



## Bloemfontein → Durban

### Don't be a parts maker, be an automaker.

The team entered the Kingdom of Lesotho, surrounded by the Republic of South Africa. Some of the team members were also from Suzuki, Hino Motors, and Toyota Auto Body. *"When I bring up Toyota, they of course talk about how Toyota is so large, but I'm surprised by the opposite—how nimble they are,"* comments Shoichi Saito from the MS Stamping Production Engineering Division. He continues, *"You learn things from studying other people's work. If you learn about exhaust pipes, then you should be able to structurally*

*design a car body for efficient flow through the exhaust pipe."* Saito is now chewing on the idea of being not a parts maker, but an automaker.

The next day's destination was Afriski, some 3,222 m above sea level. The team slowly gained altitude. The city where they stopped for a break was not like the developed cities in South Africa. Yusuke Onogi from the Vehicle Performance Development Division No. 2 of Toyota Auto Body remarks, *"The roads are chaotic."* But he seems to take an interest in the city. *"If you indicate where you want to go, people let you through. When you look at someone, they smile back. At first glance it seems like there are no rules, but in reality there are unstated*

*common understandings or morals at work."* The number of used cars increased the moment the team entered Lesotho, and they could see cars getting repaired here and there. *"Even so, the speed limits are fast and there are a lot of ups and downs and curves. Just a little mistake behind the wheel could cost you your life. They need cars that will do just what the driver intends."* Onogi found a car model that he had been involved in making. Seeing a car being confidently driven in another country halfway around the world from Japan added earnest intensity to his desire to make cars.

When the team was eating dinner in Afriski, their attention gravitated around Tomoko Mashiki from the Production

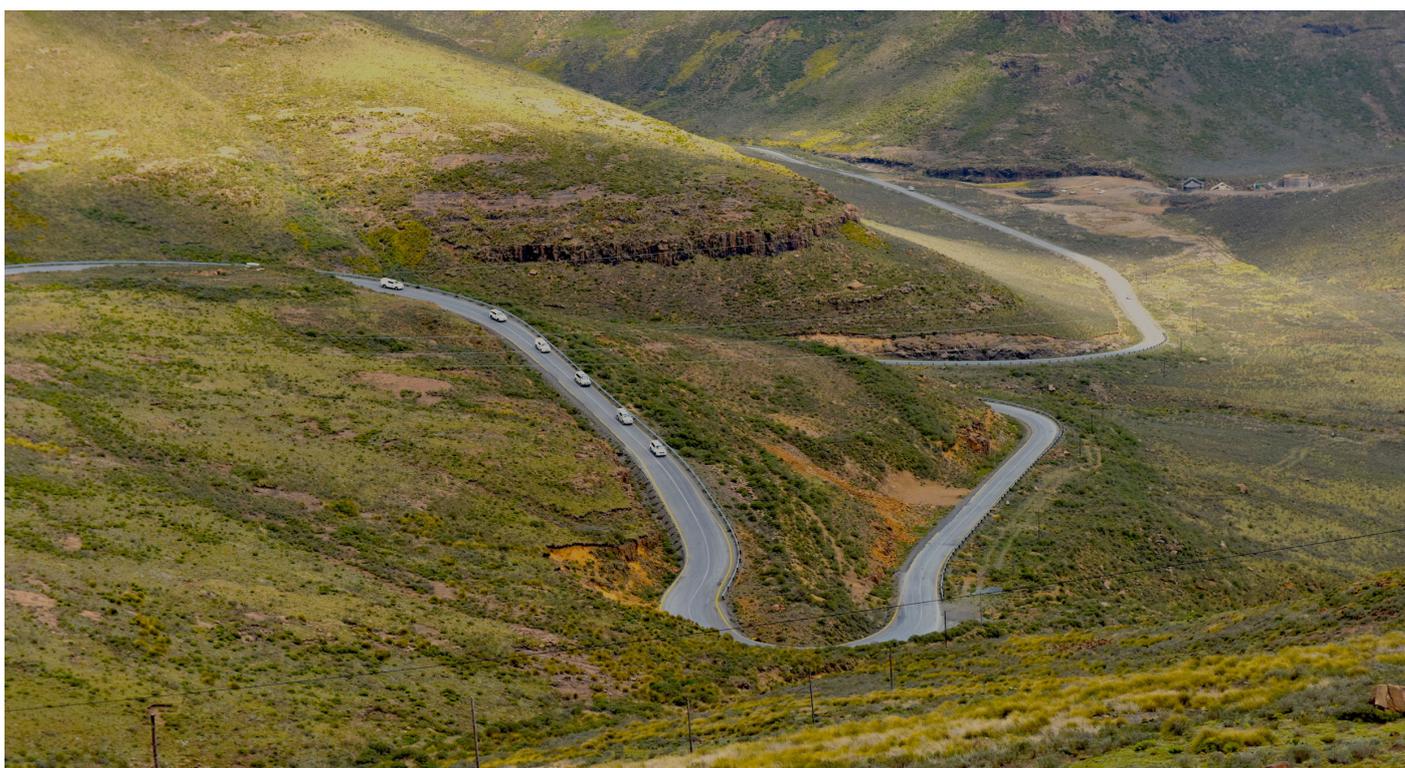
Control Division. The atmosphere suddenly becomes more relaxed when she's around. Mashiki works in a department that designs and plans factory production numbers, so she has a habit of thinking about things in terms of numbers. But through driving in Africa, she rediscovered that the many numbers she deals with literally form and become the cars made by the engineers. "I may be an office worker, but I still want to support the engineers. I can't crush their thoughts and ideas. I want the work I do to move us in the same direction."

## Colleagues gripping the same steering wheel.

The team went through Sani Pass on the

border of Lesotho. They traveled on an unpaved road in a dense fog, at times going 4 kph or less, to arrive on the South African side. "Yamada [Vehicle Engineering Development Division] gave me quite a bit of driving advice," says Akira Okabe from Suzuki Motor Automobile Chassis Design Department. He continues, "The engine speed, and the right transmission gear for the road and the car speed, are not what I would have used. Each piece of advice Yamada gave me made sense." Yamada didn't treat Okabe, who had come from Suzuki, like a guest. Okabe appreciated Yamada's approach. "I want to improve my driving skills more," he comments. Okabe learned about the fun of driving, and about just how much there is to learn, on the roads of Africa.

Masaya Okayama from the Measurement and Instrumentation Engineering Division also received his share of advice. "When you're driving in a convoy, if the lead car makes a bad decision about where to stop and park, it can affect the departure. The decisions you make when driving are important, too. You always have to make decisions for yourself when you're driving. You can't leave the decisions up to something else." No one gave Yoshio Furihata from the Vehicle Evaluation and Engineering Division of Hino Motors advice about driving. He got a seal of approval from Yamada, who said, "He's got the basics down." Furihata commented, "We receive driving instruction at Hino Motors too, but we don't have the opportunity to



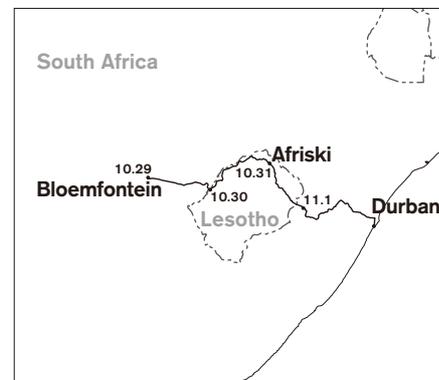
*have this many people of such caliber concentrate on our driving. Meeting the Drive Project members has been a great experience. I'd like to be able to share our knowledge and data in the future."*

The next morning, the team set out for Durban in light rain. When the cars carrying the Drive Project members arrived at TSAM, they were greeted with cheers of joy. There was a ceremony and a

presentation on what they discovered on the roads of Africa, and that marked the end of the Africa Drive Project. Team leader Tomonori Umeda commented, "We may have safely reached our goal, but now is actually our starting point." Local leader Kevin again had a look of joy on his face. *"People came from different places, but we shared time and long distances, and came to have one mind, one heart. I'm*

*sure that will lead to making ever better cars."* Hideyuki Tanaka (Advanced Technical Skills Institute), who has participated in all legs of the 5 Continents Drive Project so far, supported the team without standing out. When team members couldn't manage the bad roads or the speeds, he would tell them to drive with intention. Tanaka also helps train test drivers and knows the danger of fast speeds and small mistakes. *"Accidents happen when you try to perform beyond your skill level. You must not try to do more than you feasibly can."* Tanaka and the other vehicle leaders quietly supported the team members' driving skills.

The roads they drove in Africa will stay in the memories of the Drive Project team. They will take their thoughts and ideas back to their workplaces, using their experiences to make cars. The Africa Drive Project may have finished, but the 5 Continents Drive Project continues, with the Asian leg starting in 2019. The Drive Project team keeps on driving, in pursuit of making ever-better cars.



**Distance:** 753km  
**Duration:** October 29-  
 November 1, 2018  
**Days:** 4 days  
**Vehicles:** Fortuner, Land Cruiser 200,  
 Hilux Double Cab,  
 Land Cruiser 79 Double Cab,  
 Land Cruiser Prado