

An Adventure Right out of a Book

By
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Photos by
Porsche

Two continents, five time zones, 7,235 kilometers (4,500 miles) between Moscow and the Mongolian capital Ulan Bator—and right in the midst of it, nineteen Porsche Cayenne S Transsyberia models dominating the Transsyberia Rally for which they are named. They win all of the time trials. And at the finish line, nine Cayennes are among the first ten.

From the diary of a success story.

July 11

A tough decision: in a forest between Moscow and Vladimir there's a fork in the trail. Which way to go—right or left? Heavy raindrops are splashing through the treetops. The thermometer reads 17 degrees Celsius (62 Fahrenheit): it's the coldest day of the Transsyberia Rally. Just before the fork, a huge puddle spans much of the trail, and deep ruts mark the soggy soil beyond. There's no time to consider options. The black Porsche Cayenne S Transsyberia enters the fork at 100 km/h (62 mph). Codriver Pedro Figueiredo has warned of a hidden bump in the narrow roadway ahead, and Pedro Gameiro instinctively steers the vehicle into a slight slide to the right. He also applies the brakes and achieves a perfect traverse across the bump. But a few mudholes later, he slams on the brakes harder, turns around, and heads back: he should have taken a left at the fork! This maneuver delays the Portuguese team by a minute. But at the end of the day, they reach the finish line of this time trial about fourteen minutes ahead of anyone else. Unlike many of the others, they had intuitively made the swift decision to turn around and get on the correct route.

July 13

It's Sunday, but not a day to relax. Today's stage covers 986 kilometers (612 miles)—the longest day trip on the schedule. A regular workday in the Ural Mountains, the divide between Europe and Asia. Later in the afternoon, it's time for the shortest time trial of the Transsyberia Rally, covering only ten kilometers, but a tough one nonetheless: a fast gravel track with many large puddles, hazardous bumps, and poor visibility of what lies ahead, due to rises and dips in the roadway. Not a stretch you can make good time on, but one where you can lose a lot. The word among the drivers has been to play it safe here. For Sergey Kvashnin and Alexey Pavlovskiy that means full speed ahead. They briefly become airborne on some bumps in the road, plow through rough, verdant meadows, and celebrate the first and only Russian day-trip win. Team Portugal takes 29 seconds longer for fifth place, but remains the overall leader.

July 16

The world is wrapped in gray. Visibility through the windshield is less than half a meter. The air is filled with dust. The only way you can possibly pass anyone is to take a chance at flying blind. The 78 kilometers (48 miles) of this time trial turn into a test of sheer guts. On this, his 45th birthday, former European Rally Champion Armin Schwarz with codriver Andreas Schulz posts the best time on the wide fields around Omsk, their third such win. Gameiro and Figueiredo are not so lucky. They have trouble navigating through the dense clouds of dust, take about 33 minutes longer than the German duo, and drop back into third place overall. Team Middle East takes over the lead. The Australians, too, have difficulties: "We could see absolutely nothing," says Paul Watson. "Once we were actually following the dust plume of a local tractor, because we thought it was another participant." That's getting pretty thick. ▶

Plowing straight through: On the tenth stage from Mankhan to Darvi, the main concern is maintaining visibility through your windshield



Cayenne undercover: Perfectly accustomed to such terrain, the Qatar Team wins the twelfth stage from Altay to Bayanhongor



July 18

The border crossing is not far from the village of Kosh Agash. Leaving Russia, entering Mongolia. Waiting for hours here becomes a time trial of another sort. A tedious test of everyone's patience amidst this rugged mountain world, but of course all the participants pass in the end. Their meeting point is in the tent camp near the Mongolian city of Ölgii.

July 21

Yard-sized boulders line the narrow trail that takes the participants ever higher up into the Altai Mountains. The rally's highest point is reached at 3,205 meters (10,500 feet) above sea level. On the right, towering ice peaks reach for the sky. A few kilometers beyond, further down in the valley, the participants cross a dry riverbed. What makes Mongolia so attractive are its extremes. The time trials here are pushed to a higher level: they are longer, harder on men and machines, and require total concentration. The 316 kilometers (196 miles) from Mankhan to Darvi include the toughest trial passages and extremely fast gravel roads. Rally drivers excel in steering skills. The Frenchmen Christian Lavieille and François Borsotto, who had al-

Near and far:
The narrow trails through the birch forests around Vladimir require the utmost concentration; Mongolia, on the other hand, evokes an entirely different sense of spaciousness (right)

ready reached the top in the rankings during the first trial in Mongolia, make the most of these conditions. They earn a day-trip win and lead the others by over 51 minutes.

July 24

Car-wash day. Among the rocky but colorful Mongolian hills the participants have to cross numerous rivers. Those who were here in 2007 are expecting the worst stretch to be that from Bayanhongor to Mongol Els. But this time the fords are easier. The difference is that this rally started a month earlier: it's a lot drier now. Still, there is no lack of hazards, in the form of unstable boulders and soggy subsoil—surfaces can be deceiving in this landscape. The winners of this stage are the Spanish Porsche Team Pau Soler and Laia Peinado. Only the French overall leaders, who started this penultimate stage with a lead of about an hour and a half, could afford to take



Car wash: On the next-to-last stage from Bayanhongor to Mongol Els, the ultimate victors are already easing up on their pace

it easy: "Today we didn't take any risks," reports Lavieille. "We took our time and enjoyed this marvelous scenery. The vista of wide valleys and splendid colors is just overpowering."

July 25

The last day. The roadbook lists 87 kilometers (54 miles). That's 87 kilometers in which everything can still be lost. The French with their Cayenne are now in the lead by

more than two hours. The Schwarz/Schulz duo wins this stage and has the largest number of day-trip wins, a total of six. But nothing happens to spoil the triumph of Lavieille and Borsotto. "We've done it! Our Cayenne can take a rest now," says Lavieille and launches into a veritable eulogy: "This Porsche is incredible. Especially considering that, except for a few minor changes, it's really the production vehicle. During the whole rally we only had to replace the shock absorbers. That's it. In every other way, this vehicle has taken us safely and victoriously to the finish."

July 28

Homecoming from the Transsiberia: in unpacking, traces of mud are found splattered even on the toilet kits. What might the undersides of the cars look like? ◀

Final standing, overall ranking, Transsiberia Rally 2008

1. Lavieille / Borsotto (Team France, Porsche) 27:13:27 hours
2. Soler / Peinado (Team Spain, Porsche) 2:15:25 hours behind
3. Schwarz / Schulz (Team Germany 1, Porsche) 2:21:14 hours behind
4. Gameiro / Figueiredo (Team Portugal, Porsche) 2:54:36 hours behind
5. Levyatov / Talantsev (Team Russia 1, Porsche) 3:53:15 hours behind

Transsiberia Route 2008



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|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1: Moscow Start | 10: Mankhan, 429 km (*5,335 km) |
| 2: Vladimir, 231 km (*231 km) | 11: Darvi, 316 km (*5,651 km) |
| 3: Kazan, 711 km (*942 km) | 12: Altay, 358 km (*6,009 km) |
| 4: Yekaterinburg, 986 km (*1,928 km) | 13: Bayanhongor, 519 km (*6,528 km) |
| 5: Tyumen, 483 km (*2,411 km) | 14: Mongol Els, 339 km (*6,867 km) |
| 6: Omsk, 672 km (*3,083 km) | 15: Ulan Bator, 368 km (*7,235 km / 4,500 miles) Finish |
| 7: Novosibirsk, 712 km (*3,795 km) | |
| 8: Kosh Agash, 890 km (*4,685 km) | |
| 9: Ölgii, 221 km (*4,906 km) | (* cumulative kilometers) |