

## Windhoek → Lüderitz

### One Africa

Team 2 arrived in Durban, South Africa. The next day, they visited the TSAM test course. Team captain Tomonori Umeda comments, *"I want to know what the needs are in Africa."* When he met local leader Kevin Jarvis, they greeted each other by saying, *"One heart, one team, Africa!"* Umeda says he wants to add one word to the greeting. *"I want to add 'one' at the end. 'One Heart, One Team, One Africa!' The Drive Project support from TSAM and the local team members is vital. After Team 2's leg, I want to feel one Africa."*

Early Saturday morning, the team arrived in the Namibian capital of Windhoek from Durban. They would spend Monday getting the cars ready

and preparing their navigation routes and start driving on Tuesday. On their day off, Hironobu Tsuboi of the Vehicle Engineering Development Division went to see rental cars that were used on desert safaris. All of the 20 or so cars were Toyota Hiaces that had been turned into camping vans. He found a large number of shock absorbers strewn on the ground near the HiAce.

*"When you drive on unpaved roads for a long time, the minute vibrations cause the absorber oil to bubble up. These shock absorbers are a consumable good,"* said the car rental attendant with a laugh. The vibrations cause bolts to loosen and fall off, and sometimes the control arm strikes the car body. This happens when the car is clearly overloaded, so it falls outside





the scope of evaluation testing. But still, it's the reality in Africa. *"Suspensions and shock absorbers are not my field of expertise. I may not be able to solve the problem by myself, but I feel like speaking up is my mission in participating in this Drive Project."*

## Making off-roading more accessible

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Team 2 headed for Swakopmund, a coastal city along the Atlantic Ocean. The paved road eventually turned to unpaved. The ground can do many things depending on its physical properties. When asked about the dust



clouds that flew up from an oncoming car or car ahead, Tomohito Onari of the Vehicle Performance Development Division No. 2, Toyota Auto Body, grinned as he said, *"It was just like snow on the road so I could handle it."* He added, *"In powdery snow, you can manage to follow the road by watching the left shoulder while keeping your eyes trained in front."* He has a lot of opportunities to drive on the snowy roads of Hokkaido, and it seems as if that experience has helped him. *"You don't know what's going to end up being useful. My experiences in Africa will surely prove useful at some point too."* The special stage (SS) set up for Team 2 in Swakopmund was off-roading in the sand dunes of the Namib Desert, which has become a tough pastime for locals and tourists. Taro Yamada of the Vehicle Engineering Development Division has worked on Land Cruiser development and keeps his eye on both users in Japan and around the world. *"People have to trust that the Land Cruiser will always bring them back safely."* For automakers, the desert of Namibia

makes a fine testing ground. On this day, he observed how the other team members drove. As he watched them grip the steering wheel stony-faced, he thought, *"We have to build performance into the vehicles so that people can feel like off-roading is more accessible."* After having the rare experience of off-roading in the Namib, Team 2 headed for the settlement of Sesriem, located in the desert.

## Becoming more persuasive

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There are no hotels in Sesriem, so the team stayed overnight in tent accommodations. Kentaro Kosuge of the Sales and Operation Planning Division remarked, *"We hear from distributors about what kinds of cars they want, but we can't meet the requests of the whole world."* His colleagues who think about car development are always passionately exchanging ideas. *"You have to have interpersonal skills when you dialogue with people. You have to improve your knowledge of the cars and the market regions."* Kosuge

believes that this African leg of the Drive Project will help him become more persuasive. The team drove the vehicles from the Namib Desert to the port town of Lüderitz. Almost the entire 552-km journey was off-road, going from about 1,500 m above sea level down to the ocean. Kiyohiko Sumida, who was participating in the 5 Continents Drive from the Automobile Product and Cost Planning Department of Suzuki, had an open and personable way of chatting with the local drivers and TMC members. He sometimes gave advice to the other people in his car about when to brake and how to use the wireless radio while off-roading. When asked whether he frequently went off-roading, Sumida said, *“I only told them what I heard the other day from Mike at TSAM.”* The roads of Africa were not only straight lines; there were also many blind corners and sections of corrugated road. When two cars driving at more than 100 kph pass by each other on an unpaved road, the ensuing cloud of dust almost completely obscures the field of vision. *“In Japan, the authorities would prevent drivers from entering that area, but in Namibia, it’s drivers’*

*responsibility to use their skills to protect themselves.”* Sumida tells the team members riding with him things to watch for while driving and changes he notices in the car to prevent accidents. It’s all to ensure the safety of his team and the local people. Sumida took driving lessons at the Tahara Plant before coming to Africa for the Drive Project and had a lot of revelations in the lessons. *“What’s amazing about Toyota is the many opportunities for education it offers. And local members offer instruction too. I’m grateful to have this concentrated learning environment about cars.”* But Sumida adds this. *“Africa is not only what we see out of the car window. Our immediate customers are also here. It would be good if we talked more with some local people.”* The 5 Continents Drive Project is also a diverse travel experience. The team members overcome barriers of nationality, gender, company affiliation and position to drive toward the same goal. On Monday after a weekend break, the team is on its way to the town of Keetmanshoop in the middle of the desert.



Distance: 1,532km  
 Duration: October 9-12, 2018  
 Days: 4 days  
 Vehicles: Fortuner, Land Cruiser 200, Hilux Double Cab, Land Cruiser 79 Double Cab, Land Cruiser Prado

