

Peking to Paris 2019

Day 07. Unitiin Brigada camp - Tsagaan Uul camp. 380km

If the Great Wall of China is where the rally fire is lit, then Mongolia is the crucible where it is melted down and reformed. Legends are written in its never ending and awesome landscape and today was a day which will long be remembered by all of those crews who took part.

We were pleased to see Serge and Jacqueline Berthier at breakfast. They've been playing catch up for a few days and they almost made it back to the rally in the Jensen only to have it break down again within a few kilometres of the pancakes and coffee. For this intrepid crew they've once again been shuffled to the back of the pack. There was better news from Wim Van Gierdegom and Arne Van Collie whose Chrysler lost its oil on the way out of UlaanBataar yesterday. They effected a repair and made it into camp at 5.00am which at least saved them from having to put up their tent.

Strangely however, for a day which was to prove such an epic, it began in an almost mundane fashion with the first 200km of the route running over good quality traffic free tarmac through a wooded and rolling landscape which was home to a scattering of settlements and yurts and the associated livestock. This road took us to Murun, an old Peking to Paris staging post which was replete with fuel stations and tyre shops - the last we'd see for a while. After filling the tanks and perhaps fitting some new rubber, we turned off the main highway and onto gravel for the Special Time Control sections which would ultimately lead to the campsite.

As was the case over the last few days in Mongolia, this section was no walk in the park and required a press on attitude, accurate navigation and a vehicle which was still capable of taking the pace.

There's only so much that man and machine can take though, and by the end of today there were some who were perhaps close to the tipping point of fatigue and mechanical breakdown.

Along the way we saw David Gainer whose Datsun had broken a steering arm and had "lost heaps of time" as a result. The roadside repair was nevertheless a very efficient one and got them all the way into camp.

Shivinder Sikand and Dean Drako's woes continued, their Peugeot 504 lost a wheel bearing and a wheel in quite spectacular fashion whilst Rene Bacx and Jef Augustyns were left struggling with Google translate to ask a Mongolian motorcyclist if he could help them find water for their Bentley.

Alan and Tina Beardshaw were stranded for a few hours when their Volvo's suspension collapsed once again, and Nick Brayshaw and Paul Woolmer also had a long wait for sweep assistance because of a failed wheel bearing in their big orange Chevrolet Coupe. "All we need is a vice" they cried "and then we could get it sorted".

The campsite welder was also kept very busy this evening, Anton Gonnissen and Herman Gelan were rebuilding and strengthening their front axle which has failed once again and next in the queue were David and Jo roberts who needed the magic rod applying to their Sunbeam's suspension as well

For those who'd made it through without any big issues though this was a most pleasant evening. The high altitude campsite (1850m), was bathed in warm sunshine and the usual five star amenities were once again laid on for us.

There's still another two days of Mongolia to get through and there may be some who are a little nervous about what's to come but, tomorrow's another day. Anything could happen - and it probably will.

Syd Stelvio