

2015

# Dream Ride in Himalayas



**Life is beautiful; because it has adventure in it....**

**‘I am adventure’**

**Diary of**  
**Dream Ride in Himalayas**

**By**  
**Dr. Suresh Bada Math**



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### **Fore word**

This diary is a day-to-day experience of bike rides undertaken by **Dr. Suresh Bada Math** and his friends from 27 June 2015 to 9 July 2015, with the '**I am Adventure**' group. This was an exquisite, life time adventure, breathe taking, exposing to blizzard and spine chilling experience of bike ride through the Himalayas clocking 2038kms over a period of 11 days.

'I am Adventure' group registered in Delhi has been organizing motorbike touring in India since 2006, making history for over 9 years now. They claim that they are the leaders in organizing motorbike touring in the Indian market. People, who want to enjoy riding without any speed restriction will surely enjoy the company of 'I am adventure'. They offer facilities like accommodation in tent/guest house/hotels, food (morning and dinner), help everyone to handle water flooded roads commonly called by 'PAGAL NAALA', tips to handle bike through the snow/ice covered roads, bike repairs and maintenance on any part of the road. If the bike breaks down beyond repair they even help us in couriering the vehicle to the required destination.

It was definitely a Dream ride for each one of us who participated in the ride with the 'I am Adventure' group. It was a lifetime adventure to be remembered. This was an unforgettable and legendary ride through the Highest Motorable Road in the World. Riding through these highest passes like Khardung La 5,602 mtrs (18,380 ft), Chang La 5,360 m (17,585 ft), Taglang La, 5,328 metres (17,480 ft) and Baralacha La 4,890 mtrs (16,040 ft) is an ultimate adventure with a high level of inherent danger. The extreme challenge is to ride through these snow covered highest passes. Each rider gets an opportunity to push his limits to the extreme, to experience the exponential growth occurring in bounds of riding bike, cruising, skidding, overtaking, dragging, falling and motoring through waters are the few challenges you may have to face. However, please expect the unexpected from the Mother Nature like land slide, avalanche, blizzard, raining, snow, roads flooding and shooting rocks. Also manmade disasters like road accidents, bike breakdown, fall from cliff and (very rare) terrorist attack so forth.

The complete journey is etched in my memory for the lifetime and 'I am Adventure' team played a major role in making my dream a reality. This journey made me feel and experience the greatest beauty of our beautiful country. I was absolutely thrilled, enjoyed the landscape of the Mother Nature of Himalayas, adventure of bike riding and camaraderie of fellow bike riders.

### **Acknowledgment**

Sincere thanks to "**I am adventure**" group for making this dream came true

Visit: <http://www.iamadventure.in/>



**Saturday 27 June 2015 - Reporting at New Delhi**

**Day - 0**

**Objectives:** Reporting at New Delhi, Renting Bike and orientation

**Dairy:** My dream ride journey started at 3.00AM in the morning from a taxi ride from my home to International Airport Bangalore. Flight departed and arrived Delhi as per the schedule. I reached Delhi airport at 10.30am and took a taxi to the hotel called '*Nataraj Yes Please*' which was arranged by the 'I am adventure' group. This hotel 'Nataraj Yes Please' provides accommodation in central Paharganj of New Delhi. It is located 12 Kms from Indira Gandhi International Airport and took 70minutes drive through the traffic to reach the destination. We were able to locate it easily without much any difficulty because it is about 100 mtrs from Ramakrishna Ashram Metro Station.



'Nataraj Yes Please' hotel, Paharganj of New Delhi.

We were greeted by Mr. Akarsh Pall, the CEO of the 'I am adventure' group with a great amusing smile with a tinge of indication 'doctor now, you are finished'. We checked in to the hotel without any delay and were advised to ahead to rent the bike from Tony Bike Center, Naiwal street, Karol Bagh, New Delhi. I had booked the Royal Enfield Thunder Bird 350.C.C bike for the trip approximately four weeks in advance. We reached the bike center, but unfortunately bikes were not ready. They were still undergoing last minute maintenance and we had to wait for five hours before we got an opportunity to do the first test ride. After the test ride of 2009 model Royal Enfield Thunder Bird 350.C.C bike, I was concerned about the rear brakes

and the luggage carrier attached to the bike. Tony Bike Center took notice of it and again bikes went for ultra last minute repairs. We hired riding gears, helmet, bungee cords and plastic sheet to cover the luggage. We received phone call from Mr. Akarsh Pall regarding the orientation program for the ride at 6.30PM at the hotel. We immediately rushed back to the hotel for pre-ride briefing session.



Briefing session at the hotel with tea and biscuits

This briefing session lasted for 80 minutes. The session started with introducing briefly ourselves to the group and knowing everyone. Followed by Mr. Akarsh Pall's authoritative explanation of the highlights of the trip, does and don'ts, frequently asked questions and also clarified all our doubts. Mr. Akarsh and his team highlighted the pain undertaken in meticulous planning and also advised to be ready with the unexpected. Mr. Akarsh's content of his speech and voice sounded me like the voice of a Military Lieutenant Colonel of discipline required during the ride for next two weeks in the toughest motor able terrain of the world.

After finishing the briefing session, we again went to Tony Bike Center, Karol Bagh, New Delhi at 8.00PM to take the delivery of the bike. We paid the required deposit and received the bike at 9.15PM with necessary documents (like RC book, insurance and pollution check) for the journey. Finally, we reached the hotel at 9.45PM and had a quick dinner to start early next day. We slept at 10.45 PM. My beloved elder brother, Girish visited me, to wish me luck.

## Day - 1

**Sunday 28 June 2015- New Delhi to Naggar (536 km)**

**Objective:** to get used to the dream journey mate 'the bike'. This is the day when everyone is introduced to harsh environment and testing of riding abilities to the upcoming challenge in highest passes. It also prepares the rider for what's going to come on the toughest Himalayan way. It also provides an opportunity to ride together as a group, to follow the group, to navigate and help each other. Finally to reach Naggar safely (Naggar, which is 20 kms from Manali)

**Dairy:** Early morning at 2.00AM, there was a huge knock on the door of our room. There was a strong authoritative voice saying get ready 'Bike riders'. This was the welcome knock by the team to get ready so that we can start our day of riding by 4.00AM. Within no time, we were ready but took lot of time in tying the luggage to the bike with plastic wrapped around the bag, wearing riding gears and group getting assembled to start the ride.



**Three musketeers' - all for one, one for all**

Bike ride kick started at 4.15 AM sharp with thunder loud noise of 21 bikes roaring through the roads of Paharganj of New Delhi. An early morning start is imperative, if you intend to reach Manali in time so that you have a good night rest for the onward journey. We started to follow each other forming a bike chain stretched over a mile. With in no time bikes started to cruise towards the NH1 towards Chandigarh. The drive is through the plains of northern India, firstly through Haryana and then through Punjab before entering into Himachal Pradesh. We were riding on the NH 1 from Delhi to Kharar. In Kharar, we changed to NH 21 to reach Manali. Important towns on the way are Panipat, Karnal, Kurukshetra, Ambala, Chandigarh, Roopnagar,



Sunder Nagar, Mandi & Kullu. We had an awesome breakfast stop at Jhil Mil Dhaba at Kharnal. Jhil Mil Dhaba is a great option and it is located on the highway, great food and reasonable prices. Service is fast and good too. Please do not focus on the hygiene aspect and just enjoy the Punjabi delicacy. It is mouth watering tasty food but keep watch on your intake. You may have to stop for nature call, if not !!!



**Breakfast at Kharnal**

Finally, we had stop in Roopnagar and Sunder Nagar for refreshment. Drive till Bilaspur is very harsh and hot. Traffic appears to be unruly only in few places. After reaching Mandi, the ride becomes pleasant because of the high altitude and weather. The bike ride through the tunnel near Mandi is very refreshing and awesome experience. It was a tranquil like state while riding through the 2.75Kms long tunnel.



**2.75 Kms long tunnel near Mandi**

Riding through this hilly terrain post-Mandi gives the glimpses of upcoming drive through the mountains. Riding through Kullu is a treat to any bike rider. However, unruly traffic increases in the narrow lanes of the hilly ride. Riding the sharp curvy road, hairpin bends, road carved through the mountains and climbing up the hill at the end of the day is tiring but worth million dollar experience.



### **A bird view of bike riding through the roads from Mandi to Manali**

Finally, we reached Naggar at 6.45 PM without any major accidents. We successfully completed the ride of 536kms in 14hours. It was difficult but worth taking this preliminary test of riding to Naggar so that it gives a sense of control over the bike and taste of upcoming challenges ahead. Took some time in checking into the hotel and had dinner after having a beer.



### **Dare devil riders getting ready for the trip**



**Day - 2****Monday 29 June 2015 - Rest day at Naggar and visit to Manali**

**Objective** – to get acclimatize with the altitude, bike check, sightseeing and last minute shopping in Manali

After completing 536Kms, we had a rest day at Naggar. We had an awesome resting day in the middle of the Mother Nature. The rest day was strategically planned to get acclimatize with the altitude, bike check, sightseeing and last minute shopping in Manali. The Mall Road is the throbbing nerve street of Manali, and is lined with plenty of hotels, eateries and shopping opportunities. That explains the top three things you can do around here - sleep, eat and shop. Last minute shopping included medicines, riding snow goggles, water resistant gloves, woolen socks, gloves and cap, thermals, petrol carrying plastic cans and plastic rope.

**Dream rider's last minute shopping at Mall Road, Manali**

After the shopping we hired a local taxi for sightseeing and visited Larji Hydroelectric Power Project India is located at Upstream of Beas Dam in Kullu district of Himachal Pradesh. The drive through Mandi to Manali road is fantastic. It was one of the best days of my life.



**Larji Hydroelectric Power Project, Manali**



**Bike checkup at Naggar**



**Tuesday 30 June 2015 - Naggar to Sarchu (235 km), Stay at Sarchu in tents**

**Objective** – to bike ride safely through Manali – Rohtang Pass– Gramphu – Kokhsar – Tandi- Keylong – Jispa – Darcha – Zingzingbar – Baralacha La – Bharatpur – Sarchu. To Stay in tent at Sarchu.

Again third day started at 4.00Am in the morning to cover the awesome ride, which was through the NH 21, the road through the Manali and over the Rohtang Pass, Gramphu, Kokhsar, Keylong, Jispa, Darcha, Zingzingbar, Baralacha La and Bharatpur to reach Sarchu. On the way to Rohtang Pass one gets to see the spectacular and panoramic of Himalayas, glaciers, beautiful valley, waterfalls, rugged mountain and nature at its best. Located 51km from Manali, at an altitude of 3,978 m (13,050 ft. The road is narrow and the ascent is slow and treacherous. The scenic views of beautiful snow capped peaks and glaciers are mesmerizing. The great Rohtang Pass is named after pile of corpses, due to people dying in bad weather trying to cross the pass. This pass connects Himachal pradesh with Kashmir. Traffic jams are common as military vehicles, trucks, and goods carriers try to navigate the tight roads and rough terrain, compounded by snow and ice at certain points and the large number of tourists vehicles. We had a coffee break at Rohtang Pass. It was very cold but managed to reach within 3hours of start from Naggar. Ride through this road was very anxious because this pass is well known for undisputed reputation for being dangerous because of unpredictable snowstorms and blizzards.



**Bliss!!! after reaching Rohtang Pass**



After Rohtang Pass, We stopped at Kokhsar for breakfast. The drive from here was relatively smooth without any much difficulty through Gramphu, Kokhsar, Keylong and Jispa.



### **Break at Kokhsar**

Journey from Kokhsar here is also downhill till Tandi and roads are mostly in a state of disarray. Tandi has the last petrol pump before Leh, roughly 385kms from here. So dont forget to tank up before moving on to Keylong. We filled our bike tanks and also the petrol cans.



### **The last petrol filling station at Tandi**

We reached Darcha at 1.30PM. Darcha, situated on the banks of Bhaga River and there is a police checkpoint for the travelers. The cloud had taken over the territory and the ride was cool. It started to rain in Darcha, when we were having lunch. Rain continued hence, we had to start in the rain. At the Zingzingbar the rain was heavy and it started to snow also. Weather was very cold and visibility was about 5-8meters only. It was a very difficult call, should we continue our riding or not through Baralacha -la pass. We did not stop. Riding through the Baralacha -la pass was one of the difficult moment of the ride. The Baralacha -la pass is a high mountain pass in Zaskar range, connecting Lahaul district in Himachal Pradesh to Ladakh in Jammu and Kashmir, situated along the Leh-Manali highway. Weather became the worst enemy. The blizzard hit us badly. It started snowing heavily but we were determined and crossed the pass. This Baralacha -la pass pushed our limits to the extreme, it challenged our skills, kicked our patience, tested our endurance, tolerance to the worst weather was experimented and cold extreme temperature of minus four made riding very difficult. Few of us had an afterthought of 'Did we made the right choice of bike riding in Himalayas? We were craving to see any sign human habitat, when we were crossing Baralacha La. The Bharatpur Tent Colony gave us the first sign of hope and breath of life. We took a break had awesome hot garlic soup and sandwich. There was combination of scare and success of crossing the Baralacha La on everyone's face. Finally reached Sarchu at 6.30PM in the evening. It was truly a spine chilling experience.



**Sarchu Tents**



Sarchu is a major halt point with tented accommodation in the Himalayas on the Leh-Manali Highway, on the boundary between Himachal Pradesh and Ladakh at an altitude of 4,290 mtrs (14,070 ft). Overnight stay at Sarchu had a great toll on the team. Many of us started to experience the high altitude sickness symptoms in the form of head ache, vomiting, increased breathing, disorientation, heavy fatigue, sleeplessness and poor appetite. It was very cold (just minus five degree in the night) and long night.



### **‘Parking without fees’ in Sarchu**

Sarchu does not have any electricity, camp has own generator set which provides electrical power required. The generator set operates as soon as it gets dark in evening till the guests have their dinner & go to sleep in their cozy tents and again in mornings for departure. It was one of the coldest night. Everyone struggled to keep themselves warm. The tents were less in number compared to the number of travelers, hence four of us were asked to get accommodate in one tent. Dinner was served but no one was hungry but everyone was tired and angry at the facilities offered. It was a very cold dark freezing night. However, the sky was absolutely clear, moon was seen very bright and I could see the maximum number of stars I’d seen on a single night. Outside the night scenery was awesome but it was very cold we couldn’t move around in the night. Whole night wind was blowing outside and the tents fluttered violently. Above all water was freezing cold and it was difficult to drink water to keep ourselves hydrated. It would be best to avoid staying at Sarchu. Staying in Keylong or Zingzang bar should be considered considering the climate and also the altitude.



**Day - 4**

**Wednesday 1 July 2015 - Sarchu to Leh (230 km), Stay at Leh in hotel**

**Objective** – to bike ride safely through the (21) Gata Loops, Nakee La Pass (4739mtrs), Biskynala, Lachalung La Pass 5,059 mtrs (16,600 ft), Pang, the Moray Plains, Debring, Taglang La 5359 mtrs(17582 feet), Runtse, Gya, Miru, Upshi, Stakna, Karu, Thiksey and Leh

**Sarchu Tents**

Early morning, we had to force ourselves to get up and had our breakfast. It was torture in the early morning to get ready for the ride. The ritual of packing luggage, carrying bag to the bike, covering the bag with plastic cover and tying the luggage to the bike with bungee cord was very tiresome. After that securing the oil and petrol cans to the bike is also a ritual which every bike riders hate it. After, that through bike check and starting the bike at high altitude is a daunting task.

**Getting ready for the Ride**

We started at 7.00Am from Sarchu after breakfast. Initially the road was simply superb and driving through the valley is a journey that makes the long lasting impression in heart. Further, an awesome the Gata Loops, a stretch of 21 hair pins, can give you a perfect-postcard picture from the top – an epic picture of the 21 twisting roads. Riding through the 21 Gata loops is like head spinning experience and puts your riding skill to the ultimate test and it climbs up one of the mountains to the Nakeela pass. Nakeela pass is a high mountain pass at an elevation of 15,647 ft (4.769 m) above the sea level, located in Ladakh region of the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir.



Lachulung La 5,059 mtrs (16,616 ft), is a mountain pass along the Leh-Manali highway. It is located some 54 km from Sarchu and 24 km from Pang on the Leh-Manali highway. The



weather on this zone is harsh and highly unpredictable and it does not take much time for the bright sun shine to change over to moderate to heavy snow fall.

After the Lunch drive to Leh passing through Skyangchu Thang also called as More plane (Biggest and Highest Plateau on Stretch of 42 Kms in the world). Riding through this awesome plane road, is simply superb and feels like one is riding the formula one racing car. Moreh plane ride one can experience the spectacular views of rugged rocks and their unique geological formation.



Moreh Plains is a flat, barren stretch of land that lies after Pang. Though very dusty and rough, it is still a welcome break from the atrocious twists and turns of the mountain track. Moray Plains give way to a steep climb to the Tanglang La pass.



After having lunch at Debring, we started to cruise towards the second highest pass in the world with lot of excitement and anxiousness. The Tanglang La Pass 5359 mtrs(17582 feet), is the world's second highest motorable road in the world. The road at this pass is awesome and it is maintained well by the BRO.

After Tanglang La the going was great, it was downhill and the surroundings change spectacularly as you enter Ladakh and one can see the first sight of the Indus river. Small houses begin to appear, cultivated farms and gardens, temples, schools and signs of civilization gives a sense of comfort for the riders. Behind these few villages there are barren, brown mountains with not a shrub on their steep slopes. We relished every moment of our ride through the Gya, Miru, Upshi, Stakna, Karu, Thiksey and Leh.

As we became restless to reach Leh and throttled the accelerator to the maximum speeding at 80-90kms on these roads, one could feel that the weather now was getting quite warmer and our jackets and sweaters started coming off. As we cruised through the city of Karu, one can feel the peace and a sense of serenity because of the presences of Indian Army. Finally, reached the Leh at 5.00PM and reached the guest house to take hot water shower. A great shower and a bottle of beer after awesome bike ride is not less than hundred orgasms!!!!



Thursday 2 July 2015 - Rest day at Leh (check bikes/ gear up)

Day - 5

**Objective:** – to get acclimatize with the altitude, bike check, sightseeing at Leh and last minute shopping in Leh

Leh was an important stopover for one day to get rest after long bike riding journey. Leh is one of the two districts located in Ladakh, the other being the Kargil District. Leh is an enchanting and hassle-free as mountain-framed city with peace and serenity around. Town is decoarted with steep rocky ridged mountains, Tibetan-style palace, monastery and fort. Buddhism relegion and culture rule the lifestyle of the people here. The Chortens (Stupas) and enchanting Gompas (Monasteries) adorn the city with their presence. Leh is a place that's all too easy to fall in love with the splendid Mother Nature. We visited Hall of fame, which is a well-presented museum mostly commemorates the army's role in Ladakh. Visit to this museum also includes a 30-minute film introducing the 1999 'Kargil War'. This museum reminds us the galore of strength and sacrifice of our Indian army



Hall of Fame at Leh



**In memory of those who set out to serve the nations cause  
and did not return (Ladakh 1947...memorial)**

Next, we visited Spituk Monastery also known as Spituk Gompa. It is a Buddhist monastery in Leh district. The site of Spituk was blessed by the Arhat Nyimagung. The monastery contains 100 monks and a giant statue of Kali.

We had lunch at one of the best hotel in Leh called Chopsticks Noodle Bar. This hotel had wonderful range of dishes from the Chinese and Tibetan cuisine. Well furnished restaurant with great ambiance and excellent food.

The Shanti Stupa, Dominating Leh from a high, rocky ridge, this gigantic white spired pudding of a stupa was built in 1991 by Japanese monks to promote world peace. You can circumambulate to canned mantras and meditate in the Buddha Hall but the greatest attraction is the stunning view over Leh.



**The Spituk Monastery**



**The Shanti Stupa**





**The Leh Palace**

The Leh Palace, this nine-storey dun-coloured palace is Leh's dominant structure and architectural icon. It took shape under 17th-century king Sengge Namgyal but has been essentially unoccupied since the Ladakhi royals were stripped of power and shuffled off to Stok in 1846. Today the sturdy walls enclose some exhibition spaces and a small prayer room, but the most enjoyable part of a visit is venturing up to the uppermost rooftops for the view. In the evening had dinner at Il Forno. Dinner was served with Italian pizza and fruit custard was delicious. I was eagerly waiting for tomorrow's bike ride to Pangong Lake through Chang La Pass, second highest motor able road on earth.

**Friday 3 July 2015 - Leh to Pangong Lake (164 km), Stay at Pangong Lake in tents**

**Objective:** To ride through the Chang La to reach the world famous Pangong lake

As usual we started early at 4.00AM in the morning from Leh. Early morning start in cold pollution free air was superb, cold wind in the hair feeling was fantabulous and excitement to visit Pangong lake by bike ride through the Chang La pass was adding to the sheer adventure pleasure. The smaller road to Pangong lake deviated from the main highway after Kharu, but the surface nevertheless remained smooth for 20 kms only. The sheer challenging adventure started, when we started to ascend the Changla La pass. The Chang La 5,360 mtrs (17,590 ft) is the second highest motorable road in the world. The climb is very steep and requires a tactful, skilful and careful drive. The descent from chang La towards darbuk is again very steep. My RE thunderbird started to struggle and reluctantly responded slowly to the full throttle of the accelerator at steep ascents and hairpin bends. Approximately 13kms before the Chang La pass the road disappeared and were left with mud road, snow covered mud road, cold chilled water stream in the middle of the road, snow covered mountains across 360 degree view and loose gravel and wet soil challenged all the bike riders.



**The Changla Pass 5360 mtrs (17688 feet)**  
is the second highest motorable road in the world.



Almost all the riders fell from their bikes including me. Bike riding through these snow covered road was a nightmare to every rider. Bike riding was very difficult and everyone became ultra cautious about the ride through the ice covered road. The bike riding skill was to slowly, steadily and continuously ride applying accelerator holding clutch without using the brakes, while maintaining traction and power to the rear wheel to avoid bike slipping from the road when it is slippery bcos of ice. However, few falls and slipping from bike did not threaten us from completing the journey.

It must have taken us a good two hours to cross the Chang La pass to be welcomed by smooth road towards Pangong Lake. Again we were cruising at 60 to 80 Kms speed on the smooth road. Unfortunately, I made a silly mistake during overtaking a lorry and fell from my bike at a speed of 40-50kms. I was lucky nothing happened to me. The helmet and riding gears protected me from life threatening injury. Finally, reached Pangong lake and stayed overnight in an awesome tent next to the Pangong Lake. Both sunset and sunrise was worth the risk we took riding the Chang La pass. It was an imperatively memorable day at Pangong lake.



**The Pangong Lake. It is situated at a height of about 4,350 m (14,270 ft). It is 134 km long and Maximum width is 5 km. It extends from India (only 1/3<sup>rd</sup> in India) to China (2/3<sup>rd</sup> in China).**



**The Pangong Lake**



**Mesmerizing view of the tents at the Pangong Lake**



**Saturday 4 July 2015 - Pangong Lake to Leh (164 km)**

**Objective:** To ride back through the Chang La to reach Leh

The drive back to Leh was wonderful without much any accidents. We were able to reach back to Leh by Lunch. On the way back, we had an opportunity to visit the school titled “Druk Padma Karpo School”. This is an iconic school of Ranchoddas Shamaldas Chanchad (alias Phunsukh Wangdu), does it ring any bell? Off course this school was used to shoot “3 idiot movie”



**“Druk Padma Karpo School”. This is an iconic school of “3 idiot movie”**

After reaching Leh in the afternoon, we realized that one of the fellow rider developed **High Altitude Pulmonary Edema** (HAPE) and his oxygen saturation was only 36%, hence he was admitted in Intensive care unit of Government Hospital at Leh. The treatment of high-altitude pulmonary edema (HAPE) includes rest, administration of oxygen, and descent to a lower altitude. If diagnosed early, recovery is rapid with a descent of only 500-1000 mtrs. Other measures taken were bed rest, Oxygen, Nifedipine, Acetazolamide, Sildenafil and Salmeterol were used. He was admitted for next two days and he recovered completely but he could not ride the bike further and was grounded.

**Sunday 5 July 2015 - Leh to Nubra Valley (crossing Khardung La) (125 km), Stay in tents**

**Objective:** To ride through the Khardongla Pass to reach the Nubra Valley and stay in tent.

All the bike riders started at 5.00AM in the morning from Leh towards Nubra Valley. From Leh, Nubra Valley is about 120km. To reach Nubra valley, one should take the road which is most dangerous, challenging, spine chilling, yet and adventurous, because one has to cross Khardung La Pass. Khardung La pass 5,359 mtrs (17,582 ft) is the highest motor able road pass in the world. The Siachen Glacier lies part way up the latter valley.



For me, more than reaching Nubra valley it is the crossing the Khardung La Pass excited me a lot. Khardung La is situated 39 km by road from Leh. Initial part of the road to Khardung La is good but 12 Kms on either side of the pass i.e., before the pass (South Pullu) and after the pass (North pullu) is in very bad condition. Actually there is no road. The roadway is primarily mud road, gravel, sand and loose rock. This road is also covered by snow and water from the snow melt, which makes the bike rider to become uneasy and extra cautious during the drive.

The steep ascent and descent of the road can induce panic attacks and goose bumps. The road at many places would be paved with snow, demanding extra attention on your riding skills. The charismatic view of

the Himalayas is awesome. One side of the road was lined with frozen ice, water log and small rocks and the other side was steep cliffs covered with snow. Nature can be beautiful yet deadly dangerous. Sheer noise of nineteen bullets roaring through the mountains can trigger avalanche!!!! We managed to reach the K-top (Khardung La Pass), without any accidents.



After the North Pullu, the road is fantastic and well maintained by the BRO. We had dream bike ride on the curves of the Nubra valley road. Finally, we reached Nubra valley, which is a tri-armed beautiful cold desert valley. Siachen Glacier lies to the north of the valley. This valley is known for the Bactrian camel, which has two humps on its back. Staying in a resort tent at Nubra valley was a pleasure. A bonfire in the resort was exquisitely placed delight to the bike riders after crossing K-top.



**Tents at Nubra Valley**



In the evening, we visited Hunder. This place is known for the Sand Dunes. The Hunder sand dunes is a unique bed of nature that is located between Hunder and Diskit villages in the Nubra Valley. It is one of the high altitude deserts in the world that covers a wide area and is cut across by a gentle stream. We had an exquisite opportunity to do Bactrian Camel safari in the Sand Dunes.

**The Bactrian Camel safari through the Hunder Sand Dunes**

**Monday 6 July 2015 - Nubra Valley to Leh (125kms)**

Ride back from Nubra valley was uneventful. We started late at 7.00AM and were cruising at a speed of 60-80kms/hr speed on the awesome Nubra valley road. Again, our speed got reduced to 10-20kms/hr near Khardung La Pass. We were welcomed by fresh snowfall and also land slide immediately after Khardung La Pass. We had to wait for 20-30minutes before the land slide blockade was cleared by BRO. They were very professional and swift in clearing the debris in no time. This part of the bike ride is always challenging because early morning bike riders face frozen ice across the road and in the afternoon land slide and threat of avalanche looms over the riders. In the evening overflowing water on the roads poses serious threat to the riders.



**Land slide immediately after Khardung La Pass**

Our ride through the Khardung La pass went on smoothly apart from one land slide. Riders did not make any mistakes and we reached Leh by 12.30PM in the afternoon. After having good lunch and 5% C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>5</sub>OH, it was a memorable, relaxing and a pleasant day. We also received pleasant news that our fellow rider had recovered completely and he was in getting discharge from the hospital.



**Tuesday 7 July 2015 -Leh to Kargil (231 km), Stay at Kargil in tents**

**Objective:** To accomplish 231kms journey to reach Kargil through Spituk, Lamayuru, Fotu La pass, Namika La pass and Mulbek.

Early morning the bikes roared through the spiritual city Leh towards Kargil. We were riding to complete 226kms journey to reach Kargil through Spituk, Lamayuru, Fotu La, Namika La and Mulbek. We had couple of stop. Intial stop was at Patthar sahib Gurudwara, to thank god for giving us an oppurtunity to explore the paradise when we are alive!!!. This majestic Gurudwara constructed in memory of Guru Nanak Dev. The armed forces look after the Gurudwara. At the Gurudwara, I drifted into a peaceful spiritual mode with a satisfactory smile and a sense of contentment.



**At Patthar Sahib Gurudwara**

I had to pinch myself several times before I could get believe myself that we were heading towards the completion of our journey in next 48 hours. Little did I expect to be blown away by the enthralling, adventurous and splendid journey.

On the way, approximately 3kms near of Nimmu village, we saw the majestic confluence of Indus and Zanskar Rivers. The Indus was sparkling emerald green while the Zanskar was muddy. This part of the journey was good but tinged with a sense of sorrow because the bike ride is coming to end shortly.

Again we started our journey towards Kargil. On the way to Kargil, we had opportunities to visit Mulbek and Lamayuru Monasteries. We had refreshing lunch at Lamayuru and headed to cross Fotu La pass (13,432 ft) and Namika La (12,200ft) to reach Kargil. The road was simply superb and everyone was on full throttle on the national highway road. Finally, 20Kms before the Kargil road suddenly vanishes and mud road appears. We also witnessed the sudden change in the culture, tradition, ethnic, people, landscape and spirituality also. We reached Kargil to stay in a tent. Few of our fellow riders cooked mutton for the dinner after tiring ride also.



### **Tents at Kargil**

Kargil has an average elevation of 2,676 metres (8,780 feet), and is situated along the banks of the Suru River (Indus). It is sparsely populated region with diverse linguistic, ethnic and religious groups, living in isolated valleys separated by some of the world's highest mountains. Kargil has a temperate climate. Summers are hot with cool nights, while winters are long and chilly with temperatures often dropping below zero degree. The Kargil became world famous in 1999. It witnessed the infiltration of Pakistani forces. They were repulsed by India in the Kargil War. The area that witnessed the infiltration and fighting along the 160 km long stretch of ridges overlooking this only road linking Srinagar and Leh. We had a relaxing evening and sound sleep at Kargil.



**Day 11 – Dream Ride to Srinagar (Last Day of the journey)****Wednesday 8 July 2015 -Kargil to Srinagar - (213 km), Stay at Srinagar in hotel**

**Objective:** To accomplish 203 kms journey to reach Srinagar through via Drass, Zojila Pass and Sonamarg.

Final stretch of bike ride is from Kargil to Srinagar (213KMS), via Drass, Zojila Pass and Sonamarg. A few kms from Kargil is the Drass war memorial, built in the memory of great Indian soldiers, who scarified their life in defending the country border in the 1999 Kargil war and a must visit for every Indian citizen passing through this route. This monument also commemorates the historic success of Operation Vijay (Vijaypath) during the Indo-Pak war of 1999. It is built in the foothills of the Tololing Hill. This war memorial reminds us about the mighty sacrifice, symbol of courage, patience, integrity and endurance of our soldiers.



**Kargil war Memorial**

A 'Veer Bhoomi' is been dedicated to all those martyrs who lost their lives while safeguarding the country against intruders. Names of soldiers and officers who sacrificed their lives are mentioned on the walls of this war memorial. I am proud to be an Indian. Immediately after the Drass, an awesome valley starts from the base of the Zojila pass. This famous Zoji La pass 3,528 mtrs (11,640ft) needs to be crossed to reach Srinagar via Sonamarg. The roads on the both side of the pass are in bad condition with lots of gravel, slush, mud road, recent evidence of frequent landslides and tough terrain in which BRO works constantly to keep it operational.



**Zoji La pass 3,528 mtrs (11,640ft) with the friendly army men**

The journey from Sonamarg to Srinagar takes you through some of the magnificent valley of Kashmir. Awesome curved road snakes through massive mountains laden with forests on both sides and the Sindh River that meanders through the valley next to the road is a splendid treat to any bike rider. Sonamarg is also a base for undertaking the yatra to the holy Amarnath cave. The traffic becomes heavy, as we approach Srinagar and riding bike becomes tiresome. There is heavy army presence and there are soldiers posted every few hundred meters, it is relatively safe and security forces are there to help you out. Finally, reached Srinagar at 2.30PM and stayed in a hotel. Our bike riding journey of 2072 kms from Delhi to Srinagar through Manali, Sarchu, Leh and Kargil over a period of eleven days cutting through the Indian Himalayas was etched with awesome memory in our heart and soul. Riding bike covering some of the highest mountains and most scenic roads in the world, including the world's highest motorable pass (Khardung La) will be my all time favorite. Undisputed, that this is one of the toughest motorcycle ride in India. Journey covering high Himalayan mountain roads, endless valley, narrow snow covered dirt-tracks and water filled roads is not less than a cruise through paradise, which froze our memory to the eternity.



Thanks to the 'I am Adventure' group to make this dream come true. A superb itinerary, which is a mash-up of exciting route of rugged terrain, at times smooth cruise and fabulous views of the Himalayas. The road route is cut into the mountainside, so you can watch the breath taking valley beneath your feet and snow covered mountain on the other side. It was a sort of daredevil feels to the ride these mountains on a narrow path unimaginable visual treat that comes with it. It can be simply called 'one crazy ride'. The dream bike ride will test the riding skills to the max. Slush, sand, rain, ice, snow, water on the road, rocky river beds, forces of nature like land slide, avalanche, cold wind and blizzard experience waits for the ultimate adventure seeker. Driving a motorcycle in this terrain is like flying in freedom with all your senses alive. When we ride through Himalayas in the early morning with clear air and the scents of the wild flowers of the mountain that washes over the rider are just heavenly.

Life is beautiful; because it has adventure in it....

I am adventure