



**CARBON NEUTRAL EVENTS**  
ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE DRIVING



### Syd Stelvio Day 13 – Salta to Catamarca

The first proper day of rallying in Argentina, post rest day so cars are fixed and even cleaned, and competitors are fighting fit. They would need to be, as today was a bit of a mammoth run south, a cool 563 km of tarmac and gravel with a couple of regularities thrown in for good measure, easy!

The 07:00 start time maybe wasn't so easy after the comfort of a lie in the previous day, especially as the main time control and departure point was a 20-minute drive away from the city. The good news though was that the MTC was at a racetrack, and not a kart circuit, a proper racetrack and the day would begin with a test.

It was a quick one too, the perfect way to blow away any early morning malaise as the cars tore up the circuit in the early morning sun on a two-lap dash, albeit on a reduced distance, well we had to keep a lid on the drivers over enthusiasm somehow! Most made it round as instructed, although Michael Haentjes in the number 6 Lagonda LG 45, back with us after a few days of car fettling, decided that a full lap of the circuit was needed and shot off around the full length of it, but then I'd have been tempted to do the same I suppose. There were other on track shenanigans as well, and Daniele Poretti + Ronnie Svizzero may well have to change their names to Dick Dastardly and Muttley after their attempts to put off the competition by laying down an oil laden smoke screen, the Mustang pouring out white smoke and reducing the visibility on the circuit to almost nothing for those on track at the same time. Perhaps the oil dropped by the pair was the reason for Matteo Kamata + Federico Ferrari's perpetually pirouetting Porsche 911, that seemed to be facing the wrong way on most of the corners, spectacular but not exactly Peter Perfect.

It was all good fun though and the adrenalin was pumping, just in time to sit in the Salta early morning traffic, on a stop start escape from the city that seemed never ending. The dash out of the city didn't go quite so well for Otakar Chladek + Hynek Tauscher, when Otakar's big Mercedes Benz 350 was rear ended by a much smaller car, which certainly looked to have come off worse. I can only imagine the reaction of the occupant when the man mountain Otakar emerged from inside the Merc, good job he's a gentle giant!

Once clear from Salta's gravitational pull though the road opened up and gave us a glimpse of what Argentina is all about as the road took us through the Quebrada De Las Conchas, or Shell's Gorge that not only provided us with an incredible road but also fabulous scenery. The rock formations, caused by erosion and tectonic activity were almost Martian in appearance, and certainly made up for the slog to get out of the city.

Once into the afternoon the plains opened up into wine country, with Bodega's lining the road pitching to tempt us in for some fine Argentinian plonk, however with a regularity about to start it was best to refute temptation and keep a steady hand on the tiller and the maps. There was nothing too complex about the reg, but it showed off more of the Calchaqui Valley and we were climbing once again, although not to the heady heights visited in Bolivia and Peru.

More steadfast distance was covered post reg, with a long stint of a few hundred kilometres to be ticked off before the final competition section of the day. A lot of it was on straight roads that stretched on and on, although there were some twisties to keep up the interest, there was one road in particular that was a highlight, as it took us into almost jungle like conditions as we descended into the base of a valley, but mostly it was an afternoon concentration run to rack up the miles.



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One last regularity remained to finish off an extended day, but such was the progress that had been made along the route we were all into the hotel around two hours earlier than planned, a relief for everyone with several long stints at the wheel over the coming week. We continue the run south tomorrow on another 500 km day, and the halfway point of the adventure is almost in sight, almost, but not quite.

**Syd Stelvio**

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