



SMELL THE ROSES

LA LEGGENDA DI BASSANO, ITALY 22-25 June

THE MILLE MIGLIA is a bucket-list event, but there's no doubt that it retains a certain romance in part because crews are never quite allowed to forget the challenges faced by those who took part between 1927 and 1957. By the standards of the original and deadly 1000-mile race, today's regularity is a cakewalk, but the press-on programme doesn't suit everybody.

Those in search of a first-class but more laid-back Italian rally experience have found it – in increasing numbers in recent years – in the form of La Leggenda di Bassano, known until 2016 as Le Mitiche Sport a Bassano.

Held over three days (22-25 June this year), it boasts a field the equal of any in the world: a maximum of 100 open-top pre-1960 competition cars. The organisers allow road

cars that look the part, too, but the dress code is strictly enforced. The list of entries typically includes everything from Blower Bentleys and Alfa 8Cs to Jaguar C- and D-types and Ferraris of the 1950s.

Like the Mille Miglia, La Leggenda di Bassano is, nominally, at least, a competitive event. 'A regularity, if you can be bothered', as one long-time fan puts it, amusingly – and with the 600km route through the Dolomites taking in some of the most spectacular mountain scenery you'll ever see, we'd not fault anybody for tossing aside the stopwatch and simply drinking in the views.

There's plenty of time to enjoy both the surroundings and the fine hospitality, thanks to a most civilised schedule. The first car

departs from Bassano del Grappa (about 60km north of Padua) at 1:30pm on the Friday for a 5:30pm arrival at the day's overnight halt. (No sense staying in a nice hotel if you don't arrive in time to appreciate it). On Saturday and Sunday crews are flagged away at 8:30am and the driving broken is up into manageable two-hour stints.

The whole thing, somewhat unbelievably in this day and age, is organised as a not-for-profit enterprise by volunteers, and their passion for historic cars and pride in the region they call home shine through. Moreover, their generosity of spirit is reflected in the attitude of the crews, so newcomers can expect to be welcomed warmly.

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