

## **Peking to Paris 2019.**

### **Day 21. Ufa rest day**

Ufa is the town where the young Rudolf Nureyev, the Lord of the Dance, learned his trade and, last night we have it good authority that one or two of the rally took to the dance floor themselves and, with mixed success, tried to emulate him.

Even though this is only the third such day, when we rolled out of bed on our Ufa rest day most of us were hit by an overwhelming sense of déjà vu. Repair, rest and repeat is the mantra. The routine stays the same and only the postcode changes.

Some crews squirrel their cars away into specialist workshops for a bit of extra TLC, but some of the diehards prefer to play out their dramas, great or small, in the hotel carpark. Matt Bryson for example was standing in the engine bay of his P76 having made a few minor adjustments. He knows this car inside out and was giving little away as to what he was doing but as the leader of the classics category there would have been plenty of others who would have loved to have known.

The big Rolls Royce of Alan and Steve Maden needed some suspension work doing after the exhaust burned through one of the rubber seal whilst the lights on George Coelho and Margo O'Brien-Coelho's Volvo weren't working properly so Rob Dominy and Matt Smith were rummaging around under the bonnet this morning with electrical spade connectors and crimping pliers.

Jeff Urbina meanwhile was flat on his back, wrestling with his very large (and filthy) sump guard. Alongside Chris Pike they've been sweeping off the accumulated crud and filth of the last three weeks and having a precautionary look around the parts of an engine that are usually hidden away. "That's got to be the first time you've seen me working on a car" Jeff offered as Chris nodded enthusiastically in agreement.

This is turning into a good rest day for cars returning to the rally, we've already seen Ludovic Bois and Julia Coleman make it back to us, as well as David and Jo Roberts and Johan Gitsels and Walter Op' t Roodt's so it shouldn't have surprised us that John Young and Kerry Finn along with their Peugeot 504 rolled into the carpark as well. What they thought was a seized engine was actually a damaged clutch which had shattered and jammed the gearbox. A few hours with a good Russian mechanic and a box of Lada spares later they think that they're good to go all over again albeit with the proviso ringing in their ears that they "should be careful with this clutch, it's a used one".

Alex Vassbotten and Randy Marcus are also back with us. They've got a new gearbox in the Alvis and are ready to take on the rest of the rally. Sadly the gearbox isn't from a Lada though - it's been donated by a Ford Transit which apparently didn't need it any more.

Once they realised that they had a problem which couldn't be repaired by the sweeps, Ludovic and Julia turned back into Ulaan Bataar where a worn driveshaft was diagnosed and repaired by some VW rally mechanics. The crew then had to play catch up and sensibly opted to head North into Russia and make towards Irkutsk, but alongside the shores of Lake Baikal the shaft failed again. Luckily they were rescued and towed to a Mercedes garage where, unseeing the size of the problem, the manager despairingly asked "why me"?

His workshop however came up trumps and the mechanics turned another shaft for the Peugeot with a 10,000km guarantee. A bit more catch up ensued and they rolled into the hotel in Ufa yesterday hoping that they wouldn't need to call upon that warranty until Paris at least.

Our other notable returnees, Johan Gitsels and Walter Op' t Roodt's have brought a replica of their Porsche 911T and have also competed a heroic five day to get themselves here from Belgium. They promised to be back in Paris with us but we didn't expect to see them from this direction.

David and Jo Roberts tell us that in the workshop in Kostanay, they had to make a new kingpin, reconfigure the wishbone and replace the suspension. There was also lots of welding during the 14 hour stint in the workshop but finally the Sunbeam was lowered from the ramps and managed to roll all of the way here under its own steam There's a ore work to be done though as the "steering was, at times, a bit approximate" according to Jo so this morning David and the ever helpful Owen Turner found a workshop to make those final few lat minute adjustments.

Syd Stelvio