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Life's a Beach

- Beach's Motorcycle Adventures

By Jane Schluter, Editor-in-Chief,
RA #33524

I just got off the phone with Rob Beach of Beach's Motorcycle Adventures, Ltd. and I can honestly say I am on a high. I have met few people who are so passionately positive about what they do. Rob grew up on a motorcycle, an R69 his dad bought, and rode over 70,000 miles as a passenger. His embodiment of the spirit of the motorcycle rider is visceral and lifelong. Along with Gretchen, his wife, the Beaches are truly a remarkable team. For them, it is all about the adventure, not necessarily the destination and Beaches Motorcycle Adventures are designed to help riders broaden their horizons through the spirit of adventure and see the world through continually new eyes.

Rob Beach

Rob Beach, the owner of Beach's Motorcycle Tours, has been around motorcycles his whole life. He is one the fortunate motorcyclists whose parents were lifelong motorcyclists. His father had a successful career as a merry-go-round salesman and corporate pilot so Rob grew up going to amusement parks all over the US and was on the road with his dad much of the year. Rob's father traveled 3-4 days a week and would wake him up at 3 AM and ask if he would like to go to Chicago or wherever. Instead of going to school, Rob, being a typical young boy, naturally chose to take trips with his father. Truth be told,

sometimes his father also needed his son to walk along the wing tip of the plane and guide it along the taxiway because the weather was so bad. Rob says that both his mother and father were "impressive" individuals who helped set the stage for a life not only "on the road," but also full of "adventure on the road."

In 1969 Rob's father found himself unemployed and decided to go on a trip. He went to the bank and, incredibly, got a loan to purchase a motorcycle and go to Europe. He signed up for a tour in Europe which included a BMW motorcycle delivery. On this bike tour, he realized that he could conduct a better and more organized tour even having no knowledge of the travel and tour business. After two years of research he began doing his own bike tours of the Alps in 1972. Rob's dad was also instrumental in the formation of the organization and magazine for the BMW MOA. Rob's family used to collate the magazine on their dining room table. As a tribute to this history, Beach's donated a tour to the MOA every year for 30 years but now he donates tours to the RA.

Rob Beach saw his father using his motorcycle as his profession, organizing and riding tours. Rob instinctively chose to follow in his father's footsteps and worked with his father until about 30 years ago when, at 71 years, his father retired. Adding up all the time that Rob has been involved in the business, Rob has been touring for over 40 years. This translates to 9 years of living

in hotels for tours alone and more than a decade in hotels between tours, away from his home in Western NY. Ironically, despite Rob's being a world traveler, his home on an island in the middle of the Niagara River is less than a 1000 feet from where he grew up.

In the summer tour season, Rob and his wife Gretchen are based in Munich. Gretchen became involved in Beach's not long after a 2006 Beach's tour that she and her father rode in. The rest, as they say, is history. Gretchen also grew up in a motorcycle family. By the time she was two years old, she was watching her parents and siblings ride dirt bikes in the California desert. Gretchen is truly committed to the motorcycle adventure lifestyle in her own right.

Rob is getting close to his 200th tour and is showing no signs of stopping. What keeps him going? Rob profoundly loves his job – the freedom it gives him and his family, the fellowship, and the ability to share his knowledge and enable people to discover incredible places. He is motivated to help those unsure of their surroundings and realize their potential to experience new adventures. In other words, he helps teach them to convert their desire to go out and explore new places into the ability to go out and explore new places.

Rob enjoys engaging with riders who are unfamiliar with being in a foreign area and is understanding of their concerns. Rob gives them the information and tools that ul-



“We bring a group of fascinating people together and then go out on a common adventure, but it is not a common adventure that we all do the same way.”
—Rob Beach

timately allows them to step out of their comfort zone. For example, many people on tour do not speak the local languages and are leery of riding without being near Rob. Rob is able to demonstrate that not speaking the language is not a hindrance to communication and travel. He finds great reward in the tales of these people's unforgettable day-trips and their changed attitudes. While Rob and Gretchen

everything you would look for in a motorcycle tour – I haven't found any place that beats Europe."

Rob Beach believes that the best tours can be taken in Europe. Because of that, many of Beach's Motorcycle Adventures tours are in Europe. However, they also do tours to South Africa, New Zealand, and some other destinations every few years. According to a friend who went on one of his tours, Rob

rider was surprised not only by Rob's memory but that his deposit was valid.

In Europe, Rob supplies BMW motorcycles for his tours and a typical tour has eight to twenty-five people. Beach's Motorcycle Adventures is the only tour company that offers a variety of routes every day. Each of these routes is pre-programmed into the GPS. In addition, there is a tour book for each tour that has 150-200 pages of information about this specific tour, routes, and sites. As a motorcyclist, you want to get out and see the country but sometimes part of this discovery is a touristy place, such as Neuschwanstein Castle. Everyone is unique and therefore wants a different tour experience.

Rob believes he is in the business of providing options for your adventure, options that include roads not traveled by other tour companies. On one tour you can go see a castle but take a more remote route to get there or choose from other route options for that day. In providing flexibility, Beach's allows riders to control their trip to make it a more memorable experience. For those who prefer to have Rob along, he goes ... it comes down to "what do you want to do? This is your vacation, not mine."

A day on tour actually starts the evening before. Everyone meets for dinner at 7:30 p.m. to discuss the next day's options. Rob will go through the routes, discuss some highlights, some things to avoid, who will go where, who will pair up with whom and who will go with him if they would like to ride with him. Here is the time for questions from those who have read through their tour book. The only rule one needs to follow is to have luggage down by 9 a.m. because the van will be leaving shortly thereafter. Likewise, if you

provide riders with routes, scenery, food, lodging and motorcycle rides, they hope to facilitate a person's creation of their own truly memorable, and possibly life altering, experience.

The European Tours

"It's very simple. I haven't found a more interesting place to ride motorcycles than Europe. There are a lot of pretty places and culturally fascinating places in the world. It comes down to simply a great combination of really interesting street riding, tourist amenities and

has a love for these countries that is contagious. He purposely keeps the tours small and leads every one of his European tours. He and Gretchen personally ensure the quality of the meals, hotels, and all that a tour could include. It also makes for a more personal experience with each rider for each tour. For example, he has someone who is coming on a tour next week who put a deposit on a tour 12 years ago but was unable to use it. Rob answered the call, immediately remembered this person and told him he would apply his deposit to this tour. The



are not going to make it in by 7:30 p.m. give Rob or one of the other two contacts a call to let them know you are safe and happy.

Once the plans are set the night before, people leave when they want to for the next day's ride with options in hand and only one point of reference – the 7:30 p.m. dinner at the next destination. Often, they will have a spontaneous picnic on the way because Rob has found many people are destination driven and would miss all the interesting things along the way and the freedom in their adventure. He wants you to stop at that castle you see, even though it's not on the route for the day. I think this is fabulous as I would be that person, saying, "Oh gosh I'd like to go see that castle."

"Gretchen and I are just here to make sure you have had the best motorcycle ride you ever had. My job is to offer possibilities, opportunities, encouragement, instill confidence, and for those who wish to simply follow me, the ability to stop thinking for a few weeks."

I look forward to riding on one Beach's Motorcycle Adventure tours because of the unique flexibility of the program, depth of the knowledge provided, size of the tour group and ability to personalize the experience. The route options are extremely detailed and varied. The tours seem to embody the true spirit of the motorcyclist – get up, get out, go riding and see where it takes you, in a somewhat non-time dependent, no-special-permission-needed-to-explore environment. In addition, Rob is filled with interesting stories and tireless positive energy that will make you just laugh.

In asking Rob to sum it up in a memorable experience, he could not pick just one as they happen on every tour. That said, he summarized by saying that he and Gretchen



en find it heartwarming when they think about the number of tour members who now realize how much there is in the world to be explored and now have the mindset to do it. Rob and Gretchen will continue to lead tours until "he can no longer throw a leg over the motorcycle," and there will be more stories

just like those Rob shared with me. One former member drove from CA to NY to one of their reunions. He hadn't been on a bike in 15 years but was on one of Beach's Motorcycle Adventures' tours 30 years earlier. He drove across the US just so he could sit next to Rob's dad and say, "Your tour changed my life!"

