

My 10-day experience on the road
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I was the youngest amongst the 4 of them, being a 17-year-old hard-core Royal Enfield enthusiast. I started riding and fiddling with the monster at the age of 14. I got a chance of going on a road trip, but then with me being in class 12 and with my boards coming up within the next 3 months, my parents were really hesitating in letting me go or not. But then, where there is a will there is a way, am I right? I was very excited even though I was not being given the privilege of riding the monster. I was to take pictures of the whole trip. My parents had given certain restrictions because of which I am sitting here on the net and not on the bike with the group. I was not allowed to do the whole trip, but had to get off at my hometown, Calcutta on the 31st of December. The group moved on to Bhubaneswar on the 2nd of Jan.

We flagged off from the India Gate on the 21st of December 2002. The lead singer of 'Silk Route' along with Pramod Kant, the commissioner of Police had flagged us off. We headed towards Chandigarh, which was 220 kms from Delhi. There was not a problem in this stretch as the road was amazing and we were comfortable. I was still getting used to be sitting as a pillion :(We bypassed Chandigarh and took a right to Shimla. This was the beginning of the hilly roads, which we had to do at the very first night. Shucks! Well, no regrets as we were doing fine. The great Solo (Solomon) was zipping up and down and giving the riders tips, as to when and how to cut gears and also some tips on the usage of high and low beam at turnings etc. Once we were into Solan, one of the group members, the leader Chandan had gone into reserve and it was midnight at that time. The petrol pump was certainly not open at this hour. Hence we halted for the night at Solan. We parked our Bulls outside a small hotel. Got into our rooms and crashed till we woke up the next morning, saddled ourselves and moved on towards Doon. We refilled our tanks, engine oil and also took a can of petrol for emergencies. The ride to Doon was pretty good, except for a couple of bad stretches, and then came the worst incident which took place in the entire trip. The muffler around my neck got stuck in the rear wheel, all melted and rolled. Thanks to Solomon as God knows what would have been done if he was not there. With his help, we managed to take the entire muffler out. I also managed to learn quite a lot while Solo got his hands dirty on the monster. It is really interesting to do the work by oneself. Well, after getting the muffler out, we hit the road again and reached Doon early next morning at 2.00 a.m. to be more precise. We were supposed to halt in some N.C.C. base, but bad luck, as we could not find it. We then crashed at Joy's house at Doon, who was one of our group mates.

After waking up the next day, we had to get a lot of work done on the bikes and once we reached the workshop, we were told that the piston had to be changed, which automatically meant we couldn't do over 50km/hr! We also changed the handlebars of the bikes. We put the Yamaha RD 350's handlebar, which was already there on Solo's bike. At Doon, we met up with quite a few bullet enthusiasts at the workshop and hopefully by now, a Doon Bullet Club would also have been started.

We left Doon pretty late at 8 p.m. in the evening. We certainly could not make it to Lucknow at night; hence we halted at a Dharamshala for the night and moved on the next morning. It was a beautiful ride since there were lovely temples, sceneries, pictures of which I have succeeded to capture. We reached Lucknow at night. At Lucknow, we had some minor work to be done on the bikes that did not take much time. And as soon as the repair work got over, we rested for the night after a small party amongst us with some lovely Kababs and Biryani of Lucknow and moved on to Patna early next morning. We stayed at Benaras since we could not make it to Patna. Hence, we rested the night at a N.C.C.

training camp. We managed accommodation since Chandan's Dad was a retired senior officer.

Next was Ranchi on the list. A Lot of press people had to be entertained at Ranchi by Chandan and myself, since the other two were stuck up about 150 kms away from Ranchi fixing up the battery of Joy's bike. We left Ranchi early morning about 1 or 2 a.m. After travelling about an hour in the cold, Chandan looked back at his rear mirror and could not see the light of the other bikes. Wondering what in the world happened to Solo and Joy, we turned back and went about 2 or 3 kms to find Solo showing his flash light at us. Guess what? Joy's tyre went FLAT!! Well! Again, the great Solo helped us out and again I learned a lot. We changed the tube and filled air, but putting the tube back was a problem. Solo and Chandan rode down to a nearby mechanic to put the tube in properly because the rod we had was too thick for putting in the tyre and we needed a sharper one. In the mean time, I took out my sleeping bag and took a nap at the road side, while Joy took care of the bikes. At about 5 a.m., we were all set to leave and a half an hour's ride welcomed us to a Dhaba, where we filled ourselves with stuffed Parathas and scrambled eggs.

The road to Calcutta from Ranchi was amazing, lovely roads, numerous opportunities for taking beautiful pictures, interesting people. We had a ball! Joy, Chandan and myself on two bikes were leading and Solo with Joy's camera was coming slooowwwly. After he caught up with us, he claimed his piston was dying out. Right! And guess what next, none of us could find him. We were doing a steady 75-80 kmph and Solo was way behind. His bike's piston was supposedly dying out, but I guess he was busy taking pictures all long. As soon as we entered Bengal, I got the privilege of speaking in my mother tongue, Bengali.

We reached Calcutta about 8 or 9 p.m. in the night. As soon as we entered Calcutta, Joy's battery had to be changed. We landed in my house, where we stayed till 1st Jan. My parents were kind of happy to see the gang and more to it was that they were happy I came in safe hands... lol. The next day, Joy was busy writing the daily report at Chandan's in-law's place. I got the chance to get my hands on Chandan's bike to take it to the mechanic. Solo and myself were literally hunting for a good mechanic who would help us to get the bikes done up. The mechanic who told us that it was the connecting rod bush, which was giving problems, dismissed the fear that Solo had on his bike's piston being gone.

Finally, we got the best Bullet Mechanic in Calcutta, near Free School Street. This guy did some neat work on the bikes. After the work was done, the guys left me back at Calcutta and left for Bhubaneshwar, the very next day!

It was certainly a lovely experience and I would love to go for one again with my OWN bike and NOT a pillion. As soon as my Class 12 Boards get over, I would convince my dad to get me one 500cc monster :).