

# Ride of a lifetime

Four countries, seven days, miles on end and a spectacular ride in the Alps. **Haroon Rafique**, our reader from Saudi Arabia, has done that and is happy to share it with *BIKE India* readers

I HAD BEEN MULLING the idea of such a ride for more than a decade. This year we decided to put our plans into practice.

The first in the long list of preparations was convincing my wife to accompany me. Then came taking a bike on rent in Munich, Germany. After a lot of research, study of maps and fund arrangement dawned the fine morning when we had the air tickets in our possession. Leaving the kids with their grandparents, my better half and I were now ready to set out on the ride of our dreams!

We arrived in Munich to a cold and cloudy welcome. I went to take a look at my companion for the ride: a light blue-grey, brand-new 2010 model BMW R1200RT. I was going to be the first person to ride the bike! They

also happily obliged to fix my GPS on it.

Then came the much-awaited day of the advent. The plan was to ride from Munich to Zell Am See. The ride was smooth, barring a few snags and GPS failure, which cost an extra 30 km. Traversing some of the most picturesque landscapes, first-class roads and spectacular hairpin bends, we covered the set 300 km before calling it a day.

We were ready to hit the road as soon as possible on the morrow. However, news on the telly showed rain, fog and snow in the area we were to pass through. The only alternative was to change the route and cross into Italy. It was a day of biting cold wind and dark tunnels, alleviated by the magnificence of Europe. My Cramster K2K jacket, DewRex gloves and Olympia



All ready to set out in the right outfit and the necessary gear in place

trousers kept me comfortable with temperatures varying from -1 to 25 degrees Celsius as well as light rain along the way. The Wolfman tank bag also proved a valuable piece of accessory during the trip.

Savouring a variety of delicacies on the way, we reached Cortina by evening. Cortina is home to some of the most prestigious names in the fashion world: Bulgari, Benetton and Gucci etc. The nearby mountain slopes were used to film the 1981 James Bond film 'For Your Eyes Only' and, later, 'Cliffhanger'. Arabba, our destination for overnight stay, was now about 50 km away. Supper was waiting for us in Arabba, which boasts of nice pizzerias serving mouth-watering food.

On the third day of this seven-day extravaganza, we woke up ►









to be greeted by bright sunlight and a clear sky. A sunny day in the Alps could mean a temperature of about three degrees Celsius. The plan was to head east, touch Slovenia and then fetch up at Villach in Austria for the night. Excellent cheese-tasting sessions *en route* was a memorable highlight of the day! A few more GPS failures and we made it to Villach, which was nothing short of a Hollywood set and looked surreal.

By now, we had become accustomed to getting lost and asking the local citizens for directions. We then reached Halstatt. This whole village can be toured on foot in 10 minutes, but you can immerse yourself in the tranquillity of the place for hours on end!

As the ride was coming to an end, the destination for the day was

Salzburg. After a brief interaction with the most beautiful roads I have ever travelled on, I promised myself that I must undertake such trips frequently. Salzburg has a lot of places worth visiting, many of them related to Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and the remaining to 'The Sound of Music'.

The sixth day was devoted to a small ride to Munich. Well aware that Munich was a stone's throw away from Salzburg, we decided to take it easy. Riding through small villages and not finely sliced tarmac, we were surprised to see roads strewn with cow dung. (And we thought it happened only in India!)

We reached Munich and, sadly, also the conclusion of our dream ride.

Our last day was devoted wholly to the BMW World and Museum in Munich. What better



A beautiful European road and (above) the BMW World and Museum in Munich

way to arrive at this landmark than astride a beautiful BMW R1200RT motorcycle?

The museum had something for lovers of both - BMW cars and bikes, including a free-for-all section where all the new models are displayed and are accessible to all. For scale model collectors, there is a whole range of new, classic and vintage models with fine detailing to choose from. However, most prices run into three-digit Euro figures! Admittance to the BMW Welt is free, but the museum charges eight Euros per person and is open from Tuesdays to Saturdays between 10.00 am and 6.00 pm.

I must now put the final full-stop to my travelogue. It was a dream come true and I was really lucky to experience it early in life! **BIKE**