

Syd Stelvio Rally Report

Day 9 – Dubrovnik to Split – 306 km

Rest days, they're great and all, but the committed traveller gets itchy feet and the call of the road cannot be ignored forever. It was with some relief then, when after a days r+r in the stunning city of Dubrovnik, goggles were donned, Irvin jacket was fastened, and pistons were fired into life in expectation of another fabulous days rallying on the Adriatic Adventure. Sadly, there are few things that dent one's optimism in the way that mass amounts of precipitation can, especially when driving, and despite the sun greeting us all as we rose this morning it wasn't long before the cloud moved in and the rain lashed down.

It coincided with our crossing back into Bosnia, a land where the slightest bit of moisture leaves the roads much like glass with all the traction of a new-born Deer, reminders to us all that these roads can, and will, bite. The route was pleasant though, and as it transported us through the Bosnian hills the clouds dissipated and the sun remounted its throne high above us, a position that it would hold for the rest of the day.

Two regularities broke up the morning and reminded us all how to use a trip meter and read tulips, well, reminded most of us, spies report several bits of confusion early on. The real highlight of the jaunt into Bosnia though was the opportunity to spend a couple of hours in the ancient city of Mostar, exploring the hustle and bustle of its ancient streets and seeing first-hand the culture clash that defines this complicated metropolis. The architecture is beautiful and the Stari Most, the old bridge that is the nucleus of the town, has to be a must visit destination if you have never gazed upon it in real life.

Of course, the road is never far away and so we marched on this afternoon, with the best regularity of the day that took us up a steep and challenging hill-climb on the narrowest of roads. It was great fun to stretch the legs of the cars and tell me dear reader, are there many sounds sweeter than that of engines under load, piping sweet music from exhaust trumpets? I think not, and it was a shame that I was unable to enjoy the noise of every different cylinder combination pushing hard to fight gravity.

The reward of the ascent was seen just a few miles after the finish of the regularity, in the breathtaking coastal road that ran a ribbon high up on the cliffs, the quintessential Dalmatian views out towards the Adriatic Sea and the islands that bobbed motionless in its calm waters. Bathed in sunshine as it was, it provided quite the vista and I wouldn't be surprised if many of our travelling party took the opportunity to stop and admire the spectacle.

It topped off what was a fabulous day and the perfect route for the resumption of the rally after a much-needed rest day. We rest again in this evening in Split, back in Croatia and now entering the twilight of this rally. There is still much more to come though, and I cannot wait...

Until tomorrow evening,

Syd Stelvio.