



**CARBON NEUTRAL EVENTS**  
ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE DRIVING



## **Syd Stelvio Day Three**

### **Fes to Midelt - 464 Kms**

Good God the morning traffic in Fez, total chaos. Cars, trucks and busses travelling every which way but straight. There was no point putting lines on the road when they laid the tarmac, they should have saved the paint. Head down, elbows out, that's the only way to get through the maelstrom, well, that and a bit of luck. Sod slowing for the Police checkpoints, they've taken no interest in us so far, sod the pedestrians that don't seem to be able to distinguish between pavement and road, and sod the man reversing around a roundabout – no, really. The morning commute in Fez, Good God.

Still, out of Fez and up into the hills to play. Today felt like a monster, as we said goodbye to the more populated areas of the country and went in search of something else, something rural, something remote. Regularity one was a simple affair, well, we needed something to calm the nerves. There were beautiful views as well, out across the azure waters of Barrage Allal Al Fassi, a bloody great reservoir to you and I. The Lac de Bab Louta further into proceedings wasn't bad either, and the Tazekka National Park was something else. Unfortunately, I daresay neither driver nor navigator had much time to take any of the park in, as it played host to the first TC competition section of the event, which was a rip-snorting climb up the valley.

It was easy to forget that we were here for the desert, in between the fragrant pines of the national park, but eventually the scenery changed again, and tarmac gave way to dirt tracks and deep gravel, particularly at the start of the days second of three regularities that started with a particularly steep climb to the top of a mine, with a descent that mirrored the ascent. It was also at this point that Lars and Annette Rolner found their day descending as well, as fuel pump problems with the Safari spec 911 left them stranded and would eventually lead to them heading straight to the days end.

They weren't the only crew struggling, and in fact not even the only Lars struggling, as Lars-Olof Staffens and navigator Heikki Saloheimo were also on the way to the final time control with an exhaust pipe that needed mending. Neil Lawson-May and Paul Rivlin were in the wars again too, this time it was brake issues causing an early end to their day, rather than beaching themselves. They were last seen still underneath the big Buick, but hopefully they will be back in the hunt tomorrow.

One pair that were having a good day were the occupants of car 1, back with us after their administration issues, their countryfolk in car 4 were also enjoying themselves, "you don't get this in Kansas" remarked Hayden Groendyke. 'This' was the desert section of the day, that began to uncloak itself after the second regularity, on a long transit section that became increasingly more arid. Then, after a bit more climbing over the mountains before Ait Oufella, the edge of the Sahara came into view properly for the first time, stretching out for seemingly forever below the peaks over which we were travelling.

The sand seemed achingly close, but there would be a few more miles yet on deserted desert highway, cool wind in our hair – stop it – before a turn off onto some desert track action for the first time. This was but a taster of what is to come, with more promised tomorrow on the longest day of the rally at 470 kilometres. That desert action will come at the end of the day as well, with another climb into the Atlas first.



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Heading up that climb in first place is Carlos Rieder and Urs Schnüriger, having taken over the top spot in the table from the Scowcroft's, who suffered mechanical gremlins that turned out to be a broken half shaft. They are now in third place, but only ten seconds adrift so very much still in the hunt. It is after all only day three, it is still all to play for and there is a lot more sand to play in. Who knows what tomorrow may bring.

**Syd Stelvio**

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