

Peking to Paris 2019.

Day 28. Hyvinkaa - Tallinn 143km.

What a way to start the day. The opening round of the European Cup kicked off this morning and with breakfast barely digested, we were off to the first test, at the world renowned Hyvinkaa RalliCross circuit.

There, the Peking to Paris *run what you bring* championship continued apace and piggy backed seamlessly, onto what seemed to be the locals Fast and Furious demolition derby.

Stephen Partridge and Corgi Le Grouw appeared to spend the entire lap sideways, much to the delight of the crowd and their more conventional Morris Oxford also cut somewhat of an unlikely figure in a carpark filled with dedicated rallycross racers.

It's also very probably safe to say that no one watching our antics had ever seen a Contal, never mind one on opposite lock. Quite what Borghese would have made of all this was debated long into the night.

From Hyvinkaa we then travelled the short distance to another rally circuit, Saukkolan which was one we'd seen before on the Baltic Classic. This was a much bigger and more complicated proposition than the first one though and was basically a full-on forest stage.

Naturally the crews loved every minute of it and so did the crowds, the local marshals and the Martti Kiiikka fan club who were still with us.

The MTC for the day was set in the neat little cafe on site, which meant that once the crews had finished their run, there was no hurry to leave.

Delicious coffee, pizza and homemade cakes were served so that those who did hang around at the circuit had something to chew on whilst they watched the rest of the rally strut their stuff.

Kerry Finn enjoyed both sections immensely and, in common with almost everyone else, he enjoyed standing around afterwards watching his fellow competitors. This is his third Peking to Paris and in truth he says that it has left him with some frustration. Along with John Young, their Peugeot has been through a record number of tyres (around 30 since China) and a well flagged clutch issue which left them playing catch up until Ufa.

Alain 'the earthmover' Faymonville however was a little more restrained today than he was when he first visited Saukkola. In past events his signature big Mercedes was noted for flinging buckets full of dirt from its wheel arches. Unfortunately, today he and his Bentley finished the day being towed onto (and off) the ferry after his gearbox failed.

Bernhard and Petra Rieder's Porsche also arrived at the hotel on a tow but once it had been untied it was immediately surrounded by the sweeps keen to diagnose the problem and get it back on the road.

Keith Weed and Richard Holmes though we're having a much better day. Along with the team from RPS, they'd got themselves into a workshop and put in a heroic all night session to fit a new engine block so their Pontiac would be shipshape and ready for today's tests and the crossing to Estonia. When they arrived at the night halt they were delighted and full of praise for their seemingly *new* car.

The trip to Estonia, the sixth country so far of our odyssey, was a very pleasant one. Calm seas, a modern ship with a well-stocked galley left more than one wag to pun that this left the crews enjoying their cruise.

Syd Stelvio