

# CLASSIC DRIVER

## [All the action so far from the 2019 Tour Auto](#)

### Lead

Unless you've been closely following our Instagram account this week, you might not be aware that the 2019 Tour Auto Optic 2000 is currently tearing through northern France. Fortunately, our man Mathieu Bonnevie is in hot pursuit – this is the story so far...



Once every 10 years, the Tour Auto deviates from its usual route from Paris to France's southern coast and instead remains in the middle and north of the country. The circa-240 entrants in this year's edition, some of whom have travelled from as far afield as Japan, are currently meandering from Paris to Deauville, taking in Dijon, Lyon, Vichy, and Tours along the way. Between some of the finest stretches of road France has to offer, drivers will also tackle famous racetracks including Magny-Cours and Le Mans.

### Day one - Paris to Dijon



After a day of ogling each other's cars – or, in some cases, eyeing up the competition – in the magnificent Grand Palais, the entrants set off at the crack of dawn on Tuesday morning across Paris to reach the first checkpoint at the stunning Château de Vaux le Vicomte, which was still bathed in the golden morning light.



It was from there that the first closed-road special stage commenced, and the war of attrition began. For some competitors, mechanical gremlins were already taking their toll. James Cottingham and Andrew Smith's Carreras Columbia Cobra, for example, which was well-placed to be among the frontrunners, suffered a clutch problem that took an age to rectify. Judging by their Instagram snippets, though, the pair took it in good humour – that's the spirit...



A brief lunch stop at another equally spectacular chateau was followed by an outing on the famous Dijon-Prenois circuit, where Gilles Villeneuve and René Arnoux had one the greatest duels Formula 1 had ever seen in 1979. The pace felt equally frenetic on Tuesday evening and it was a spectacular way to conclude the opening day.

### Day two - Dijon to Lyon



Day two began enveloped in dense Dijon fog – not so good for the drivers, but a fantastic opportunity for Mathieu to capture some great photos. The day would take them through the brilliant-green Morvan region to Lyon, via the modern Formula 1 circuit Nevers Magny-Cours and the expansive vineyards of Beaujolais.



While the sight and sound of a braying pack of historic racing cars haring round Magny-Cours, spearheaded by thunderous Ford GT40s and Cobras, was undoubtedly sensational, it was the warm welcome and fantastic atmosphere in the various towns such as Decize that was the overwhelming memory. Oh, and the day-ending special stage in picturesque Beaujolais as the sun danced its way down.

### Day 3 - Lyon to Vichy



It seems a shame to pass through some of France’s most famous wine regions without stopping to sample any, but alas, time is of the essence on the Tour Auto. Day three started deep in the Rhône Valley before climbing Mont Pilat. Despite weather that appeared to switch seasons every 30-or-so minutes, the pace was seriously quick on the first special stage of the day, a tight and twisting route through the dense forest close to Montbrison.



The afternoon’s route from the Château des Martinanches was particularly special for Mathieu as it passed right in front of his old high school in Auvergne! Whoever said France’s midriff wasn’t pretty? The road encountered so far on this year’s Tour Auto have been nothing short of breathtaking and we’re very excited to see what the next few days hold as it snakes north towards Tours and the final stop in Deauville. Who’ll be the victor? You’ll have to come back to Classic Driver on Monday next week.

*Photos: Mathieu Bonnevie for Classic Driver © 2019*

**Gallery**

































































































































































