

## **Peking to Paris 2019.**

### **Day 14. Novosibirsk rest day.**

Like an oasis to a thirsty desert traveller, the second rest day in Novosibirsk couldn't have come soon enough for the weary crews of the Peking to Paris Motor Challenge.

There was some drinking to be done (obviously - it's an oasis) but once thirsts had been slaked, there was a fair bit of fettling as well and, whilst the hotel car park was busy from early in the morning till late into the evening. The main action occurred hidden from view, in a myriad of workshops and garages spread across the city.

Parts had been delivered, technicians had flown in and for some there was a lot riding on this rest day.

Whilst the rest of the rally is running to a strict timetable, Mitch Gross and Christopher Rolph however, aboard their Siberian Samovar, have their own schedule so after a quick lubrication service, they pulled out early this morning and set a course for Kazakhstan. The cockpit of the 1910 White MM Pullman looks to be a hard place to spend one day, never mind 36 days across half the world. This is a heroic drive no doubt about that.

Away from the frantic rebuilds and panic repairs there were some crews who had very little to worry about. David Main and Brian Head's Buick Coupe is what they themselves describe as an "original oily rag car" they're not interested in where they finish in the results, rather "they've come for the adventure" and, thanks to their slow but steady approach they can just about "smell the coffee and croissants of Paris". Today was all about spanner checks and making sure that the next leg is as trouble free as the last one.

Barry Nash and Malcolm Lister tell us that their white and black, 1969 Rover P5b hasn't missed a beat in around 22,000km of rallying. Today they were doing the basics and were changing the shock absorbers simply "because we can". And they quipped that "if the suspension collapses tomorrow then that will indeed be a shock".

Stephen Partridge and Corgi La Grouw are similarly delighted with the way that their Morris Oxford has performed, it's "strong, simple and easily maintained and everywhere it goes people seem to love it". The only thing they're getting through more quickly than usual are the rubber spring hangers but, if that's the price for staying on the road then it's one worth paying. It's tiring though and Stephen adds that he doesn't mind getting down to do the maintenance but it's the getting back up he can't be bothered with.

John Young was lying under his Peugeot 504 along with Andy Inskip and, whilst taking a break from the spanners he declared that everything underneath was "ticketyboo, which is exactly why we've got Skippy here - and both front wheels off".

Dieter and Hilla Baumhaeckel were looking to fit some suspension bump stops to their 1961 Volvo PV544 but other than that this Swedish icon has been doing very well thank you.

The galleon that is Doug and Mike McWilliams Bentley S1 has been listing to starboard lately. They know that the suspension is down on one side and this morning they set off to find out what the problem is. As of lunchtime though they were still none the wiser.

Julian Riley, a long time ERA competitor is enjoying his first Peking to Paris and is finding the experience a fantastic one. He's sat beside the very experienced Jamie Turner, a gamekeeper turned poacher, who's also giving his little Morris Minor the ride of its life. Alan and Tina Beardshaw along with Serge and Jacqueline Berthier left us in Mongolia with suspension and electrical issues respectively. After a few days playing catch up and chasing spares, they're confident that by tonight both cars will be rally ready and rolling out with the rest of us from 7.00am tomorrow.

Otto Gerhardt and Derek Boycks' Porsche 912 was getting a full car park service and a mini valet right down to Otto sweeping out the engine bay with a rustic besom he'd brought specially for the job. All four wheels were off the ground and a small pile of oil stained Mongolia sat beneath the sump guard. A testament to what this tough little car has been through.

Gary Boyce, an ebullient Kiwi, had enjoyed a fantastic morning and like so many of us was impressed with the helpful and friendly nature of the locals. The garage he visited ordered him a bottle of 30/50 oil which arrived within two hours and in the meantime he used their hoist to do some underbody checks and had the car washed and waxed as well, leaving the afternoon free for a bit of "me time".

By the end of the day it was clear that Sergei, Arkadai, Nikolai and the entire Russian support team had worked miracles to get the cars into the right place and to get them out again. The hotel carpark slowly began to fill with cleaner, smoother running cars than when they left only 24 hours ago.

Tomorrow we'll chase the steam car into Kazakhstan.

Syd Stelvio.