



# EMBARKING ON SISTERHOOD

50 women. 25 cars.  
3700km. One long  
highway. We celebrated  
Women's Day by joining  
an epic drive from  
Kashmir to Kanyakumari

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**W**E FLAGGED OFF ON International Women's Day. What better way to celebrate 'girl power' than a cross-country road trip with a group of strangers, right? However, this wasn't just any road trip – it was a tribute to the spirit of women. A non-stop, 10-day celebration of sisterhood, from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. When you're about to embark on a journey that spans the length of a country, you realise one simple truth: the road is never just about the destination. It's about the journey: it's about the people you meet along the way, the stories you share and the unspoken bonds you create. Kashmir and Kanyakumari were just bookends to an incredible adventure!

As I write this, memories come rushing back in waves. The roads we conquered. The women who made me laugh until my cheeks ached. The moments only a road trip can throw up – like when I grabbed the radio instead of my phone. There's something about that crackle, the sound of voices travelling over the airwaves, that felt more real, more connected than any text message or call could.

You see, this wasn't just about driving – it was about rewriting the narrative. Women and driving? We didn't just break the mould; we shattered it. All the whispers and snickers about "women drivers"? We left them behind on the side of the road, where they belonged. When you're rolling down the highway with a convoy of women, the roads take on a whole new meaning. It's not just the rumble of engines; it's the laughter, the music blasting from every car, the jokes flying, and the impromptu singing and dance-offs. Every moment felt like a scene from a road trip movie – only this time, we were the stars.

Each woman in the convoy was not just a participant in a road trip; she was an adventurer. Whether a doctor, CEO, entrepreneur, mother, leader, artist, or architect, what brought us together wasn't just our love for the open road, but the shared desire to push boundaries, to experience something meaningful, to take that leap for ourselves. This wasn't just a road trip. It was a masterclass in being a woman who does it all. And we did it with style.

**Setting the tone**

When we first met, the awkwardness was real. The usual, "Where are you from?" and "What do you do?" felt like getting to know someone on a first date – only this time, there were 49 other women experiencing the same thing! That initial awkwardness soon gave way to excitement and shared energy. It wasn't the crisp 7-degree Celsius air in Srinagar that gave me goosebumps – it was the thrill of knowing we were about to embark on something that would change us in ways we couldn't yet imagine.

As we gathered for the evening before the drive, Embarq Motoring Experiences and Anila Pendse from Skoda India welcomed us. At the heart of it all was the launch of the inaugural drive of Embarq's Bold Route Series – K2K, designed by women, for women. It perfectly aligned with the #HerSkodaHerRoad initiative, showcasing that

**Right:** We started the Embarq K2K drive from Srinagar on International Women's Day; this was the inaugural drive of Embarq's Bold Route Series, which was proudly designed by women, for women





women are more than capable of taking on the road – literally. As Anila said, “This isn’t just about dreaming of adventure; it’s about making it happen.” Skoda India had partnered with Embarq to give us a fleet of 25 cars – we had Kushaqs, Slavas, Kodiaqs and even the new Kylaq on the drive. This was poetic since it was 25 years of Skoda India, and it also showed their commitment to women’s mobility.

Medha and Sujal, the incredible founders of Embarq, had meticulously planned the drive down to the very last detail. As Medha put it, “This drive is not just about reaching Kanyakumari; it’s about celebrating women who take charge of their journey, break barriers and redefine the road ahead.” That stuck with me. We were finally ready to take on the road, together.

Keeping with the theme of this drive, the team over at **evo India** sent in an all-women crew to cover it! Neha Gharat and Srividya B were creating the visual content you see on these pages and on social media, while I was doing the driving, hosting and writing – tapping into my extensive driving and rallying experience for that.

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**Right:** We visited several important monuments along the way including the Taj Mahal; the new Kylaq was also part of the convoy; the founders of Embarq and our drive leads – Sujal Patwardhan (bottom, left) and Medha Joseph

**Happy International Women’s Day**

At 0800hrs, the atmosphere was electric. Nuzhat Gul, Secretary of the Jammu and Kashmir Sports Council, flagged us off and we rolled out in the brand-new Skoda Kylaq. Not quite my rally car, but it surely was a better choice for a road trip, thanks to the functional and comfortable interiors. And not to forget, we had to accommodate four of us including luggage and camera gear (now that’s not something my rally car would be capable of). Then came a check-in that would become more familiar with every passing day: Luggage? Check. Belts? Check. Mirrors? Check. Radio? Check.

We hit NH44, a highway that would soon become our second home. The first leg of our journey, just 222km to Katra took us through the stunning, winding roads of Jammu and Kashmir. The landscape unfolded like an endless canvas – snow-capped peaks of the Pir Panjal Range, towering pine trees in their winter colours, and occasional glimpses of the Jhelum river cutting through the valley. As we neared Banihal, the forests thickened around us and we caught occasional glimpses of deep ravines. We entered the Chenani-Nashri Tunnel, India’s longest road tunnel, which whisked us through 9km of mountain, a true marvel of human engineering. When we finally emerged, the landscape shifted yet again, and we were greeted with lush fields and valleys of Katra. Cue dramatic music.

The car was also working really well. This Kylaq is the smallest Skoda on sale today, but by no means does that mean it is compromised. It draws so much from the bigger Kushaq – its platform, engine, features list and so much more. It doesn’t feel like a sub 4m SUV with compromises engineered into it, but a much larger SUV that simply occupies a smaller footprint.







Katra wasn’t just a stop – it was a party. There were *dhols*, there was dancing and there was a whole lot of joy. The kind of joy you only get when you’ve been in a car for hours and finally see the hotel that’s going to be your sanctuary for the night. It wasn’t just the traditional warm welcome; it was a celebration of us, the women who had come together to make this journey happen.

And this wasn’t a one-off. Each stop felt like its own mini-festival, complete with music, energy and a highly enthusiastic group of women dancing through the evening. I mean, who needs a gym when you’ve got a convoy full of women who engage in a couple of hours of intense cardio every evening after several hours on the road?

**Moving forward**

As we drove through India’s heartland, each city told its own story, every region had its own rhythm. In Agra, we all stood in awe of the Taj Mahal – the epitome of love and beauty. No joke, I felt a little like the Taj itself: standing tall, proud and maybe a little overwhelmed

**Above:** Our all-women content crew from the drive; the Skodas turned out to be great mile-munchers, all the way from the north to the south; a quick photo-op in Kanyakumari to mark the end of the drive

by the sheer magnitude of what we were accomplishing together. I mean, if a monument can symbolise love, surely 40-odd living, breathing women on a road trip can symbolise friendship and empowerment?

But it wasn’t all about beauty. In Jhansi, we stood before the iconic Jhansi fort, a reminder of the bravery of Rani Lakshmibai. Her story echoed in every woman’s heart. That night, we passed through the Veerangana Durgavati tiger reserve. The silence was empowering – we weren’t just crossing distances; we were reflecting on the bravery, the courage and the legacy of women who had walked these paths long before us.

This is what it means to be unstoppable. There’s something electric about being a woman behind the wheel, knowing that you’re not just controlling the car – you’re controlling your own



# IT WASN’T JUST ABOUT THE MILES WE DROVE OR THE DESTINATIONS WE REACHED. IT WAS ABOUT THE WOMEN WE BECAME ALONG THE WAY

story. What no one had told us was that navigating 25 cars across a country would be a really wild ride – Indian roads are chaotic and more so in a convoy. What helped was that we had each other. “Lead to convoy: watch out for the truck coming in the wrong direction on the right lane... cattle on the left lane... 10 minutes to our next halt... bio break anyone!?”

When we were on calmer stretches of long straights, radio chatter kicked off almost immediately, often turning into an impromptu comedy or music show. Many were new to using the radio, which resulted in some funny moments when someone would just say “Hello?” like it were a phone call and the receiver – in this case 24 other cars, knew who was on the line.

At every stop, the parking lot became a pit stop of shared energy and laughter – swapping stories, sharing snacks, taking pictures, and high-fiving each other like true pit crew members. And fuel stops? Let’s just say, we might have caused a traffic jam or two. But it wasn’t just the cars that were fuelling up; it was our spirits, too.

**Pushing on**

Jabalpur marked the halfway point of our journey; it was as if we had crossed into another world – one where time moved in tandem with the roads we travelled. We were in a new car now: the Skoda Slavia. It was like upgrading from a cosy little cafe to a chic rooftop bar. Sleek, smooth and full of power, an absolute joy to drive. Despite being a sedan, it never felt out of its depth in the Indian

heartland what with its generous ground clearance. The bigger 1.5 TSI engine also promised plenty of performance, while the cooled seats kept us comfortable on the inside.

But no matter which Skoda we were driving, the one thing that didn’t change was the bond we shared. Whether we were stuck in traffic in Delhi, getting lost in the ancient lanes of Gwalior, or laughing through the vibrant festival of Holi in Nagpur, the camaraderie was unwavering. The Skodas didn’t just get us from one city to another – it became a vehicle that moved us forward. Each woman, driving her own Skoda, found her rhythm, her confidence and her voice.

That’s what this journey had done to us – it had brought us together in ways I never thought possible. The connection, the shared experiences, the freedom of driving with like-minded women – it was all transforming us in real time.

By the time we reached Madurai, we were closer to the coast and with every passing mile, the sunset painted the sky in hues that made us feel both small and infinite. On to the final stretch now.

**The final stretch**

The first glimpse of the pristine blue sea took my breath away – and I’m pretty sure the ocean was just as stunned to see over 40 women pulling up in 25 Skodas. The sea was every shade of blue you could imagine. It was mesmerising. At that moment, no photo or video could capture what we were feeling. The culmination of 10 days of shared memories, challenges and triumphs had brought us here, to this breathtaking moment. We had arrived – and it was worth every kilometre.

What Embarq facilitated wasn’t just about the miles we drove or the destinations we reached. It was about the women we became along the way. I arrived in Kanyakumari with a heart full of gratitude – for the friendships forged, the lessons learned and the unwavering belief that women can conquer anything, together or alone.

Like I said at the start – Kashmir and Kanyakumari were just bookends to the amazing adventure. And as I looked at the women around me, each glowing with pride, I realised: Our Embarq K2K drive might have come to a close, but what we were feeling? This was just the beginning! ❌

