

## Salta → Buenos Aires

### Cars make people smile.

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The team left the tourist haven of Salta, beginning their trip south to their destination of Buenos Aires. Kondo from the Unit Advanced Control System Development Division comments, "Being able to spend this concentrated time as a group has been an invaluable experience. While I'm glad that it's almost over, I'm also a little sad." He's involved with engine development and used to position cars as a means of transportation, but this Drive Project has changed his thinking. "I came to think of cars as things that make people smile. I also feel like now I have a mission to communicate what I've experienced here to the next generation." Kondo also said that the Drive Project made him painfully aware of his lack of vocabulary when talking about cars. He was impressed by the breadth of expression his peers displayed. "I have to make myself even better," he declared.

### FUN TO DRIVE for each and all.

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Arriving in Cordova, the team headed for some mountain roads on the outskirts of town. They drove on a dirt road that is used in rallies and was unexpectedly rough, perhaps from rain the weekend before. It would be in better condition for races. The compelling course has a series of hairpin turns, and Julio from TASA, who works in the Overseas Service Technology Division, relished driving it. When asked what "Fun to Drive" means to him, Julio replied, "I like to get out of my home and go all kinds of places. I've been all over Argentina, but I had fun on this trip going to some new places and driving on new roads. Besides that, I like the moments when I feel like I'm in control of the car—like how it feels driving on the road today." After driving through a resort town, the team once again headed for

Cordova while getting stuck in traffic. The road was engaging and fun, like a microcosm of the roads they had taken over this leg of the Drive Project.

### Valuable customer feedback

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On the way to Rosario, the team stopped by a large farm and met with some IMV drivers. It was wheat harvesting season, and the surrounding fields were shining seas of gold. The farm had dirt roads, which caused clouds of fine dust to swirl in the air and reduce visibility to almost nothing. The team hears directly from customers at various points in the Drive Project, which is invaluable for team members in development divisions. Yokogoshi, who works in the Engine Production Technology Division, had this to say. "I'm truly happy to hear from the



farmers we met in Salta and these customers too that they are satisfied with the IMV engine's performance. I'm usually only working with the parts, so it's hard to get a real sense of what customers think, but meeting with them directly makes me truly feel how I make cars. Before, I've been told that this or that would be expensive, but because I now have a firm idea of what people want out here, again I see how I need to take that and use technology innovations to make safe products at affordable prices."

The farmers shared helpful feedback with the team, like the problems they have with dust. At the end of the meeting, team leader Hirai addressed the customers.

"I promise that in the future, we will address the points for improvement you have shared with us today, so please choose a Toyota again the next time you buy a car."

The team bowed deeply to the customers and then left the farm.

## From Argentina to Uruguay.

As the team went from Argentina to Uruguay, a Prius and an Etios that were used on the first half of the Latin American leg came back, and three members from AYAX also joined the team. When the team crossed a bridge that separates the two countries, Andres, who is the service manager at AYAX, welcomed everyone to his country over the radio. His grandfather founded AYAX in 1956, which has carried Toyotas since 1968. He was riding in a car with Muramatsu, who works in the Vehicle Technology Development Division. When Andres found out that he was involved in the Welcab, a vehicle produced for people with physical disabilities, he asked, "Do you make the parts too? We have customers here who need them." Muramatsu gave him some pamphlets and told him that he would talk to his colleagues after he returned to Japan. The team noticed little difference in the roads between Argentina and Uruguay, but Uruguay is relatively flat with no tall mountains. They arrived in

the small riverside town of Mercedes and spend the weekend there.

## Picking up new sensors.

On the drive from Mercedes to Montevideo, the capital of Uruguay, team leader Hirai took another look back on his experience in the Drive Project.

"There's one day left, but so far we've worked together as a team and have stayed safe on the road. I'll be glad if we can all smile when we reach the goal tomorrow. This trip of more than nine thousand kilometers has boosted our sensors. Or you could say it's given us the chance to see where we need to grow. For me personally, getting out and driving on the roads has re-sharpened my senses."

At a rest area, Sasaki from the Master Technician Development Division uses his own towel to polish the car. In fact, everyone has displayed this kind of willingness in their work on the drive. When asked what has changed in him over this month, Sasaki answers with an intense expression, "I was impressed by the management of the team leader and assistant team leader and how they drew out everyone's strengths. I'm not very good at leading people, but I watched the team go about their work and tried to imagine myself leading them. This was a kind of growth for me. Just like how I learned to see through the eyes of the IMV customers, I also picked up a new way of seeing and new sensors while watching the team."

## Reaching the goal for future Toyotas.

Tuesday, December 6. This day is not only the final day of the drive in Argentina and Uruguay, it is also the last day of the Drive Project in Latin America. Crossing the Río de la Plata river by ferry, the team drives through Buenos Aires, the busiest city on the drive, and arrives at TASA's Zarate Plant.

Daniel from TASA comments, "I rarely get the opportunity to have this level of in-depth exchange not just with people from TMC, but even with people from TASA, where I work. I learned about driving technologies from my TMC colleagues and even got to experience driving on rally courses. The days were long, with meetings and reports to write after driving, but more than anything, I affirmed that I really like cars. It was really fun to drive."

All the team members broke out in smiles as they reached the goal of the Five Continents Drive Project in Latin America. Team leader Hirai addressed his team. "Become an evangelist. Share what you've learned here with your coworkers and make sure you use it in making cars." The team encountered some tough times, but they also experienced the thrill of driving to the fullest. In their fields of specialization, they more than anyone should understand the meaning behind the words, "The roads shape the cars, and make us and the cars stronger."

They will demonstrate what they have learned starting tomorrow. Future Toyotas will tell this tale.

Reporter ○ Rui Shimamoto



Distance: 2,647km  
 Duration: November.28-  
 December.6, 2016  
 Days: 9days  
 Vehicles: LC200, Hilux Wcab,  
 SW4/Fortuner,  
 Corolla (Prestage),  
 Etios Cross HB, Etios SD,  
 RAV4 4X4, Prius,  
 Hilux Scab w/canopy