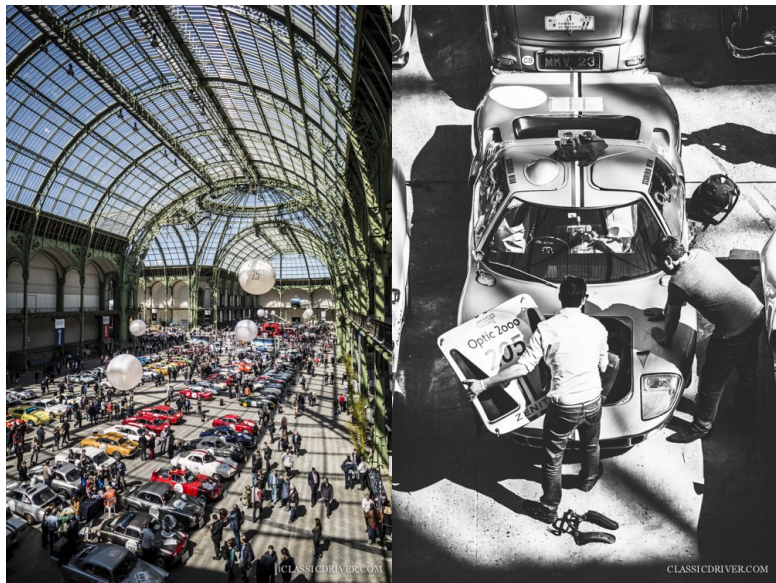


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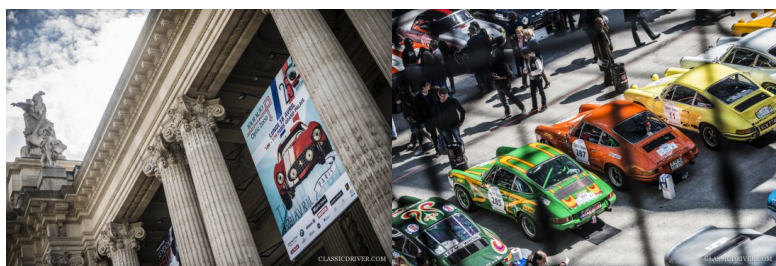
Lead

It's hard to know where to start with the Tour Auto, but we think a simple 'wow' should suffice. Snaking along exquisite roads, through France's diverse and most beautiful environments, will stick in our memories for a long time to come...



The days might be tough, the competitors exhausted and the cars punished, but that is part and parcel of a long-distance historic road rally. And Peter Auto knows exactly how to throw a long-distance historic road rally.

The grandest of venues



The start is always a magical part of the Tour Auto, where all the cars are assembled for scrutineering (and for show) at the Grand Palais in Paris. It served as a reminder of the glorious building's former role as the venue for the Paris Motor Show. It's as though it was built specifically with exhibiting classic cars in mind – the light pours in through the vast glass roof, and dances off the polished lacquer and chrome in a devilish manner, playing tricks with your eyes. For the competitors, a 6am start beckons. As the first of the 240 participants stray out into the near-deserted streets of Paris, so the atmosphere heightens – who doesn't love the smell of Castrol R in the morning?

The hare and the tortoise



Each day of the Tour Auto is punctuated with special stages, either on closed roads or on the racetrack. They are split into two categories, competition and regularity, and while the former attracts huge interest, the latter provides interesting battles. Our favourite machines from this category were the Ferrari 275 GTB, the Porsche 356 Carrera, and the utterly superb Siata 208 S.

A lower calibre?



Admittedly, the ultra-high calibre of previous years' entry lists was a distant memory. Ferrari 250 GTs, countless Porsche prototypes and a smattering of Matras that before had been the norm were nowhere to be seen. Everyone was particularly disappointed that no Matras were present, particularly as an MS650 was on the provisional entry list. Could this be attributed to the stratospheric values these cars are achieving? Regardless, we'd love to see more owners using their cars as they were originally intended.

Trading places



To say the cars in attendance were mundane would be foolish – there was still a handful of Cobras, Jaguar E-types, Porsche 911 Carrera RSs and Ford GT40s to ogle. And from start to finish, the battles were fierce, with positions traded after almost every special stage. The VHC class was won by Jean-Pierre Lajournade in his Jaguar E-type followed, like last year, by Ludovic Caron in his famous Shelby Cobra and Damien Kohler in his nimble little Lotus Elan. The regularity class was won by the beautiful Ferrari 250 GT ‘SWB’ of the Argentinian brothers, Martin and Francisco Sucari.

Until next year...



For British Tour Auto debutants Andrew Smith and James Cottingham (of Classic Driver dealer [DK Engineering](#)) driving the Scuderia Bear Ford GT40, their week was certainly an adventurous one. Having suffered no fewer than three engine fires, the duo thankfully arrived safely in Cannes – they even managed to win a few special stages along the way. “That was just amazing,” they said, “we’ll be back next year for sure!” We strongly encourage you to join them.

Photos by Rémi Dargen for Classic Driver © 2016

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