

Peking to Paris 2019.

Day 30. Riga - Mikolajki. 524km.

Today's menu had a distinctly international flavour and it saw us take our breakfast in Latvia, lunch in Lithuania and dinner in Poland. As important though on a long day such as this, we also swallowed quite a few miles, under the watchful eyes of hundreds of nesting storks - perched on almost every available post.

The road south to Mikolajki was a pretty one and the borders we crossed (from Latvia into Lithuania and thence to Poland) were marked by nothing more onerous than a road sign, and that's just the way we like it.

The second passage Control at Baisogala was a great opportunity to fuel up and take on board some refreshments before the long trek to the first Test, the Nemanus Ring. This is an impressive circuit, it's long and wide with numerous changes of direction and height. In short, it's a drivers delight.

We've been here before though and back then, both Graham Goodwin and Bill Cleyndert collected cone penalties in a chicane at the top of the last hill but this time, they both managed a clean run.

Another notable difference is that this time it's Graham who's leading whilst Bill's lying second overall. Whether the home advantage that Bill's Polish co driver, Artur Lukasiwicz will enjoy for the next few days, helps to push them up a notch, remains to be seen.

Waiting for us a mere 250km down the road from Nemanus, was the day's crowning glory. The Super Special Circuit at Mikolajki in Poland. This is an off-road blast pure and simple and the two lanes, which the crews lap in turn are separated by armco and crossed by a bridge and a tunnel. The surface is loose and slippery, and the turns are tight but, no matter what speed you attack it at, the worst that can happen is a bit of a fender bender.

The night halt hotel was next door to the circuit so there was no hurry to get back on the road and many of the crews hung around to see who did what and how they did it. Giorgio Schon and Enrico Guggiari gave it everything in their Ferrari 208 GT4 and came in four seconds ahead of everyone else and that certainly impressed the paddock.

Tomorrow morning the crews get another chance to better this impressive performance when we take to the track once more before heading to Bydgoszcz but there's a party in the carpark tonight hosted by the sweep crews which can't be missed.

Syd Stelvio