



CARBON NEUTRAL EVENTS
ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE DRIVING



Syd Stelvio Day Eight – La Paz to Sucre

The route book said that today was one of those days where you just needed to keep on going, and to begin with that seemed a fair synopsis. A long day in the saddle was scheduled with some 588 km to be covered, and after the shenanigans of the previous day, the early start felt like torture and the long climb out of La Paz seemed to have more akin with running through soft sand than driving. Even after making it to the summit of the city, there was still several clicks of chaotic highway out of the city, that mirrored the run in the previous evening, only this time you could see the piles of rubbish that was being fought over by packs of stray dogs.

But, this didn't continue and although the mileage for the day was high the run out in the morning was on quiet and well paved dual carriageway, which whilst not the most exciting way to travel, was extremely efficient at transporting us to the good stuff. The 'good stuff' began to reveal itself after leaving the city of Oruro, around 235 km's in to the day, as the road became single carriageway again and got much quieter. There was a real change in the scenery, and whilst we were still very high and accompanied by mountains in the distance, the vista was very much that of a desert, arid and bereft of very much flora and with dried up riverbeds breaking up the parched landscape.

The roads though just got better and better, with undulating and flowing tarmac that bit through canyons and carried us up around the edge of the mountains, who's peaks topped 4500 metres, whilst we ourselves cruised at around 4000 for much of the afternoon. There was a real flow to proceedings, which felt in complete contrast to the stuttering days that had been experienced and it felt like the rally was fighting back against the bad luck that had so far prevented all of us from enjoying it to the full.

The only slight hesitation in the day's fun was at the second passage control of the day, when simply trying to fuel the cars descended into chaos. Now, it must be stressed that the process wasn't helped by the lack of Spanish speakers amongst the group, but it must also be made clear that the practice of filling up with fuel in Bolivia is not a simple one and involves almost as much paperwork and bureaucracy as a border crossing. Carnets were exchanged, licenses and passports handed over and there was a demand from the proprietor for a mystery four digits to allow us to fill our cars with the much-needed fuel. In the end it turned out that the fuss was all caused by the fact that for us to be issued with receipts for our fuel we would need the secret cyphers, but if we didn't want a receipt then it didn't matter, although of course we would have to pay an inflated tourist's price.

The boredom of the border felt like a long time ago as the surging stretches of tarmac bought us quickly to the only regularity of the day. I say quickly, the competition section wasn't reached until 443 km's had passed underneath our wheels, but the afternoon had flown by, and the distance was soon covered. For some it was covered more quickly than others, and whilst in most cases the progress had been swift, for David + Susan Danglerd it had been particularly swift, as they arrived at the reg almost before the marshals and had begun it before it was ready to go! The regularity itself was on more flowing roads that hugged the contours of the land, but this time on gravel and much narrower than we had been used to during the rest of the day. The driving was just as outstanding and the views across the neighbouring valleys and adjacent high peaks was quite incredible, and even after the competition section itself had finished the elevated gravel roads continued for some miles, before descending and re-joining the main road.

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There was still over a 100 k's to go to reach the nights camp, but the fun was set to continue as the contour lines remained in close proximity and the road to Sucre ducked, dove and climbed its way around the tantalising topography and ensured that everyone's adrenaline levels soared as high as the Condors that call these mountains and valleys their home. A fitting end to a fabulous day's rallying and a real taste of what might have been, had plans stayed true to format, but also a glimpse of what is to come.

Not everyone managed to get through the day unscathed though, and a notable absentee from the roads was the bright blue Peugeot of Dean Drako + Shiv Sikand who had suffered a broken diff before the climb over the mountains. The car will now be shipped overland to Salta and Shiv will rejoin the rally then, as is in fashion at the minute, although Dean will sadly be leaving us and the up until today third placed machine will now not be able to challenge for the win.

This evening in Sucre the local inhabitants were celebrating Halloween, and tomorrow as we head south to Bolivia's salt flats, our competitors will be hoping to avoid any sort of horror show as another day of competition beckons on our road to Ushuaia.

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