

HOT STREAK THE SCENIC ROUTE

BY WAYNE ROTH

AN OVERSEAS TRIP,
A NEW HEADSET,
AND AN UPGRADED BIKE.

HERE'S A ROUNDUP
OF REVIEWS TO GET
YOUR MOTOR RUNNING
THIS SEASON.

Recently, I spent a week on a motorcycle in the Alpine mountains of Austria and Germany. **EDELWEISS BIKE TRAVEL** has been in business since 1980 and offers guided tours in 180 locations across the globe. Inspired by my motorcyclist's "bucket list" published in the last issue of *Ride Texas*, I browsed their online catalog and chose to ride a BMW R1200GS for five days on the Alps and Lakes Tour. The GS was among their top-tier bike selections, bringing the fee to \$4,205 to also cover lodging, dinners, and a chase van that conveniently carries luggage between hotels. Before arrival, Edelweiss plucks your chosen bike from its warehouse in Austria and delivers it to your starting location, which in my case was a small town called Erding, near Munich, Germany. Edelweiss pre-mails you a spiral-bound tour book, which suggests you use carry-on luggage for your helmet and wear your riding jacket in order to save precious luggage space. They warn you not to pre-ship riding gear to the hotel because of possible customs delays.



Rejoining the group at Grossglockner High Alpine Road at 8400 feet after slaloming through the turns below on a BMW R1200RT.

<DAY ONE> After breakfast, which begins each day with a ride brief that covers all route options, everybody mounts up. While group riding with the tour guide is encouraged for safety and camaraderie, you're free to ride solo or pair off into groups if the guide's route isn't to your liking. My first day, I chose to ride solo on the longer 142-mile course that snakes its way from Erding into the Alps and on to Salzburg, Austria, guided only by my trusty GPS, pre-programmed with the cities listed in the tour book. The rest of the gang followed the guide on a more direct route that included a tour of the spectacular Castle Herrenchiemsee, built for King Ludwig II in 1878. I have to say that without GPS, there's no way I could have easily navigated on my own through the multitude of small German villages and roads that peppered my path—very different from Texas. It took about an hour for me to reach the fantastic Deutsche Alpenstrasse (German Alpine Road) that winds its way through the Alps from Lake Constance at the west end to Salzburg at the east, and I hit the road roughly at its middle in Schliersee, a picturesque resort town on a lake of the same name in the Bavarian Alps.

To the east of Schliersee, the Alpenstrasse climbs upwards through a series of tight switchbacks and roughly parallels an old pipeline that once transported brine from the salt mines in the Berchtesgaden area, south of Salzburg. After another hour of spirited riding and breathtaking views (when I could spare time to turn my head away from the road), I stopped for a drink and to take photos at Lake Weitsee, a beautiful nature preserve popular with bathers and hikers. Another hour or so later, I was climbing my way up the 7.5-mile stretch of Rossfeld Panoramastrasse, one of Germany's highest scenic roads with amazing views of Germany and Austria to the left and right, respectively.

Just before I reached Salzburg, I stopped to refuel, happy to be riding an efficient motorcycle as gas was in the vicinity of \$5.50 per US gallon. Despite my longer route, I beat the rest of the group to the hotel, so I set off on foot to explore the historic city. Salzburg is the birthplace of the composer Amadeus Mozart, and

the cobblestone streets around his birth house were heavily populated with tourists. Our tour guide, Marko Bauer, had reserved two dinner tables for us at Stiftskeller St. Peter, a restaurant that lies within the walls of St. Peter's Abbey and is believed to be the oldest in Europe, serving folks since 803 AD. The entertainment during the multi-course meal was provided by a sextuplet of musicians on stringed instruments, with two opera singers playfully bantering back and forth to a selection of Mozart. Thus, Edelweiss provided a little highbrow culture to a group of guys and gals more likely accustomed to eating pub-grub meals while wearing padded pants. Not bad for a Day One!

<DAY TWO> On the second day, we all rode behind our second tour guide, Wouter Despiegeleer. Most Edelweiss tour guides work in pairs and alternate days serving as lead rider and chase van driver. A native of Belgium, Wouter was new to Edelweiss, and we broke him in on his first tour. Our first rest stop was at Das Kehlsteinhaus (The Eagle's Nest), which was once an executive retreat for members of the Nazi Party, including Adolph Hitler, who was said to have hated the harrowing ride up 6,000 feet to the main house. We let the bikes cool for



Don Tujaka, Sharon Dolega, Bill Richards, and Wayne Roth in the Austrian city of Hallstatt.

(1) Carol Clemens enjoys her hot chocolate at Restaurant Hexenkuchl. (2) The Alps & Lakes riders huddled near their bikes for warmth at Grossglockner pass. (3) The author in beautiful Hallstatt. (4) Panoramic view from the hotel in Traunkirchen.

several hours while being bussed to the top on an exceedingly narrow road with a steep drop-off that made me appreciate Hitler's concern. Kehlsteinhaus itself was not impressive, but the views of Austria from the outdoor café where we lunched were extraordinary. Upon returning to the bikes, we set out for my second trip through Rossfeld Panoramastrasse and broke for another photo opportunity before continuing on the winding roads to our overnight rest stop in Traunkirchen, a small town on the beautiful Lake Traunsee. I learned that night that not all European hotels are graced with air conditioning, but managed to get some sleep anyway in a pretty toasty room.

<DAY THREE> In the morning, we set out behind Marko again for a vigorous ride with a few stops for the purchase of non-water-absorbent gloves and tasty pastries at Café Zauner, in the town of Bad Ischl. We also spent a couple hours in the absolutely gorgeous lakeside city of Hallstatt, which is a must-see. Meanwhile Wouter, on chase duty, had





The Cafe Zauner in Bad Ischl.

stopped at a grocery store and set up a nice picnic at a lakeside park just outside of Hallstatt, where we met him and his big van for lunch. We then continued on through more mountain passes and curvy roads to our hotel in the resort town of Kaprun, for a GPS-measured tally of 136 miles over four hours in the saddle, with an additional four hours spent nosing around on foot.

<DAY FOUR> Most Edelweiss tours include a rest day, which only means you stay in the same hotel for two nights and have the option not to ride during the day. Nobody from our group chose to just hang out, and we all set off with Wouter in the lead on the Grossglockner High Alpine Road, where we froze our tails off at an elevation of 8,400 feet surrounded by snowcapped mountain peaks. After a break for coffee at top of Grossglockner in the touristy Restaurant Fuschertörl, we descended back to the relative warmth of the valleys below and stopped for lunch at Restaurant Hexenkuchl, a biker-friendly pub-grub eatery with outdoor seating and a fantastic view of the nearby 426-foot Jungfernsprung waterfall. Although we had planned for an additional ride over the border into Italy for pizza (and to add another country to our logbook), wet weather was approaching from the west, so we decided to head back directly to Kaprun and have beer and pizza there instead.

<DAY FIVE> We used the final riding day to return to Erding, where we shared our last supper and, the next morning, watched Marko and Wouter load up our bikes on a flat bed and drive away. I was sad to see them go, but eager to return home to Texas and begin planning my next adventure. After all this fun, what do I do for the rest of the year? How about piloting a float plane to Alaska? Let me talk to my wife and I'll get back to you. 📧

START/FINISH: **ERDING, GERMANY** NEAREST AIRPORT: **MUNICH**
 DURATION: **7 DAYS TOTAL, 5 RIDING DAYS**
 TOTAL DISTANCE: **463-743 MILES** DAILY DISTANCES: **84-175 MILES**
 WEBSITE: **EDELWEISSBIKE.COM**

TALK TO ME

On the final day of the Edelweiss tour, my new ride buddy Tim DelGrosso and I range-tested a pair of **CARDO PACKTALK BOLD HEADSETS** I'd packed for the trip. I'd been using one set all week, listening to music and making periodic calls home. By this point I was getting a little tired of the 1,600-song playlist I'd programmed into my phone, but the PackTalk's battery charge lasted for the duration of each day's ride, and I couldn't complain about the excellent sound quality, which was loud enough to be heard through foam earplugs. On phone calls, which I initiated by saying, "Hey Cardo, call home" into my helmet-mounted microphone, my wife revealed she couldn't tell I was riding on a motorcycle, as my voice was perfectly clear and devoid of any wind or engine noise. Tim and I put more distance between us than most riders usually would and we never lost voice contact, although it did get a bit choppy when Tim left my sight behind a curve lined with trees. It was fun to concentrate on the new technology, rather than bemoaning the fact that I was rapidly approaching the end of a wonderful motorcycle adventure.

cardosystems.com



Wayne Roth pictured with the new Gold Wing DCT (at right) and his 1976 Goldwing GL1000.

FIRST RIDE

Back in Texas, I jumped at the chance to test ride a sixth-generation 2018 **HONDA GOLD WING TOUR AUTOMATIC DCT** (dual clutch transmission) at the Circuit Of The Americas track in Austin. I own a 1976 GL1000 Gold Wing, and I wanted to see how much the model had evolved over the last 42 years. First, the numbers: The new Gold Wing DCT has six horizontally opposed cylinders with a displacement of 1832cc, develops an estimated 125 horsepower, weighs in at 833 pounds, has a 7-speed automatic transmission, and costs \$28,200. The bike was completely redesigned for 2018 with the goal of making it sportier and, therefore, more appealing to younger riders. I found that the effect of the bike's significant weight quickly disappears once underway, as it's very easy to roll into a turn. The electronics are superb, with four modes of "throttle by wire" engine control. Despite my preconception that I'd never like an automatic transmission on a motorcycle, I loved the way the Honda seamlessly shifted gears as power was added. I played with the transmission by manually shifting it, but soon realized it was pointless to try to outsmart the bike's processor. The next time I'm in the market for a motorcycle upgrade, the new Gold Wing will be at the top of my list.

powersports.honda.com/2018/gold-wing.aspx