



Sao Paulo → Fortaleza

The city of Sao Paulo is filled with steep slopes and cobblestone streets.

There aren't so many Toyotas on Sao Paulo's streets. Sasaki, from the Production Engineering Development Division, sighs and says, "It feels so lonely seeing this." So why are there so few Toyotas? Is one reason all those steep slopes? After the kick-off event, the 5C 2016 Latin America Driving Project started driving in portions of the varied environments that TOYOTA Brazil uses as one of its standard test course.

After driving 30 minutes on a highway whose road conditions were not much different from those in Japan, we're

surrounded by jungle. We can see how the unending straight road cuts right through the jungle, and when we enter a village it turns into off-road driving conditions. Our local driver, Odair, tells us, "What you need here is not a Hilux. You need a car that's small, inexpensive, and can drive on these roads." There certainly were a lot of compact cars on Sao Paulo's streets. According to Odair, he's not sure if the Etios could get up this off-road slope when the rainy season comes and it turns into a muddy quagmire. Oizumi, who is riding with him from the CV Vehicle Testing Department, nods in agreement.

After the off-road conditions comes a steep cobblestone slope. The cobblestones on the downhill side have been filled in with asphalt, with big potholes where the asphalt has broken

down. There's a drop-off where the cobblestones end, and the bottom of our Prius' body scrapes the street. The Prius' Eco mode isn't enough to get up the 18% grade. Little by little, we're starting to get a better feel for what kinds of cars are needed in this city.

The evening rush hour was a traffic jam to end all traffic jams. Motorcycles fly out from both sides. They dart between lanes in quick and sudden movements. Horns blare. Visibility narrows as the sun sets, and Oizumi, imagining the life of Sao Paulo's citizens, comments, "You really have to be alert. But they consider this normal." In other words, this is the customers' point of view. The day was our first step in getting to know Brazil.



Red plantations and intense clouds of powder-fine dust.

Bennacchio, our local team leader, kept saying that he wanted to show us the roads, off-roads in Brazil. So he planned out an efficient course to do just that. After all, we only had one month. We cut through the Amazon, taking a plane to Sinop in central Brazil, a flat land with plantations as far as the eye can see. We understand why Bennacchio took us here after getting off the highway. The dust was intense. Clouds of fine red particles reduce our visibility to nearly zero. Fujishima, who works in the Quality Assurance Department at Tahara Plant, enjoyed the “handicap.” He hardly ever has the chance to drive in all this dirt in his daily work. “I’m not that good a driver even though I’m in charge of suspension,” he says self-depreciatingly. Still, he takes the SW4 Hilux Fortuner steering wheel as if to check the vehicle’s performance.

“I’m in charge of testing at the plant. My job isn’t directly related to car performance. So when people ask me

what I’m going to bring back from the driving project, I don’t have an answer right away. But that’s exactly why I want to listen to people from various angles, build up my knowledge and experience, and think about what it means for me to be here.”

Fujishima asks the Brazilian driver with him all kinds of questions. He gets a feel for the land at the plantations and searches for clues to solve problems.

The biggest problem faced in this place is the fine dust particles getting inside cars. The people who work on plantations don’t see the Hilux as their daily wheels, but as a tool to get their work done. At a dealer meeting, we hear that people trade in their Hilux after two years and more than 150,000 kilometers driven. Miyazaki, from the Rental Lease Business Division, asks questions typical of someone who works in sales. “So how much do they get when they trade in their old Hilux?” It turns out that driving up to 150,000 kilometers only lowers the value by 23%. Then we learn that because of this, sometimes people get an old Hilux in

lieu of their wages. Because the vehicle has rock-solid credibility, it’s also held to high standards. A film of dust so fine that people in Japan wouldn’t believe it covers the interior of our Hilux after a day of driving around 150 kilometers.

Reporter ○ Toshiya Muraoka

Distance: 639Km
Duration: August.21-August.29,2016
Days: 9days
Vehicles: LC200, Hilux Wcab Hilux Scab w/canopy SW4/Fortuner, Corolla(Pres) Corolla (Armoured) Etios SD, Etios HB, Prius Lexus NX200 armoured RAV4 4X4, RAV4(armoured) Etios S/D, Etios HB