

Syd Stelvio Rally Report

Day 10 – Split to Zadar – 284 km

Day ten of the Adriatic Adventure, and one could be forgiven for thinking that we might possibly be getting bored of the fabulous roads, endless views and constant snake of tarmac that stretches out before us. But how could we when each day serves up a veritable feast of motoring entertainment? Despite today being near the end of our adventure, it was one of the best days yet, a trilogy of wonderful regularities played out under azure blue skies and on some of the most sparsely populated routes we have encountered, what a time to be alive!

Of course, it is always preferable when a day begins well and this one did, with a short escape from the city of Split and then a tremendous climb up the mountains that separate the coastline from Croatia's inland areas. The view back was incredible and the descent into the next valley equally so, with the first regularity of the day then providing a nice boost to the morning's attractions.

For a country with so many closely packed contour lines, the inland part of Croatia that we travelled through today is actually pretty flat. A vast expanse of super-heated scrub land (super-heated for the end of September in any case), with the panorama taking on a decidedly Mediterranean feel. The flora became decidedly spikier and the fauna scallier as the road carried on.

Much like the landscape, the list of companions we are travelling with had changed, with us sadly saying goodbye to the car 19 and its crew of Catherine d'Andrimont-Janssens and Anne Rothier, the stricken Lancia Aurelia too sick to continue. We have welcomed back David Ferguson and Michelle Pelleriti in the Jaguar XKE Roadster though, the big cat not seen in the wild since Trieste. That's how it goes on the road, people can drift in and out, but the rally continues regardless.

In amongst the arid geography there was the odd, sporadic oasis percolating through the yellow and red of the rock. Luscious areas of green near to rivers and other waterholes, with ornate bridges and crystal-clear waters, flickering in the sunshine and reflecting the huge mountains that loomed in the distance for most of the day. We even gained altitude for parts of the route, although the 1000 feet or so that we rose was nothing on some of the peaks scaled during the past fortnight.

In fact, the past fortnight feels like a long time and reminds me that we are now nearing the end of this particular adventure. A brief stop tonight will provide some rest for our weary band, as we set forth for the last long day of this rally tomorrow morning. Until then I believe it is time to enjoy a cocktail on the veranda, overlooking the sea and witnessing a sunset that Hitchcock declared to be the greatest in the world. I like my cocktails as I like my cars, so mines an old fashioned, if you are buying,

Until tomorrow evening,

Syd Stelvio