



CLASSIC
EDELWEISS TOURS

KINGS AND CASTLES TOUR

” In terms of culture, history and sightseeing, this motorcycle tour is our number one! “

KINGS AND CASTLES TOUR

RIDING DAY 1 : WIEN (VIENNA) - ČESKÉ BUDĚJOVICE

Standard Route (260 km / 161 miles)

After leaving Vienna we quickly reach the Wachau, probably the most beautiful part of Lower Austria. In order to get to the other side of the river we could easily take a bridge, but why should we if we can take a romantic little ferry?

Past Melk and the impressive abbey that is visible on the southern side of the Danube we reach Maria Taferl, where we can marvel at the beautiful baroque church, at the wonderful views down to the Danube, and at our lunch.

After Maria Taferl we leave the Danube (and we won't see it again until we get to Budapest) and head north, into the woods of the Waldviertel ("forested quarter"). The border checkpoint at Pyhrabruck is not in use anymore since the Czech Republic joined the Schengen Agreement, but you can still see the buildings. From here it is another 15 miles to Budweis.

Highlights:

#1: Wachau valley



One of the most beautiful sections of the Danube, Europe's second-longest river, is the Wachau, situated between the towns of Krems and Melk. It is only 25 miles long but its impressive wealth of castles, abbeys, historic towns and gorgeous scenery attracts numerous visitors, and its reputation as a prime wine growing region helps, too. Rumor has it that Weissenkirchen, on the northern banks of the Danube, is the cradle of the Riesling grape...

#2: Maria Taferl



The beautiful baroque pilgrimage church of Maria Taferl sits on top of a hill, high above the Danube. This hill, called the Taferlberg, has been a place of religious activity since Celtic times (note the Sacrifice Rock outside the church), but the present church dates from the late 17th century. The interior of the church is just as amazing as the panoramic view of the Danube valley.

#3: České Budějovice



The golden years of Budweis were in the 16th century. Most of the buildings are from that period, like the salt-house and the city hall. The inhabitants speak about their city as the Siena from South Bohemia. Nowadays, Budweis is known mainly for its beer, and of course you can have a guided tour through the brewery.

RIDING DAY 2 : ČESKÉ BUDĚJOVICE - PRAHA (PRAGUE)

Standard Route (275 km / 171 miles)

After a short stop in Český Krumlov we go back to nature. Riding through the Böhmerwald, a huge forest area with mountains up to 4,462 ft., is a lot of fun. Nearly no traffic and a lot of twisties: that is paradise for motorcyclists!

But in foggy conditions it can be a little scary, because there are no houses or villages for many miles. The castle of Kaspersky is an option for lunch, but it is a thirty minute walk up there – one way.

Highlights:

#1: Český Krumlov



With its spectacular castle, narrow, cobblestoned streets and elegant old town square, Český Krumlov looks like a pocket-sized Prague. Renaissance and baroque buildings enclose the meandering arc of the Vltava River, housing riverside cafés and bars. Following architectural neglect during the communist era, the undeniable fairy-tale beauty of Český Krumlov is radiant again, with thoughtful restoration transforming the heritage buildings lining the narrow lanes into cozy restaurants and classy boutique hotels. The UNESCO included Český Krumlov on their World Heritage List in 1992; today it is the Czech Republic's second busiest tourist town after Prague.

#2: Šumava (Bohemian Forest)



Dense forests, green meadows, rapid rivers and crystal-clear lakes, that's the Bohemian Forest. The Germans call it Böhmerwald, the Czech Sumava. Combined with the Bavarian Forest on the other side of the border this is Central Europe's largest forest complex. No big cities, no industry, no traffic, only pure nature; you and your bike.

KINGS AND CASTLES TOUR

RIDING DAY 3 : PRAHA (PRAGUE)

Standard Route (90 km / 56 miles)

Prague is a spectacular place and one day here will be merely enough to scratch the surface. You can join your tour guide for a walk through downtown or just hang out by yourself. Either way you are guaranteed to enjoy yourself. If you don't want to spend all day in the city you could join us for this short loop to the south of Prague to Karlstein, one of the most famous castles in the Czech Republic.

Highlights:

#1: Karlštejn castle



Above the wine village Karlstein, a gigantic castle complex rises up. This national cultural monument was planned as a treasure house for the emperor Karl IV. That's why the interior of this castle is so luxurious.

#2: Praha (Prague)



Prague is widely considered to be one of the most beautiful cities in Europe and is among the most visited cities on the continent (according to euromonitor ranks 21st among the cities of the world, with more than 6 million visitors in 2013, more than Las Vegas, Beijing or Moscow). Though it suffered one large bombing raid during World War II, it largely escaped the utter destruction, which befell so many European cities during that period and emerged largely intact. Some highlights: the Prague Castle and St. Vitus Cathedral, the Old Town Square with the Astronomical Clock, the city hall, Charles Bridge, and much, much more. In 1992 the extensive historic center of Prague was included in the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites. According to Guinness World Records, Prague Castle is the largest ancient castle in the world.

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RIDING DAY 4 : PRAHA (PRAGUE) - DRESDEN

Standard Route (245 km / 152 miles)

Tiny roads across the Czech "outback" are on our menu today. Melnik, a small town north of Prague, features a beautiful central square (with some lovely cafes!) and an interesting ossuary. After this "bone chilling" experience we continue north, to the Bohemian Switzerland, a beautiful, mountainous region full of dense forest and rugged rock formations. On the other side of the border, in Germany, the region is named Saxonian Switzerland, and the Elbe Sandstone Mountains are the most interesting part of it. From the rock formation known as "Bastei" we enjoy sweeping views of the Elbe valley before we head down to Dresden.

Highlights:

#1: Mělník Ossuary



patterns.

When the plague swept through Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries people quickly ran out of space to bury the victims. Everywhere in the country the remains of the dead of previous centuries were unearthed from the cemeteries and stored in bone houses, usually in an old crypt or a basement room underneath the church. In Melnik, the bones of 10-15,000 people are stored, lovingly arranged in

#2: Elbe Sandstone Mountains



The Sandstone Rocks of the Labe (Elbe in German) are a protected landscape on both sides of the border. The meadows and deep forests of the "Czech Switzerland" and the "Saxonian Switzerland" do look a bit Swiss, but the dramatic sandstone formations add a very special touch. One of the most spectacular vista points is the Bastei.

#3: Bastei



The Bastei is a rocky prominence overlooking the Elbe River within the Elbe Sandstone Mountains. As a mountain reaching 1,000 ft., the Bastei overlooks the river from 636 ft. up! Located near Rathen in Saxony, the Bastei is a landmark in a national park near Pirna, southeast of Dresden. It is part of a climbing and hiking area that extends to the Czech Republic.

RIDING DAY 5 : DRESDEN

Standard Route (190 km / 118 miles)

Leaving Dresden heading south, we follow the River Müglitz to Altenberg. On our way, we stop for a coffee and some pictures at Castle Weesenstein. Glashütte, famous for its long watch-making history, is just down the road and offers a watch museum if you are interested. Shortly afterward we'll cross the border to the Czech Republic and follow it for a while, on tiny, remote roads. On our way back to Dresden we can enjoy some fast sweepers, with the Elbe Sandstone Mountains always within sight.

Highlights:

#1: Dresden



Dresden has a long history as the capital and royal residence for the Electors and Kings of Saxony, who for centuries furnished the city with cultural and artistic splendour. The city was completely destroyed by the controversial Allied aerial bombing towards the end of World War II. The impact of the bombing and 40 years of urban development during the East German socialist era

have considerably changed the face of the city. Some restoration work has helped to reconstruct parts of the historic inner city, including the Katholische Hofkirche, the Semperoper and the Dresdner Frauenkirche. Since the German reunification in 1990, Dresden has re-emerged as a cultural, educational, political and economic center of Germany.

#2: Castle Weesenstein



This 700 year-old castle has a museum telling you details about its history, for example about the gifted Prince Johann, who worked on his translation of Dante's Divine Comedy before he became king of Saxony in 1854. The large, manicured gardens that grace the lands were destroyed by the vast flooding in 2002, but they have been restored to their former glory.

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#3: Erzgebirge

The Ore Mountains (Czech: Krušné hory, German: Erzgebirge) are a mountain range in Germany and the Czech Republic. They form the border between both countries for 93 miles, extending from the western border of Saxony to the Elbe River. The Ore Mountains were virtually uninhabited during the Middle Ages and covered with dense forests. In the 15th century the discovery of silver and iron deposits led to the settlement of the mountains and the foundation of cities. The name is derived from the richness in mineral resources, including fluorspar, iron, copper, cobalt and uranium, as well as silver and tin. Segmented, Erzgebirge combines the German word "Erz" for metal ore, and "Gebirge" meaning "mountain range." Similarly, the word "krušec" used to mean "ore" in the Czech language, "krušné" being its adjective, and "hory" means "mountains." Today the mountains are also a popular winter sports destination.

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RIDING DAY 6 : DRESDEN - LÁZNĚ BĚLOHRAD

Standard Route (340 km / 211 miles)

This ride starts with a stretch of Autobahn and there are two reasons for that: we get around the countless little villages with their 50 km/h limitation and we get to see Görlitz, Germany's easternmost city and one of the most beautiful ones. It has more listed historic buildings than Dresden!

In Görlitz we cross the border to Zgorzelec, which is Polish and means - Görlitz. Yes, this used to be one and the same city, until in 1945 the Allied decided to make the Neisse River the border between Germany and Poland, thereby cutting the town in two halves.

We ride through Poland for less than half an hour, then go back to the Czech Republic. The pleasant little town of Frýdlant could be the place for our lunch break, then we head towards the Giant's Mountains. We may not see any giants there but if the weather is right we may be able to spot the Sněžka, the country's tallest mountain.

An optional, curvy loop through the foothills could take us across the border to Poland again, but if you can't wait to get to our hotel in the spa town of Lázně Bělohrad you could shorten your ride by some 60 miles.

Highlights:

#1: Görlitz



Germany's easternmost city is also one of the country's most beautiful ones. It escaped WWII almost undamaged, was neglected during the years of the GDR, and today, 25 years after reunification and after injecting a couple of billion Euros, Görlitz is once again the Grande Dame, boasting almost 4,200 listed heritage buildings. Take a look around or just sit down, have a coffee and enjoy the

atmosphere.

#2: Krkonoše (Giant's Mountains)



The "Riesengebirge", meaning Giant Mountains, is not as big as the name suggests. It is 25 miles long and 13 miles wide, covers a land area of around 250 square miles and its highest point, the Sněžka (meaning Snow Cap), reaches just over 5,000 ft. But it is the third highest and northernmost mountain range in Central Europe and offers a unique ecosystem as well as fantastic hiking and pretty good skiing conditions. There are some great roads in the vicinity, too -

just don't expect the Alps...

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RIDING DAY 7 : LÁZNĚ BĚLOHRAD - STARÝ JICÍN

Standard Route (306 km / 190 miles)

This route offers not much sightseeing but a lot of good riding. It will take you into the Eagle's Mountains, a small but pretty mountain range right on the border to Poland. Narrow curvy roads through dense forest, no traffic, beautiful scenery, that's what you can expect from this ride.

Once we've left the mountains behind the land becomes more mellow. We ride along endless wheat fields that cover the softly rolling hills from horizon to horizon. This is Moravia, one of the historical Czech lands, and while riding on the bumpy, tree-lined alleys and looking at the sun-drenched land and the forgotten little villages you can't help to think that not much has changed here during the last couple of hundred years.

Highlights:

#1: Nové Město



This 500 year-old town (pop. 10,000) features a rectangular market square lined with Renaissance houses and arcades and an interesting castle. The entire ensemble is picture-perfect and several little cafés invite us in to take a rest and enjoy the place.

#2: Orlické Mountains



This tiny mountain range (30 miles long and up to 5 miles wide) follows the Czech-Polish border. Despite its size and low profile - highest point is only 3,658 ft - these mountains are quite wild and remote, which is good for us, because traffic on the curvy 311 is mild.

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RIDING DAY 8 : STARÝ JIČÍN - KRAKÓW (CRACOW)

Standard Route (190 km / 118 miles)

Eastern Moravia and south-western Poland are densely populated and very industrial, so there's not much pretty scenery to enjoy. We take the expressway to get to the Polish border and some backroads to get to Oświęcim. Here, the former concentration camp of Auschwitz bears testimony to Nazi terror and the Holocaust. Nothing can prepare you for what you see behind these walls, in fact for many people it turned out to be too much. If you want to experience it please use the rest day for an in-depth visit.

The museum in Auschwitz is not on our agenda today, but the actual site of the camp is. In Birkenau, just a few minutes from Auschwitz, you can see railroad tracks and the platform where new arrivals were sorted, some remaining barracks, ruined crematoriums, and a huge Holocaust memorial.

From Auschwitz, we head straight to Cracow and you can enjoy the rest of the day in this incredibly beautiful city.

Highlights:

#1: Birkenau (former concentration camp)



Birkenau was the first extension of Auschwitz, the Nazi's largest concentration camp. Construction on Auschwitz II-Birkenau began in October 1941 to ease congestion at the main camp. In early 1942 Birkenau was turned into an extermination camp, gas chambers and crematoria were built and then the trains started rolling in, cattle trains filled with Jews, Sinti, Roma, and others.

You can walk around the grounds freely, look at the remaining barracks, the railroad tracks, the ruins of the crematoria, and the huge monument that was erected later in memoriam of the countless victims. A very sobering experience.

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#2: Kraków (Cracow)



As the most fascinating city in Poland Cracow has a special flair and the sheer number of historical sites is just amazing: 140 churches and 5,500 protected historic buildings. The 700 year old castle, Wawel, is the most important historic site in Poland, as it is where all the kings were crowned and buried. The city square is one of the largest in Europe and certainly one of the most beautiful. And these are only a few major attractions!

KINGS AND CASTLES TOUR

RIDING DAY 9 : KRAKÓW (CRACOW)

Standard Route (270 km / 168 miles)

Cracow is an amazingly beautiful city and can easily occupy you all day. the huge city square, the old bazaar hall, the churches, the castle, the endless array of restored buildings, the Jewish quarter, Schindler's factory, Poland's largest shopping mall.... you get the picture. This place is stunning, and it rocks!

If you still want to ride we can offer you a loop through the hilly countryside and to the spectacular salt mine of Wieliczka. A piece of advice for claustrophobics: don't go in!

For a closer look at the concentration camp memorial in Auschwitz we recommend to join a guided bus tour, leaving from and taking you back to Cracow. It's way more relaxing than taking the bike. Your tour guide will be happy to assist you with finding the right tour.

Highlights:

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#2: Salt Mine Wieliczka



Dating back to the 13th century, Wieliczka is one of the oldest salt mines in Europe and part of the UNESCO World Heritage List. It reaches a depth of 327 meters (1,073 ft) and is over 287 kilometers (178 mi) long. A guided tour features corridors, chapels, statues, and an underground lake, 135 meters (443 ft) below the surface. There is an underground cathedral with salt chandeliers, a statue of Pope John Paul II, a restaurant and a sanitary. Access is by

guided tour only; your visit will take about 3 hours. Don't go if you suffer from claustrophobia!

#3: Auschwitz Concentration Camp



Auschwitz has become a symbol of the Holocaust that is known throughout the world. The Nazis occupied Poland in September 1939, changed the name of the city of Oświęcim to Auschwitz, and set up a huge concentration camp of the same name in 1940. During the following years Auschwitz grew and eventually consisted of three main parts and over 40 sub-camps.

Initially, Poles were imprisoned and perished in Auschwitz, later Soviet prisoners of war, Gypsy (Roma) and prisoners of other nationalities were also held here. Beginning in 1942, Auschwitz became the site of the largest mass murder in human history, which was committed against the European Jews by the Nazis. The majority of the Jewish men, women and children deported to Auschwitz were sent

to their deaths in the gas chamber. Over 1.1 million people were killed.

Those who remained in Auschwitz were liberated by Red Army soldiers on January 27, 1945. Now Auschwitz is a State Museum and part of the UNESCO World Heritage List to remind future generations of this cruel part of world history.

KINGS AND CASTLES TOUR

RIDING DAY 10 : KRAKÓW (CRACOW) - RAJECKÉ TEPLICE

Standard Route (365 km / 227 miles)

This is a long and challenging ride. After looking at the amazing wooden church of Dębno we cross the border to Slovakia and circle around the High Tatras clockwise, enjoying some amazing views as we climb up steadily. Tatra Lomnica is the closest you can get to the Tatra Mountains. Tourism is king around here, the best ski resort in Eastern Europe keeps people busy in winter, in summer it's all about hiking, climbing, bicycling – and motorcycling.

If we limit the number of our stops and keep them short enough we might be able to cover the full length of this route. There's some great roads ahead, so hurry up!

Highlights:

#1: Church in Dębno



The main - and only - attraction in this village of 800 souls is the historic wooden church of St. Michael the Archangel. It was built in 1490, the spire added in 1601. The interior of the church is a unique combination of Gothic art and highland folk tradition. Especially intriguing are the paintings that cover walls and ceiling. They are more than 500 years old and were never restored, but the colors are bright as if they were new. This secret of color fastness has never been uncovered.

#2: High Tatras



The smallest High Alpine mountain range in the world is a paradise for hikers and climbers. There are ten peaks of 8,500 ft or more, the highest one being Gerlachovsky stit at 8,711 ft. Because there are no roads in but only around the mountains the Tatras are a quiet and unspoiled refuge for people who want to enjoy pure nature.

#3: Oravský hrad (Orava Castle)



This picture-perfect cliff-top castle was first mentioned in 1267. It was enlarged and remodeled many times but it always kept its movie set-like appearance. In fact, the 1922 film "Nosferatu" used it as a backdrop in several scenes. It is a long, steep hike up to the castle, but thankfully the view from the parking lot (and the ice cream shop) down below is just as nice...

KINGS AND CASTLES TOUR

RIDING DAY 11 : RAJECKÉ TEPLICE - BUDAPEST

Standard Route (325 km / 202 miles)

A fairy-tale castle, a historic mining town, beautiful little roads without any traffic and a ferry ride across the blue Danube - what a wonderful day. On a hot day you could bring your swimming trunks and dip into one of the small lakes high up in the Štiavnické hills.

Later in the afternoon we cross the border into Hungary, country No. 6 on this tour.

Highlights:

#1: Čičmany



The village of Čičmany is famous for a 200-year-old custom of painting its wooden cottages in patterns based on traditional embroidery motifs. They make a great photo opportunity, and in the local gift shop you can buy model cottages.

#2: Bojnický zámok (Bojnice Castle)



The fairy tale castle of Bojnice is the single most visited castle in Slovakia. It was first mentioned in written documents in 1113, remodeled many times over the centuries and then, from 1888 to 1910, it was turned into today's beautiful imitation of French castles of the Loire valley. It is worth going inside, but if the lines are too long just walk to the little pond and take a gorgeous picture.

#3: Banská Štiavnica



... began as a medieval mining centre, exploiting some of Europe's richest gold and silver mines. Already a showcase town in the 13th century, in its 18th -century heyday it became Hungary's second largest town.

But then the mines began to dry up, and the town slipped out of the mainstream; today it's less than half its former size. Having missed the 19th-century boom that turned Banská Bystrica into a city, it's now an extraordinary mirror of earlier times, with a picturesque old centre full of Gothic and Renaissance houses, churches and two castles set beautifully in steep, wooded hills. In 1972 the town was added to the Unesco World Heritage List.

KINGS AND CASTLES TOUR

RIDING DAY 12 : BUDAPEST

Standard Route (390 km / 242 miles)

Budapest offers more than enough things to do and see to keep you busy for a week, so if you haven't been here before we highly recommend leaving your bike in the garage and go sightseeing. But if you just can't stand the thought of not riding you could think about looping through the Matra and Bükk hills, about 40 miles east of Budapest.

Highlights:

#1: Budapest



The “Paris of Central Europe” is not only Hungary’s capital and the gravitational center of the country in terms of history, culture and business, it is also one of the most beautiful and interesting cities in all of Europe. Its splendid location, its wealth in art and architecture, and its long and exciting history give Budapest its distinctive atmosphere.

You can spend your day marveling at the beautiful, stylish buildings from the late 19th century, visit a museum or two, climb to one of the many viewpoints in the hilly western part of the city or just stroll along the Danube River. Highlight your day by attending a performance at the Hungarian State Opera House, a memorable event in the city’s most beautiful building.

You might as well spend the day at Gerbaud, the famous 150 year old café at Pest’s busiest square or go shopping in Europe’s biggest shopping mall (over 400 shops). Another popular pastime in Budapest is “taking the waters” in one of the numerous thermal baths. The city boasts 118 thermal springs, and some of them were used by the Turks in the 16th century. The Parliament building in Budapest resembles the one in London not by chance, but was intended by the architect as a tribute to the first democracy.

#2: Matra- and Bükk Mountains



In a country flat as a pancake a hill like Kékes, about 3,000 ft above sea level, is a real mountain. Combined with the Bükk hills the Matras are Hungary's highest and wildest mountains, and in between the two ranges lies Eger, a beautiful old town famous for its wine (Eger Bull's Blood). There are some beautiful roads snaking through the dense forest.

KINGS AND CASTLES TOUR

RIDING DAY 13 : BUDAPEST - WIEN (VIENNA)

Standard Route (305 km / 189 miles)

Unfortunately today is our last riding day, a long one, not very challenging, but with some interesting stops along the way.

The curvy road across the Pilis hills brings us to Esztergom, Hungary's first capital. The basilica is very impressive, and even if you've seen many churches during the last two weeks: don't miss this one!

Along the Danube we continue west, on the Slovakian side, because there's less traffic. Back in Hungary we pass through the bustling city of Győr, follow busy highway 85 and finally arrive at the site of the Pan-European Picnic of 1989 to have some picnic of our own.

Afterwards, the Leithagebirge, a very small mountain range, delivers some more riding fun before we reach the outskirts of Vienna.

Highlights:

#1: Esztergom



Esztergom is of great national importance to all Hungarians: Here, their first king, Stephen I, was born in 973 A.D. and crowned in the year 1,000. This event marks the official birthday of the Hungarian nation. The most prominent feature of the city is the Basilica. 387 ft. long, 157 ft. wide and 335 ft. high, it is the country's largest church. For the most dramatic view of the area you can cross the bridge to the Slovakian side of the Danube River.

#2: Sopron



Only 5 miles behind the Austrian-Hungarian border lies Sopron, probably the most beautiful medieval city in Hungary. This area was a popular trade place even before Roman times and the city is still popular today – with tourists. The historic center is mostly car-free and offers a multitude of medieval buildings, some of them as old as 700 years. On the main square you can see a perfect example of a “plague pillar.” Hundreds of them were erected throughout Hungary during the times of the Black Death.

#3: Pan-European Picnic



August 19, 1989. Local Austrians and Hungarians are staging a cross-border picnic in an effort to bolster their friendship across the Iron Curtain. People from East Germany, on vacation on the shores of nearby Lake Neusiedl, seize the opportunity, pack their bags and march west - right through the hole in the fence. Nobody knows what to do, several hundred East Germans escape, it's big

news throughout Europe, it's the beginning of the end of the Cold War.

The place where all this happened is like a small open air museum today, it features some original barbed wire fence, a watch tower as well as displays and memorials. It also features some picnic benches, so if the weather is right...



We wish you a wonderful tour.

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