

The Big Bend's Fall Sports Special Section Inside This Edition

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2 Germans on scooters visit Alpine at leisurely pace

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Let's see. They've been from New York City up to Canada, to the Great Lakes, Wisconsin and the Twin Cities.

To Mount Rushmore, then waaaay across the country to Seattle, then to San Francisco and Los Angeles. On to Las Vegas, where they spent four days, down to Phoenix and into Mexico, where they saw Chihuahua City, then up to Texas and in Alpine.

That — so far — is the slow but sure journey through the United States for Christian Z█████ and Hendrick H█████ of

Germany.

Oh, the slow part? That's because they're touring our country on Vespas. Scooters. Top speed of 40 mph. Built in 1954.

"We're taking mostly back roads," Z█████ said.

(No surprise there.)

The pair stopped in Alpine one day last week, sipped a brew or two and enjoyed the August weather. Yes, they enjoyed the Big Bend area's weather because earlier they had camped out in Arizona. That place, the two agreed, was hot!

Z█████, a 41-year-old jour-

nalist, and H█████, a 27-year-old painter, generally haven't had run-ins with law enforcement (except for one incident in Canada) during their adventure.

But — probably given the age of their vehicles and the gear they're hauling — they've had run-ins with the Breakdown and Flat Tire Gremlins.

"Every day is a repair; it's always something," H█████ said. But he seemed to take the repairs in stride. Z█████, too.

Their most hair-raising breakdown came on one of Minnesota's highest bridges — not the one that collapsed recently. They were crossing the bridge during rush hour when one Vespa got a flat. An unhappy policeman directed traffic while they pushed the disabled scooter about 600 meters to a spot where the tire could be changed safely. "Everyone made faces at us," they said of the commuters.

Both are avid collectors of Vespas (1940s and 1950s); Z█████ estimates he has about 70, while H█████ has 7 or 8.

From Alpine, the men were heading to San Antonio, then New Orleans before ending their trip in Bonita Springs, Fla.

Some of Z█████'s family moved to southwest Florida in 1979, so he's familiar with parts of the United States.

This trip?

"See more of the country," Z█████ said.

At 40 mph, no less.