

KING OF THE ALPS

PHOTOS & TEXT BY JOHN HERMANN

You gotta have this report of the ride in Spain and the Alps last month. There were fifteen involved, but not all together at one time, including Barbara and Tracy Cate from New Jersey, and a couple of worthy BMW riders from Britain.



10 First we had to get ourselves and our bikes on the train in rainy Munich. Ride up onto the train, and then forward on metal plates through several cars, keeping heads on the bars because the overhead is very low. Here Tracy Cate and Blair Balsam are checking their bikes before heading for the passenger cars. We had rooms with two lower bunks and we spent much time in the dining car.



It was sunny and bright in Narbonne, France, when we got off the train. That's Carol Alley and Stacy Silverwood, right, with their new R1200 RT from Switzerland. Tom Roach on his 1150GS, and Sybil on her 650GS met us at Narbonne. We were off for Spain and the Costa Brava.



The sad new is that a couple of days later, at this Spanish gas station at a village in the Spanish Pyrenees, the new R1200 RT had engine failure. Many phone calls and much discussion followed. So we left Carol and Stacy there. BMW eventually sent them on to our next hotel in a taxi, and then got them a diesel VW car. The bike was picked up by the village towing service and taken to Pamploma, Spain, and we presume, eventually back to Switzerland.



Loyal friends that we all were, we played on along the French/Spanish border. Here's Blair Balsam leading the charge into France. Note: no double yellow.



Later, Don Walker was leading, with Tom Mooney on his tail, down this Spanish road in the Picos de Europa mountains, out along the Atlantic coast.



Here's Blair Balsam leading Don Walker on another wooded road in the Picos de Europa.



And here's Blair in a gorge of the Picos de Europa mountains. These

mountains, right on the north coast of Spain, still had some snow on them. The weather was coastal cool and the asphalt was perfect.



In Spain, we stayed at Paradors, government sponsored hotels in remote or unusual places. This castle in Olite, Spain, was our hotel one night. It was originally built by the king of Navarre in the 13th century. Navarre is the old name for the area we know as Basque country.



Look up there. There's a stork nest on the tower of the castle.



At the Parador at Santillana del Mar, Blair and Ira Grossman had the room over the front entrance. Blair's peeking around the flags.



Santillana del Mar is a preserved old village with stone buildings and cobble streets. Only Parador guests may drive into the village. The wonderful R1150 R that Herm was riding is beside Don Walker's R1100 S, and Blair's R1200 GS. Just five kilometers outside Santillana are the Altamira caves, featuring some of the oldest prehistoric paintings known.



Everywhere the Spanish were friendly and hospitable. This restaurant in the Pyrenees took us in enthusiastically for lunch. Note Don Walker's R1100 S with Florida license plates.



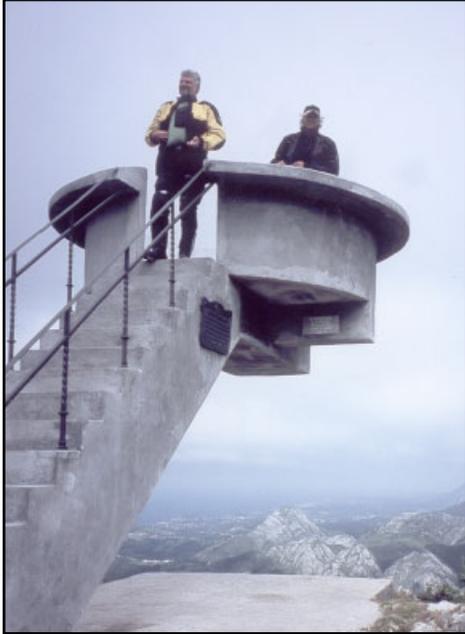
Inside the stone restaurant with vaulted stone roof, there was no shortage of white linen. Sybil Roach is back to camera, with Tom at her right. Then Don Walker, Blair, Carol Alley, Stacy Silverwood, Ira Grossman, Tom Mooney behind Don Picker. They served all a small cup of soup and some appetizers.



We stop to eat. That's why there are so many pictures of us eating. This lunch was as we entered the Dolomites in Italy, with the first Dolomites in view in the distance. The pass road makes a

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hairpin turn around a building here, and motorcyclists were regularly buzzing by.



This view tower atop a pass in the Picos de Europa mountains provided breathtaking views of snow-capped mountains and blue ocean.



In France huge crowds gathered at every stopping spot underneath the new Millau freeway bridge. It's supposed to be the highest bridge in the world, designed by the British archi-

tect, Foster, who designed the glass dome atop the German Reichstag building in Berlin.



Another French marvel is the Gorges du Goulez road, last year on the Tour de France. Above the gorge, we stayed at Villard de Lans, an overnight on the Tour last year.



Andermatt, Switzerland, is perhaps the motorcycle capital of the world. Everything and everybody seem to pass through its cobble stone streets. Here Barbara and Tracy Cate and Blair Balsam are admiring the first K1200 R we'd seen on the road. It was from north Germany.



The last night on the road was at the sister-village of Julian, California, Heiligenblut, Austria. The town band paraded by in the morning as we prepared to climb the Grossglockner.

