

Rollin'

Rollin'

EIN MAGAZIN DER BIKE REPUBLIC SÖLDEN



DEUTSCH

AUSGABE

2020



ENGLISH

A GUIDE THROUGH THE BIKE REPUBLIC SÖLDEN



EDITION

2020



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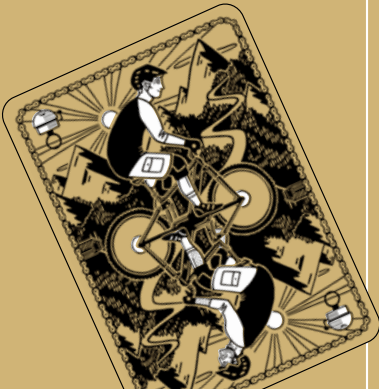
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Coverphotos: Lukas Ennemoser, Leo Linser, Photos: Lukas Ennemoser, Peter Leitner, Leo Linser, Sebastian Doerk, Martin Erd, Rudi Wyhlidal, Leslie Kehmeier

Coverfotos: Lukas Ennemoser, Leo Linser, Fotos: Lukas Ennemoser, Peter Leitner, Leo Linser, Sebastian Doerk, Martin Erd, Rudi Wyhlidal, Leslie Kehmeier



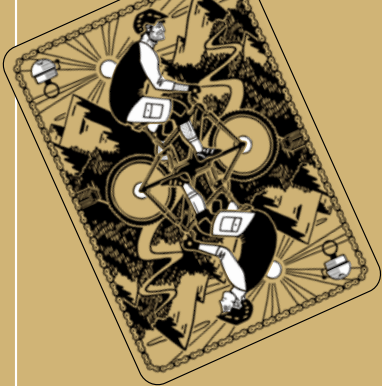
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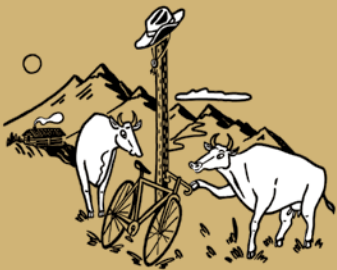
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AUS & AUT
Er ist eine **Mountainbike-Ikone** aus Australien. Sie ist mehrfache **Bike-Weltmeisterin** from Austria.



The storytellers of this edition:



**Leslie
Kehmeier**

She is a "Colorado-born adventure nerd" and photographer, who has travelled all seven continents. Her husband Chris is the reason for her frequent returns to Sölden. A landscape architect, he is also a renowned trail designer.



**Daniel & Olivier
Wiechmann**

As a journalist Daniel investigates the future of mobility, as a book author he writes entertaining guides. In the Ötztal, two things moved him: an eBike and the fact that he is growing older while his teenage son grows stronger.



**Sebastian
Herrmann**

He is a dad, an editor at Germany's biggest daily, the "Süddeutsche Zeitung", and a cowboy. He became the latter by fighting his way up the infamous Kühtai pass three times in a row on his roadbike.

Rollin' Rollin' Rollin'

Five years ago, the BIKE REPUBLIC SÖLDEN was born — and has rapidly grown into a mighty state with

numerous trails and lines inhabited by thousands of citizens. It has flourished so beautifully, because it is firmly grounded in cycling-crazy soil.

The REPUBLIC is nestled in the bike nation of Ötztal, a nation which lives and breathes cycling in all its forms: from Haiming at the entry to the valley, home of our MTB and roadbike world champion Laura Stigger (p. 10), up to the alpine heights of the Rotmoos glacier where melting ice has uncovered an ancient bike (p. 3).

850 kilometers of signposted mountain bike routes, iconic road cycling passes, a cycling path that beautifully winds its way through the entire valley: the Ötztal is rollin'.

Welcome home to the cycling nation BIKE Ötztal!



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11.—14. JUNE 2020

Bike Opening

The BIKE REPUBLIC loves hosting great parties — especially on such occasions: we **kick off the new bike season** with stars and shows, the iconic trail-hunting **Schnitzeljagd** and other unique contests and, of course, a huge EXPO area with brand new bikes waiting to be tested on the fresh lines and trails of the REPUBLIC.

26.—27. SEPTEMBER 2020

National Holiday

The season might come to a close, but we are still rollin'. On the BIKE REPUBLIC's very own national bank holiday weekend **citizens** from near and far **come to enjoy** the final laps, to chill and ride test bikes, improve their skills, and eat tons of great food. Of course, the rollin' kids are taken care of, too.



bikerepublic.soelden.com

59 %

of BRS citizens **voted for a new black line for 2020**. Your wish is our command: it will be a deeply black, 1.8 km long run called OLM VOLLE (more details on page 10 / 11).



The brand-new, blue TROALEN LINE starts at the Rotkogel — you can combine it beautifully with the HARBE, the GAHE and the LETTN LINE to the crazily long **12,9 km** Giggijoch Long Line!



In 2018, a **bicycle** was discovered high up on the Rotmoosferner at over **3,000 m** above sea level. It had melted out of the glacier ice. The find is a big mystery, because it may not be as ancient as Ötzi's mummified body (about 5,000 years), but it is at least 60 or even 100 years old. Who was crazy or desperate enough to carry a bike over the ice? Smugglers? Soldiers? Refugees? The bike found a warm home in the Ötztal museum.

Photos: Ötztal Tourismus, Christoph Bayer, Rudi Wyhlidal, Lukas Emmoser, Ian Lean, Ötztaler Museen, Mario Webhofer, Sölden Gravity Team

**Bike Republic Sölden Gravity Team**

Just 0.7 seconds behind the winner, **Kilian Schnöller** (born 2001) from of our BIKE REPUBLIC SÖLDEN GRAVITY TEAM **took second place** in the **Austrian Downhill Championships**. **Jonas Geoweil** (born 2002) secured the **number 1 spot** overall in the **iXS Downhill Cup**. The youngsters **Matthias Speckle** and **Moreno Riml** (born 2005) also **raced to numerous podiums**.

300

kilograms of frozen yogurt were consumed in der **Rollin Bike Bar** right in the pumptrack at Gaislachkogel in the 2019 season — made of local yogurt, of course, (see page 18 / 19).

**4,808**

pizzas left the wood fired oven of the **Bäckelarwirt** — most of them were devoured by mountain bikers.

**1,357**

We welcomed **1,357 new citizens** to the BIKE REPUBLIC SÖLDEN in 2019.

Highlights

30. AUGUST 2020

Ötztaler Cycling Marathon

The legendary road cycling race celebrates its **40th anniversary** in 2020. More than 15,000 cyclists apply each year for the epic Ötztaler, only 4,000 get the starter ticket. And those those lucky riders will push themselves to the limit at the end of August on the **238 km long course** with four alpine passes and a total vertical gain of 5,500 meters — the most ambitious excel to break records, while the rest target to finish.

www.oetztaler-radmarathon.com

Winding through the wild:
the OLLWEITE LINE high
above Sölden.

Second Home

4

5

TEXT & PHOTOS: LESLIE KEHMEIER

in the Bike
Republic
Sölden

“Ah... you are American” she says as she admires the majestic looking eagle on the photo page of my document. It seems as if this is the first time this woman has seen a passport from my home country...



She shakes her head after I ask her if she sees many americans around here, and continues to write down my details so that I can be properly checked into my hotel in the Ötztal Valley, home of the Bike Republic Sölden. Too bad... I think to myself. The mountain biking experience in the Alps has it all as far as I'm concerned. At least that is what I have come to discover over the last three summers while visiting Sölden.

I feel most comfortable in the mountains, like I was born to be there. When I traveled to Sölden for the first time in 2017 I felt an instant connection as soon as the glorious high peaks came into view and I felt the crisp, fresh air. I arrived in spring when snow still blanketed the higher parts of the resort and the lifts were not running. I had followed my husband Chris, a trail builder and project manager who would help with the construction of the Harbe, Lettn, and Ollweite Lines.

Looking back, I consider myself lucky. I got to know the Bike Republic in a way that perhaps no other person has. In the days before the lift opened for the summer season, I was free to roam and explore all parts of the mountain. My legs and lungs came to appreciate the elevation and terrain that would provide an awesome canvas for building trails.

While lines were being shaped, I also discovered places that

would always remain peaceful, like the connection from the top of the Gaislachkoglbahn across Bartiges Bödele to the Langeggbahn. Even when the crowds would eventually flock to the trails, this natural singletrail with lichen-covered rocks and ever-blooming wildflowers would always seem quiet. I would also experience the “civilized” nature of riding mountain bikes in the Alps – the ability to be in the backcountry one moment and then sipping a cappuccino the next. It seems like a dream and I was lucky enough to be living it.

In the United States I have usually focused on the riding experience and avoided the amenities like food and coffee at lift-accessed resorts. Maybe I have not found the right places at home – it is usually more of a soulless, cafeteria-style experience with limited choices and no real culture. When I first rode in the Alps, I had to pinch myself when we stopped for a break at a rustic alm and had a proper coffee. To my surprise and delight, it was delivered in a ceramic cup from an espresso machine. What?! I thought it was the most civilized thing I had ever done on a ride. It is probably one of the main reasons I look forward to coming back year after year. Epic Alp days are what I live for now – they are fun, challenging and come with good food and coffee.

Also, lift-accessed riding here often means more than just doing laps in a bike park setting, which is often the case in the United States. It can be a gateway to the dramatic and sublime high alpine landscapes that some strong-minded mountain bikers lust after. The “big” rides back home usually start from the car and require long, arduous climbs. Although there is still plenty of pedaling here, cable-cars and gondolas are the initial catalysts for accessing alpine zones.

I returned in 2018 with a friend who was impressed by the experience the Bike Republic trails had to offer.

They have developed tools and methods for living and working in steep and variable terrain. There are centuries of knowledge available to make anything happen.





The natural singletrail with lichen-covered rocks and ever-blooming wildflowers would always seem quiet.

That was a huge compliment considering she is a native of British Columbia, one of the best places on the planet to ride a mountain bike. Her take: Sölden is doing a splendid job of making the seemingly impossible possible. The extended boulder field on Ollweite Line prompted her reflection. I totally agree.

Having watched the trail during construction, I know what it feels like to have a major shift in perspective. In Sölden, there are not many problems that cannot be solved with an experienced team.

I chalk it up to history — people have inhabited the Alps for far longer than North America, and in the process, they have developed tools and methods for living and working in steep and variable terrain. While shaping lines for mountain bikes is relatively new in this part of the world, there are centuries of knowledge available to make anything happen. This translates to some incredibly unique trail experiences that cannot be replicated anywhere else on the planet.

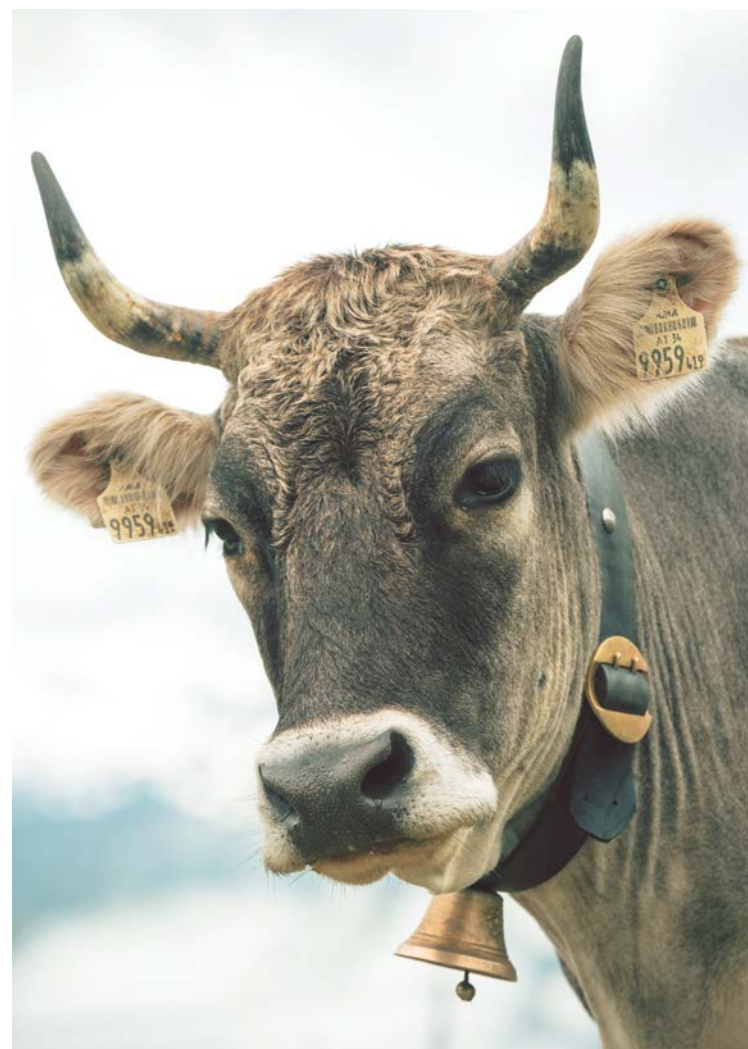
We covered every line on the mountain from Teäre and Zaahe to Harbe and Lettn in a day and a half. It was an exhausting effort and next time we thought it better to plan more days and take our time. Perhaps my favorite part of that visit was a top to bottom Long Line Rotkogel run from Ollweite Line back down to Gaislachkogelbahn. Descending 1,300 meters over 12.5 kilometres from the rocky alpine terrain into the big pine forests on Ohn Line is an experience that is truly unforgettable.

In 2019, when my travel plans for Europe were starting to gel, the new Gahe Line was ready for action and I was stoked for a more

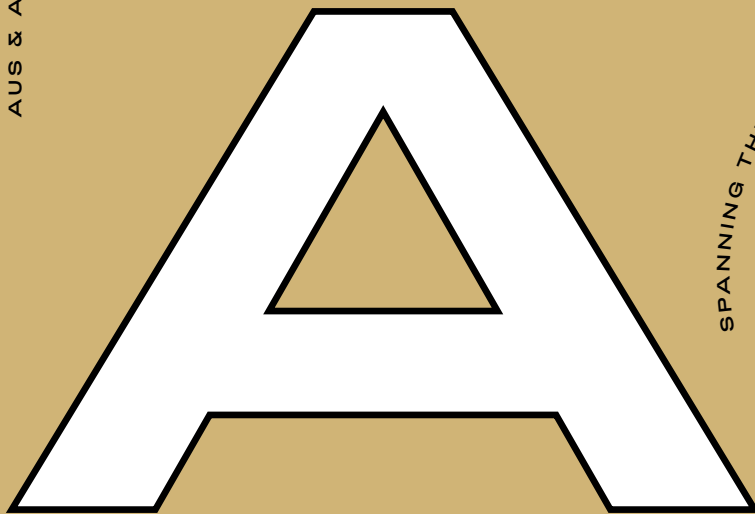
extended route through the trees on the Giggijoch side. Yet aside from riding the trails, I am always excited for mid-mountain stops to sit on the deck at Gampe Thaya. I can hardly wait to hear the sizzle of the Kaiserschmarrn as it hits the table with a Verlängerter soon to follow. During my latest visit, I arrived to hear the sweet sounds of a violin-accordion-guitar trio floating up into the fresh mountain air, sending me completely over the moon for Sölden — a place, where you can ride amazing terrain and enjoy local culture at the same time, where you can experience multiple seasons in one day, where you see the landscape changing in seconds before your eyes, a place that makes people like me want to return year after year to ride both cherished old haunts and new places.



The sweet sounds of a violin-accordion-guitar trio sending me completely over the moon for Sölden

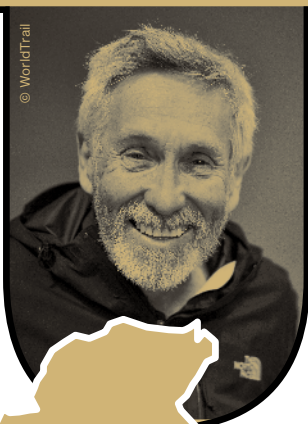


Epic Alp days are what I live for now — they are fun, challenging and come with good food and coffee.



SPANNING THE GLOBE: HOW BIKING UNITES DOWN UNDER WITH THE HIGH ALPS.

Glen Jacobs



© WorldTrail

- was born in 1957 and raised in Cairns, Australia.
- is the first and only Australian to become a member of the MTB Hall of Fame in California.
- has been to Sölden four times and loves the region for its amazing people, first-class facilities, the delicious food, the spectacular landscape and the proximity of the trails to the town's cafes and accommodation.
- had a soft spot for espresso with whipped cream until he became a vegan.
- was named the first official trail designer by the UCI in 1997. He has created every World Cup, World Championship and Enduro World Series track in Australia — including the Olympic course in Sydney 2000. With his company World Trail he constructs bike projects worldwide.
- personally loves singletracks that are professionally and sustainably built — and that are rough, raw and rowdy.
- loves building singletracks like the OLM VOLLE LINE that get people excited and wanting to come back for more. So as soon as they reach the bottom, they want to go right back to the top.
- wants to experience as many trails in different parts of the world as possible and discover the different mountain bike cultures and how they connect people through riding.



Laura Stigger

- was born in 2000 and raised in Haiming at the entry of the Ötztal
- is the first and only Austrian to win the roadbike as well as the mountain bike World Championship titles.
- has been to Australia once and loves mainly the continent's incredible scenery, the super relaxed people and the memory of winning her first World Championships in 2017 in Cairns — the home of Glen Jacobs.
- has a soft spot for sweets — and definitely no soft spot for kangaroo meat.
- will finally be able to focus entirely on mountain bike racing after graduating from the sports high school in Innsbruck in 2020.
- personally loves singletrack that are technically challenging and has a lot of airtime.
- is super excited about the OLM VOLLE LINE, because a trail building icon has come all the way from Australia to build the best track.
- wants to race the Olympic course in Tokyo 2020 at full speed. And besides racing wants to see and discover many, many countries in the world.

Australian Glen Jacobs is a trail building legend and member of the MTB Hall of Fame in California. Austrian Laura Stigger is both a multiple Junior mountainbike and roadbike World Champion, as well as an native to Ötztal. In 2020, the BIKE REPUBLIC introduces the new OLM VOLLE LINE: a super challenging course (p. 3) designed by Glen for Laura.



© Peter Leitner



Challenge

Father and son set out to Ötztal's AREA 47 for two and a half days packed with action and adventure. For both of them, it's the first time on an eBike — and, of course, the ride quickly turns into a battle.

TEXT: DANIEL WIECHMANN (DW) AND OLIVIER WIECHMANN (OW)

N 1

W 1



www.oetztal.com/bike

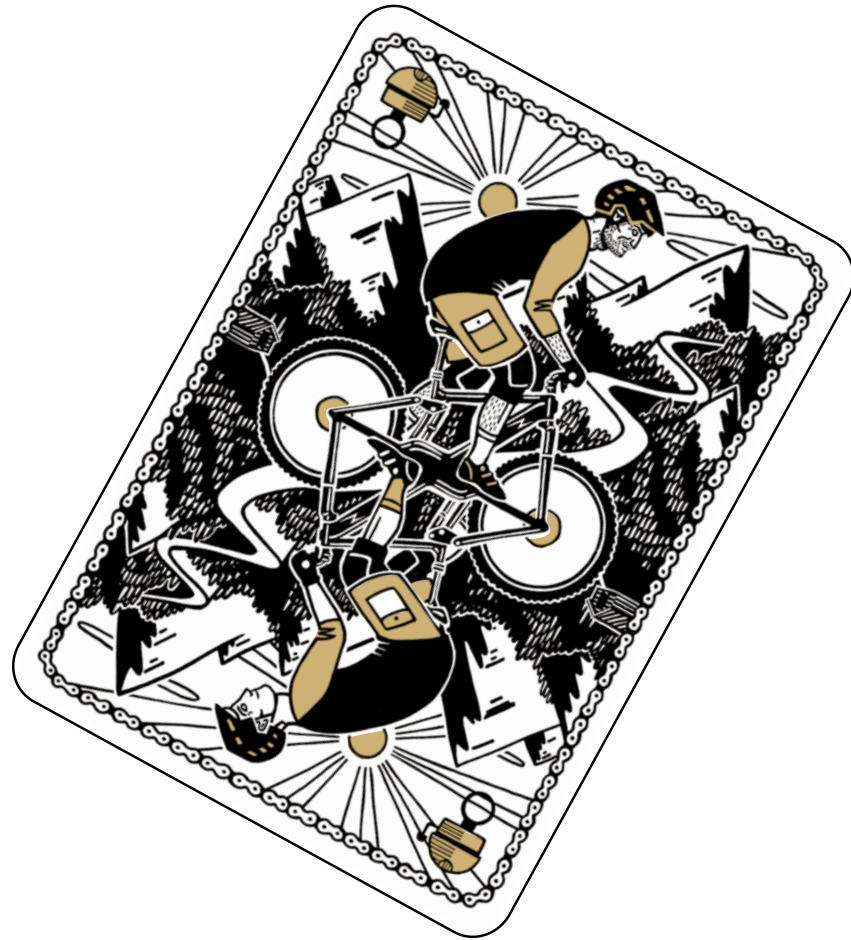
Photo: Rudi Wyhlidal

Accepted

ROLLIN

ROLLIN

"I knew it. Of course, the nice and easy eBike ride in stunning scenery turns into a battle."



The Plan

Two and a half days just the two of us, my son Olivier and me diving into a few outdoor adventures. That's the plan and that is what brings us to AREA 47 located at the entry of the Ötztal valley. I'm pretty excited about our shared time, especially as we hardly get any quality time together at home. I'm busy working and Olivier has his friends and, of course, his smartphone that is loaded with all those games which I find stupid and absolutely useless, while he seems to find them vital to getting through the day. Olivier is 14 years old now and I'm starting to realize that he's becoming more and more independent, and that he no longer needs me as much as he used to. All the more I was surprised that it didn't take long to convince him to join me on this weekend trip.

The Journey

DW: We sit on the train from Munich to Tyrol. Olivier is gaming thanks to the free rail Wi-Fi. I gaze out of the window smiling.

Olivier has no idea that he's about to get a few days of digital detox in AREA 47. Wi-Fi is limited to the restaurant. He will have no access in our room — or on our adventure trips. It's a short taxi ride from the train station to the huge outdoor playground. It didn't even take us two and half hours from Munich to get here. To be honest, adventure parks are not really my kind of thing. But the vibe here is different. Maybe it's because the Area is situated in the middle of a beautiful nature reserve. From our room we see the big river and a wild forest.

Not bad. But nature has to wait for tomorrow. Now it's time for the Water Area — that's perfect for beating the heat — and my son.

The eBike Ride

DW: Okay, I knew this moment would come one day. But not yet. I'm only 45 years old for God's sake. That's not an age for an eBike. I don't need support riding up a mountain. Maybe in twenty years time ... but definitely not now.

OW: Getting up at 8.30 am — in the middle of school holidays. I can't remember when I got up this early in the last few weeks. At least it was an all-you-can-eat, eggs and bacon breakfast. Now I'm pretty curious what it will be like riding a grandpa eBike. Well, for Dad it's about time to get one soon anyways ...

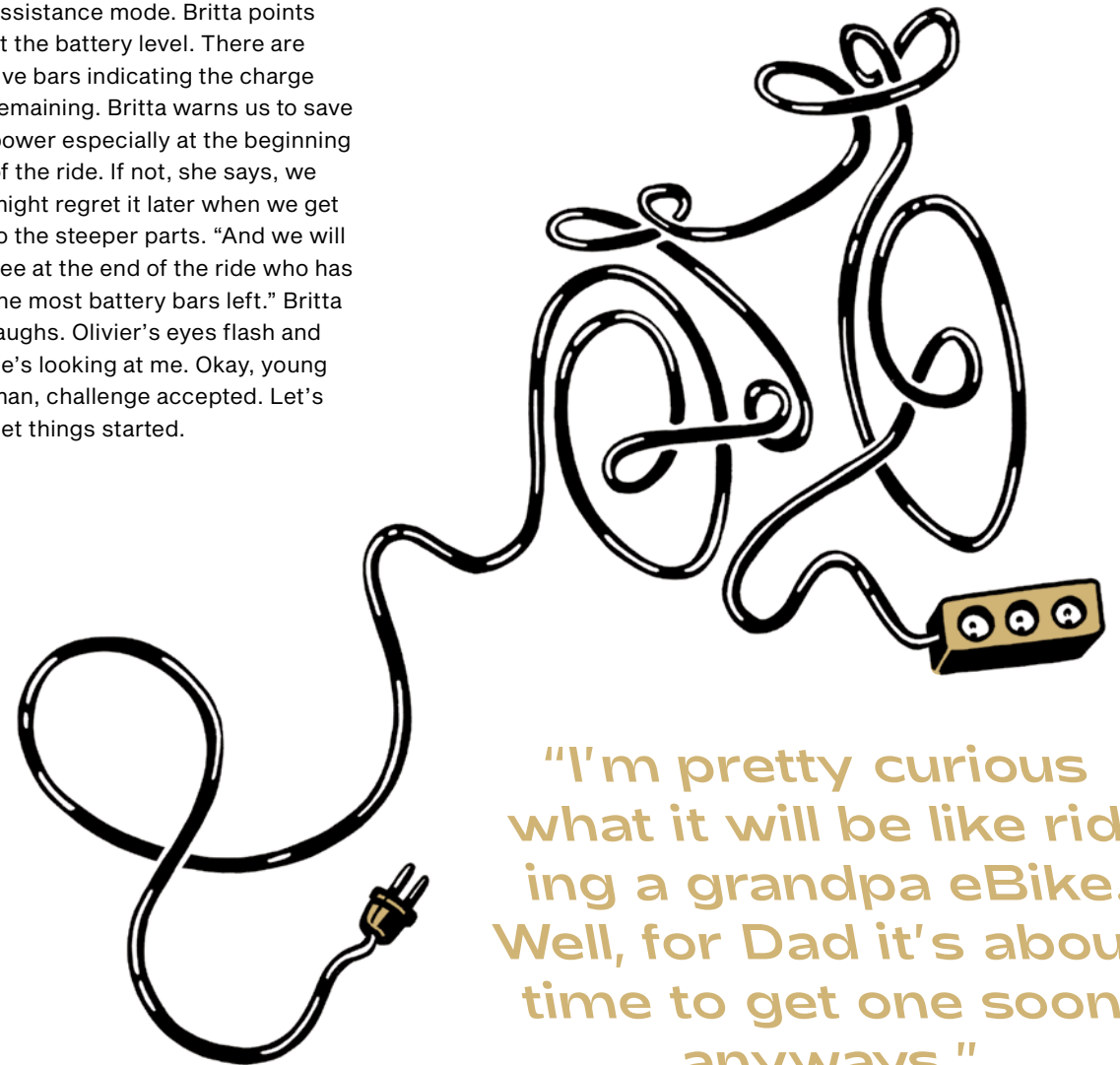
DW: I knew it. The nice and easy eBike ride in a stunning scenery immediately turns into a battle. It's, of course, Olivier who starts it all, but our guide Britta is to blame, too. She says that fatal sentence while explaining the eBike set-up. She is guiding us through this little display showing all the data including the electric assistance mode. Britta points at the battery level. There are five bars indicating the charge remaining. Britta warns us to save power especially at the beginning of the ride. If not, she says, we might regret it later when we get to the steeper parts. "And we will see at the end of the ride who has the most battery bars left." Britta laughs. Olivier's eyes flash and he's looking at me. Okay, young man, challenge accepted. Let's get things started.

OW: How cool is this? When I use the turbo mode it almost feels like riding a motorbike. Dad, of course, takes it slow ...

DW: Riding an eBike feels strange. I have to get used to it. It takes a while for my head to work out all the extra bits, the interaction of shifting and engine support. In the first half hour I have the feeling that the motor takes over the shifting part. Olivier seems not to reflect much on this new form of cycling. He seems to handle it a bit smoother than me — and he's constantly eyeing my handlebar to see which mode I'm using and how much energy

I'm wasting. For the flats at the beginning I use the eco mode most of the time so that I get a bit physical activity. We're not here to have fun, are we?! I even turn off the motor every now and then. I'm surprised that the heavy 25 kg bike is also a nice human-powered ride — at least in the flats. With every meter I'm getting less sceptical. Maybe I won't wait till I'm 60 before getting an eBike?

The AREA 47 follows the Valley Loop Tour for beginners. It starts off relaxed and easy, which is a nice way to get to know the rest of the group.



"I'm pretty curious what it will be like riding a grandpa eBike. Well, for Dad it's about time to get one soon anyways."

Although I'm really no fan of guided tours, I soon enjoy the luxury of not having to care about a thing. Britta knows the route by heart, and she has shifting tips when we climb the first steep passages—and there are more and more of them coming. I'm really getting used to this bike.

OW: That's so much fun. I do need an eBike back home. That would be amazing on those long

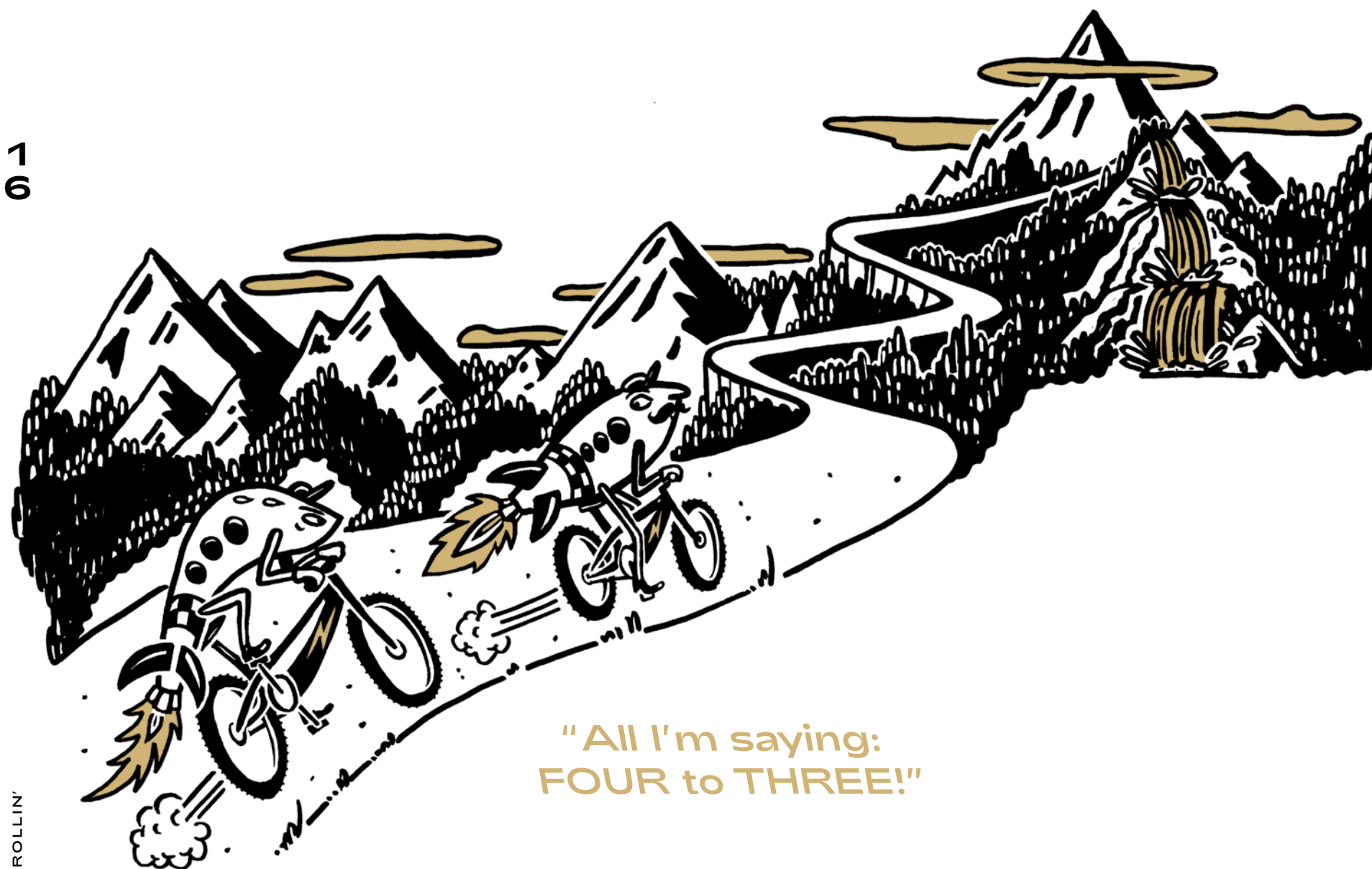
boring hikes that Mum and Dad always force me to do. I take the eBike and they can hike. That would be perfect.

DW: It's getting steep. A gravel path is winding up to the Stuibenfall, Tyrol's highest waterfall. However, before we can enjoy the view we have to pedal, pedal, pedal. And what can I say? I love it! With the motor you accelerate, and it feels like I'm flying up the

hill. While Olivier is struggling more now with the climb. Ha. That's my back wheel you are seeing. Eat this!

OW: Okay, Dad wasn't that bad at tackling the mountain. But after lunch all you can hear is his brakes squealing on the way down. At least I hear them for the first bit. After two minutes I'm so far ahead that I don't see or hear a thing from him. Haha!

"My personal triumph: 50 kilometers, more than 1,000 vertical meters and an incredible landscape."



"All I'm saying: FOUR to THREE!"

DW: I don't get it. Why does everybody bomb down the mountain? Are they crazy? How do they take the corners anyway at such a speed? And since when is my son such a good cyclist? My brakes are running hot and starting to smell. I really have to work on my downhill skills. On the way back, Olivier constantly questions me about my battery bars. I have three left. Olivier smirks. Great.

OW: We're back at AREA 47 after five hours of eBiking. It's the moment of truth. Drum roll: I have four bars left—and Dad has only three. Of course, he's trying to talk his way out, saying that he still won, because he's heavier by 30 kg. All those excuses. All I'm saying: FOUR to THREE!

DW: My son cannot stop bragging about his alleged victory in the battery bar challenge. But seriously, I don't care. My personal triumph: 50 kilometers, more than 1,000 vertical meters

in an incredible landscape! That was a fantastic trip. Such great fun. Uphill more than downhill. But I can work on that. Despite of my descent performance, Britta believes I'm capable of the other tours offered by the Area—including a skills training and some proper trail riding. I put it on my list for when we come back here next year. However, tomorrow we will go rafting and that's where I feel at home. I will definitely outshine Olivier. He also badly needs distraction. He's annoyingly urging me to get him an eBike for Christmas ...



Huben/Längenfeld

Gerold Brüggl

Who: Gerold Brüggl**What:** Yogurt & Milk

Where: In Huben, close to the primary school, you find a small wooden kiosk with a vending machine at the Brüggl farm. Frozen yoghurt made from their milk is sold at the Rollin' pumptrack and the family also supplies numerous accommodation options in the valley — from small B&Bs to 5-star hotels.

By the way: The family already started their direct marketing decades ago, when the milk prices were falling. Today, they exclusively sell their non-GMO (genetically unmodified) milk and yoghurt only locally in the valley.

Bike Ride: Ascending 800 meters, the beautiful climb to the Breitlehalm runs through the scenic Polltal.



You want to treat yourself to an after-bike ice-cream or grab fresh produce for the barbecue or dinner? Throughout the whole valley, you find local producers who offer a delicious selection of home-grown and home-made food — just a roll away from the valley's cycle path and great bike rides.

PHOTOS: LEO LINSE



Oetz

Reaß'n Hof

Who: Andi Sonnweber

What: Farm-fresh bread and sausages, jam and honey, yoghurt and milk — just about anything the farm (and the fields) has to offer.

Where: Just off the main road Oetz on the way to the Piburger lake.

By the way: The family not only runs the farm and the farm shop but is also one of the biggest solar energy producers in the Ötztal — their goal is to be as self-sufficient as possible. Since 2015, you will also find an electric charging station at the farm.

Bike Ride: The loop up to the stunning Piburger lake is a bucket-list experience.

www.facebook.com/reassnhof

Umhausen

Ötztalerei

Who: Martin Scheiber

What: Coffee and cake, burgers and salads, but — most of all — rich, delicious, homemade ice-cream in flavours from chocolate to rosemary-blueberry. All made from local ingredients, of course.

Where: At a small, idyllic stream in Umhausen. The Ötztalerei ice-cream is also sold on the Gampe Thaya hut in Sölden — and wherever Martin stops with his special ice-cream bike.

By the way: Martin is not only a professional confectioner, but also the trail runner in the valley. Although today he spends more and more time cycling with his unique mobile ice-cream bike.

Bike Ride: A pretty challenging route with a climb of almost 1,200 m taking you high up to the Schweinfurter Hütte. For a far more relaxed journey, cycle the Umhauser lap and make sure to hike to the highest waterfall in Tyrol, the Stuibefall.

www.oetztalerei.at



Our Locals

Sölden

Farm Butchery Wilhelm

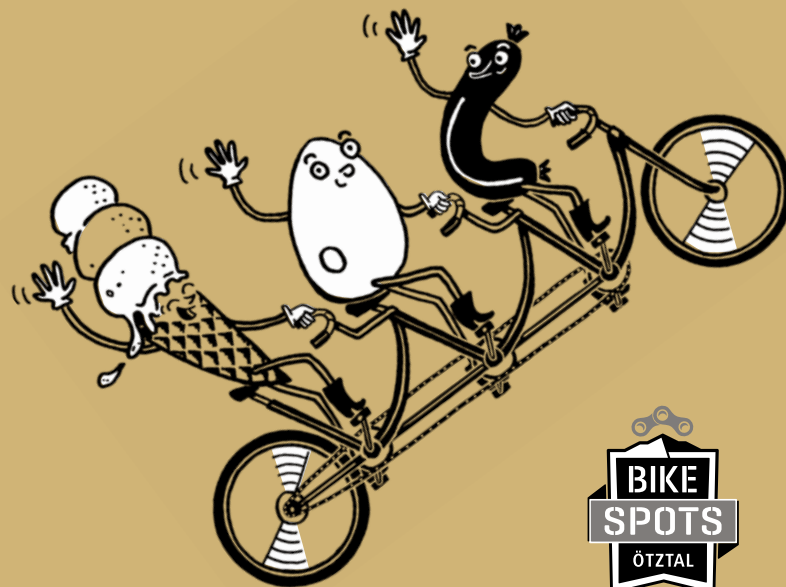
Who: Matthias Wilhelm

What: Beef sausages, bacon, fresh meat — and you can also pre-order marinated meat for your barbecue.

Where: Below the fire station in Sölden and therefore close to the pumptrack.

By the way: 26-year-old Thisi Wilhelm decided to become a farmer and butcher at the age of 12. Most of the beef comes from his own farm — the shortest farm-to-table distance you could wish for.

Bike Ride: All rides that end in the pumptrack or at the Gaislachkogel valley station.



www.oetztal.com/bike

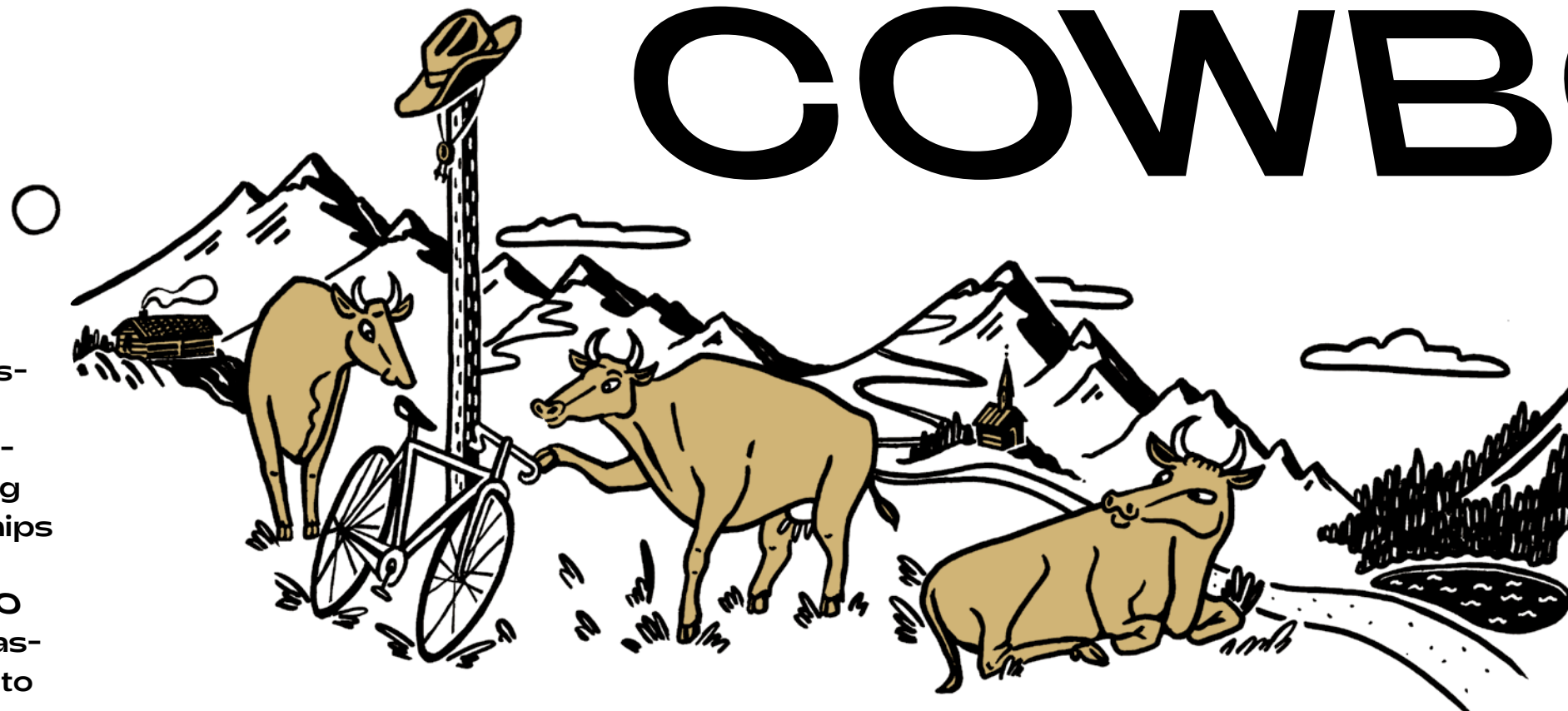


CARBON COWBOY

TEXT: SEBASTIAN HERMANN



www.oetztal.com/bike



It is a great mystery to himself why, but our author loves facing extreme hardships on his bike. The KÜHTAI RODEO presents a fantastic opportunity to do just that. It is a roadbike challenge where you have to climb the infamous Kühtai pass three times in one day from three different sides — that's a total of 4,250m of altitude gain. Read here a drama in three acts starring our megalomaniac hero in a steep and unforgiving setting.

I see light at the end of the tunnel — and hear cheesy tunes. An accordion, some yodeling. Songs about the beauty of the mountains and, of course, the girls' beauty — the heartache, the longing, the whole shebang. The syrupy songs welcome me to the Kühtai pass. They rattle from the speakers of the shop that sits over 2,000m above sea level. It sells postcards, kitschy souvenirs, schnapps and — very essential — cold drinks and solid food. Today, this marks my finishing line. I will cross it three times — each time more shattered than the last. This is where I momentarily emerge from the tunnel that I retreat into on my rides.

It is hardly a heroic finish. The shoes clip out of the pedals, I lean my bike on a wooden bench between two red parasols, take my helmet off and my stiff legs stumble into the shop to get a Coke. Back outside there are three guys sitting in the shade, holding their cans of beer and exchanging local gastronomy gossip. One of them looks up and asks with a Northern German accent: "What kind of bike is that? Is it all plastic?"

He takes a sip from his beer and looks at me with a challenging glare waiting for an answer. "Uhm, no," I stammer rather stunned by the question and pretty drained from the first of the three climbs up the Kühtai. "It's made of carbon fiber — the best of the best."

"Still looks like plastic to me," he replies with a shrug and turns back to his friends.

The 'conversation' in front of the Kühtai shop strengthens a feeling that hits me regularly when I cycle up peaks and passes: it's the feeling of disappearing into a tunnel and thus somehow entering my own world, a world only accessible to cyclists. All other human beings turn into mere extras layered into this setting. They exist somewhere separately, as though there's an invisible barrier between us.

It's not so easy to find a way back into the normal world after climbing up the Kühtai three times in a row, surviving a diabolic 4,250m

ascent — all by myself. However — at least it's what I've told myself again and again throughout the hours in the saddle today — tackling this challenge alone is the only way to do it. In the end, this torture is called the Kühtai Rodeo and only those who conquer the Kühtai from all three sides in a single day on a bicycle may call themselves Kühtai Cowboy — at least that's what it says on tirol.at.

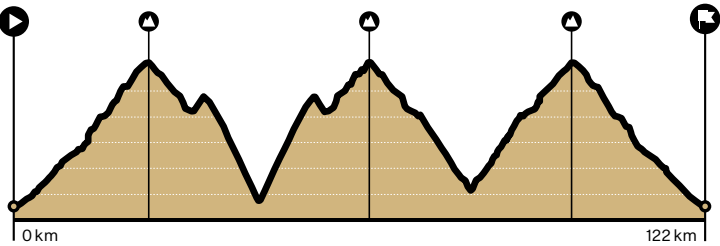
The great rodeo ride starts with mounting the bucking Kühtai from Oetz. I'm slightly daunted, a bit nervous. I always am before setting out to climb a pass. Each and every time it is a leap into the unknown. Only after some time in, after having tested your legs and lungs on the first strenuous passages,

you know if and how your body is in shape that day. And that's the moment when it's too late to exit this thing you started so gracefully.

Today, the first miles are a rather easy climb, lifting me up to a stunning view across the Ötztal. A few days prior, the participants of the iconic Ötztaler cycling marathon pedaled up here. I'm sure that on this first section of their "road to suffering" they must have nervously checked their bodies for positive signs to assure themselves that their climbing legs were ready to fight and burn that day.

You start ascending a pass by looking for a rhythm, the right pace, which will open the door to your inner tunnel. When the cyclist finds it, the ride up the mountain turns into a kind of mobile meditation — thoughts come and go, there are songs in your head, the world is reduced to a minimum, all is rhythm, asphalt, nature. However, if you do not enter this tunnel, the gates of hell await you: pain and exhaustion, you get impatient, you start cursing yourself.

The Kühtai, they say, is one of the toughest alpine routes. Of course, that's open for great debate.



Kühtai Rodeo

Start & Finish:
Kematen, Oetz, Haiming —
in any order

Altitude gain: 4,250 m

Route length: 122 km

Highest point: 2,020 m

Lowest point: 621 m

But the Kühtai sure bucks. It is ill-tempered — at least that is what it feels like to me today. From Oetz, steep and flat passages take their turns, there are only a few switchbacks easing the way up. On the final kilometers close to the lake below the saddle the Kühtai gets me each and every time: I always expect the top to be just around the corner — but it’s far too early. Although I should know by now, I’m still deceived again and again. No, there are still (too) many meters of ascent waiting.

But I do feel fantastic when I hear the terrible sounds blaring from the speakers for the first time this day. When I get off the bike to get the Coke, I feel fit. The first climb didn’t waste too much energy. Nothing can beat me today. Nothing can stop me on my way to become an official cowboy!

The descent towards Sellrain is fast. In Kematen, I stop for a second late breakfast — me being the lonely stranger among a whole group of young mothers. I get back in my saddle. Unfortunately, my delusion of grandeur quickly passes. It’s hot and I start to struggle, silently cursing. The climb up from Kematen is a brutal torture of over 22.7 kilometers and 1,407 uphill meters. The road runs straight ahead and, of

course, straight up. It starts mildly, but then turns into a tormenting steepness for one kilometer: on some passages my pulse is hammering loud — but I still hardly move. My pace feels so slow, I couldn’t be much slower taking a nap at the roadside. No bends, no switchbacks in sight. Nothing to grant me the tiniest chance to catch some breath. Nothing that would work as a small interim target so I could cut that long road into tolerable pieces.

The second time I lean my bicycle on the bench in front of the shop on the pass, I’m already pretty exhausted. There goes any feeling of invincibility. It’s quite an effort to swallow the nutty pastry. My mouth is dry and I’ve no appetite whatsoever. But I have to gulp it down, otherwise I can totally forget about the third and final ascent via the Haimingerberg.

Yet, first the descent is interrupted by a short uphill section, the Haiminger saddle. Down in the Inn valley, I take a turn in the roundabout and go straight back up the same road I just came down on. The final of the three ways of climbing the Kühtai is steep nonstop. The 1,486 m of altitude difference do not present themselves to be easily conquered by just any cowboy aspirant. Still the northern ascent via the

Haimingerberg is my favourite route out of the three. The road winds up moderately and long passages are shaded by trees. It’s the uphill where I find my rhythm quickest.

At one stage a woman shouts out to me: “You want to help us, so you can get off your bike?” She holds a wooden rake in her hand. Together with two other women she is making hay on a steep slope next to the road. I gasp and gesture feebly. At my back I can hear them laughing. It is not easy being a cowboy.

And then, eventually, it’s a wrap. For the third time I enter the shop at the top of the pass. I sit down in the sun — and then proudly fly back down towards Oetz in the valley.

After the ride, after the “Kühtai Rodeo” mission was accomplished, I slowly find my way back into the world and transform back into a common guy — one of those that seemed so foreign to me while riding. Of course, I don’t return completely. In the end, I’m a cowboy now: lonesome and wild, venturesome etc. Did this guy really say my bike looks like plastic?

Photos: Sebastian Doerk

MANUELA HOLZKNECHT



When did you get into biking?
I tasted blood in 2016 on my (hardtail) ride with countless crashes and bruises. Over the years, I became the REPUBLIC’s Foreign Minister, which means I’m responsible for marketing and communication — and that’s the best excuse to spend as much time as possible on the bike.

What is so special about the REPUBLIC?
I have met so so many incredible people through the BIKE REPUBLIC. The community is super chilled and caring and cool.

Why is it so perfect for female riders?
No matter what people say: flowtrails are just perfect for starting with trail mountain biking — and we have such a great variety of fine Lines. If I had started on a rough trail I would have never got back on a bike.

MARIE-THERES RIML



What do you do all day long?
I balance between my job, where I take care of a few businesses, and my passion which is riding my bike. I started in summer 2017 and since then it’s more or less all I do in my spare time.

Don't you get bored?
Never. There are still too many spots that challenge my skills. There is this one passage on the Schteckler Trail that I haven’t managed so far ... And we get new lines every year, too.

Things you have to do before leaving Sölden?
A morning ride on the OLLWEITE LINE, enjoy good food in the Nudeltopf or the Bergrestaurant Sonnblick, and soak in the view of the Tiefenbach or Rettenbach glacier.

They might still be a minority elsewhere, in Sölden they rule the lines just like the men do: the high number of female riders reflects the special spirit of the BIKE REPUBLIC. More and more local ladies, too, take it to the trails.

LADIES LOVE IT

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

DIANA GRÜNER



How did you get started?

We had a corporate bike day, so we swapped desk for bikes. My first ride was the TEÄRE LINE — and I fell in love. It's just my thing.

What makes the BIKE REPUBLIC so special?

It stands for a (bike) life without limits, barriers or restrictions. The REPUBLIC is open for anyone and it's a spirit you can feel. Oh, and the sunrise breakfast on the Rotkogljoch hut is super special, too.

What is your wish for your biking future?

To see many more cool bike citizens in Sölden and to enjoy many more (crash free) rides with my new bike.



BIANCA PLANKENSTEINER

When did you start riding your bike?

I only picked up 'serious' riding a year ago — there was some pressure from my colleagues since I'm working for the BIKE REPUBLIC. When I got better from ride to ride I just couldn't stop.

What are the most beautiful views in the BIKE REPUBLIC?

On your bike: from the OLLWEITE LINE. When you have a rest: from the Gampa Thaya hut.

What is your secret BRS tip?

The rides on the so-called quiet side of the valley, where you have no lifts.



SOPHIE FENDER

Photos: Sebastian Doerk

What brought you to mountain biking?

The local kids in our cycling club. We used to take the gondola up the mountain and then ride down the roads or ski slopes. But when the BIKE REPUBLIC opened, we had the trails ...

How has the BRS changed your life?

It has turned it upside down. The first lines set so many things rolling and changed everything. I guess the major change was that we founded our Bikeschool RIDE ON.

What pushes you?

I get a kick when people realize how much they are actually capable of. It's such a great feeling to be able to help people gain confidence, to feel safe and comfortable on their bikes and to have a fun time.

BIKE & SKI GUIDE



KATHARINA GSTREIN

When did you start riding your bike?

When I was six years old. Later, I did some cross-country riding. But I only really started trail-biking when the BIKE REPUBLIC opened.

What in particular do you like about the BRS?

That really anyone can have an amazing, fun time on the trails and lines — whether you are a beginner or a pro.

What's the perfect ending to a day on the bike?

Sitting in the pumptrack and having 1 to 6 beers, while watching all the bikers rolling in with happy faces.

MARKETING CONSULTANT



JOHANNA BANKEN

BIKE & SKI GUIDE

LIENKE ZWIERS

TEXT: SISSI PÄRSCH, PHOTOS: MARTIN ERD, ALEXANDER LOHMANN

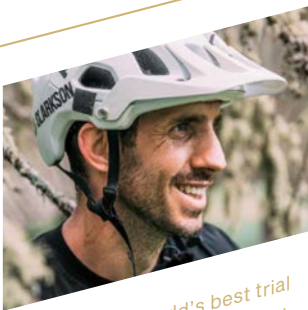
BIKE & BOND

A MAN

IN HIS ELEMENT — AND WITH A MISSION.

From the streets of Glasgow to the trails of the Alps. Trial star Ali Clarkson tours from bikepark to bikepark with his camper van. At his stop in Sölden the Brit realizes: it can't get any more majestic than this.

Ali Clarkson
TRIAL-PRO



Is one of the world's best trial bikers and member of Danny MacAskill's Drop And Roll crew. What that means? He shows his incredible bike skills in stunts and jumps, tricks and balancing acts — he is generally doing things on two wheels that neither humans nor bikes were meant to do. In Ali's world everything turns into a playground of obstacles. See his virtuosity on his YouTube channel.

ROADTRIP

The Brit has finely considered and finally picked the bikeparks of Livigno, Nauders and Sölden for his road trip through the Alps. He is a trial trickster who likes playful and technically tricky trails. The biggest challenge, however: driving on the right side of the road.



TRAILS



The new BIKE REPUBLIC citizen can take his time at breakfast — the camp ground is just 300 meters from the bottom station of the Gaislachkogel gondola.

www.camping-soelden.com



In his hometown of Glasgow, Ali rolls through the streets hunting for urban obstacles like rails and stairs, walls and fences. Trail biking in the BIKE REPUBLIC he speeds up on much more natural terrain: soil, stone, wood — Ali is in his elements. Yet there is one more special element waiting for him as his final highlight in Sölden.



Higher ground: Glasgow is situated 40 meters above sea level, the town of Sölden at 1,370 m. Ali doesn't seem to have a problem with the thin air in the Alps, though. On the contrary: he likes to take off and enjoys his airtime.



May we introduce: Ali Clarkson, the first and last person to ever ride the high-alpine Hollywood world on two wheels. In the unique iceQ restaurant, Sam Mendes, Daniel Craig and the 007 crew spent months shooting "Spectre". Now, Ali spins his wheels on its roof. For all other bike citizens, the iceQ is the top spot, where you can enjoy your cappuccino and apple-strudel with an amazing view of the valley and Tyrol's highest peak, the Wildspitze.

www.iceq.at



007 Elements is no museum — it's a cinematic adventure set in a unique alpine setting in the rocks of the Gaislachkogel at 3,000 m. The building is spectacular, the surroundings jaw-dropping, and the inside packed with Bond action, original Q gadgets, and virtual experiences.

007elements.soelden.com

Probably the best job application for a 007 stuntman the world has ever seen: Ali balances on the skinny railing: the rock wall drops deep and steep on one side, on the other side waits the Bond plaza. Ali, of course, lands on the good side.



BIKE REPUBLIC



850 km
SIGNPOSTED MTB ROUTES
IN THE VALLEY



33
BIKE SHOPS AND
RENTALS IN THE
VALLEY



NW



2
PUMPTRACKS
IN THE BIKE REPUBLIC



ROLLIN'

0
LACK OF KIDS



4
BIKE-WASH STATIONS
IN SÖLDEN



52 km
ÖTZTALER
CYCLE PATH



Bike

Photos: Rudi Wyhlidal, Leopold Hermann, Christoph Bayer, Ian Lean, Lukas Emmoser, Martin Erd, Christoph Schöch

Republiic

70 km
SHAPED LINES AND
NATURAL TRAILS



16
BUS STOPS IN
THE VALLEY WITH FREE
BIKE TRANSPORT



5
YEARS OF BIKE
REPUBLIC SÖLDEN



40th
EDITION OF THE ÖTZTALER
CYCLING MARATHON



70
BIKE ACCOMMODATIONS

007
ACTION UP AT THE
GAISLACHKOGL



BIKE REPUBLIC

NW

ROLLIN'