



THE CARRERA PANAMERICANA AND ITS LEGEND
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Adriano Cimarosti Collection Image

The 1951 winning car, the Ferrari 212 Inter, c/n 0171 EL, of Taruffi and Chinetti, at the start of the Mexico City leg.

VIVA MEXICO!

■ In order to celebrate the completion of the Mexican section of the Pan-American Highway in 1950, it was decided to run a motor race running the full length of Mexico.

■ An event run in the tradition of the great inter-city races, from the Texas border, with desert and prairie in the north, through Mexico City and on to the Guatemala border at the southern end of the country.

■ The Carrera Panamericana was thus funded and organized by automobile associations and the Mexican government, in partnership with the states through which the course ran,

in the hope of creating both economic opportunities and social awareness.

■ This 1950 edition attracted a large entry from Mexico and the USA, and 132 crews took the start in early May for five days and nine legs across the countryside.

■ The 3300 km course was dantesque, and only 47 crews were classified. US drivers dominated the race, led by Hershel McGriff with his Oldsmobile 88 who won, beating the Cadillac 62 of T.A. Deal and Al Rogers, while the first European, Piero Taruffi, finished fourth with his Alfa Romeo 6C 2500.

■ The Carrera Panamericana proved to be a tremendous bench test, where the simple fact of finishing was already an exploit.

■ It earned an immediate reputation as the most complete, challenging and dangerous competition in the world, four people having paid for it with their lives. This was the ultimate proving ground both for the cars and for the men.

■ Everything was unique about this race, being for example the first international event where the cars were adorned with sponsorship advertising. It was also an adventure which could

turn out to be financially interesting, because while participating was expensive, the prize money was high.

■ The competitors were finally very well welcomed, with great hospitality and fine accommodations, and with banquets scheduled at night.

■ This first race was therefore adjudged a great success, to the extent that it would be repeated.

■ The Europeans, and even the rest of the world, were soon to succumb to the Messicana fever...

