

THE BUCKET LIST ✓
MOTORCYCLING MUST - DOS

If Bond did bike museums

Why you should head up an Austrian summit to the amazing Top Mountain Motorcycle Museum

'A perfect mix of great roads and wonderful motorcycles'

PICTURES: GEOF TOMPINSON



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Austria's highest border crossing is also one of its greatest motorcycle roads. The mighty Timmelsjoch pass climbs from the Ötztal valley in the Austrian Tyrol and crosses the border at 2474m before descending through a series of ten spectacular cliffside hairpins into the Passeier valley in Italy.

The last thing most motorcyclists are thinking about when riding a road like this is making a visit to a museum. But in April 2016 a new space-age toll booth and cable car base station was opened at Hochgurgl on the Austrian side

of the pass just below the border crossing. Twin brothers Alban and Atilla Scheiber, who own the complex as well as the road itself, also made it home to one of the most impressive motorcycle museums in the world – and the highest in Europe. The opening ceremony included a visit from Giacomo Agostini on his racing MV Agusta, a flyby by Red Bull and world-class cuisine. It looks more like the film set for the latest Bond villain's head of operations

than a repository of legendary machinery. If you take the time to dismount and enter the museum a €10 entry fee will see you inside the personal motorcycle collection of the Scheiber brothers.

Their lives have been driven by their passion for two wheels. "We got our first moped when we were six years old, at eight we were sitting on our first motocross bike, we haven't gotten off our bikes again since," recounts Alban Scheiber. They have been collecting

motorcycles for many years, buying them from friends, online or at auctions in Europe and the USA. "The old toll station from the 1950s had to be restored," says Alban, "which gave us the idea to integrate a motorcycle museum into the new building at the same time and open our collection."

Ten years before the building opened they started to add more and more bikes to their collection and the current display has 350 bikes, 70% of which are owned by the family, the rest are on loan.

We based ourselves in Sölden and headed south from there to the Timmelsjoch. Thankfully it was

open (it has been recently plagued by landslides) and we were blessed with great weather. The Austrian side of the pass climbs through four hairpins and is a relatively gentle introduction to the more spectacular Italian side. We soon pass the small ski-resort town of Hochgurgl then up around the next bend the imposing wood and glass structure of the combined cable car station / toll booth / Motorcycle Museum and restaurant comes into view straddling the road ahead and jutting out over the valley to the left.

The main exhibition hall is on the first floor but there is also a secondary exhibition area on the



TMMM co-founder Alban Scheiber gets amongst his collection



The museum is a pure architect's dream location



Bikes on wooden banking as if waiting for the race to start



There are bikes from all eras of the sport



See the Munro replica streamliner



Every wall is adorned with displays



Bikes are beautifully displayed



Museums don't come higher or better

We are shown around by Museum and Restaurant manager Basilius Praxmarer who also gives us some of the back history and future plans.

Angelus Scheiber, grandfather of the twins, was an Ötztal tourism pioneer and with support from the provincial government planned the first paved road over the Timmelsjoch in 1950 following the route of the old mule trading track. The idea was to be able to ski at midday on the Ötztal glaciers and then relax in the afternoon under the palm trees of Merano. Work started in 1955 and the road was opened in July 1959.

Two generations on and the twins have replaced the old simple toll booth with the structure we see today but already there is work underway on an expansion. A third wing is being built at the moment and will be opened in Autumn 2021. The collection is expanding thanks to private donors and a new partnership with Red Bull and Wings for Life.

It's an extraordinary perfect storm of incredible roads, a breath-taking location, amazing architecture and a stunning collection of motorcycles. It's hard to find reasons why you wouldn't want to visit. **MCN**

HOW TO GET THERE

2175m above sea level...

● Top Mountain Motorcycle Museum, Timmelsjoch, Hochgurgl, Austria
The Top Mountain Crosspoint with Europe's highest motorcycle museum at 2175m is open every day from 9am to 5.30pm. The connected restaurant is open from 10am to 5pm. The entrance fee is €10 but if you are staying in the area and have the Ötztal Premium Card, then the entrance is free.

To visit the museum you don't have to pass through the road toll but you are sure to want to ride the spectacular Italian side of the pass.

The access road is open daily from 7am to 8pm all year round, but the section after the toll is normally only open between end of May and end of October. It's worth checking whether it is open on www.timmelsjoch.com/en. The one-way ticket costs €15 and a return ticket costs €21.

The Italian side is not suitable for large vehicles and coaches over 10m length or over 8 tonnes are prohibited – so leave your massive motorhome at home. Trailers over 4.5m are also prohibited.

All information about the museum can be found on their website www.crosspoint.tirol.or tmm.at

● Airport Innsbruck, which is served from UK by BA and charter airlines. You then have to drive to Sölden in Ötztal and then on to Hochgurgl.



The ride there is a total treat too