

Alpenbrevet 2011
(www.alpenbrevet.com)

3 days before the 10th Alpenbrevet I've got an invitation from one of the organisers - Georg Dönni (www.jaguarclassic.ch) to join them on their „Alpenbrevet 2011“ drive through the Swiss mountains.

As it was of short notice, first I declined. But when Georg told me what a pity it is that no electric cars dares to drive it , he got me and I shouted: I dare!

The whole drive is about 950 Km in one full moon night over 16 Alp crossings in 20 hours. We shortened the route for me to 650 Km and 10 passes in 22 hours, so I was able to charge.

The day started well. The car was fully charged and I did drive to work. Some 30 Km to a charging station (Park and Charge). Where I put it on charge. But it did not want to charge with more then 10A. I was a little bit worried, because in my roadbook I was counting on „emergency charging“ with 16 A on those outlets you have everywhere. A message from Tesla enlightened me that with the newest Firmware update you can only charge with 10 A with the spare mobile connector. Not good for my trip.

4 hours later, when I came back to my car. The next problem: Some nice guy had pulled the starting glider on the charging cable and spilled beer over the cable. The car was not fully charged and the cable I had to clean before putting it into the boot.

Of I went to Meiringen where the start of the challenge is. A friend of mine, Markus happens to live in this charming little mountain resort. He has just finished the renovation of his beautiful house and told me that he had a CEE32 A socket to fully charge my car before the drive. Some 90 Km later I parked at his home and was happy to see a red socket. But a problem did occur again! It was only a red 16A socket and my plug did not fit!

Markus made 4 calls in Meiringen. Nobody did know of any CEE32 A socket in the village, but the local boss of the energy company told: „It's the lunch brake, but in one hour I will send out somebody to install a 32 CEEE socket for you on the train station“!

I did have a nice lunch with Markus and his family, loading with 10 A and then he guided me to the train station. There, a very kind man of „Alpen Energie“ (www.alpenenergie.ch) was allready installing the correct socket. 5 minutes later, my car was charging with 32A! Thank you Alpen Energie! Without you, it would not have been possible!



Just around the corner was the office of Beat (www.atelierke.ch). He drives a „Think“ electric car and is a great enthusiast of electric cars! We had a nice chat and a good coffee in his office.

There is also a station of „Think“ cars you can rent (<http://www.alpmobil.ch>).

I left the car charging for the drivers briefing and a little snack in a beautiful old hotel 100 meters from my charging station. Georg mentioned to the drivers that for the first time ever

an electric car will try to drive the „Alpenbrevet“. Everybody was positively curious and looking for a comparison. They were astonished that you could try such a drive with an electric car. Many questions, many answers, but mostly you could see in the eyes that they thought it not to be possible!

At the time of departure, the car was not fully charged, yet, but it was pretty full.



At 16.00 I did start in very good mood. A Lotus Elan and a Mini Cooper in front of me and a Jaguar E-Type behind me.

We made good progress towards the Sustenpass (2264 m), but it was heavy traffic. The electric car was clearly superior to the ICE cars, especially on the hairpins. The smooth drive, without gear changes, the full torque from the very first turn of the electric motor make a big difference!

But half way to the Sustenpass I noticed that I was using much too much energy. If you drive with ICE cars, you have to accelerate and to deaccelerate much more then when you drive an electric car on your own pace.. So I pulled over, made some pictures and started again when the roads were a little bit emptier.



Driving smoothly on my own was much better for the consumption. However on the Sustenpass I had consumed much more then I thought. I needed to regenerate a lot on the drive down to Göschenen.

And it did regenerate, but not enough. With such a consumption I would clearly not make it to my first scheduled charging point in St. Moritz. So I did make an early stop in Göschenen to recharge at a station where according to „Lemnet“ I should be able to charge with 32A. What a disappointment! There was no CEE32 socket. I plugged the car in a 10A socket and bought a chocolate to smallen my frustration. Enjoyed the mountains for a 30 minute break and drove away.

I decided to go on for a while and to think of alternatives I have while driving. There I went to Andermatt, then Oberalppass (2046 m), Lukmanierpass (1914 m) down to Biasca. I did not drive fast, but it was not slow either. I did drive smoothly and noticed that it seems better to regenerate for a long time a little bit then for a short time a lot. Down in Biasca I

noticed that I did drive far more energy efficient then on the beginnning. May be I could make it to St. Moritz? I thought, o.k. I will skip one pass and take the tunnel and with good feelings pressed on. Then something weird happened to the „estimated range“. It showed more then 900 Km. Then after a while it did show only nonsense. Going up and down very fast. It did distract me, because I was not sure what is correct. But what happened is probably that for the last about 20 to 30 kilometers I did regenerate more energy then I used. So the computer was not able to calculate anything.

It was getting dark, and my spirit was high. So I decided: „When the going gets tough, the tough get going“ - not to skip a single pass. I took the San Bernardino Pass (2065 m), too. And this was so beautiful. So calm and wild. It was profoundly special to drive in an electric car. The silence. You heard the insects and the cows! You heard the waterfalls and the small rivers. You smelled the wonderfully sharp and cool air while driving the top down. It was pretty dark, too. It was a magic experience!



When starting to climb to the Splügenpass (2113 m) it was completely dark. No moon visible. Nearly no cars, no houses, nothing. Just a smoothly driving electric car and its lights. The border crossing with Italy was deserted.



Down I went and suddenly the full moon came behind a steep mountain and it was just above a mountain lake mirroring on the quiet water. Poetic, breathtaking!



I made just a little stop to chat with other drivers and with some Italian men very interested in the car. They agreed, this car is like „Formula Uno“...

What followed would have been scary if it was not so beautiful. In complete darkness I did drive down into Italy. The road was extremely narrow with uncounted hairpins. Several of them in tight tunnels, without light or any signs, several of them with water dropping on my head! And the locals, going probably out on their Friday evening with their „ragazze“ driving like Michael Schumacher (in a positive and negative sense). The hairpins were so narrow that it was very tight to make it without reversing, even with the Tesla. At one moment I even had to reverse to make it. This was a very challenging drive, the most difficult part were the hairpins turning right, because in the complete darkness I did not see where the inner side of the curve was!

I did take it easy on the Malojapas (1815), because there was not much energy left in the batteries. I made it to the hotel in St. Moritz with about 40 Km of „Maximum Range“ left. Thanks to Peter Märky, the director of the hotel Steffani (www.steffani.ch/en/) who organised that the electric company of St. Moritz did put a charging station for me on the parking slot of the hotel!

It was 23.30 when I arrived at the hotel. One hour earlier than I thought! Immediately I put the car to charge in performance mode (thank you Eberhard) with 32 A and had a nice chat with Peter Märky with whom I had a superb drive some 13 years ago to Donington.



My iPhone did wake me up at 4.30 to check the charging. Everything worked like a charm! I did took a warm bath in my hotel room and at 5.30 left St. Moritz. The car was not fully charged, but I did calculate that it should be enough.

Julierpass (2284 m)was quiet.



Tiefencastel, too. Recuperation worked perfectly. The estimated range did not. San Bernardino tunnel, Airolo, Sankt Gotthard Pass (2106 m),



then Furkapass (2436 m). Quite a lot of action here, because early this morning there was a bicycle race which had started in Meiringen with 1700 (!) participant bikers! Grimselpass (2165 m) was full of bikers with and without engines! I did drive to the Grimsel Hospiz (www.grimselwelt.ch) with a very friendly staff. They have a CEE32 charging point in their garage. During my brunch I was able to charge with 32A! Nice. The Grimsel Hospiz is really beautiful and worth a visit!



Some 90 minutes later I left. A new problem occurred: The navigation system said: „Hasta la vista „, so I had no more the exact number of kilometers to drive, but I learned to calculate in school, didn't I?

Around 12.30 I arrived at the finish line in Interlaken! About 90 minutes earlier than I had planned. Most of the cars were already there, but not all.





And I still had enough of energy to make it back home safely, the last 90 Km.

It was triumphant first drive for an electric car! A big thank you goes also to Mr. Rolf Reichling of Tesla Motors Zürich, for keeping my car in such an excellent form! And a big thank you to everybody who made this drive possible!

The future is bright - the future is electric!

