

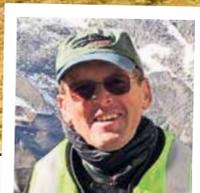
**THE  
BUCKET  
LIST**  
**MOTORCYCLING  
MUST-DOS** ✓

# RIDE THE GROSSGLOCKNER

Austria's highest peak is also home to one of the world's finest biking roads

● **'We threaded a line through the hairpins and straights'**

Get your timing perfect and the roads are yours

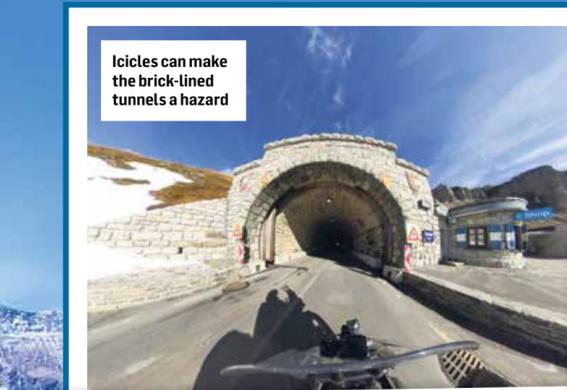


BY GEOFF TOMPKINSON  
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above us gave any hint of serious weather on the way. The reds and oranges and browns and greens of autumn were alternately back and front lit as we threaded an unimpeded line through hairpins, straights and bends. It doesn't get any better than this. As we climbed ever higher the trees soon disappeared and we were left with browning green vegetation dotted with the reds and yellows of small shrubs against an approaching backdrop of jagged snowy peaks. The sides of the road next to the precipitous drops,

● **'550,000 cubic metres of snow are cleared away'**

switching from left to right with each hairpin, are lined with spaced out rows of stubby stone blocks that would only serve to catapult you over the edge should you hit them.



Icicles can make the brick-lined tunnels a hazard



36 numbered hairpins? It's pure biking bliss



Also known as Bikers Point, it's just spectacular



It's worth pausing to eat and take stock



The road snakes ever up to the peaks



Autumn colours line the lower sections



There's plenty of Alpine hospitality



**'I DID IT TOO!'**

**'Stop off for a schnitzel'**

Larry Hepi runs a B&B in the Austrian Alps. He rides a Triumph Daytona 955i

"It was a beautiful sunny day in early autumn and the perfect day for this ride. The road was warm, in great condition and free of traffic. I knew that I was going to have some fun on the 36 hairpins ahead. The ride to the top was as exhilarating as the scenery was spectacular – passing through a changing landscape of forest and green meadows on the lower part rising up to rocky peaks and glaciers above the tree line at the top. Naturally, being Austria, there is always somewhere good to stop for a schnitzel and apple strudel. This time I paused at Restaurant Fuschertörl at a height of 2400m. A spot of lunch in the sunshine surrounded by panoramic views before jumping back on for the descent towards Heiligenblut. I rode down to the toll booth on the south side, turned around and did it again."

**YOU CAN DO IT**

The Grossglockner High Alpine Road is normally open from May to October, [www.grossglockner.at](http://www.grossglockner.at). Prices for the toll for bikes is €27 for a day and if you're staying overnight then the second day is €12.50. On a day ticket you can ride as long as you want so long as you stay inside the toll booths. For lunch we like restaurant 'Fuschertörl', which has hearty food, a great terrace and fab views. [www.grossglockner-restaurant.at](http://www.grossglockner-restaurant.at)

at this end of the season they were clear. The descent down towards Heiligenblut was a wonderful reward of all the fun we'd had on the way up, but there was still one major attraction in store for us. As we descended back down into the forested zone a sign at a small roundabout pointed us towards the Kaiser-Franz-Josefs Höhe and the Pasterze glacier. This road is a microcosm of all that went before. It has its own zones of changing vegetation, its own numbered hairpins and equally stunning, dare I say better, views as it winds along the right of the valley up towards the glacier.

Just before it gets there it passes through a long concrete roofed and columned terrace clinging to the wall of the valley, protecting the road from snow and rock fall. With the low autumnal light it made for a stroboscopic entry to the view as we turned the final bend. We emerged on a viewing platform directly above the foot of the 8km Pasterze glacier and below the snowy peak of Grossglockner. This was the Franz Josefs Höhe (high point), named after the last Kaiser of Austria, which at 2369m is still about 1500m below the peak. It was all for us – a bucket list of a ride well and truly ticked. **MCN**

restaurant in preparation. We decided not to hang around for too long. A few photos posing with the altitude sign and we were off. We were truly above the snow-line now and that alien spacecraft of a cloud was spanning the entire visible sky behind and seemed to be chasing us across the high plateau as we made our way to the two short brick-lined tunnels that would lead us to the start of the descent. These tunnels can be very treacherous and are often lined with a curtain of dripping ice but

At 2450m we arrived at the first highpoint and a welcome coffee stop at the Fuschertörl restaurant. After easily succumbing to the lure of a slice of apfelstrudel we mounted up again and rode up the narrow switch-back cobbled road (not recommended in the rain) to the Edelweiss Spitze, affectionately known as 'Bikers Point', which at 2571m is actually the highest point on the pass. The wind was threatening and they were battenning down the solar panels on the roof of the Edelweisshütte