

# *The Fifth Annual* KÜSTEN



I have written in the past about the adventures that I and a few of my vintage BMW friends have taken on the backroads of California. As this was the fifth year of our annual Küstenfahrt or Coastal Drive we changed things up a bit and made our drive in April instead of October. Why? Instead of the dry brown hills of the central coast and competition for hotel rooms with wine harvest visitors we

decided to hold our event while the valleys and hills were still green from the winter and spring rains. The benefits were immediate: fewer cars and almost deserted roads and byways, great weather and idyllic scenery.

This year we had our largest turnout ever with twenty-one cars and twenty-four participants. As this journey is really about the camaraderie and not just about the

drives (although they are awesome) we even allowed two vintage Porsches to join us in the mix! The assortment of vintage BMWs included two 2002 tiis, ten e9 coupes, three e12 sedans, one e30 cabriolet, an e32 735i, an e28 M5, and an e46 Touring recently imported from the Netherlands and the aforementioned 911s. It is not often that ten e9 coupes can get together and there was a nice assort-

# FAHRT



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Photos by Doug Park*



ment of 2800CSs, 3.0CSs and an Italian delivery CSL. We also had a nice color palette as well: Chamonix, Polaris, Colorado, Fjord, Verona, Atlantik and Tundra, and those were just the coupes.

Our adventure began in Long Beach where many of us met on a Tuesday morning at 5:30 AM. Traffic on the west side of Los Angeles can be brutal on a work day, so an early start is essential. We managed

to escape the worst of the traffic and were able to stay fairly close together as we headed north towards Santa Barbara. Our destination was breakfast in the small town of Los Alamos in the Santa Ynez wine country. Leaving Highway 101 behind we took two lane backroads like Highways 135 and 1 through rural farming areas and the small towns of Guadalupe and Oceano. Before long we arrived at our first day's

destination, Shell Beach. Since we all stayed at the same hotel we gathered for wine and cheese on the lawn overlooking the ocean before going to dinner.

Day Two was going to involve around four hours of driving so leaving early was not necessary and we got together in the parking lot at 9 am. If you have ever organized a group drive, then you can relate as it is often worse than herding cats!

## COASTAL DRIVE

Sometimes I have to test one of the members by asking "What did I just say?" The response, "I didn't do anything!" This morning it was a little more important as I had sent Paul Cain ahead of us in his 1974 Fjord Blau 3.0CS to set up on the side of the road above Cayucos on the coast so we could pull in for a group photo opportunity. So what happened? Most of the group left early and almost passed Paul up as he was trying to get their attention to park. In the end we took some amazing photos and videos of all twenty-one cars. From there we headed up Highway 1 towards Big Sur to stop at Ragged Point about an hour away. As the road is still closed around 30 miles above Ragged Point, we had no traffic at all, well except for a few large semi-tractor trailers each with two huge boulders headed north to be used in the road repair operation. Fortunately for us we got to experience Nacimiento Ferguson Road ten miles or so ahead which took us over the crest of the Coastal Range. It climbs several thousand feet in nine miles and took us above the coastal clouds and drizzle which made driving this single lane road a bit challenging. It had been closed for over



three years due to wildfires and erosion from the rains of several winters. Dirk and Alendra will remember this road I am sure from a drive we participated in which included way too many Porsches! As we dropped down into warmer climes, we followed County Road G14 as we wound our way into Paso Robles for the evening. We had a lovely gathering at John Niedernhofer's home where he served a new beer that he was testing on us as he owns three breweries in SoCal.

The next morning our departure was also very casual as our journey would be shorter than the day before. From Paso we headed north to San Miguel and once again left Highway 101 behind and took Cross Canyon Road eastwards to the tiny community of Parkfield. We did not stop here but it



with verdant green fields, trees and hill-sides and with, yes, more twists and turns. The saloon is not open, but it makes for a great rest stop and more photos. For the afternoon Paul planned a blind wine tasting with cheese imported from the Netherlands at his sister's home in Cayucos right above the ocean. Again, it was the chance to socialize and share our stories from the day's drive before we headed back Paso again for night number three. Paso has some amazing restaurants with great food and wonderful wines as there are over three hundred wineries in the greater Paso Robles area. Some say that Paso is the Napa and Sonoma of thirty years ago and it sits halfway between Los Angeles and San Francisco it has become very popular.

My trip encompassed nearly 1,000 miles as instead of heading home three of us drove north to Monterey on Friday so we could attend the Bay Area 2002 show on Saturday at the Brisbane Marina which I had not attended in several years. And I did not even mention the rare M535i owned by Chris Kohler, the Dietel Alpina 528i owned by Jon Iverson or the Hartge 735 of Rey Rivera which should probably have their own stories.

is famous for the Parkfield Saloon and their delicious hamburgers. We now turned south and soon arrived at Highway 41 which took us even farther south past Cholame and the James Dean Memorial and through Shandon and Creston. The 41 was freshly paved and quite twisty which allowed us to drive a little more aggressively but still responsibly. The goal was a short road known as County Road 229 which has three miles of the most incredible twists and turns that you can image. Everyone waited as I drove ahead to give the followers the 'all clear' to proceed briskly. It can be best described as an adult version of a skate board track with many off-camber turns. Our next stop would be the Pozo Saloon on a road we call the Pozo Loop past farms, ranches and assorted dwellings

