

Bora to Budapest

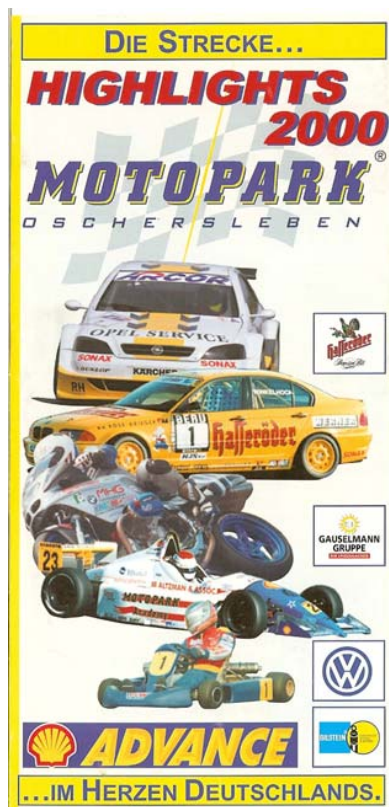
A fortnight before the 2000 EuroClassic a telephone call confirmed that my entry for the event, which was being restored, would not be finished in time. The MSA were helpful and the Bora was substituted which only left the small matter of trying to ensure the car would make the distance. Andy Heywood kindly fitted the car in and gave it a once over and sent me off with a large box of spares to cover most eventualities.

In the days before departure the fuel crisis was starting to spread across Europe and the worry was no longer about the car but whether we would be prevented from getting to the start in Brussels by the French blockades. My father had bravely volunteered to be the 2nd driver and we set off and boarded the boat at Dover with a full tank of fuel and were relieved to find Calais and the route to the Belgian border clear.

The following morning we arrived at the start in the Parc Cinquenaire, Brussels to find things a little more hurried than the usual as the Belgian truckers were arriving to blockade central Brussels, fortunately they had taken pity on us classic car owners and had agreed to leave our route out of the city open so long as the MSA team got all the cars out by 10.30 am.

The first checkpoint of the day was at Ford's Lommel proving ground, where we were escorted round the various facilities by a pace car, but although everyone had to put their cameras in their boot to keep them out of temptations way there was little of interest to see, the only 'new' car being the new Mondeo which in any case had already been revealed to the press.

The remaining check points for the day were more rest halts to break up the two long Autobahn legs, necessary to get the cars close to the eastern part of Germany, and we finished the day at our overnight stop of Hanover.



On the second day we left Hanover and made our way to the Volkswagen Group's theme park/visitor centre, Autostadt in Wolfsburg. The highlight there was really the museum which aside from housing an example of every VW, had some unusual examples of the Group's other marques, Bentley, Bugatti and Lamborghini, including some of the recent "W" engined concept cars. The rest of the park was made of themed buildings, one for each marque containing themed sound and light shows. The most spectacular being Lamborghini which featured a Diablo that mounted on a rotating wall which emerged through clouds of dry ice, thumping music and a recording of its V12 at full chat.

The second stop was one of Germany's newest Circuits the Motopark at Oschersleben. It was an interesting circuit, fun to drive with good corners and some decent straights, but the most memorable thing in many ways was the central stadium raised high above the circuit from where you could view the cars most of the way around the circuit and which caught the engine and exhaust notes as the cars went down the Finish Straight.

The next leg took us into what was East Germany and although the border has been dismantled it was unmistakable when you crossed the boundary. Even if you missed the line across the landscape where the walls and fences once ran you could not help but notice the change in road surface and the grim buildings that still stand as a legacy to the recent past. This took us to Leipzig and our second overnight stop.

The following morning and we set off for our first stop of the day, Colditz Castle, which inevitably had the potential to stir feelings, not least in the Bora as my father had seen active service during the war. In fact it turned to be one of the most memorable stops on the event. The whole town were out to welcome us, the mayor had given the schools a morning off and there was a band there to welcome us. The castle itself was fascinating and totally different to how we imagined, as being in the East it was not available to be used in the many films and programmes made about it.



We then made our way via a refreshment stop in the town of Chemnitz into the Czech Republic. At this point the route book had a very stern warning about paying attention to the road for the first few miles after the border. We were a little bemused at this at first as the roads were actually better than those we had just left behind in Germany, but the potential distraction became all too clear. Despite being a rural road with no visible houses the road was lined for several miles with women of all shapes and sizes clearly all working in the world's oldest profession. We managed to pass this major distraction without incident and pressed on to our next checkpoint the Autodrom Most circuit. This was an excellent circuit to drive on, due not least to the fact that its major meeting of the year is the European Truck Grand Prix, so it is a good wide circuit making it easy to pass slower cars. From Most we drove to our overnight stop in Prague where we were parked up in the beautiful Old Town Square.

The following morning was a late start to give everyone a chance to have a wander round the sites of Prague and we then set off via the town of Jihlava to one of the other highlights of the event the International Hill Climb Course at Namest. Once again, here the whole town had come out to see the cars and the course was lined with cheering spectators, the louder the car the more raucous the reception, so the Bora was well received. The course is 1.2 miles long and not overly complex and the Bora's torque was a huge advantage. Despite the cars being despatched at intervals designed to keep cars apart, we easily caught the car in front little more than half way up, much to the delight of the assembled crowd.

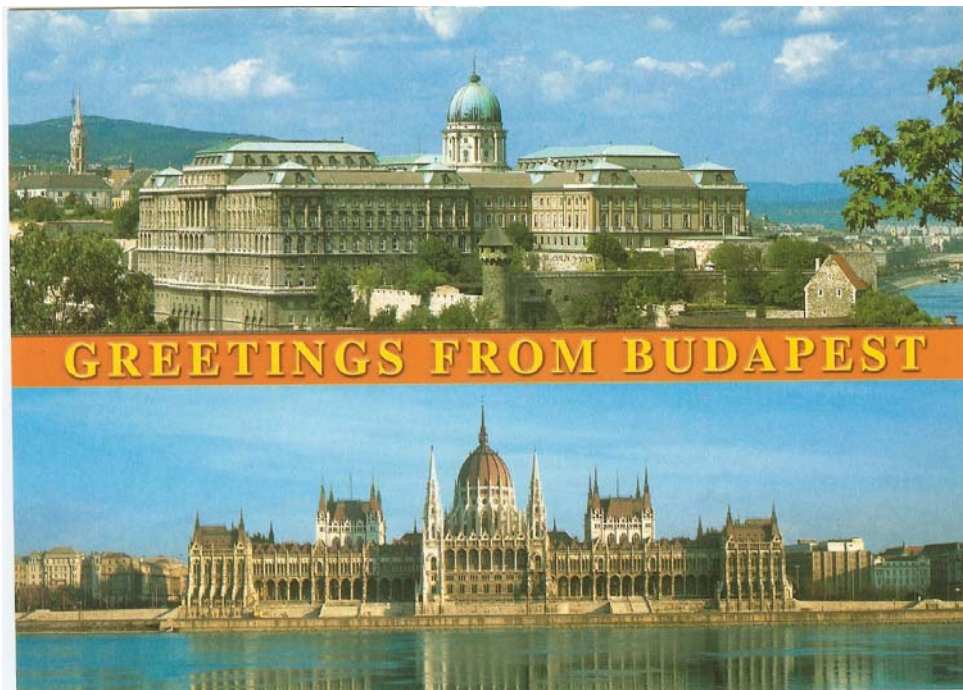
From Namest we made our way to the Automotodrom at Brno. This was another excellent circuit, which I could have driven round all day, though in fact we only had a limited time as they were hosting a round of the European GT Championship and the team transporters were arriving and eager to set up. So playtime, over we made our way into the town of Brno and our overnight halt.

The following morning and the final day, we set off to cross the border into Slovakia. We continued to drive through Slovakia via a stop in the centre of the Capital, Bratislava. After leaving the city my co-driver made only his second mistake of the event and took us off in the wrong direction. I turned into a

suitable side road, turned round and tried to get back on our route, but before we knew what was happening a tatty Skoda came tearing up beside us and the driver poked a red plastic lollipop out of the window and forced us off the road. He got out and showed his police badge and proceeded to talk at us in Slovak. Unfortunately neither of us understand a word of Slovak and as it bears no relation to more familiar European languages we had no idea what if anything we had done wrong. Fortunately he quickly realised that communication was not going to be easy so having examined our passports and our tulip route book, he gestured for us to follow his car and guided us to the Hungarian border.

Having crossed into Hungary we made our way to a stunning Lunch stop overlooking the Danube Bend and from there made our way to the Hungaroring F1 Grand Prix Circuit. This should have been one of the highlights of the trip as it is a circuit I have always wanted to visit, but after the first lap we noticed the water temperature rising dramatically and pulled straight off to let the car cool down. A brief inspection revealed nothing obvious so we set off cautiously for the finish at Budapest. All appeared well but after a few miles the temperature again started to rise so we pulled off into a service station and on this occasion the problem was rather more obvious as a steady stream of water was coming from the underside of the car, one of the pipes carrying water from the radiators to the engine had cracked.

Amazingly despite being a motorway service station they had no water supply for replenishing thirsty cars, so we stocked up with several large bottles of mineral water which saw us to, much relieved, the finish in the Parliament Square in Budapest.



Fortunately as the car was booked onto a transporter for the journey home the problem could wait until we got home.

Over all it was a fabulous event that was thoroughly enjoyed by all, next year Imola is the proposed final destination and I can't wait.