

■ WORDS: SARAH HARRINGTON-JAMES
PICS: FILIP RIJAVEC

The MINI scene in Slovenia is huge and *Modern MINI* saw first-hand back in June 2010 at the MINI Alpe Adria Summit how much this little car has been taken to heart by the friendly eastern Europeans.

The Alpe Adria 265 km cross-country adventure took us from picturesque Lake Bled to awesome mountain passes and finally on to Portorož, the Slovenian equivalent of Saint Tropez, in just a day. But out of the 106 MINIs involved from 12 different countries there was one Cooper S in particular that stood out. And that belonged to Slovenian Ambroz Kavs, who runs MINI tuning specialist Kavs Motorsport.

Premium rate

What you probably don't know is that brand new MINIs in Slovenia command a much higher on-the-road price than in the UK, meaning it is equivalent to a top-of-the-range luxury car in the country. What's more, unlike here in Blighty where we have hundreds of MINI dealerships scattered far and wide, Slovenia has just one. And it was at this dealership in Ljubljana that Ambroz placed his order for a brand new Electric Blue Cooper S at a cost of 27,000 Euros.

"It all started in July 2002 when I was thinking about changing my car," remembers Ambroz. "So I called a friend who's a walking car encyclopaedia and asked him what I should buy and could afford. And then I remembered that the new MINI was to come out shortly in my country. In September I had a test drive of a new Cooper S and it was love at first sight so I ordered one, but I had to wait two long months for it to arrive!"

For three years Ambroz's Cooper S remained stock – not because he wanted it this way as he'd always planned on tweaking it – but upgrading was expensive and most parts only available from the US.

His dream was to create a unique and rapid MINI for track use, but still be comfortable as a daily driver. He explains: "My first mod was in the summer of 2005

when I bought a 15 per cent reduced supercharger pulley from the USA and upgraded the brakes. I also fitted a short shift kit for quicker gear changes, but I didn't stop there. I upgraded the suspension with Eibach Pro-Kit springs, custom shocks and OMP upper and lower strut braces. Then I added a partial AeroKit, bonnet stripes and roof rack so I could carry my surfboard for vacation. But all these tweaks still weren't enough for me as I was still dreaming of a high performance car."

By the end of 2005 Ambroz upgraded the exhaust with a One Ball system and 4-2-1 manifold, while he kept the standard catalyst. Then soon after the biggest change of all occurred: as the Cooper S's supercharger belt started slipping on the reduced pulley, his fellow MINI friends encouraged him to make his own high-quality pulleys instead.

This wasn't a big deal for Ambroz since he already makes 500 different types for other marques through his job, therefore after some R&D a 19 per cent reduced supercharger pulley for the Cooper S was born.

Most MINI owners find once they started modifying it's addictive and hard to stop – Ambroz is no exception. Once his new pulley was installed, he got serious with other engine mods too. In went new Schrick camshafts and bigger John Cooper Works



Hey Ambroz, looks like you need a new set of rubber, and pronto!