



**CARBON NEUTRAL EVENTS**  
ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE DRIVING



## Syd Stelvio Day 0 – Anticipation in Andalusia

There's a special atmosphere the day before a big international rally, the anticipation of adventure is tangible and when you are in amongst it you feel like you could reach out and pluck it from the air. It's a time for excitement, for old friends to come together and be reunited, sharing old stories and discussing what might be to come. It is a new beginning, but sadly, for some on the third running of the Sahara Challenge, it was also the end; Or was it?

It wasn't so much mercury rising, despite the intense Andalusian sun, as a comet crashing to earth for car number 30, the Mercury Comet entered by Ludovic Bois and Julia Colman. The cool blue beast suffered a suspected engine seizure during preparation for scrutineering, and for a time Malaga looked to be as far as they were going to get. Strapped to its trailer in a state of disgrace, the machine was set to be heading home, but a last-minute reprieve may just have been offered up by the intrepid mechanics. Time will tell, but time is also running out.

Elsewhere there were other unforeseen problems, and this time not the mechanical kind. A quick browse of the route book warns of the ferocity of the Moroccan Police, but car 12, the resplendent red Chevy Coup of Richard Walker and Faith Douglas, had found itself in trouble with the law before it had even arrived at rally HQ. The American built car carries a UK registration but pressed onto a Missouri license plate. The eagle-eyed Spanish constabulary spotted this and towed and impounded the car, clearly worried that it was about to be used for bootlegging moonshine across the Strait of Gibraltar. The first that the owners knew about it was when the Chevy had disappeared from where they had parked it, but is thankfully now back in their custody, with the offending Missouri markings covered up with insulation tape.

Dramas indeed, and all before a wheel has been turned in anger. Elsewhere scrutineering ticked along without too many issues, and the sight of two score or so classic and vintage cars parked up ready for their inspections was causing a buzz amongst the locals that were observing the goings on. No wonder, either, as there is something very special about these rally prepped machines. This is of course an event for the vintage entrants in the field, and the pre-war runners are the only one's eligible for an overall win. The spectacle of the Bentleys, Chevys, Studebakers, Alvis and others parked up was salivating, so it will be a treat indeed to see them doing their thing in the Sahara proper, the many nonagenarian runners covered in sand and being used and enjoyed. Their 'newer' running mates will be a tremendous sight as well, and all of the machines will provide an exceptional soundtrack in between the dunes.

The combination of exclusive cars against the spectacular and unusual backdrop of the desert really is something to look forward to, but before that there are some Spanish miles to cover on day one, as the rally gets underway at 10:00 am CET tomorrow. A gentle introduction for the new fish amongst the crews and a mild reminder for those in the group that are experienced of what is to come, as a day of competition in the mountains that sit close to the coast in this part of Spain beckon. Then it will be onto the ferry and onwards to Morocco, and a drive into the relative unknown.

## Syd Stelvio

### HERO Events Limited

138 Southern Avenue, Command Works, Bicester Heritage, Bicester, OX27 8FY, United Kingdom

t. +44 (0) 1869 254979 · enquiries@hero-era.com · www.hero-era.com

Registered in England and Wales: 6997408