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SPECIAL FEATURE: TATA SAFARI

TIME TO ESCAPE

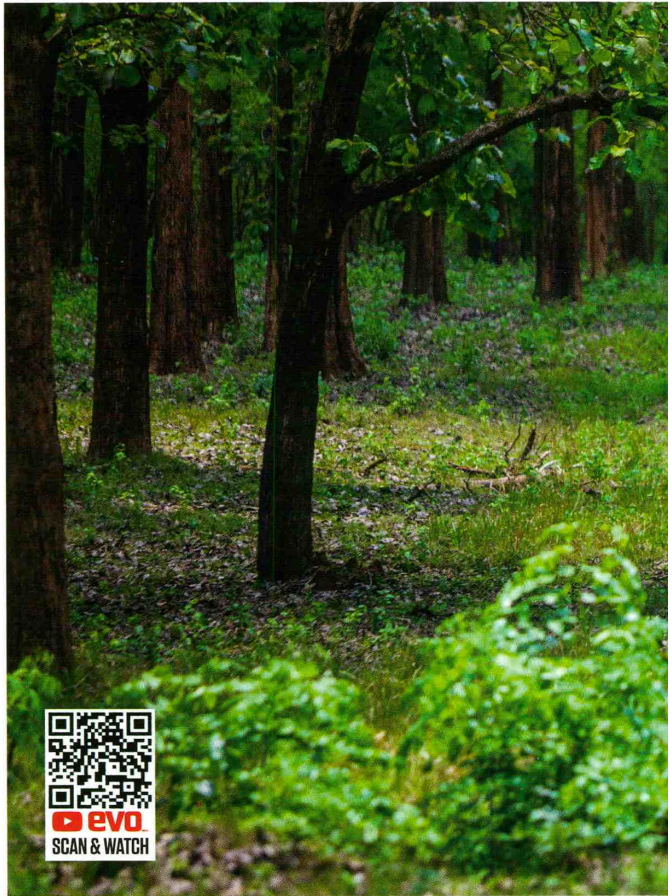
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On the second edition of the #ReclaimYourLife drive, a couple of Tata Safari owners joined us to take in all the tranquility that the Scotland of India has on offer!

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state and you're treated to an alluring sight everywhere you look. We were supposed to arrive at the Riverside Coffee estate, our abode in Coorg for the next couple of days, just in time for lunch. But since the Safari made such quick work of the roads, we decided to go a little off the route and into the Nagarhole Tiger Reserve National Park or into the Safari's natural habitat. The Nagarhole Tiger Reserve is among the prettiest drive-through national parks in the country. Imagine this, a narrow trail flanked by tall green trees on both sides — look hard enough and you might spot some animals! We actually managed to spot some deer, a herd of bison and even a few *langurs*, right from our SUVs.

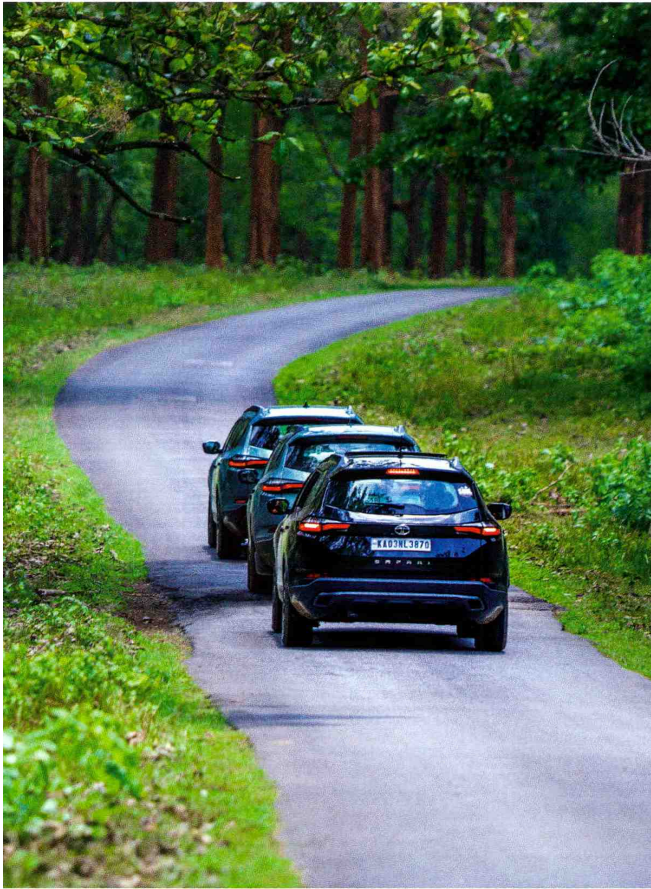
Visit Coorg and you'll understand why anyone and everyone who is born there likes to go rallying and off-roading. There are some incredible twisties, and plenty of estate land to go mud-plugging. You might think that a 2-tonne SUV would feel out of place here, but the Safari never skipped a beat on the curves of all the mountains in Coorg. The Safari's 2-litre turbocharged diesel engine with its colossal 350Nm torque offers oodles of oomph to take on the steepest slopes the hills have to offer, even with seven people down and luggage loaded up to the brim. Its

THE NAGARHOLE TIGER RESERVE IS AMONG THE PRETTIEST DRIVE-THROUGH NATIONAL PARKS IN THE COUNTRY

front-end feels direct and although there is a bit of a body roll, hustling it around the sharp corners is more fun than you'd ever think. Ritesh and Rafi, the two proud Tata Safari owners who had joined us agreed.

The coffee cup of India. That is one of the many colloquial names for Coorg. Over 70 per cent of India's coffee is made here and it is appreciated by caffeine connoisseurs around the world. We were in for a treat as we'd be staying at the Riverside Coffee estate for a couple of days. Owned and

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Clockwise from facing page top: Rough road mode tweaks the traction control system to aid grip in rocky terrain; the Safaris always feel at home in the jungle; going off-the-road at the coffee estate was much more extreme than we thought; the kids love their Safari for it allows them to get up close with mother nature



managed by Rishwin Devaiah, it is nestled in the forests, right beside the Cauvery river, near the town of Siddapur, about 20km from Madikeri and it is an institution for everything coffee. We arrived at the Riverside Coffee estate with little to no rest, yet feeling as fresh as a daisy.

Lunch was had but we were itching to drive these Safaris through the estates! They are brilliant on-road but there's a certain joy in taking a proper SUV off-road. Instead of doing an estate tour in the regular SUVs that the estate uses, we did so with our own Safaris! The trail was a combination of everything. Steep slopes, narrow pathways that had a lot of slush and even some rocky sections. Tackling the rocky section, at the very beginning of the coffee estate, wasn't a hassle for the Safari at all. Put it in its 'Rough road' mode and the throttle becomes less eager. The traction control system adjusts itself for low traction surfaces and makes sure you're always in control.

That was much needed the deeper we went into the estate. We had arrived after a bout of rain and the soil was slushy. Coffee needs shade to grow and the canopy of silver oaks didn't let much light filter through. The ground was soft, malleable and seemed tricky enough. But the Safari remained



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UMMER IS HERE AND IT'S HERE WITH A BANG.

And it started with a heat wave, the likes of which very few Indians have experienced before and the weather report hints at even hotter days ahead of us. The urge to head out to cooler climes is real and this just gave us another excuse to go on an adventure. To say that we were excited for the second edition of the Reclaim Your Life drive with the Tata Safari is a huge understatement, for we were headed to the mountains! If you aren't familiar with **evo India's** Reclaim Your Life drive series, here's a little overview.

Supported by the SUV Owners United League (SOUL), the Reclaim Your Life drive is an effort to break free from our tedious lives and to go out on an adventure! These adventures also let us bring out the Safari's true potential and show owners what their SUV is really capable of!

This time around, we'd be going to a quaint little town in Karnataka that calls the Western Ghats its home. The home of coffee in India. Coorg!

The Tata Safari is one hell of a mile muncher. It swallows everything that the Indian roadways throw at it with such great poise and comfort that our first stretch on the Coorg to Bangalore trip was merely a warm up for it. The route which we had chosen would take us from the oh-so-smooth National Highway 75 to the not-so-smooth single carriageways and then on to the twisties of Coorg. Although it was a mere 260km, the ETA to our destination was almost six hours. After leaving the mad scramble of Bangalore city behind, we settled into a cruise on National Highway 75. A smooth stretch of tarmac that would take us through the Nelamangala town to the famous city of Channarayapatna. What a road this is. Minimal traffic and excellent views, there's very little to complain about and this is where the Safari proved how it's in a league of its own. The engineers at Tata have done a wonderful job in tuning the Safari's suspension to our conditions. It irons out each and every undulation, be it big or small. It feels stable, even at triple-digit speeds, giving a new meaning to the term cruising. That is backed by the excellent JBL surround sound system that can play your favourite tunes with the aid of wireless Android Auto and Apple CarPlay and those oh-so-comfortable ventilated seats.

Just as we passed Channarayapatna, we were welcomed by the single carriageways of Karnataka. This is a beautiful

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Facing page, clockwise from top: Assistant-ed Aatish briefing the Safari owners about convoy driving before the drive; the Safaris stretching their legs on Karnataka's highways; flagging off from the Lemon Tree Premier hotel

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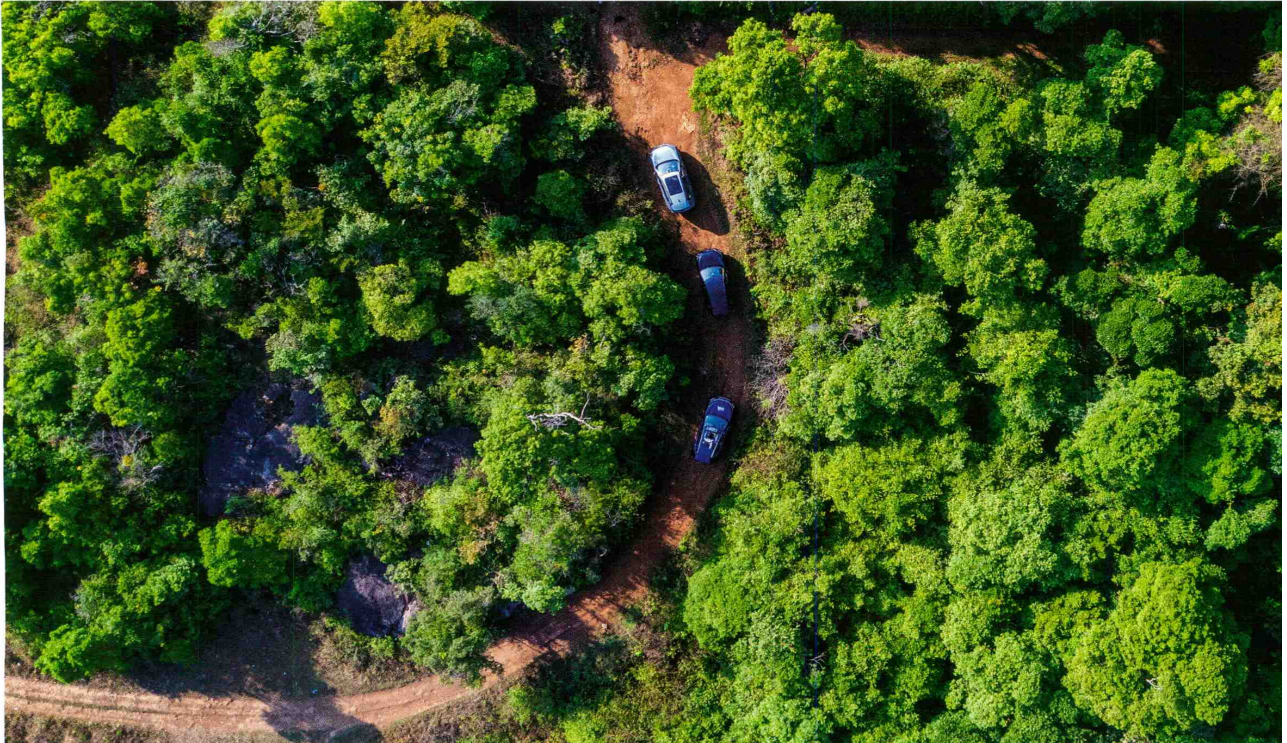


surefooted. Its high ground clearance meant we avoided all the sharp, underbody shattering rocks, and hill descent control made sure we made it down in one piece.

All through we learned about the history of coffee cultivation in Coorg. Did you know the community here originally grew rice? Which is why a lot of their festivals are centered around rice. Coffee was introduced by the British much later. We understood the differences between the different types of coffee, the conditions it needs to grow, the manner in which it is picked and processed before it ends up as the coffee beans we find at a Starbucks or Cafe Coffee Day. As the sun set, we returned to Riverside to chug a cup of freshly brewed coffee and that gave us a chance to have a chat with the people who had joined us.

“Growing up, the Tata Safari was my dream car. I dreamt about it and hustled my way to become a digital marketing expert in the Gulf. After coming back to India a decade later, when I was finally able to afford it, it was a no-brainer that the new Safari was my go-to choice,” said Rafi Mohammed who had joined us from Bangalore with his wife, two kids.

Left: Coffee guru Rishwin Devaiah gave us invaluable lessons. **Right:** Kote Betta mountain is where the *Pandavas* came to attain peace. **Bottom:** An aerial view shows how deep into the estate we had ventured



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WE FOUND OUT THAT THERE'S ONE THING COMMON BETWEEN THE TATA SAFARI AND ITS OWNERS — THEY ARE BOTH UNSTOPPABLE

"1.25 lakh kilometres, that is how much I had clocked on my old Safari Storme and I intend to do that with my new Safari as well," said Ritesh Pandey. He is the product leader at Microsoft Hyderabad India and has already done over 12,000km just four months into his ownership of the new Safari. His son, daughter and wife had come along for this drive.

When it comes to Safari ownership, we have two very different individuals here. A veteran and a first-time buyer. Ritesh has explored the full country with his older Safari Storme. The drive to Coorg was Rafi's first long trip with his new Safari. But one thing is common, the Safari wows both individuals with the same appeal every time. For both Ritesh's and Mohammad's families, their Safari is their key to freedom.

The next morning we woke up early and decided to catch the morning sunrise from the third highest peak in Coorg, the Kote Betta mountain, guided by our friend Ashik, who also happens to be a local. It is believed that the *Pandavas* spent a considerable period of their exile at this place and built several stone houses that stand until date. The climb was steep but the Safaris pulled through without breaking a sweat.

Day three of our Reclaim Your Life was all about the adrenaline. We were now headed to The Quarry Adventures and Cafe. An outdoor adventure theme park that offers activities such as zip-line crossing, rock climbing and camping. Here, we found out that there's one thing common between the Tata Safari and its owners. They are also unstoppable like their SUV. A lot of fun was had conquering all the challenges at the Quarry Adventures and Cafe, and this was the perfect ending for what was a truly wonderful drive.

Looking back, it's hard to contest the fact that the Tata Safari is an all-rounder. It has an engine that pulls it like a freight train no matter how tough the situation is. A very comfortable interior that cocoons you from all the chaos that's happening in the outside world and a dominating road presence that declares you have arrived. It has off-road chops, good on-road capabilities and the ability to keep your family safe. Which is exactly why Ritesh and Rafi picked it! The fact that they get to be a part of SOUL and everything it entails is just an added bonus! 🚗

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