

Peking to Paris 2019.

Day 24. Nizhny Novgorod Zavidovo. 606km

The 8.00am start time we saw on the noticeboard sounded civilised enough, but on closer reading we saw that it was actually at a track some 39km from the hotel which meant that we were up and in the thick of things by 7.00am.

Breakfast was very pleasant though, on the sunny terrace overlooking the square in which the cars had been parked overnight watched over by the huge statue of Lenin which stood guard pointing in the very direction we had to take towards the Nizhny Ring.

We used this tarmac circuit in 2016 so there were some amongst us who perhaps had a bit of an advantage over the newcomers who were driving it on sight for the first time. Rod Wade had a good day today though. In 2016 he lost a rear wheel here and although he finished the test, he did lose his Gold Medal. Today he finished with a full complement of wheels and still has the Gold medal he so covets.

Following the fun and games on the track it was then back onto the highway for the drive up to Zavidovo, north of Moscow. Russia's a massive country so the day was a long one but as with the last two days, there were plenty of Passage Controls for rest, refreshment and repair.

Wim Van Gierdegom and Arne Van Collie were glad of one of these stops when their Chrysler 70 Roadster broke a piston so along with the sweeps Jack Amies and Russ Smith, the crew set to work to replace the damaged parts. Even after such a long and tricky operation though they still managed to check into the MTC within their minute and the delight on their faces was clear to see.

Unfortunately, because of some Government activity, the two Tests which had been planned at the Nami vehicle test facility had to be cancelled at short notice, so we pressed on to the night halt for a few cool drinks.

Our hotel tonight is the Radisson, a favourite of Russian Presidents past and present and one we also used in 2016. This evening, as before, the bar was busy before dinner and the bar was busy after dinner too, everyone seemed to have a tale to tell.

Syd Stelvio