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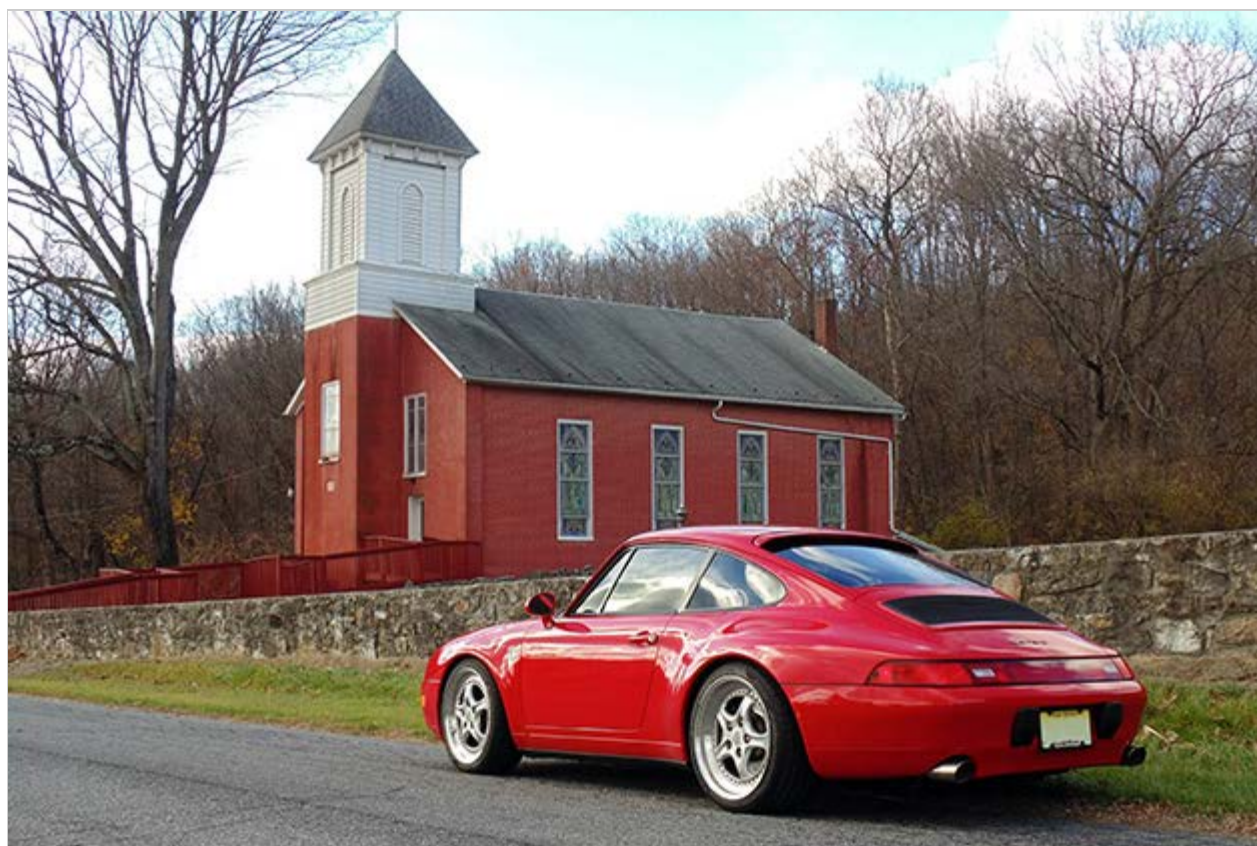
# The Delaware to France

**Pablo Deferrari**

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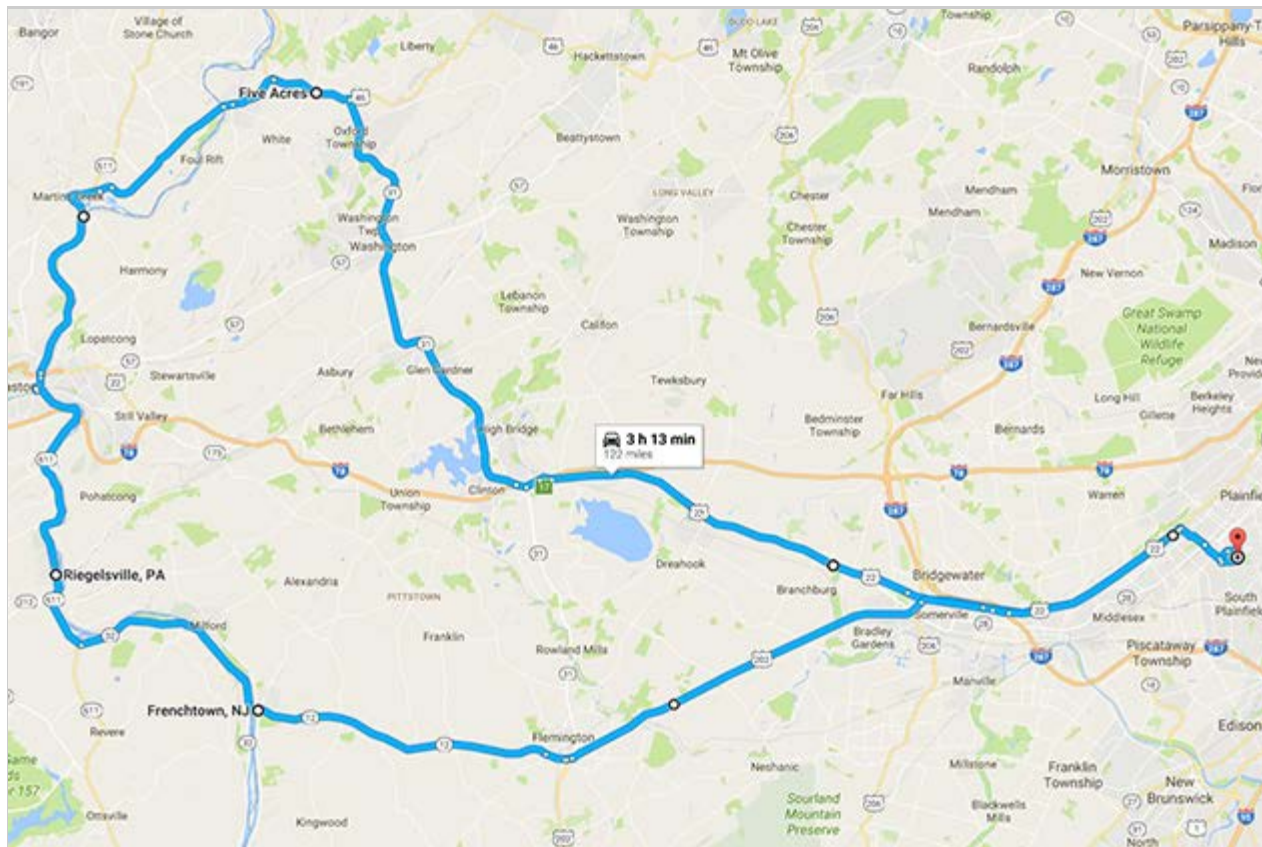
One of the churches on Three Church Hill in Martins Creek, Pennsylvania.

They had no idea.

Six pistons had been fired awake without a clue they'd be pounding us down paths founders of this country had

squatted, built and defended. Their needs were simple; air, gas and a bit of spark — and so were ours.

No particular destination or reservations. Our motivation bursts from ink-smearred maps with taped creases laid across the dogs on our bed. A swig of coffee, a trace of the finger over some backroads and triple-digit county byways is enough to get some idea of direction. Within 30 minutes, we're seated, strapped and pushing the handbrake's trigger.



Our 122-mile route fully mapped out.

It doesn't happen when snaking out of the neighborhood's grid, or when stopping minutes later to fill the tank. It's during the first long stretch of a two-lane road without semaphores and stop signs that freedom's no longer a lust, or a daydream — it's *real*.

The 911 feels different; *sounds* different. The tarmac had been stretched tight, losing its tire-roaring imperfections giving way to sounds the air-cooled engine wanted us to hear. As if she shook off 100 kilos of lead and insulation, drew a long breath and sprang into the air — every mile was a miracle.

Maybe it's the state of mind the mid-October air ignites. The trees, some with leaves painted in reds, oranges and yellow; others naked, don't talk about death, but of change — and that's what calls out to have a look at the landscape's new dress.

It was County Road 620 begging for me to hold the throttle down a bit longer in second gear and wait, just through the trees coming off the left sweeper, until the Pequest River snuck up on the left — put it in third! Nonpareil du Monde, Uncle Buck's Diner and Nick's Liquors was about to become a flash of memory as we

blasted through Belvidere. In a few seconds, the Delaware River would coo from under the bridge that the adventure was about to begin.

The Riverton-Belvidere Bridge shot us out into acres of Pennsylvania farmland. Martins Creek, with her blanket of green and ochre patches stained with silos, red barns and clapboard houses, laughed at this raspy Guards Red jellybean ripping through.

Our insignificance was obvious. The depth of the sky and fields of crops long since gone to seed was like being adrift in the Atlantic. But the intimacy of the Carrera's cocoon erased the contrast; we felt snug as hell in there watching the world live on the Sekurit widescreen. My woman snapped shot after shot while I turned my head now and then — not to look at her subjects, but to lend an ear to the fan and six air-cooled jugs sucking air.

Clutch in, foot rolls off the brake, blips the throttle, the gear lever springs to neutral — *point mort*. This would be the last time we'd sit at a semaphore and hear the oil's gurgle for a while; hugging the Delaware's left bank on Route 611 would be an uninterrupted song when the light turned green.



Blasting down PA-611.

It's right there.

We know it is, slithering on the left, behind Alpha Cement's 22 concrete silos. The Delaware River can't be seen from Route 611 yet, but another gear and a few hundred feet reveal it.

This must have been what the Lenape Indians saw from the shores on this side; the current flowing south, a

thicket of trees and patches of dried dirt marking the shoreline. No one would believe our speck of a state still has unspoiled views like this.

At four-and-a-half grand, second gear baits the 3,6's feral growl; it interrupts the serenity of the view. Third gear steps in with a muzzle ... the compromise suits us both. There'd be plenty of road left ahead to play that rock and roll when the scenery shrugged the shoulders.

Like an inseparable couple, PA-611 and the Delaware hug each other for miles. Streaks of greens, oranges, reds and yellows pinched between two shades of blue go by slower than the speedometer needle points out. The eyes are seduced away from the road ahead too often as more of the river and Jersey's wooded banks reveal themselves; temptation comes with a risk.

The couple quarrels and splits approaching the city of Easton, Pennsylvania; so does the foot and throttle. 611 meets the Lehigh River; the affair is an invitation to pull into a park at the confluence's shallow waterfall.

It's busy here; Interstate 78 and Route 22 perched overhead while across the other side of the Lehigh, three other bridges, including a four trestle job reeking of the industrial revolution, exchange freight trains between the two states. Off in the distance is the centerpiece, the Easton Dam and Lock 24 — the business *end* of the Delaware Canal. The camera howled for mercy.



Frenchtown at sunset — it's love.

Easton wasn't selfish. When it shuffled us back on to PA-611 in haste, it was understood; the sign forked into its shoulder read *Delaware River Scenic Drive*. Two lanes split by double yellow paint would make good on that promise.

Never mind centuries-old rock slab walls and viaducts history randomly left behind on the shoulder, the Delaware Canal winked us over for a look. It hugged 611's sweeping lefts and rights flashing parallel views of the Delaware, hills of New Jersey, and towpath peppered with runners, cyclists and lovers hand in hand.

Foot bridges, Whippoorwill Island and St. Paul's Church glided by on the left. Just after the town of Raubsville were Locks N° 23 and 22 called us in — a family of 184-year-old gates, gears and cogs called us in for a few shots.

First, second, third; we highball back on 611 where the curves tighten and the hills become grown-ups. A speed limit of 45 mph lets the flat six sing staccato between second and third gear; then, arrows in yellow warn of a tight left. Down to second, hard on the throttle, 285mm of planted rubber push us 'round.

Another postcard comes to view ahead, another 200-year-old wall on the right, another chance to roll down the window, let off the gas and hear six pistons roar.

The fight for this country's independence boiled around these parts 240 years ago, the stone buildings approaching Riegelsville and further down PA-611 revives this history. Pieces of back-door Europe hide behind a new identity settlers were trying to hone; it's America at her youngest.



The romance of the trip is underscored.

Rolling through Upper Black Eddy, Pennsylvania with its mid-century modern ranches, American colonials, and 18th-century cottages sitting on acreages, there's a flirt with the idea of sinking roots in these parts. These river towns untouched by our generation's raze-renew-refill obsession offer a different way to look at life; simple,

uncluttered — breathable.

With the last of the sun tucking westward, Pennsylvania slips between the steel trusses of the Uhlerstown-Frenchtown bridge. It's over cappuccinos and a peanut butter cookie at the Bridge Café that wrapped pinkies seal the agreement between us; watching the Delaware ripple by in this place called Frenchtown for a little while *feels* right.



The agreement made over a crumbled cookie.

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#### About the Author



A dyed-in-the wool, air-cooled 911 junkie, Pablo Deferrari doesn't discriminate against other Porsches. Want further proof? He's in love with Porsche's early water-cooled models and is dedicated to the celebration of the 924, 928, 944 and 968 series. Pablo is one car away from having all four of these models in his own collection: the 924.

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