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Kerala

An odyssey from the land of Ulysses



GLOBE-TROTTING: Vula Netou and Akis Temperidis, a couple from Greece, who are on an 800-day tour round the world on their Land Rover, in Alappuzha on Tuesday.

This Greek couple could give Jules Verne's Phileas Fogg the complex of his life.

If Fogg had circumnavigated the world in 80 days, Akis Temperidis and Vula Netou are doing it in 800 days, but in a way that Fogg could perhaps never dream of.

Akis, a 4-wheels magazine journalist, and choreographer-turned-photographer Vula set out from Athens on April 25, 2007 and on Tuesday, the 428th day of their globe trotting adventure, had covered 79,000 km across 37 countries before a two-day halt on the scenic backwaters of Alappuzha.

Driving a 190 bhp turbo diesel powered Land Rover, the couple drove through the Sahara twice, and has zoomed across tough terrains in Central Africa, Italy, Spain and the route of the famous Paris-Dakar Car Rally as well.

"The stay in Alappuzha has so far been the best part of our journey. We have been treated well on a palatial houseboat by our hosts Rainbow Cruises. It has been like a fairy tale, truly romantic," gushes Vula.

"We have already said on our website (www.theworldoffroad.com) that we are seriously thinking of staying here forever," chips in Akis, holding Vula's hand and whispering that Alappuzha was where their honeymoon would be. The duo will leave for Kanyakumari, for a "photo on the southern-most tip of India".

From there, it will be Chennai, where the Land Rover will be shipped to Malaysia. After covering the entire South East Asia, they will head for Australia.

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"The rest of the route is yet to be finalised. Alaska, South America, Japan, maybe," says the couple, who are working en route, sending articles and visuals via satellite, "to earn money for the trip".

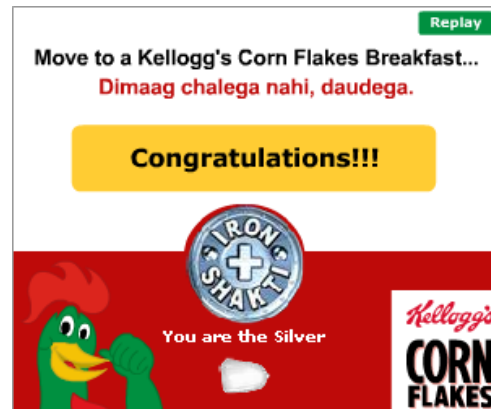
Spending the nights on a roof tent attached to the Land Rover, Akis is 'powered' by a 75W solar panel. A satellite connection keeps them knitted to friends and the Internet for daily updates.

"I should add one more thing. The worst bus drivers I saw across the 37 countries are in Kerala," says Akis.

Dennis Marcus Mathew

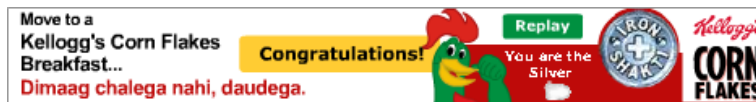
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