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WINTER 2015

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## ON THE COVER:

*Traveling to October  
Fest with the Road  
Monkeys*







**Dennis Nowak**  
President - Houston Chapter



The infamous **Hair of the Dog Drive** on January 1st and the Annual Dinner on January 16th. Information on both of those events are elsewhere in this newsletter. I am looking forward to the Annual Dinner since we are changing the location and format this year. I want to thank, general manager, **Tommy Kuranoff** and his staff at **Momentum BMW Southwest** for their generosity in hosting our event!

We will be electing a new President and Vice-president this year so please vote! As we head towards the holidays, I wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! I hope you get to enjoy them with family and friends. Stay safe in your travels and remember to check your vehicle before heading out on the roads.

As always, I hope to see you at the events, you can find me . . .

**in the driver's seat!**

*Thanks, Dennis, for those gracious words. I really enjoy editing the newsletter. It's an honor for me to contribute to the Houston Chapter. I appreciate everyone who takes the time to send in articles. This issue, in particular, showcases what the BMW CCA is all about - getting out there and enjoying these wonderful cars we drive and the exotic places we go and the friends we have.*  
- JR

all of the board members who have served with me these last two years. With their help, dedication and guidance we have continued to make this the best car club in the area. I would also like to thank a couple of previous Presidents, **David Dalton** and **Dan Baker** for their guidance along the way. It's been fun, interesting and challenging to say the least but I feel I've done the best job I could. I still have much to finish before my term ends and that will be a challenge to get done. I appreciate all the help from the members who have volunteered to help out with events, without you devoting your time and expertise this club couldn't function.

One task I still need help with from the membership is to find someone to be the **Social Events Chairperson**. Since Neil moved we have been without a person to help us with events. As I've mentioned before the board cannot do it all and we need help putting events together. Please let me know if you can help out. Speaking of social events we have two upcoming events planned.

I am late getting this article to Jim, our newsletter Editor, contributing, I am sure, to his frustration in getting this edition to the printer. I have to brag on Jim, though, for putting together some awesome newsletters. I bet most of you don't even know who he is. His job tends to have him working most times when we have our events so he is not seen much, staying behind the scenes, but still managing to put out some excellent work. Jim is soft spoken yet always has some great ideas to make the newsletter better. I have given him free reign on the layouts and content with guidance only to insert information I need in certain issues. I think he does a fantastic job and most times, with little thanks. So if you like what you see and read in these newsletters give Jim a shout at [newsletter@houston-bmwcca.com](mailto:newsletter@houston-bmwcca.com).

Since this is my last president's page article before I pass the duty on to the next president, I would like to thank

**2016 Houston Chapter Annual Dinner**

We are so excited to have Momentum BMW Southwest host our annual dinner for 2016. What better place to hold a BMW car event than at a BMW car dealership! The format will change up a little as well. The autocross awards portion has been split off with an all new separate awards event. The evening will start with cocktails and light appetizers then progress to a sit down dinner. Yes, we will still have the slide show and of course the raffle with not one but two \$1000 tire certificates.

**Momentum BMW Southwest**  
**10002 Southwest Freeway, Houston, TX**  
**Saturday January 16, 2016**  
**7 -10 pm**  
**\$15 Per person**  
**Business casual attire.**  
To register visit [www.houston-bmwcca.com](http://www.houston-bmwcca.com) and click link for Annual Dinner Event

**Stay Informed!! - eBlast Signup**

Once a month the Chapter emails an eBlast to all members who have indicated that they want to be kept informed about Chapter activities and events, as well as news and information involving the Chapter. If you wish to receive this information and are not already signed up you may do so on the website at [www.houston-bmwcca.com](http://www.houston-bmwcca.com). The eBlast request is located at the lower left on the front page.

# Board Member Elections

## Houston Chapter – BMW CCA 2016 Executive Committee Ballot

Please note there are 3 ways you may cast your ballot for the 2016 Chapter Elections:

1. Bring your ballot to the Annual Dinner
2. Or mail your ballot to:

Houston Chapter  
BMW Car Club of America  
Post Office Box 56763  
Houston, Texas 77256-6763

3. Or email your ballot to:  
[nominations@houston-bmwcca.com](mailto:nominations@houston-bmwcca.com)

\_\_\_\_\_  
BMW CCA Membership Number

### Chapter President:

Blake LaGrone

### Chapter Vice President:

Jeff Conley

ALL BALLOTS WILL BE COMPILED AND TALLIED WITH RESULTS ANNOUNCED AT THE ANNUAL DINNER.

IF MAILED, BALLOTS MUST BE RECEIVED NO LATER THAN JANUARY 10, 2016 TO BE CONSIDERED.

## Houston Chapter – BMW CCA 2016 Executive Committee Write-In Ballot

Please note there are 3 ways you may cast your ballot for the 2016 Chapter Elections:

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Nominee's Name (PRINT)

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### Vice-President:

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# Oktoberfest 2015 With The Road Monkeys



Written by Dan McLaughlin  
Photos by Chris Stokes

I started off on a bright, sunny Thursday morning in September. With my M5 all cleaned up, fluids and tire pressures checked, and luggage in the trunk, I was headed east to Natchitoches, Louisiana to meet up with the **Road Monkeys** for our annual pilgrimage to the **BMW CCA O'Fest**, this year in Absecon, New Jersey on the famous Jersey shore. This is the story of a 12 day journey that will never be forgotten.



Meeting the rest of the group at the Church St. Inn with a glass of wine welcome, we prepared for several days of driving. Friday morning, with route directions in hand, we headed out on the back roads. With a detour for construction, some dust devils and a fantastic lunch stop, we made our way through Louisiana, Arkansas, and Mississippi, ending our day at Pickwick Landing State Park, Tennessee arriving as night fell.

Day two was a continuation with even more winding roads and little towns as we headed into the Appalachian Mountains. With a long lunch stop, busy Saturday traffic, and then an hour delay as the group got stuck in a traffic jam

schedule for our dinner reservations. Abandoning the planned route, we decided on more direct roads through Charlotte to Norfolk, Virginia making it across the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel before sunset. An hour later we arrived at our next stop in quaint Onancock, Virginia. Dinner and drinks were fabulous as we all looked forward to an easier day of driving the next morning.

Monday the skies were dreary and the roads wet but it did not deter a single member as we headed north and boarded the ferry to Cape May. With just short drive up the Garden State Parkway, we pulled into our destination, the beautiful Stockton Seaview Hotel and Resort.

After checking into our rooms, we headed to registration, picking up our



events packets and goodie bags. Plenty of vendors too, with the BMW Foundation, Girot's Garage and Odometer Gears

because of the largest car show in eastern Tennessee, it made for a very late arrival in Burnsville, North Carolina.

Day three we headed east and hopped on to the Blue Ridge Parkway for a stint of beautiful mountain roads with stunning vistas. Stopping for gas and a potty break we realized we were running way behind

to just name a few. Just walking around the hotel, we all started running into old friends and acquaintances and catching up with each other on our adventures the past year since O'Fest 2014 in Beaver Creek, Colorado.

Tuesday is always Concours day sponsored by Pirelli Tires. With the car wash stations busy, rags and cotton swaps were brandished with skill as the owners scrubbed away the grime of several days of travel. And what a sight was in store for everyone as all the cars, contestants and display onlys, were arranged on the hotel's front lawn. From a vintage **1932 F76 triwheel van** to a trio of brand new



i8's and every variation you can imagine in between were on view for all. The afternoon was also the TSD competition plus the start of the Fun Rally and Gymkhana challenges.

Wednesday being a Jewish holiday, no official events were planned but a Cape May wine tour and the Simeone Foundation Automotive Museum tour in Philadelphia were arranged for those wanting to head out for the day and explore. All week many other events came and went. A golf tournament, car control clinics, trivia contest, test drives and a weekend of BMW Club racing. There is something for everyone's interests and hobbies. I even got my hands on the keys to a M235i convertible for a little drive around the countryside.





On Thursday evening, a 1920's Pre-Prohibition party filled the hotel. The hotel, built in 1914, was the perfect backdrop as flappers, gangsters and more overflowed the lobby into the hotel bars and outdoor spaces. With beer provided by Spaten, the party extended through dinner and into the night.

Saturday is the day we pack up and head home as we have a long drive back to Texas. We say our goodbyes for another year as we begin to look forward to next year's O'Fest, in Monterey, CA. This year was a bit special for me as I got to see members from my old chapter in New York who came down for the festivities. These are the people who taught me so much about BMW's and how to actually drive. Thank you Andre and the rest of the gang. It was great seeing y'all again.

Hitting the road, several of us decided not to rush back, taking 3 days instead of 2. It's hard when you're driving solo. We managed to avoid a nasty backup on I81 from a truck accident. Found the best Chinese/Thai food restaurant in Tennessee and we all hit the first BBQ joint we could once back in Texas.

Thursday started the performance segment of the program. AutoXing on Thursday and Friday and HPDE's Thursday through Sunday at New Jersey Motorsports Park which features two tracks, Lightning and Thunderbolt. With the vendors moving over to the track, the BMW Foundation set up charity rides with BMW RLL team driver **Bill Auberlin**, **Mike Renner** of the BMW Performance Center and former BMW race car driver **Hans Stuck**.



Friday night's Awards Banquet was hosted at the Resorts Hotel and Casino in Atlantic City. Hundreds of our fellow Beemer heads packed the Starlight Room to a 5 course dinner. The winners of the Car of your Dreams drawing were announced. Awards were given out to many deserving participants for the Concurs, AutoX and Photo contests. My fellow Road Monkeys earned quite a few awards including AutoX class wins for myself and Chris Stokes, and a 3rd place for Jeff Thomson in a hotly contested "modified M3" class. Chris and Leann Stokes won 2nd place in the Gymkhana as well as an award in the Photo contest. Plus there were numerous raffles as Valerie Baker won a Michelin Tire gift certificate and I snagged a Shell Gas gift card. Thank you sponsors! This year's special guest speakers were Bill Auberlin and Hans Stuck who entertained us with their experiences and racing stories.



Thank you Road Monkeys for making what could be a mundane drive into one full of great back roads, adventures and camaraderie.

I wouldn't do it any other way.







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# My Trip To BMW Welt

Kheng Swee Goh



This was my first time to the Welt, so I was like a kid in a candy store! All day parking costs €10. Lunch and drinks weren't overly expensive at the café. Beer was good too (local favorite in Munich seems to be this "Tegerenseer Hell" beer).

The Welt had 3 separate facilities there. The main Showroom - showcasing current models of Mini, BMW and 1 Rolls Royce; the Museum - displaying all things BMW of yesteryears and finally, the Factory - where the 3 and 4 series cars were built.

This past August, I took a 21 day trip to Europe, covering 8 cities and 5 countries. While there were many things I could write about from my trip, since this is a BMW story, I'll limit my subject to BMW only.

Several weeks prior to my departure, my best buddy told me that if I wanted to join the BMW Welt tours, I'd need to call in ahead of time due to their limited group size. That was good advice because when I did; some 2 weeks before my trip, I was informed that they would be closed for maintenance and will only open some 5 days later. So I promptly reserved my BMW Welt "Premium Tour" ticket (as well as modify my itinerary). I also mentioned my "BMW Club" membership to get a discounted rate.

Also, I figured I'd need to rent a car, and to my pleasant surprise, a 1-series could be rented for US\$30.60/day based on a minimum 7-day rental from Sixt (they have almost every BMW model for rent). So I booked the 1er before my trip (because I have a small travel budget).

Fast forward to Aug 17, when I arrived in Munich, walked up to the Sixt counter; the nice lady there told me they have no 1-series. And asked if I would prefer a TT. "An Audi? No, I came here for BMWs" I replied. She then offered me a 3-series, which I didn't mind. But later said she can't because that car had some issues with its registration. She then upgraded me again to a 520d sedan. I was ok with it, but I casually said "we can't even get a 520i or d in America. This car will probably be slow on the autobahn."

She then asked "If you don't mind a wagon, I can give you a 535", I was thinking, a 535d for \$30/day? "Sure"! And I was given the key to an almost brand new 535d xDrive wagon. All cars from Sixt are less than 6 months old by their policy anyway.

It was surprisingly nice! The car didn't feel big at all, and I managed to do 234kmh (145mph) on the autobahn!



The car also featured BMW's latest LCD dash, where the dials and needles were images on the LCD and not mechanical like most cars. With that, it changes when I toggle between Sport, Comfort and EcoPro.



It's a shame we don't get the 5er wagon here in the US, with the added space, it's actually a very good alternative to the X5. Oh, I did price out the exact car in the German BMW website, it came to €80,000!

Enough about the rental, let's move on to BMW Welt.

Some photos from the main showroom



There was also a counter in the main showroom area for “BMW on Demand”, a fancy way of saying “short term rentals”. They weren’t cheap by any means. My Sixt car rental was a fraction of their rates, and I could’ve rented any M-cars from Sixt. But if you want to rent an i8 to play around for a few hours, that’s one way of doing it.

At that time I was there, they were also just starting to set up a special showcase for the new 340i model (pictured bottomright on page 10). Not all cars were unlocked. Only some cars were unlocked for the public to sit in.

They also briefly had a BMW i3 driving slowly around in the building - since it’s electric - perfect for indoor drives.

I joined the “Premium Tour” at a BMWCCA discounted rate of €15. Here’s a very good tip for photos in the museum; if you’re there close to closing (say an hour or so), that is the best time for photos, since you get to take photos of entire display halls with nobody in sight!

By the way, that vintage parts delivery truck says “parts in a hurry”. In the Museum, which I found was the most interesting of all 3 facilities, my first ever BMW (which I still own) was proudly on display there... the 318ti... ..and along side it’s 3-series stablemates.

In fact, the 3-series was the most successful product line in BMW, the dedicated a whole hall to the 3 series alone.



On a separate floor, is the BMW Delivery Center. If you ordered your car via European Delivery, this would be where you’d pick up your car.

And, on a totally separate wing, there was the BMW America manufacturing showcase with a few X cars, and a movie clip playing in a loop about the manufacturing facility in Spartanburg NC.



Of course, BMW’s heritage wasn’t about only cars, they had various displays of aircraft and marine engines, motorcycles, and even “Das Boot” (boat)!



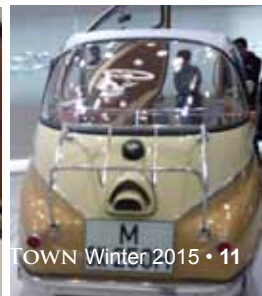
The famed cylindrical corporate offices are off limits to visitors, but has been used for movies such as Buck Rogers in the 25th Century (as their “headquarters”).



“Parts in a hurry”

I was also surprised to learn that BMW once made a rear-engine car way back in 1964! Notice there were no “kidney grills”?

One of my favorites was the Isetta, the cute vintage bubble car. And they have 2 on display there! One in the museum, and one in the main showroom. Only the 4 wheeled version was on display though.







The tour of the manufacturing plant unfortunately did not allow any photo taking at all. So it was only a walking tour.

But from memory... We were shown various (but not all stages) of manufacturing, mostly done by robots, including:

- ◆ **Cold stamping of body from sheet metal**  
“We were shown (from a great distance) the stamping machines working.”
- ◆ **Robotic spot welding of the chassis.**
- ◆ **Phosphate coatings and spray painting stages**  
“Spraying and dipping of the partially completed cars.”
- ◆ **Windshield assembly**
- ◆ **Upholstery assembly** “This was one of the few manual assembly segments we saw in the entire process.”
- ◆ **Rear subframe assembly**
- ◆ **Body and drivetrain “marrying” together.**
- ◆ **Dash and electrics assembly and testing**
- ◆ **Final dyno check and drive off**



At one point, we also walked by a “body storage”, where various upper bodies of the 3 and 4 series were stacked on giant racks (like a Costco). And if needed “in an emergency”, one of these spare bodies could be pulled to the assembly line. Again, unfortunately, no photos...

In closing, if you have a chance to go to Munich, definitely try to:

1. **Rent a BMW from Sixt**
2. **Visit BMW Welt**
3. **Join the tour (call ahead to book)**







**UPCOMING EVENTS:**

**Coffee meetings:**  
Cedar Creek Cafe Bar & Grill  
9am - 12pm  
December 12

**AutoCross Practice:**  
Houston Police Academy  
8:30 - 3:30pm  
December 12

**AutoCross:**  
Houston Police Academy  
8:30 - 3:30pm  
December 13

**Annual Dinner:**  
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**Hair of the Dog:**  
January 1

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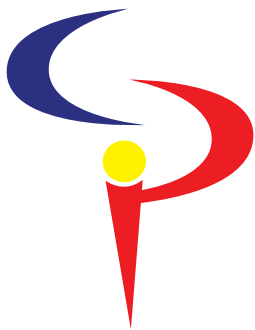


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## E36 M3 Blower Fan Control Repair

The later E36 cars went to an electronic speed control on the fan motor. The fan display has speed increments to select the speed, rather the older (and completely adequate) 1 to 4 speed selections. No blower speeds means the AC won't run, not good in the summer in Houston.

If the display goes completely blank, there is a good chance the device in Figure 1 has failed. BMW calls this the Final Stage Unit (FSU).



**Figure 1 Final Stage Unit**

The ETK shows this part used on E36 318, 320, 323, 325, 328 and M3 from 3/95 and is PN 64118376174 or 64118380580 and now superseded to 64116929540, on cars with the automatic AC control. Whenever I see several superseded part numbers, it is a clear indication of a problem part. Also a great thing about BMW that they continue to improve parts of cars no longer in production.

Searching BMW forums it appears this part regularly fails. With about 170k on the subject car, it was likely this was the problem of a blank fan display.

[Penskeparts.com](http://Penskeparts.com) (a great site to look up BMW parts) shows the cost for this part as \$150. I also checked on [Pelicanparts.com](http://Pelicanparts.com) and find at least three options, two aftermarket

and genuine for \$125. Since there are several available, this is further evidence of a problem part.

Checking eBay I found an interesting replacement part. Sold by APSX2010, it is a replacement part that is a totally different design, claimed to do the same thing as the factory device, but does not generate the heat of the factory unit so does not require the large heat sink. At about \$42.00 shipped it was worth a try. Figures 2 and 3 show the part received.



**Figure 2 APSX replacement FSU**



**Figure 3 Back side of APSX FSU,  
no heat sink**

The part appears to be a 3D printed housing.

To remove the old unit, the lower dashboard trim panel must be removed from the driver side of the car. The FSU is located at the bottom of the heating/AC box. The Bentley 3 Series manual provides instruction to remove the trim panels. Use caution removing the lower panel as the plastic is often brittle on these cars.



The FSU is retained with two (2) T-20 torx head screws. Figure 4 shows the installed unit.



**Figure 4 Installed new unit**

The new unit fit right in but I wanted to test it before putting the trim back in. When I plugged it in the connector was pretty tight and the clip didn't quite line up. It worked, so some electrical tape (3M 33+) was put around the connector as insurance.



**Figure 5 FSU installed with panels**

The blower in this car is working good ever since and now approaching a year since installation. Admittedly I took a gamble on this part, but so far a good deal.



**Figure 6 Working display and control now**

I always try to remove weight if reasonable from my cars. Putting the old unit on the scale showed a weight of 240 grams. The new unit is much lighter, didn't weigh it but only on the order of 50g, so a small side benefit to this product.

Questions? Please contact:

[tech-advisor@houston-bmwcca.com](mailto:tech-advisor@houston-bmwcca.com).

**Jeff Otten**

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# Oktoberfest and Driving the BMW M4 on the Autobahn



There is no better time to visit Munich than during Oktoberfest. Strange as it may be, Oktoberfest starts the 2nd week in September and ends two weeks later. This year, it was between September 19 to October 4. You can find all the Oktoberfest 2015 activities here. Munich has always been one of my favorite places to visit regardless of the many times that I have been there before. This year was no exception when I invited two old high school exchange students that I had hosted together in 2009-2010 school year to join me in Munich. Oliver flew in from Copenhagen and Philip flew from Hamburg to celebrate the biggest beer festival in the world. It is ironic that Philip, a typical young beer drinking German, has never been to Oktoberfest, much less to Munich. Oktoberfest is the greatest beer festival in the world, celebrated and copied by many restaurants and beer taverns around the world, but unlike other franchises, there is only one Oktoberfest, and that is in Munich.



**Löwenbräu wagon train to Oktoberfest**

Oktoberfest is more than just about beer, it is a carnival for everyone, young and old to enjoy. You can walk the grounds and just watching people going by. There is a historical parade with bands and beer wagon trains prior to the official ceremony at 12:00 pm when the Mayor of Munich taps the first barrel of beer to open Oktoberfest. Be there by 9:00 am if you want to watch the ceremony. The joy of being there with friends should not be missed and walking through the Oktoberfest is magical, it's like a different world. People are in a good mood, and everyone talks to everyone like we all party together.

You will see the typical carnival rides, the many stalls selling Bavarian food and souvenirs, but my favorite are the stalls selling the traditional gingerbread hearts. They are a must whenever you go to Oktoberfest. They come in all kinds of colors and with all kinds of texts on them. The messages on the gingerbread heart chocolate treat include "I mog Di" (I like you), "Spatzerl" (Darling) and "Herzlerl" (Sweetheart), but now there are even ones in English. Oktoberfest is where everyone, young or old, German or foreign, is a Bavarian for the day. Most are dressed in the traditional lederhosen and dirndl.





I found the costumes quite attractive during our visit, but I would never wear one. You can buy them at a substantial discount towards the end of the carnival. There is also a discount on the carnival rides during the last weekend of the festival.

Oktoberfest is a celebration of a tradition Munich has to offer since 1811. Accordingly, the beer tents sell only original Munich beer which is characterized by a long tradition that brewing beer follows a strict adherence of the "Reinheitsgebot" (Bavarian Purity Requirements). The six Munich Oktoberfest-breweries are Augustiner, Hofbräu, Löwenbräu, Paulaner, Spaten, and Hacker Pschorr. The location of Oktoberfest is the Royal Wedding took place on 12 October 1810. Crown Prince Ludwig, later to become King Ludwig I, was married to Princess Therese of Saxony-Hildburghausen on 12 October 1810. The citizens of Munich were invited to attend the festivities held on the fields in front of the city gates to celebrate the happy royal event. To tradition, the Oktoberfest location will never expand in size to accommodate over 6 million visitors in attendance each year. As the result of space limitations and the two week duration of the festival, you will find the cost of a hotel room highly inflated. When I started looking form accomodation for 3 people, the cost was already 300-500 euros per night, far too much I wanted to pay. For that reason, our hotel room was in Ingolstadt, 50 minutes to Munich by car.

As I have also visited Oktoberfest 2014 the previous year, it is a common knowledge that getting into one of the 6 "tents" during the weekend is nearly impossible without reservations, which are purchased by companies two years ahead of time. For us common people, the wait in front of the beer tents for a spot at the table can be long, frustrating, and disappointing. Even the extended tables outside are full and crowded. It is suggested that you get there 7am in the morning and wait in line to enter the tent. Recognizing that, rather than to wait hours in line for a table, we headed over to Augustiner beer garden for a few Maß (one liter of beer in a stein) in what was a lovely sunny autumn afternoon in Munich.

Augustiner is one of the oldest beer gardens in Munich, and one of the most beautiful. It is a place where we could refuel and really relax and enjoy life on a Bavarian sunny day. It should not be missed.

Immediately, we were socializing with the Australian father of the bride who just married a German, and they were celebrating at Augustiner. The world would be a safer place to live if the leaders would sit down and get drunk. After a phone call to Georg, who lives in Munich and works on heads up displays at BMW, he joined us at Augustiner Garden. I knew Georg when he stayed at my house in Friendswood while he was finishing up master thesis at NASA Johnson Space Center. After a couple of Maß, it was time to head over to the Hofbräuhaus

located in Marienplatz for dinner and of course more beer. The long walk was refreshing as the weather changed and it started to rain.

The Hofbräuhaus is probably the world's most famous drinking hall. I have been to the one in Hamburg and several in the USA, but none can rival the original in Munich for the atmosphere and good German food. This place was packed and electrifying even though Oktoberfest was only a few miles away. Dancing on the tables to the German Bavarian music after a few beer is not unusual. As our celebration continues, we order the typical Bavarian dishes of Hendl (roasted chicken) and Schweinebraten (roast pork) to go with the beer. At the end of the night, sobered (I had only one Maß), we drove back to Ingolstadt. Although we did not have the famous Munich beer at the Oktoberfest tents, we had the best of time at their permanent locations in Munich. My suggestion is go to Oktoberfest during the weekdays when it is less crowded.



Our time in Bavaria was not only spent in Munich. We enjoyed the Audi factory tour and the museum in Ingolstadt. What made this year's trip to Munich special was besides the usual BMW plant tour to see where more than 900 BMWs and up to 1,400 engines are built each day, we had reserved a 2015 BMW M4 through BMW On Demand for a Sunday drive.



Unlike the US spec M4 that is electronically limited top speed of 250 km/h (155 mph), our German spec car was not limited. I believe the M4 top speed is 280 km/hr (174 mph).

Overall we enjoyed the M4 for what it was designed to do. We found it to be very stable at high speed, easy to drive fast, and a car that has an angry demeanor when pushed hard on the autobahn. Between rain and sunshine our Sunday drive went by too quickly. When it was time to return the car we filled the tank with 37.74 liters premium gasoline for the 289 km that we drove. Upon returning the key to BMW On Demand, the lady at the counter looking for small talk asked Philip where we went. Upon acknowledging the route we took to Garmisch-Partenkirchen, she responded with one word, "adrenaline". My immediate thought was "suicide" for allowing Philip to drive at 270 km/hr while I was nervously holding the camera to record his driving.



Garmisch-Partenkirchen is special to me. It is a beautiful drive from Munich through the German Alps on the A95 autobahn. In 1998, I remembered taking my two small children snowboarding nearby Germany's highest mountain, Zugspitze. Garmisch-Partenkirchen is also the location of the 1936 winter Olympics. The M4 is designed for traveling at high speed so the A95 autobahn and mountain road leading to Garmisch-Partenkirchen would show its handling capabilities too.

The first thing we noticed while driving the M4 through Munich was the growling exhaust sound that it made even as it was driven slowly through Munich at 50 km/hr. The sound seemed fake and orchestrated, and the piped in sound through the speakers would make a daily city drive quite tiresome. Is there a way to turn it off? To Philip and Oliver, the exhaust sound was beautiful music. The best description I have is that exhaust sounded more like a big V8 than a twin turbo six. Perhaps I'm getting too old for this car, but Philip and Oliver found joy in being noticed by the other drivers on the road so it wasn't long before Philip and Oliver took over the driving.

The next Monday morning I drove Philip and Oliver to the airport for their return flights home and then I returned the Hertz rental car near the Munich Hauptbahnhof only to find my train reservation back to Budapest for the Tuesday flight to Houston was cancelled due to the massive influx of refugees coming to Munich from Budapest. Nevertheless, with the help with several English speaking train conductors, I was able to take three local trains through Austria and arrived in Budapest just before midnight for the next morning flight to Houston. The one month I spent traveling thorough Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Switzerland, Austria, and Germany by bus, train, and by car to reacquaint with several old friends was highlighted by the last few days of drinking beer in Munich. It was fun.

The day after the opening of Oktoberfest, we got up early that Sunday morning for the 50 minute drive back to Munich to BMW Welt to pick up the car. After providing all the necessary documents, drivers license, passport, and a credit card at the BMW On Demand reservation counter, we proceeded down the elevator to the underground parking lot where the cars were located. We were greeted by two gentlemen who were dressed, not unlike other German business men, in black suits. We went over the car key operations, but, like a kid with a new toy, I was a little anxious and impatient to take the car out right away. I realized that the NAV system was important to us because it would guide us back to Welt. So, I took the time to understand the operational procedures. Unlike the previous BMW iDrive system, I found navigating through the NAV menu easy to understand and to use.

The Nav had several recommended routes stored for our selected drives. Since my mind had already mapped out where I wanted to go, I paid little attention to the recommended routes. Once we completed all the legal formalities, I proceeded out of the underground lot with Philip riding shotgun and Oliver sat in the back seat, Philip programmed the NAV to Garmisch-Partenkirchen and we're off.



See our BMW M4 on the autobahn here. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E2tfnYPW\\_Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E2tfnYPW_Y)



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