

The Tour du Peloponnese Vintage Auto Rally: “...The Last Wild Auto Rally In Europe...”!

...Per the Senior Representative of the HISTORIC CLUB CASTROVILLARI from near Milan, who was in attendance during a midnight TdP2022 planning meeting at a trendy Bistro on September 24,2022 just 90 minutes after I deplaned in Athens from Crete!

As someone very involved with the European-wide FIA auto events accreditation organization, his words, related to the running of the 9th consecutive Tour du Peloponnese, were meant to be taken as absolute fact rather than as a casual, late-night observation.

At a time when all Sanctioned Auto Rallies across Europe have been regulated by accreditation agencies and host countries, to often being little more than Point A to Point B to Point C events, the TdP, given Greece’s unique, often barrier-free road networks, and lack of national travel restrictions governing such events, these same words were also echoed continuously by journalists, media personalities, and other auto rally aficionados across Europe!

Whenever something appears too good to be true, at the time when proposed, one or all past experiences often win out and whatever “It” is, often is! And so it was received by most except our CAROC President, Dennis Sbertolli, who, subsequently supported my follow-on contacts, after I first surfaced the opportunity to him and our members to partake in this event!

At the time, given the far-flung distance to travel, expenses perceived and actual involved, the highly restrictive and ever changing COVID situation, and other unknowns as the registration deadline for TdP 2021 neared, CAROC member participation plans simply bogged down. Then finally during a Thursday night AVANTI Café meeting, Very Good Naturedly banter turned into a statement by one or more saying if it was such a good deal, “to put my money where my mouth was!

Which I did.

While serving as a previous CAROC Board Member, I was contacted by the TdP organizing agency, The Triskelion Group, Greece, CEO John Papanikolaouas, over 24 months ago and have remained in close coordination’s ever since, culminating in my participation as driver, with another Alfisiti, Frank Tabor, of Chicago, as our navigator, in the TdP 2022. We were the only American team in a field of 70 registered International Teams!

This turned out to be an opportunity of a lifetime! John took care of us, and true to his word, made available, free of charge, for our use, as CAROC members (Frank had applied previously years ago), our choice of 6 vintage rally cars maintained by the Group for select international participants. In our case, we chose the 1979 Datsun B180 Rally Car with 122,000 kms of experience under its bonnet! A wise choice, because after six grueling days and a night and

over 1,000 kilometers of adrenaline stoked competition, we ended up placing third in our class! A nearly unknown occurrence for first time participants.

We experienced road closing rockslides, detours onto nearly impassible dirt or gravel cow or goat paths spiraling down 3000' + high mountains, constant blind curves every few minutes of every 6-8 hour day, glorious ever changing scenery from valleys to mountain tops to sea views, on to visiting places we only heard or read about in the history books of our youth including Sparta, Olympia, Argos and more!

All participants stayed in 5-star spa resorts, fortresses, or castles nightly, with everyone, almost 200 in total, dining together nightly in near medieval settings all the while bonding and sharing experiences in over a dozen languages and sets of international gestures!!

Alfas amounted to about 30% of the field, followed by vintage Jags, Porsches, Mercedes, Citroens, Audis, others, AND even a 1929 Canary Yellow Ford Model A with 29,000 original miles on it...in ORIGINAL Showroom Condition, formerly belonging to the king of Belgium's private collection!

It was once told to me during travels to Cappadocia, Turkey that "you arrived here at our boutique hotel a stranger, but you leave family"! The same is true of the TdP rally participants.

Over 60% are repeats hailing from as far away as Australia! Conversations the first pre-rally evening's mixer ranged from...catching up on family gossip, to news from home to which business takeover was in the works, to who's castle was getting a new tennis court out of some state-of-the-art material! To the latest rally computers or android apps, to who bought who's car from the previous year! By the end of the 7th day, EVERYONE was heard making plans with each other for meeting up for the TdP2023!

For TdP 2023, registration is now open. CAROC members once again have their choice of 6 free rally cars from the Triskelion Group garage for pickup in Athens, Greece 2 days before traveling to the pre-rally registration point/resort. Pickup requires an Athens arrival during the last week of September, lodging on you! But, for anyone with Hyatt Points, the Hyatt THEOXENIA PALACE & House Suites on the far North side of the city (right nearby the pickup point for your rally car) is the absolute best deal in town, points or dollars-wise! Other Costs are as follows: Air Fare to Greece (British air from Chicago to Athens with miles is the best flight deal out there). Fuel and oil products. A \$1,200-1,400 (Depending on early or late registration) per team member Registration fee for the 7-day event which includes 5-star resort Team Member shared accommodations, Breakfast, Lunch stops, and Evening dinners (no alcohol or wine) and enroute maintenance support from rally contact maintenance teams, plus coordination support throughout the pre, conduct and post rally periods!

The best thing to do if interested, is go to view the Official 19 minuteTour du Peloponnese 2022....video production on YouTube to get a very clear picture of what's involved and what to expect...or not! The routes are changed every year!!!

...and Yes! Once again, I'm putting my money where my mouth is along with the planned Springtime shipment into Rotterdam of my 1986 Alfa Romeo Spider Veloce to partake once again in the Tour du Peloponnese 2023 on the first of October!

Hope to see you there!

Wayne Toberman