



The 23rd Classic Marathon

25 June - 1 July 2011

Route Survey News (March '11)



Viva España

It is fifteen years since the Classic Marathon last visited the rugged, wild and sparsely populated mountain regions along Spain's northern coast. Back in 1996, crews were taken in by the glorious traffic-free roads and spectacular beauty of this little known area. Having just returned from a very successful final route survey, Route Designer - Anthony Preston has found that little has changed providing us with the opportunity to put together one of the best Marathon routes of recent years...

Designed to appeal to a wide range historic rally enthusiasts, six days of concentrated rally action lie ahead (including nearly 40 Regularities and a good mix of Special Tests) combined with time to relax and enjoy the special hospitality offered by our choice of top class hotels and interesting lunch halts.

Day 1 - With the enthusiastic help of the Santander Tourist Office, crews can look forward to a great send off from **Santander** with a late morning start from the Plaza Porticada, right in the heart of the town.

Competition gets underway with an exciting special test followed by a series of interesting regularities through the foothills of the Cantabrian Mountains as we head west towards the spectacular jagged peaks of the Picos de Europa. En-route, we stop for lunch in a remarkable former monastery and enjoy another test at a local motorsport complex.

After a great afternoon of mountain rallying, we arrive at the attractive seaside resort of **Ribadesella** where we stay the night in a 4* beachfront hotel, which was once a summer palace of the Marquises of Argüelles.



Ribadesella

Day 2 - Leaving **Ribadesella**, we are quickly into the action with a brace of excellent regularities on classic stages from the Spanish Rally Championship in the Eucalyptus-clad hills of the Costa Verde.

After morning coffee and a quick test at a great little kart circuit, the scenery becomes more spectacular and the roads more challenging as we cross the high mountains of the Cordillera Cantábrica to reach our lunch halt in the attractive lakeside town of Riaño.



Cordillera Cantábrica

During the afternoon section, the surroundings become more arid as we explore the rolling hills of Castilla y León. This vast landscape hides some beautiful flowing switch back roads, ideal for classic rally sections as we make for **Ponferrada** and our overnight stop in a brand new 4* hotel on the outskirts of this historic town.

Day 3 - A superb day of competition is in prospect, starting with a long circuit test, just north of **Ponferrada**, before the morning's regularities take in a series of wild and lonely roads that snake their way through the picturesque Sierra del Courel mountains. Here you will appreciate the sheer emptiness and breathtaking beauty of Spain.

Our lunch stop today is in a converted 18th Century nobleman's country house close to the Sil Valley. From there, a busy afternoon of competitive motoring explores an excellent network of country lanes in the hills east of Ourense before we reach our night's halt at the 4* **Parador de Santo Estevo** - a former Benedictine monastery in a spectacular location overlooking the Cañón do Sil.



Parador de Santo Estevo

Day 4 - From **Santo Estevo**, we head west into the heart of Galicia with the morning's four regularities taking us through some wild and rugged landscapes, reminiscent of western Ireland. After which, we stop for lunch at the Pazo do Tambre - an elegant country villa nestling on the shores of a tranquil estuary.



Pazo do Tambre

Turning north, the afternoon's regularities follow the dramatic coastline of the Costa da Morte, which combines excellent rallying terrain with attractive vistas of serene white beaches squeezed between rocky headlands.

The afternoon concludes with a super circuit test just outside A Coruña before an easy cross-country run brings us to our overnight hotel - a secluded 4* spa complex near the pleasant little town of **Guitiriz**.

Day 5 - Just north of **Guitiriz**, a cracking first regularity twists and turns its way through the forests before making a dizzying descent into a narrow gorge. Further dramatic scenery is on offer as the rest of the morning's regularities take crews over the picturesque moorlands of Northern Galicia - very reminiscent of Dartmoor.

Following a terrific test at a small driver training centre, we ascend into the Asturian mountains en-route to lunch in the lovely little village of Taramundi.



Classic Marathon Motoring

A steep climb leads us away from lunch and onto a superb ridge road that wends its way along the top of the coastal cordillera. The views up here are simply magnificent - with the coastline of the Costa Verde far below you to the left and high mountain peaks stretching off into the distance to your right.

Descending from these idyllic surroundings, the competition begins again in earnest with a series of challenging regularities along sinuous mountain roads through some unspoilt Alpine-like countryside on our way to **Avilés**, where we spend the night in a luxurious new 4* hotel overlooking the coast.

Day 6 - Heading inland from **Avilés**, an interesting regularity through the lush farmland of the Corvera de Asturias area starts a demanding final day of competition, concentrating on the network of steep mountain lanes in the hills around Oviedo.

These challenging sections should provide a fitting finale to this year's event and might just shake-up the leaderboard as crews make their last bid for victory.

Not forgetting the social side on this busy final morning, we have found a lovely traditional hotel for the morning coffee stop whilst the lunch halt venue was an even better find - a beautiful 17th Century Asturian manor house set in a quiet valley just outside Oviedo.

After lunch, a final pair of regularities precedes an easy run into **Oviedo** and the grand finish, right in the centre of the elegant Asturian capital.



Oviedo

It is then a very short drive to the fabulous 5* Hotel de la Reconquista – the most famous hotel in Oviedo, where crews can share memories of another unforgettable week of Marathon motoring over a celebratory drink before the evening's lavish gala prize giving dinner rounds the event off in style.

See you in June...!

Anthony