
Miura 40th Anniversary Tour - the conclusion

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We left our intrepid band of Lamborghini Miura drivers resting overnight at the Relais & Chateaux Hotel Ombremont on the Lake of Le Bourget. Friday was reserved for driving to Monaco in time for the biennial Grand Prix Historique. The following story is Part Two (and Part One can be read here) of the Miura 40th Anniversary Tour from Gstaad to Monaco, a fitting conclusion to an event which celebrated the iconic sports car's original appearance at the 1966 Monaco Grand Prix.

Friday morning brought much welcome sunshine and warmer temperatures as owners rose for breakfast. Outside, in the gravel surfaced courtyard, owners and mechanics fussed over their cars in preparation for a long and testing day's driving.

With 400km to cover, much of it on twisty mountain passes,

and a 6.30pm deadline for arrival in Casino Square if the cars were to be allowed to line up there together, there was no time to waste. Swiss event organizers Experience flagged off the cars individually at 9am sharp and the first rendez-vous was at a large refueling station at the entrance to the Autoroute. Exchanging friendly (nervous?) banter with the local Gendarmes who had also chosen the same time to fill their patrol cars and bikes, the Miura Tour set off down the motorway at full speed, anxious to make their evening deadline. What a sight (and sound) Piet's Jota made leaving the Peage at full speed, its four megaphone exhausts bellowing yellow flames on the over-run. Seeing it in their rear view mirrors prompted late morning commuters to dive for cover in the middle lane, and most of them moved one further across when they heard the noise it made as it passed them. It made me think of someone standing behind the space shuttle at launch (but louder).



By the time the Miuras left the Autoroute the first terminal casualty, the very pretty orange SV owned by Italian hotelier Andrea Padulazzi, had succumbed to noises in the back axle first heard the previous night, but not to be defeated he sent for another car from his collection to be dispatched by transporter in time to meet the group for lunch. The scenery now was dramatic, with snow capped mountains overlooking green valleys punctuated by deep blue lakes and beautiful, unspoiled French villages preserved for centuries. The Nationale 85, a wide, sweeping road, followed the valleys until cars turned off to the Mediaeval Chateau des Herbeys where a lobster and champagne lunch awaited.

Stopping only long enough for food and driver changes, the glamorous convoy now headed East for the Italian border in dazzling sunshine and 25 degree temperatures. A fast trio soon broke free of the rest, the freshly rebuilt orange ex-Armin Johl SV Speciale (registered GAP-V12) driven by Swiss historic racer Marc Caveng chased by Simon Kidston in his jet black ex-Innocenti SV, and a red Miura S driven with great gusto by Sicilian enthusiast Stefano Cammareri following up the rear. Banker Andrew and his glamorous wife Belinda headed a more leisurely group in Rod Stewart's factory restored yellow SV, including Iranian enthusiast Reza Rashidian with the glorious sounding SVJ and fellow Iranian Darius Fouladi in the quirky Miura 'Millechiodi' (a thousand rivets).



Crossing an unmanned Italian border (siesta time), the pressure increased as the roads became more challenging and the 6.30pm deadline loomed closer. With four hours to go, the casualty rate grew as drivers upped the tempo. The newly acquired right hand drive SV of Scottish hedge fund analyst Graham Robertson expired with electrical problems whilst passing through an alpine tunnel (Italian drivers actually got out of their cars to help push) and Swiss Ferrari collector Jean-Pierre Slavic's orange Miura suffered fuel feed problems when the pumps sucked up dirt at the bottom of the tank. The rakish Monza, driven by Brits Martin and Angela Kent and widely admired wherever it went, was

forced to slow after its brake servo decided it had done more than enough after 36 years of rest.

The first Miuras now climbed higher as they approached the Col de Tende, one of Europe's greatest driving roads where rock faces overhang the road as it snakes through gorges, following the rivers carrying the melting snow to the valley below. The sound of the Miuras as they approached, and even better from inside the cockpit, is hard to describe but matches the best the motoring world has to offer. Most of the owners agreed this was one of the best drives they had ever done in their cars. "Demanding, but worth the entire trip on its own. I've never had so much fun with my Miura" said Darius Fouladi afterwards.



By now the 6.30pm deadline was looking doubtful, but cars and drivers pressed on and the fastest teams finally spotted the deep blue waters of the Mediterranean over the distant horizon as they dropped down towards the coast. Slipping from the mountain road onto the final section of Autoroute, the leading group roared through the dimly lit tunnels past modern traffic and exited above Monte Carlo. As they whined through the streets of the Principality, their bodywork stained by almost a thousand kilometers of hard driving, local residents and visitors to the historic Grand Prix stopped to listen and to admire, most of them oblivious to the moment 40 years earlier which these cars and drivers had come to celebrate. As the Miuras arrived one by one in Casino Square (yes, they were late, but these are Italian cars after all) a crowd gathered to watch as weary but smiling drivers lined up their cars opposite the Hotel de Paris and climbed out for well deserved champagne and canapés. And after much harassing Piet Pulford even agreed to do a lap of the Square with the Jota before parking, stopping to rev up the engine outside the Café de Paris to spontaneous public applause and tolerant looks from the Monegasque Gendarmes on guard nearby.



A final gastronomic dinner thanks to sponsor Credit Suisse Private Banking followed for everyone at

the Hermitage Hotel, where the Miura Tour teams spent the weekend watching the Historic Grand Prix and enjoying the sunshine. Owners eventually (and reluctantly) handed over the keys of their Lamborghinis to carefully briefed transporter drivers, and I dare say both owners and cars had newly found respect for each other after a challenging but rewarding drive in just about all imaginable conditions. This event was intended to put the cars to the use for which they were intended (ie not all day polishing) and it wouldn't be surprising if we didn't have to wait 10 years until the next Miura Anniversary Tour...



Story: 'Beckerman'

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