



The three friends are part of the Meetup group Let's Drive, which started in December 2014.

Adventure group to drive through ten countries in three weeks

Inspired by Ibn Batuta's legendary travels, three friends — Jamal Khan, Shamim Ahmad and Haris Anwar — have decided to embark on a road trip that will take them to 10 countries across two continents. While Haris lives in Doha, Qatar, Jamal and Shamim are UAE residents.

Starting today in a Toyota FJ Cruiser, these travel-crazy men will drive through Iran, Azerbaijan, Russia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Germany and Switzerland.

These men are part of a Dubai-based travel and outdoor adventure group called Let's Drive. The group started on Meetup in December 2014 and now has over a thousand travel enthusiasts as its members.

"This is only our beginning to scale the extreme. As our experience grows, our travelling will become more radical," said Jamal, a banker, who is the group co-founder and lead driver for this trip.

So far, the group has done road trips in Asia, Europe and Africa, but this journey is unlike any other before. Not only will they experience diverse cultures, climates, food, languages and topography, the long driving will also test their road skills.

Due to the sheer challenge of this undertaking, the group has prepared for this trip for the last six months. "From researching the best routes and scenic locations, to sorting out the visas and carnet for the car, from trying to get sponsorships to getting the car prepped-up for the marathon drive, from learning survival skills to learning better photography, everything has been an educational experience for us," says Farhan Kafil, another co-founder and organiser. "There will be stories aplenty and so much to learn and share — this is definitely an experience of a lifetime. I have been an insane traveller all my life, but the magnitude of this trip still gives me mild shivers," adds Abdul Rafeq, co-founder and organiser.



Members of Let's Drive pose for a photograph during one of their previous adventures.

Asked why they chose to do this trip, Jamal explains that they are doing it for their love of driving, exploration, and to promote road trips as a better way to experience the world. During this trip, the men have also planned to showcase the spirit of friendship between UAE, Qatar and the countries they would visit. Their car will adorn the flags of UAE and Qatar and all the countries they will pass through.

The car with its embellishments is likely to get noticed. The trio also plans to engage people

on the way and share the stories of their travels with them. "We have also kept some miniatures and travel books on Switzerland, UAE and Qatar, which we will be gifting to the warm ones we come across on our way. How sensitive the world would become if everyone travelled to a new place every year, met new people, and shook off the stereotypes and inhibitions about the 'other' that they had been harbouring since birth," said Haris, whose idea was to gift people books on the way.

Upon reaching Zurich, the trio will be met by 15 other group members on September 10 to do road a trip called the Grand Tour of Switzerland together in eight days.

24 days and 10,000 km later, the travellers will come home on September 20, perhaps to start planning their next crazy adventure. The group hopes to get bigger, better, and bolder in its adventures after the trip. "As I said, this is only our beginning to scale the extreme," says a smiling Jamal.