so that we made a new attempt. The 2nd campground was signposted and also very beautifully situated - but unfortunately not yet in use. For lack of toilets, water and other things we started a 3rd attempt. In *Modane* at the *Tunnel du Frejus* (the first railway tunnel that was built in the Alps!) we were successful. The place is very nice,



but unfortunately you could hear the announcements of the nearby train station and also the road noise up to the car tunnel all evening and night long - not very loud, but still disturbing. On this place it rained for the second time during one night (the third and last time during one night the rain should hit us before Reit im Winkel). In the morning Werner and Lothar noticed that they hadn't pitched their tent properly, because a clear puddle had formed in the front part. My tent had remained dry this time.

Wednesday, July 26, 2000, day nine:

The "dream journey in the Alps" continued. Via *Lanslebourg* we reached the **Col de l'Iseran**, with **2764 m** (on the pass height is 2770 m) the highest (!) road pass of the Alps. (The Col de la Bonette is 2802 m high, but it doesn't count, because the actual pass, the rest of it branches off before and is much lower). From the top of the pass we went into *Val d'Isère* with the winter sports resort of the same name. Via *Tignes* we finally reached the border to Italy at the **Little Saint Bernard Pass (2188m)** and left France after 6 days. Following the *Aosta Valley* to *Aosta* we reached the **Great Saint Bernard Pass (2469m)** and returned to Switzerland. On the road towards *Martigny*, we turned right before to reach *Saxon* via the **Col de Planches (1411m)** and the **Pas du Lein (1656m)**. The route over these two passes is unpaved for a few kilometers, but still quite easy to ride. Since the following stretch to *Saxon* is one of the most beautiful of the whole Alps for me, I enjoyed the very curvy road and not so much the landscape and drove quite fast down into the valley. I had to wait a little bit for the others, but I just love this route. Lothar was the last one to arrive in *Saxon* and was very angry, on the one hand about the dirt road (although I had pointed this out before) and on the other hand about the speed at which this also scenic route was mastered. He gave short and strong throttle, so that the Buell went up in front and he would have laid on his nose by a hair's breadth. But the frustration was quickly gone and we went on. The "normal driver" rides in the *Rhône valley* on the valley floor via *Sion* and *Sierre* to *Brig*, not so we. Since I know this area quite well, we immediately turned left to drive via *Leytron* and *Ovronnaz* towards *Grugnay*. Shortly before this place we ended the day on a camping site, which was situated here in the height and above all quiet. With a price of 10 SFr per person (motorbike and tent included) this place is also very cheap, not only by Swiss standards! The ground was as soft as butter and the pegs went into the lawn by themselves. The restaurant at the camping site also made an excellent impression - although we didn't use it, since we mostly supplied ourselves. In the evening we talked again about Dietmar's tire change at the beginning of the tour. I took a tread gauge and went to the machines to test the tread depth. I had to find out that on the Buell of Lothar as well as again on the BMW of Dietmar the rear wheel was just before the limit of 1.6 mm or already below. So we decided to contact a tire dealer by mobile phone, who could help to solve the problem. A call to the ADAC in Germany referred us to the Italian automobile club in Milan. Unfortunately there are - at least according to the information there - supposedly no tire dealers in Italy? According to information given by telephone, the respective car dealer would do so, so that a Harley workshop would be necessary for the Buell of Lothar. Dietmar gave up the attempt unnerved. So the intention to be able to change the tyres in Tirano (see 11. day) had to be dropped. Since we wanted to ride through Italy the next days, we had to switch to Austria on Monday. So a call to the Austrian Automobile Club. A tire dealer in Klagenfurt, where we would be on Monday, 31.07.00, was ready to get the necessary tires for the two machines. But we should check again the next day if everything would work out fine.

Thursday, July 27, 2000, day 10:

We went into the *Rhône valley* and there first to *Sion*. Dietmar had to replace his camping stove and got acquainted with the Swiss prices! Then the way led us constantly uphill to *Anzère*, but here the road didn't go on - as shown on the map - but was closed. Therefore we had to turn back and drove - as intended - via *Crans* to *Montana*. The route is characterized



by fascinating views down into the *Rhône valley* and of the giants of the Valais mountains, which often rise above 4000m. *Montana* is very chic and was accordingly well visited. The descent to *Sierre* brought us back to the bottom of the valley. Following this we went via *Susten* to *Visp*. As I wanted to show the others a small but nice side trip, we turned right into the *Mattertal*. After the long tunnel, which follows at the beginning, there were only two of us left. After a longer wait, the other two also arrived, and it turned out that Dietmar had received a call on his mobile phone just before entering the tunnel. We went on to *Stalden*. There a small road branches off to the right, following the signs, towards *Törbel* and *Embd*. Always steeply uphill, with wonderful views down, we reached *Törbel* and continued uphill. Those who drive here for the first time think that the road ends somewhere up there. But this is not the case. At the *Moosalm*, at an altitude of over 2000m, we had a lunch break to get back to *Visp* via *Zeneggen*. A really nice side trip. After *Brig* we went steeply uphill, using the old *Simplon pass road* at the beginning. This route, which branches off in *Ried*, is not very long, but still very nice to drive and clearly preferable to the new Simplon route. Then we took the main route to the **Simplon Pass (2005m)**. On the *Simplon Pass* we called the tyre dealer in *Klagenfurt* and got the confirmation that the tyres would be there when we arrived there. So the journey could continue. Through the *Gondo Gorge* we drove to *Domodossola* in order to drive towards *Locarno* and the *Lago Maggiore*. Via *Malesco* we reached the *Centovalli*, which surely rightly bears its name "Hundred Valleys". *Locarno* greeted us with the rush hour, so we were glad when we had escaped this hype. Turning south, we went to *Magadino* and *Vira*, where the road branches off to the left over the **Alpe di Néggia (1395m)**. This route, which reaches *Lake Maggiore* again in *Maccagno*, is scenic and very attractive in terms of its routing. Up to *Luino* the route followed the shore of the *Lago Maggiore*. Then turning left to *Ponte Tresa* on *Lake Lugano*. Only late in the evening, around 20.00 o'clock we reached the camping site at *Agno* at the lakeside. Unfortunately, this campground (a few hundred meters further on there is another one - but we didn't know that) is not recommended anymore. I had spent the night there several times before and had not had any bad experiences, but this time the *Lugano Lake* was *in* flood and parts of the site were under water. A very narrow place was still free. The prices were salted (over 20,- DM converted per person we had to pay) and I will certainly not go there again.

Friday, July 28, 2000, day 11:

In the morning - we regularly left at 9:00 am at the latest - *Lugano* was quickly reached and from there we went along the northern shore of *Lake Lugano* to *Porlezza* on Italian territory. Shortly afterwards it started to rain for the second time on the previous tour and we put on the rain suits. In *Menággio* we reached the *Lake Como*. Going north on the left bank, we reached the end of the lake via *Dongo* and *Gravedona*. Turning left we continued to *Chiavenna*. There we turned left to the **Splügenpass (2113m)**. The rain stopped again in the driveway and we pulled out the



rain suits again. I used the descent to *Splügen* for some photos of Werner and Lothar on this very serpentine route. In *Thusis* a refueling stop was necessary, so we had to drive into town and then turn around and continue towards *Tiefencastel*. After the lunch break in *Surava* (the inn is located directly at the roadside and is highly recommended) we went up the **Albula Pass (2312m)**. There we met some scooter riders(!!!), who

went down to the valley in a rapid descent. Then we went via *Samedan* and *Pontresina* to the **Bernina Pass (2328m)**. Via *Poschiavo* we reached *Brusio*, where there is a speciality of railway construction. Here the line makes a complete circle and continues south under its own rails. Via *Tirano* where we turned left, we went to *Mazzo di Valtelino*, where the **Passo di Mortirolo (1896m)** begins. For me personally, this pass is also one of the most beautiful that the Alps have to offer. At the top, we turned right on a small high altitude road to the southwest, in order to get back to the valley over a stretch with a partial gradient of up to 25% and then to the right to the **Passo di Aprica (1113m)**. Here is a camping site that Werner and Lothar already knew and which we used. Dietmar was allowed to clean his topcase here again thoroughly, because the garlic sauce had run out. Well, one should store food, especially in glasses or bottles, safely!

Saturday, July 29, 2000, day 12:

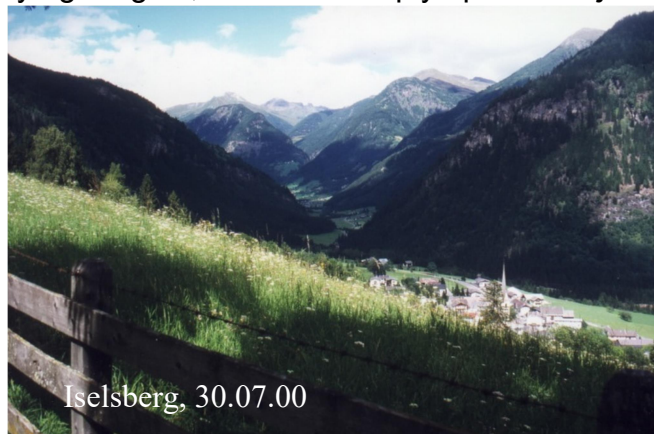
In the morning we went first to *Edolo* and further south to *Forno Allione* where the road to **Passo di Vivione (1828m)** branches off. An excellent motorcycle route, but mostly very narrow. The little frequented route leads from the top of the pass directly along the steep rock face - very exposed - to *Schilpário*. Afterwards I unfortunately took one of the few wrong turns and we had to turn back in *Azzone* to reach *Breno* via *Borno*. We mastered the here beginning road on the **Passo di Croce Dominii (1892m)** again in the express train speed. This stretch is simply fun. At the top of the pass we had cappuccino and then we went on towards *Bagolino*. About 10 km before this place the other three motorcycles were suddenly missing. I waited a few minutes and then turned around to look for the others. Then I saw the presents! 11,5 km before *Bagolino* Dietmar had not turned to the right at a bend and had collided with an oncoming car. He had torn off his left suitcase, hit a rock on the right, tore off his right suitcase and the crash bar and was able to stop the engines. The damage was considerable, but fortunately nothing had happened to Dietmar himself, except a bruise on his leg. The police came a short time later and made the accident report. For the Italians it was clear that Dietmar was solely responsible for the accident. I

returned to this place about 14 days later and measured the width of the road: 3.15 m. Dietmar could certainly have avoided the accident if he had driven on the far right, but it is doubtful whether he was solely responsible, given the very narrow width of the road. However, even Dietmar's attempt, which started after his holiday, to have at least a partial guilt of his accident opponent confirmed before an Italian court, is not very promising. The right suitcase could be fastened again to the BMW and Dietmar could continue driving with us. Further it went, in *Bagolino* right turning, to the *Lago d'Idro*. Driving northwards we reached *Lodrone*, where we had a lunch break. Because of the accident, time was already far advanced and we decided to drive only to *Auer* south of *Bozen* and camp there. The further way led us through the *Ledro Valley*, where I turned right before the tunnel leading to *Riva di Garda* to find a small side road. We reached *Pregásina* (very beautifully situated), but had to turn back there, as it was a dead end here. I discovered the road I wanted to take from a beautiful viewpoint above *Lago di Garda* on the opposite hillside. Unfortunately, as we discovered afterwards, this road is closed for motor vehicles, it is a pity, it is very beautiful and very curvy. Before *Riva di Garda* we turned left in direction to *Lago di Tenno* in order to get later to *Ponte Arche*. There the route to *Molveno* begins. In *Andalo* behind *Molveno* we turned right and reached *Mezzolombardo* and finally the road that leads from *Trento* to *Bozen*. *Auer* was not far away and so the rain, which started exactly 2 km before the village, could not disturb us anymore. But the rain stopped soon and we could set up the tents in the dry. In the evening we enjoyed the well-known gastronomy of Paula and Markus on the camping site.



Sunday, July 30, 2000, day 13:

As we had already been on the road longer than planned and there was still a long way to go, we decided to shorten the route through the *Dolomites* and drive directly to the *Staller Sattel*, but still use the most beautiful roads. So the route led us first to *Bozen* and from there to the *Sarentino Valley*. There we turned right towards *Ritten* and went steeply uphill to *Klobenstein*. Here we had a cappuccino break, which was obligatory at least for me here, before we went via *Lengstein* to *Barbian*. The whole time we could enjoy the beautiful view into the *Eisack valley*. After the drive into the valley, a short left turn and immediately right again, we went steeply uphill to *Lajen*. From there on a very small, but also very scenic road to *Gufidaun* and the *Villnöss valley*. In *Sankt Peter* turn left to the **Würzjoch (2004m)**. Down the valley we finally turned left again to reach the **Furkelpass (1759m)** via *Welschen* and *Zwischenwasser*. Arrived in the valley, we turned right immediately to reach the *Antholzer valley* a short time later. At the entrance of the valley I saw that the *Staller-*



Sattel is only open for 15 minutes every half hour from this side. Considering that it was shortly after 11:30 am, we had to hurry. I had already informed the others that we might have to accelerate here in order not to have to wait an hour for the next opening of the pass road. So said and done, ignoring all speed limits and with mostly more than 130 km/h up the valley. Arriving at *Lake Antholz* I saw that we had just made it - 3 minutes before the traffic light changed to red we drove the only 6 km long single-lane route up to the **Staller saddle (2052m)**. After a short break at the top of the pass, the ride into the beautiful *Deferegggen valley* could begin. Via *Sankt Jakob* and *Sankt Veit* we reached the Tauerntal and turned right to *Lienz*. Over the **Iselsberg (1204m)** and *Winklern* we went to *Heiligenblut am Großglockner*. 230 ÖS paid as toll and off we went on the beautiful *Großglockner-Hochalpenstraße*. Unfortunately the rain caught up with us on the *Franz-Josefs-Höhe* and we had to start the upcoming drive to the *Hochtor (2575m)* in the rain. The higher we came, the whiter the landscape above us became. When the rain turned into snow and we saw the snow on the roadside only a few meters above us, we decided to turn around and drive directly to Carinthia. So we went back to *Heiligenblut* - shortly after that we took off the rain suits again, because the sun was shining again - and continued towards *Winklern*, there we turned left onto the B 106. Via *Außerfragant*, *Obervellach* and *Mühldorf* we finally reached *Möllbrücke*, where we ended the day. The campsite there is very well situated and has a very good kitchen, but the noise in the early morning on the B 106 is more than one would actually like.

Monday, July 31, 2000, day 14:

Monday led us first via *Spittal* to the north. From *Gmünd* we came to *Kremsbrücke*, where the *Nockalm Road* begins. The route leads through the *Nockberge Nature Park* up to an altitude of over 2000m and finally ends in the village of *Ebene Reichenau*. At first we continued south and then turned off to the west and *Bad Kleinkirchheim*. In *Radentheim*, we turned left onto the B 98 and passed the *Brennsee* and *Afritzer-See* before reaching the turn-off to *Villach*. Due to a large inner-city construction site, we only passed through the town very slowly. Further direction *Wurzenpass*, we made immediately before the turnoff rest. The pizzeria there is highly recommended! The pizza was very good, but also very big. None of us made it completely! Then we could go on to *Slovenia*, our next destination. Over the **Wurzenpass (1073m)** we reached *Kranjska Gora*. Here the road branches off over the **Vršič pass (1611m), which is** peppered with 50 serpentines. The journey continued to *Bovec* and *Kobarid*. This part of the route reminded me very much of Karl May's "In the Gorges of the Balkans". Via *Tolmir* we continued on road no. 403, which led us via *Kneža* and *Koritnica* to *Podbrdo*. From here the next destination *Bohinjská Bistrica* was not difficult to find. After *Bled* we turned right to *Radovljica*. A small side road via *Zapuže* and *Zgoša* brought us to *Bistrica*, where the **Loibl pass (1367m)** begins. From here we went directly to *Klagenfurt*. At the beginning of the village we also saw a big Honda dealer, where I could have my brake pads changed the next day, which were almost down to the metal. Then we looked for a camping site at the *Wörthersee* for the night. The track there was longer than expected, so we had to drive almost to the end of the lake.

Tuesday, August 1, 2000, day 15:

So on Tuesday morning I went back directly to *Klagenfurt*, so that on the one hand I could change the brake pads and on the other hand I could have Lothar and Dietmar put on new tyres. Lothar at least was already driving on slicks at this time - there was no sign of tread on the back! Shortly before noon everything was done and as soon as my bike was in order again and the bill was paid, the others arrived. So the journey could go on. Via *Sankt Veit an der Glan* we reached the *Gurktal* road. Via *Kraig* and *Pisweg* we came to *Gurk* where we turned right to *Zwischenwässern*. From



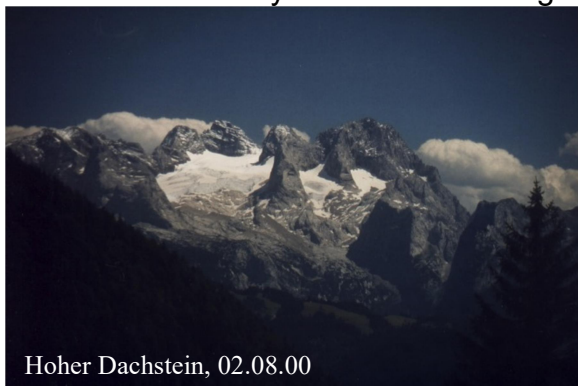
Rhône Vallev.

Althofen we reached the **Klippitztörl pass road (1644m)**. This is also a very nice motorcycle track. At *Wiesenau* we turned right to reach the **Packsattel (1169m)** via *Twimberg*. *Köchlach* and *Voitsberg* were the next stops. From there, taking the branch line to *Geistthal* and *Großstübing*, we came to *Kleinstübing* on the *Mur*. The *Mur* valley to *Bruck an der Mur* is very idyllic. In *Bruck an der Mur* - the

easternmost point of our tour - we went west again. In *Leoben* we turned right until *Eisenerz*. After the pass **Prabichl (1227m)** we passed the *Erzberg*. Here a gigantic open-cast mine has been created, which is also used for the annual *Erzberg* motocross race. On the one hand, this is certainly a tourist attraction, but on the other hand, there has also been a huge overexploitation of nature here. Unfortunately, the camping site at the *Leopoldsteiner-See*, which is marked on the map, no longer existed. Thus, we had to continue and after a few kilometres we already passed a campground sign. We stopped and wanted to turn straight when we were already greeted stormy! The owner of the campsite was "like crazy" and immediately told us that we could camp for free, because the municipality had built a construction site directly at the site and this caused considerable disturbances. The municipality therefore had to reimburse her for the costs. We only have to give our personal details and then everything would be free. All right! The place was soft, like a carpet and we actually already had a bad conscience to put up our tents and to push in the pegs. But since we were so kindly asked, we used the offer.

Wednesday, August 2, 2000, day 16:

For this Wednesday another scenic highlight was on the agenda: It should go to the



Hoher Dachstein, 02.08.00

Salzkammergut. First we followed the B 115 to *Hieflau*, in order to turn left onto the B 146. Through the *Gesäuse* and via *Admont*, *Liezen*, *Steinach* and *Bad Mitterndorf* we reached *Bad Aussee*, where we turned off towards the *Hallstätter-See*. A short stop at the lake shore and on we went via *Hallstadt*, *Bad Goisern* and *Bad Ischl* to *Traunsee*. Leaving the lake in *Mitterndorf*, we reached *Steinbach am*

Attersee via *Neukirchen*. An inn, situated on the lakeside, came just in time for our lunch break. Afterwards we went via *Unter-ach* to the *Mondsee*, which we circled once because the direct way to *St. Gilgen* was closed. After we had reached *St. Gilgen*, it was now the last one to reach *Lake Wolfgang*. At the end of the lake near *Strobl* a small toll road branches off to the *Post-Alm*. A very nice little road with beautiful landscape. The view to the *high Dachstein* - wonderful. Via *Golling* we came to *Hallein* and a little later via the B 160 back to Germany. Next on the program of the "Traum-reisen" was the *Rosfeld-Hö-henstraße*. The toll for this is worth every penny! The wonderful views down, both towards Austria and towards *Berchtesgaden on the German side*, are phantastic. Via *Berchtesgaden* we followed the B 305 towards *Inzell* to finally reach a camping site south of *Ruhpolding* for the last time. The place was very cheap - 12 DM per person - and very well maintained. The sanitary facilities were very good, so we can recommend this place.

Thursday, August 3, 2000, day 17:

The last day had started with rain during the night. In the morning, however, it was dry at first and we drove back to Austria via *Reit im Winkel*. Via *Kössen* and along the *Walchsee* we came to *Niederndorf*. Shortly before, it had unfortunately started to rain, and we were forced to put on the rain suit for the third time on this tour. When we wanted to turn off in the direction of *Kufstein*, Dietmar said goodbye to us and drove directly back to Munich. But the rest of us turned left and followed the given tour. As soon as Dietmar parted from us, it stopped raining and we arrived dry over *Kufstein*, further direction *St. Johann* to *Kitzbühel*. Over the **pass Thurn (1273m)** we reached *Mittersil*. There we had our last lunch break and then continued to the **Gerlospass (1507m)** and into the *Zillertal*. A construction site with traffic light control then led to confusion! A worker sat next to the traffic light and watched calmly the change to green, so off we went. Unfortunately, the opposite side also had green and so we were glad to be on the road with the motorcycle. We still passed the oncoming traffic on the single-lane route - the one behind us certainly didn't, and it certainly took quite a long time until this traffic chaos disappeared! In *Zell am Ziller* we turned left to take the *Zillertaler-Höhenstraße*. Unfortunately, it started raining again up there and the view into the valley was virtually non-existent - what a pity. After a short break in an inn we continued - unfortunately until *Sonthofen* in the rain. Passing the *Achensee* we drove to the **Achenpass (941m)** and on to the *Sylven-steinspeicher*. *Vorderriß* and *Garmisch-Parten-kirchen* were the next stops. Via *Erwald* and *Reutte*, and - not to forget the **Gaicht-Pass (1082m)** and the **Oberjoch-Pass (1180m)**, we returned happily to the rainy *Sonthofen*.

Comments:

A total of 5800 km in 17 days, that is 340 km a day, 73 more or less high passes, countless serpentines and lots of riding fun. We were very lucky with the weather, only three times for a short time, and then the rest from Zillertal to Sonthofen, we had to put on the rain suits - otherwise almost always bright sunshine - while the people of Sonthofen were not very happy about the were predominantly rainy weather. The route described in the book we have basically driven - it is just great! Although I always find



View from the Rosfeld-Höhenstraße, 02.08.00

very nice routes myself, I couldn't have chosen this tour better. The most beautiful landscapes, the most wonderful roads (with very little traffic on these secondary routes) have been chosen here. "Werner-ohne-Licht" (since his problems with the generator he almost always drove without light), "Lothar-Slick" (his rear tire was shiny in Klagenfurt), "Dr. Kamikaze" (Dietmar because of his accident at the Croce Domini) and also I were a good team. The speed was good and we didn't have to wait for anyone. Dietmar was, with his French language skills and his cooking skills, a successful addition to our group, but also with his "specialties", such as worn tires, defect on the BMW, such as first leaked honey and later garlic sauce in the topcase and accident, he provided variety. It was a lot of fun, and I would definitely ride the track again, but then with a little more time to explore one or the other section more closely. Werner regularly complained about the "many breaks", but on the one hand I wanted to be considerate of our smoker (Lothar), but on the other hand it was necessary to take one or two breaks to enjoy the landscape. I like to drive a lot myself, but stops are necessary, otherwise you don't need to drive into such a beautiful area as the Alps as a whole.