

Syd Stelvio

Day 7: Budva (Montenegro) to Dubrovnik (Croatia)

Ahh, Dubrovnik, "The Pearl of the Adriatic" according to Byron and he ought to know, having visited more than a few places in his lifetime. Aside from the magnificent vista of the old town upon the descent into the city, the biggest thing our crews may have noticed was the increase in traffic as they made the short hop from the efficient Croatian border to their rest halt for the next couple of days. But first there was some rallying to be done...

It was a shorter day on the road, but after the stuttering progress made during yesterdays journey all were hoping for a smoother ride today. Unfortunately, the famous rise up the cliffs from the fairytale town of Kotor became an exercise in dodging the enormous amount of tourist busses that were descending and ascending the serpentine road. It made for some sphincter clenching moments, however almost the entire rally is now almost as adept at going backwards as they are forwards.

The view was worth it though, with the old town beneath us and the Gulf of Kotor stretching out towards the mountains behind, mountains that we would soon be travelling through. Although the planned regularities today were limited to just two, the second of the afternoon was one of the longest on the trip, running through the Spanish like mountains. Of course, Montenegro translates to Black Mountain, although the colours here were often more sandstone than basalt, but perhaps that was just the goggles I had donned for the day tinting the view. What was for certain was that the roads were great fun, just the right side of rough to be a challenge but still enjoyable and, especially important for those of us in cabriolets, bathed in the beautiful afternoon sun.

The other prominent feature in this region were the often-deserted building and small hamlets, it was as if this were a land that time had forgotten and its inhabitants hadn't realised that much had changed in the world outside, 3000 feet below at sea-level. Inhabitants herded animals back and forth the mountain roads, small churches stood with sprawling graveyards and the occupied dwellings that did exist presented an image of simpler times; the perfect backdrop for automobiles that represent the same.

Back down into the populous though and it was the police making themselves known to some of our travellers, I wouldn't like to name names, but I'm sure it wont take to much detective work dear reader, to whittle out those in our party that cannot convert between kmh and mph. I'm reliably informed though by a certain 'Andrey Joint', who came a cropper with a copper a couple of days into the rally, that if you've the charm you can ask for tourist rates. I of course, being a pillar of the motoring community, stick very much to the laws of the land.

Speaking of which, it is time for me to retire for the evening, dig out my best smoking jacket and take residence in the bar in preparation for a well earnt day off, along with all of my other travelling companions,

Until two evenings time, when we resume,

Syd.