

# CLASSIC DRIVER

## Ferrari Panamerican 20,000 - the latest news



**When we last caught up with the two Ferrari 599 GTB Fioranos making the long journey from Brazil to New York, a trip which began on August 24th, they were taking a well-deserved 48-hour rest in Cartagena, before boarding a ferry for Panama. This is how they fared once the cars and crew crossed the famous strip of water which divides the American continent in two -**

**Panama, 30th September 2006** - While the Ferraris board the ship that will take them to Panama, the team members fly to the same destination and visit the canal linking the Atlantic with the Pacific Ocean. It is now almost one hundred years old and still regarded as one of the most imposing structures on earth.

**David, 3rd October 2006** - The two 599 GTB Fioranos leave the hotel in Panama at 8 o'clock in the morning. The rainy season continues, and heavy rain drenches the cars on their first stint in Central America. The tour hits the highway, direction Santiago, and after some 20 kilometres on a straight and non-asphalted track, the road becomes easier and takes them to David.

**San Jose, 4th October 2006** - The team leaves David early to get on the road in the direction of the Costa Rican border, using a modern four-lane road. After only a short ride the team has to stop at the border for the formalities to leave Panama. The formalities to get into Costa Rica take a little bit longer and long hours pass by. Once over the border, the road leads along impressive vegetation, interrupted by occasional banana, pineapple and coffee plantations.



130 kilometres to go to San Jose and the road starts to lead upwards, turning narrow and very curvy, until its peak at 3200 metres. While driving down the rain stops but it becomes foggy so that the cars have to slow down. From up above they can finally see the city lights of San Jose and after a quick ride the team arrives at the hotel.

**Managua, 6th October 2006** - The Panamerican 20,000 team leaves Puntarenas early in the morning to reach the border of Nicaragua. Houses and shops line the road, with luxuriant vegetation just behind. Approaching Nicaragua, the forest slowly gives way to wide plains with livestock farms and, once over the border, the tour reaches Lake Nicaragua with its splendid volcanoes. The last kilometres leading to Managua

are especially testing, as the narrow road is jam-packed with potholes and the usual tropical rain. At Managua the Italian ambassador welcomes the team with a party.

**San Miguel, 7th October 2006** - Departure from Managua is at dawn. The troop sets off on a flat road through incredibly green vegetation with livestock farms. Later the road leads upwards through forests to end on a plateau and the Honduras border. Across the border and the road leads down to the plane of Choluteca, and into San Salvador. After passing numerous roadblocks finally, under moonlight, the shape of the volcano that sits above the city of San Miguel can be seen.



**Ciudad de Guatemala, 8th October 2006** - From San Miguel to San Salvador and on to Guatemala. The vegetation is still incredibly green and along the road livestock farms and tropical forest can be seen, interrupted by stalls selling coconuts. Before arriving in Ciudad De Guatemala, two splendid volcanoes appear on the left, one adorned with a towering, smoking crater.

**Antigua, 9th October 2006** - Ciudad de Guatemala was hit by several devastating earthquakes, the last one in 1976, so the city has not much to offer architecturally. The team is impressed, however, by the traditional dresses of many of the women. The team then heads for Antigua, the ancient capital, the third in Guatemala's history; and then they travel via Atitlan to the Mexican border.

**Palenque, 12th October 2006** - Now in Mexico, the team arrives in Palenque with its ancient Maya pyramids and, the following day, reaches the shores of the Mexican Gulf. The journey towards Veracruz is accompanied by a wonderful view of the setting sun.

**Ciudad de Mexico, 14th and 15th October 2006** - The two 599 GTB Fioranos ride along the sandy coastline of Veracruz to reach the highway to Puebla. At first, the road is flat and there are plantations of sugar cane, bananas and pineapples. Soon, the cars arrive at a road leading up through forests of pine and fir resembling European flora. In Xalapa, at an altitude of 2,000 metres, the tour reaches a plateau where several volcano craters surround the fields. The cars stop by the side of a splendid lake bordering a former volcano.

Having crossed the industrial periphery of Puebla the tour arrives at the archaeological site of Cholula, famous for the biggest pyramid built by the Maya, where the Spaniards built the Santuario de los Remedios church. Then on, towards the enormous Mexican metropolis, the Ciudad de Mexico.

**Crossing Mexico, 16th to 18th October 2006** - The Ferraris leave Mexico City and head for Guadalajara. The road with its long slopes is straddled by forests and fields. From Guadalajara, the cars follow the highway to Tequila, after which the famous Mexican spirit is named, and then north, where the road is twisty and the team members can spot green forests, agaves and tobacco farms among the volcanoes. The tour arrives in Mazatlan in time to watch the sunset over the Pacific Ocean, a wonderful experience.





As they head further north, the team sees a gradual 'westernisation'. The motorways are controlled by electronic barriers and private jets soar over the extensive fazenda lands. In the evening they board a night ship for La Paz.

**La Paz, 19th October 2006** - The boat docks and, after the numerous drug enforcement checks are over, the crew heads towards La Paz. The city is situated on Baja California, the 1,300-kilometre Mexican peninsular. The zone emerged from the sea two million years ago and is now famous for its vast beaches.

**Los Angeles, 23rd October 2006** - A sprint along the motorway from Ensenada to Tijuana sees the Ferrari berlinettas draw up at the United States border. The highway runs along the coast, parallel to an uninterrupted series of beachfront houses. The customs clearance takes some time and it is late evening before the expedition can cover the 130 miles between the border and Los Angeles.

The Panamerican 20,000 began exactly two months ago today and the 599 GTB Fioranos have covered a total of 18,662 kilometres.

**Las Vegas, 25th October 2006** - Half a day is spent in Los Angeles - city of cars, of hundreds of highways, and of thousands of parking spaces. Life in Los Angeles happens in cars. But once the two 599 GTB Fioranos leave this city, they immediately enter another desert.



The road leads through the Mojave Desert: to the left the team can see the famous Death Valley and to the right the Mojave National Park. At that point the two 599 GTB Fioranos are leaving California and entering the state of Nevada. From time to time an oasis is spotted in the distance, where diners have been built for hungry travellers: truck stops of an incredible modernity, considering that they were built in the desert, in the middle of nowhere.

In Las Vegas the cars and the team are welcomed with a cocktail party at the local Ferrari dealer. Later the team members take the cars and explore the city by night: an incredible place, smack in the middle of the desert.

**Text:** Classic Driver

**Photos:** Ferrari



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