



# RECCE REPORT

JULY 2024

EXPERIENCE THE THRILL OF DRIVING LIKE NEVER BEFORE

◦ Salzburg ◦ Kühtai ◦ St. Gallen ◦ Andermatt ◦ Gstaad



# THE ROAD TO GSTAAD

**WEDNESDAY 24TH JULY | SALZBURG, AUSTRIA**

It was a wet afternoon when we arrived in Salzburg to start our recce for next year's Palace to Palace Challenge. After checking into our hotel, we walked into the city through the tunnels of the Mönchsberg mountain to visit a classical Bavarian restaurant we plan to use for our welcome evening. Despite the rain, the walk was excellent, filled with stunning views of the imposing Fortress Hohensalzburg, sprawling mountains, and the baroque rooftops of Salzburg's historic old town.

After a delightful meal (I had the excellent schnitzel, and Scott had the slow-roasted pork shoulder), we ventured further into the city and crossed the Salzach River to view our hotel options for the first night. This was a worthwhile expedition, as we discovered that parking is limited in central Salzburg and that one of our potential choices, the excellent Hyperion Hotel, would not be suitable for the event.

This is due to a lack of a dedicated loading and unloading zone, limited onsite parking, and its proximity to secure offsite parking. Our other options, the Bristol and the Hotel Sacher, also have limited onsite parking but are closer to secure offsite parking and have dedicated areas for our guests to load and unload their luggage. After taking photographs of each location, we walked back towards the old town, recrossing the Salzach River via the padlock-adorned Makartsteg Bridge before entering the pedestrian tunnels next to the Sigmundstor.

It was a very wet evening as we exited the mountain tunnels close to our hotel in the Leopoldskron-Moos district. We were ready for a hot shower and a warm bed as we stopped for the night very close to our planned start venue on the shores of Lake Leopoldskroner Weiher.



BY KIM BANNISTER  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOTT BANNISTER



## DAY 1 | SALZBURG TO KÜHTAI, AUSTRIA

We started our day with a wonderful buffet breakfast on the shores of the lake before leaving the city via surprisingly quiet roads that quickly took us into the beautiful Bavarian countryside. On our way out of Salzburg, we stopped at a fuel station to purchase a vignette (enabling us to use the motorways and expressways of Austria) before heading south into nearby Germany to explore the majestic Rossfeld Panoramic Road above the historic town of Berchtesgaden. This fantastic toll road is Germany's highest, and an absolute thrill to drive, with brilliant bends, fantastic straights, and plenty of opportunities to stop, take photographs, and enjoy the incredible panoramic views of Berchtesgaden, Salzburg and the Saalach Valley.

From Berchtesgaden, we headed west, exploring the valleys and mountain roads around northwestern Austria and southern Germany, crossing the border between the two countries on multiple occasions. However, despite being surrounded by some extremely picturesque countryside, we began to feel that the roads we were using were fairly mundane and lacked the excitement offered by those we had experienced earlier in the morning. Therefore, after about an hour and a half of driving, we decided to turn around and head back to the town of Schneizelreuth and restart this section of the route.

Instead of heading straight through the centre of the Saalach Valley, we decided to head north into southern Germany and pick up the fantastic Deutsche Alpenstrasse (German Alpine Road) across the top. This change of roads made a huge difference; we immediately felt our excitement levels rise as we climbed through the Chiemgau Alps on fast, winding roads that took us deeper into heavy forests around Laubau and Seehaus.

We crossed back into Austria close to Lofer before passing through the centre of the Lower Inn Valley and stopping for a quick lakeside lunch in Walchsee.

After lunch, we continued our journey crossing the Inn River at the Tyrolean border town of Niederndorf. We crossed into Germany at Oberaudorf and followed the fantastic Sudelfeld Pass through the Mangfall mountains, passing the majestic Tatzelwurm waterfall, on our way to the pretty town of Bayrischzell. From Bayrischzell, we continued our journey in a north-westerly direction, tracing the shores of Lake Schliersee before dropping south and stopping for an afternoon coffee on the banks of the Tegernsee.

Our journey from Tegernsee towards Innsbruck was nothing if not surreal. First, we joined a procession of traffic behind a tractor, a caravan, a horsebox, and a campervan, before seeing a stream of classic Citroëns in an array of different shapes and colours, and then being held in the town of Glashütte as a group of farmers marched a large herd of cows through the town, into what appeared to be someone's garage.

Luckily, our journey south from Glashütte was less eventful as we crossed over the serene Sylvensteinsee reservoir and followed the Isar River through the Karwendel Mountains southwest to the Austrian border near Scharnitz. The drive to Scharnitz was exceptional as we passed through the Inn Valley via mountain roads to the Sellraintal Valley towards our overnight stop in Kühtai. We were surprised by the number of grazing cattle roaming the streets of this quiet ski resort but found them to be quite happy to ignore our car as we parked outside our hotel beside the alpine pastures above the Austrian city of Innsbruck.



## DAY 2 | KÜHTAI TO ST. GALLEN, SWITZERLAND

We began our day by driving north through the Tyrolean Alps, joining the Fern Pass outside the town of Nassereith before turning west under the shadow of Zugspitze (Germany's highest mountain) and heading over the Eastern Alps into southern Germany. The Fern Pass is usually one of the busiest alpine passes in the Eastern Alps, as it connects southern Germany and Innsbruck. However, we enjoyed a relatively traffic-free drive, allowing us to cross the German border near Füssen well before our morning coffee stop.

We made a coffee and pastry stop in the village of Hohenschwangau, overlooked by the fairy-tale-like Schloss Neuschwanstein castle. It's not often that you get to have coffee in a place that evokes such vivid childhood memories. Sitting in the shadows of Baron Bomburst's castle from Chitty Chitty Bang Bang was a personal highlight of the trip.

From Hohenschwangau, we headed west across the pristine Bavarian countryside, stopping for lunch in the foothills of the Nebelhorn Mountains just outside the town of Obermaiselstein before driving into the mountains along the twists and turns of the magnificent Riedberg Pass. This fantastic winding road marked the beginning of our journey through some of the most beautiful countryside in the region, passing through idyllic old towns and villages before crossing the border into Austria, framed by stunning views of the Bavarian Alps.

Heading south towards Au, we experienced the steep mountain inclines and narrow hairpin bends of the Furkajoch before crossing the Rhine into Switzerland. We passed through the quiet town of Oberriet before heading north across rolling hills and alpine pastures towards the centre of St. Gallen and our overnight stop at the elegant Einstein Hotel.





### DAY 3 | ST. GALLEN TO ANDERMATT, SWITZERLAND

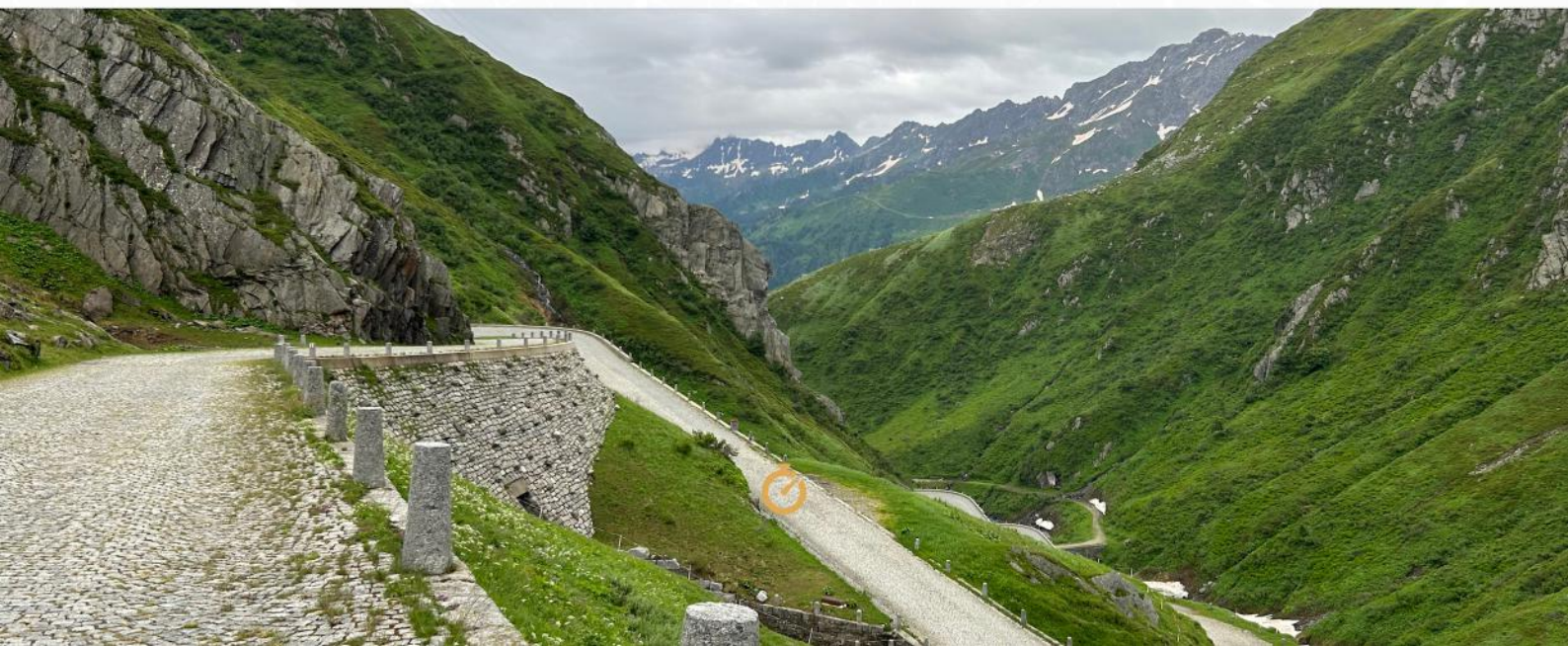
Today marked the penultimate day of our recce, which was spent surrounded by stunning mountain scenery on traffic-free roads. We began our journey by driving south out of St. Gallen, using quiet country roads to explore the blooming meadows and lush pine forests of northeastern Switzerland. Our route led us through the impressive Schwägalp Pass, where we ascended into the mountains, passing through the glacial valley overlooked by Mount Säntis and Mount Hochalp.

Continuing our climb through the Alps, we traversed the plateaus of the awe-inspiring Klausen Pass, flanked by breathtaking waterfalls and towering granite peaks. Unlike many other passes in the Alps, the Klausen Pass offers a motorway alternative, which limits traffic to residents and driving enthusiasts, making our journey along its sweeping turns and high-speed straights enjoyable and stress-free.

After a quick coffee break at the summit of the pass, we descended through the mountains, passing short stretches of the original cobblestone road as we made our way to Bürglen, the birthplace of William Tell. Following a brief stop to explore the town, we headed south for lunch in the ski resort of Andermatt.

Our afternoon adventure commenced with a magnificent climb through the Ursern Valley onto the striking Oberalp Pass. This high mountain pass, situated 2044 meters above sea level, connects the cantons of Graubünden and Uri and passes near the source of the Rhine at Lake Toma. From the Oberalp Pass, we journeyed through the Val Medel, crossed the Lukmanier Pass, and skirted along the shores of Lake Sontga Maria before entering the Italian-speaking canton of Ticino.

We explored the scenic roads and charming hillside towns of Ticino before looping north around Airolo, navigating the winding turns and hairpin bends of the cobblestone-paved Tremola before returning to Andermatt and our hotel for a well-deserved dinner.





#### DAY 4 | ANDERMATT TO GSTAAD, SWITZERLAND

We started our day early on day four to head into the mountains and explore the beautiful roads and passes around Andermatt. Our morning began with a wonderful drive south along the St. Gotthard Pass to Airolo. Despite low-lying clouds reducing visibility on the way up, we enjoyed panoramic views of the stunning snow-capped mountains and glacial valleys from the top of the pass. The descent was equally spectacular as we passed through the clouds on our way to Airolo. From there, we headed west across the Bedretto Valley, climbing to a height of over 2,400m as we conquered the winding Nufenen Pass.

We made a coffee stop just outside the town of Oberwald before returning to Andermatt via the thrilling curves and hairpin bends of the impressive Furka Pass. This iconic road, made famous by the car chase involving James Bond's Aston Martin DB5 and Auric Goldfinger's henchmen in their Ford Mustang in the movie Goldfinger, was the highlight of the day for me, fulfilling a personal bucket list item.

Continuing from Andermatt, we journeyed west across the Sustenpass, enjoying incredible views of the Steinsee Lake and the limestone peaks around the Stein Glacier as we ascended the winding mountain road.

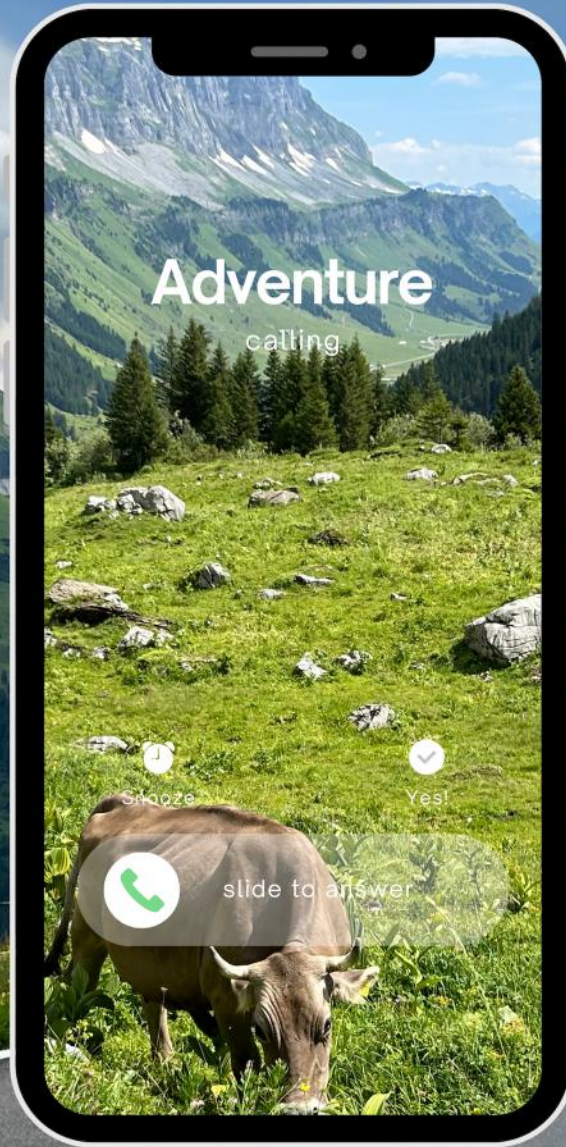
Lunch was in the town of Meiringen, close to the Reichenbach Falls, the setting for the showdown between Sherlock Holmes and Professor Moriarty. After lunch, we indulged in Meiringen's famous culinary creation, the meringue, before driving across central Switzerland and deep into the mountains above Lakes Brienz and Thun.

We crossed the beautiful Simmental Valley on traffic-free roads toward the Jaunpass, a beloved winding route with steep climbs and scenic hairpin bends. Our journey took us through the idyllic chalet village of Abländschen, via the stunning Mittelbergpass. Passing into the Saanen Valley through forests and farmland, we made our way towards Gstaad and our destination, the luxurious Palace Hotel.

We had an amazing time planning this route and can't wait to share this experience with you in June 2025!



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