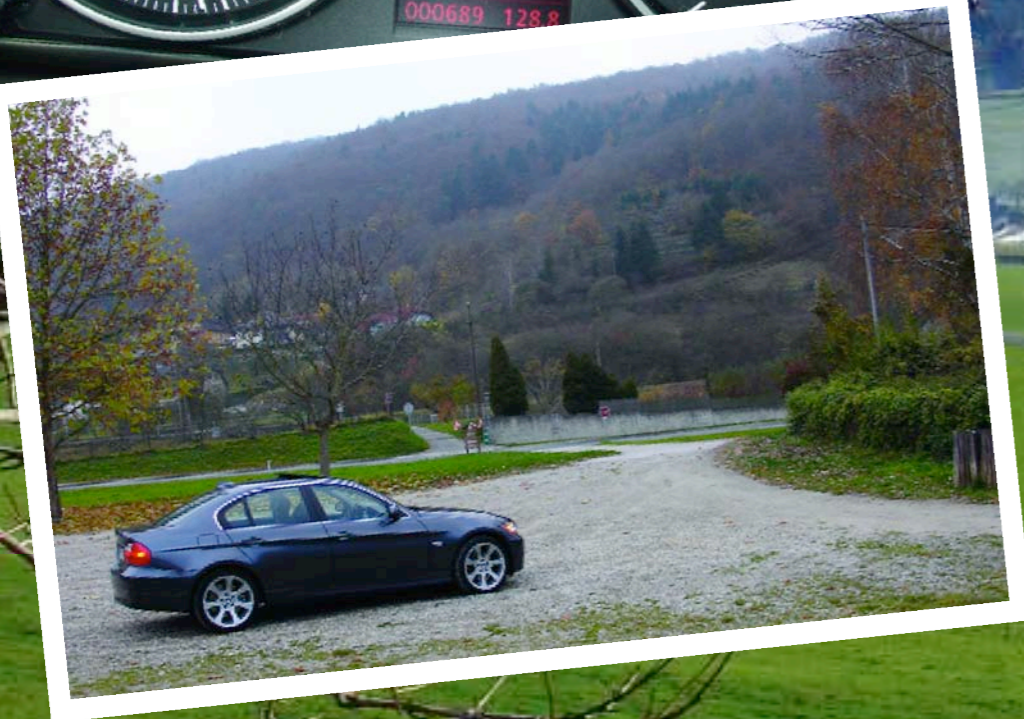


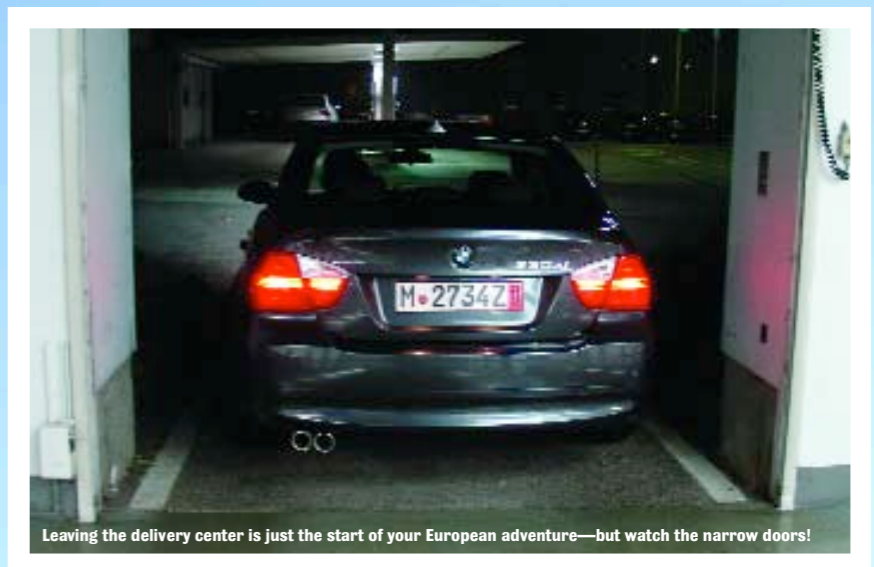
THE Ultimate SOUVENIR



FOR FORTY YEARS, AMERICAN BMW BUYERS HAVE BEEN TAKING THEIR BRAND-NEW CARS ON A FINE VACATION.

Since the 1960s, several thousand Americans each year have taken a special trip to Munich—but they are not there just for the beer, the schnitzel, the museums and art galleries, and the *Gemütlichkeit* alone. No, each of these Yanks has another goal in mind: to pick up a new BMW at BMW's factory delivery center. For years, BMW has been among a handful of European automakers that offer Americans the option of picking up their cars at the factory.

Today's European Delivery program has its roots in the 1950s, when members of the U.S. armed forces returning from Europe brought with them a taste for smaller, sportier European cars. Many shipped their own cars to the States with the help of E.H. Harms Auto Forwarding & Shipping Co., a company founded by Egon



STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY JONATHAN B. SPIRA

H. Harms, a German soldier who had been captured by the Americans at the Battle of the Bulge. After he was released, he started moving military vehicles back to different ports; as more U.S. bases were built in Europe, he began shipping soldiers' cars stateside as well.

At that time, other than the occasional Volkswagen *Käfer* (Beetle), a non-U.S. manufactured vehicle was an unusual sight in the United States. Their appearance was

mostly due to U.S. soldiers—and to Max Hoffman, the Austrian immigrant automotive entrepreneur who, starting in 1948, single-handedly created the imported car business in the United States. During his career he marketed Mercedes-Benz, Volkswagen, Porsche, Alfa Romeo, Fiat, Jaguar, and BMW vehicles!

Fortunately for us, most of Hoffman's energy was focused on BMW. He started importing BMW models in the 1950s, and

he was the exclusive importer from 1960 until March 1975. (Hoffman's influence on the company's products was vast, from insisting on the Albrecht von Goertz design for the 507 to fudging the specs on the 1800TiSa to coming up with a name that would successfully market the E3 2800 sedan in the U.S.: the BMW Bavaria. When BMW of North America was formed, they reportedly bought Hoffman out for \$16,000,000.)

Herr Roller's Advice

Diplom-Kaufmann Thomas Roller is the manager of the BMW Delivery Center where European Delivery cars are delivered. He has some suggestions

to make the European Delivery experience more fun and less stressful for American visitors:

- **Order satellite navigation**—and get the DVD for Europe.

Having navigation in the car will allow you to enjoy your trip without going astray. Asking for directions in a language you don't speak and reading a map for an unfamiliar city takes away your enjoyment of the places you came to enjoy. Arriving hours late for a once-a-day tour can ruin a vacation.

- **Learn a few phrases** in German and the language(s) of any other countries you will be visiting. "Danke" (thank you), "bitte" (please and you're welcome), and "Guten Morgen" (good morning) will go a long way.

- **Plan for local weather.** Don't order a car with summer

performance tires for a mid-December delivery. You (and your car) won't get very far.

- **Read the materials** BMW provides, including information about drop-off locations and hours. Ask questions at the delivery center before leaving.

- **Don't overplan.** Many first-time visitors to Europe try to see everything. Pick a few destinations and get to know them well.

- **Verify the location** and hours for your intended drop-off location when you pick up your car at the Delivery Center.

—Jonathan Spira



Thomas Roller is a master of perfect delivery.



When BMW Welt (BMW World) is completed, it will add even more to the European Delivery experience.

In the mid 1960s, with the advent of the Jet Age, Hoffman saw an opportunity to boost both sales and mindshare for BMW by offering prospective buyers the opportunity to take their first European vacation and drive around Europe in their own car—a BMW, naturally—which would follow them back to the U.S., giving them a unique experience, saving money on their car purchase, and eliminating rental charges. It

was a popular program; by the end of the decade, Mercedes, Saab, Volvo, Porsche, and Volkswagen all offered factory delivery for American buyers. Today, customers are drawn by packages that can include significant discounts (published BMW discounts average about 7% on most models; individual dealers will frequently offer even better pricing), discounted or free airfare, meals, and the thrill of a factory tour. Today,

BMW's program is quite popular; by 2004, the company was selling nearly 2,000 cars through their European Delivery program, and in 2005 they sold 2,363.

But even if there were no monetary advantage, the romance of European delivery would still attract buyers. Just as legend tells us that the Lorelei bewitched the hearts of sailors on the Rhine, the Autobahn bewitches the hearts of American drivers:



Driving anywhere in the Alps will bring you to majestic views and awesome tunnels; the Felbertauern Tunnel in Austria is over three miles long!



European Delivery Timeline

1. About three months before your travel date, decide the color and options, and negotiate the price.
2. Sign the purchase order, which your dealer then submits to the European Delivery department with your desired delivery date.
3. Your car is manufactured about 30 days prior to delivery.
4. Usually, you pay for the car two weeks before your scheduled pick-up date; if you are leasing, your lease starts on this day.
5. You pick up the car in Munich.
6. You drop the car off in Europe (within 30 days for BMW Financial Services lease, 90 days for BMW Financial Services finance, six months otherwise; insurance for four-teen days is included).
7. The car is transported to port and then put on board ship.
8. Your car reaches the USA (from drop-off, this takes up to four weeks for the East Coast, up to six weeks for West Coast delivery).
9. The vehicle clears customs; then it's processed at the Vehicle Delivery Center and shipped to your dealer. Depending on a variety of factors—including how backed up U.S. Customs is—this process can take one or two weeks.
10. Final delivery. Go home—the long way!—Jonathan Spira

My Favorite European Delivery Resources

BMW NA Web Site: BMW presents an overview of European Delivery, including pricing, at www.bmwusa.com/bmwexperience/europeandelivery

Rolf Raffelsieper, BMW pick-up service: Herr Raffelsieper started working at BMW in 1967. He will pick you up at the Munich airport and take you directly to the BMW European Delivery Center in Freimann or to your hotel. He will gladly pick you up from your hotel and take you to the Delivery Center and can also meet you at E.H. Harms and take you to the airport after your drop your car off. He can also arrange various tours, including visits to BMW facilities of interest. E-mail Rolf at rolf.raffelsieper@web.de.

Find a dealer you like: All BMW dealers are appropriate avenues for European delivery, but some seem to specialize in it, while others seem unaware that the program exists. If you like your local dealer, you're ahead of the game—especially if it's one of those dealerships where at least one sales rep knows all the ins and outs of Euro delivery. I have had a successful relationship with Ricki Shamen at DiFeo BMW for over a decade, working with her on several European deliveries (and several U.S. deliveries as well). She enjoys each customer's trip as much as if she were along for the ride. (rshamen@unitedauto.com)

Lufthansa: Lufthansa, German's flagship airline, serves Munich from sixteen cities, offering non-stop service from New York City (JFK and

Newark), Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Charlotte, and Boston (in the summertime). Most flights are operated with Airbus A340 aircraft, configured in a two- or three-class configuration. Newark flights offer a 44-seat all-business-class alternative using a Boeing 737-700 corporate jet. Lufthansa just opened up a new first-class lounge in Munich with limousine service to the plane. For European Delivery customers, Lufthansa offers a special two-for-one package. Visit Lufthansa at www.lufthansa-usa.com/241bmw or call 888 552-4508 to book your flight.

InterContinental Resort Berchtesgaden: The InterContinental Resort Berchtesgaden is located close to the Bavaria/Austria border some 150 kilometers from Munich and 35 kilometers from Salzburg, making it an excellent destination for a European Delivery trip. The mountain resort sits about 1,000 meters above sea level on the Eckerbichl Mountain range, offering spectacular views of Berchtesgadener Land. Visit www.ichotelsgroup.com/h/d/6c/1/en/hd/zceha for more information.

Holiday Inn Munich City-North: The Holiday Inn, located in the heart of Schwabing, is a short distance from Munich's famous Englischer Garten and the many shops and cafés on the Leopoldstrasse. It is also situated within minutes of the A9 and has a safe, self-park garage ideal for a brand-new BMW. Visit www.ichotelsgroup.com/h/d/6c/1/en/hd/mucls for more information.—Jonathan Spira

The opportunity to drive a BMW in its native habitat is a major draw. And why not? You take delivery, drive on the *Autobahnen, Bundesstraßen, Landstraßen,* and *Autostrades* of Europe for several weeks, and have your car shipped back to the United States. The trip has become almost an annual ritual for some; indeed, a third of BMW's European-delivery customers are repeat buyers.

While the notion may seem daunting at first, the process is actually relatively simple, as European Delivery sales are arranged through BMW dealers in the United States. Many dealerships have one salesperson as a designated specialist. It's not like dropping by the dealer and spotting what you want on the showroom floor; each car is built to order, and must be ordered at least three months prior to the desired delivery date—but European Delivery customers don't mind the wait. It's like anticipating a Christmas present that's exactly what you really wanted!

Dealers like the programs, too; usually, the cars do not come out of the dealer's allocation, so there is no floor cost to the



The Rasthaus Hopfgartner on the B100 Bundesstrasse near Dellach im Drautal offers a nice break from a day of driving.

dealer—essentially, it's like selling an extra car. Buyers should expect more paperwork (after all, buying a car usually doesn't involve your passport)—and understand that the wait time for redelivery can be six weeks to eight weeks after your European sojourn. Be aware of German (and other national) holidays when making your travel plans; the delivery center is closed on

German holidays, and drop-off centers—over a dozen throughout Europe—are likely to be closed on local holidays.

Like an exotic vacation resort, European Delivery also has an informal "season," which runs from mid-March to mid-November. Deliveries in the off season—that is, after mid-November—are not recommended if your car comes with summer



Where's My Car And What's Happening To It?!

Once you drop off your car at a European drop-off point, what happens to it? For many, that four- to eight-week block of time is a black box during which all the owner can do is obsess and try to track the vehicle using fairly rudimentary tools.

Once a car is dropped off, it goes by truck to Bremerhaven, Zeebrugge (if the car is dropped off in Amsterdam, Madrid, or Paris), or Southampton. If a car is dropped off in Italy, it is driven to Munich for further transport.

All cars are loaded on vessels in the same manner; the only difference is that privately-owned vehicles (the European Delivery

cars) have priority over new vehicles if there is a space limitation.

New cars are cleared through customs electronically before the ship reaches port; privately-owned vehicles are cleared individually and manually (paper forms must be sent to customs).

The vehicle delivery center (VDC) is where your car will be received upon its entry into the United States. Most cars go to the Port of New York, where they are received at the North East Auto-Marine Terminal. Cars destined for the west coast go to the VDC at the Port of Hueneme in the Oxnard Harbor District.

When the ship arrives, cars

are offloaded by stevedores to the first point of rest, also called the pier, which is part of the Northeast Auto Terminal.

European Delivery cars are segregated on the pier until they are cleared by customs inspectors, who physically inspect each car.

Once the cars are cleared and released by customs, they are inspected by Automotive Visual Inspections (AVI) for any damage. Northeast Auto Terminal personnel then shuttle the cars—about a 1.5-mile trip on a private road—to the VDC. Once the cars arrive at the VDC, barring the removal of the Cosmoline (which European Delivery cars do not

have), the cars are taken into inventory, washed, and taken into the facility. Each vehicle is visually inspected for damage which might have occurred during your use in Europe or during transport. The VDC is especially concerned with safety-related damage or defects such as broken lights or gouges in wheels; they also check for any factory defects such as “airbag light on.” Any manufacturers’ campaigns (normal updates) are performed, and the car’s paper trail is reviewed.

From there, the car goes to your local BMW dealer for redelivery.—*Jonathan Spira*



At the Vehicle Delivery Center, cars are checked for damage and prepped for final delivery.

sary; in December, southern Germany had consistent heavy snow and winter storms, making driving conditions hazardous. Despite this, American buyers who apparently had never heard of the Internet and weather.com were showing up in Munich to pick up their cars ordered with summer tires. (They were counseled to leave the car at the delivery center and make arrangements for BMW’s shipping agent, E.H. Harms, to pick it up for transport.) “All-season” tires are no guarantee, of course; one customer from Chicago, driving a new 650i with all-season tires from Prague into Vienna, slid off the Autobahn into a ditch, causing extensive damage to the vehicle.

In any case, buyers receive premium auto insurance with no deductible for fourteen days—and best of all, if the Lorelei call to you again, it can be extended at a slight extra cost! ♦

or performance tires. German law requires the use of winter tires (tires must be des-

ignated M+S, but “all-season” tires do qualify). Some common sense may be neces-