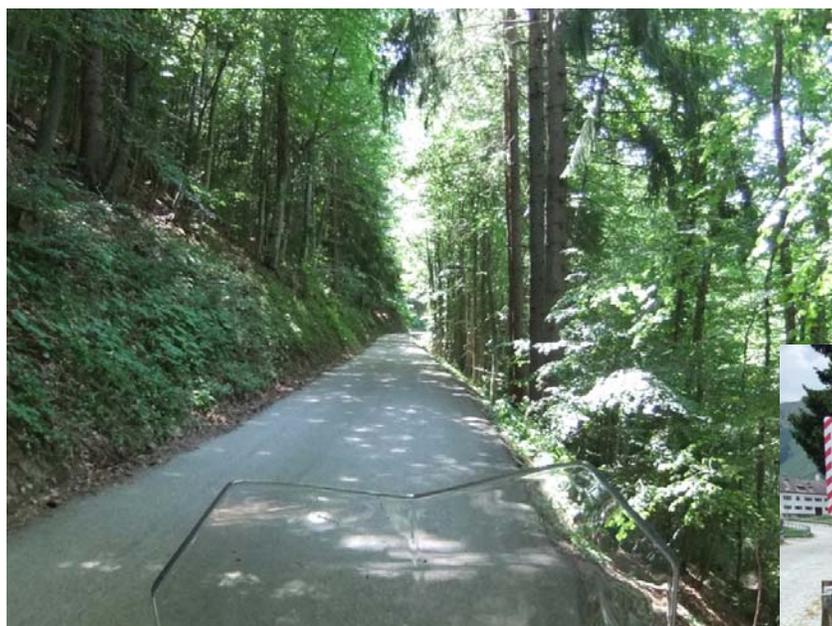


Beach's Motorcycle Adventures

Alpine Adventure West by Bill Edwards

The roads, most no wider than a cart path, wound their way through the forested side of the mountains and into the villages with regularity. Most of the time, the routes through the villages turned



to cobblestone where the doors of the small farm houses and small shops opened directly onto the street. More often than not, the village had a freely



flowing water fountain, fed by mountain streams, located near village center where you could drink the cleanest, clearest, coldest water available on tour. It was almost a step back in time on a modern motorcycle.

Beach Motorcycle Adventures has numerous tours from which to choose - several Alps tours, an Italian tour, an Italian/Sicilian tour, an island tour of Corsica and Sardinia, a South African tour, and a tour of New Zealand. Rob and Gretchen Beach's slogan, "we turn dreams into memories," couldn't be more true. A Beach Motorcycle

Adventure means breaking free of urban areas and spending the majority of your tour riding some extremely serious roads like the one through the Splugen Pass that I rode on the Alpine Adventure



West. The Splugen Pass, between Switzerland and Italy, is only open from June to October, due to weather and because it has some serious hairpin turns, some extreme switchbacks, and unlit tunnels, and hairpin turns and extreme switchbacks IN unlit tunnels. Really!

Most of Beach's Tours are two weeks in length providing lots of opportunity to do some serious riding. As a serious motorcyclist Rob relies exclusively on BMWs. For my Alpine Adventure West, I

requested and rode a new water-cooled 2015 R1200GS. What a machine!

A discussion of the next day's riding plans usually takes place at dinner, so the only real requisite for the group is that if you're going to be late for dinner, let the Beaches know. Rob preprograms each day of the tour on a BMW Navigator IV with a short route for those who want to sleep late or do some sightseeing at the next location, a long challenging route or two for those who want to spend the day riding, and a medium route or two for those who want to sample a little of both. You're on your own with Beach Tours as you can follow Rob on any of the routes if you want, or you're free to tackle any of the routes by yourself. You can leave and stop at your

leisure and set your own pace, an opportunity unique to motorcycle tours. No matter which routes you choose there are some really unique off route excursions available

that Rob calls Rob's Roads. These often provide some of the best scenery, topography, and photo opportunities you'll get, but some are quite challenging. The Alpine Adventure West began and ended in Zurich, with a route through the Swiss countryside, the Black Forest in



Germany, and then numerous small villages in the French, Italian,

and Swiss Alps. Many days we spent criss crossing back and forth between France, Italy, and Switzerland. Of note is the fact that crossing the borders between these countries is much easier with the advent of the European Union. Most of the border stations are unmanned.

There were 3 stops on tour where we spent two nights at one hotel. These are timed and spaced throughout the tours to give those who want it the opportunity to do some additional sightseeing, or alternately some leg stretching, if needed. For those who want to sightsee while riding, Rob supplies anywhere from two to four “out



and in” routes for those days. Two of these routes out of Talloires and Embrun featured the mountain passes at the Col du Glandon and the Col d’ Allos, two of the “climbs” featured in the most recent Tour de France, which was about a week behind us in the Alps.

Our tour included a chance to visit Mont Blanc the highest peak in Europe; Lake Maggiore, the second largest lake in Italy and the



largest lake in Switzerland; the Matterhorn; the highest road in the Alps; and most of the best known passes in the Alps - Col du Glandon, Col d' Allos, Petit St. Bernard, Grand St. Bernard, Klausen Pass, Col d' Agnel, Splugen Pass, and the highest paved pass in the Alps, the Col de l'lesran. Needless to say the

roads to these places were amazing to say the least, and some of them were real riding work. I spent the better part of the first eleven days of the tour looking for “that” picture of something like the road up the famed



Stelvio Pass. I had ridden many, many of these roads with numerous hairpin turns, but the photograph just hadn't been there. I finally found it en route from Verbania, Italy to Arosa, Switzerland on the second to last day of the tour. The picture was worth the wait - so was the ride!