

3000-MILE PIZZA DELIVERY

And no, it wasn't some quarantine gig. by Tyson Hugie

Acura gave me the key to a 2020 TLX for two weeks, and I used it to deliver pizza and garlic bread.

Before that phrase prevents me from ever getting a demo car from them again, let me explain.

My grandpa's favorite pizza place, Fredrico's, is located 400 miles away from his home. He's nearly 90 years old and doesn't get to travel as much as he used to, so his opportunities to taste Fredrico's food are few and far between these days. But I crafted an idea of a way I could make it happen as part of a summer road trip. The strategy involved a to-go order, a cooler, and effective time management to get the meal delivered six hours away. It worked

out perfectly, as I arrived in St George, Utah at 5:00 pm, right on time for dinner.

The pizza run was just one of many rewarding aspects during an over-3,000-mile, six-state, 12-day road trip in a new Acura TLX. And the experience was exactly the great escape I'd been needing after being cooped up in quarantine for a couple of months.

The year 2020 has taken each one of us for a pretty unpredictable ride. What started out as an anticipated year of celebrations for me—car meet-ups, a high school reunion, and family festivities—started cascading like a row of dominoes as every event cancelled in sequence. And two months into what became a worldwide

health crisis, I learned that the future and stability of my own career was in jeopardy. A mandatory unpaid furlough added to the drama, but I engineered a way to turn that downtime into some serious uptime. Enter the TLX.

I've followed the limited-production TLX "PMC Edition" since it was first introduced in a press release on April 11th, 2019. In fact, I knew about it a day prior, because Andrew from Acura Public Relations had clued me in privately via email a day in advance. His email stated, "I think you're going to like this one." Indeed, I did.

Even before that, I'd followed the evolution and launch of the first-generation TLX for a long time. I was present in January 2014 when it debuted in concept form at the North American International Auto Show (NAIAS) in Detroit, where I met Jarad Hall, its lead designer.

The TLX production model was unveiled three months later in New York. I first

TLX PMC odometer start, Day One 2,233
TLX PMC odometer end, Day 15 5,369
Trip mileage 3,136



(Left) Grand Teton National Park, at Jackson, Wyoming. (Above) The Perrine Memorial Bridge, US 93 crossing the Snake River on the north edge of Twin Falls, Idaho. // Crossing the river in Logan Canyon, Utah. // We passed many a "Welcome To" sign, including some states more than once.



drove one that August, and in February of the following year I secured one for a thorough road test via some Arizona scenic byways. It's now been five years since I really had much of a chance to spend time with one. Until now.

I flew from Phoenix, Arizona to Southern California on a Friday morning, with as many precautions as I could possibly put into place. The entire travel experience was somehow new for me, despite being such a seasoned traveler: mask regulations, distancing practices, new signage, modified boarding procedures, sanitization measures and in-flight announcement changes. But it was a unique opportunity.

Andrew picked me up in PMC Edition #027/360, with 2,233 miles on the odometer. I had lunch with a fellow Acura enthusiast who brought out his 1988 Integra Special Edition, and the rest of the adventure started from there.

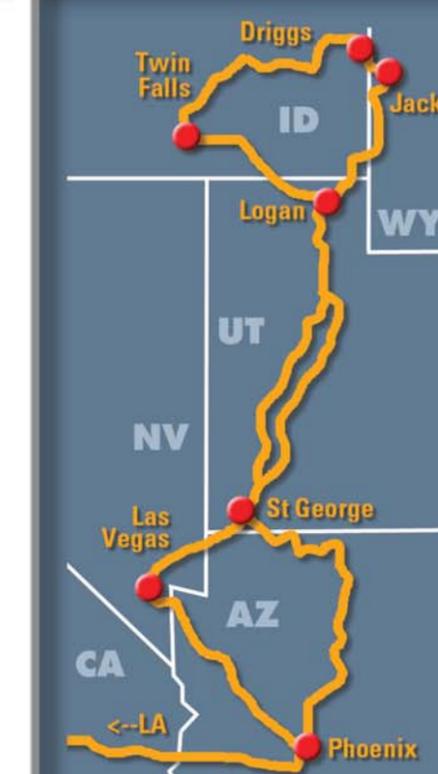
My first order of business was getting back home to Phoenix to load up the car with luggage, since I'd flown to California with only a backpack. While there, I tried the TLX on for size by introducing it to the heritage Acura vehicles in my garage.

The trip route was intentionally designed to minimize ever having to re-use the same stretch of road. And aside from a few small areas, I succeeded in that. For 3,136 miles, I made my way through Cali-

fornia, Arizona, Utah, Idaho, Wyoming and Nevada. I reconnected (at a safe distance whenever possible) with family and friends, mapped out some roads I'd never seen before, and saw some of Mother Nature's finest landscapes in the Rocky Mountains.

No interstate adventure would be complete without saying hi to some of my fellow Acura enthusiast brothers and sisters, so I made a special point to arrange a meet-up in Salt Lake City with friends including Sunny, Trevor, and Shaun who brought out their TSX, TL, and RDX respectively.

The trip's capstone was a three-day weekend in a small town nestled at the base of the Grand Teton mountain range, an area known as Jackson Hole. As home to about 10,000 people, Jackson, Wyoming acts as a hub of recreation for that region. In the wintertime, skiers swarm the town for the opportunity to hit its three ski





areas, and in the summertime, there are dozens of hikes and activities to entertain people in the great outdoors.

My dad and stepmom joined for that leg of the trip. We took an eight-mile early morning hike at Bear Paw Lake in Grand Teton National Park, where we had the place nearly entirely to ourselves, aside from a few mosquitoes and other forms of wildlife. Bear sightings, for better or for worse, were zero that day. We had some fun capturing ourselves on the Town Square live webcam stream from multiple angles.

Climbing out of Jackson on Highway 22 to the west via Teton Pass, the ascent sharply climbs from about 6,000 to 8,500 feet with 10 percent grades and avalanche slide paths. I chose this route because it provided the most direct access to eastern Idaho, where I stayed at my uncle Jeff's cabin for a night. With temperatures in the low 30s that day, there was a likelihood I'd run into snow, and I was optimistic I'd get to put the TLX Super Handling All-Wheel Drive to a test, but aside from wet roads and heavy fog, I had plenty of traction to get where I needed to go.

I added a few hundred extra miles to my trip in Idaho because I wanted to reconnect with a couple of friends there. After passing through small towns like Arco ("first city in the world lighted by atomic power") and seeing what there was to explore at Craters of the Moon National Monument (basically, an abundance of lava caves), I dropped into the city of Twin Falls, along the Snake River.

My friends Josh and Pete met up with me there for the best all-you-can-eat sushi



(Above, left to right) Marble Canyon, along Highway 89A, northern Arizona. Fredrico's garlic bread completed the pizza order. Craters of the Moon National Monument, Idaho. (Right) Years of family photos at the elk statue in Jackson, Wyoming prove that nobody grows older, just the trees.

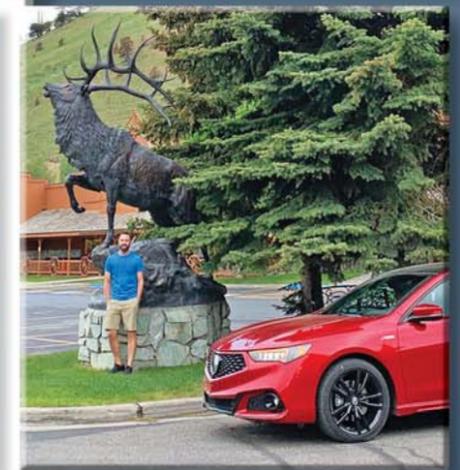
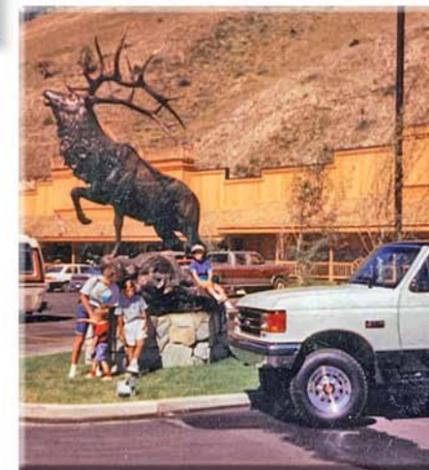
in the state. Josh also presented me with a custom, hand-built Hot Wheels display board. The Idaho hospitality was definitely very much appreciated.

My return to Phoenix included a few more stops to see people, as well as the aforementioned Fredrico's Pizza delivery run. Fredrico's is in Logan, Utah, and grandpa was working up an appetite back in St George. All right on the way!

I made the most of each and every checkpoint along the drive home, even popping in to say hello to my friend Casey who works at the Shell gas station in small Mona, Utah off Interstate 15. My entire handwritten fuel log—or at least the 13 fuel stops since starting out in Phoenix—was left in the glove compartment for posterity.

It's hard to believe six years have passed since I first laid eyes on a TLX – the design is modern and the car drew compliments everywhere I took it. I hadn't even made it out of Orange County, California without a fellow driver rolling down the window in his Mazda and waving to get my attention to ask, "How much is the A-Spec?" And the coolest part of my drive experience was the fact that this particular TLX wasn't just any A-Spec, it was one of only 360 total cars hand-assembled and hand-painted at Acura's Performance Manufacturing Center in Marysville, Ohio.

I reluctantly gave back the key to my



Valencia Red ride, but will forever enjoy the memories that were created on this trip. The TLX PMC Edition was the perfect travel companion, delivering 28 miles per gallon thanks to an eco-minded 9-speed transmission that revs low at freeway speed.

I found the TLX's 290-horsepower 3.5-liter V6 more than ample to crest the mountain passes (and overtake slower traffic) with ease, and I was spoiled by the car's awesome stereo system and driver-assist technology. Even the most vigilant driver can benefit from the occasional nudge of the steering wheel when beginning to veer from a travel lane, and even though I disliked that feature initially, I found it helpful as time went on.

And maybe I'm getting old (would you believe 40 is coming up next year? Yikes!), but I fully enjoyed having an automatic transmission as a change of pace, so I could more freely focus on other enjoyable attributes of the driving experience.

Now, who needs a pizza delivered and what toppings can I get you? ■

2020 ACURA TLX 3.5L SH-AWD PMC

ENGINE	3.5L alum alloy 24v DOHC i-VTEC V6
HP/TORQUE	290 hp / 267 lb-ft
DRIVETRAIN	Super Handling AWD™
TRANSMISSION	6-spd auto w paddles
SUSPENSION F	MacPherson strut, amplitude reactive dampers, 26.0mm stblzr bar; R: multi-link, 25.4mm stblzr bar
STEERING	elec power assist rack & pinion
BRAKES	F: 12.6 vent disc; R: 12.2 solid disc
WHEELS	19x8.0 piano black split 5-spoke
TIRES	245/40 R10 high-perf AS
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	190.7 / 109.3 in
HEADROOM (F/R)	37.2 / 36.7 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	42.6 / 34.5 in
CARGO CAPACITY	14.3 cu.ft
GROUND CLEARANCE	5.9 in
TURNING CIRCLE	39.5 in
WEIGHT	±3838 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	91 oct prem / 17.2 gal
MPG	20/29/23 (city/hwy/comb)

PMC EDITION: Numbered limited edition of 360, handcrafted at Performance Manufacturing Center (PMC).

PMC INCLUDES: NSX exclusive Valencia Red Pearl paint, exclusive sport seats, exclusive gloss black accents, Advance Package, A-Spec Package and Tech Package.

BASE PRICE\$48,950

DESTINATION CHARGE995

TOTAL\$49,945