

Veterama

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Veterama

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For me, the big event of 2005 was my transfer from Moscow to Milan. Among other good things, this meant that Veterama was now a relatively easy drive instead of a full weekend trip involving airplanes and rental cars. Mapquest says it should be about 5.5 hours, but they did not consider that the entire drive through Switzerland would be in a construction zone and/or tunnel. The rain and fog in Milan gave way to improving weather to the north, and thanks to the Autobahn, I managed the trip in just under 6 hours after a very slow start. The weather in Mannheim was sunny and mild.

I walked into the Veterama grounds about 2:30 PM on Friday, which is a good time to arrive. If you arrive at 12:00 when Veterama opens, a large number of vendors will not be set up and you will have to retrace a lot of steps. By 3:00 PM, the "regular" vendors I want to visit first will usually be set up and I can start my search for unobtainium (most vendors keep the same location year after year). After that I go back to the front of the motorcycle section and start working my way toward the back. All this time, more and more vendors are arriving and setting up. By closing time on Friday, I have covered about half of the motorcycle vendors that are open. The early bird gets the unobtainium!

Veterama offers the possibility of purchasing an Insider ticket good for all three days. I recommend this option if you can do it, even if it means buying some Euros in the USA and sending cash in the mail. It is worth it to have your ticket ahead of time because the lines at the ticket booths on Saturday morning are LONG. I try to arrive at the entrance about 8:30 AM and the doors usually open about 8:45. It is also worth getting there early to get a good parking place. You would think that all the vendors would be open and ready to sell when the doors open, right? Wrong! Many vendors bring more beer than parts and use Veterama an excuse to party. 9:00 AM will find many vendors drinking coffee, cooking breakfast with their goods still covered up, which can be frustrating.

As soon as I enter on Saturday morning, I go to the rear of the motorcycle section, get a cup of coffee (the food stands by the entrance are crowded), and start working my way toward the front. This strategy gives me about two hours of relatively easy going before I meet the crowd who is working their way from front to back. By noon or so on Saturday it is crowded everywhere!

The Veterama grounds are very large and if you want to see everything in any detail, it will take all three days. I also have a vintage Mercedes habit, so I like to look at the auto section as well as vintage toys and literature. In the past when I flew into Frankfurt, the flight schedules usually dictated that I would be there for three days. This year, however, I planned on just Friday and Saturday. I departed at 4:00 PM on Saturday with almost everything on my list (and few things that were not), although I did not spend much time browsing anything except motorcycle parts.

If you stay for Sunday, don't worry about being there quite as early because at 9:00 AM, many vendors (mostly HD vendors, I think) will still be sleeping. Also, please note that many vendors will pack up and go Sunday morning and a few will even leave Saturday night. While some vendors may discount items (especially heavy items they have to carry home) a little more on Sunday afternoon, my rule is that if I see something I want (except for stock items like sparkplugs that many vendors will have), I buy it on the spot. The part, or the vendor, may not be there when you go back. Also, it pays to take notes as you walk for future reference.

There are always a lot of nice bikes of all makes at Veterama and this year was no exception. There were a lot of pre-war BMWs, both restorations (most of unknown quality) and projects. The list included R42, R57, R63, R2, R4, R35, R12, R5, R61, R66 and R75 as well post war twins and singles. Lots of pre-war/postwar parts, too! The Russians were in attendance with their usual collection of bogus R71s. I am always amazed at the amount of prewar HD and Indian bikes and parts that show up in Germany. Europe was a big market for them before WWII.

Vendors that were new or of particular interest include:

Hans Keckeisen is a custom sheet metal fabricator and the work he displayed was outstanding. www.hanskeckeisen.de

KLA-MO-TE, a Bing and Amal carburetor specialist. No website.

Martin Schumann

Erlenstrasse 48

45964 Gladbeck (Nord-Ruhrgebiet) Deutschland

Tel-/Phone: +49 2043 681 533

Mobil:+49 177 321 5484

Fax:+49 2043 28 749
Mortphonoeraaf@aol.com
Kla_Mot_Te@Yahoo.

The highlight of the trip?Â Since my projects donâ€™t need carburetors, I donâ€™t usually sort through the massive piles of ca that some vendors have, so I really donâ€™t know why I looked at this one.Â Maybe my eye caught a glint of chrome, but a closer look discovered a VERY unobtainium, almost complete, chrome plated brass Fischer Amal.Â A little more digging turned up its mate!Â The best news is that the vendor did not know what he had.Â â,-100 for the pair (no, they are NOT for sale)!Â This was my best find since the R71 air tubes in 2003.

Veterama dates for 2006 are:

April 21, 22, 23Â Auto + Motorcycle, Ludwigshafen
April 28, 29, 30Â Motorcycle, Ludwigshafen
October 6, 7, 8Â Auto + Motorcycle, Mannheim (the BIG one)
www.veterama.de

Anyone wanting more info on these events, please contact me.
RBFrey@aol.com

Ciao,
Bruce