

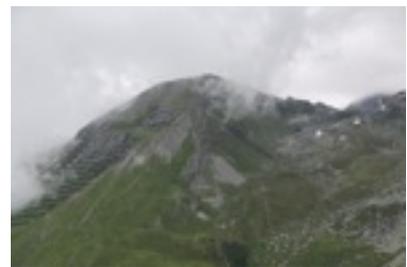
FLOODS ACROSS AUSTRIA

Craig | Joanne | Peanut



Wednesday 30th July: Tux to Gerlos Pass, Pinzgau

Boy did it rain last night! It was none stop and this morning we are covered in cloud. The streams look pretty full and the waterfalls are roaring. So glad we did our trip to the glacier yesterday, the weather is that bad I bet they close the mountain. Just looking over at the ski lift and it doesn't look like it is moving, maybe it is closed until the weather improves.



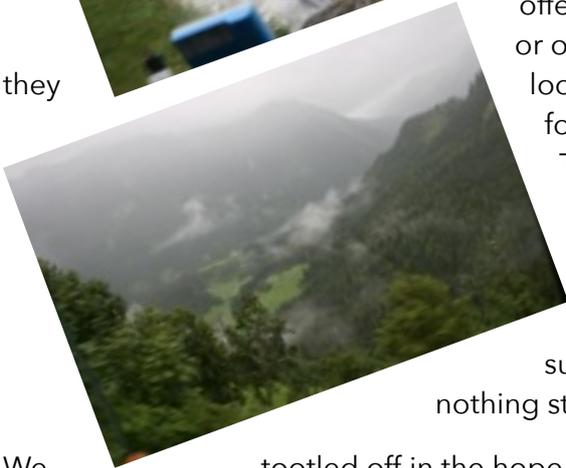
We slowly headed back down the Tux valley. The roads were saturated and poor Homer was having to tread carefully amongst all the torrid roads streams. Poor thing, it felt like he was nose down but sat on his arse, so as to slow down and stop himself from slipping away in the streams. As made our way down the streams just looks so different, only a couple of days ago and they were merrily trickling away down stream but today, its gushing. The little villages and towns were deserted with only the odd one or two hardened walker.

Even covered in cloud and lashing down with rain the landscape is still pretty dramatic and amazing. As we wound down the valley we stopped at

bottom, the village
our



they



of Mayrhofen to be precise for some water and fuel. As journeys seem to be a bit up and down at the moment we are only keeping Homer half full, so we don't put too much strain on him. There seems to be plenty of petrol stations and all offering water, so might as well optimise our resources while we can.

Mayrhofen is a pretty active place. Lots of restaurants, hotels and sports. I would imagine a great place to base your holiday as the place offers a lot but also not a million miles away from skiing or other great places. The hotels tend to be 5 star but look amazing (Clive check out Stock Hotel) and great for both outdoor pursuits and indoor spa treatments. The Austrian's are renewed for their spa treatments but bear in mind this may include being dunked in an ice-cold pool before being stripped and spread eagle on a wooden lounge in the middle of the hotel grounds only to be left to freeze dry. Not sure why anyone would pay for such pain but hey ho nothing stranger than folk.

We tootled off in the hope the rain would stop and the cloud would lift but oh no, it rained and it rained and it rained. It got so bad we couldn't see where we were. We pulled in loads of places in the hope it would stop and we could see where we were but the cloud just got denser and greyer and the the rain just got bigger and faster. At one point we sat 2ft apart and shouting at each other but couldn't hear a word. The water levels were getting pretty high and so glad we are high up right now. Its got to be safer than being at the bottom where all this water will end up.

We passed a massive garden centre, it looked fabulous. A bit like Bents but on steroids! Love the Austrian name for garden centre...Bluminhaus. But as the Austrians love their flowers especially begonias no wonder the garden centre is so big.

No matter where we turned it was spotless. We really cannot get over how clean Austria is from the roads, to the houses, cars, lorries, you name it, it is clean. Even the cattle are clean, in fact we were trying to find a dirty cow but struggled. The cows even have clean bums, which means they teach their cows how to aim well or they jet wash their jacksy. There is no way cows can be so clean unless of course our English cows are just messy buggers and don't give two hoots about their poopy rear. Talking of cows, we passed a village today and there were a load of cows loitering outside a restaurant. Believe it or not but today's special beef burger!

We called at the bank and I wish I'd taken my camera. The bank was like some spa resort reception room, it was gorgeous. All marble with a little pebbled stream running through. Never seen



anything like it and probably never will again. The hole in the wall was different too. You had to enter your PIN before doing anything which felt strange because in Italy you only entered your PIN just before it spat your money out. Anyway, I entered my PIN and checked our balance and then selected the withdrawal option. Now how good is this...they list the notes available and you select how many notes of each denomination you need. I think this is great and saves you ending up with €100 notes that everyone just frowns at.

We had a game of hide and seek. Craig did a C for cloud and I did a R for rain then we got stuck...nothing else to see.

We eventually found a parking spot near a lake. Beautiful view considering the low cloud, so bet its wonderful on a clear day. There were a few campers there already but once we got down to the lake we didn't like the look of the ground. It was saturated and very loose and if the rain continues we'd end up bogged down. We drove back up the lane to solid ground and parked up. After dinner we cuddled up under the duvet and watched telly. It was really good to snuggle up, felt like being at home in middle of winter.



Thursday 31st July: Gerlos Pass, Pinzgau to Bruck

Last night it rained none stop and this morning the road is like a mini stream. I am so glad we chose not to sleep near to the lake because we'd definitely be stuck and bogged in. Breakfast over we set off towards Hohe Tauern National Park. An hour in to the journey and we'd become tree top experts. Well at least it is better than yesterday, we only got cloud yesterday but today we get tree tops & clouds! This rain is becoming worse and every time we see a river



is seems to be getting faster and fuller. I am sure the Austrians are used to this but we aren't, it is quite worrying.

We came to a fork in the road and Craig took the one that said no vehicles over 2.5 ton. Homer is 4 ton. **What are you doing? We'll be fine, you they build in a tolerance and so we'll be OK.** The single track road left no option but to move forward. Thank god we're not in rush hour. With the cloud we couldn't see what was over the edge and that's probably a good thing as my toes were clinging on the Homer's dash like crazy. Jeez we're back on the mad mouse but this time there are no barriers to stop you hurling over the edge. The we came across a sign for road repairs. How the hell do they do road repairs on a single track road on the edge of a mountain? Surely they should close the road? We slowly moved forward and after a mile or so we came across the section of road to repair. They hadn't started the repair because it was more of a rebuild, half the bloody road had collapsed and slid down the mountain. What does Craig do, he nudges Homer slowly over the very thin and extremely unstable road. Lets put it this way, if I had stepped out then I would have had no road to step on to. I pooped myself. Fortunately we got over the road and then I got a bad thought, what happens if we have to reverse or if someone comes the other way. Why does your mind play stupid tricks on you just when you really need it to be balanced? I don't get why we scare ourselves half to death, why do we do that? Then just as the single track road got back to normal we see a 17% gradient. Going down a steep hill, on single track road built for 2.5 ton whilst it is pickling down is not right. I think we need our bumps checking out. Poor



Homer waded through the water and kept his breaks on as hard as he could. We slowly crept down the road, stopping ever so often to let Homer cool down. As we got half way down the mountain we started to come out of the cloud and the valley below started to come in to view. The forest and alpine pastures were a lush green colour and welcome change from grey cloud. You could see all sorts of conifer like spruce and larch and the arolla pine...best be careful we stay away from the pine needles. As we crept down off the mountain on to the valley floor. It was still raining but at least we could see stuff and it was beautiful.

We'd not long been on the 'normal' road when we came across a road block. We pulled Homer to onside and stepped out to see what the problem was. A mother and son were also trying to suss out what was going on. Just as the mother said the road was closed due to flooding, we noticed massive hale bales go floating by in the not too distant river. Blinkinek I hadn't noticed how bad that river was. I was gushing everywhere and destroying everything in its path including massive trees. The son told us his car was being repaired on the other side of the river and he needed to collect it in order to head to Switzerland. He said the road would be closed until tomorrow and then it may reopen but depends on the weather.



We were unsure what to do. We put on our raincoats and walked down the road. As we approached it became obvious the river had burst its banks and was gushing everywhere. The fields were completely flooded and the train line completely ripped up. The road was underwater and several houses were several feet in water. The fire brigade were there trying to rescue people from their homes and get basic stuff to them. It was awful and we felt for the home owners. You could see how distraught they were and despite all their efforts with sandbags and barriers, the water still got passed and managed to take a whole load of mud with it. We stayed around to get any information we could but it seemed like the road wouldn't open again today.

We headed back up the road to a little spar, parked up





Cattle Shed



and had some lunch. The man in tourist information reckoned the road would be open in the morning, he also said that floods were across all of Austria.



We are also signed up for emergency news alerts from UK Foreign Office and sure enough we received email alert for Austria and Switzerland. We

dossed around for a while and managed to get totally irate at the Austrian Go Box company. We scanned and sent them all our registration documents and now we have to fill in an application form for an emission classification. The system might work well when you know what you are doing but 1st time users, it is very confusing and not at all helpful or logical. The call centre staff aren't much better they just demand you complete the form by a given date otherwise we'll be fined. All this is after they've taken your money!



Just before teatime we had a cycle around. As we went closer to the flooded road we noticed a few cars going through. Is the road open, we thought? We weren't sure but shot back to Homer to give it a go. Yep we got through! But as we continued along the road the floods devastation became clear. The whole valley had suffered in some shape or form from the burst river. It was heart breaking to see people trying to rescue their homes. The only blessing, no lives were lost in the flood and from what we can gather, the cattle were taken to high ground and out of the flood area.



Hey there's a Hofer store. Why do we know that logo? Hey that's right, it looks like an Aldi. Wonder if they have rebranded and building up the store? We decided to give them a whirl. It was OK but both of us still prefer Lidl.

After a little shop we headed to Zeller Am See. Now a massive tourist trap but originally founded by monks in 8th century. The lake Zell is a deep glacial lake filled with alpine water that are crystal blue. And just like the lake district you can drive around the lake and stop in lush hotels and mountain spa's. We tried to find somewhere to park but no joy, it was chocker with cars and people. Clearly a busy holiday period for Zeller. Eventually we ended up heading away from the lake and stopping in a little town called Bruck just a few kilometres away. We don't know much about Bruck apart from its quiet.



Tomorrow's adventure is on our bucket list of things to do...so pretty excited.