

AUTOMOTIVE **TRAVELER**

October 2007 ISSUE No.4

**Motor City Madness
Cruising Detroit's
Woodward
Avenue**



Volkswagen
Touareg+
**Lisbon to Dakar
the Hard Way**

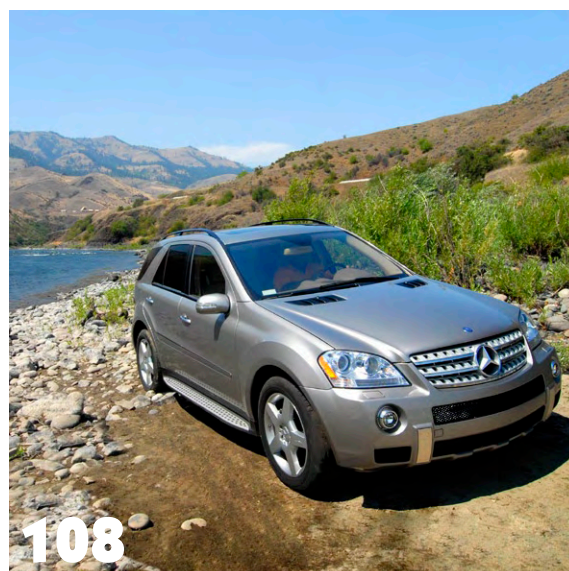
Chevrolet HHR+
**Visiting the du Pont's
Brandywine Valley**

Mazda CX-9+
Route 66, Los Angeles to Tulsa, and a special '57 Plymouth

BMW 550i+
Germany, Austria, and Czech Republic, One Family's Euro Delivery Adventure

this month's features

in *Automotive Traveler*



BMW Euro Delivery Vacation

Debi Lander's purchase of a 2008 BMW 550i funds a family road trip vacation in Germany, Austria, and the Czech Republic.

Exploring the du Ponts' Place in the Country

Vera Marie Badertscher explores the legacy of the du Ponts with a tour of the Brandywine Valley Scenic Byway across Pennsylvania and Delaware in a retro-looking Chevrolet HHR.

Dakar – Destination, Journey, or Just a Race?

Do you enjoy driving? Author/photographer **John Rettie** asks, how'd you like to drive over 4000 miles in 14 days? How would you like to drive to Dakar?

Tulsa Bound

Brett Stierli, with three best buddies in tow, treks from Southern California to Tulsa to be on hand for the reveal of a 1957 Plymouth Belvedere buried a half-century ago.

2007 Saturn Outlook

Steve Statham travels to the heart of a New Mexico volcano but avoids testing the Outlook's lava-avoidance capabilities.

2008 Mercedes-Benz ML550

Mark Elias cruises through North-Central Idaho to discover this SUV ain't no small potatoes!

European Delirium

**Debi Lander's purchase of a 2008 BMW 550i
funds a family road trip vacation in Germany, Austria,
and the Czech Republic.**

“Want a new BMW?” my husband Jay asked. Who wouldn’t? “Of course,” I replied. Then he revealed the catch: “Mind if we go to Germany to pick it up?”

“Mind?” I replied, immediately imagining castles and cathedrals, Bavarian villages, and Rhine wine. Jay’s thoughts zoomed to powerful, fast cars, the Autobahn...and beer. (Surely our interests overlap somewhere?)

Plans proceeded to purchase a 2008 BMW 550i, take possession of it in Munich, drive it around for two weeks, return

it to the factory, and then let BMW ship the car to the United States. This process is called taking European delivery, and each weekday, approximately eight to ten Americans scoot away from the factory behind the wheel of their brand-new Bimmer. Many European manufacturers offer such a delivery option.

Vehicles accepted abroad enter the States as used cars, with a reduced tax rate. Hence, the automakers can pass the

savings on to the customer. In our case, we applied the seven percent price deduction to family vacation

tion funds, and saved airfare by redeeming our frequent flyer miles. No rental car or train tickets were needed.

Laura, our teen daughter, joined Jay and me on this trip. We figured she’d learn hands-on history, experience cultural differences, and spend time with us, a rarity these days.





Our arrival in Munich

We anticipated high prices; Germany and Austria have prosperous economies and the dollar is down. Much of that results from industrious workers and the auto manufacturers: Audi, BMW, Mercedes, Porsche, and Volkswagen. But, I scoured the Internet looking for hotel discounts and we did our best; BMW even arranged bargain-priced rooms at The King's Hotel in Munich.

Shortly after our arrival, we darted off to see

ornate, post-war reconstructed buildings in the Marienplatz. The town hall clock features a famous Glockenspiel that comes alive every day at 5 p.m. with little dancing figures that re-enact festivities from a 16th-Century royal Bavarian wedding.



We joined a guide for a walking tour, who led us through churches exploding with gilded baroque flair and an open-air market selling pretzels the size of large pizzas. We meandered toward the Royal Residenz and the square where Hitler paraded his troops.

But, the Hofbrauhaus – an immense beer-garden restaurant imbued with frivolity, oompah music, and plenty of brew – beckoned. And we were

ready! Although I am not much of a beer drinker, when in Munich...I ordered a stein. The stout waitress clasped all our mugs in one hand, although I was barely able to raise my one-liter glass vessel. Mom and Dad permitted Laura to try a Radler – a light beer mixed with lemonade, since the drinking age in Germany is 16. Tasty dinners of escalope and spatzle cost about the same as drinks – six euro. Perhaps the deflated dollar situation wasn't so bad?

Our guide pointed to the subway, sending us back to our hotel. First mistake – we rode in the wrong direction – and ended up hiring a taxi (a BMW no less), to chauffeur us home.

Auto Delivery at the Factory

We arrived at the BMW factory just outside the city, as excited a kernels of corn ready to pop. Almost instantly we were seated in our 2008 metallic-silver ultimate driving machine. Sebastian, our rep, taught us to operate all parts: side mirrors that fold in, "great for tight spots," he said; recharging outlets in the back-

Munich, Bavaria's Capital, is home to the famed Glockenspiel and Hoffbrauhaus. Crowds gather to watch the clock tower figures come alive twice daily and party in the beer garden. Insert- Jay, Debi, and Laura raise a toast.



Stunning 2008 BMW 550i stands ready for European Delivery at the factory near Munich. The proud Lander family takes possession of their German auto at the start of a two-week driving escapade covering 1,900 miles.

seat (designed with techno-teens in mind); adaptive brake lights, to reduce the risk of bumper-to-bumper collisions; infrared night vision; and a concert hall sound system. He gave special instruction on the GPS navigation system, which soon

became our omniscient observer.

Sebastian warned, “don’t take the rpm over 4,500 and stop by the drop-off location to complete paperwork.” This method eliminates shipping concerns at the end of a

trip. After he input the address into the navigation system, license M 3714 Z officially entered the freeway.

Jay skillfully maneuvered through congested traffic like a seasoned local driver, eventually returning



downtown to retrieve our luggage. After fitting all our bags into the cavernous trunk, we were poised for a two-hour autobahn adventure.

Just beyond Munich, Jay surged onto the super-highway, thrilled with the tremendous thrust from the V-8, 360-horsepower engine. He was like a young boy unfolding pages in a forbidden Playboy magazine; the sexy car more than

satisfying his dreams.

He raved that the vehicle hugged the road, the steering was responsive, and POW—had quick acceleration. He rambled on about the autobahn being pure joy and Europeans driving with serious intent. Then, my husband began lecturing, “you’ve got to watch

your rear-view mirror, because cars traveling 120 mph appear on your tail in seconds.”

“Got it,” I answered, free to ogle at velvety alpine hills, like pictures from the childhood classic “Heidi.” A-framed wood and stucco homes studded the rocky fields, each one sporting flower boxes bursting in bloom.

We named the voice of our GPS system “Money penny,” and mimicked her proper Brit pronunciation and straight-to-the-point advice, “take the next exit, then turn right at the first intersection.”

My 007 spouse barreled down the A8 and in a flash, edged into Salzburg. Rounding a hairpin turn so tight drivers have to stop and back up; he spun up the mountain to Schloss Mönchstein, a regal hotel.

Our top-floor room overlooked the peacefully cradled city, crowded with so many church steeples that Laura and I lost count. At 7 p.m. we heard bells, lots of bells in various octaves; some played delicate melodies, others clanged or gonged. Julie Andrews was right – the hills of Salzburg truly are alive with music. Heavenly music.

Next day, we made quick study of the historic old town and Amadeus' birthplace. Acting as typical tourists, we bought Mozartkugeln (nougat-covered chocolate balls) from a tiny shop, Café Konditorei Fürst, which claimed to be the originator.

Other confectioners mass produce Mozartsweets, bouncing them off souvenir



insert - Creating a Mozartkugeln- Austria's chocolate ball treats.

Below - The Salzach River flows through Salzburg.

shelves, at the rate of a hundred million per year. No wonder: The candy melts in your mouth, created by divine inspiration, like the maestro's compositions.

Mistake number two: In the afternoon, we followed the hotel clerk's "easy" instructions to nearby Helbrunn Palace, and got lost. Jay remained in the car and studied the owner's manual,

determined to master the crucial navigation device.

Meanwhile, Laura and I cavorted at trick water fountains, naturally getting soaked. She proclaimed the site, "cool," literally and figuratively.

Day Three: Bears in the Czech Republic

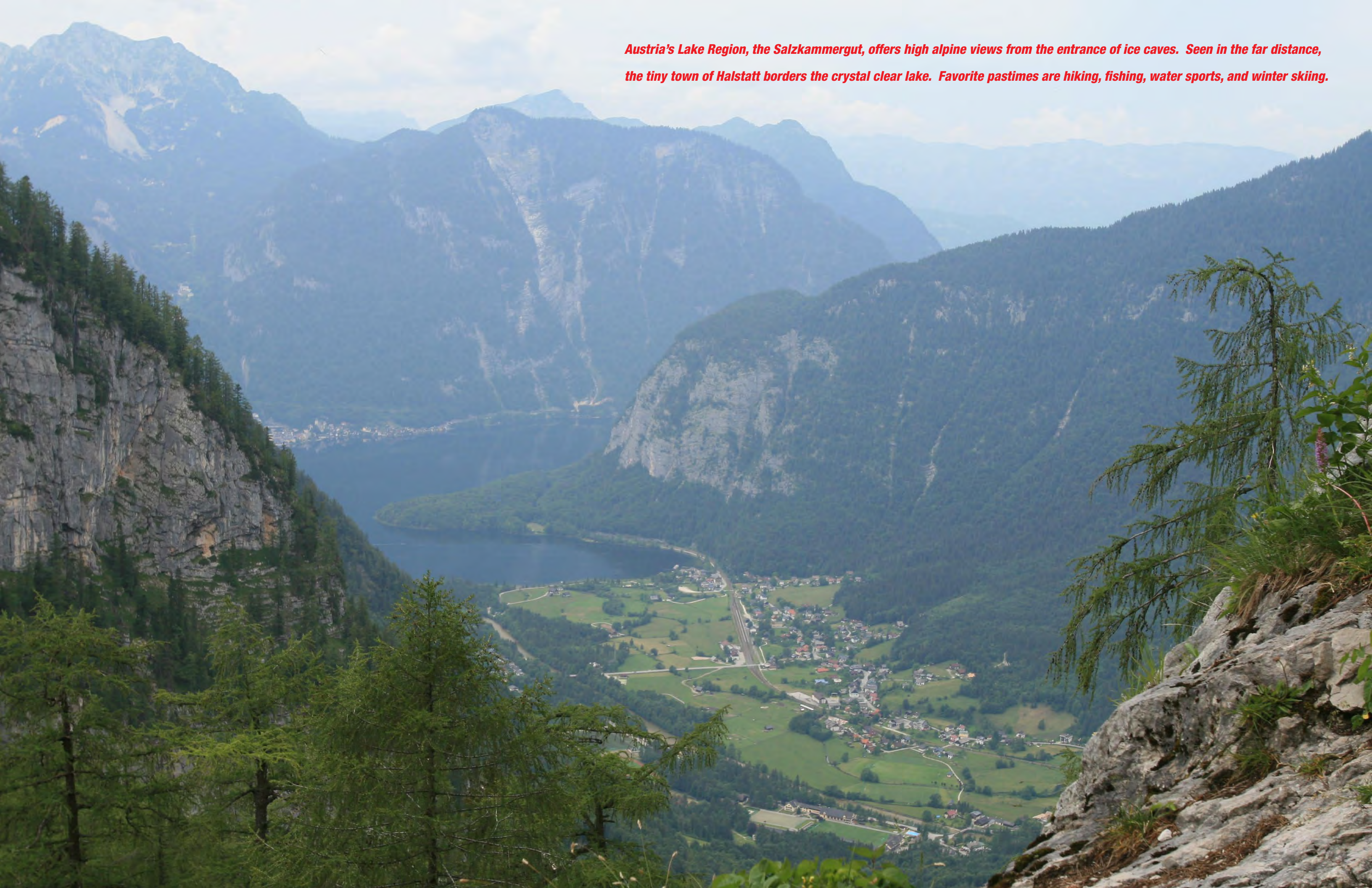
We cruised along seemingly fresh-paved, Austrian highways until the tank neared empty. I told myself not to worry about the price; petrol has always been expensive in Europe. Still, I was flabbergasted by the \$100 charge. If the gas tank holds 18.5 gallons, that's \$5.50 per gallon. Guess Miss Moneypenny just became the Cashqueen.

Further along, roads narrowed, but were still smooth as a skateboarders' dream. Guards welcomed us into the former Soviet-ruled Czech Republic, although armed with attack weaponry.

Beyond the checkpoint, streets grew aged, a bit pot-holed, and obviously not maintained by European Union funds. Passing bucolic fields, dense woods, and sparsely populated regions, we were totally dependent on magical Moneypenny, as we couldn't decipher the Czech language. I sighed with relief when she announced, "you have arrived at your destination."



Austria's Lake Region, the Salzkammergut, offers high alpine views from the entrance of ice caves. Seen in the far distance, the tiny town of Halstatt borders the crystal clear lake. Favorite pastimes are hiking, fishing, water sports, and winter skiing.



The Vltava River encircles Cesky Krumlov, a UNESCO World Heritage site. The town is sadly fraying, like an over-stuffed cushion bursting at the seams, from a deluge of visitors. Cars are not permitted, so we dragged our bags over cobblestone streets to the hotel. (Okay, I should have packed lighter.) The clerk instructed us to follow a map, with about 15 turns, to a parking garage on the outskirts of town; mistake three.

Unfortunately, Miss M did *not* recognize this area (mistake 4) and the poorly marked diagram didn't warn of a detour (mistake 5). We spent the next hour in husband and wife verbal ping-pong (mistakes 6-16) trying to locate the obscure lot, then trampled back to our lodgings—only to find we overnighted the BMW in the wrong place! (Time to stop counting.)

Jiri, a private guide waiting in the lobby, sorted out the mess. Jay moved the car, while Laura and I strolled through a maze of medieval townhouses. Then we crossed a castle drawbridge over a pit where

two brown bears lived; the bears provide alternate protection to a water-filled moat, and symbolize a link with royalty. It seems the castle owners added a bear motif to the coat of arms to flaunt their relationship to the “Orsini” line – a noble Italian family. “Orsa” means she-bear

in Italian, so they began keeping the real deal.

Jiri, Laura, and I climbed 162 stairs in the town's signature landmark, the decoratively pastel painted tower. The tall cylinder looks as if Boticelli frescoed it using the same

colors and clamshells he included in his masterpiece, “Birth of Venus.” We peered down on a walled village, crammed with red-roof-topped dwellings and many small bridges.

Finally, we slipped onto a river raft, sight-seeing while also shooting

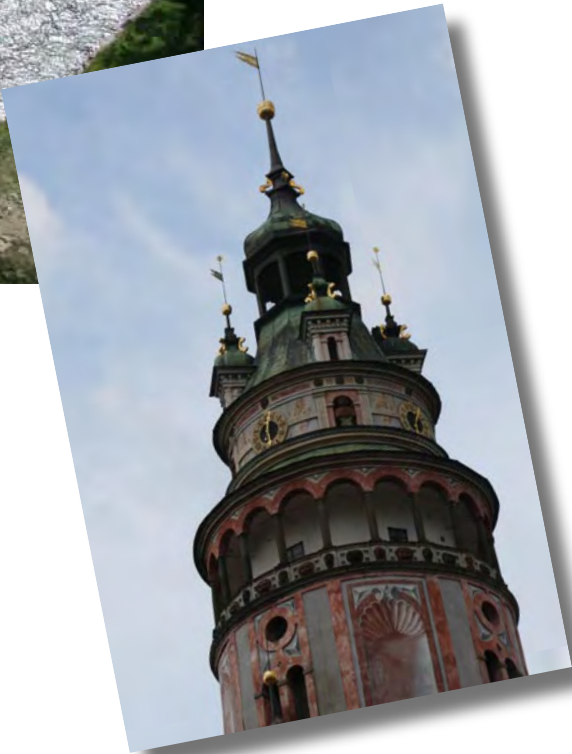
three short rapids. Mother and daughter shopped their way back through the narrow passageways, now cleared of numerous day-trippers.

Venturing to Vienna

Next morning we split for a three-hour journey to Vienna, cruising at 90-100 mph most of the way. Honestly we just blended into the flow of traffic. Jay devoured this drive and the Bimmer added plenty of bite. Somehow the sizzle of the auto-bahn started awakening my senses.



Cesky Krumlov: The Barber's Bridge crosses the surrounding Vltava River in the red-roofed village of narrow streets. Insert: Top of the Castle





The Castle of Cesky Krumlov.

Could I be acquiring a taste for speed? My fears were further abated because we encountered no accidents, not even a fender-bender.

We spent two days and nights waltzing through the stylish capital city, dropping a lot of cash in the process. Seated in the posh Sacher Hotel, I reminded Laura of the handy BMW etiquette rule. When in doubt about table placement, just remember the letters of our car: BMW= B-bread on the left, M-meal in the middle, W-water on the right. We sipped champagne and applauded Austria's decadent chocolate cake, Sachertorte, with schlag – an American super-sized dollop of whipped cream. Cost: 60 euro.

A performance of the dancing Lipizzaner stallions nibbled away almost \$300. We didn't keep track of what we spent feasting on Wiener Schnitzel and indulging in an evening Mozart concert at the luxurious Golden Hall. Pricey, but sheer genius.

Our boutique hotel manager strongly recommended a taxi and early arrival at the immense and ostentatious Schonbrunn Palace, this region's version of Versailles. Sage advice. He also warned us: "Subway riders must beware. Vienna's number one tourist destination attracts pick-pocketers, dressed as camera-toting tourists." He also added that the thieves were not nationals.

Back downtown, our eyes popped at the dazzling Hapsburg jewels. We lost our equilibrium exploring



UNESCO World Heritage Site: The historic architecture and castle of picturesque Cesky Krumlov, in the Czech Republic, lies protected for future generations. The Gothic St. Vitus Cathedral stands in the right rear of the photograph.

Hunderwasser's modern architecture, reminiscent of Barcelona's Gaudi, and craned our necks at soaring St. Stephen's Cathedral. Hotel, tour guide, entry fees, cab fare, and tips: *mehr geld*. Memories: priceless. Viva Vienna.

Up the Alps and Down the Lakes

Keeping to schedule, we whizzed down the road to Salzkammergut, considered the most beautiful region of Austria. Once we exited the main highway, we crept along, not prepared for the dramatic change

of scenery, which included towering rock walls, dark tunnels through snow-capped mountains, no passing zones, huge azure lakes, and miniature settlements that looked like model railroad displays. I loudly reprimanded my daughter, "Laura,

turn off the DVD and look outside!"

We finally pulled into tiny Halstatt, population 500. The pedestrian-only hamlet is literally chiseled into the mountainside, bordering a crystal-line lake. There was no elevator, so we trudged up four stories (yes, I brought too many clothes) to our rustic room with balcony, everything crafted from pine. Thankfully, our million-dollar view cost a lot less.

Salt Mines

Day six. We footed to a funicular that zips visitors to a landing above town, then hiked uphill to the salt mine entrance, feeling like three dwarfs hi-ho-ing off to work. Tourists donned miner's jumpsuits

and plodded through claustrophobic frosty burrows, similar to catacombs, while learning about salt. Everyone had fun whooshing down slides in the mine.

More punishing stair climbing was necessary to explore the dramatic altarpiece in the town's gothic Catholic Church. Our effort also achieved

a majestic view of wispy clouds lacing across voluptuous mountains, whose edges slash down into the blueberry colored sea.

Next to the church, I entered the eerie Charnel House or Bone Chapel; a room crammed with skulls and bones of former residents, like a scene from a horror flick. The city of Hallstatt simply lacks grave space, so after ten years, caretakers dig up the dead, paint the skulls, and place them in the sanctuary.

Ski Jumping in Innsbruck

Awakening to low-lying clouds and a downpour, we chose to forgo the high alpine road, or scenic route to Innsbruck. The famous Grossglockner drive switchbacks across the teetering Alps and offers, what guidebooks call “panoramic glacier views.” I’d been warned to update my will before driving it.

Our decision left time run through the Altstadt (or, “old part of town”) and the Hofkirche, the awe-inspiring Imperial Church, filled with larger than life-sized bronze figures, surrounding Emperor Maximillian’s empty tomb.

Then we hailed a taxi to Innsbruck’s impressive Olympic ski jump. From the top platform we watched courageous athletes careening off the edge; after soaring through the air, they landed on Astroturf, their view facing straight into a cemetery

lying outside the stadium. Location, location, location.

Our taxi was another Mercedes, but not a top-of-the-line model. Automakers must offer fleet deals to cabbies, as most are either Mercedes or BMWs. So nice to ride in style.

Dreams Come True at Fairy Tale Neuschwanstein

I’ve always dreamed of visiting Schloss Neuschwanstein, also known as Mad King Ludwig’s castle. Ludwig II, King of Bavaria



declared insane. His palace is perched atop a wooded, treacherous ledge in rural Bavaria. Visitors, including those enormous tour buses, squeeze up and down bottlenecked roads, across roller-coaster peaks and a valley, before the fantasy magically materializes out of the trees. Even Walt Disney relished the glamorous gem, using inspiration from its fairy tale turrets to create his theme park castles.

Small insert:
Painted skulls in the Bone Chapel.

Bottom of page: **A summer skier practices on Innsbruck's Olympic ski jump.**

Top Right: **Larger-than-life bronze figures of Innsbruck's Imperial Church have incredible detail.**

from 1864-1886, shunned the public and politics, choosing instead to build elaborate castles. He nearly bankrupted his domain, and was

Happily, we avoided an endless line by pre-ordering tickets online. Once inside, the 40-minute tour runs with German precision, through lavish rooms of arduously carved wood paneling. Eccentric Ludwig II drowned in shallow Swan Lake, below the fortress, after only living in the creation 172 days. Some say he was murdered. Hmm?

Neuschwanstein Castle, Germany's top tourist attraction, is the spectacular fairy-tale fortress built by Bavarian (Mad) King Ludwig II. An uphill hike to Mary's Bridge, another engineering feat, gives visitors this panoramic view.



My Turn

Finally, it was my turn to drive! A four-hour escapade through southern Germany brought new landscape perspectives, including mile upon mile of the sunny, yellow-green vineyards, which foster the region's *wunderbar* wines. Passing on two-lane roads proved tricky, with so many blind spots, swerves, and tight-angle turns. The 550i performed to perfection; but I questioned my own driving skills. Jay's frustration grew as I withdrew; I was hesitant to pull out and around others. Before long he snatched back the wheel and wrangled his way behind a fire-red Lamborghini and Porsche 911. When congested traffic hit a straightaway, all three gunned their engines. We zoomed around slower vehicles – until the trio queued up, again, and again.

Deep in the Black Forest

Arriving in Freiburg, driver Jay insisted, "No more hotels in these cursed



no-car zones." (But I liked being in the middle of things!) A marvelous medieval gothic cathedral dominated the skyline, miraculously upright and unharmed after WWII, unlike 80 percent of the town.



German Clock Museum, at Furtwangen, deep in the Black Forest, features cuckoo clocks to delight both eyes and ears. Insert: Our BMW at Hirschhorn Castle.

Next day, we headed for the heart of the evergreen Black Forest and the cuckoo clock museum. Roadways dwindled from four- to two-lane

streets, then single alleys without shoulders, down to a narrow strip of asphalt, without any markings. Abruptly we stopped. Construc

tion workers claimed the area was closed. GPS showed it as the only viable route – unless we considered a lengthy detour.

Chasing a Smart Car

While we were turning around, a tiny smart car pulled in, with a young man behind the wheel. “Road’s closed,” I told him. But he countered, “Not really. Just follow me.” Holding our breath, we barely inched past heavy machinery, finally appreciating the ingenuity of side mirrors that fold inward.

Clearing the work zone, his compact car revved into high gear, jetting around banked curves. I joked that the smart car was blowing away our Bimmer.

“Never,” my husband replied and floored it.

When we arrived at our destination, we parked and thanked Floe, our new friend, who admitted he had never visited the museum before. Then he joined us, gleefully snapping photos with his cell phone! Prost (cheers) to German hospitality.

The museum displays the history of timekeeping, including collections of astronomical devices, ornate mantelpieces, pendulums and pocket-watches, and some entertaining mechanical gadgets like the dumpling-eater, who gulped down the right number of biscuits on the hour. Eve Renz, the charming direc-

tor, showed us how cuckoos sing thanks to small bellows and intricately carved clock cases.

Though we were running late, Laura and I refused to miss the region’s specialty – Black Forest cake. The delicious concoction smacked of kirsch – a cherry liqueur – but gave us energy to continue on our journey.



Above - Smart car owner, Floe, helped guide us through treacherous territory.

In Stuttgart, the Mercedes Benz Museum displays vintage and futuristic cars. Car buffs should plan an entire day at this amazing facility.

Mercedes Museum

We surged to Stuttgart, home of automakers and traffic jams dominated by the luxury brands. The Mercedes-Benz Museum is jaw-dropping gorgeous, its rounded sleek glass and metal structure forming a crystal monument to German engineering. Visitors ride pod-like eleva-

tors to the top floor, then wind their way down nine floors, through 120 years of automotive legacy.



Even non-car buffs can easily digest the history lesson. Important events – especially the World Wars and development of the Daimler-Benz company – are depicted through large photos with minimal labeling. Each area showcases plenty of prized antique cars and vintage movies. Our favorite was the 1957 300SL gullwing, whose doors open upward like a bird taking flight.

The center’s lower arena displays fanciful futuristic models and an



Above - A Knight's View: The Neckar River swerves in storybook fashion below the fortress built by the Knights of Hirschhorn.

Right: Laura and Debi enjoy the terrace of the castle hotel, overlooking busy locks.

extensive (and expensive) gift shop. The impressive 1.5 million-Euro facility encompasses 16,500 square meters, and definitely lives up to Mercedes' elite standards.

On the other hand, the Porsche Museum, six miles away, was disappointing. The current offering contains only 15 cars and one video presentation. Across the street, an astounding, aerodynamic-looking replacement will open in 2008.

Over the river and through the woods

By evening, we conquered Hirschhorn castle hotel, a fortress above the Neckar River. Like royalty, we supped scrumptious seafood, drank golden wine, and slept like kings. Then our carriage was off for a final day of touring in Cologne, my biggest disappointment. The immense cathedral, so tall and wide it couldn't fit into my camera lens, just can't compare to elegant Notre Dame and her imaginative gargoyles. However, I have to ad-

mit that the city's light beer, kolosh, tastes great.

Laura and I concluded on a sugar high exploring Schokoladenmuseum, a chocolate museum. Just breathing the air outside the building started my mouth to watering. I chuckled as a worker frantically bagged wrapped sweets on the assembly line, much like the familiar "I Love Lucy" candy episode. The cafe's mocha chocolate cake, truffle-rich, received our highest honors.

Back Home

After two weeks we were bursting with bratwurst, a bit cranky, and ready to return home. Indeed, I was enthralled by castles and cathedrals, Bavarian villages and Rhine wine, but I also grew to enjoy fast cars, the incredible highways, and even a little beer.

Jay, ecstatic with the freedom on non-restricted speed, ended his vacation

Our family road trip through Germany, Austria, and the Czech Republic soared to the top of the Alps and descended below the earth's surface to salt mines and ice caves. We rediscovered each other during time spent together – 1900 miles in the car and all those meals. (No wonder we were cranky by the time we finally departed.)

We felt privileged to drive alongside Europeans, who skillfully weave through traffic on their excellent roadways. Our relationship with

Bavarian

Motor Works is stronger

than ever and why shouldn't it be? The process was seamless and the magnificent 550i was even better than we expected.

Memories come from interacting with people, places, and the culture, and this vacation transcended our expectations. We can't wait until we need another new car – for the perfect excuse to return to Germany.



with a surge of testosterone – unleashing the car's muscle and autobahning back to Munich. Me, I'm just looking forward to driving my BMW in the United States, all by myself.

Interested In Your Own European Delivery?

Taking ownership of a vehicle abroad permits its entry into the United States as a used car and at a reduced tax rate. Hence, the auto manufacturers pass the savings on to the customer. BMW discounts their price by seven percent. The process saves the cost of renting a car, or purchasing other modes of transportation within Europe.

The hometown dealer handles the purchase like any new car; customers agree to the price or lease agreements and choose the model, options, and date of delivery. Then the dealer submits preliminary paperwork to the factory.

When the sales agreement is finalized, the transaction proceeds and confirms a delivery date. All autos purchased using this method will meet U.S. regulations and emissions standards. Different manufacturers offer slightly different discounts, some include airfare and even hotel rooms. Naturally the location of factory determines where

delivery takes place. BMWs are produced and delivered in Munich, Mercedes and Porsche are in Stuttgart, and Audi is in Ingolstadt. Swedish-made Volvos are delivered in Gothenburg and Saabs are delivered in Trollhättan, Sweden.

We made our own flight arrangements, using frequent flyer miles to save even more money. The manufacturer supplied a packet of extremely helpful information, including the name of a reservation service in New York to obtain discounted hotel rooms. They also arranged airport shuttle service. We were offered a free factory tour, but declined due to schedule conflicts.

When we arrived at the Munich factory on the scheduled date, the process couldn't have been easier. We gave BMW staff a copy of the purchase agreement, along with our passports for identification and our international driver's license. Within a half hour, we were sitting in our new car, reviewing its operation with a factory representative.

A special tourist license plate was put on the car (which we brought home as a souvenir) and 15 days of zero-deductible comprehensive insurance coverage was included. BMW recommended purchasing a DVD covering European territories for the GPS system. The cost was \$165, certainly worth every penny.

We drove to the Munich drop-off location and filled out a few shipping documents in advance. This step can also take place at the end of your trip. BMW offers 21 different drop-off locations throughout Europe. Be sure to note these options when planning your itinerary.

At the vacation's end, a shipping agent checked the condition of the vehicle, noting any problems and re-recorded the mileage. Then the car was placed on a boat, at no additional cost, and arrived locally, just like a new model. Our 550i was then prepped and delivered by the local dealer.

The time from drop-off to pick-up can vary, but usually takes 6 to 8 weeks. Ours arrived in sparkling showroom condition in eight weeks.

The European Delivery program offers a great excuse to experience a continental fling, and certainly makes the process of buying a new car a memorable and exciting event.

A special tourist license plate was put on the car (which we brought home as a souvenir).



Before you go:

Pre-planning is essential since one euro currently costs about \$1.30. I began with the German Tourist site, **germany-tourism.de** which offers an excellent route planner throughout Europe, provides maps, directions, mileage, and estimated driving times. Also helpful was the Austrian Tourist Office site, **austria.info**.

Karen Brown's Guides, **karenbrown.com**, carry the apt subtitle: Exceptional Places to Stay & Itineraries. Karen suggests day-by-day plans and wonderful hotel options. Rick Steve's guidebooks rate sites of interest and provide terrific walking tours at **ricksteves.com**. I also love browsing DK Eyewitness Travel Guides, **dk.com**, thanks to their eye-popping photos and detailed diagrams and checklists of major tourist venues.

Tripadvisor.com offers personal pros and cons from previous visitors to attractions and hotels and **hotels.com** lists numerous lodging choices and discounted rates. Prepay rooms to save hundreds of dollars.



GERMANY

In Munich, BMW arranged discounted rooms at The Kings Hotel, First Class. The rooms are small with lovely canopy beds, priced between 100-150 euro per night. My teen daughter rated their breakfast buffet as the best in Germany. **kingshotels.com/first-class.htm**.

Don't miss the Hofbrauhaus, "The" place to taste German beer alongside tourists from every other country in the world. Meals are inexpensive and tasty in an Oktoberfest atmosphere, **hofbrauhaus.de**

Neuschwanstein Castle: Mad King Ludwig's fairy tale dream. This is Germany's number one tourist attraction, so pre-ordering tickets (with date and time) is imperative. Don't miss it! **ticket-center-hohrnschwangau.de**

The German Clock Museum: Also known as the Cuckoo Clock Museum, it sits in out-of-the-way Furtwangen, but can be reached by an invigorating drive through the Black Forest. **deutsches-uhrenmuseum.de**

Schlosshotel- Hirschhorn, near Heidelberg, is a true fortress. The castle hotel overlooks the Neckar River with fascinating views of locks and barges. Their small restaurant surprised us by serving the most delicious meal of our trip. **castle-hotel.de**



CZECH REPUBLIC

Cesky Krumlov's Hotel Dvorak sits at the edge of the Vltava River and the Barber's Bridge. Ask for a room with a castle view, as it remains illuminated all night. **discoverczech.com/cesky-krumlov/hotel/hotel-dvorak.php4**



AUSTRIA

Hotel Schloss Monchstein in Salzburg is outstanding, our trip favorite. The graciously renovated castle hotel, with 24 rooms, provides privacy and scenic views. Walk 5-7 minutes on a woodland trail to a lift, which descends directly into old town. Impeccable service and a superior restaurant. Pricy at 300-400 euros per night, but worth the splurge. **monchstein.com**.

Also in Salzburg is Carpe Diem Finest Fingerfood, where award-winning chef, Jörg Wörther, runs a healthy chic restaurant serving quick meals in crispy cones. **carpediemfinestfingerfood.com**

In Vienna, we chose Hotel Koing von Ungarn, a boutique hotel just around the corner from St. Stephen's cathedral and within walking distance of all center city sites. The spacious

rooms are great for families. We had a two-bedroom apartment, giving my daughter a treat. Best of all, the hotel is a real value in an expensive city, at about 200 euro per night. **kvu.at**

Elegant Sacher Hotel and Café is home of world famous Sachertorte, chocolate cake served with a dollop of whipped cream. It's also available as take-out or mail-order. **sacher.com**

We saved money in Hallstatt staying at Gastof Zauner, where doubles cost less than 100 euro. This rustic pine guesthouse boasts a picture-book restaurant, with ivy growing through the windows and over the ceiling. Order the fish from the lake and be sure to get a room with a balcony. **zauner.hallstatt.net** More expensive, Hotel Gruner Baum located right in the tiny town's central square offers fine lakeside dining and lodging with 20 guest-rooms. **gruenerbaum.cc**



INNSBRUCK

The Romantik Hotel Schwarzer Adler is located near, but not in, the pedestrian zone of medieval Innsbruck. Bathrooms feature Swarovski crystals, and its fantastic restaurant provides both old world charm and terrific service. **deradler.com**

contributors

some members of the team that brought
you this issue of *Automotive Traveler*

Vera Marie Badertscher When she was barely a year old, Vera took her first road trip with her family from Ohio to Mississippi. Since then she has meandered the roads of 45 states and explored many corners of the globe. From her home in Arizona she writes about Gila monsters, hawks, and backroad adventures as well as lifestyle, shelter, international travel, and the arts. She has received national awards for travel and internet writing that appeared in publications like *“Arizona Highways,”* *“AAA Living,”* *“Home and Away,”* *“Steinway & Sons,”* and the *“Rolls Royce Owner’s Desk Diary.”* Until the editors of *Automotive Traveler* persuaded her to climb out of her beloved Jeep Cherokee, she had never driven a Chevy HHR and she had never been to Delaware, both now listed among her favorite things. (pen4hire.com)



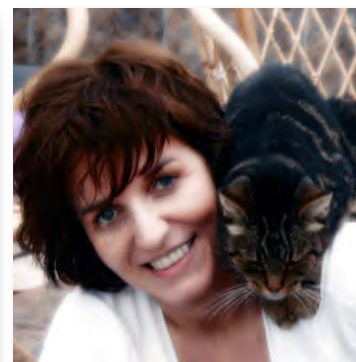
Brett Stierli is a Field Technical Specialist for Mazda North American Operations western region and a self-described auto enthusiast/adventurer. Brett is also a movie location buff who enjoys finding and photographing movie location sites, and he appreciates unique architecture such as 1950’s and 1960’s mid-century modern design, googie, Eichler, and others. During his many business and personal travels he enjoys discovering local/obscure family dining establishments for every meal...the older the better, no chain restaurants for this guy! Brett is single and resides in an empty four-bedroom house with a FULL three-car garage in Trabuco Canyon, California.

John Rettie is an internationally renowned writer and photographer, specializing on automotive topics, photography, travel, computers, and high technology, who lives in Santa Barbara, California. Rettie has managed to pack a wide range of experiences into his career and has traveled the world covering auto races, product launches, and numerous other aspects of the auto industry. He’s visited 73 countries and his goal is to set foot in more than 100 before he retires. John is one of 50 members of the jury for the annual World Car of the Year award. Previously, he was a member of the jury for the North American Car of the Year award for 13 years. He was honored to be president of the Motor Press Guild in Los Angeles in 1990, 2004, and 2005. (johnrettie.com)



Dusty Dave It was a lucky day when *Automotive Traveler* first learned of Dusty Dave’s self-published book, *The Top 100 Rustic Vacations*, an outgrowth of his 10-year-old website **rusticvacations.com**. Dusty is an accomplished travel writer, photographer, and most importantly, an outdoors enthusiast who in his travels has stayed at some of the most unique and charming lodges in North America. When he’s not at his home in beautiful Telluride, Colorado, he is most likely traveling around looking for new and interesting rustic vacation destinations to be profiled in his monthly column for *Automotive Traveler*.

Debi Lander is a freelance travel writer and seasoned international traveler who hails from Jacksonville, Florida. She considers photography her hobby and has a keen interest in castles and cathedrals. Debi has run ten marathons including Athens, Greece, the vineyards of Bordeaux, and the 2001 Marine Corps Marathon past the 9/11 wreckage at the Pentagon. Debi is the proud new owner of a 2008 BMW 550i, which was acquired through European Delivery in Munich.



Cindy-Lou Dale A well-traveled writer on many topics, Cindy-Lou Dale is *Automotive Traveler*’s resident road warrior, having accumulated more than her fair share of frequent flyer miles. An accomplished photographer as well as a writer, Cindy has contributed articles for magazines around the world, including *The New York Times*, *National Geographic Adventure*, *Islands*, *Winding Road*, *Away Magazine*, *Penthouse* and many other titles. Cindy-Lou was born in South Africa and currently lives in England, but she spends weekends visiting her cats in Brussels. Read her blog at **automotivetraveler.com**.