

Around the world in 73 days! Daman Thakore went on a road trip across 14 countries in his vintage car

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On August 15 last year Ahmedabad-based businessman Daman Thakore (50) and his family set out from Mumbai to realise their dream of travelling the world in their 73-year-old 1950 MG YT, which they fondly call Lal Pari. They travelled through 14 countries - Dubai, Iran, Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria, Macedonia Albania, Montenegro, Croatia, Italy Switzerland, Slovenia, France and UK - and got back to India in October 2023.

We met Daman during the recent vintage car rally in the city where he proudly showed us his Lal Pari and spoke about the most special road trip of his life. He says, "My father bought this car in 1979 for Rs 8,000 and it has been with us ever since. It was my mother who inspired me to fulfill my dream to travel across

the world and especially visit the MG factory in Abingdon, UK, where the car was assembled. We wanted to spread the message of unity through our travels."

Daman says, "Our car was shipped from Mumbai to Dubai while we took a flight to the UAE. We started our road journey from Dubai and covered over 13,000 kms. We also had a support caravan that was driven by my friends. It had all our daily requirements, including food and clothes. My wife Uditra was my biggest support system. She took care of all the necessary permissions we needed to travel through so many countries in our car. Despite all

the difficulties we faced on the road, my father and daughter, who accompanied us, never once complained."

Talking about the challenges they faced, Daman told us, "The biggest challenge was driving the car when we reached Dover, UK. On a cold, rainy day we were driving at 33 km per hour on a 112 km per hour highway. The car's wipers were not functioning well and we had to go on like this for 7 hours." He added, "We faced extreme weather conditions. For instance, the temperature in Dubai and Iran was above 40 degrees, while it was very cold and rainy in Turkey and Europe. It was a challenge to keep going in 10 degrees. The car suffered poor brakes, less power and frequent breakdowns on the wrong side of hilly roads. While my father and uncle had worked hard to make the car technically sound, it was still tough."



(Daman at Iran, Switzerland and Turkey with his Lal Pari)

Not everyone seeks such adventures! So, didn't he feel the risk in travelling with his family? He said, "Many times after the axle broke in Croatia, I still wanted to go through the highest and most scenic Gotthard Pass in Switzerland. My father throughout the trip has not even once complained if it was getting tough. My mother who was sitting at home in India only had words of motivation. So, when people told me that most people from Switzerland do not wish to take trips in their classic cars through this Pass, I was a bit confused. And there was a good chance that if another axle broke due to the steep roads it could have jeopardised the entire trip. But, I was adamant that if we didn't take this chance, we would never do it again! Finally, we took the higher Pass rather than going through the tunnel to enter Switzerland and we made it."

He added, "When you travel without an agenda, people are good and eager to help strangers no matter where you are from. The love people have for India from Asians and Europeans is phenomenal. It is important to practise patience. We had undertaken this journey to give back to society but instead received a tremendous amount of love and support."

Ask the adventurous traveller inside Daman about that one lesson which sums up his expedition and he said, "The joy of returning home! When we reached Mumbai and finally were the first ones to lead the rally on Republic Day, January 26th, it was a great sense of pride and achievement. I have understood and learnt that if you don't have the guts, then there is no glory that comes your way," he concludes.