

THE WINDING ROADS OF AUSTRIA HEALEYING THE AUSTRIAN ALPS

Cross-country with a big Healey 3000 Mark III to some of the most beautiful places in Austria. To drive, not to be driven. "The way that you wander is the way that you choose. The day that you tarry is the day that you lose..."

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Photographed by Reinfried Marass for HEALEY MARQUE.

Surrounded by spring-like mild temperatures, paired with a scenic view on Austria's snow-covered pikes, a lowered top and the marvelous agility of an Austin-Healey makes a trip across mountain routes a special kind of life experience. Austria is a small country located in the heart of Europe, with landscape scenery that is famous for its mountains, lakes and rivers – a fact which is even anchored in its national anthem.

A short road trip – made exclusively for the readers of HEALEY MARQUE – leads us to one of Austria's most beautiful areas called the "Salzkammergut," which is a resort area spread among three counties. The name Salzkammergut means "Estate of the Salt Chamber" and derives from the Imperial Salt Chamber, the authority charged with running the precious salt mines in the Habsburg Empire. Large parts of the region were listed as a "UNESCO World Heritage Site" in 1997.

Covered with numerous lakes and mountains, the Salzkammergut offers many opportunities for recreation. Famous objects of interest, inherent natural beauty and variety, and especially small, narrow roads and alleys are waiting to be discovered in a Healey roadster.

Austin Healey





“The Loser”

The Healey gearbox is pretty well matched to steep and winding mountain roads and the driver in a sporty Healey roadster very often feels encouraged to change gears more often than really necessary – just for fun and just to enjoy the quadraphonic sound produced by the torque engine with its huge three-liter displacement, and echoed among the surrounding faces and walls of snow.

Quite surely these are the roads that Donald had in mind when he designed the 3000 series. These are the roads a Healey really is made for and should be forced to be driven whenever possible. (Fortunately, “someone” added an overdrive unit, so the roadster is drivable on freeways as well.)

What goes up must come down, and some care shall be taken when driving downhill. Old-fashioned drum brakes tend to overheat when overstrained. One of the last things a driver likes to experience are fading brakes when going downhill – especially when on a mountain named “The Loser”!

With an elevation of 1,838 meters, “The Loser Mountain” is one of the major landmarks and most important ski resorts in this area. It is possible to almost reach the peak by car by using a toll road of nine kilometers named the “Loser Panorama Street.” Although this road isn’t a mountain pass by itself, some of the most beautiful and scenic mountain roads in Austria, such as “Timmels Joch” or “Stilfser Joch,” are a great gateway to the south right into Italy’s “Dolce Vita.”



“Simply to stop by... to lean back... to enjoy the beautiful spots of Austria’s country”

Hallstatt is a very popular tourist attraction owing to its small-town appeal and is located on the shore of the “Hallstätter See” (a lake).

Until the late 19th century, it was possible to reach Hallstatt only by boat or via narrow trails. The land between the lake and mountains was sparse, and the town itself exhausted every free patch of it. Access between houses on the river bank was by boat or over the so called “upper path,” a small corridor passing through attics. The first road to Hall-

statt was built only in 1890, along the west shore of the lake, partially by rock blasting.

The name Hall is most probably from the old celtic name for *salt*, the salt mines near the village being an important factor. Salt was a valuable resource, so the region was historically very wealthy. It is possible to tour the world’s first salt mine, located above downtown Hallstatt.

Today, apart from salt production, which since 1595 is trans-

Automobiles have a great tradition in Austria. Names like Siegfried Marcus and Ferry Porsche come up and it's not a big surprise that classic vehicles are loved by the Austrians as well. There are a lot of classic car events throughout the year and many owners are organized in clubs. Numerous types, makes and models of classic cars are registered, and approximately 200 feature the Healey name plate. If somebody likes to travel the country with a classic, he is very welcomed to do so.

Mountain passes and mountain roads are closed during wintertime in Austria and are open only about March to September. So please check carefully if your road book heads you to one of these roads.

The British license plate pictured with the car is a fake one; on the road the car was operated with dealer numbers. It was mounted for the photo shoots only, but sometimes was forgotten to replace it when driving along. Lucky for us, "Smokey Bear" was asleep.

After two continuous days hitting the road and squeezed into a tight British roadster, our model Aisha said, "I'm in love with these cars and I will never understand why it is nicknamed 'The Pig' - cruising around in it was so much fun. Should there ever be a follow-up story I'll be there for sure - anytime and anywhere! And I'll be angry for a lifetime if another model would be allowed to drive around with it."



ported for 40 kilometers from Hallstatt to Ebensee via a brine pipeline, tourism plays a major factor in the town's economic life. Tourists are told that Hallstatt is the site of "the world's oldest pipeline" which was constructed 400 years ago from 13,000 hollowed-out trees. There is even so little place for cemeteries that every ten years bones used to be exhumed and removed into an ossuary to make room for new burials.

In a 1956 book titled *Panorama of Austria*, James Reynolds wrote:

Hallstatt is set on piles in one of the Gosau lakes, the Halstätter See. An intricate system of intersecting timber ramps, buttresses and ascending terraces like hanging gardens creates an air of mystery, the eerie beauty of mirage, a village lost in the middle-mist of fable. The mountain flanks rise sheer from the lake, leaving no room for a road.

More recently, guidebook author and TV travel host Rick Stevens wrote this description of Hallstatt:

The minute it popped into view, I knew Hallstatt was my Alpine Oz. It's just the right size (1,200 people), wonderfully remote, and almost traffic-free. A tiny ferry takes you from the nearest train station across the fjord-like lake and drops you off on the town's storybook square.





"big red pig" exactly on the stamp-sized square of Hallstatt for a little picture – a place usually crowded by hundred of tourists and not accessible by car with ease. So back the introductory statement: "Simply to stop by... to lean back... to enjoy the beautiful spots of Austria's country" is written for a more poetic reason only. **HM**

Bullied onto its lakeside ledge by a selfish mountain, Hallstatt seems tinier than it is. Its pint-sized square is surrounded by ivy-covered guest houses and cobbled lanes. It's a toy town. You can tour it on foot in about 10 minutes.

Challenged by the statements above it was almost a duty for us to place the



Credits

The Model: Aisha Hajdin, a semi-pro model and book author. Her website and gallery: <http://aisha.leric.net>

The Car: Austin-Healey 3000 Mark III, supplied by Austrian classic car dealer Mr. Franz Wittner. Website <http://www.carcollection.at>

The Photographer: Reinfried Marass, professional photographer specialized in car photography and automotive art. Further images of the road tour can be viewed at the website <http://marassphotography.com>