





Ian and Maria Dean went to
Austria and came home with
an interesting souvenir...

AUSTRIAN ADVENTURE

“We were both very shocked but very honoured”

After seeing a TV programme following the Alpine Rally around Europe many years ago, we decided that we would like to do something like that.

Years later, we purchased our 996 and our adventures started. We joined the Club and started to attend events, both here and in Europe, and we heard about the International Porsche Day at Zell am See in Austria at one of them. When we saw applications were open for the fourth International Porsche Day – also known as ‘When the Porsche family meets the Porsche family’ – held by Porsche AG and the Zell am See-Kaprun Office of Tourism in September 2021, we applied and were delighted to hear we had been accepted.

We travelled all day on September 1, stopping off in Germany for one night. This had its own dramas, including a run-in with the Zoll, but that’s another story for another day. We arrived in Austria on the afternoon of September 2 and we officially signed in at the Ferry Porsche Congress Center. We were met by organiser Karl Steiner and his team, various checks were undertaken in relation to COVID-19, and we were given the itinerary and various goodies. These included an umbrella, which we didn’t need because the sky was blue.

We made our way to Hotel Barbarahof in Kaprun, where we had a lovely suite with snowy mountain views. That evening, there was an official welcome at the local airport where we had a chance to meet the other guests, catch up with old friends and hear welcoming speeches from Karl Steiner and Dr Wolfgang Porsche. All the cars were lined up alongside the airfield and it was possible to take helicopter flights with aerial views of the glacier and local points of interest. An ample buffet supper was enjoyed by everyone and, as darkness fell, everyone headed back to their chosen hotel.

On September 3, we met at the Tauern Spa where we were flagged away with great precision. From there, we attempted a small local time trial. We then followed the road to the Grossglockner Pass with its stunning mountain views towards the Porsche Automuseum Helmut Pfleifhofer. Here, we had chance to look around the museum and enjoy lunch while listening to local musicians. Meanwhile, our cars were being judged for the concours. Later in the afternoon, we headed back to our hotel via the 5.3km Felbertauern tunnel before enjoying an Austrian-themed dinner in town that evening.

September 4 began with an early visit to the Ferry Porsche Congress Center, where we had the COVID-19 tests which we needed to return to the UK. The Center had given over some of its space to the Red Cross for COVID-19 testing, which really impressed us. Within 20 minutes, we had our negative results and could then continue with the day’s itinerary.

The group was split into two and we had a flagged start in the town centre so the locals could see the array of cars and hear the owners’ stories. From the town centre, we headed to the Porsche Experience Centre, where we had access to the test track. First, we raced our own cars and were given tips on racing lines and the best way to use the track to reach the optimum speed. We then swapped to a new Taycan Turbo S (a.k.a. ‘a rocket’) where we did drag race starts using launch control with the other guests followed by a few fast laps – an experience we shall never forget. Following this, we had some time for an off-road experience in a Cayenne and another timed challenge. At midday, we headed off to Schmitzen Mount where we had a cable car ride to the top of the mountain and we enjoyed lunch with stunning panoramic views. We then had a leisurely drive back to our hotel along waterfall-laden valleys to complete the day’s driving.

As evening fell, it was time to brush up for the gala dinner and awards ceremony. The dinner was held at the Ferry Porsche Congress Center and, once the guests had eaten, the speeches took place and the awards were handed out. Sadly, it appeared – unsurprisingly, to be honest – that there was nothing for the lone 996 team from the UK this time. Or so it seemed, as we heard an Austrian on the stage talk of the “Englanders” and some other words which we did not understand.

Suddenly, our table and everyone else was applauding and we were being directed onto stage to get an award, having been the only British entrants who accepted the challenge of making the long journey and meeting all the restrictions head-on. We were both very shocked but very honoured, and received a lovely silver-engraved memento presented by Dr Porsche himself.

Once we were home, we thought it was a truly memorable trip to Austria and one that will hopefully not be our last.

