



**CARBON NEUTRAL EVENTS**  
ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE DRIVING



## Syd Stelvio – Day One and Two

### Malaga to Tangier - 363 Kms | Tangier to Fes - 372 Kms

More often than not the first day of a long endurance rally eases competitors into the groove, with a gentle indication of what might be to come. No doubt those gathered in Malaga for the Sahara Challenge thought this would be the case, the route book certainly hinted at it and the moderate start time of 10 am also suggested that day one would not necessarily be leisurely, but comfortable. Any thoughts of that would have to be forgotten quickly, as right from the first competition section the bar was set, and it was set high.

Regularity one was a gravel strewn thrill ride, loose and technical with roads that had been scorched and baked in the hot sun that has been locked onto Europe for seemingly the whole summer. Dust billowed into the air, tyres relinquished adhesion, and everyone seemed to have a smile on their face. If this was a hint of what was to come, then the roads of Morocco couldn't come soon enough.

First though there was some driving to be done, on kilometres of fabulous link road through the Andalusian mountains that belong to the Los Alcornocales National Park, as well as two other regs that saw dust and dirt give way to cork forest and greenery. Sadly, some wouldn't get to enjoy these brilliant ribbons of road. Car 30's engine troubles had sadly proved terminal and car 45 succumbed to ignition problems early in the day. Car 10 was also in the wars, Neil Lawson-May and Paul Rivlin had clearly misinterpreted the Tulip's and had somehow beached the big Buick on an earth bank, but luckily it was Paul Dilley to the rescue and the 40C was freed from its mooring.

It was all a lot of excitement for an 'easy introduction', and clearly the eagerness to begin had gotten the better of Scott Pereksliss, the driver of car 1, as in his enthusiasm he had neglected to bring his passport with him. Now, I'm no expert on border control, but I do know that without a passport you've Bob Hope and no hope of progressing to your desired destination. Still, all credit to Scott, he was straight back to retrieve it, it's just a shame that he didn't realise until he got to the port at Tarifa!

If all of these ups and downs leave you a little breathless, remember that this was just day one, and there was still the small matter of the hour ferry to Tangiers and the two-hour run to M'diq on the other side. As is the want of the ferry operators on this particular route, the boat that had been booked was cancelled and so a later sailing was made necessary and this was of course late in sailing, so as the sun set over the Strait of Gibraltar, whilst we were still all floating in it, the prospect of a night time run on unfamiliar roads was being considered by all of the crews that had made it on board.

First up were customs though, almost always an agent of treachery on any trip but thankfully this time the fixers had done their job and things ran remarkably smoothly. The Federales performed their custodial customs quite well and the cars slipped through and onward into the neon lights of Tangiers and finally into the dark of the Moroccan night.

I'm sure the night in Morocco is shorter, it certainly seemed that way when the alarm clocks burst into life and shattered the illusion of a good night's sleep at first light this morning. Still, I and everyone else was on Moroccan soil and raring to get going on the main part of this competition. Well, almost everyone. Scott Pereksliss was still bobbing about in the sea somewhere, but with Africa in sight it wouldn't be long before he was reunited with his Chrysler Roadster and could set about catching up with everyone else, and we would all be delighted to see him.



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The first competition section of the day was loose, and dust filled again, perhaps the perfect tincture to fight against any lingering tiredness from day one's late finish. This was followed by a breathtaking ascent into the Rif Mountains, as the sun burnt through the clouds that had doggedly clung to the peaks up until this point. The views out were spectacular and the roads beneath were thrilling as the tarmac stretched out before us all, in a theme that would continue for much of the day. The machines were running on the road in reverse order, with the vintage vehicles first out of the blocks, being chased down by the classics. Bill Cleyndert, being ably navigated by his daughter Georgia on her first rally had the honour of holding top spot overnight, but such would be the distance covered today that it wasn't too long before the start order had very little to do with the order of the cars on the road, particularly on the monstrous link sections that ran between the days four regularities.

The mountain roads were punctuated by the towns and villages of the inhabitants of this part of the world, and all were alive with people going about their day to day. The tourism industry in Morocco is big business, but our route was largely off the beaten track and so for the locals no doubt the sight of a caravan of foreign classic and vintage cars, fighting their way through the Mule's, markets and pedestrians scattered across the urban streets was a treat indeed, and will likely be talked of long after we have ended our adventure here. For the most part people waved and smiled, and children clapped and cheered, enjoying the spectacle perhaps even more so than those taking part. In some of the small mountain villages the gathered children were going full Group B rally fan spec with their encroachment on the road as the cars came through, well, it beats going to school!

Fez was the terminus of today's entertainment, and no doubt after such a busy few days, all were happy when the hotel came into view. Even car 1 arrived, eventually, and they will have a proper day rallying to look forward to tomorrow, as we head high into the Atlas and onward to Midelt. Leading the pack tomorrow will be Brian and Andrew Scowcroft, leading the field by twelve seconds after an excellent days work. Close behind are Pierre Gerber and Alice Leuenberger and Carlos Rieder and Urs Schnüeriger, occupying the final podium positions as it stands, but all will know that it is still very early days.

## **Syd Stelvio**

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