



**CARBON NEUTRAL EVENTS**  
ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE DRIVING



## Syd Stelvio Day 19 – Neuquén to Bariloche

Patience is also a virtue and the sun shines on the virtuous. The sun shone today, as we travelled through 550km of Patagonia and the best scenery and roads that we have found so far in Argentina. Tomorrow is a rest day and we have finished this seven-day stint of long miles with a flourish, and what a reward it was for yesterday's toil, imagine if we had skipped on ahead and missed out the day entirely, what a terrible shame that would have been! Good things come to those who wait, that's for sure.

The sun really did shine today, lighting the way out of Neuquén, surrounded by vast plains before we headed for the solitude and tranquillity of the National Park. Snow Capped peaks guided us in, and we found ourselves in a green oasis tree lined slopes and valleys filled with rapid melt water rivers. The roads matched the beauty of the valley, swooping and flowing along the natural contours of the land, often accompanied by the river, the Rio Alumine, burbling its own marching song as the water glistened.

The river stayed with us for much of the day, an ever-changing constant, always there but never the same. The rally can get a bit like that sometimes, day in the process is the same, punch the clock, cover the miles, punch the clock again. The process might be repetitive but on days like this you remember why you do it, why you suffer the endurance, why you love the sport.

Some competitors were loving the sport and the road so much that they missed a crucial left turn, instead preferring to head deeper into the park and within touching distance of the Chilean border. I'll not name names, but Bob Harrod was particularly delighted about the 70-mile detour, I'll have a P please Bob.

Back to the sport and the first of two regularities increased the altitude, but only slightly, the peaks of the mountains here still rose well above our altitude. As the regularity finished so did the climb, and then it opened out onto what are probably Argentina's finest set of switchbacks and certainly one of the country's best views, as the peaks parted, and the vista opened up into a vast glacial valley below. These switchbacks, on finely graded gravel, provided plenty of entertainment, didn't they Manuel Dubs, who needs a Japanese drift machine when you've a 1940 Ford Coupe.

The road, and the river, continued on into Argentina's lake district, a land of vast glacial lakes and geological features carved out over millennia by the slow advance of the ice. It was incredible stuff, and the landscape was only punctuated by the Austrian like ski towns that have grown up in this area. The second regularity came and went, a dusty charge up hill again, where peoples speed was not only governed by the clock but also the trail of dust left by the previous competitor. Too close to the car in front and it was impossible to see, and from the top of the climb the residue of the cars journey hung in the air just above the trees, billowing in the cool air of the afternoon.

The day ended in the lake town of Bariloche, the finish of day 19 and the point and the last day of the second third of this monster rally. More importantly for the weary crews it also signalled a rest day, or a non-transit day at least, a chance to spend a day prepping the car for the final parts of our adventure. To start thinking of the final part of this journey seems ludicrous, considering there are ten days still and many kilometres until we reach Ushuaia, but then the fact that the autumn of this trip is signalled with so far to go is a measure of just how far we are going, and how far we have come. There is long



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way to go, the river will keep flowing and those bobbing along it will do their best to remain afloat.  
**Syd Stelvio**

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