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MOTOR VIKATAN VOLUME: 2 ISSUE:1

# MOTOR

The Pulsating Automobile e-Magazine

VIKATAN

ROYAL ENFIELD

**Scram 411**

Scramble for Fun

**ROAD TEST**

**2<sup>nd</sup>**  
**ANNIVERSARY**  
Celebration



Volkswagen  
bets big with

# Virtus

**Walkaround**



**Volkswagen bets big  
with its new sedan**

# VIRTUS

**A**fter witnessing plenty of SUVs in the Indian market it's time for some sedans. Yes, German automaker Volkswagen's upcoming compact sedan is all set to hit the Indian roads. Virtus, Volkswagen's newest and the group's fourth offering based on the MQB-A0-IN platform, which is the group's modular platform that produces Taigun, Kushaq and the Slavia. VW Virtus is currently the final offering from the group, India, 2.0 project.

In late 2019, the VW group announced a massive structural and operational overhaul worth 1 billion euros, one of the biggest investments in the Indian auto sector. The group merged its three units-Volkswagen India, Volkswagen Group Sales India and Skoda Auto India-into one entity called Skoda Auto Volkswagen

India to streamline decision-making. In came the successful MQB platform to manufacture cars locally, reducing retail prices. VW's latest launches like Taigun and Tiguan are in tune with the group's India 2.0 strategy.

As far as Virtus is concerned it looks elegant, sporty and sophisticated. The sharp and understated lines give way to a bold looking product. It looks like a fusion of the best from Volkswagen. The front reminds me of the new age Polo with those sleek looking headlamps that beautifully merged with the grill. The air dam section below the grill is massive that is outlined by a chrome strip that differentiates Virtus from Slavia, which we all know is its brother from another mother.

The same approach reflects on its profile too. The 16-inch

The more exciting of the two engines are offered on the performance line. The four-cylinder 1.5-litre TSI engine puts out 150PS and 250 Nm of torque and comes mated with a six-speed manual or an optional seven-speed DSG.







wheels feature a new design and dimensionally the Virtus gains 20 millimetres in its overall length and 20 millimetres in its height as compared to the Slavia making it the biggest car in this segment. With its form and lighting elements, the rear looks like Jetta which was once sold in India. And that's not bad thinking because it really looks upmarket. Just like the front, the rear bumper sports a gloss black insert outline with chrome applique. GT trim has an integrated boot spoiler and also get visual enhancements, like a black roof, black wing mirrors, red callipers, and GT badging on the fender, grill and rear.

When it comes to the interiors, as predicted it has been heavily inspired by the Taigun. The dashboard looks more premium

due to its glass treatment than its own sibling. The GT line offers red surrounds in the dashboard, aluminium pedals and exclusive red ambient lighting as well as red stitching for the seats. In terms of the features, there is a touchscreen infotainment system, digital cockpit, wireless Android Auto and Apple Carplay, wireless charging, ventilated seats, and an electric sunroof.

As we have driven the Slavia, we can expect the Virtus will be comfortable, spacious and practical. Engines are familiar too, with no diesel on offer, but you do have two very exciting engines. The 1.0-litre TSI, a three-cylinder engine that's offered on the dynamic line, puts out 115 PS that is mated to a six-speed manual transmission or an optional

six-speed torque converter. The more exciting of the two engines are offered on the performance line. The four-cylinder 1.5-litre TSI engine puts out 150PS and 250 Nm of torque and comes mated with a six-speed manual or an optional seven-speed DSG. The 1.5 litre also features ACT technology, allowing you to conserve fuel occasionally.

In terms of safety is concern there are around 40 plus features are being offered as standard across the range including multi-collision brakes, hill-hold control, and a tyre pressure deflation warning system. It looks quite a premium offering from Volkswagen for the Virtus and it looks eye-catching. We are excited to drive this new German machine and will keep you all updated after we get hold of it on the roads.





BHARGAV SRIDHARAN

📷 RAJASEKARAN

Skoda to reignite the  
mid-size sedan segment with

SLAVIA







● 25.4 Touch Screen Infotainment System and Beautifully Crafted Interior Design



● Sharp Lines, Crystalline Structures and LED Headlights with L-Shaped DRLs

India is no longer a small car market, and the country is in love with SUVs. Last year SUVs commanded more volumes than the cumulative volumes of hatchbacks and sedans. The sedan segment is not something that has completely gone out. Sedans still constitute 12-15% of the market. To dominate that space, many companies compete. Now, Skoda has developed an all-new mid-size sedan Slavia, which will go against the likes of the Honda City, Hyundai Verna, Maruti Suzuki Ciaz and the Volkswagen Vento. Earlier, Skoda has tasted the Indian sedan market with Octavia, Superb and Rapid and now Slavia joins the list.

Will Slavia make a mark in the SUV dominated market? Let's figure it out. First of all, I would like to talk about the design, since I could see a lot of sharp creases on the body, giving it a chiselled look. The nose sports a large grill with chrome surrounds and the headlamps extend outwards from the top corners. The led DRLs have







If you wanted a little bit more of a spirited drive, you can put it into sport mode where the shifts come faster and it holds the gear right up to the red line.

the check crystalline effect and there's a large air dam in the chin.

The customers started loving SUVs mainly because of the ground clearance. Sensing that Skoda has worked on it and it has a segment-leading ground clearance of 179mm. The side profile also sports sharp creases, and it has a swooping coupe roofline. While it does have a smart set of alloys, they are 16 inch and the wheel to body gap is quite large.

At the rear, the boot styling is on-point with the brand and the snazzy crystalline effect continues to the tail lights as well. Now Skoda wants to stake claim to being the most spacious sedan in the segment and if you compare it with Honda City and Maruti Ciaz, Slavia is the widest in the segment and it has even outperformed Ciaz in the wheelbase, which is at 2651mm. But just by a one-millimetre margin in length and height, it sits in between the Ciaz

and the City. Slavia scores well in boot space too, it has got 521 litres, which is the class-leading number.

Inside the cabin, it's pretty familiar. Many things look like the Kushaq. Slavia gets the dual-tone dashboard, 10-inch touchscreen, which sits in the recess, but the recess does have a different texturing. You get the two spokes steering wheel as well. There is a nice metallic strip that splits the two-tone dash right across and the round air-vents as well. You get digital dials on the top variant, and it does have three themes as well.

When it comes to features, Slavia comes with a sunroof, wireless charging, which is a vertical slot and the phone leans against it. You also have ventilated seat. The interior is quite comfortable and there are lots of practical storage spaces, too. There are cup holders up front and all of these have anti-slip.



In terms of the safety features, Slavia impresses with standard ESC, low tire pressure warning, Isofix and even three-point seat belts at the back. Top-spec versions of the Slavia get six airbags. It also comes with an electronic differential system, which uses brakes to prevent wheel spin at the inner wheels in a corner and the multi-collision brake system activates in the event of an accident to automatically bring the car to a safe stop. There are no rear disc brakes, however, it does have front disc brake wiping.

Overall, the Slavia's interior is good looking and its much better finished than what we saw on the Kushaq with things like the roofline and now being knitted. It is still not the quality of what we have come to expect from European brands.

Getting in and out of the cabin is pretty easy and it has a comfortable

driving position. The steering has tilt and telescope, there's a seat height adjuster and with the flat dash and large glass area, the visibility is also very good. Slavia comes with a 1.5L and a one-litre engine option mated to manual and automatic transmissions. These are essentially the same engine and gearbox combinations as in the Kushaq and even have the same power figures.

The one-litre TSI produces 115 HP and 178 Nm of torque. Now this one-litre engine is very familiar and it was impressive. In fact, it feels more energetic in the Slavia. It does feel pleasantly quick on the road. When you're ambling around at city speeds, crawling along, you can be a lazy driver. It will pick up from lower RPMs, even in a higher gear. But progress was slow till it reaches 1800 RPM, later on, the power really kicks in.

Slavia's gearbox is nice and positive and the clutches are light and easy. So driving in the city will also be a breeze. City or highway the one-litre does the job and it does it well, it never feels like a small engine and whether it's performance or handling the Slavia impresses.

The suspension is softly sprung, so there is a bit of roll, but there's lots of grip on offer and the steering actually gives you a good amount of confidence as well. So even when you drive enthusiastically, the Slavia stays better through the road, quite impressively. When the steering gives you confidence at higher speeds on the flip side, it's light enough of parking in city driving too. The fact is that the more you drive the Slavia, the more you'll begin to enjoy the combination of performance and handling. In fact, the right quality of the Slavia is one of its strengths. And while the experience behind the wheel is so enjoyable, it can keep you in there for a while.

The rear seats are comfortable with good thigh support and spacious too. It is more than enough legroom for tall people here as well. Now, though, the roof is scooped out and the seat is set low, taller people may find their head pretty close to the roofline. The window line is high, but there's enough glass area, so it still feels open and airy. The floorboard is flat so the third passenger will be comfortable. There's enough legroom for the third passenger as the cabin is wide. So three abreast will be pretty easy in this back seat.

So this backseat is a really nice place to be. There are air-vents, two USB-C ports, handy pockets, one smaller one for your phone and

- Comes with a 6-Speed Manual Gearbox as standard and can optionally be paired with a 7-Speed DSG





a larger one to fit in other larger things. You do have the armrest and cup holders as well. The backseat is spacious. No doubt, but it's also very comfortable because of the ride quality.

We also took a spin in the one-litre automatic, which make city driving quite easy. And it does, it moves up the gears very rapidly so we can expect this to be fuel-efficient. And it also makes the car more refined because you never really hear the engine rev hard like you're doing in the manual. It also cruises comfortably. If you wanted a little bit more of a spirited drive, you can put it into sport mode where the shifts come faster and it holds the gear right up to the red line. If you want a quick downshift, you also have the paddle shifters.

Comparing the manual transmission the automatic does well, especially below 1800 RPM, where there was a lack of power in manual, so it does make the drive experience effortless. The one-litre TSI does well in combinations with both gearboxes and for those that want that little more punch, the

manual does the job well. But the automatic also does a great job and ensures that the drive experience is more effortless. I am impressed with this engine, especially in Slavia and there are lots to be impressed about with this since its spacious loaded with features for convenience, entertainment, and safety.

The right quality is super and the performance is enjoyable. So while SUVs may be the flavour with their great ground clearance and massive boot, I think the Slavia has what it takes to compete and compete strongly. The price of Skoda Slavia 1.0-litre TSI variants ranges from Rs 10.69 - 15.39 lakh (ex-showroom, India). Slavia has a higher starting price than the Verna, Ciaz and Vento, although it is Rs 50,000 cheaper than the Honda City. At the top-end, the Slavia is again the most expensive of the lot, but the premium can be justified as the Slavia gets turbocharging and torque converter automatic gearbox compared to naturally aspirated rivals with CVT automatics.





**BHARGAV SRIDHARAN**

 **RAJASEKARAN**

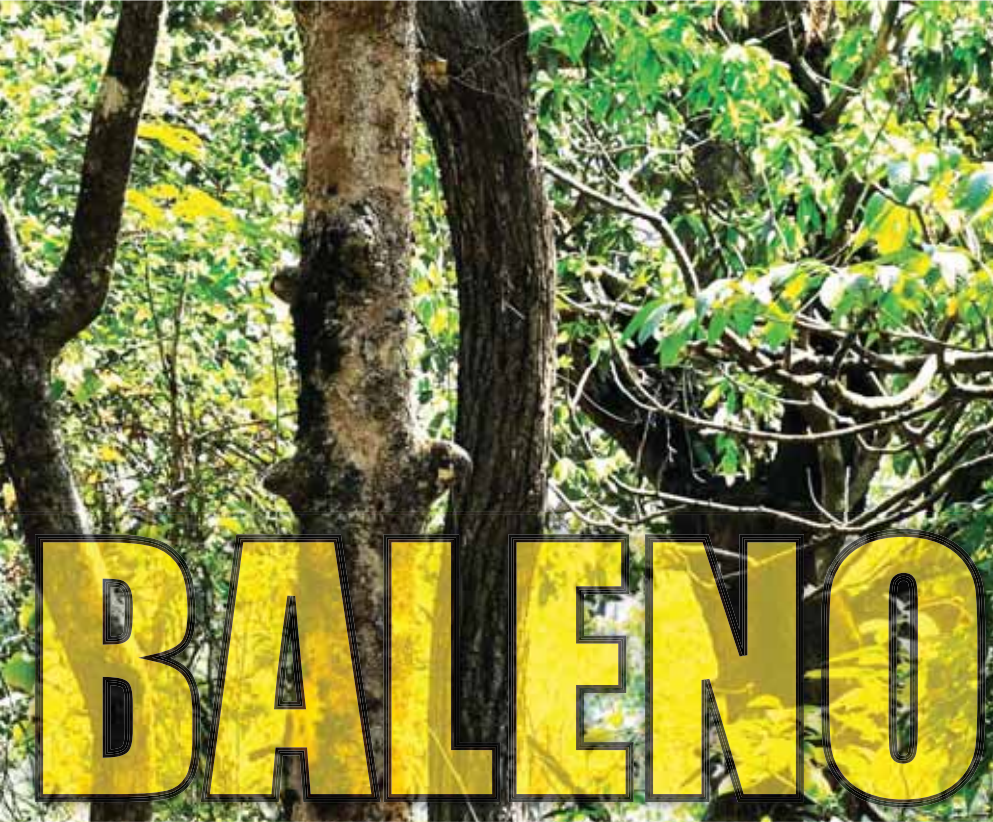
**MARUTI OFFERS AN**

**ALL-NEW**

**WITH FRESH LOOKS,**







## COMFORT AND PRACTICALITY



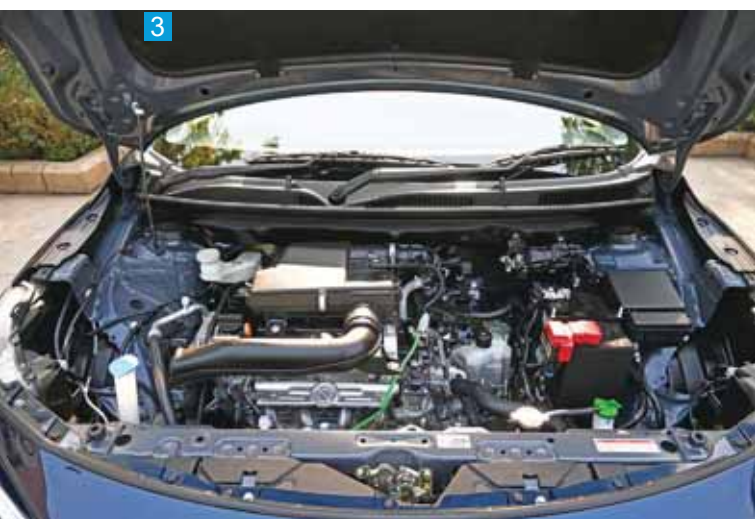
**T**he Baleno has been a very popular car from Maruti Suzuki and has been around for a while. Now, after six years we are getting a new model. It may resemble the old Baleno, but it's now based on the fifth generation Heartect platform that offers better build quality and safety compared to the outgoing one. The body panels are all new, the interiors are completely changed, the suspension has been reworked and even the engine is updated.

So let's begin with what's new on the outside. The front looks actually all-new, there's a larger honeycomb grill with a chrome underlining that's placed under the new headlamps. They are wider and have a triple element DRL. The air dam is wider too and the fog housings have grown as well.

The new Baleno has got a flatter bonnet, making it seem much wider. In the profile, it looks very similar, but the body panels are changed. The alloys have a smart new design. There's a sharp chrome strip that underlines the windows and extends up to the rear. The rear looks distinctly different with the C-shape tail lamps, extending out over the sides and making the rear look wider. There's chrome once again that underlines that glass area of the tailgate and below that is an all-new bumper. Overall the car looks sharper looking.

Dimension wise, the new Baleno is five millimetres less in length and 10 millimetres down in height. Boot space is now 318 litres instead of the earlier 339 litres. But still, it can accommodate more luggage. However, the loading lip is high and you have to hold your





- 1** 22.86 cm HD Smartplay Touchscreen Infotainment System **2** Comes with 5MT / 5AMT Transmission System  
**3** 1197 cc Four Cylinder Petrol Engine **4** Rear AC vents & fast charging USB

luggage up and keep in. The rest of the dimensions remains the same.

The cabin is a whole new world and it is actually quite interesting. It gets a dual-tone with navy at the bottom and the smart silver strip that runs right across and the black on top of the dash. The AC vent is a C shape that looks quite nice. The blower controls have now gone lower and they are of good quality as well. Everything feels easy to use. The dashboard gets an all-new free-standing nine-inch touchscreen. The graphics of which are really sharp and nice. You get a new steering wheel, the door panels also are all new and they have that dual-tone colouring and you also have nice padded armrests on the door.

The seats are so comfortable. It is springy, soft and comfortable.

On the whole, the interior is more modern and it is far more premium looking, but there are some things that take away from the premiums like this roof lining, which is still felt and feels a little old fashioned and there features that are missing like there is no sunroof, there are no ventilated seats, there's no wireless charging as well. But you do get some class-leading features like the heads up display. And what's interesting about the heads up displays is you can toggle through a few functions. You get the fuel efficiency, the current fuel efficiency that you have. It also comes with a tachometer, speedometer, navigation, time, and you can also have a simplified format over. They would just give you the speed, direction and time.

An interesting feature in the heads-up display is the blower controls when you use them. You can actually see the fan increase decrease or the temperature that's increasing or decreasing, but you would have to have the screen on the particular meter on the setting for this to show up as well. And it's good because it's safe. It means you never really have to take your eyes off the road when you're increasing or decreasing temperature. Another class-leading feature that you get is a 360-degree camera. You get a 360-degree view of the car is not the greatest of the resolution, but yes, you can see all around the car, which is very handy for parking. You get connected car features. You also get an Arkamys sound system.



While looking at the storage spaces and practicality, there is a large enough glove box, two pockets for one-litre bottles, a cup holder in the area behind the gear lever, a place for the phone in front of it, a bin in the console between the seats as well. And you have a 12-volt charger and a USB A in the front. The rear seat is pretty much the same and the seats are extremely comfy. The window line is nice and low, there's a lot of glass area. Legroom is good and you can stretch your feet. Headroom is good enough to even for taller people. And as far as features, you get a USB A and USB C. You also get the air vents and you get a small storage slot too and get space in the door pocket.

The first-gen Baleno was offered with two petrol engine options the K12B with 83hp and the K12C with 90hp, while the

new one will only be offered with one K12N that produces 90 HP and 113 Nm of torque. This engine is one that we've seen in the Maruti Swift and the Dzire of late and now the Baleno gets it. The newer version of the engine comes only with AMT and an MT eliminating CVT from the outgoing Baleno. The AMT, which Maruti calls it AGS is definitely not as smooth as the CVT. I mean, you notice the difference instantly there is that pause between the gears, especially when you go over.

When the gears move from first to second or second to third you do feel that slight hesitation between the gears. So yes, there is a difference, but it's a trade-off because you are exchanging that for better fuel efficiency and you're getting it at a better value. This system from Maruti also has come a long way and it is much smoother.

When you wanted to access it quicker, there is an availability of manual mode, which does the job easily.

The engine struggles below 2000 RPM and you need to wind it up to get going. And then the hesitation before it shifts in the AMT is accentuated. When you push hard and flatten your foot on the accelerator, however, when you drive with a lighter foot and don't demand a sudden burst of power, it actually feels much smoother.

The company has improved the performance of the AMT, so as long as you're not an aggressive driver, this AMT does the job well enough. This AGS works well to keep you in the right gear, so if it's city driving, this would be the better choice because you won't have to work the gears that much. Now, this is not the only area that Maruti has improved, it has improved the ride quality. It's soft, well-cushioned,





the bumps and potholes get done away with, and I think what adds to the comfort within the cabin is the softness of the seats.

However, the trade-off is that as you pick up the pace, it does feel more bouncy in the backseat. Dynamically the Baleno feels much better than before. The steering

too is good while it's light and easy enough for city traffic and nipping in and out of gaps. Even as you pick up the pace and go faster all-around corners, it gives you good enough confidence. The Baleno has been given all-new suspension, with notable changes including a new torsion beam at the rear, new springs all around, 20mm of increased suspension travel and recalibrated damping at all four wheels. The Baleno's improved dynamics make it a far nicer car to drive.

According to Maruti, the AGS is a step down from the CVT, it is 15% more fuel-efficient. They claim the fuel efficiency figures at 22.5 kilometres per litre for the manual and 22.94 kilometres per litre for the AMT, we did also drive the manual while the clutch was light and easy and the shift smooth enough. One had to work the gears, especially in the hilly terrain and for highway overtakes. The moment you drop below 2000 RPM, it needs downshifts, so even in city driving, the left foot will get a workout. So the Baleno has improved dynamically and that just makes you wish that there was a more powerful engine on offer

this engine just doesn't have the bottom and grunt as one would like.

Coming to the AMT or the AGS as Maruti call it, it is definitely a step down from the CVT if you're used to that. But as far as AMTs, it really does well on its own. And if I were to pick one of the two, the manual or the AMT, I would definitely pick the AMT because it is the easier one to drive. On the whole, otherwise, Maruti has done a great job and this Baleno is a big improvement from the older one.

The new Baleno is more modern, it's more premium it's got smarter interiors, it's got sharper looks and the ride is more comfortable. The dynamics have improved as well. So yes, it does have a lot going for it and you get all of that packaged at a good value. Compared to its peers like Hyundai i20, the new Baleno is priced lower, but while comparing the first-gen Baleno the cost has gone up, which starts at Rs 6.35 lakh and goes up to Rs 9.49 lakh (ex-showroom, India). There is a huge scope for improvements but still, the new Baleno is the best product and best seller in the category and we hope the same continues.

So the Baleno has improved dynamically and that just makes you wish that there was a more powerful engine on offer this engine just doesn't have the bottom and grunt as one would like.





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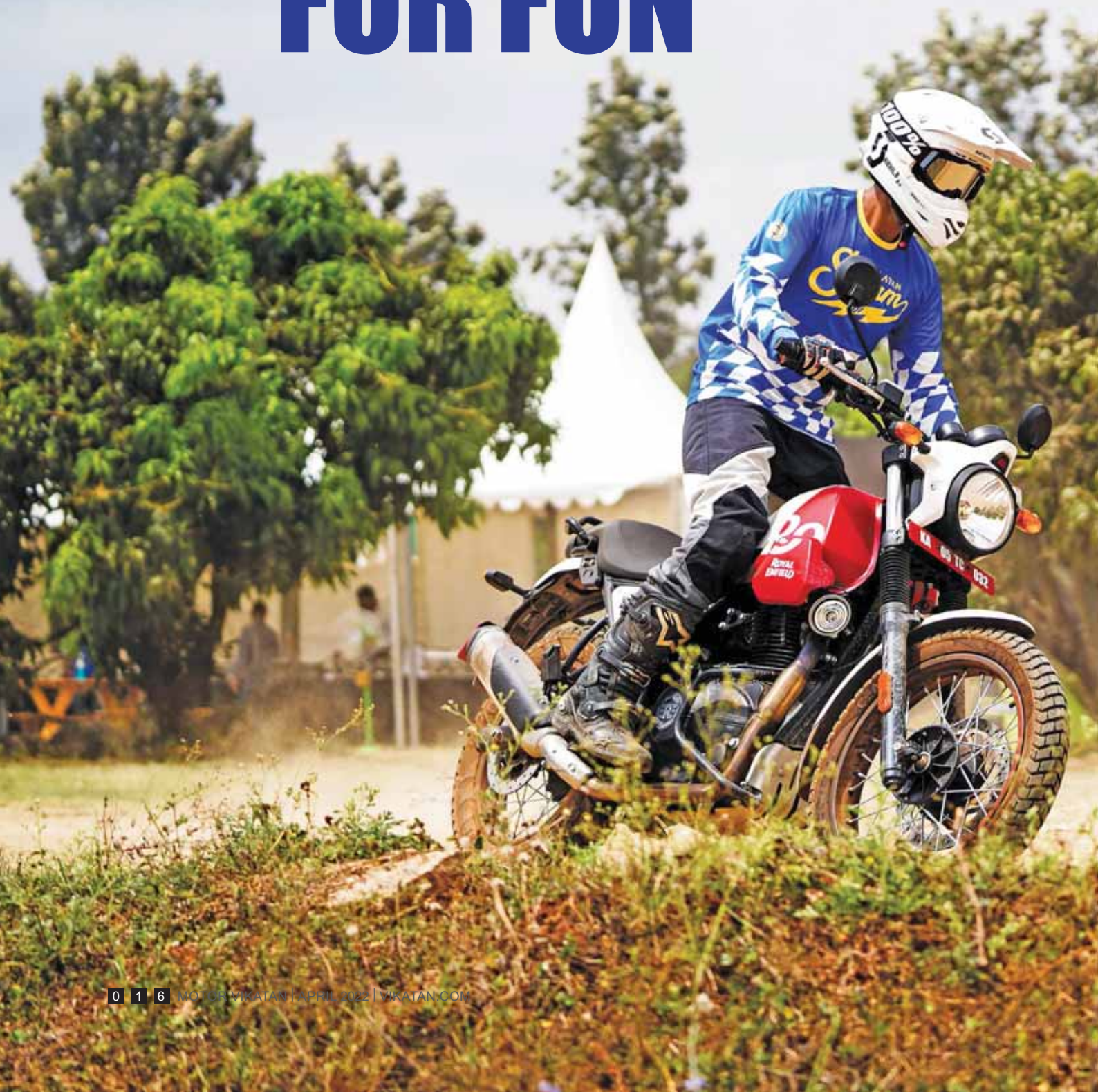
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AVINASH NORONHA

📷 THULASIDHARAN TJ

# SCRAMBLE FOR FUN







**R**oyal Enfield as a brand has been super active off late. There is always a market abuzz with something or the other to talk about. Never ever leaving the limelight. The brand has been skillfully navigating the multitude of ever-growing segments. And the Royal Enfield Scram 411 is their latest addition to this fast-evolving list.

Though Yezdi has also brought a slew of products including the Adventure, Scrambler and Roadster, it does feel a step behind the Chennai based brand.

The Scram 411 is essentially a stripped-down variant of the successful and much-loved Himalayan. This machine is set to fill the vacuum which existed in this super niche segment.

We were invited to ride the Scram 411 on the highways around Bangalore and at the Big Rock facilities to get a taste of the off-road. After riding the motorcycle on asphalt, dirt and broken roads, we have come to the definite conclusion that this is one heck of a motorcycle!

Royal Enfield has used the Himalayan as a platform to design this new machine. Working towards building a scrambler, with all that goes with the scrambler

culture. The design team has jettisoned some of the excess baggage on the Himalayan to give the bike a more purposeful appearance. While it does look like a Himalayan, it surely feels lighter than the Himalayan, long before you have thrown a leg over the saddle.

Design elements of the motorcycle have been moved around on the Scram. The round headlight now is set alone, without the need of an entire assembly to connect it down the sides of the tank. This makes the new bike look much sleeker from the front. The fuel tank is still quite big at 15-litres, which is more than





the Yezdi Scrambler, its immediate competition.

The ergonomics of the bike seem to have been tweaked ever so slightly to make urban warfare that much easier. The bike also gets a long single-seat, rather than the split seats on the Himalayan. This gives a different look to the Scram, while at the same time being comfortable for the rider. Though we didn't test it, we do think the pillion seat should be

comfortable as well for medium-range rides.

Saddle height is also lower than the Himalayan at 795 mm, which makes it much more accessible to a number of riders. It sits lower than the Yezdi as well. This will surely be a boost to the confidence of shorter riders as well.

This machine does not have a pop-out console. The single-round instrument cluster looks good and you can get trip navigation as an

optional for this bike. This is from the Meteor 350. The tail of the bike has been streamlined as well. The handlebar is of the same width, but now closer to the rider, giving it a more controlled posture for city riding. Unlike the Himalayan, luggage mounted racks will not be available on the Scram 411.

One of the biggest differences we feel is the wheel size. The front-wheel goes from 21 inches on the Himalayan to 19 inches on the Scram. The smaller front hoop makes changing direction easier in slower speed city traffic, though it increases the challenge of roots and rocks in the dirt. But this is a trade-off that makes a lot of sense for the scrambler edition. If a rider is going to be so dirt focussed, then they are better off with the Himalayan.

The heart of the bike remains unchanged with the 411 cc engine remaining unchanged as on the







Himalayan. This mill belts out 32 kgm of torque at 4250 rpm and 24.3 bhp of power at 6500 rpm. The engine could possibly have been used in a different state of tune to make it more hooligan friendly!

Though this engine is bigger than the Yezdi Scrambler, it produces less power than the 29.1 bhp of the Yezdi. Which makes it somewhat an awkward product positioning, at least on paper. The power delivery is linear and you feel it pushing you forward at a nice easy pace, never hurrying you up unnecessarily.

The company claims a top speed of 125 kmph, we could only whack out an indicated 110 kmph. Importantly, we hit those speeds without experiencing excessive vibrations. Here again, the Scram gets a 5-speed gearbox compared to the 6-speed employed on the Yezdi.

While riding the Scrambler on the trails of Hard Rock, I could feel the suspension working overtime to keep things in control. Front fork travel has been reduced by 10 mm on the Scram as compared to the Himalayan. The rear shock has the same amount of travel but in a slightly different setup. It is of course not as stable as the Himalayan but does the job of a scrambler well enough.

Ground Clearance also goes down by a whopping 20 mm to 200 mm. It is more than enough for city riding, but you wish for it on the trails. The bike gets dual-channel ABS, but it cannot be turned off for the rear wheel in the dirt, which is a shame for a scrambler. We would love to have the rear float around in the dirt. After all the stripping, the Scram 411 loses just 5 kg to the Himalayan, which isn't quite enough. It needed to be leaner to make urban life easier.

Royal Enfield has priced this bike at INR 12000 less than the Himalayan. It is also a few thousand less than the Yezdi Scrambler. Without fixating on the price, we don't think that should be a deal maker or breaker. The selling point of this Scram 411 is the number of colour options available. The essence of a scrambler is to look good and RE has helped its cause by offering quite the variety. It also comes with the company's MIY (Make It Yourself) scheme to help you customise your motorcycle more to your preference.

So, which should you go for? The Yezdi Scrambler or the Royal Enfield Scram 411? It is difficult to say, the market for scramblers currently is too tiny for a head-to-head. Both of these models are more likely to be cannibalising sales from their own company machines, rather than beating each other up!









# Suzuki Avenis

## Getting Access to Style!

**M**eet the smart new Suzuki Avenis, a sporty scooter, from the house of the Hamamatsu based Japanese manufacturer. A machine which is meant to excite you in equal measure with its looks as with its performance. Does the Avenis live up to its billing? Let's find out...

For a machine labelled as sporty, performance is of greater interest than aesthetics. So, we delve into this aspect of the Avenis first.

### Performance

The Suzuki Avenis is based on the same engine and chassis as the much-loved Access. A machine which has proved itself to be a winner time and again in the Indian

scooter market. It therefore is little surprise that Suzuki has stuck to this time-tested formula. The Avenis producing the same 8.58 bhp @ 6750 rpm and 10 Nm @ 5500 rpm from the same 124 cc engine.

This is both good and bad. Prospective buyers know they are getting a butter smooth, trouble-free engine. Having said that, a retuned engine would have been greatly appreciated when flaunting a 'sporty' tag. At 106 kg, the Avenis is sufficiently light footed and nimble. Filtering through traffic is a breeze with the torque at hand. It might feel muted in comparison to its direct rival the TVS Ntorq. The sorted chassis, capable telescopic front suspension and 12-inch front





wheel, give the scooter decent capability when tackling bad roads.

### **Ergonomics and Handling**

In terms of ergonomics, the Avenis has a spacious footboard and tall handlebars, which should make it a comfortable ride even for taller riders. But the two-step seat, gives the rider little room to shift. Something to keep in mind for really tall prospective buyers. There are a couple of 'practical' hooks on the front of this sporty scooter and it also comes equipped with a mobile charging dock in the closed glove box.

The ergonomics leave you sitting upright, which is great for urban riding, as it allows you to

see farther up the road. What isn't great is the handling and acceleration once you get out of the city and hit open roads. Post 50 kmph, the bike goes from being sporty to a commuter. The chutzpah one expects is missing. Handling through corners is even more commuterish. The 10-inch rear wheel doesn't inspire confidence for spirited riding, as you try to throw it in, the upright posture doesn't help in this regard either.

### **Features**

With this bike being firmly aimed at the younger junta, the list of features is of even more importance. The ability to flaunt the snazziest and jazziest is of paramount importance, carrying

groceries home is much lower down the pecking order.

In this regard, the Avenis scores. You get Bluetooth connectivity for the console and can happily receive phone notifications and navigation alerts. The Avenis also features full LED headlight and tail lamp units.

From a safety perspective there is the side stand engine cut-off feature.

Surprisingly, though the bike gets an external fuel inlet, the rider still needs to get off and open it. Since it isn't operated from the ignition keyhole. Another minor grouse is the lack of an LED light in the boot, a feature which is now expected.



## Styling

Leaving the best for last, the Suzuki Avenis will turn heads. Its edgy styling is modern and you can spend considerable time admiring the layers of design elements.

If you go for the Race Edition, then you get the Suzuki in its race blue livery. The other colour options don't stand out as much. If you look at the silhouette of this scooter, you could easily mistake it for an Ntorq. The physical resemblance is uncanny at times.

The most striking element of the Avenis is the Apron mounted LED headlight at the front. With the split grab rails and LED tail lamp unit also equally visually appealing. The downside of some of these visual elements are that it looks 'inspired' by the Ntorq.

One design feature we would have liked changed is the 10-inch wheel at the rear. Just from an aesthetics viewpoint, it looks out of place.

The overall fit and finish of the Avenis is incredible and speaks volumes about the brand.

## Verdict

The Suzuki Avenis doesn't provide any compelling reason for a prospective buyer to choose this over any other machine. It does many things well, but nothing stands out over the competition.

It is nonetheless an interesting option for anyone looking at the Suzuki Access, but with more modern styling. It is a machine that looks the sporty part, but at heart is a humble commuter scoot. Providing the long-term reliability expected from a commuter machine.





THULASIDHARAN TJ

THULASIDHARAN TJ



# The Honda experience of a Royal Enfield fan



**E**xactly one year ago, Honda released two models, the CB350 and the CB350 RS. Honda launched these bikes to compete with the Royal Enfield Classic. Honda introduced the CB350 RS in retro style to compete with the retro-styled Enfield.

We spoke to someone who has been a fan of the Royal Enfield bike for generations. He has been passionately buying and riding the RE motorcycles. Though, recently he has bought the CB350 RS. Shankar has this to say.

Shankar is an IT professional in Bangalore, he says, as for the relationship between Royal Enfield and me, everyone in our family is a Royal Enfield fan. In 1960 my grandfather had a mini bullet. Since then, the garage of our house has

been adorned with bikes bearing the Royal Enfield name. In the 1990s my dad was a Royal Enfield biker with a petrol bullet, a diesel bullet, an Electra, another diesel bullet. Then in 2001 I first bought Enfield's campus model bike. Then in 2011, I switched to the Classic 350. For almost 5 years, I travelled 63,000km on my Classic.

Having been using the Enfield for many years, I was interested in trying out a new bike. But, at the same time, the bike I could buy seemed to be on par with the Royal Enfield experience. Currently competing with Royal Enfield are Bajaj's Dominar and Honda's CB350 RS. It seemed like both could be tried. So, I bought the Dominar after







the Classic. Following that, I bought this Honda CB350 RS.

With the same engine capacity as in the Classic; The RS has almost the same power. But when it comes to features it has dual-channel ABS, traction control, slipper clutch and LED lights over and above the Classic. Dominar also gave me a great experience. However, I missed Enfield's retro style and Enfield's riding position a lot.

That's why I bought the CB350 RS bike which was the next choice. RS had the same features as the Dominar other than power. Also, my favourite retro look. I have to say that RS impressed me a lot after using it.

#### **About Royal Enfield Classic**

The first thing I liked about Royal Enfield was its appearance. RE's split seat is its trademark. There were few REs on the road when I bought it. So, I was unique wherever I went. That was the speciality of RE at that time too. RE introduced the disc brake when many bikes did not have one. I mean 10 years ago. Therefore, there can be no alternative to the RE being a better bike.

#### **About Bajaj Dominar**

The Dominar has a sportier stance. Its power must be highlighted. 40bhp Power, which everyone likes. Plus, its slipper







clutch works great. One of my favourite features is that Bajaj kept the price under control. The service interval is longer and there is no need for frequent service. Low cost of service, low cost of maintenance, low cost of Dominar spare parts. I have never spent a lot on Dominar. Cost-wise Dominar is a special choice.

#### About Honda CB 350 RS

I will say with my eyes closed that the best thing about the RS is its engine. Honda has given the RS a smooth engine that doesn't vibrate. It's so good to drive. The clutch of the RS is like a knife in hot butter. Both the Classic and the Dominar weigh almost the same and are 190+. The weight of RS on paper is only 8 to 10 kg less than Classic and Dominar. But it feels much lighter while driving. I really like this RS as it is like riding a lightweight bike after a long. I have

decided to continue using this bike! He concluded by telling us about his experience.

At one point in time, RE enjoyed being the monopoly and didn't have any competitors. But, today there is a lot of competition for it and we also have a lot of options to choose from. Along with Enfield, Bajaj, Honda, Jawa and Yezdi are jumping on the bandwagon.

When our reader Shankar bought his bike, the Yezdi was not in the market. Considering his requirement, if Yezdi would have been there, he would have considered it as well. The 350cc segment is getting hotter now. The culmination of this segment will be Enfield, which has been on the throne for a long time. Honda, which has been infiltrating the field, or Yezdi, which has re-entered the market with new products.







AVINASH NORONHA

O'THULASIDHARAN TJ

# The Yezdi Troika

**Y**ezdi. A name which immediately takes middle-aged motorcyclists into the realm of nostalgia. Memories harking back to the days of sitting with one's dad on those heavy metal stallions. Motorcycles have never been simple machinery. Motorcycles are an emotion. And bikes like the Yezdi troika play on those emotions. Welling you up with days long gone.

After the buzz created by the Jawa series of bikes, launching a bunch of motorcycles with the Yezdi sticker made a lot of sense. Yezdi shares not just the thought

but the platform as well with the Jawa bikes. With that thought let us delve into this holy trinity of the Adventure, Scrambler and Roadster.

We were provided these motorcycles for short durations and here are our initial impressions.

## An adventure beckons

First up is the flagship product, the Yezdi Adventure. A motorcycle which unapologetically targets the Royal Enfield Himalayan. So much so, that the design looks a little too similar. One can argue, that most ADV bikes have a similar silhouette. Even taking that into account,

it is still going to be a task to differentiate the two motorcycles from a distance.

We believe that the company missed an opportunity to design a bike which looks different from its immediate competition.

Looks aside, the bike sports a 334 cc mill which churns out a healthy, but not heart stopping, 30.2 hp and 29.9 Nm. Giving it adequate grunt to tackle the terrain it is built for. The gearing is almost spot on, with only second gear appearing to not have the perfect ratio. Engine refinement has scope for improvement, as we could 'feel' it, at low and high RPMs.









The Adventure impresses more with its handling and suspension. Ground clearance is a comforting 220 mm, as it is equipped with a 21-inch wheel at the front and a 17-inch wheel at the rear. Front fork travel is 200 mm, while the rear monoshock gets 180 mm. This translates into a plush ride on asphalt, while maintaining its composure on gravel. We want to put the bike a bit more through its paces before giving a verdict on its off-road capabilities.

Brakes on the Adventure have decent bite and feedback. But it does need a firm hand by the rider. The bike also gets dual-channel ABS, which can be changed to allow the rear to break free in the dirt.

This machine sports a digital instrument cluster with Bluetooth connectivity and navigation assistance. The cluster fit and finish is acceptable, but does leave you wanting more.

At a starting price of INR 2.1 Lakh Ex-showroom, the Yezdi Adventure is a good option. But it needs a lot more going for it, to get prospective buyers to switch from a Himalayan to the Adventure.

### Scrambling the market

Second in the Yezdi hierarchy, the Scrambler is far more likely to turn heads, rather than its more expensive sibling.

The Yezdi Scrambler has new found competition in the market with the Royal Enfield Scram 411 (read about it in this issue). Yet, it is a fresh concept at this price point of INR 2.05 lakhs. Motorcyclists harking back to their Yamaha RX-100 days, will surely eye this attractive piece of kit. It oozes all the fun and frolic which a Scrambler should. The bike is young, sporty, ready to tackle everything and a hoot to ride.

The 200 mm of ground clearance promises you routes, which you might have otherwise avoided. This machine also gets full LED lighting, which is somewhat par for the course these days. It also gets 3 ABS modes and a USB socket for charging your phone. It doesn't get Bluetooth or navigation, which the more expensive Adventure gets.

The engine on all three Yezdis is the same 334 cc unit. But the Scrambler runs it at a different state of tune. 29 ps of power and 28 Nm of torque are the claimed figures. The motorcycle does seem to have more bottom end torque compared to its siblings, which would make it easier to ride in the urban environment.





The Scrambler shines on the riding front, with good manners both on asphalt and dirt. The 21-inch front wheel helps with riding the rough stuff, while the wide handlebar gives adequate leverage for manoeuvring at slow speeds. Chuck the bike fast into a corner and you feel planted. Which is surprising considering the big front hoop.

Overall, the Scrambler is the Yezdi which shines the most from the trio. Opening up the Indian market with a genre which previously didn't exist.

### Classic Roadster

Harking back to its roots is the new Yezdi Roadster. The motorcycle which embodies all the pent of nostalgia of Indian motorcyclists.

The Roadster much like its Jawa Forty Two cousin, has a classic design, with the genes of the original workhorse. The most affordable of the Yezdi offerings, the Roadster is likely to have the most takers with its more conventional retro styling.

From some viewing angles, the bike looks like the motorcycle from the 70s. From other angles, the bike looks a bit like a cross between a Royal Enfield Standard and Thunderbird. This doesn't detract from its aesthetics, but it does give the bike a long wheelbase of 1440 mm. Which in turn dictates its handling.

The raked out steering and long wheelbase, gives the motorcycle the handling something more akin to a cruiser. The bike is extremely stable on a straight road. This comes at a cost of manoeuvrability. You have to heave a lot of the

handlebar to steer it into a corner and then hold it through. Spirited canyon carving this motorcycle hasn't been designed for. It is perfect for sedate riders, who enjoy the open road and like to munch up the miles without breaking a sweat.

This iteration of the Yezdi also runs the same engine as the Scrambler and Adventure. But with a different state of tune. The engine is tuned to complement the sedate chassis.

All that retro looks, doesn't change the fact that it is a modern motorcycle at heart. It sports an LCD console, LED lighting, liquid

cooled DOHC engine, and ABS. Giving you the best of both worlds.

This bike has a lot going for it, and we believe it has the potential to do well. With one small caveat. Its biggest competition will be sitting in the same showroom in the form of the Jawa Forty Two. An extra option for the potential customer, could turn into cannibalising sales for Yezdi.

We can't wait to these three motorcycles out on longer rides to get to know them better and share our thoughts with you.







THULASIDHARAN TJ

SHAFIQ AHMED

# Experience Yamaha Track Ride

If you have a Yamaha bike, you too can ride on a race track!

'The Call of the Blue' Track Day!

Even if you own a race bike, you mostly only ride on the road. Most people would be willing to do anything to ride the bike on the race track. Riding on the track is sharpening your razor edges of sensory perceptions. All bike owners cannot ride on a race track, nor all bikers can become racers.

Yamaha then made an incredible announcement for owners of the YZF-R3, YZF-R15, MT-15, FZ series and Aerox 155. They were given an incredible opportunity of riding on the Madras Motor Race Track.

Yamaha fans were gaga about the news. Bookings for the available slots immediately started filling up, as everyone wanted a chance to ride on the race track. How could one possibly miss such a golden opportunity?

On March 13, Yamaha organised

the Track Day experience, "The Call of the Blue", for its customers at MMRT, Chennai. With an entry fee of Rs 2000/- you could make a reservation, bring your Yamaha bike to the track and attend the track session. More than 500 Yamaha fans attended the track ride that morning. The roar of bikes of all these Yamaha bikes was heard from afar.

You had to just show up with your motorcycle at the track. Full riding gear, helmets, boots, gloves









et al were provided by Yamaha. I was handed the keys to an R15 for riding on the track.

The first 20 minutes were a briefing class. There are many rules to riding a bike on the race track. There was a thorough explanation of operating motorcycles on the track, the safety rules, definitions of the various race flags, and the importance of riding gears. First-time attendants were eagerly listening to the safety rules, quite unlike flyers in an aeroplane!

Many riders noted that race bikes don't have a mirror. Others wondered how are you supposed to overtake and what exactly is meant by a pitstop. I already had the experience of riding the Yamaha R15 on the race track a few times. I was nonetheless still excited about riding on the race track again. This time my target was to hit 150 kmph on the straight.

Riders were only allowed to ride on the track after wearing armour, a full-length leather suit, track boots, gloves and a helmet. Participants were in the age range of 18 to 34

years. Regardless of age, each rider was allowed to ride 8 laps.

The Yamaha R15 M track performance was fantastic. Features like the aerodynamics, slipper clutch help you fly on the track. The only downside was just 8 laps! Others also felt the same. We all felt a few more laps would have been nicer. Everyone who saw the bikes on track wanted to have a go at it.

Like FDFS movie reviews, I asked for feedback from First Day First Track Ride (FDFTR) people, I got these replies:

"Riding on the track is so much fun"

"It feels like going on a roller coaster"

"I ride an R15. Only today I realise I could go so fast"

"Thrilling is when you go through the corner"

"It is so hard to race"

All participants were presented with an instant photo, t-shirt, keychain and food coupons by Yamaha. Yamaha's 'Call of the Blue', as the name suggests, the blue colour is cool to the eye...



Out of curiosity and love, one customer asked, when would the next iteration of this event happen again? If you have the desire to ride the bike on the race track, then don't miss this opportunity. I didn't miss it either! Everything else aside, I loved taking the R15 to 150 kmph. Thanks, Yamaha!





THULASIDHARAN TJ

📷 ADITYA BEDRE, VIGNESH



# ROYAL ENFIELD CONTINENTAL GT CUP 2021

In the automobile industry, Royal Enfield is one of the oldest brands globally. The company which has been building bikes since the Internal Combustion Engines and tyres were invented are now a century old. True to its roots, RE has been maintaining a design philosophy that harks back to its original machines. The unmistakable beat of the Royal Enfield has inspired generations as you coast along at 80 kmph on the highways enjoying your weekend ride. Even I went riding to the Himalayas on a Royal Enfield, that is how most of us get acquainted with these metal steeds.





One day we got some incredible news which was music to my ears. The music was that Royal Enfield was going to start a racing championship. It was as much a shock as a pleasant surprise. Racing on an RE was not something we were used to imagining.

We all have seen lightweight motorcycles with their 4-stroke engines flying around the racetracks in India. And here there was Royal Enfield which was going to be racing their GT bikes with twin-cylinder engines, significantly heavier than most race bikes. How would these fly on the race track?

Previously we had heard of the Polo GT Cup, and now we had the Royal Enfield Continental GT Cup! I left with my crew, grinning from ear to ear, wondering what lay in store. RE hosted these races in conjunction with the JK Tyre National Racing Championship. The company representatives





understood our curiosity when we arrived at the Kari Motor Speedway in Coimbatore. We were going to be riding as well on track!

Royal Enfield had invited all the racers in India to take part in this race. More than 500 racers had sent in their application to race the Continental GT on the track. Everyone who set their eyes on the bike wanted to have a go. There was a selection round to bring down the numbers from 500 to 100. RE then selected 18 racers who were the best amongst them to race in the GT Cup Championship. All races for the first season were held at the Kari Motor Speedway.

Normally, a Continental GT looks like a street bike. The track-ready bike had minimalistic modifications done to it. But these mods were sufficient to give it a sense of racing purpose. The bike sported a retro fairing, a stiffer suspension setup, steel exhaust and special JK Race tyres, which helped with cornering through

the track. The engine though was unchanged, with power figures the same as a stock bike.

It was slightly odd riding a street bike on the track. Even the motorcycle sensed my reluctance and after the first four corners, did the bike started feeling natural to ride. ABS on the bike was switched off so that you could slide through the corners if you wish. That allowed me to get a closer feeling of the braking and the power of the brakes as the brake pads came slamming down on the disc. The engine power could be felt while exiting the corners.

It was a pleasure to ride this retro bike as a race bike. I hit around 130 kmph on the short straight on the Kari track. But it is not the straight line, where it is fun. It is the corners. The bike doesn't just have good road manners, it also felt complete on the race track as well.

During the race, there were 18 retro bikes racing through

the corners and straights. A sight which is difficult to forget. All 18 racers who raced showed their full potential. 27-year-old Anish Damodar Shetty clinched the National Continental GT Cup Championship 2021. Anish had been leading the championship from the very first round and held that lead to the end with 64 points. 24-year-old Allwin Xavier was tough competition as he ended with 61 points. 21-year-old Anfal Akdhar ended up in third place, but at his young age, he showed a lot of heart and potential.

The GT Cup was a grand success in its first season. Royal Enfield is planning to bring more races next year. Also, they will be starting a school to help budding racers to understand and learn about racing. Those interested in starting to race at a young age and aspiring to become champions can start with the Royal Enfield Race School.





# Caring for your Car in Indian Summers





**T**he majority of India sees a 9-months long summer. With the summer being at its peak for a good 3 months. The scorching heat takes a toll on both man and machine. It is imperative to care for the well-being of both.

In this quick guide, we cover the necessary precautions one must take for one's automobile.

### 1. Air-Conditioning

The first thing we all think of is creature comfort and the air-con in your car is directly related to it. As such, it is of primary importance to get your air conditioner serviced before the onset of summer. Also, it is helpful to use it for a few days before you actually need it. So that you find out in advance if there is any malfunction.

### 2. Coolant Levels

Now that we have the air conditioner working to keep you cool, we divert our attention towards keeping the car cool! The heart of the car, the engine, is as stressed out as us humans in the heat. It is the job of the engine coolant to suck out this heat and

dump it out through the radiator. To do so, there needs to be sufficient liquid that can transport the heat energy from one place to another. This is why it is so important to regularly check the coolant level throughout the summer months.

### 3. Engine Oil

Having the requisite amount of engine oil is always important for the well-being of your car. And it becomes doubly important in the summer. Because engine oil doesn't just lubricate the engine internals in the searing heat. It also transfers the heat from the core of the engine. Do make sure that the engine oil is topped up with the recommended grade.

### 4. Wipers and Windscreen fluid

This might not seem an obvious element for the summer. But Indian summers are often peppered with quick rain showers. If you get caught with old hard wipers or no water for the windscreen, then you might end up damaging the glass. Hard wipers grate against the windscreen surface, scratching it up over time.

### 5. Tyres

Tyres take a hammering in the summer months. Burning hot black asphalt is in constant contact and friction with the black doughnuts of your car. The ambient heat is compounded with the heat produced by friction and you have a recipe for tyre torture. Before the start of peak summer, check your tyre condition, especially if it is old and cracked rubber. During the summer months, regularly check the air pressure in the tyres and maintain it at optimum. This will increase tyre life and give you a better driving experience in the summer.

### 6. Sun Shades

We wear shades to protect our eyes from the bright summer light. Similarly, we need to protect the







car from the light. A closed car, parked in the sun, acts like a greenhouse. Buy a set of shades for your car. And use it, whenever you plan to leave your car parked in the sun for a long time. It will keep your car cooler and make life easier for you when you get back to drive.

### 7. Park in the Shade

Look for places where you can park your car in the shade. Whether it is the basement parking in your apartment complex or a shady tree on the highway. Park in the shade as much as possible. It will not just help keep your car cooler, it will also protect the paint of the car from deteriorating at a faster pace.

### 8. Air Filter

Indian summers are not just hot, but also exceptionally dusty. The heady cocktail of heat and dust plays havoc with the air filters in your car. Clean it thoroughly before the onset of summer and check regularly through the season.

### 9. Open Doors and Windows

After your car has been parked in the open during the day, don't just jump straight in. Open the doors from either side to allow the air trapped inside to escape. Even after you have started your car and switched on the AC, keep the windows rolled down for the hot air to flow out. This will help your car cool down faster.

### 10. Battery

One often overlooked item in your car is the battery. The battery is under a lot more stress during the summer with an extra electrical load. Coupled with that is the moisture sucking heat, which reduces the liquid levels in the battery. If you have a battery that requires water top-ups, do so regularly in the summer.

Most importantly though, in the heat, it is easy to get worked up while driving. It is pertinent to keep a cool head at all times. The rest will then be easier to follow!







# WHAT MAKES HIGHNESS A HIGHNESS?

IS IT LEGACY? IS IT THE VOICE? IS IT BEING HIGHLY SELECTIVE? IS IT MOVING  
AROUND WITH THE NOBILITY? IS IT BEING IN TUNE WITH THE TIMES? IS IT JUST  
PURE CLASS? WHAT MAKES HIGHNESS A HIGHNESS?



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AVINASH NORONHA

# 20 Tips for Long Distance Driving





"Country roads take me home to the place I belong", famous lyrics from John Denver's song. When we get our first car, we all dream of heading out for a long drive. As there's nothing as joyous for an automobile enthusiast as being out on the open road with your machine for company.

You plan your first trip and then realise, that there's many a thing that needs to be done before you head out. Here's a quick checklist for you to plan your drive.



## Plan Beforehand

1

Plan your drive beforehand, so that you know the total distance to your destination. Divide your distance by the kilometres you want to cover every day. It is easier to average around 8 hours of driving a day, more than that and fatigue sets in causing driving errors.

## Prepare Your Vehicle

2

Prepare your vehicle properly in advance. This includes keeping water, food, snacks, tissue, hand sanitiser, hand towels and anything else you will require for the journey. Don't wait for the last morning to store this in the car. Do it the evening before the drive.

This also includes having your vehicle papers in order and up to date. In India, we need to have the vehicle's RC, Insurance and PUC, along with the driver's licence.



## Driver should be rested

3

Ensure the driver has had a good night's sleep before the start of the journey. Driving with inadequate sleep and fatigue will cause mistakes and can end in tears.

## Dress comfortably

4

Wear clothes for comfort, not style. You will be sitting in the same place for many hours continuously. You will also be stopping for food at open highway eateries. You might also need to use public toilets. You want to be comfortable for any and all eventualities.

## Sit up straight

5

Sit comfortably and straight in your car. Slouching will only make you less focussed on your driving and bring on fatigue faster. Set up your driver's seat as per your preference in advance and find what works best for you.



## Eat Right and Stay hydrated with snacks

6

Don't overeat while driving long distances. At the same time don't starve yourself. Overeating will make you uncomfortable as you are seated with minimal physical activity during the drive. Insufficient nutrition on the other hand will cause fatigue to creep in faster. While sitting in an airconditioned car, we often forget to drink water. Remind yourself and fellow passengers to hydrate.

## Using Navigation and having navigation tools

9

If you are going to stick to arterial highways, then this isn't a priority. But if you are planning to go off the beaten track and looking to explore, then having navigation tools at your fingertips can be exceptionally heartening. Save your routes offline on your phone or download offline maps. If you have a dedicated navigation device, then that is even better. Remember the internet may or may not work in remote areas, when you need the maps the most.

## Keep your music playlist

7

Music. An element which can make or break the enjoyment of your drive. If you are driving alone, then you can play all your favourite playlists. If you have a mixed crowd in your vehicle, then find out what kind of music everyone likes. Prepare playlists in advance, so that you don't have to go searching for songs while driving.



## Frequent Stops

8

Depending on your driving experience and comfort, plan out your stops. 3+ hours of nonstop driving isn't easy for everyone. Driving 2 hours at a stretch is comfortable for most drivers and passengers. Find your own sweet spot. Plan your wayside meals so that they coincide with your planned driving breaks.

## Maintain safe distance from other vehicles

10

While out on the road, keep a safe distance from the vehicle in front. A gap of 2 feet might feel sufficient when driving in city traffic at crawling speeds, but that is woefully inadequate on the highways. As the speed goes up, the gap between two vehicles should increase proportionately. Ask yourself, if you have enough distance to come to a sudden halt if required?



## Vehicle Emergency kit

Ensure your vehicle has an emergency kit. This includes a wheel changing toolkit, emergency lights, reflective triangles, engine oil for top ups, water for the windscreen, cleaning cloths and a medical kit.

11

## Share the driving load

If there are multiple drivers on your journey. Give each other a turn to drive. Everyone gets to enjoy the drive that way and nobody gets tired.

If you are planning to head to the hills, then the best driver in the group, should drive in the hills. The less experienced drives can gain miles on the open highways.

13



## Refuel in time

Don't wait for your vehicle to hit reserve before you start searching for a fuel bunk. There can be times and places where good quality fuel bunks aren't readily available, more so the case in rural and semi-urban areas. Start searching for a fuel bunk when you still have around 100 km in the tank.

12

## Enjoy the scenery

Don't be in a hurry to get to your destination. Else you miss out on the beauty on offer along the route. Enjoy the scenery and if needed, find places of interest which are enroute or with minor detours.

14

Drive consistently

Pace yourself. Drive at a consistent pace which doesn't let you tire easily. If you keep accelerating and braking hard, both you and your machine will reach fatigue levels faster. Have both machine and human empathy.

15



## Keep the phone away

Phones are now an integral part of everyday life. Nonetheless, put it away while driving or ask one of your co-passengers to attend your calls. Phones more often than not are responsible for road incidents.

16

If you are driving alone, then have somebody back home for tracking you. Give them a call or drop a message every time you halt, so that they can keep progress of your journey. And if any unfavourable events take place, there will be someone expecting a call from you and will press the panic button.

## Service your car a week prior to departure

Don't wait for a day before the drive to service your car. Technicians at the service centre are only human and can make mistakes. Service a week before departure and drive around the city looking for any odd sounds or irregularities. This will give you time to revisit the service centre if required before leaving.

19

## Check the weather conditions

Check weather conditions before you head out for a drive. If you are expecting rain, then you will take longer to reach your destination. For mist and fog, expect to make slow progress in the early mornings. If peak summer, then you don't want to be driving in the middle of the day.

17



## Avoid driving at night

There are a few people who prefer driving at night. But for most, it is best avoided. Try to reach your destination before or soon after sunset. Driving in the dark can increase fatigue drastically. If your car doesn't have fantastic headlights, then you will get tired faster.

18

## Document your trip

Finally, don't forget to take photos and videos when out travelling by car. You will enjoy reliving those memories when you are back to your desk in office!

20





# THE FUTURE OF EV CHARGING INFRASTRUCTURE IN INDIA

In the automotive industry, electric vehicles (EVs) are the buzzword. While the big OEMs are developing new EVs there are quite a lot of start-ups are also entering the space. The transition to electric mobility is a promising global strategy for decarbonizing the transport sector. India is among a handful of countries that support the global EV30@30 campaign, which targets to have at least 30% of new vehicle sales be electric by 2030.

The recent announcement of the FAME II policy, aimed at promoting faster adoption and manufacturing of electric vehicles in India, is visionary and has led to a phenomenal start to the shift towards a more environmentally friendly automobile market. But there are still some tweaks needed if we are to move forward and keep the momentum going. The demand for electric vehicles is increasing every day. As many as 236,802 electric cars and 25,735 electric two-wheelers were sold in FY21 as per the Society of Manufacturers of Electric Vehicles (SMEV).







Without a doubt, EVs are environmentally friendly compared to fossil fuels but if a customer buys a petrol or diesel vehicle there are around 70,000 fuel stations across the country and refilling is quite easy. But what about charging stations? There are only a few numbers available in the country, so installing a charging infrastructure is the priority for the government and private players. In order to reach the goal of EVs reaching 30% market penetration by 2030, India needs to work on a robust network of electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure.

EV charging requirements depend on the specifications of EV batteries, as power must be supplied to the battery at the right voltage and current levels to permit charging. The typical capacity and voltage of EV batteries vary among the different EV segments. EV

charging involves the supply of direct current (DC) to the battery pack. As electricity distribution systems supply alternate current (AC) power, a converter is required to provide DC power to the battery. In the case of an AC EVSE, the AC power is delivered to the onboard charger of the EV, which converts it to DC. A DC EVSE converts the power externally and supplies DC power directly to the battery, bypassing the onboard charger.

EV chargers are defined by the amount of energy delivered to the vehicle's battery per unit of time. Starting from 1KW to 120KW chargers are available. The 1KW being the lowest to 120KW will be the fastest to charge the battery. Capex for a charger consists of the charging equipment itself (similar to a gas pump) plus any required upgrades to the local electricity grid, land, civil works,

etc. Most capital cost comprises the charging hardware itself. There are some economies of scale, but these peak as the station reaches four to six chargers, with capital cost per charger declining slowly as the overall size and capacity of the station increases. While Level 2 chargers are relatively less costly to build (with only a 5 KW capacity) on a per-KW basis, they're actually more expensive than Level 3 and 4 chargers.

Many entrepreneurs wish to set up charging stations in both cities and highways, but considering the current volume setting up charging stations does not provide enough returns or profit. On the other hand, the vehicle manufacturers see the lack of such stations as a dampener for the sale of these low-emission automobiles.

Private companies are building charging capacity in advance of





demand, absorbing losses and counting on the eventual rise in EV adoption. These players often seek to play in numerous EV-charging use cases such as installing home chargers (not unlike installing a home appliance) and at-work charging networks, setting up charging points at commercial locations (such as parking lots at hotels or retail centres) and building roadside, fast-charging stations.

Though the state and city governments have made provisions of charging points mandatory in new buildings, it is currently only public sector companies, such as the NTPC and Energy Efficiency Services (EESL), and those running EV service that have put up charging infrastructure.

Capex for a charger consists of the charging equipment itself

(similar to a gas pump) plus any required upgrades to the local electricity grid, land, civil works, etc. Most capital cost comprises the charging hardware itself. There are some economies of scale, but these peak as the station reaches four to six chargers, with capital cost per charger declining slowly as the overall size and capacity of the station increases. While Level 2 chargers are relatively less costly to build (with only a 5 KW capacity) on a per-KW basis, they're actually more expensive than Level 3 and 4 chargers.

Indian electric vehicle market is projected to grow at a CAGR of over 37%, during FY2022-FY2027. Robust market growth is anticipated on account of rising number of government initiatives such as incentive schemes to encourage adoption of environment-friendly electric

vehicles, growing consumer inclination towards electric vehicles, increasing concerns over harmful effects of air pollution, and huge investments by various OEMs for developing more affordable and premium electric vehicles in the coming years.

The EV charging infrastructure in India is growing, as the number of electric vehicles on the road is increasing day by day. Various government initiatives to curb pollution will be a major factor behind the increasing number of electric vehicles on the road, this will further bolster the growth of the electric vehicle charging infrastructure market. If all the gaps are addressed immediately, the charging infrastructure in the country will witness a massive boom, creating huge opportunities for potential investors too.





# "Why did I buy Nexon Electric Car?"



**Z**OHO Chairman Sridhar Vembu reveals the rationale behind buying Tata Nexon and his vision of investing in EV companies to Thulasidharan TJ of Motor Vikatan.

There is nobody in Tamil Nadu who does not know about Sridhar Vembu. Started as a small software development company in a small apartment in Chennai, Sridhar Vembu is the CEO and Chairman of an Indian company that today competes with leading companies globally such as Google, Microsoft and Salesforce. Recently, he wrote on Twitter that he had bought a Tata Nexon EV, which went viral in the automobile world. "Zoho CEO bought





an electric car, and he bought a budget car," said an electric car enthusiast. To find out his thoughts on electric vehicles and what kind of experience Nexon gave him, he was interviewed via Zoho Meet video conferencing.

**What interested you in electric vehicles and can you share a little bit about it?**

For the past few years, I have been interested in using electric

vehicles. I was more interested in electric vehicles from the beginning than I have been saying for the past few years. Not just for use; I was also interested in investing in it commercially. Because the use of electric vehicles is inevitable. However, technology is currently being developed to suit our use. Mainly battery technology. In another 5 to 10 years, the transportation sector will become electric. Just as

cloud technology revolutionized the software industry, so did the electric transportation industry. In the future, not only personal transport but also lorries, trucks and tractors will all become electric.

**The CEO of ZOHO, who trades in billions, may have bought luxury electric cars such as Tesla, Audi and Mercedes-Benz. But what is the reason for buying a budget car?**

This car gives me pleasure. I just want to be very simple. I come from a middle-class family. I do not think I can get pleasure from driving cars worth crores. I want my choices to always be simple.

**Is that a reason to choose Tata Nexon EV in particular?**

The reason I chose the Tata Nexon EV was that it fulfilled my wish. All the driving range and power I needed was in the Nexon EV. So, I chose it. Personally, I really like the Nexon EV. Its design, its performance is everything! The Nexon EV is also great to use. Tata engineers have designed a great car. If you want to give credit for this, it is to the Tata engineers.





A lot of foreign companies can come to India and produce, sell. But we also have to specialize in all the technologies.

**Two things you like and dislike about Nexon?**

If there are two favourite things, acceleration first and second, it is quiet. I really liked the fact that it was quiet while driving the car. The disliked thing is the range. When it comes to the 200km range, even driving a little too far can bring tension. If the range is higher, it will be even better. It's going to come in a little while more. One negative aspect is that the battery life is short enough to match the second electric vehicle. Need to build batteries that can last a long day. That's all.

**You said you were also interested in investing in electric vehicles, can you share a little bit about that?**

We have already announced this. TVS Motors and ZOHO have jointly invested in an electric motor vehicle manufacturer called Ultraviolet. It is a company that makes premium and high-performance electric motorbikes. I also shared a video on Twitter about this. The company design had done everything well. We have invested in producing and marketing it on a large scale.



You have spoken in many places proposing India use Indian products first. What do you think about foreign companies like Tesla coming to India in this situation?

Healthy competition is definitely something to be welcomed. A lot of foreign companies can come to India and produce, sell. But we also have to specialize in all the technologies. An object must be designed and manufactured

right here. We need to make sure that happens too. We should not be completely dependent on foreign companies. India is the most populous country. 2.4 crore babies are born in India every year. If employment for them in the future is to be in India, we must be self-sufficient. It is very necessary. We need to ensure that there are employment opportunities in India, whether foreign companies or domestic companies.









# MotoGP's Asia Calling

**M**ore than 7 decades ago Grand Prix racing began in Europe, with the riders and manufacturers from the continent itself. The world was much larger, Asia, Africa and America were a distant dream away. 1961 saw the first GP being held outside of Europe and two years later, Asia had its first GP in Japan.

Even though motorcycle racing is predominantly Europe centric, it has over the years seen racers from different countries take charge. After the first 3 decades of European dominance, the 80s and 90s saw riders from America taking control. There was a smattering of Australian riders as well in this era. From the time MotoGP started in

2002, we have seen mostly Italians and Spanish motorcyclists not just win, but almost entirely fill up the grid.

MotoGP like any other professional sport, is driven by commerce. The over representation of Italy and Spain in the championship is primarily because of the number of fans in these two countries.

Which is why 2022 is a historic moment for Asia. For the very first time in GP history, the first two rounds of the season are being held in Asia. The season opener was in Qatar and the second race was held in Indonesia.

A clear indication by Dorna, MotoGP's promoting body. They are looking east as the future awaits



here. Lusail has been hosting MotoGP for over a decade now, and this was the first race in Mandalika. As you would expect there were teething problems with a new track in the middle of nowhere. Look at it as a long-term plan and it makes much more sense.

See the crowds teeming to get a glimpse of their favourite MotoGP stars and it is unsurprising that the sport is desperate to cater to them. As a pre-event build-up for the GP, the President of Indonesia went for a motorcycle ride with the GP stars. Where else in the world would you see something like that!

There are now five Asian rounds through the season in the Championship, with Japan, Malaysia and Thailand part of the racing calendar. But currently only a single Asian rider in the premier class in the form of Takaaki Nakagami from Japan. With a greater push to the sport in Asia, we can hope to see more Asian riders in the coming decade.

What about India? India



currently has an FIA approved track in the form of the Buddh International Circuit, where Formula 1 races were held. It was also homologated by the FIM for the World Superbike, but that fell through at the last moment. India isn't lacking in infrastructure, the circuit and surrounding areas has better accommodation, airport and

medical facilities than many other tracks in the world. What we do lack though is mass interest.

India has a large and growing motorcycle market. We also now have a considerably developed motorcycle lifestyle, where people ride motorcycles by choice and not circumstance. Yet, we are lacking in interest towards motorcycle racing. It is a niche sport in the country. There just aren't enough MotoGP fans to viably host a race here. All of this might change with the recently launched MotoGP series being aired on Amazon Prime, MotoGP Unlimited. A series made to show all the drama which happens off track, to attract new fans to the human side of the sport. Modern-day gladiators, so to speak.

Which brings us to the actual racing which happened in the first two rounds of MotoGP.

With the two races having happened on tracks which are widely different from the rest of the calendar, we have no direction







going in for the rest of the season. Lusail is a night race held after dark on a track which barely sees any use for the rest of the year. Mandalika is a brand-new track, where the surface was degrading under the powerful motorcycles. The race weekend also saw incredibly high track temperatures of 67 degrees centigrade. With the race being cut short because of excessive tyre degradation. It eventually got hit by a tropical downpour, which skewed the entire results.

Enea Bastianini in only his second year in MotoGP and on a year-old satellite Ducati, won the opening round at Qatar. The attack from the other Ducatis which was expected, didn't materialise. Neither were the Suzukis able to pose any challenge. Second place was taken by Brad Binder on his KTM, who nobody was expecting to find on the podium, while third spot was rounded off by Pol Espargaro on his Honda.

Mandalika's results were similarly thrown a curve ball with the rain. Miguel Oliveira took the win on board his KTM in decisive fashion. He made a break early in the race and kept the lead



unchallenged till the finish. More surprising than the winner was second placed reigning MotoGP champion, Fabio Quartararo. The Frenchman has never been great in the wet on his Yamaha. But in Indonesia after a slow start, he made his way through the pack to finish second. Third was taken by another Frenchman, Johann Zarco on his Ducati, after a tough fight with fellow Ducati rider, Jack Miller.

After two rounds, Bastianini leads the championship. But there is not much you can read into it. This

is a long season and the first two races were anomalies.

The biggest takeaway from the season start was the crash of Marc Marquez. In a massive highside, he has re-injured himself. Double vision problems which plagued him through the winter break is back. How will that pan out for the multiple champion and the MotoGP championship? The motorcycling world waits with bated breath.





# NEW ERA,



**T**he 2022 Formula One World Championship season is underway and the new regulations have already made a huge impact on the course of the season. When the 8-time constructors champion is taken out of the title race after just 2 rounds, then the regulations should be deemed a hit!

Charles Leclerc won the first race of the season in Bahrain and

Max Verstappen who was forced to retire in that race ends on the top step of the podium in Jeddah. The fight between those two lit up the tracks and laid the foundation for the Verstappen-Leclerc rivalry.

This season didn't seem to rekindle the Verstappen-Lewis Hamilton rivalry from 2021. Mercedes who won the team championship for 8 consecutive seasons, struggled a lot



# NEW BATTLE!



in the gulf and we've even seen the sight of Hamilton being eliminated in Q1. The headline maker among all the events of the past two weeks is Kevin Magnussen scoring points, despite joining the team only 11 days before the Bahrain GP! Yes, this season is indeed a huge surprise.

## **Race 1: Bahrain GP - Wounded Bull, Walloping Horse**

"Fighting for the title next year is a must. We are working hard for

this: failing to do so would mean having done everything wrong. A failure"

Mattia Binotto said this 7 months ago and he would be the happiest man in the F1 paddock right now. After spending the last two seasons in the midfield, Binotto's team has brought the 'Prancing Horse' back to where it belongs.

Yeah, it's just the first race; just one race. Yet, it was enough for the fans to dream about the title. Seeing both the drivers on the podium alone won't give you that much optimism. But, the result of the race as a whole was enough to bet on the horse!

The Ferrari Power Unit should be considered the biggest hit this





season. Unlike other drivers, both Charles Leclerc and Carlos Sainz didn't face any issue in those 57 laps. This turned out to be a big reason for their success, as the teams that used other power units struggled.

Not just Ferrari, all the other benefactors of the Ferrari 066/7 power unit had a smooth race in Bahrain. Valtteri Bottas and Guanyu Zhou of Alfa Romeo came sixth and tenth respectively. Kevin Magnussen, the comeback man was brilliant in his first Formula 1 race in more than a year, finished an impressive fifth position. Mick Schumacher was so close to tasting his first F1 points but missed out to the debutant Guanyu Zhou.

Five out of the six cars that used the Ferrari power units have finished inside points. That's

83.33%. Alfa Romeo & Haas scored a combined 13 points in the whole 2021 season and the combined score in the very first race of 2022 is 19! Haas should be the second happiest team, after registering points for the first time in 29 races. This was the first time after 2019, Haas had a car lined up in Q3 of qualifying.

The Mercedes engine was struggling throughout the week in Bahrain. They weren't fast as expected and all the teams were finding it difficult to gain any pace. Out of the 8 cars powered by the Mercedes engine, only 2 finished inside points. Half of the cars started from P17 to P20 after an underwhelming Q1 performance.

Only one car has completed the race out of the 4 that used the new 'Red Bull Powertrains' engine.





DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP	
Charles Leclerc	45
Carlos Sainz Jr	33
Max Verstappen	25
George Russell	22
Lewis Hamilton	16
Esteban Ocon	14
Sergio Perez	12
Kevin Magnussen	12
Valtteri Bottas	8
Lando Norris	6
Yuki Tsunoda	4
Pierre Gasly	4
Fernando Alonso	2
Zhou Guanyu	1
Mick Schumacher	0
Lance Stroll	0
Niko Hulkenberg	0
Alex Albon	0
Daniel Ricciardo	0
Nicholas Latifi	0

Pierre Gasly retired on the 44th lap, Verstappen on the 53rd and Sergio Perez on the last. All their cars suffered engine issues and all three have lost a chunk of points. Max missed the podium and later, his teammate who replaced him for the podium place also missed it.

Alpine, powered by Renault E-Tech RE22 engines was the only other engine to have a decent outing in Bahrain. Both the Alpine cars scored points despite not being faster than expected.

**Highlight:** The highlight of the Bahrain GP was the three laps (laps 17-19), where Max and Charles went toe to toe for the lead. Verstappen overtook leader Leclerc in the first turn of the 17th lap, only to be overtaken again by Leclerc at turn 4. This was repeated in the next lap with a slight difference: this







time Verstappen overtook Leclerc in turn 2. All the events were set to be repeated again in lap 19, only for Verstappen to have a huge lock up which gave the momentum away completely.

**The disappointment:** With all the surprise and shocks at the front of the table, the bottom part of the table garners attention too. Joined with Aston Martin and Williams at the bottom with no points are the McLaren, team that finished with 12.5 points per race last season. McLaren suffered all week in Bahrain, despite having a good time in Barcelona. This is the

first time in 30 races, the Surrey based team finished with 0 points.

### Race 2: Saudi Arabian GP - Broken Arrow

Lewis Hamilton in a Mercedes is a force to reckon. Every team, every driver in Formula 1 circuit is finding it difficult to defeat this combo. Actually, they 'were' finding it difficult. This season turned out to be the most challenging one for the Silver Arrows as they are finding it difficult to produce the pace needed to fight the Bull and the Horse. The blunt arrow could not hit the Bull's eye!

At least in Bahrain Hamilton stood on the podium, courtesy of Red Bull's double retirement. In Jeddah, the issue was deep rooted. The 8-time champion struggled for pace and could not extract anything from his new car. That Saturday proved to be one of the worst days in Hamilton's Formula 1 career, as he was fighting to clear Q1.

In the previous 178 races (until 2021 season) with Mercedes, Hamilton had won 82 of them (46.07%). He started 42.7% of

those races (76) from the pole position. And, this legend was eliminated from Q1 in Jeddah. Even in the race, he was outsmarted by Kevin Magnussen in the Hass. If not for the retirements of his former teammates Fernando Alonso and Valtteri Bottas, Lewis would have finished this race out of the points.

George Russell on the other hand qualified at 6th, outclassed by the Ferraris and Red Bulls and also the Alpine of Esteban Ocon. The young Brit drove very well to cross the chequered flag 5th, but could not enjoy the result. With everything happening with the Silver Arrows, how could he!

**Highlight:** The few laps of insane fighting between the Alpines caught the eye in Jeddah. The battle went on for almost 8 laps until Bottas splitting them in lap 14. The two drivers had a fierce battle, Alonso almost touching the wall once. They both took the lead at times and also overtaken by the other immediately. It was fun watching that duel, but both the drivers have taken this professionally.

**The disappointment:** The whole world feels for Sergio Perez. After getting pole position for the first time in 215 races, Perez was destined to register his third Formula 1 victory. But a Ferrari bluff and a safety car incident put him in the back seat. When the safety car was deployed, Perez was the only driver among the top 4 to have pitted and that cost him 3 positions. He had a lead of about 1.6 seconds over Charles Leclerc while entering the pits, but he had to fight the other Ferrari of Carlos Sainz even for that last podium spot which ended in vain.



CONSTRUCTORS' CHAMPIONSHIP	
Ferrari	78
Mercedes	38
Red Bull	37
Alpine	16
Hass	12
Alfa Romeo	9
Alfa Tauri	8
McLaren	6
Aston Martin	0
Williams	0



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# Where there is a Thar... There is a Path!

**W**hat to expect: Off-road Driving, Picturesque Amman temple inside the forest. Possibility of staying inside a tropical forest. Relax and rejuvenate at the waterfall.

Sometimes, long, wide and paved roads take you to your destination. Sometimes you get narrow, sandy roads. Sometimes you get nothing - A jeep is built for all these circumstances. Because the fun part of a road trip isn't arriving at your destination; it's the journey. The off-road machine that accompanies you. It's none other than the Mahindra Thar. "Brother! Don't try selling ice to Eskimos! We bought this Mahindra Thar just to experience the joy of off-road drives. So much so that we both booked the Thar on the same date, for our shared love of off-road drives. Look at the







Name	Vignesh, Manoj
Town	Udumalpet, Tirupur District
Vehicle used	Mahindra Thar Diesel Automatic/Manual
Travel Distance	About 190 km
Spot	Kodandur
Protocols for Visit	Need clearance from Forest Department



**Udumalpet to Kodandur**





**A** s we climbed above the waterfall  
barefoot, we saw a whole new world  
expanding right in front of our eyes.

odometers of our cars, they'll tell you the story!" exclaimed Manoj and Vignesh - best friends, travel buddies and adventure seekers.

"Munnar is our weekend spot — just as how Ooty is for people in Coimbatore and Kodaikanal for people in Madurai — but we are not taking you there! We have planned something special. Hop in!" they said. The place is called 'Kodandur'. The only way to reach there is by taking a right turn into a narrow off-road immediately after crossing the Munnar check post.

We set off from Chennai, with our Photographer, towards Udumalpet. After a light breakfast at Udumalpet, we onboarded the Thar along with Vignesh and Manoj for a magnificent drive. It's fair to say that we got a good reception at the check posts in Valparai and Munnar.

We were only asked, "Where to?". The officials at the check post did not waste time in asking where we were from, as they figured that out with the number plates! Locals do get special treatment, and we got hassle-free approval to take the road to our destination. And above all... We have Thars!

Two Thars. Two vibrant off-road fanatics. Off we went into the woods, surrounded by lush green trees on either side. I could not resist thinking that the Thar could be specifically engineered for neglecting the challenges on a jumpy forest road like this. "Brother! I happened to watch the interview of Velusamy sir on Motor Vikatan YouTube Channel. What a guy! I'm in awe of his design" Vignesh said with childlike joy and enthusiasm.





Not just the king of off-road, our Thars proved they could take on any sedan we encountered on the road, blazing past them gracefully. About the Thars: Manoj's one was manual and Vignesh had opted for an automatic gear system. "The 130 bhp power is too good for these roads. However, I am yet to speed over 110 kmph in my machine. This guy, Manoj, is a speedster" said Vignesh cheekily. Oh! It was a real pleasure to switch between driving the Manual and Automatic variants.

We crossed Udumalai and on the way to Munnar was the first check post - the one at Anamalai Tiger Reserve. Here, one needs to submit proof of permission if they want to take the route to Kodandur. However, if your destination is Munnar, you are given a go-ahead, with just the regular formalities.



Within a few kilometres came the next check post. We could not resist stopping by and savouring the delicious Paniyaram (a baked sweet snack) and Bonda (a spicy variety of vada) sold by the locals

and clicking a few photos before we took off again. Cruising into the woods with two majestic jeeps left the locals to wonder about our purpose and many asked us out of curiosity "Are you from





the Forest Department?" Both Vignesh and Manoj seemed to know the route well. We took a right into an intimidating narrow & unpaved road. It appeared that our Thars were more excited about the journey ahead than we were, as they stormed into the road with 4Low on!

"Look! This is the special cottage where I wanted us to stay. Fully powered completely by solar energy. Sadly, we were denied the request to stay as there are some issues with the solar panels" - lamented Vignesh. We went past the popular Kattalai Mariamman Temple and we were told that only locals were permitted to participate in special poojas that happen every Thursday. It made sense for it was not a tourist spot and such regulations are needed to protect the forest.

Though it was unfortunate that we couldn't stay at the cottage, nothing stopped us from looking around the premises. We learned that the cottage is visited not just

by humans but also by certain wild animals who stroll the place even during broad daylight! Adjacent to the cottage was a small, clear stream which explains why wild animals frequently visit the premises. There was no sign of human presence around which made every minute we spent there exhilarating. I began talking longingly about how supernatural and thrilling the night would have been if we had stayed there.

Before I could finish what I wanted to say, we heard a cinematic loud cry. "Brother! Hurry! Come, look at this!" We approached our Photographer Ragesh with excitement. It was a snake's shed skin, a 10-foot-long bundle with traces of its eye and face. We wondered how long the actual snake would have been — by looking at its pattern and the scales, we argued whether it could be an Indian Cobra or a venomous Rattle Snake. "Two Indian Cobras live around here" casually claimed the local resident who had now

joined us as a guide.

One thing was for sure. No other vehicles, except for jeeps like Thar could move even a few metres on that rutted, rugged road. With the kindness of the locals, we were permitted into the Kattalai Mariamman Temple. It certainly was not busy, just a handful of locals. After offering our prayers, the Thars were set on track again, taking a sharp right from the temple. What lay in front of us was an open forest with limited greenery—it was scary, to say the least for we could hear the sounds of the forest. It would have been nice to have a similar environment throughout, but our route mostly was a hard-top one.

Whether it's travel or life, the path is important. It was a moment of realisation when we found that the Thar behind went missing suddenly. No trace of it whatsoever. We were deep inside the forest and the only mechanical noise I could hear was that of the automatic gear Thar that I was driving. "Brother!



Seems we are going in the wrong direction. You should take that road to reach the falls" - claimed the local resident. Sigh! I had taken a wrong turn.

Luckily, we realized our mistake fast enough that we didn't lose much time. On our way back we got to see Kattalai Amman temple once again and this time, we took left and went downhill. After just a few minutes of driving, we reached the watchtower, a lens to unravel the beauty of the entire forest. A long ladder was in place to take people to the top of the tower. Manoj giggled after seeing the ladder being protected by a door. "Who would have a door for a ladder?" he remarked. Not just Manoj, all of us were thrilled to know that the door was in place to prevent animals like leopards from taking the ladder.

As we approached the top of the watchtower, we saw small streams and waterfalls all around us, as if we were trapped in the middle of nowhere. Had we climbed the tower in the evening, we surely would have spotted a few elephants or leopards roaming around.



"Yeah, there you have it. Let's take a bath in the stream next to that waterfall; the water is not that deep here" said Kodandur Annan pointing at a stream nearby. We got down, safely parked the Thars near the watchtower, and headed towards the stream warmly welcomed by the forest's murmur.

Non-swimmers should strictly avoid getting down into the stream and anywhere near the waterfall. When I say waterfall, don't expect an Athirapally or Courtallam, yet, this is a place of scenic beauty. Beneath it lay a big trench. That's

where we dived in for a bath in the middle of the forest! With literally no human or animal presence around, it felt like the water was falling just for us to rejoice.

Looking at the greenish colour of the water I suspected that the water was probably contaminated. "Ha. Not at all. This is herbal water, so pure that you can drink it. As a matter of fact, this is the main source of drinking water for our village" - our local guide corrected me. As we climbed above the waterfall barefoot, we saw a whole new world expanding right in front of our eyes. I still remember it vividly — waterfalls, mostly small, were everywhere: in whichever direction you set your eyes. It would be a crime to not click some pictures at this majestically beautiful spot and we sure clicked plenty till our mobiles ran out of battery!

We laid down flat across the stream, hands to the back of our heads, glaring at the sky without a worry in the world. It was surreal. Probably this is what people call 'Zen Level?' We'll never know for sure.





Even though we received prior alerts that the waterfalls are hanging spots for elephants, I didn't fully buy it and wondered how an elephant would climb over such a steep place. Until that moment I saw huge piles of fresh elephant dung indicating it was not too long before the elephants left here. How wrong could I be!" Come in the evening and you can see herds of elephants camping here! If you are lucky, you could spot a leopard or a bear too!" Kodandur Anna's words surely startled us!

When it was time for lunch, I expected an episode of Forest Survival — that we would eat whatever we find and live another day. "We don't do that here", said Vignesh and Manoj as they brought in pre-ordered food.

In the middle of nowhere, we tasted a chicken meal with a wet body under the scorching sun. It really was quite a lunch.

Both Manoj and Vignesh acted responsibly as they knew a lot about, and loved the forest. "Sir, do not use plastic; let's not litter; we should take the empty water bottle back with us." They knew how to act as responsible citizens inside a forest.

Like all good things, our short stay in Kodandur had to come to

an end. It was time to return back to our Thars again onto our next destination — Munnar via Marayur and Kandalur.

There will be a lot of waterfalls along the way to Marayur, possibly interfering with your travel plans. We drove past Sandalwood trees, the smell of country sugar, the sound of waterfalls, and took the hill road that goes through Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Though there

were many options to stay in Munnar, we had booked a heritage club in advance. It was a unique experience to stay in a British style club, which has been functional since the 1930s.

The next morning, on our way to Eravikulam National Park, we paid a visit to the Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary. Unfortunately, the Kerala Forest Department had cancelled all the tourist activities to support the breeding of Nilgiris 'Tahr' — talk about an ironic coincidence. Despite having Thar, we were not able to see Tahr.

We returned to Kodandur via Maraiyur. The intoxicating forest path, the nostalgic solar cottage, the symphony-restored waterfall bath, the elephant dung - our minds raced alongside the two majestic Thars.

## Planning a visit to Kodandoor... Have a look at this first!

On the road that connects Udumalpet to Munnar, if you turn right from the second check post, you will get to the Kodandur forest. Keep in mind that this is not a tourist destination. The main attraction here is the Kattalai Amman temple located in the middle of the forest. Only locals are allowed to enter the premises of the Amman temple! It should be noted that devotees should also take permission from the forest department to bathe in the waterfalls. You can try staying in the one and only solar resort here with the government's permission. In the evenings, the movement of wild animals like elephants, leopards, snakes, bears etc. becomes frequent. If you climb and get to the top of the watchtower, you can relish the entire view of the forest. Get into the waterfalls only if you can swim well. Non-swimmers are not recommended to hop over the trench. Prior approval from the forest department is mandatory if you want to get into the waterfalls.







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# WEEKEND DESTINATIONS AROUND BENGALURU

If you are from Bengaluru or are working and living there, then you are extremely lucky. Especially if you love your cars and bikes. The city is beautifully located at the centre of three states, which allows you access to every corner.

Your weekend will be blessed if you head for a road trip to any one of these locations. Each is spectacular in its own right.





# Hogennakkal Falls

**L**iterally smoky rock, the name of this fall comes from the smoke appearance that's there when the water crashes into the rocks.

These falls are around 127 km from Bengaluru, making it a perfect getaway from the city. It is located on the Tamil Nadu – Karnataka border on the Kaveri River. It is sometimes also called the Niagara Falls of India.

The best time to visit these falls is immediately after the monsoons till February. Then the river is full and swollen and the falls are at their most magnificent. If you go during the off-season, then you can enjoy these waters in a boat, because the falls aren't as dramatic. If you like to fish, then you can also enjoy freshly caught fish from the river which is cooked and sold by the locals.

It takes anywhere between 3-4 hours to drive one way to these falls.





# Mysuru

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**F**or the history buffs there is Mysore. A legacy of the Kingdom of Mysore set at the bottom of the Chamundi Hills. At 145 km from Bengaluru, this town is where the Wadiyar dynasty ruled. A dynasty which laid great emphasis on culture and art.

Thanks to which it is still considered the cultural capital of Karnataka. The most famous place in this town is the Mysore Palace, which is a must visit for anybody going there. Dasara is famous around here and people visit during that festive season from around the world. If you can time your visit during the Dasera festival, then you will be treated to an extravaganza of culture.

The town is also famous for its sweet dish, the Mysore Pak, a food, the Mysore Masala Dosa and its paintings. For shoppers, the place is also famous for its silk sarees, a material which was introduced under the rule of Tipu Sultan.

It takes around 4 hours from Bengaluru to Mysuru, depending on traffic. As weekends see a lot of folks make a beeline to the place.





# Yelagiri

**Y**elagiri is a popular hill station in Tamil Nadu which is just 160 km from Bengaluru. Located at 1100 metres above mean sea level. This town perched on the hill is a nice break when the sun is beating down on the plains.

The hills are surrounded by verdant green valleys and rose gardens which are of particular interest to the avid home gardner. Unlike the more popular tourist hill stations of Tamil Nadu like Ooty and Kodaikanal, Yelagiri isn't as developed. Which is what makes it unique. You can still enjoy the rawness of the place, without excessive commercialisation. Best time to visit is most of the year other than the monsoons. As the rains can be quite intense in this area.

Yelagiri is around 3 hours from Bengaluru on some gorgeous highways which are fun to drive and ride.





# BR Hills

**BR** Hills or more correctly Biligirirangana Hills is an ecological paradise and unique. It is the western most part of the Eastern Ghats and extremely close to the Western Ghats. As a result, it has a veritable cornucopia of flora and fauna, not found together in many other parts of the country.

These hills are around 160 km from Bengaluru and a must visit for anybody who loves nature. The drive to this place is serene. It is also a forest reserve which was originally created around the resident temple in 1974, and in 2011 it was declared a tiger reserve as well. There is something more to look forward to. The BR Swamy Temple is a must visit for anyone heading to this place.

A birder's paradise, BR Hills is a perfect weekend trip if you want to live in nature's lap. The best time to visit is in the winter months and it takes around 4 hours to drive down.





# Yercaud

**A**t around 200 km from Bengaluru, Yercaud is another hill station located in Tamil Nadu. At 1500 metres above mean sea level, these hills are cool even in the hot summer months. Which is what makes the place such an attractive proposition for a weekend getaway.

In Yercaud, you can visit the lake and the ancient shrine where stone-age implements have been discovered. The place is peppered with coffee plantations, which means the hills are covered with green always. A special attraction in May is the Yercaud Summer Festival which draws many tourists to its top.

You can check out the Killiyur Falls, Shevaroy Hills and Bear's Cave in Yercaud. At just 4 hours' drive from Bengaluru, this is an ideal weekend destination for those looking for a mixture of nature and serenity.





# Bandipur

**B**andipur National Park is a tiger reserve famous around the country in the state of Karnataka. It was earlier the hunting grounds of the Maharajas of Mysore, but now is an integral part of the Nilgiris Biosphere Reserve.

A perfect place for people who love nature and want to enjoy a thick forest reserve. The flora of the place varies a lot, as this national park is situated between a height of 680 to 1400 metres above sea level. The variety in fauna leads to a rich variety in birds, and birders from around the country visit to enjoy this forest.

The best time to visit here is in the winter months and you can always club it with a drive to Ooty if you wish. If you are lucky, you can spot many wild animals, including the Indian elephant, tiger, gaur, sloth bear, crocodiles, golden jackal and more.

It takes just 5 hours to cover this 200+ km distance from Bengaluru, which gives you ample time to leave the city and reach the place to enjoy the wildlife.





# Chikmagalur

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**L**ocated in the Western Ghats of Karnataka, Chikmagalur is just 250 km from Bengaluru. Out there you get to enjoy the many coffee estates, tropical rainforests and lovely hill station weather at 1100 metres.

The town is a fully developed tourist hill station, so you easily find accommodation at all price ranges. Getting to this place is also a joy, as you get to drive through the Western Ghats. Enroute and around the town there are a number of viewing spots, where you can enjoy expansive views of the valleys in the ghats. If you are into trekking, then you have ample scope for that as well.

Because of its cool weather during most of the year, you can visit any time, except the monsoons. Though adventurous motorists also love driving and riding down in the rains, because it provides a different kind of monsoon challenge. You can visit the Mullayanagiri Peak, Mahatma Gandhi Park and the Kudurekuha Jamly Hill.

At around 5 hours from Bengaluru, the drive to Chikmagalur is as much a highlight of this weekend destination, as the destination itself!





# Wayanad

Located in Kerala and the farthest from Bengaluru in this list is Wayanad. God's Own Country is always welcoming for a weekend or even longer getaway. This hill station is on the Karnataka-Kerala border and is an extension of the Mysore Plateau. It has altitudes ranging between 700 to 2100 metres.

Wayanad is a place you will find difficult to explore in just one weekend. With its diverse attractions, chances are that you will find yourself going back there again and again. Wayanad which literally means the land of paddy fields in Malayalam, is made up of three towns called Kalpetta, Mananthavady and Sultan Bathery.

This part of the country is rich with flora and fauna, and birders flock there. There are as many birds as there are birders! It is also the origin of the Kabini River and Chaliyar River. With so much happening in a small geographical area, it attracts a lot of nature lovers from Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

You can visit the Banasura Sagar Dam and Karapuzha Dam to enjoy the marvels of modern-day engineering in the lap of nature. Or you visit the Tholpetty Wildlife Sanctuary, Phantom Rock and Edakkal Caves.

At 6 hours from Bengaluru, Wayanad makes for a long drive and is thus preferred only when you have a reasonably long weekend.





TECH DISRUPTORS AT WORK:

# WILL AUTOMOTIVE AFTERMARKET DEFY THE GRAVITY?

POSES A HUGE OPPORTUNITY FOR  
MULTI-BRAND SERVICE CENTRES



**C**onvenience and conviction are the two biggest drivers of innovation in the automotive sector. While several automotive players develop solutions to meet growing consumer interest in EVs, driverless cars and contactless car services, it is important that aftermarket players too need to accelerate their efforts to remain technically relevant.

While new technologies are being adopted every day, the readiness of the automotive eco-system is of paramount





importance. The sophistication has been mainly in electronics and software, connected technologies and telematics and the ability to read and interpret the data. The modern-day engines used in cars are becoming more progressive in electronic and mechatronics, at the same time the business is heading towards connected devices. This technological advancement in vehicles throws up a lot of challenges and offers opportunities aplenty in the vehicle servicing and maintenance business.

### **The technology in servicing**

According to the RedSeer report, the car services and repairs market are likely to grow at a compounded annual growth rate of 12% to reach \$25 billion by 2030, as compared to \$8 billion last year. The sector, fragmented and largely unorganised, has in recent years witnessed an influx of startups that are using technology to provide services - from doorstep pickup to post-service warranty - to customers. These companies are also offering services to offline workshops, providing them with spare parts at affordable cost. Online platforms are accelerating the focus on digitising the entire journey of car ownership, right from car search, car purchase and car finance to car insurance and car sales, which will result in providing a seamless experience to the customers.

Technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI), Augmented

Reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR) and Machine Learning (ML) are not only changing the cars on the road but also the garages that service them. Chennai-based myTVS, part of TVS Automobile Solutions (TVS ASL), which is India's largest integrated multi-brand vehicle service provider, uses various digital technologies that make automotive service more efficient. The company connects with the vehicles to unlock actionable insights for insurers and repair facilities while also connecting them to a network of over 23,000 garages nationwide, facilitating visibility into how to make vehicles safer and more durable with its various services. myTVS utilises its advanced technology to power decision-making for both its technicians and customers while being backed by its wide range of catalogues through data collection.

### **Need for multi-brand workshops**

Currently, in India, there are about 30-35 million cars and 600,000 CVs outside the warranty period, which need to be serviced. In the largely unorganised aftermarket segment in India, there is a huge demand for organised multi-brand players. There are three things that are crucial when we think of multi-brand service centres: competent technicians, the required tooling and technology to assess the vehicle, diagnose the problem and offer the solution, and the parts supply chain. Training of technicians across a range of cars along with the latest tools and

**m**yTVS' multi-brand workshops relies on quality and technology to give customers a unique experience.



equipment are essential for the success of multi-brand service.

Sensing the need, TVS ASL has set up its 'Knowledge Centre' in Sriperumbudur near Chennai, a first-of-its-kind in the automotive aftermarket sector, to upskill the service personnel. This centre trains its personnel in digitisation including vehicle diagnostics and tooling. Through this Knowledge Centre, the company has digitised the repair procedure with AR and VR.

Post free service or warranty, servicing the vehicle from authorised workshops used to be a trend earlier, now people are looking for more avenues other than the authorised workshops. myTVS' multi-brand workshops relies on quality and technology to give customers a unique experience. The services provided are cloud-based full-stack models, offering end-to-end solutions to customers across India through its over 25,000 touchpoints.

### **Predictive maintenance is key**

Currently, vehicles are serviced as per the manual, which is called scheduled maintenance where general services are carried out. There might be a growing issue in the vehicle and the customer will not realise it until there is 100% failure, which might result in an accident too. Going forward, predictive technology will be key where the cars are monitored 24/7 and potential vehicular problems are identified in advance. myTVS's cloud technology has two components - one is a dongle that is plugged in to the car through the On-board Diagnostics (OBD) port and the other is the mobile app. The app collects real-time data and





transmits it to the smartphone, and then uploads the data to the cloud for analysis. This solution can alert the customers to potential issues in advance, this avoids sudden failure of components, and will save money on repairs and operating costs, and also prolong the car's lifespan.

myTVS aims to become a one-stop solution in the aftermarket sector by aggregating the unorganised garages and integrating its various aftermarket services to offer standardised, quick service across the country as India's largest on-demand mobility service provider. The company has tied up with Google Cloud to build a digital ecosystem that can connect several stakeholders in the unorganised and fragmented auto aftermarket industry.

The cloud services will bring vehicle owners, retailers, garages and insurance companies from a fragmented marketplace into one seamless digital technology architecture to provide service, parts, roadside assistance and insurance.

Going forward predictive maintenance will also help in creating more accurate insurance

policies, especially for new drivers. Predictive maintenance can also vastly improve the reliability and durability of cars, thereby increasing their resale value. On an average, a truck owner spends around Rs 1.75 lakh and a car owner spends around Rs 30,000-40,000 per year on services. With the connected services the above cost will come down drastically.

### EV and more...

Recently myTVS also entered into the electric vehicle service space by launching a digital mobility service platform for EVs. The platform serves as a one-stop shop for all service requirements for EV owners for high-quality services, parts, accessories, tyres, batteries, insurance and 24x7 on-demand roadside assistance across India.

With the aim to move closer to its customers, myTVS's 'Service at Home', a pan India initiative, provides convenience and ease to customers for their basic servicing needs. It aims to provide seamless doorstep service to the customers. This comprehensive car service will be done at

customers' choice of place - home or office. For two-wheelers too, all the periodic services including mechanical repairs will be done at the customers' doorstep.

Over the past few years, TVS ASL has focussed on building an integrated supply chain platform, networking 20,000 auto parts retailers into singular cloud technology. This distribution ecosystem is a pan-India platform. Any retailer can order parts from their mobile app. The retailer will know whether it is available and, if not, get advice on alternative parts apart from updates on the order and time of despatch/delivery.

Through this initiative, TVS ASL could increase the margin of the retailers and distributors as it brought down the layers in the value chain from nearly 5-6 to 2, this, in turn, increased the margins and expanded the offerings. Besides, the cost advantage for the customer is around 20-30 per cent as against any other OEM owned dealerships. Parts supply is very important and it is the biggest strength of myTVS.

### Change is the only constant

At the industry level, many disruptions and big investments are the new normal. All these are combined together with IoT, a bit of analytics, AI and ML. It is in a state of evolution. The survival and success of the aftermarket industry is in getting the big data for vehicle service. The independent aftermarket sector will go through changes in the next 5-6 years and the key is how the players adapt to them quickly.







## A s u s 8 z



### Specs:

- 5.92 inch HDR 10+ AMOLED display (120 Hz)
- Snapdragon 888 5G Processor
- 8 GB RAM + 128 GB Storage
- 64 MP + 12 MP Rear Camera
- 12 MP Selfie Camera
- 4000 mAh Battery
- 30W Fast Charging
- Android 11 (ASUS ZEN UI)
- 5G support

### Plus:

- Handy and sleek design
- Performance
- Great Cameras

### Minus:

- Battery life could have been better
- Occasional heating under Load

### One-line Review:

- This may not be the perfect all-round performance phone. But, in this segment it is a decent buy. With good performance and quality cameras, Asus 8z is a great alternative to OnePlus phones.

Price:  
**42,999**

Rating:





# Samsung Galaxy Tab S8 Ultra



## Specs:

- 14.6 inch Super AMOLED Display (120 Hz)
- SM8450 Snapdragon 8 Gen 1 Processor
- 13 MP + 6 MP Rear Camera
- 12 MP + 12 MP Selfie Camera
- 11200 mAh Battery
- 45W Charging
- Android 12, One UI 4.1

## Plus:

- Mind-blowing Display
- Battery life
- All-round Performance

## Minus:

- A little bit Pricey

## One-line Review:

- At last Samsung has delivered a tablet that can compete with Apple's High end iPads. Samsung nearly ticks all the necessary boxes. This one could be expensive for many. They can go for Tab S8 and Tab S8 Plus.

Price:  
**1.08,999**  
(256GB)

Rating:





# OnePlus Nord CE 2



Price:

**Rs. 23,999**

6 GB RAM + 128 GB storage

**Rs. 24,999**

8 GB RAM + 128 GB storage

Rating:



## Specs:

- 6.43 inch AMOLED, 90Hz, HDR10+ Display (120 Hz)
- MediaTek MT6877 Dimensity 900 5G Processor
- 8 GB RAM + 128 GB Storage
- 64 MP + 8 MP + 2MP Rear Camera
- 16 MP Selfie Camera
- 4500 mAh Battery
- 65W Fast Charging
- Android 11 (OxygenOS 11)
- 5G Support

## Plus:

- Decent Display
- Battery Back-up

## Minus:

- Average camera performance

## One-line Review:

- OnePlus has tried correcting the many flaws of the previous Nord phones and has succeeded in some. Still there are minor flaws. Video performance could be much better. Nevertheless Nord CE 2 is a decent option in this price segment.



# S o n y   W H - X B 9 1 0 N

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## Specs:

- Weight: 252 grams
- Bluetooth 5.2
- SBC, AAC, LDAC Bluetooth CODEC Support
- 50 Hour Battery life
- Can be fully charged in 3.5 hours

## Plus:

- Comfortable to wear
- LDAC Bluetooth CODEC Support
- Battery Life

## Minus:

- Strictly for bass lovers

## One-line Review:

- Are you a lover of rock? If yes, then do not hesitate. This one's for you!

Price:

Rs.14,990

Rating:





— Presenting —

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<b>CABIN SURROUND 64-COLOR AMBIENT MOOD LIGHTING</b>  <b>FIRST-IN-CLASS</b>	<b>VENTILATED FRONT SEATS</b>  <b>FIRST-IN-CLASS</b>	<b>SMART PURE AIR PURIFIER WITH VIRUS &amp; BACTERIA PROTECTION#</b>  <b>FIRST-IN-CLASS</b>	<b>FULL DIGITAL LCD CLUSTER WITH 10.6 CM (4.2") TFT MULTI-INFORMATION DISPLAY</b>  <b>FIRST-IN-CLASS</b>	<b>KIA CONNECT - NEXT GEN CONNECTED CAR TECHNOLOGY</b>  <b>FIRST-IN-CLASS</b>



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