Sunday Drives: Tenerife

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11/12/2022 Porsche-mad pop artist Diego Izquierdo escapes the beach for a day above the tree line in Tenerife.

Where:

Teide National Park, Tenerife

Length:

58 km

Type:

Fast bends and long, empty straights and stunning volcanic views

Just off the northwest coast of Africa lie the Canary Islands, a remote volcanic archipelago that for several decades has been a staple holiday destination for European tourists searching out some winter sun. But a small group of mainly Spanish-speaking locals are lucky enough to call the islands home, among them artist and Porsche fanatic Diego Izquierdo.

The 30-year-old was born and brought up on the largest of the islands, Tenerife, from where he has been creating his vibrant interpretations of pop art for more than 15 years. Drawn to the late-1950s movement as a small boy, he was inspired by the vision and creativity of many of its leading protagonists, from Andy Warhol and Peter Blake to James Rosenquist and Claes Oldenburg. Izquierdo found his own form of expression through graffiti in 2007, but was soon evolving his repertoire from this modern urban art form to include more traditional media such as mural painting, sculpture and collage.

Today, Izquierdo's work is based largely around classic cars, using these solid and familiar forms to create a fixed point of reality in otherwise surreal scenes. He works with recycled materials, allowing chance finds to influence the creative orientation of a piece while celebrating both the aesthetic value of and the opportunity to give an object a second life. Many of his recent works have focussed on Izquierdo's interest in Porsche, something that has grown exponentially in the last year since he became the proud owner of an unusual transaxle model.

“I found it just over a year ago when I was looking to change my modern car for anotherclassic,” he explains, “and after viewing several candidates I finally fell in love with this 944. The owner offered me a great deal: I gave him my modern Mini and he gave me his car.”

Incredible look and fantastic handling

Izquierdo uses the car as his daily driver around Tenerife, increasing his fuel bills a little but also boosting his happiness a lot. “It is a car that literally has it all,” he says. “An incredible look, two additional seats and a large storage space. But the handling is also fantastic and the level of grip great, so it loves to take on Tenerife's curves!”

The artist's favourite drive begins in the colonial city of La Laguna, a world heritage site that sits around 500 metres above sea level, and climbs another 1500 m through the Teide National Park, the third highest and most voluminous volcanic structure on the planet. The route is some 58 kilometres from start to finish and should take around an hour.

“You start the ascent along a road called the TF-24,” Izquierdo says, “and after the airport the landscape

quickly begins to open up, with meadows and large trees, and at this point you can start to enjoy some generous straights and wide bends before the town of La Esperanza. This is a good place to refuel, have a coffee and even some churros with chocolate. After that, you continue climbing through until you reach Betty's Terrace, another good place to eat actually, beneath the forest canopy."

The surrounding area is a protected environmental zone comprising a largely wooded 46,613 hectares through which scythe some challenging bends. Along the route there are several viewpoints from which to take in magnificent ocean views, including Montan□a Grande, Pico de las Flores and Ortun□o. A few kilometres later, at La Crucita, the landscape changes completely, the volcanic nature of Tenerife laid bare in the rocky, barren substrate that dominates suddenly from every angle.

"To the right at this height you can enjoy a sea of clouds beneath you," Izquierdo says, "and coming up is what everyone calls La Tarta or 'the cake', a vast rock wall made up of various different-coloured strata. A little later is the observation deck at Puerto de Izan□a, and the Teide Observatory, which you can turn left to see from close-up if you're feeling curious. But be warned that the road here is not in a great condition and there is no other exit, so you'll be coming back along it!"

A few kilometres further on, Izquierdo and his 944 leave the TF-24 for the first time, turning left to join the southbound TF-21. This road takes you past the El Portillo visitor centre, offering a wealth of information about the volcano and the flora and fauna of the area, before passing the Minsa de San Jose, an otherworldly environment more akin to the Moon or Mars than a sunny holiday hotspot. Still high above the tree line, the road passes below the Teide cable car before an arrow-straight two-kilometre stretch runs into La Ruleta and the Paradores Cañada del Teide, where you can spend the night or simply enjoy a coffee with incredible views before starting your return journey.

"I love this route for its variety of landscapes and the excellent road quality," explains Izquierdo, who often meets up with fellow Porsche owners on the route. "I try to escape and travel it whenever I can, either alone or with a small group of friends. It's a very special moment for Canarians, going up to Teide to see the snow for the first time, so it is a route full of memories for me. Whether with family, friends or even going solo, it will always be my favourite."

Sunday Drives

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