



**CARBON NEUTRAL EVENTS**  
ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE DRIVING



## Syd Stelvio Day 27 – Calafate to Puerto Natales

On these adventures I find there is always a moment of clarity in each trip where just what it is we are doing sinks in. This time it occurred whilst enjoying a drop of the local beverage in a bar in Calafate, a flash of lucidity where I thought how lucky are we? Elsewhere the world is exploding, there is conflict in Ukraine, there is economic crisis in Europe, people in England are being forced to choose between heating and eating and here we are adventuring across a continent seeing things most won't see in a lifetime and driving the sorts of roads that petrol heads dream about.

Those thoughts were only reinforced today as we drove further into the Patagonian wilderness on the way to the Chilean border. Out on the plains there were kettles of Condor soaring above us, I counted 8 together surfing the thermals and around the next corner there were Flamingo's stalking through the sporadic lakes that had formed in these otherwise dry heathlands, heathlands that disguised mobs of Rhea's and sat before a backdrop of snow-capped mountains, there aren't many places in the world you can see all of that together.

This was all before we crossed into Chile for our second visit, and the driving took place largely on the gravel tracks that are so prevalent in this sparsely populated corner of the continent. One regularity added a spice of competition, with a tricky little junction to catch out any navigator who had become too transfixed on the wildlife, but then before we knew it 200 kms had clicked over and it was time to get passports and carnets stamped once again.

Mercifully this crossing into Chile was an altogether easier experience than the previous one, and with a little patience we were all through in a relatively short time with little fuss. This was where the day would really take off, with a route and regularity in the Torres del Paine National Park, which even the most well-travelled amongst us would have to admit was nothing short of breath-taking.

The Cerro Paine Grande, the highest peak in the Cordillera range, looked down upon us as we skirted around its base. Encased in snow and ice at its summit, with glaciers tumbling down its edges its craggy crown reminded me of Hubble's Pillars of Creation, with great rock fingers reaching upward. Whichever angle we gazed upon it from it was impressive and is perhaps the most beautiful thing I have seen on our journey.

At its feet the road twisted and turned around the meltwater lakes that the mountains rise up out of, the azure blue of the water that we have become accustomed too sparkling in the sun, the twinkling aided by the ferocious wind that was tearing across the landscape, whipping up tremendous waves upon the surface of the lakes.

In a setting such as this competition is almost irrelevant, it is the spectacle that counts, the experience of rallying through such an environment. There isn't long to go on this trip now, and what seemed like an eternity of travelling stretching out before us is now coming to a close and it is at this point the traveller can begin to wonder if they have taken enough in or made the most of experiences whilst on the road.

For all of the stress and difficulties of life on the road, for all of the trials and tribulations that have come our way on this rally especially, today was surely a day where none of that mattered, where come what may to gaze upon this place was enough to add a little clarity to what we are doing here



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and why we came. There are just three days of the rally left now before this sustained adventure finally reaches the finish, time to drink it all in and savour every second we can.

**Syd Stelvio**

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