

CLASSIC DRIVER

Ferrari's 15,000 Red Miles

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A pair of Ferraris will leave Shanghai on 29 August 2005 for a grand tour of China, driven by Chinese and international journalists. No other constructor has ever undertaken such a daunting task. The route covers an enormous range of very different terrains and challenges. The cars will endure extremes of cold and heat, incredibly tough road conditions and environmental obstacles of all kinds.

The 612 Scagliettis will first head north and then east toward Manchuria. After this they will drive south-west to Beijing and then along the Great Wall as far as Lanzhou. From there they will cover over 3,000 km at an altitude of more than 4,000 metres as far as Lhasa in Tibet before heading back west through the Gobi Desert to the ancient city of Kashi, site of Marco Polo's famous silk market. After a further dash through the desert, the two 612 Scagliettis will drive on to Urumqi and then down through the tropical part of the country to Guangzhou, which is more familiar to us as Canton. From there they will continue on through the most modern and western part of China back to Shanghai after a round trip of 15,000 miles. If all goes according to plan, the two 612 Scagliettis should complete their tour of China in 45 days.

The Tour has received the valued support of the Chinese authorities as well as logistical support from Fiat China. It is also being staged in partnership with some of Ferrari's most faithful sponsors, including Shell (fuels and lubricants with specialist support in the toughest areas), Puma (for crew clothing), Alcoa (technical partner and builder of the 612's aluminium chassis), Pirelli (supplier of specialist tyres for the various terrains) and Saima Avandero (transportation of the cars, wheel rims and spares). We will also be joined by a Chinese partner, Xin Yu Watch & Clock, the leading distributor of Swiss timepieces in China. Assistance and spares will be provided by four vehicles: two Fiat cars and two specially equipped Iveco trucks.

The two 612 Scaglietti cars are in complementary colours. One will be red with a silver bonnet and the other will be silver with a red bonnet. They are modified only very minimally - they will have a larger fuel tank with petrol filters that are easily accessed for cleaning purposes, under body protectors and slightly higher suspension to cope with the more challenging terrain. Their headlights will also be protected by a metal grille and some of the air intakes will be modified to allow them to traverse water-logged areas in safety. In every other respect, however, the cars are - normal - production models with a 540 hp V12 engine and a maximum torque of 588 Nm, dry sump lubrication, a six-speed gearbox and a Transaxle transmission.



The route and main stages

The route begins and ends in Shanghai and is divided into 11 main stages (see attached map) which will also act as the crew changeover points. The first stage sees the expedition leave Shanghai bound for Beijing, a 3,000-kilometre, seven-day journey away. En route it will take in the city of Shenyang at the very north-eastern tip of China near the border with Mongolia.

The second major stage takes the cars along the Great Wall of China from Beijing to Lanzhou, a 2,100 km dash over four days. At Lanzhou, the cars begin their descent into south-western China which will culminate in a very tough stretch at altitudes of over 4,000 m and take them into the Tibetan capital, Lhasa, after a seven-day drive, on 19th of September. From there the expedition will retrace its steps as far as Goldmud where it will turn north-west, stopping off at the northernmost tip of the route in the city of Urumqi, over 2,700 km from Lhasa. Next the cars head for Kashi, home to one of the most famous silk markets encountered by Marco Polo on his travellers. This time the leg will be a "mere" 1,400 km, to be covered in three days.

From Kashi the expedition turns back towards the east bound for Jiayuguan, 2,500 km away, which it will reach in six days. From there the cars will drive down to the south-east coast through to the major city of Chongqing (2,000 km to be covered in six days) and then on to Guangzhou (Canton), a further 2,000 km away. After this they begin the home run, via Wenzhou (1,500 km from Canton), back to Shanghai, where they are expected to arrive on the evening of October 29th.

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