

Members of the BMW MOA Foundation Board,

I wish to extend my thanks to the BMW MOA Foundation for granting me the Paul B. Scholarship to advance my motorcycling skills as well as to provide a synopsis of my training experience. I've been riding my F700GS for four years, have taken the MSF basic & advanced courses, and considered myself a solid intermediate rider prior to my new training course.

I chose to use the scholarship to help fund the week long Alps Riding Academy with Edelweiss Bike Travel. The course, developed by Christian Preining, is designed to teach the appropriate riding techniques needed to safely negotiate the tight hairpin roads of the Alps. Christian is a BMW certified off-road instructor and has a myriad of other credentials including 10 years of motocross racing, experience racing the infamous Isle Of Man, and so many years leading Edelweiss trips that he has become in his words, "like a piece of furniture" within the organization. He proved to be one of those invaluable instructors who has not only the skills but the ability to effectively share those skills with his students in a safe and fun learning environment. It's safe to say that he made the Alps Riding Academy the amazing learning experience that it was!

Our group of four students with varying skill levels and riding experiences met at a cute little hotel on the outskirts of Bolzano Italy. This was our base from which we did daily rides. On day one, a non riding day, we gathered for an initial welcome and received our rental bikes. I had chosen the F700GS since I was already comfortable with it. The next day, our first riding day began with a couple of hours in a classroom setting to learn the physics of riding, finding the best lines for cornering and information specific to riding in the Alps. Then we hit the roads and got our first taste of mountain riding on the way to the safety park where we worked on skills in a closed environment. By far the most critical skill that proved necessary on the mountain passes was the slow speed tight turn with weight shifting; serious weight shifting. We practiced several other skills, got rid of the first day jitters and even got to do a little tire shredding on the mini race track. I loved it! Exhausted after that first day, I felt excited that I had already learned so much and was looking forward to our next day in the Dolomites.

Christian assessed our skills and took us out on successively more challenging rides each day. He provided an appropriate amount of feedback both verbally and non verbally. Simply riding behind him taught me so much about what a safe and skilled rider looks like. He warned us about upcoming turns and gravel in the road by his bike handling.

Daily challenges included many mountain passes, hairpin turns with traffic, sweeping turns, cobblestone lined village streets, wooded one lane roads with uneven terrain, and a quick stop for an unexpected sheep crossing.

Highlights included one particularly difficult mountain passage with steep terrain, tight turns and the unexpected reward of a mountain hut restaurant for those able to complete the challenge. We also rode the dramatic one lane canyon roads with unlit tunnels surrounding Lake Garda.

Needless to say, this was an excellent course and I felt myself becoming a better rider day after day. I feel I'm now surpassing the intermediate skill level and am motivated to continue to learn and grow on the bike.

Thank you again to the BMW MOA Foundation directors for choosing me to receive the BMW MOA Paul B. Scholarship.

Sincerely,

Julie Snyder.