



Buenos Aires → El calafate

A test drive to learn the local rules of the road.

On the first day of Team 3's South America Drive Project, the Japanese team members went to Toyota Argentina S.A. (TASA), where they attended an informational session on Argentina's rules of the road. They listened intently while looking at traffic signs and lane rules on a large screen. When the country changes, so do the traffic laws. Then there are the unwritten rules of the road. In order to stay safe on the trip, the Japanese members couldn't afford to miss a word of the advice given by the Argentine members. After the meeting that made the potentially serious implications of driving clear, the team went on a test drive.

When the team went out on the streets, they quickly found that the driving conditions were completely different than in Japan. Even on one-way streets, cars were often parked on both the left and the right,

making gauging distance a challenge. There were potholes everywhere, and the dirt roads consisted of fine sand that drastically reduced visibility. After the test drive, team leader Hirai had a message for his team. "Double-check the conditions and respect each other. Never fail to check conditions. Make safety your priority no matter what." All the team members took his message to heart.

Starting the drive from the southernmost tip of the Americas.

The next day, the team took an airplane to Ushuaia. While you could wear a short-sleeved tee shirt in Buenos Aires in the daytime and still break a sweat, the climate was different here. The temperature falls below freezing on chilly days in summer and may hit -20°C in winter. Staff at a dealer started getting the

cars ready for the drive. Okumura from the Vehicle Testing Division at TC Company asked the Argentine local dealer why Toyotas were popular here. He gave two key reasons: the quality of the after-care service and their high resale value. With the cold climate, rust caused by snow-melting agents and car body damage was a real problem, and repairs were a frequent need. Given these conditions, Toyotas had a reputation for value.

"In addition, the road conditions are decidedly different from Japan—sometimes with fine dust and oversized gravel. I talked with EGM Morimoto about how it would be good to reevaluate the ground clearance of cars destined for sale in regions with harsh conditions."

The night before the drive was fueled with excitement, marked by a kick-off party at a hotel attended by TASA President Herrero and Vice President Kato.

The next morning, Team 3 started its drive on the South American leg of



the 5 Continents Drive Project. After a ceremony to commemorate the beginning of the drive, the team headed north in a caravan. They drove on mountain roads that first morning. The roads were relatively easy to drive on, but the Argentines on the road also tended to drive fast for this reason. In the afternoon, the team went down a dirt road that continued for more than 100 km. Nonaka enjoyed driving an SW4 (Fortuner) and was grateful for its driving stability in spite of the region's distinctively changeable weather and strong crosswinds.

The Patagonia winds blow harder than imagined.

To go north, the team first had to drive across part of Chile. They left Río Grande headed for the border town of San Sebastian. The wind was stronger than the day before. The dealer in Ushuaia said the Etios was his best seller. Sasaki from the Master Technician Development Division was riding in an Etios on this day. He commented, "On the dirt road yesterday, the car lost stability when we went over eighty kilometers an hour. The wind is blowing hard today, and I can't drive straight unless I keep pulling the steering wheel to the left." Sasaki grew up in Hokkaido, and he drove while watching for the potholes that are a trademark of cold climates. "Driving here is similar to where I'm from in some ways, but the

scale is different. Hokkaido doesn't have straight roads that go on for so long like this."

After getting over the border into Chile, they needed to take a car ferry to cross back into to Argentina. Ferry service, however, had been suspended due to high winds. No one knew when service would resume. The Etios is a compact car, but its roomy front and rear seats alleviated the stress of sitting and waiting in the car for a long time. Despite that, the Etios is not so good at withstanding strong wind. The doors wouldn't open without a good push. The car isn't very airtight either, and the team could feel cold drafts while sitting inside of it. Sasaki asked Daniel from TASA if this was a problem for local customers. Price was another problem that came up. There was no end to discussions of how the car could be modified. They were stranded at the ferry dock for a while but passed the time talking about cars, and ferry service resumed in the evening.

Searching for what customers want

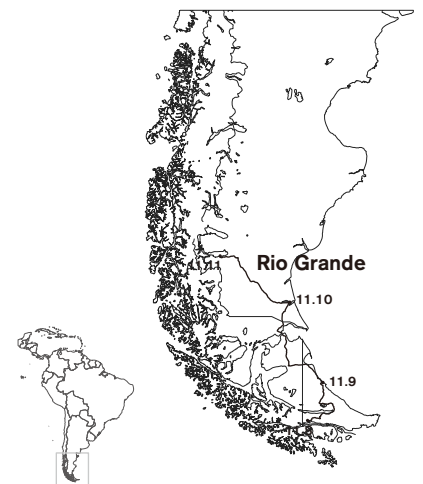
The next morning at a dealership in Río Gallegos, the team met the Land Cruiser 200 and a Hilux with scrub bars, which have come to symbolize the Drive Project since the first leg around Australia. The 5 Continents Drive Project is a series of connected legs around

the world, and the arrival of these vehicles carried with it that meaning. Luciano is a product engineer at TASA. He says the reason he wanted to work at Toyota was that he wanted to experience another culture and gain a higher perspective."

"What Toyota has that other companies don't is growth that takes customers more into consideration. I'm glad to have the opportunity to participate in this project. We're driving to some places that I've never been to before even though it's my country. I hope to make a lot of discoveries."

The noise from the blowing wind made conversation difficult inside the Etios. Luciano thought this was a problem. At what level is noise unacceptable and needs improving? He said he wanted to search for things on the drive that he hadn't yet experienced firsthand. The team arrived at El Calafate in the evening. The wind was still blowing hard.

Reporter ○ Rui Shimamoto



Distance:	923km
Duration:	November.7- November.11,2016
Days:	5days
Vehicles:	LC200,Hilux Wcab, SW4/Fortuner, Corolla(Prestage), Etios Cross HB,Etios SD, RAV4 4X4,Prius, Hilux Scab w/canopy