



CARBON NEUTRAL EVENTS
ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE DRIVING



Syd Stelvio – Days 22 – 24

‘If I never drive another road in my life, it won’t matter’ said Three-Diff-Shiv, “That was one of the greatest roads I have ever driven.” That quote tells you some of what you need to know about the last few days on the Lima to Cape Horn rally, which have been the kind where the hours are long, and the down time is fleeting. It goes like that in rallying sometimes, especially on a gargantuan event such as this. 1900 kilometres have come and gone since I last wrote, that’s a hell of a distance over three days by anyone’s standards, but in classic and vintage car’s it is a tremendous effort. During those miles an awful lot happened as well, some of it fantastic, some less so, but all part and parcel of life on the road and all part of what will become a wonderful adventure tale.

The first major event of the past few days was the border crossing into Chile, and another crossing where the location was subject to a last-minute change of plan, thanks to the planned post being closed. Despite its remote and quaint situation Argentina out was reasonably ok, as isolated border crossings go, but Chile in would prove to be, well, a challenge. I can hear the scoffs and guffaws at that understatement from here, but as the voice of biased impartiality you’ve got to allow me some leeway. In the end it was one of those days that was extremely difficult, with some crews not getting into the evening hotel until midnight and the rally team arriving in the early hours. No doubt the what’s, why’s and wherefores will be picked apart, if they haven’t already, and in the future, it will likely be one of those stories that is told over a few glasses but suffice to say at the time it was not what anybody wanted, and sense of humour levels were running on empty.

The next morning there was revolution in the air, there had already been warning from the advance car that some of the roads in Chile had deteriorated to the extent where those who might be nursing machines were advised that staying in Argentina might be the best option, and whilst most had made the crossing with the intention of completing rally route, after the calamitous border day those in the vintage camp were thinking of machine preservation. In true South American style, a splinter group was being formed, with Comandante Asimov Cleek at the helm of the newly formed Liberation Rally Front, or LRF. The LRF being an inclusive cell, true to the leftist values of their forebearers of justice and unity for all, were accepting anyone as members, as long as they drove a vintage car. The LRF’s demands were simple, tired of the overbearing demands placed upon them by arduous terrain they would not bow to the terrorism of topography and were taking their own route out of Chile. “Death to the shackles of the tulips!” cried Comandante Cleek, and charged out of the MTC, Bentley blazing, after getting his timecard stamped of course so as to minimise the penalty for skipping the day.

Those of us that were remaining true to the empire, including vintage driver Manuel Dubs and navigator Leunam Spud, who had not been swayed by the promise of a free lifetime supply of Castrol R for anyone that committed fully to the LRF, headed out onto the route as planned, not knowing that we were about to begin one of the best days of rallying, not just of this trip but of any event ever. The drive and the scenery were as magnificent as it was dramatic, as the cloud rolled in off the Pacific and clung to the tops of the mountains the landscape looked ethereal, draped with an otherworldly presence that would continue throughout the entire day.

Once into the Patagonia National Park, travelling on the Carretera Austral, the reasons for the one-day excursion into Chile became clear. The route was fantastic, a road unlike many on the planet. Every single corner offered up another wow moment, every direction change provided yet another spectacular view and the road itself was the kind that mixed a technical challenge with rhythm and flow, a delight for drivers. The Aysen region of Chile is one of the least populated in the country, and



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for huge stretches of the day it felt like we were the only one's here, exploring the wilderness of the rainforest like slopes, with the deep blue waters of the Rio Murta for company, before navigating the shores of the colossal General Carrera Lake. This vast body of water of nearly 2000 square kilometres, who's teal blue waters, caused by particles left from the meltwater that feeds the lake, mesmerised all of us and the road took our hearts. The route was certainly rough in places, just ask the adventure motorcyclists who were enjoying the road, and care was needed at times, but the rewards outweighed the risk and all of us wished we were sharing it with our vintage shod brethren, you were missed.

It was a quite remarkable day and as we headed for the border, a border that would prove efficient and simple, the sun began to lower in the sky and the lake and surrounding mountains put on a spectacular show in our rear-view mirrors, as the various weather systems that were making their way across the expanse of the land offered a vista that was quite unlike anything I've ever seen.

The following day we were all together again, point made the LRF had been disbanded (for now) and we all set off on what would become the longest distance day of the rally, a 750 km hike through Patagonia, on roads that would emphasise the enormity of this region, perhaps acting as a metaphor for the size of the challenge we had all taken on when leaving for Ushuaia from Lima all of those weeks ago.

Despite the length of the day once into Calafate the camp was full of good feeling, and Raj Judge and Tim Guleri opened the Bentley Bar for an impromptu street party where everyone truly was welcome. With two rest days in the offing, it was a party that would continue late into the night, and the rallying cries of "Ushuaia" may well get us through the final few days of this mammoth trip.

When we reconvene on the road in two days' time there will be just four days to go, and the terminus of our adventure will be almost in sight. It's been a hell of a ride so far and I hope we all finish with a flourish.

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