



Lofer, Austria is a small ski town just at the base of the Alp Mountains and is booming in the ski season. However this time of year the town was empty compared to the high numbers that pass through in the winter. There are many options for lodging in Lofer but I think Tom Weir found the best place. We had a living room, kitchen, and a safe place to store and fix boats. The best thing about staying in lofer was that we could easily walk to the river with our boats. We would shoulder our boats and walk through the tiny cobblestone streets of the city.



German Nationals were being held the weekend we arrived and they had a very high attendance. They had team races in all classes and age groups. If we would have known that the race was happening we could have arrived a day early and competed. There turnout was amazing as was the amount of energy from the all the spectators.

The courses we raced on for the first two world cups were very good. The classic was short and very flat up top but the finish at the end of the sprint course was great. The sprint course is hard enough to deserve your attention but not so hard that it over stresses you. It is really very frustrating because the lines are obvious but harder then they look when you're going at race pace.



The classic started upstream of the city and was a short drive from the apartment. It was flat and had shallow spots but it made for an excellent race. Racers could totally burn out in the flats then would have to finish by running the last part of the classic which was the sprint course. Being so anaerobic for 10 minutes then trying to maneuver through the class 3 sprint course was challenging even for the top paddlers.



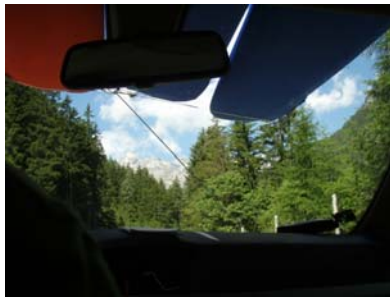
### Karlovy Vary , Czech Republic



The size of the team grew as we moved to next race venue. We were up to 3 cars, not all of them were full. Two of the cars and 7 of the boats crossed into the Czech Republic at the same time. We had come off a great stay in Austria and we looking forward to world cups 3 and 4.

Once we crossed in to the Czech Republic we stopped at a gas station and bought some ice cream and even though we noticed the currency is in Crowns and Euros both,

we didn't give it much thought at the time. We were on our way down the road and hadn't gone very far when a police officer flagged us over. His English was not very good but was far better than any of our Czech. After a few minutes of trying to figure each other out we learned that when you are in the Czech Republic you must have your lights on. We also learned the minimum fine is 200 and maximum is 2,000. We got away with the minimum fine and later that night we figured it out to be about 7 USD so it was not a big deal. It was funny that they expected us to wire transfer the money from the USA when we got back.



The river which the races are held on runs off of a reservoir release and unfortunately the only day they turn on the water is the day before the race. It is a really fun run and it would be enjoyable to get a few more releases to paddle more on the course before the race. The scenic run through the old city distracts you from trying to find markers to use for your pacing. The Classic was long enough that pacing was very important and knowing when you're ¼ of the way down and ½ the way down makes for a better race run.



The run starts outside of the city and feels like any Appalachian creek as it meanders and drops occasionally down an easy rapid. The banks will disappear and become a cobblestone wall as it drops into the old city of KV. The scene here is unbelievable; views of castles, statues and having so many people watching and gathering around adds to the excitement. Big screen TVs, and cameras lined the sprint course and any American that has an interest in wild water should make a trip to this place because it is all unbelievable



The only downfall is that there is not enough water for more releases so it would be best to plan on paddling somewhere else and getting to KV the Thursday before the race. This would allow you to paddle Friday and race Saturday and Sunday.



Ivera, Italy



We were sitting south of Munich and having a good dinner trying to relax after a crazy day at the airport picking up more passengers and paddlers. We had heard from other racers that Ivera was big and we all felt good that we were headed to a course that would be big water. At this point of the trip there was no use to worry about how big it was as we all had given some much time, money and sacrificed so much to be here that we all were going to start the race no matter what! We all started but unfortunately we all did not finish. When we pulled up to the course and laid our eyes on it we all knew that everyone would take their turn getting smacked down by the river. It is quit a humbling experience to see men and women from around the world at the top of their game getting chucked, slammed, rolling and swimming. Watching all these professional athletes struggle to do what they do best, there are no words to describe it. Some athletes took advantage of the opportunity and stepped up and turned out perfect runs in a course where so much can go wrong very fast. The classic was flat as a pan cake with a descent rapid at the very end. The town and the local people of the city seemed happy to have all the paddlers there. So I hope the issues can be worked out and next year's world championships will go off very well. Anyone who is thinking about going to Ivera should practice by sprinting through the biggest water they can get on.