



Going the extra mile: 10 countries in 22 days!

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TO dream and to follow their passion, few dare to go the extra mile. But for Doha's Haris Anwar, an engineer, and his friends from the adventure travel group, Let's Drive, it has always been about overcoming the odds and exploring the unknown.

Come Thursday, Haris and two Dubai-based travel mates – Jamal and Shamim – would have set off to converge in Iran, before jetting off in a Toyota Cruiser for a Grand Road Tour to Switzerland.

In what they call 1,600 km of pure road-trip bliss, they shall be driving through Azerbaijan, Russia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic and Germany to savour the romance of Switzerland.

They may switch to an alternative route: Qatar/UAE, Iran, Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Slovenia, Austria, Italy, Switzerland in case a political situation or weather conditions prevent them from proceeding with the first choice of route. It's a challenge the group has never dared before. It is what they call "A journey of epic proportions. A passion fulfilled. A traveller's dream come true. And, one hell of a trip!"

In short, it's a journey that involves one car, two continents, three guys, 10 countries, 22 days, 10,000 km, a road trip to Zurich, and beyond.

The official flag-off took place in Dubai last week as the Let's Drive team gathered to welcome sponsors, travel enthusiasts, supporters, team members and family members.

Representation from Swiss Tourism (Switzerland Tourism, GCC Centre are



the main sponsors), MAG Lube, Radio Spice, Red Bull, Bosch, Dial a tire, Ultra Tint, Dot Motions, Red Bull besides a few dozen people wished good luck and safe journey to overland drivers Jamal, Shamim and Haris. People also had fun clicking pictures with the touring car.

A convoy of cars escorted the touring car from cafe to Burj Khalifa/downtown as the chequered flag was waved off by the Director of Swiss Tourism in GCC.

Great going. So how did they manage to make all this happen?

Haris explains: "It was the love and passion to drive and explore the roads and off them that led us – Jamal, Rafey, Farhan and Shamim – to leave tyre

marks in deserts, valleys, mountains and on tricky roads.

"We have known each other from our university days. As destined, we all met again in Dubai. One evening in the winter of 2014, Jamal, Rafey and Farhan sat down sharing their travel stories over a cup of coffee when this big idea was born.

"So, on December 2, 2014 we created a travel Meetup group called 'Let's Drive – Outdoors and Expeditions'. In the next two years, we had more than a thousand members and had done about 40 trips."

The group often takes the road less-travelled, combining the joys of driving, hiking, camping in a fun-filled environment. Through its activities, it also

encourages people to get away from the mundane and be one with nature, thus promoting wellness, travel, and adventure.

The Grand Tour of Switzerland (<http://grandtour.myswitzerland.com/en/>) will see the 'big four' driving in rental cars with 15 other members of Let's Drive.

The lead car (FJ Cruiser) will then drive from Zurich to Rotterdam where the trip ends.

"We may not be the first people to do a road trip from Gulf to Europe, but we have been told we are the first to drive from here to exclusively do the Grand Tour of Switzerland," said Haris.