

Peking to Paris 2019.

Day 23. Ufa - Kazan. 616km

The day following a rest day is usually one full of optimism. The cars are generally much cleaner, and they've had more mechanical attention. The crews are also just that bit fresher and today was no different.

But this was a day to cover some serious miles and it was bookended by some excellent gravel sections in the morning followed by two laps of the famous Ufa Ring right at the end of the day. Literally we took the rough with the smooth and the contrasting surfaces gave the crews plenty of opportunities for some fun whatever they were driving.

It was a sweltering hot day and for most of it we ran through the rolling countryside and oilfields of Tatarstan with its ranks of nodding donkey pumps lifting the black gold from deep underground and then alongside and across the mighty Volga river, the longest in Europe and the national river of Russia. We also hit our lowest point today, according to the Garmin we sunk to -0.6m below sea level.

Luckily, for such a long day, we also had another time zone change so, by the end of it we found that we'd gained another two hours.

Despite this slight time adjustment, two of the cars are running early every day now and living by the mantra that slow and steady wins the race. Charlotte Lockhart and Andrew Barnes have endured a few mechanical woes since having the Great Wall and have now decided to slow things down slightly and nurse their Chevrolet Super Deluxe Coupe all the way to Paris.

Similarly, Keith Weed and Richard Holmes have also decided to give their Pontiac Coupe a bit of a break. They rolled it in Mongolia, but they've also had a cracked engine block since the second day in China and are currently using around 5l of oil a day.

Sadly, Gerard and Lorenzo Bas have today decided to retire their Alfa Romeo Giulia after a multitude of mechanical issues, but they've promised to see us in Paris in two weeks' time.

Syd Stelvio