

Adriatic Adventure 2019

Day Three – Maribor to Zagreb – 230 kms

Croatia, full of life! Or so declares the national tourism website. What it doesn't say is land of cars and that's probably because there aren't many, just 300 or so per 1000 people, on of the lowest numbers in the EU. The problem is it appears that almost every single one of them is in Zagreb and was on the road as our weary band of travellers traipsed into the city this evening for tonight's halt. Still, if they are all in the city, then that should mean that the open road will be empty for the continuation of the Adriatic Adventure in the morning.

Bad mouthing of Zagreb aside, today was another one filled with motoring bliss, a wonderful route that took us quickly out of Maribor and back into the hills to play on some more dust filled regularities. The ambassador really is spoiling us with these and just when you think you couldn't possibly gorge on another set of sweet as saccharin switchbacks, one finds oneself devouring another few miles of hairpin bends.

As we climbed up through dense woodland, the light that did manage to penetrate the flora provided quite the show as it refracted off of the particles of earth that had been thrown into the air by previous competitors, nature's spot-lights that illuminated those in front of us quite beautifully. It wasn't long before the travelling band of cars broke into the light at the top of the hills good and proper and the sunshine that has been somewhat illusive since scrutineering in Trieste was back with a vengeance, a fact that I'm sure delighted those that were tackling the route in cabriolets.

What goes up must come down though, and as we edged our way to the border the altitude began to drop and the hairpins disappeared behind us, which gluttons though we had been, was probably good for all concerned and in fact, the collective cheer that was emitted from those that had been muscling the large pre-war cars around the tight spots could be heard all the way back to the Piazza Unità d'Italia in Trieste.

Before things flattened out completely though the route took us to our lunch stop high above the River Sava, on the terraces of the Sevnica Castle, built somewhere close to 900 years ago, although the exact date is unknown. From the ramparts the hometown of Melania Trump can be seen, and whilst she wasn't spotted one or two competitors were convinced that they had seen Donald, but upon closer inspection it was revealed that it was in fact merely a hayrick glinting in the sun.

It wasn't the only object sitting resplendent in the sun's rays and whilst the castle itself was indeed beautiful, the imagination of the local group of school children on a field trip had been firmly captured by the cars of the rally and taken their gaze away from their teachers intended target completely. It's a wonderful thing to see the captivated faces of youngsters when they see their first classic car up close and personal and one can only hope that it inspires them to help preserve these wonderful pieces of history in the future.

Back to the present though and the afternoon took us through the vast swathes of farmland that populate the southern parts of Slovenia. Miles of golden crops, standing some two-metres tall lined our route, punctuated by peaceful farming villages with their hodgepodge of buildings and ever-present stray Dogs. The rata-tat-tat of farm machinery hung in the air, as well as the noise of livestock, interrupted only by the various engine notes that belong to our choir of explorers.

It was a wonderful way to spend an afternoon and whilst the pace may have felt lazy, there was a test at a go-kart track to contend with before the march through the border to Croatia. It certainly served to blow out the cobwebs and gave the mechanics some entertainment as well, as the

hard charging classics succumbed to the rigours of such aggressive use. No real harm was done mind you and it does these machines good to have their legs stretched at a pace once in a while.

Sadly, as was alluded to in the opening lines of this manuscript, that was the last time 'pace' was mentioned during today, unless it came with the prefix of 'snail'. Still, one can't have it one's own way all of the time and regardless of the traffic demons, today has been a superb day and we will all miss Slovenia I'm sure.

Until tomorrow evening,

Syd Stelvio.