



CARBON NEUTRAL EVENTS
ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE DRIVING



Syd Stelvio Day Nine – Sucre to Uyuni

Some days are what memories are made from, and the best of these memories are the one's born out of spontaneity, the events that happen that you had no clue were going to take place. For a few of those travelling south to Ushuaia on the Lima to Cape Horn today was one of those days.

It started out as another one of those where divine acts of interference had altered the planned trajectory of the rally, as the first regularity of the day was scrubbed due to the advance car finding that the road had been washed away. Cue some more re-written tulips and another competitive section lost into the ether. The photographers in particular were upset, this had promised to be an extremely photogenic section, particularly with a tricky river crossing at the end.

So, it was main road for the first part of the day again, with a middle of the day time control in Potosi, a city that seems to follow the norm of Bolivian metropolitan areas by being extremely crowded and a little worse for wear, a far cry from when this was one of the richest cities in the world and bastion of the silver trade for the Spanish Empire.

The afternoon though tore the morning to shreds, as we were treated to a beautifully pictorial lesson in the geology of this area. The mountains gave away the secrets of the past in a wonderful display of colours and patterns, as the highland landscape began to melt into vast desert plains filled with rocks and canyons. The vista changed constantly, one minute it was lunar and the next it resembled the orange of the Colorado canyons, but always rocky and arid aside from the odd oasis growing in protest against the hot hot heat.

There was a regularity as well, at a difficult pace, that was marked by the low average speed rather than a high one, the complexity coming by the need to ignore the natural urge to bury the throttle on these incredible roads.

It cannot be stressed how huge the landscape was, everything about this day was massive but the real treat came into view as the end of the day was reached. Around 350 km into the route, the mammoth Bolivian Salt Flats came into view at the foot of the mountains, filling the landscape with a brilliant off white and offering up a beacon for us to head to, as our stop for the night would be right on the edge of the salt. These salt flats are the largest in the world, a landmark that can be seen from space and one that covers an area of 11,000 sq km, where it sits high upon a plain in the Andes.

For some, the urge of the Salar de Uyuni was too much and instead of spending time worrying about car maintenance they headed out into the seemingly infinite expanse of the flats, to drive fast, to take photos and for some, to streak across the flats (you know who you are, car 4!). Some made a pilgrimage to the Dakar monument, and some drank vodka and toasted this special moment, after all when are any of us likely to visit this place again?

It was the stuff of memories and as the sun went down the sky above the expansive salt desert went a beautiful shade of orange and pink and those of us there to witness it toasted the moment. This was one of those evenings that was extremely special, a moment to be savoured and a unique landscape to be enjoyed. Rally time waits for nobody, but sometimes everything must stop to take in an experience as exclusive and exceptional as this.

Syd Stelvio

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