

## **Peking to Paris 2019.**

### **Day 02. Hohot - Erenhot 436km**

China is a sizeable piece of real estate and, if history tells us anything, it is that crossing such a country in an old car takes time and effort.

The hard miles must be put in somewhere along the line and today, we awoke resigned to the long hot pull to Erenhot and the Mongolian border.

Jim Smith, the route designer for the Chinese section of the rally though did give us a great send off from Hohot. Following an excellent breakfast in the revolving restaurant on the 26th floor of the hotel, the 3 km Open Pasture Test was a rallycross style loop, thick with choking dust, laced with tight turns and sprinkled with short drops and compressions. This was purely a drivers section and once the clock had started, the navigators only role was to hold on tight and ensure that they got the finish to hand over the all important time card.

With rocky sections, short cropped grass and soft sand, this was the Mongolian Steppe in miniature and we even had a family of startled marmots running for their little lives as the cars slid towards them. As a shakedown for what was to come it was a pretty good approximation and whilst it would be unfair to say who put on the best show, suffice to say that the craftsmen of Stuttgart would have been well pleased with the performance of their handiwork today.

Sadly the day wasn't all fun and games however, and from this section the rally turned straight onto the highway to start the serious business of munching through the miles, in a north westerly direction over low lying hills and into endless rolling grasslands.

The famous Erenhot Dinosaur Arch announced the end of the days drive and for most of the crews the day had been a long but easy run on good roads with plenty to see along the way but, for Mitch Gross in the White Pullman and Anton Gonnissen on the Contal some unexpected challenges were thrown at them.

Mitch's steam powered car needed the sub burner assembly changing and we found the crew by the side of the road, armed with flameproof gloves and a fire extinguisher along with the more usual spanners and screwdrivers hard at in the full sun of midday.

Anton's three wheeler, some distance further along the road, had bent its front axle, so along with Herman his co driver and the sweep team of Bob Harrod and Tony Jones they set about finding a welding shop and effecting the repair. They were soon back on the road only to be thwarted by Chinese bureaucracy which decreed that, as a three wheeler they were not allowed to use the toll roads.

A long detour ensued and Anton and Herman arrived shortly before the rest of us were making for bed.

The 48 hour car have also been busy lately and news reached this evening that we'd likely have to make a few detours tomorrow. Incredibly after the sweltering heat we've been enjoying in China, there have been some flash floods in Mongolia. We'll all be at the border good and early where we'll discover what the scouting teams have discovered.

Syd Stelvio