

# PARIS-VIENNA RALLY 2016

## RECEE REPORT

**The 2016 Paris-Vienna Rally will be a truly spectacular event. To whet your appetite, we are pleased to deliver this route recce report from Clerk of the Course, Fred Bent**



*With thanks to the recce driver, Paul Wignall*



We reconnoitred the Paris-Vienna Rally route in September and October 2015 and found thrilling roads, interesting regularity sections, great mountain views, scenic halts, lovely hotels and terrific test venues. With a wonderful variety of entries, the rally is shaping up to be a spectacular event, a sociable sporting challenge for experienced crews and novices alike and a worthy celebration of the Paris-Vienna Race of 1902.

## **MONDAY 13TH JUNE - SIGNING ON**

A warm welcome awaits competitors on Monday 13th June at the comfortable Novotel Ury. This is conveniently located on the southern edge of the forest of Fontainebleau, close to the A6 Autoroute to facilitate the delivery of cars by transporter and easily reached from the centre of Paris (45 minutes by road or 70 by rail). Here signing-on and scrutineering will take place and crews may mark up maps and check tripmeters on a calibration route, which includes a fuel station.

In the evening, all the information required for the days ahead will be issued at a Rally Briefing and Welcome Dinner. Rally Round events are always very sociable but we have planned a relatively long day tomorrow in order to reach the Vosges mountains before dusk, so for once we recommend a reasonably early night!

## **TUESDAY 14TH JUNE - FONTAINEBLEAU TO GERARDMER**



*The start - Chateau de Bourron*

After a short, engine-warming run from Ury the Paris-Vienna Rally will start from the magnificent Chateau de Bourron, a stately home that is now an exclusive, family-run retreat. The day's 430km route begins on tree-lined roads through a former royal hunting park. We originally planned to follow

the northern bank of the river Seine, but having endured countless speed humps in every little hamlet we thought it better to put 40km behind us on the D606, which runs along the opposite bank. Despite occasional river views this is not very exciting but it is a practical and direct route eastwards and should not be too busy as all the Parisian commuter traffic will be heading in the opposite direction. Turning off the D606 to avoid small-town delays we will stage a practice regularity section on the minor roads north of Sens, which will help novice crews get into the swing of things.

Arriving in Aix-en-Othe we will stop for coffee at the Bar-Tabac Renaissance on the village square (which is actually triangular). With a few tables and chairs outside and a handful of locals inside - whatever the time of day - such charming establishments are increasingly rare these days. We can park in the square, overlooked by the church, the municipal building and several little shops including the bar, a bakery and a chemist.

From here we motor into the Champagne-Ardenne region, where the Paris-Vienna competition begins with our first proper regularity test. We pass through some interesting villages on the regularity and thereafter on the way to lunch in the picturesque town of Les Riceys, which is overflowing with Champagne Houses. We have asked the mayor if we can park in the square and set up the Time Control and an exclusive lunch at the village hall.

Some 20km and 25km beyond the lunch halt we have two more regularity tests on quiet roads we discovered as a result of some research. Neither test takes us far off the direct route to our night halt at Gerardmer in the heart of the Vosges Mountains.

On our October recce we were looking for a suitable coffee halt near Chalindrey when we stopped to refuel at a Peugeot garage. Chatting to the proprietor, Roger Girault, we learned that he and his son were both enthusiastic rally competitors. They took great delight in showing us the cars they were preparing and undertook to arrange a rest halt for us at the bar across the street. In the unlikely event that anyone has a mechanical problem that is beyond our mechanics, they will be very happy to assist!

The next segment I intend to run as a navigation section, with route checks in the form of either code boards or more likely features to be recorded - the height of a col, the distance to a town quoted on a road sign or whatever). To ensure that the correct route has been followed, Time Cards will be checked at the subsequent 'comfort break' at the Bar du Commerce in Faverney.

At last we will climb into the Vosges Mountains, synonymous with soft curves thanks to the rounded shape of their peaks, or 'ballons'. An immense forest of fir, pine, spruce and beech covers 60 per cent of this mountain

range yet the landscape is amazingly varied, with glacial lakes, wet and high altitude meadows, deep valleys, cliffs and waterfalls. This is traditional Monte Carlo Rally territory and provides the day's final regularity on the hairpins of the Col du Mont le Fourche, not the most famous of the French climbs but still an enjoyable challenge.

Little more than 30km beyond the regularity finish is the bustling lakeside town of Gerardmer, where we will spend the night at the Grand Hotel. Here the Bugatti-themed lounge bar is adorned with model cars and photographs of the Schlumpf brothers. There is also an attractive garden in which to relax with a drink, and a pool.

## **WEDNESDAY 15TH JUNE - GERARDMER TO LINDAU**



*Day 2 destination - Lindau Island*

The Day 2 route amounts to about 340km, and we hope to make good progress to allow time for a very special experience this evening. Following a short run out of Gerardmer, the day's competition begins with driving test at a great little circuit we chanced upon. It is used in the winter for ice racing - one challenge we are not expecting in June! However, it is quite tight and we may see a little slipping and sliding from over-ambitious drivers.

The Vosges mountains extend 180km from the German border and are shared by three historic regions: Alsace to the east, Lorraine to the west and Franche-Comté to the south. The range crest marks the boundary and a real linguistic and cultural border between Lorraine and Alsace. The history of Alsace has been heavily influenced by strategic politics, as Germany and France have fought over it for centuries. It is now French, and when we pass

through in June a new merged region will have been created, imaginatively named 'Alsace-Champagne-Ardenne-Lorraine'.

Our first regularity section of the day crosses from Lorraine into Alsace over the 956-metre Col de Bramont and thereafter a Germanic influence is immediately apparent in the local cuisine, architecture and place names such as Wildenstein, Unter Gerstenbach and Krut.

We take in the wide sweeping bends of the D27 and the Col de Platzerwasel - typical of the low-level passes of the Vosges that rarely emerge from the dense forest - and on to the splendour of Le Grand Ballon, the highest peak of the range. This road rises above the trees and enjoys magnificent views to the valleys and lakes below. It is so spectacular that we will enjoy an early coffee halt at La Vue des Alpes, from where you can see the French towns of Mulhouse and Colmar, Freiburg im Breisgau in Germany and across the Swiss border to Basel, while in the distance are the Black Forest, the Swiss and French Jura and beyond them Austria, Liechtenstein and Mont Blanc. As with all the climbs made famous by the Tour de France, you will be sharing the roads with riders on two wheels, clad in either Lycra or leather.

Leaving the rest halt we head on to the Col Amic, encountering a couple of wide 'cobbled' hairpins before turning off to our second regularity of the day, down a charming little route that eventually takes us out of the mountains and across the plain of Alsace. Crossing the Rhine into Germany we enter the rural district of Breisgau-Hochschwarzwald, which lies within Germany's largest national park, the Black Forest.

To the east of Mullheim is the splendid spa town of Badenweiler, where for centuries those in need of revitalising have 'taken the waters' in thermal baths. It is such a pretty little place we felt it impolite to simply pass through, so we will park up in the heart of the town, on a reserved area in front of the Grand Hotel Romerbad. The local Tourism and Events Officer is opening up the splendid Spa House am Badenweiler for us, where we will have coffee. She will also be on the microphone telling the good burghers of Badenweiler all about the cars and crews.

From Badenweiler we continue east through the southern Black Forest to the next regularity section along a winding road through high mountains and lush green river valleys. This lovely region boasts vineyards, sunny peaks, wide panoramic views and calm forests. Our destination for lunch is the lakeside town of Schluchsee and the Kurhaus, which we found almost by accident but immediately impressed us with its fabulous views of the lake. For reasons which will soon be apparent, we recommend a certain amount of gastronomic self-discipline here.

After lunch our route takes us along fast, flowing roads that link the several small villages just to the north of the border with Switzerland, between the eastern edge of the Black Forest and Lake Constance. We will pause for a break at the Gasthaus Jagermuhle, situated in a lovely riverside location on the outskirts of the village of Acch. We were pretty well force-fed with apple strudel, cream and ice cream when we called to make the arrangements for the rally, although I confess that our resistance was fairly feeble as it was so good! Now you will understand why it was wise to avoid over-indulging at lunch. You must save room for the strudel!

To avoid potential traffic hold-ups in the town of Stockach, we join the motorway for one junction en route to the final regularity of the day. I have elected to avoid the shore of Lake Constance (also called Lake of Constance, and sometimes spelled Konstanz, or in German Bodensee) as the spectacular Alpine scenery and mild climate make this a popular resort area and it can be busy with tourist traffic.

My original intention was simply to finish the day at our overnight hotel, the Bayerischer Hof, situated on a tiny island accessed via a bridge from the town of Lindau. Indeed the hotel is in a superb location, with spectacular views across to the surrounding mountains and a waterfront enlivened by street entertainers. However, having witnessed the magnificent sight of an airship flying over the lake I modified my plans in order to visit the Zeppelin Museum at nearby Friedrichshafen.



*Neue Technologie - the Zeppelin NT*

Aviation aficionados from around the world make pilgrimages to this place, where Count Ferdinand Graf von Zeppelin built and flew his eponymous airships at the turn of the 20th Century; the first of them, LZ1, made its maiden flight here in 1901. It is a nice coincidence that some of the vintage

cars on the rally represent the same era of technological advancement, and our visit affords a superb opportunity to fly over this scenic area in the latest 75-metre, semi-rigid, Helium-filled Zeppelin NT (Neue Technologie). Operating out of the largest hangar in Southern Germany, the ZNT can accommodate up to 12 passengers, and flights are offered on a first-come, first-served basis; they cost 210 euros per person for 30 minutes or 320 euros for 45 minutes, to be paid to the Rally Round office on confirmation. With more than 40 entries to the rally to date, it is important that those wishing to enjoy this experience of a lifetime contact the Rally Office to book their places as soon as possible - email [info@rallyround.co.uk](mailto:info@rallyround.co.uk). Those who do not wish to fly may of course enjoy the facilities of the Zeppelin Museum and restaurant, or make their way to the Bayerischer Hof.



*Scenic - Lake Constance from the Bayerischer Hof*

## **THURSDAY 16TH JUNE - LINDAU TO SAALFELDEN**

Primarily in Bavaria with occasional forays into the Austrian Tirol, the Day 3 route is approximately 350km and runs along the border between Germany and Austria. On the recce we looked for interesting and less touristy roads that would reflect the character of the area. Frequently we would find a promising route only to be disappointed when the road surface degenerated to a cart track. However, we have put together a good day's sport with a truly Bavarian flavour.

Classic and vintage cars are generally admired and welcomed wherever they go, and on our reconnaissance trips we certainly found that to be the case. On more than one occasion when I was a little dubious about positioning a

Time Control close to a property or using a section of private road, a visit to the resident or landowner met with a positive response. When we dropped in at the second of our two morning rest halts, at the Landgasthof Lindenhof, our conversation with Silvia the owner was overheard by one of her customers. He immediately produced photographs of the car he had recently restored and insisted that he and other local enthusiasts should be kept informed of the event's timing so they could turn out to greet us.

With two regularities, two rest halts and a navigation section, our busy morning ends with lunch on the terrace of the lovely Park Hotel in Bad Bayersoien, a charming location overlooking a lake on the edge of a small forest with stunning, panoramic views of the Ammergau Alps.



*Charming - the Park Hotel, Bad Bayersoien*

Our afternoon session kicks off with a short regularity test starting opposite the hotel, and continues with two more regularities, one in Germany and the other in Austria, before a final tea and coffee stop. The final section of slightly more than 50km to Saalfelden is such a splendid drive through fabulous scenery that I decided to let crews simply get on with it and enjoy their journey into Salzburg Land. The province takes its name from its most famous city, the birthplace of Mozart and the historical power base for the Bishops of Salzburg. It also shares the beautiful Salzkammergut region with Upper Austria, and features many other attractions in the countryside beyond the 'Sound of Music' city of Salzburg.

Whilst some competitors may be interested in Aperschnalzen, an old tradition of competitive whip cracking that is apparently popular in this part of the world, we have two cracking driving tests to end the day. Next door to our overnight halt at the Hotel Gut Brandlhof in Saalfelden is an OAMTC (Austrian Automobile, Motorcycle and Touring Club) test track. The

OAMTC's core business is breakdown assistance but it has a number of subsidiary activities including several driver training centres throughout the country. The Saalfelden track has a slalom course and areas where braking techniques, obstacle avoidance manoeuvres, skid control and so on may be practised in safety, and our tests will include most if not all of these elements. They will certainly be entertaining to watch!

## **FRIDAY 17TH JUNE - SAALFELDEN TO PITCHLARN**

The first regularity of Day 4 is a gentle one, running through the area known as the Alpine Divide between North and East Tirol. We found the delightful little timber-built Seestuberl restaurant for our mid-morning coffee halt and decided to embark on our second regularity immediately afterwards. It is a charming run and again not too taxing.

Generally I try to avoid motorways, but I decided that today a short section was preferable to a lengthy alternative route because we are heading for something very special. Competitors must therefore ensure that they display on their windscreen the mandatory vignette required to use motorways in Austria, which may be purchased at fuel stations.

En route to Innsbruck, the original 1902 Paris-Vienna Race featured a terrifying crossing of the 1,793m Arlberg Pass. That road now runs through tunnels, presenting no challenge at all. Nevertheless the Paris-Vienna Rally is bound to include some of the greatest mountain roads in Europe and today we will drive one of the best - the Nockhalmstrasse.



*Great road - the Nockhalmstrasse*

Stretching 35km between Innerkrems and Reichenau, this beautiful road winds through 52 hairpin bends (no need to count them as they are all numbered!) with a maximum gradient of 12 per cent (1 in 8). As on most popular Alpine routes, one must watch out for bikers and drivers whose enthusiasm exceeds their capabilities or whose attention is more focused on the surrounding scenery than on the road. Nevertheless the drive is a wonderful experience and I am sure everyone will remember their trip to the 'Nocky Mountains'. Our lunch halt will be the Glockenhutte, a rustic lodge at the 2,024m summit of the Nockalmstrasse. From here you can see forever, across a stunning landscape that is a kaleidoscope of colour in June when the alpine roses are blooming.

You might suppose that after the Nockberg National Park the day will literally go downhill, and indeed it does as we descend from those lofty heights. However, there is more to come. Following a teasing little navigation section we head north and tackle a regularity that follows the course of the Wobringbach, a pretty mountain stream, before pausing for an afternoon tea break at a smart hotel, the Ferner Rosenhof. This is followed by another classic Alpine route, the 1,788m Solk Pass. Yet even this is merely the prelude to the day's finale, on the fabulous Stoderzinken toll road.



*Another great road - the Stoderzinken*

Climbing to 1,829m, the Stoderzinken features on Austria's answer to the Mille Miglia, the Ennstal Classic. There is only one way up and down the mountain, so all cars have to wait at the top for the last car to arrive before the first can begin the downhill run. The wait will not be too much of a hardship as there is a good mountain restaurant with marvellous views to enjoy. When everyone arrives we can leave for our overnight accommodation a few kilometres away, the Hotel Schloss Pichlarn, at the foot of the majestic Grimming Massif.

## **SATURDAY 18TH JUNE - PITCHLARN TO BADEN BEI WIEN**

Day 5 is not a long one, covering little more than 250km to the rally finish, and although the rolling landscape of Lower Austria is less dramatic than the Alpine terrain of yesterday it is nevertheless a glorious drive. Navigators, whilst hopefully enjoying the scenery, will still need to keep their wits about them as we have a few surprises in store to catch out the unwary!

To clear the morning traffic we start with a 50km run out to the first regularity. Thus far we have neglected a well known feature of Austrian cuisine - cakes and pastries - but today this will be addressed with the first Time Control at the Cafe Purkowitzer in Sankt Gallen, where you will find a tempting array of waist-expanding goodies. It might be wise to avoid outright gluttony here as the self-start of the regularity is only a kilometre back down the road we have just travelled, but it is a relatively straightforward one to ease everyone into the action and allow sufficient time to digest the cake!

From this gentle exercise to keep the grey cells ticking over we have a navigation section that leads us into the morning's second regularity. Our route generally follows the river as it twists and turns between the mountains and this regularity has a little twist of its own.

I had thought we could stop in the beautiful little town of Mariazell for another short break. One of local hoteliers we approached is a former participant in the London to Brighton Veteran Car Run, and he would be delighted for us to visit his establishment. He is obtaining permission from the mayor so that the cars may park in the main square opposite the hotel.

At some point on the third regularity of the morning, competitors might find themselves being applauded by a throng of bikers at one of the eateries en route. Apparently this is the place to be at weekends for the boys and girls in leather, who will surely appreciate the cars and possibly the driving and navigation skills on display.

Lunch will be in the delightful village of Rohr im Gebirge, at the hotel Kaiser Franz Josef. Mine host, yet another motorsport enthusiast, assures us that everyone in the village will turn out to welcome us. If so there should be quite an atmosphere in the narrow streets of this attractive little ski resort.

From here we will enjoy one more jogularity section before the final competitive 'sting in the tail' at the extensive OAMTC driver training centre at Teesdorf. This is similar to the one we visited at Saalfelden on Day 3 but being so close to the Austrian Capital it is the most popular of the OAMTC sites, boasting even more facilities and surprises. Here, in a fitting climax to

the rally, driving skills will be well tested and possibly the final results decided. Expect the unexpected on two terrific final tests!

Crews may explore Vienna tomorrow if they wish, so to avoid traffic jams and provide a memorable ending to the rally we will finish in the beautiful spa town of Baden bei Wien, 25km south of the city centre.



*The finish - Baden bei Wien*

After five days of exhilarating driving and unforgettable scenery, crews will retire to the lovely Schloss Weikersdorf for a black-tie Gala Dinner and Prizegiving and a merry exchange of stories between rally friends old and new. Who will lift the Charles Jarrott Trophy? We can't wait to find out!



*Cheers! Paris-Vienna racer Henri Farman in 1902*

***All route details correct at time of printing***