

Wild Tiger Rum Roar Crew continues its road trip to TFWA WE, Cannes



The Roar Crew is comprised of (R) Wild Tiger Rum Founder and CEO Gautom Menon and Creative Art Director, Paul George Vendanayagam

A brazen Tata Hexa vehicle bearing wild tiger stripes makes its way through India's unforgiving highways that play home to automobiles and cattle alike. All for a good cause as it's on a mission to promote awareness and raise funds for wildlife conservation in Southern India and to highlight the importance of saving the current tiger populations. On Global Tiger Day, findings of the All India Tiger Estimation were announced at 2,967 tigers, a 33% increase from its last census of 2,226 in 2014.

Wild Tiger Rum Founder and CEO Gautom Menon and Creative Art Director, Paul George Vendanayagam, known as the "Roar Crew" are 16 days into their 65 day RoarTrip. The trip started in native Parambikulam, India and will continue through 25 countries only to complete in Cannes in time for the TFWA World Exhibition on Sept 28.



Asia Duty Free magazine caught up with the Roar Crew to get an update.

ADF: Where you are at the moment?

GM: Currently we are in Yangon, formally known as Rangoon, the capital of Myanmar. The big cities we've done so far are Bangalore, Hyderabad, Nagpur, Calcutta, Devapur, Kohima, Darjeeling, and Gangoa and now Yangon.

ADF: What is the most unique thing you have seen thus far?

GM: The most unique thing I have to admit is that North Eastern India is so incredibly diverse and so neglected that it was a real revelation for us. I would say the roads are not the greatest as they have really taken a toll on our backs.

What we have noticed as we have traveled from the South is every few 100km the whole scenery changes, the whole culture, food habits and the facial features all continue to change. It's something phenomenal. Even the animals, the cattle, goats and monkeys all look different. It's pretty exciting and I think one would have to do a trip like this first hand to really witness this. I would say even my mind is blown with the diversity India has to offer. Something which I have always read about, but seeing it and living it firsthand has made this trip all the more special for us.



Cool cats: George and Menon take turns in the drivers seat

ADF: How is driving divided between you and Paul?

GM: Paul is the primary driver. He is our Creative Art Director and he seems to be a better driver than me. So far it's been more of an 80/20 split, mainly because I have a business to run. I am working with my devices and trying to set up all the meetings at different locations with various Indian Ambassadors, Youth Organizations and Wild Life Enthusiasts. I take care of the PR and marketing, while Paul knows about cars, photography etc. So for now he's doing the bulk of the driving. However, India and Burma were always going to be the mad leg of the trip. Once we get into Laos and China, we will be splitting up the driving, hopefully more of a 65/35 split.

ADF: What is the best thing you have eaten on route?

GM: We were lucky to spend two days in Nagaland. They have their own thing going on. We met with 15 members of young Indians who are group of young and progressive entrepreneurs that all come from a different tribe. Each tribe has their own special curry. So we got to try a handful of them. My favorite was the ethnic Naga Poke curry made with bamboo shoots. It's one of the things you either love it or you don't. A lot of pride that goes into the making of it and it was by far one of the most memorable dishes that we had. Again it goes to show how diverse India is. There are so many different cuisines of India and we were lucky enough to discover the cuisine of Nagaland.

ADF: Where is the next stop and how far is it from your current stop? Why is the next stop relevant to your journey?

GM: Our next stop is Myawaddy. It's pretty much the border between Myanmar and Thailand. Currently parts of the country are experiencing its worst floods. There are a lot of landslides and over 100 people have died from this. Looks like it will be raining and the situation is not the greatest as we drive towards that location. But we have a 7am start and eight and half hours of driving as per Google. But given the weather conditions it could be a lot more. We retire in Myawaddy. The following day we get into Thailand where we go straight to Bangkok for another eight hours.

ADF: What challenges or surprises have you faced?

GM: The biggest challenge has been the unpredictable highways in India. Constantly we come to a screeching halt due to cattle crossing or tractors driving in the wrong lane towards our direction. A lot of North East India is still in monsoon season and we experienced torrential rains. We drive through tricky areas which witnessed landslides recently.

The goal of the Roar Crew is to raise US\$100,000 in donations through RoarTrip campaign efforts.

The drive will raise funds, and meet with policy makers, the local public and media to draw attention to the need to continue fighting, collectively. Funds raised will be guided by [Wildlife Protection Society of India](#) (WPSI) to support on-ground conservation efforts specifically around the tiger reserves of Parambikulam in Kerala and Sathyamangalam in Tamil Nadu.

#RoarTrip, #Roarforourtigers, #KeralatoCannes, #WildTigerFoundation #TigerConservation