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## Thoughts on entering the EuroClassic

As you may have read elsewhere on this site, I have done 12 of the 14 Euroclassics so far and I thought it might be useful to write up what I have learnt in all those runs to help anybody considering doing the run for the first time. The first thing I would like to say is that anybody thinking of doing the run should certainly do it if they can afford it and have a reasonably reliable classic car. In the last 15 years or so I have developed many friendships, visited many spectacular places, driven some truly breathtaking roads, and blasted my car around almost every GP circuit in Europe, all thanks to the Euro. The run is very well organised overall, the routes {and route books} are superb, and the back up of Norman Winchester's team of mechanics world class.

There are a few items though you need to be aware of before you set off:

### 1} Cost

When I did the early runs the entry fee was less than £500, the run required only 3 nights in hotels, mileages were short and the total cost for 1 car and 2 people was comfortably less than £1,500, even in a thirsty brute like the Corvette. Over the years though the run has become considerably longer and ever more expensive. The recently announced 2007 run has an entry fee of £1,500 plus £460 for the ferry {which nobody in the UK will do it without}, it requires a minimum of 7 nights in hotels, and with the mileages involved, I can't see the total cost for my car and 2 people being much less than £4k. That is expensive for a week away compared to a conventional holiday, but personally I don't think there is any comparison between the 2 if you are a classic car fan.

### 2} Time

Since the early runs the Euro has got progressively longer and the proposed 2007 route involves the most days yet. You catch the ferry on Sunday October 1<sup>st</sup> and return to Plymouth on the morning of Tuesday October 9<sup>th</sup>. That means at least 7 days off work and I'd recommend you take the Wednesday off as well to make that 8 as you are likely to be grateful of an extra day's recovery!

### 3} Distances

As the run has developed it has got longer and visited places further and further afield. As a consequence the total mileage, the mileage home, and the miles covered in a day have tended to rise. The runs post 2000 were often 1,200 miles, or more, in 5 days and involved me in journeys of over 1,000 miles long to get home afterwards. The MSA have become aware of this recently and tried to reduce mileages, but there are still days of 300 miles plus, which while nothing in a modern car on a motorway, can be quite gruelling in an old car, on minor roads, with several interesting checkpoints to fit in. People have done the run in Austin 7s and Model T Fords but I'd suggest that you need a car that can run quite comfortably at 60 or 70 mph, otherwise it will turn into an ordeal.



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### 4} Plan your day

Speaking personally, I always like to get back to the finish of a day's run reasonably early {by 5pm or 6pm at the latest} as this gives me time to have a beer or 3, discuss the day's events, then go for a shower before finding somewhere to eat at 8 or 9pm. It has not always been possible to do this and if you only get back to the hotel by 8 or 9pm in the evening, then the night is just one long rush. To avoid this I look at the day's run and the mileages involved and if it looks like being a long day, I will decide not to spend any time at certain checkpoints and just concentrate on the 1 or 2 that look most interesting.

### 5} Don't plan your night

Apart from the nights with organised dinners, your evenings are your own and I know some people get out the guide book and plan trips to various places. My personal view is that this is not a good idea, as often after a long day on the road what seemed like a good idea in the planning, will just become a chore. Once I have parked the car for the night, the last thing I want to do before morning, is drive it anywhere. In the evening I normally just feel like a few beers and a nice meal hopefully in a decent place with a few other entrants. It always seems much better if you don't organise it especially after a day when everything is organised for you.

### 6} Hotels and car parking

In the early days, entrants were often spread around many small hotels, often with limited car parking and the cars were left in some central area with security on overnight. I always found the security very good, the big problem normally came from the coach transfer to and from the guarded car park which could be a pain. Hotels within walking distance of the car park were always a real bonus. Since Kuoni took over bookings, we seem to have been booked into fewer, larger hotels, often part of chains like Novotel, Sofitel, Mercure etc. These often have their own parking, but can present other problems by being located further out of town, and, while they do have a bar and restaurant, this is normally overwhelmed by dozens of hungry and thirsty entrants! If you find yourself in such a place, either organise a taxi or have your meal very early! A hotel in the centre of town near bars etc is much preferable even if it means using the coaches. If you get one which is in the centre of town, but either has a secure car park or is within walking distance of the central car park, consider yourself very lucky!

### 7} Breakdowns

The runs have a quite superb team of mechanics supporting them, and they will move heaven and earth to keep you going on the run. You can help them by bringing a few obvious parts like hoses, fan belts, bulbs, oil etc though even if you have none, they will probably find something that fits! If a breakdown should be terminal something like "Europ Assist" is very useful.



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### 8) Take a camera

The run normally has a professional photographer, who takes a lot of very good shots of your car on the circuits and at particularly spectacular points on the run. You should take your own though, I have half a photo album per run, on each of the ones I have done and now wish I had taken more. On the same subject keep your route book and the list of entries. I used to throw them away after the run but they are great souvenirs and also help settle arguments years later!

### 9) Event dinners

Included in your entry fee are normally 2 organised dinners, one in the middle of the event and one at the end. These are normally in big function suites and are reasonably smart affairs but don't feel the need to really dress up. Most of the entrants are in tiny sports cars so formal evening wear is pretty thin on the ground! The dinners are though, a good place to meet other entrants and these days I always prefer to be on tables where there are people I've never spoken to before, rather than just be with the gang I already know. You will find most people on the run are nice and once you have identified the couple of "annoying" regulars that there are, you can make sure you avoid them in future!

### 10) What to take

You are going to be spending most of the time in the car, so comfort rather than style is of the essence. If you have a big car you can take plenty of luggage, but most sports cars are very limited for a long trip like this. I always take a pair of jeans and a pair of smarter trousers {for the event dinners and also in case I get wet during the day} plus a pair of shorts for if it gets hot. I take lots of t-shirts plus 2 short sleeved proper shirts, a pullover, and my leather jacket which is warm, waterproof, and can stand being screwed up and forced into small spaces. I take 1 pair of trainers/sandals and 1 proper pair of shoes, some sun glasses which act as reserve to my normal glasses, and lots of sun cream. Maps and a guide book to the area you are visiting are also useful though the route book covers a lot of this anyway.

**Bill Martland**

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