

CUCKOO CLOCKS STRIKE

SWISS INITIATIVE SENDS SPEEDSTERS TO GAOL

WORDS/PHOTOS PETER 'THE BEAR' THOEMING

Kurt Stauffer from tour operator Twincruiser Motorcycle Tours (www.twincruiser.org) has kindly sent us details of the latest traffic law introduced in Switzerland. Kindly? Well, I guess it helps if we know the worst...

Switzerland, you may recall, was the last country in the world to allow women to vote. Want to take a guess as to when that happened? That's right, in 1971. And it didn't exactly get a good rap in the classic film "The Third Man". Harry Lime tells his friend Martins "in Italy for 30 years under the Borgias they had warfare, terror, murder, and bloodshed, but they produced Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, and the Renaissance. In Switzerland they had brotherly love - they had 500 years of democracy and peace, and what did that produce? The cuckoo clock."

But of course that's not all they produced. Look up Fritz Egli some time if you don't know about this master bike builder and tuner already. But there is a deep thread of conservatism in the good folk of the Swiss Eidgenossenschaft or confederation, and it has definitely expressed itself in this latest law. Here's how Kurt sees it:

"From 1st January 2013 strict new laws came into force against drivers [and riders, of course] who speed excessively.

This follows an initiative by a Swiss pressure group called RoadCross who have been campaigning for some time against speeding on Swiss roads.

"Speeding Excessively is defined as:

- travelling at 70 km or more in a 30 km zone
- travelling at 100km or more in a 50km zone
- travelling at 140km or more in a 80km zone
- travelling at 200km or more on the motorway.

"Excessive speeding or "Raserei" as it is known is a criminal offence and anyone caught speeding will be sentenced to prison even if nobody has been seriously injured or killed.

- The speedster if found guilty will lose their driving licence for at least two years
- If the offence is repeated they lose their driving licence for life
- Convicted speedsters will face 1 to 4 years in jail
- If convicted they may also have their vehicle confiscated
- It will be illegal to inform anyone about the presence of radars and speed controls

Wonderful scenery, some outstanding roads, class-leading cuckoo clocks... but Switzerland's welcome may be as cold as charity.



- People found using radar detectors will be fined."

"Hmm", said a rider we know who happens to sit only a few feet away from me in the office, "I reckon I would last about ten minutes..."

The most interesting question, after "will someone in power think that this is a good idea in Australia, too" is "what is this intended to achieve?" A reduction in high range speeding, of course, leading to a drop in deaths and injuries on the road - but will it do that? How much responsibility does speeding actually bear for deaths and injuries?

The German experience suggest that the answer is "very little" - you can go as fast as you like on some German Autobahnen, and official figures confirm that this does not lead to any more accidents; it may in fact result in fewer.

What do you think?

Oh, and keep in mind that Kurt has many tours on his books that stay entirely outside Switzerland! PT ●