

Peking to Paris 2019.

Day 27. St Petersburg - Hyvinkaa. 490km

It's been a long time coming but today we finally said *do svidaniya* to the Rodina. It's been great travelling through this impressive and welcoming country but, all good things must come to an end. And so, this morning, as the third and final routebook took its place on the navigator's laps, we set our sights for Finland.

One last test had been planned near the border as a farewell tour but unfortunately this had to be called off at the request of the authorities. This left us with another clear and uninterrupted run to the Saimaa Canal border crossing which thankfully was both quick and efficient.

Martti and Petri Kiikka are now on home ground and a bus load of their supporters turned up at the hotel this evening. They and their Volvo will no doubt have the crowd behind them - until tomorrow afternoon at the very least.

The MTC for the day was sited just before the border post which took all of the time pressure off the crews who still had around 250km to go to get to the night halt at Hyvinkaa, just above Helsinki.

The drive to the night halt at the Hotel Sveitsi was mostly on motorways and A roads but there were a good few of gravel sections and minor roads thrown in for us to enjoy as well. And, on the way to the Sveitsi, we passed through the most northerly part of the entire route at Lappeenranta.

This is a beautiful area and when the sun shone as it did today, we really see it at its best. Just south of the Thousand Lakes region, which we enjoyed so much on the Baltic Classic rally, driving here is as much in the blood as rally spectating is. Tomorrow there's some serious rallycross action planned which will please the fans, and after a very civilised ferry ride we arrive into Estonia.

By popular demand, the European Cup competition begins tomorrow. First seen in 2016, this award gives those crews who missed the mark in Mongolia and Russia a chance to redeem themselves. The talk in the bar tonight is that there might just be the odd Peugeot, Volvo or Porsche eyeing this one up. Time will tell.

Syd Stelvio