



BUGATTI ESPAÑA 2011

Viva España!

5-11 June. Burgos, Spain

Words: Jonathan Botting Photography: Francesco Piras/Pietro Bianchi

THE RAIN MAY FALL on the plain in Spain, even in June, yet inclement weather couldn't dampen the enthusiasm of the 97 entrants on the Bugatti Owners' Club inaugural visit.

Based in the historic city of Burgos, the cars were displayed throughout the week in front of the Museo de la Evolucion Humana – that is, when they weren't being tested on wonderfully twisting and deserted roads. Each morning the snake of cars – ranging from an immaculate 1920 Brescia (brought from the USA by the effervescent judge Tina Byrd) to a pair of Veyrons – would blast through red lights, waved on by local police, to the bemusement of the locals.

The touring routes had been plotted by the ultra-efficient 2 Fast 4 You team, and went through the heart of the wine districts of Rioja and Ribero del Duero, including some dramatic climbs and descents through mountain passes reaching into the clouds. It was on one of these twisting downhill corners that Peter and Merle Mullin's immaculate Type 57SC (from his Californian collection) took a slight detour into, in Peter's own words, 'a soft and verdant' ditch as his steering locked up. These cars are tough and the car was pulled out undamaged. Had the steering chosen a different location to malfunction the outcome could have been rather more serious.

Despite potentially mixing drink with driving (including visiting the picturesque and historic Villa Tondonia), the five-day rally with over 1000km of spirited driving was not marred by anything more than a couple of minor knocks. One owner managed to drive her Type 35 into the van giving her a tow start onto the ferry at Portsmouth, and then took out a modern car on a junction in Spain. As I said, these cars are tough and damage to the Bugatti was slight... It would, however, be fair to observe that it is better to untie the tow rope before driving off and when abroad not to assume *priorité à droit*.

Villa Tondonia was a particularly appropriate visit, as entrants were



entertained by María José López de Heredia Montoya, whose family members have not only run the winery for many generations but also driven (and in the past even tragically died in) classic cars. They still own the tub for one of the world's most unusual Bugattis, fitted with a detachable aluminium roof, but without the benefit of windows and only two tiny slits for a windscreen. Only in Spain.

The vineyard is a showpiece for everything traditional in Rioja. In contrast, the final lunch was located in the ultra-modern Frank Gehry-designed Marques De Riscal winery and hotel. The city provided a wonderful backdrop to the whole spectacle, and if you too fancy mile after mile of empty, twisting and mainly smooth roads then Burgos and the surrounding countryside should beckon. Ideally have your own Grand Prix Bugatti to really enjoy it.

Top and above left
A total of 97 Bugattis of all eras (plus mysterious BMW 328 and Jaguar XK150) descended on Burgos, Spain, for the Bugatti Owners' Club international meeting; author Jonathan Botting driving Bugatti Type 39 (pale blue car).