



Cadillac & LaSalle Club Potomac Region Caddie Chronicle January 2025



'65 CADILLAC ON DRIVING TOUR IN CHINA BY HARRY CLARK CLASSIC PROMENADE

***It is illegal to have a car older than 15 years old on the roads in China,
unless it is imported for a collector car tour!***



Who would have guessed that we would be weaving our massive 1965 Cadillac Eldorado through scooters, brown cattle, herds of solid black goats and random chickens whilst attempting to follow somewhat vague driving directions through China. But let's not get ahead of the story.

Spending ten days in November 2024 participating on a collector car tour through Hainan Island, China was a unique experience. The opportunity was presented through the online marketplace prewarcar.com and the proposition was too good to pass up. The organization would pay for the transport of a qualified and accepted pre-1970 collector car from a major port to China and back. In addition, the cost for the event was reasonable. My wife, Heather, and I just needed to ship the car from the Phoenix, Arizona area to the Los Angeles port and get ourselves to Hainan Island



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The communication from the organizers was not clear nor plentiful, but luckily for us the owner of prewarcar.com, Laurens Klien, had been on several of these tours and was our intermediary. His communication was excellent. And since prewarcar.com is located in the Netherlands, nearly all of the 60 older cars on the tour were from either Belgium or the Netherlands. There were no other Americans on the tour and nearly no Americans anywhere in China these days.

We selected the 1965 Cadillac Eldorado because we wanted to use a car that was distinctly American, as well as imbued with the benefits of air conditioning, power everything and other creature comforts the Eldorado offers. Comfortable it was, fuel efficient, agile and small it was not. This was a five-day 800 mile tour held over ten days, when including the ceremony and organizing days.

The event started at the JW Marriott in Sanya, which is very comparable to Hawaii or Florida. The architecture is spectacular and most every aspect of the experience was that China is a very modern and sophisticated country. Most all of the sleek modern cars, buses and scooters were electric, silently maneuvering through the wide and modern roads. There were several brands of Chinese cars that have stunning design, incredible comfort and stunning electronics. This is not a backwards, agrarian country.

The opening ceremony was in the main beachfront plaza and open to the public with throngs of Chinese and Russian tourists enjoying the celebration. Live music, a red dancing dragon performance and at least one million photos were taken.





Cadillac & LaSalle Club Potomac Region Caddie Chronicle January 2025



There were about 35 cars from 16 countries ranging from a 1926 Bugatti Type 37 and a 1928 Cadillac V8 Convertible Coupe to a 1973 Porche 911 2.7 RS, and then there were an additional 30 cars from eager Chinese participants.



Cadillac & LaSalle Club Potomac Region Caddie Chronicle January 2025



Outside of the cities we still caught a glimpse of the China of old with the rickshaws stacked with bags of coconuts, rice farmers working in the fields and the farm animals scattered everywhere, including in the middle of the streets and freeways!

Half of the island showed signs of a catastrophic typhoon that had hit a couple of months earlier, with trees fallen nearly everywhere. In the middle of this impacted region, we passed the Chinese satellite launch facility which looked much like the Kennedy Space Center facility. Throughout the tour we saw literally hundreds of huge empty high-rise buildings only half finished that had been abandoned, with no reasonable hope to ever be completed. A sign of a country with nearly unlimited resources trying to figure out how to continue its prosperity.



At the beginning and end of each day the organizers set up an entire ceremony site, always with music and an emcee, stages, flags, red carpets and seating for the audience. The Chinese certainly love their ceremonies and no opportunity was missed to offer one. Fortunately, the organizers were consistently brief in their remarks.



The food overall during the event was excellent Chinese fare, with wonderful aromas and flavors. Hainan Island offers a continuous bounty of fresh seafood as well as a seemingly unending offering of vegetables, pork and chicken. Needless to say, Heather and I did not go hungry throughout our stay.



Cadillac & LaSalle Club Potomac Region Caddie Chronicle January 2025



The end of the tour was also in Sanya and had a very long and enjoyable concluding ceremony. Awards were presented to nearly all of the participants and the public was invited to take photos and mingle with us. The Chinese people are very warm although there are few English speakers and little ability to communicate. Heather and I were presented with an award from the Organizing Committee,

perhaps for carrying with us through the tour a wonderful Dutch couple who became fast friends. I also was awarded most Fashionable Gentleman, most likely because I had the guts to wear a *Barbie* pink-linen sport coat at the opening ceremony dinner. The overall winner was awarded to a well-deserved and hard-working couple of Dutch guys with a 1974 DAF Army Jeep (pictured below left), which can go equally as fast forward and reverse!





Cadillac & LaSalle Club Potomac Region Caddie Chronicle January 2025



Overall, this was an incredible experience that would be impossible for us to duplicate. It was a pleasure and honor to represent the U.S. in this small way and to learn so much about China and see it from a completely different set of lenses. China is impressive, formidable, advanced and in many ways, trying to figure itself out. There are no signs of old-school communism and nearly everyone is an employee or entrepreneur. It is a very safe, albeit controlled country, with amazing strengths and clear challenges. We look forward to the next opportunity to join in on a collector car tour in China!

