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Santa Rosa → Manila

Appropriate quality, the cars that are needed.

The Philippine capital of Manila has some of the world's worst traffic congestion. Roads with five lanes in one direction are completely filled with cars. A little farther on the lanes get reduced to four, then three, then two, and merging cars nose their way in. You have no choice but to brake, which makes the traffic backup even worse. It took around three hours just to get out of the city. Cars finally began to move once the team got on the highway in the suburbs. After another hour, they found themselves on a country road. Cows grazed on grass by the side of the road, and farmers could be seen plowing rice

paddies. Kosuke Kawaji of the Advanced Vehicle Engineering Development Division and Tatsuro Oi of the Purchasing Project Promotion Division drove as if to check the performance of the diesel-engine Fortuner. Kawaji said he wanted to feel the road more compared to the floating sensation the Fortuner had on paved roads, while Oi answered that he liked its reassuring feel when driving on rough road surfaces and potholes. Oi has specific opinions about what kinds of cars are wanted locally from his experience travelling the world as part of the purchasing department as well as his experience working in the Quality Assurance Division several years prior.

"I used to think a lot about really precise fittings and driving

performance, but honestly, people in the Philippines don't really care. Cars are incredibly expensive in terms of the cost of goods in the Philippines. But they still buy our cars, so what I think we can do is make less expensive cars. This doesn't mean lowering quality, but reflecting appropriate quality in the cost."





On a road with “tricycles” weaving in and out.

Getting off the highway and onto smaller roads, the team encountered mobility they were not accustomed to seeing in Japan. Local buses called jeepneys and motorcycles with sidecars, called “tricycles” in the Philippines, are what people use to get around. Fumito Akiyama of the CV Vehicle Evaluation and Engineering Division says that the tricycles, whose style varies slightly in each region, in particular may be the best solution for Filipinos. Like Oi, he believes there is a best solution that factors in costs, even in the crash safety field in which he works.

“The types of accidents vary by country too, so I think there are areas related to collision safety design, which inevitably has a large impact on costs, that should be revised. But still, tricycles that families can squeeze into and that also don’t go very fast are the best answer on local roads in the

Philippines. We have not been able to make mobility that outperforms that. Safety is of course a concern, but it makes me think, how can I put it, about cars that have local followings and what that is.”

After spending the night in the mountain town of Baguio, the team descended to the town of Subic at sea level. This port town formerly hosted the largest U.S. military base in Asia, and its restaurants and wide streets still today retain an American feel.

Drive Project to affirm one’s own work.

The “best car” was a big topic of discussion while the team drove in the Philippines. It was the same for Mei Nagao of the Business Planning Division, who was involved in the Hilux from the time it was a plan on a single sheet of A4 paper and monitored it through to its market launch. Indeed, as someone who carefully watched the process of how the model’s

combination of functions and cost was chosen, the idea of the “best car” made her really stop and think. She talked about this as she drove a Hilux – “my baby” as she calls it – that she had a hand in creating.

“To tell the truth, there’s not much I don’t know about the local conditions in Asia including the Philippines and what local markets want. But were things that we could not include back then truly unnecessary? Was leaving them out the right decision? One of my goals in the Drive Project is to hear what the Drive Project members who are driving on the roads of the

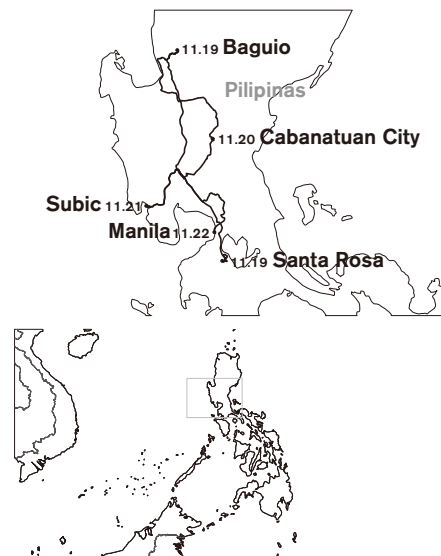


Philippines with a fresh perspective have to say. If, looking back, a function was really needed, how can I make sure it's not discarded in the next project? I hope to use my experience in the 5 Continents Drive to help me do this."

It rained in the evening, and puddles formed in the potholes. In front of the team, a tricycle with a plastic sheet over its sidecar was driving with only the headlights on the motorcycle side on. The Hilux had no problem on bumps in the road that could damage the lower body panels of a sedan. Nagao forcefully drove the Hilux, as if

to affirm that it was suited to the roads of the Philippines.

The team got on a well-maintained highway in the seaside town and once again headed for Manila. Despite getting thrown into its chaos a second time as well as having to put up with cars suddenly changing lanes, a practice that should rightfully be called a local rule of the road, they arrived at their destination of the Toyota Manila Bay dealership. The Drive Project drove through four countries in three weeks, and is finally headed to Vietnam, the last country on the Southeast Asian leg.



Distance: 844km
 Duration: November 19-22, 2019
 Days: 4 days
 Vehicles: Innova, Hilux Double Cab, Vios, Corolla Altis HV, Fortuner, Rush, Hiace, RAV4 Hybrid, Avanza

