

Peking to Paris 2019.

Day 20. Bannoe Lake - Ufa. 455km

There are some days which are easier than others on a long-distance rally and today was one of them. Nobody complained.

From the hotel we had a short hop to a motor racing circuit where the cars were unleashed for one fast and furious lap of the track before turning onto the highway for the easy run to Ufa and the third rest day.

The drive through the Urals was impressive, they might not be the highest mountains we've seen so far but they're beautiful, nonetheless. And, when you add some relaxed timing, a good road surface, blue skies, friendly locals and a great cafe for lunch, then you quickly get into the road trip vibe.

There was pressure for some though, Erik van Droogenbroek and Tone Moller's Volvo had been in the repair shop overnight and the tense crew were only handed the keys a mere eight minutes before they were due to check out of the MTC. The faulty clutch release bearing had been successfully replaced though so after they'd had their timecard stamped, Eric and Tone were free to let rip on the circuit.

Additionally, along the route the sweeps were kept busy as well. Lee Harman and Bill Ward's 1931 Ford Victoria needed some help for a "minor electrical issue with the ignition" whilst Scott and Chance Perekslis's Chrysler finished the day on a truck. There was nothing to be done by the roadside as the temporary repair which they'd made to the differential only a week ago, gave way today so they really need the replacement, which is frustratingly, sat in a Moscow airport customs shed.

Enrico Paggi and Federica Mascetti's Fiat 124 Spider didn't like the last drops of Mongolian fuel which they'd tipped from a jerry can into the tank this morning. The crew reported that it was running rough and misfiring but, as soon as Bob Harrod and Tony Jones offered it some fresh Russian petrol, the little red rocket perked up markedly.

Once we arrived in Ufa it was good to see Ludovic Bois and Julia Colman's Peugeot 504 parked up and hopefully ready to roll out on Sunday. They've had a tough time since we last saw them in Ulaanbaatar, and we look forward to catching up with them and hearing their story.

Almost miraculously, David and Jo Roberts are also back with us. The car still needs a bit of work, but it arrived under its own steam this afternoon and David is confirmed that he can get it back to fighting fitness tomorrow.

Similarly, we were amazed to see Johan Gitsels and Walter Op' t Roodt's Porsche 911T also parked up and looking ready to rally once again and this is another comeback story that we're keen to hear.

Syd Stelvio.