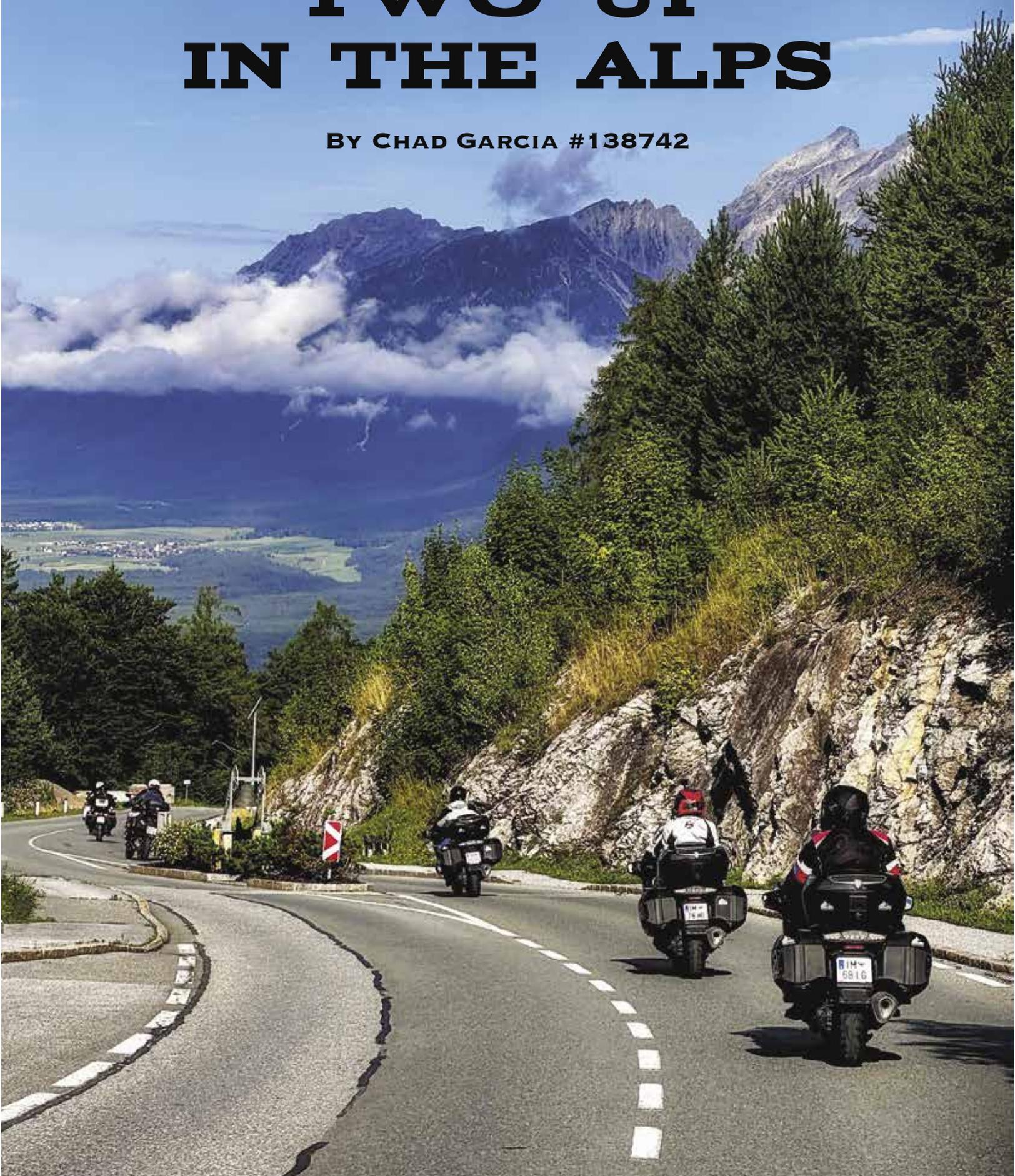


TWO-UP IN THE ALPS

BY CHAD GARCIA #138742



After reaching our goal of riding a motorcycle in all 50 U.S. states, we asked ourselves, “Where to next?” The answer: Europe! We wanted to experience the tall peaks, famous passes and have a chance to explore our family roots across four countries via the Alps. It was a dream worth chasing.

As a couple who plans every mile and meal of our trips, handing over the reins to someone else was a big step. However, after attending several motorcycle tour seminars at BMW MOA National Rallies over the years, we realized a guided tour might be the perfect way to experience international riding for the first time. That decision led us to Edelweiss Bike Travel and its Touring Center Alps—a loop-based motorcycle tour based out of Seefeld, Austria, where each day offers new roads without ever having to repack your bags.

I wanted to ride legendary roads like Stelvio Pass and Rhonnie was eager to explore European food, architecture and history—ideally with a cappuccino in hand. We also hoped to trace family roots in Germany, Austria and Italy. The Touring Center Alps offered it all: rides through those countries plus Switzerland, cultural excursions and flexible rest days.

Booking through Edelweiss’s home office was seamless. Lena, our travel coordinator, handled everything from flights to hotel recommendations and even helped us plan four extra days in Munich before the tour. Her local knowledge was invaluable, especially when it came to navigating public transport and securing gluten-free options.

We chose the R 1250 RT for its comfort and capability—ideal for our two-up mountain touring. My gear included a KLIM Traverse jacket and pants, Sedici waterproof boots, a Shoei Neotec helmet and a Cardo Packtalk Edge for in-helmet communication. Rhonnie knew comfort would make or break her trip. After trying nearly every brand at the BMW MOA Rally, she fell in love with Gryphon’s



“designed by women, for women” Twisted Sisters line as well as Stylmartin waterproof high-top riding shoes, KLIM gloves and a Shoei J-Cruise helmet.

Packing for the trip was an adventure of its own. Our Excel checklist (we are meticulous planners!) listed full gear for unpredictable weather, a universal adapter, layered clothing and just enough luggage to stay within airline weight limits.

Arriving in Munich several days before our tour, we took the opportunity to explore the city, including the BMW Museum and Welt. With a rental Boxster, we also visited the Porsche Museum in Stuttgart, drove through the Black Forest and toured the Dachau Concentration Camp. Munich was a joy to navigate and the perfect starting point for our European ride. The city offers a wide range of public transportation options. The real excitement began when we boarded the train for Seefeld.

Our base for the week, Hotel Das Eden, was situated in the heart of Seefeld, offering panoramic views of the Alps. We checked in, found a welcome package in our room (including maps, shirts and a schedule) and headed to orientation. Our group included solo riders, couples riding together, a couple each riding their own motorcycles and even one non-riding spouse who joined us for dinner. However, while we were riding, she was able to enjoy shopping and spa time.

This is one of the few Edelweiss tours allowing for such flexibility and it resulted in a diverse, fun and engaging group dynamic. We were joined by riders from across the U.S., Canada and Switzerland, led by our fantastic Austrian guides, Markus and Christoph.

On the first day of our tour, it rained a lot, but the bike handled beautifully and our guides kept the group motivated and safe. If you are new to group riding, I suggest reading up on it and/or watching some videos. If you are not familiar with the

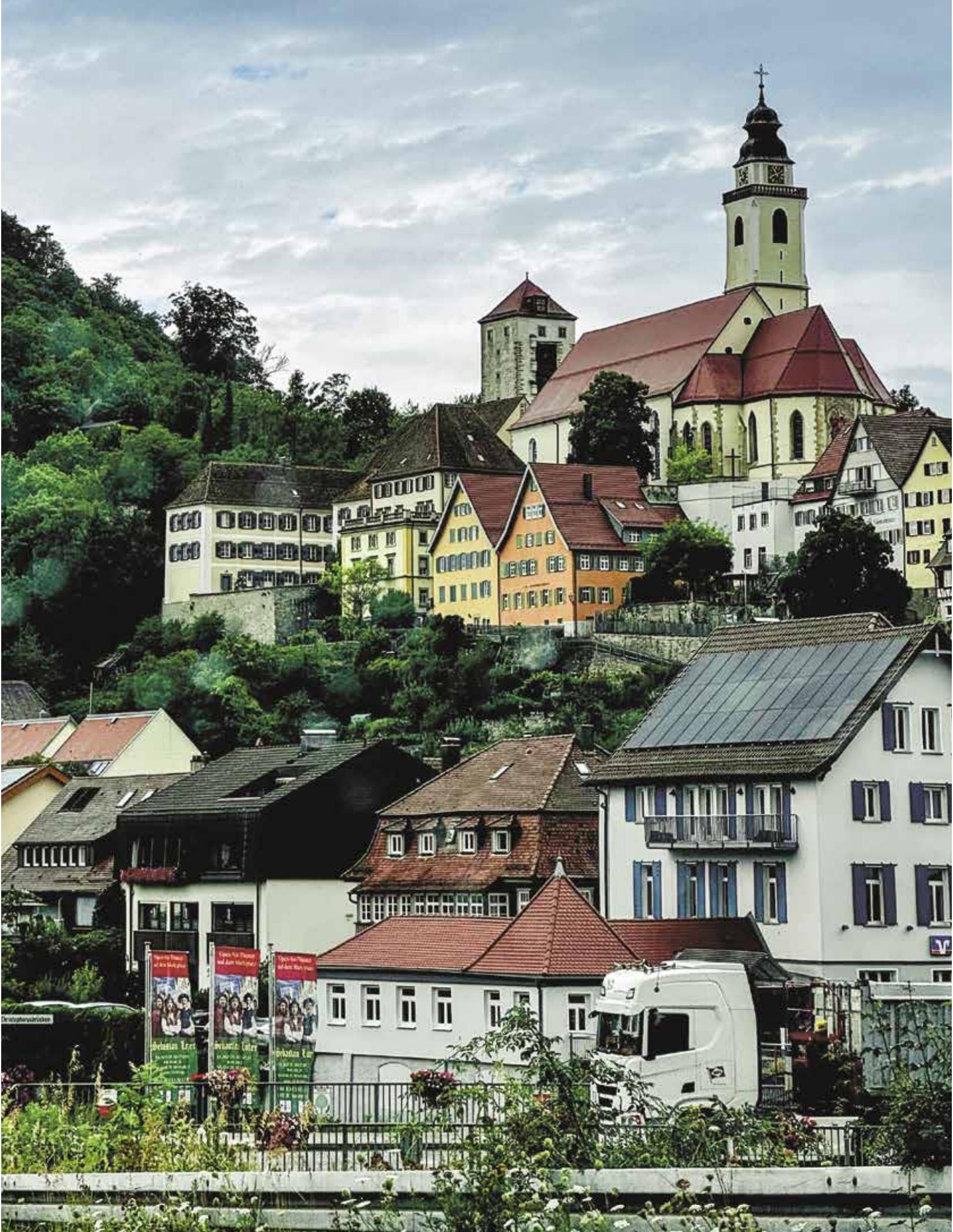


motorcycle you select, I recommend reading up and watching videos about it so that you can utilize all the fantastic options. Edelweiss also offers an extra day at the start of the tour for some riding and becoming comfortable on the motorcycle you selected. As I genuinely enjoy all motorcycles, especially BMWs, I was able to assist fellow riders with their BMW controls, as many were new to the platform.

Rhonnie, despite being soaked, was in awe as the rain made the green valleys glow, while the team spirit was undeniable. Our first dinner together that night felt like the beginning of lifelong friendships. From there, we rode through scenic valleys to Linderhof Castle (a mini-Versailles built by King Ludwig II) and Ettal Monastery, which houses a boarding school, distillery, brewery and more. The clouds lifted just enough for us to catch glimpses of turquoise lakes

Above, A Munich cheese vendor at the Viktualienmarkt. **Below,** BMW Headquarters and the BMW Museum. **Right,** A view from the window of our rental Porsche Boxster while exploring the Black Forest.







nestled between mountain peaks. The riding was technical, but manageable—perfect for intermediate riders. Rhonnie loved the history and the guides made navigating language barriers and gluten-free menus easy.

Continuing our tour, clear skies meant big mile days. We briefly rode the Autobahn, rode through the Passo del Rombo and visited the incredible Top Mountain Motorcycle Museum near the Italian border. Reaching 140 kph on the autobahn produced a smile that probably stretched across Austria. For Rhonnie, she'll never forget her cappuccino in an Italian café or how vividly green the Alps were.

Stelvio Pass, with its 48 numbered switchbacks, tight elevation changes and unpredictable weather, featured a cold rain that gave way to sun at the summit. It was the most challenging and rewarding ride of my life.

While heights terrify Rhonnie, she trusted me and looked ahead for traffic while I focused on the road. Reaching the top, we celebrated with lunch and coffee in Switzerland. Riding the Stelvio Pass was truly a team experience.

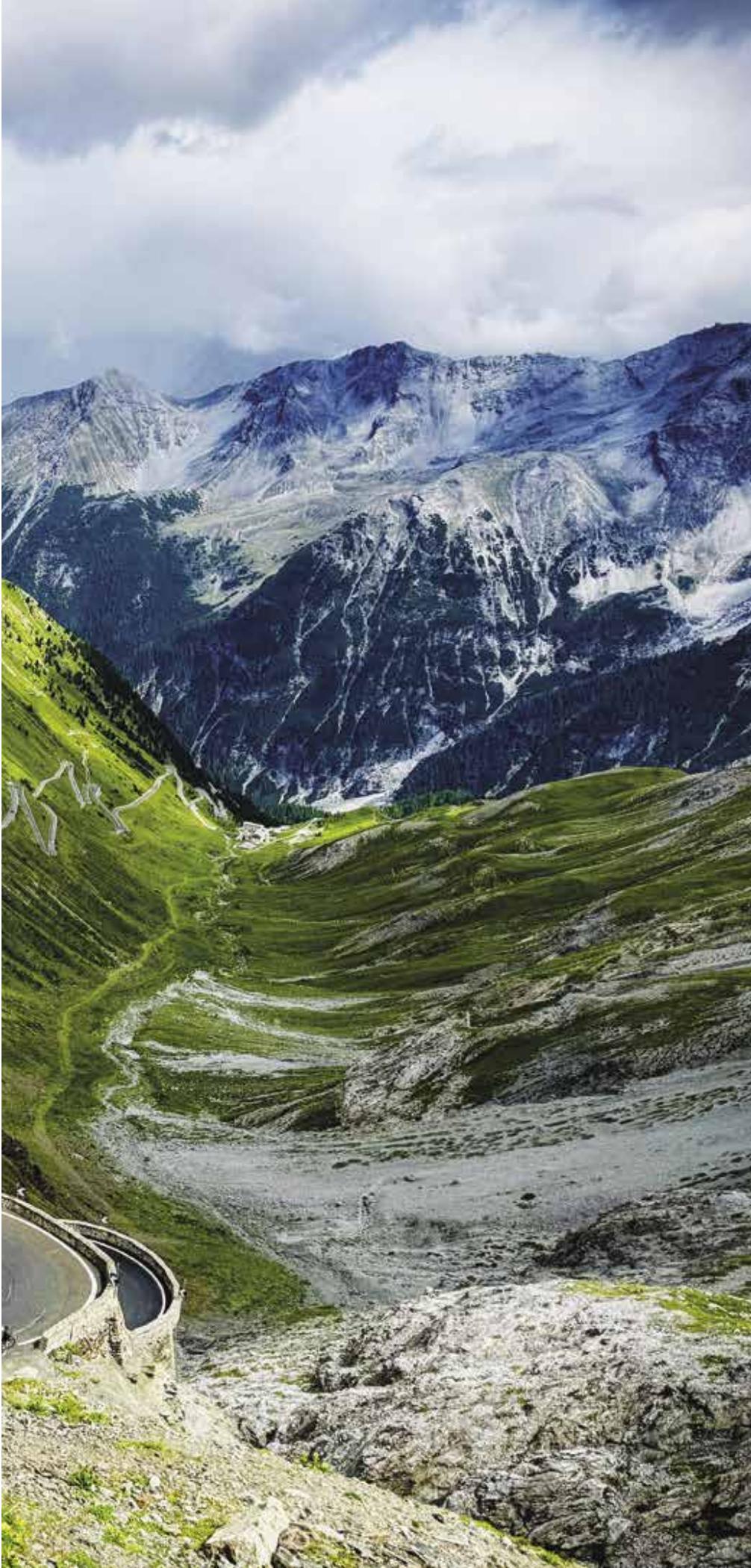
Our last day was supposed to be shorter, but we weren't ready to stop. Markus created a 154-mile bonus route for us and a new Canadian friend. Together, the three of us wanted to make the most of every moment riding the Alps. After we finally dropped off the bike at Edelweiss HQ, we headed back

Above, A view from the road in Tyrol, Austria. **Below,** A cappuccino stop along the road. **Right,** A garden at Linderhof Palace in southwest Bavaria near the village of Ettal.









to Seefeld for a farewell dinner full of laughs, stories and a few tears. Overall, this was more than a tour; it was a shared journey with new friends.

If you're a confident rider eager to explore the Alps, Edelweiss delivers. The RT was perfect, the roads unforgettable and the guides were true professionals. For once, I didn't have to plan everything and it was all amazing. As a passenger, Rhonnie felt like an active participant instead of just being along for the ride. The mix of riding and sightseeing, the thoughtful accommodations and the chance to bond with other riders made this tour memorable. If you're unsure, go ahead and do it.

Whether you're navigating hairpins on Stelvio or sipping espresso in a quiet Italian village, the Touring Center Alps lets you experience the best of Europe's roads and culture. For both rider and passenger alike, it's the adventure of a lifetime.



Chad and Rhonnie Garcia are high school sweethearts who have been riding together for 37 years. Both retired, Chad discovered his

passion for motorcycles at 13 and has been riding ever since. Rhonnie began as Chad's passenger and later earned her motorcycle endorsement through the MSF Rider-Course. Though she's ridden solo, she still prefers sharing the ride from the pillion seat.

Chad serves as Secretary of the BMW MOA Board, while Rhonnie volunteers with their local BMW club and at the National Rally.

Left, The switchbacks of Stelvio Pass in northern Italy.