



Tennessee
TECH

<https://www.tntech.edu>

<https://www.tntech.edu/engineering/news-events/news/2014-2015-coe-news/sae-india-trip-return>

TTU Baja SAE Team Returns from India

by Jerry Renshaw and Karen Lykins

September 16, 2014

For engineering students who love to build vehicles, car talk is the same in every language.

When Tennessee Tech University's Baja SAE team recently visited India for two weeks just before the semester started, they were struck by the common threads that gears, tires, suspensions and drivetrains wove into their meetings and relationships with their hosts.

"No introductions were needed when we began talking about Baja cars," said team captain Logan Atkins. "There was this amazing connection as we started talking. It was like we'd known each other all our lives."

"We took the car to the cricket field to do a demonstration," said Samantha White, a mechanical engineering major from Knoxville. "There were a lot of people trying to get a good view of the car and trying to videotape."



Marked differences in how the teams build and think about Baja cars quickly became evident. The differences simply were rooted in different experiences, and students from both countries quickly began to realize how much they could learn from each other.

While TTU team members grew up in a culture that celebrates power sport all-terrain vehicles and four-wheelers, India students were much more familiar with building cars as dependable, solid transportation. Many of the questions asked by Indian students focused on the techniques for building lighter, more responsive Baja cars.

TTU team members seized every opportunity offered to them by their hosts to learn about Indian culture, explore the region and try new foods. They visited the Taj Mahal, Golden Temple and Jaipur Palace along the way.

They also found out that people tend to stare at a group of Westerners, some of whom are well over six feet tall, but that didn't affect the hospitality and graciousness they said they encountered every step of the way.

Although one university now has an all-female Baja team, White drew some curious questions about her role on the team.

"At the end of the workshop during the question and answers, I got the opportunity to address that," she said. "I said, 'A lot of you are concerned about having girls on your team now or in the future. The girls have been through an incredible amount of trial and tribulation to get here. They have already proved themselves; they are here for a reason.'"

In addition to White and Atkins, of Oak Ridge, the other team members on the trip were Gage Babb, of Huntsville, Ala.; Sam Keener, of Lenoir City; brothers Basil and Kendall Hall, of Primm City; Dan Thomas, of Chattanooga; David Laxton, of Clinton; and Kurt Pierchoski, of Pulaski. Mechanical engineering professor Dale Wilson and electrical engineering professor Satish Mahajan traveled with TTU's students.

"It was a fantastic experience, the hospitality was incredible. I should learn how to be more hospitable when they visit here in 2016," said Wilson, the team's advisor. "We would not have had the experience if it were not for our Indian guide and mentor Dr. Mahajan."

The trip's itinerary included Chennai, Delhi, Mumbai, , Vellore, Jaipur, Delhi and Pune, with factory visits to Cummins-India, Mahindra Automotive, John Deere-India and the Jaipur Foot Factory. The entire venture came together after TTU president Phil Oldham, Bharat Soni, vice president for research and economic development, and Terry Saltsman, assistant to the president went to India several months ago.

"I should thank Dr. Karen Ramsey-Idem of Cummins for her role in helping to ship the vehicle to India, the TTU study abroad program for funding the student international travel and Dr. Kamal Vora of Automotive Research Association of India (ARAI) for handling local hospitality and logistics in India, said Mohan Rao, chairman of TTU's mechanical engineering department. "It took almost an entire year for us to plan and execute this,"

White summed up the trip for everyone with a journal entry.

"We brought home a ton of pictures, stories, and experiences to share with everyone here. I think we learned as much, if not more, than everyone we were teaching at the workshops. I think we made a great impact going over there, and we formed a lot of strong partnerships and relationships that will hopefully carry on into the future. I know I am more culturally connected than when I left, and I think I will have a better time understanding our international students here as well. I'm so grateful that I got to be a part of this amazing journey."

Last edited 2015.03.17 by Davis, Cynthia.