



AURORA 101 in Greece

Phaethon 2004, 22-28 May 2004

Report 2 - Tuesday 18th May

We were greeted with a crisp, crackling morning with the blues and whites of Greece looking like the tourist brochures show.

At breakfast it was like an international gathering. The Bulgarian boxing team, the Hong Kong world champion sailboarder, Australia's world champion sailboarder Jessica Crisp and 3 solar car teams.

The 2 German solar car groups were Hans Go and Helios. So it was introductions all around.

Back to the Internet cafe. There we met members of the Yale University solar car group. They were still waiting for their own car to arrive by truck from Spain where it had been offloaded from the ship that was intended to come to Piraeus.

Which of course brings up the question of where is the Aurora 101? The latest on that score is that the ship is due to arrive tomorrow. Conditions at the port are hugely congested. The truck drivers are still threatening a strike. We certainly hoping for clearance in time to show off Aurora 101 at the reception being staged by the Australian ambassador Stuart Hume.



The event organiser being tied directly to the Cultural Olympiad can take advantage of some of the great landmarks of Athens for staging the parts of this event. For example the official scrutineering events and dynamic trials will take place on Saturday 22nd May at the Zappion building set in a central park of Athens. In this precinct are the Botanical Gardens and Parliament house. After checking this site we had to visit the nearby Acropolis. The extent of architectural achievement is breathtaking and the objective of restoring the site piece by piece is extraordinary.



Then we went looking for the official starting point for the Rally section of Phaethon 2004. To do this we needed to find the new Olympic stadium, north-east of Athens. Traffic, traffic, traffic. Hopefully Olympic visitors will take the train. We didn't actually find the starting point for the rally, but we got close. Threading our way back south we attempted to join the freeway going to Piraeus but found that a series of on-ramps were incomplete and therefore closed. The Greek drivers had a solution at the next off-ramp, that was to reverse up the off-ramp and join the freeway. We bravely did the same. A very skilled Greek driver decided to come up the off-ramp straight at us, and even managed a mobile phone conversation while doing so.



Near the hotel we diverted to visit the Helenikon airport and were pleased to see 5 solar car teams making their own preparations there. TIGA, the favourite from Japan greeted us warmly, as did other veterans of the recent World Solar Challenge. The team from Taiwan, Hans Go and Helios from Germany and the Brazilian Banana had arrived. The Brazilians had suffered 3 trans shipments in reaching Athens and their vintage solar car was looking a bit battered.



The day had a magnificent ending in a dinner hosted by Ford Greece. Chrysa, Ford's PR manager had invited both the marketing and financing managers to honour Costas Cavathas, chairman of 4-Wheels magazine. Mr. Cavathas has served on the European committee for COTY (Car of the Year) for many years, and his 4-Wheels magazine boasts the highest circulation of any magazine in Greece. What we did discover that the staging of the Phaethon 2004 event was Costa's idea, and that he has an even bigger idea for 2008. What a great finish to the day. And all this without a solar car.
