



A view of the Swartberg Pass

Article and photos by Hans Jorg Matter

Some 26 years back most Classic Car events were of a competitive nature. However a number of pre-war enthusiasts would have liked a touring event specifically for the older cars which they felt did not get enough exercise nor open road exposure. So, Russel Wolpe, Andrew Mc Robert, Geoff Valentine and Leonard Schneider got together to plan and implement the "The Nostalgic Old Car Tour", specifically for pre-1935 cars. They stayed over at the newly-opened Grand Roche Hotel where they paid the princely sum of R250 for dinner, bed and breakfast.

The tour was a great success and they decided to make this an annual event. The following year, in 1998, there were 13 participants and the

meeting point was the Clanwilliam Hotel. Enthusiastic participant Clive de Bruin then coined the name SONDER NONSENS VREETSAAM TOUR, which was duly adopted for these tours.

Graham Davies was responsible for getting me involved in this new passion for old cars with the purchase of a neglected 1930 Ford Model A Roadster. Graham was very enthusiastic about this tour, so it became a frantic race with his great help to get my car ready for the next year's tour, as I did not want to miss out on this new adventure.

The year 2000 was the

first tour for Pam and myself, with our 1930 Ford Model A Roadster, but actually the third Sonder Nonsens Vreetsaam Tour undertaken, which had grown to 21 participants. Sometime later the

rules were slightly relaxed to allow in newer entries, up to 1960.

The next Sonder Nonsens Vreetsaam Tour took us on an expanded tour, which included Calvinia, a stop very few of us will



A welcome rest stop outside the Prince Albert Hotel



The Plymouth at Meiringspoort

forget. What happened there was that one of the organizers knew the local bank manager who strongly recommended a particular hotel. We arrived to find that the owner of the hotel had passed on and the staff of the hotel had decided to run it themselves, which turned out to be a bit of a disaster.

The Sonder Nonsens Vreetsaam Tour has grown over the years and has now reached the stage where it often is fully booked due to the limited accommodation available in many of the country towns visited.

The 24th Sonder Nonsens Vreetsaam Tour started on the 2nd October 2023. Most of the participants gathered around noon at the Kroonplaas Padstal, at the Touws River Engen on the N1, where some refreshments were enjoyed. Then on to the Lord Milner Hotel in Matjiesfontein, where we stayed for the night. There we were also taken on the shortest bus tour in South Africa, an hilarious ten minutes, followed up by a ghost tour and a music performance by the well-known Johnny in the bar. At dinner the group was officially welcomed by our tour leaders, Leonard Schneider and Jan Potgieter.

DAY 2: After breakfast, the tour party departed on the 227 km journey to Beaufort West, where we were booked in at the Wagon Wheel Hotel. As we travelled, mostly in small groups, we were awed by the beauty that the Karoo landscape has to offer. The bright yellow-clad mountain slopes in the Leeu-Gamka area were quite amazing. This was followed later by pink-purple flowering plants covering fields and the mountains. Tour members were free to make pit stops along the way at some of the many stalls.

DAY 3: We left Beaufort West after breakfast for a 131 km trip to Prince Albert (via Klaarstroom). Once again, we encountered a kaleidoscope of colours unknown in this area. The yellow and pink-purple flowers encountered before were now joined by white and orange Namakwa daisies. We booked in at the well-known Swartberg Hotel. This hotel has a magnificent rose garden and serves scrumptious meals.

DAY 4: After a delicious breakfast, we departed for our 111 km journey to the Protea Marriott Hotel in Oudtshoorn. Members had

an option to travel via Meiringspoort or the Swartberg Pass. We did not want to miss either, so we first travelled the magnificent Swartberg Pass, a pass I had discovered first by chance some 60 years earlier. Then back again and twice through the amazing Meiringspoort to shoot some photos from both sides. Unfortunately, I had caught a tummy bug and I ended up in the Oudtshoorn Hospital for a few days.

DAYS 5 AND 6: The touring party left Oudtshoorn for Mossel Bay, a distance of some 385 km. Some twenty couples showed an interest in the power car railway trip to the top of the pass from the railway station in George. A few took the alternative route over the Outeniqua Pass to Mossel Bay, to the Diaz Hotel where we would spend the next 2 days. This part of our country is indeed the Garden Route. The group marvelled again at the scenic landscape. The theme

for the last evening's dinner was an "Evening in the 50's" and tour members went out of their way to dress up for the occasion. After breakfast on Sunday, it was time to hit the road back home.

Another enjoyable classic car tour to experience the beauty of our South African landscape had come to an end!

PS: As I was in no condition to proceed, Leonard kindly drove us home in my car thanks very much Leonard!



Jacques & Wilna Pienaar's 1934 Chevrolet Coupé



Louise Farrell's & Greg Bjorkman's 1949 Citroën 11BL



John Smith's & Peter Stockl's 1960 Alfa Romeo Giulietta Sprint



Kobus Halliday's 1959 Mercedes-Benz 190



Those unmistakable Karoo roads



Above right: A fun bus ride on a genuine London double decker



Right: Old fashioned service at the Lord Milner Hotel and far right: The luxurious Lord Milner Suite.

