



BATON

With every variant of the Porsche Taycan at our disposal, ranging from the RWD, to the 4S, Turbo and all the way to the Turbo S, even a bunch of Cross Turismos, we attempt to set the record for the fastest electric car relay record on India's golden quadrilateral

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SWITCH

LEG 1

MUMBAI - KARAD - BELGAUM - CHITRADURGA - BENGALURU - CHENNAI

START: DAY 1, 04:00 | END: DAY 2, 03:00 | 1302 KM, 23 HOURS

MUMBAI DOESN'T SLEEP! SHARING A WALL WITH

Porsche Centre Mumbai is Maximum City's newest night club and it's buzzing. The road outside is packed, a proper traffic jam. There's a raucous jumble of kids waiting to get in, shooting curious glances at the hive of activity, an unexpected audience as the adjudicator from the India Book of Records counts down the Frozen Berry Taycan to the 4am flag-off.

It is the culmination of a week-long logistical exercise that saw teams fanning out to Porsche Centres across the country, collecting Taycans, juicing them up, and positioning themselves on the Indian Golden Quadrilateral. We are attempting to set the fastest relay record for electric cars and every 300-odd kilometres a fully charged Taycan will pick up the Soul Electrified baton and keep going. Mumbai - Bengaluru - Chennai - Kolkata - Delhi and back to Mumbai four days later, and we are already losing time as we inch, crawl and honk our way out of the 4am traffic jam.

Which is nothing compared to what awaits us on the Mumbai - Pune expressway.

This is a Sunday, chosen not because we don't enjoy spending weekends with our family but in the hope that everybody else would like to precisely do that. In their own homes. Except the expressway is so packed that at the first toll booth Google Maps detours us on to the old Mumbai - Pune highway through Khopoli. It's a surprisingly lovely detour. The villages haven't stirred which means no traffic, and flinging the Taycan up through the steeply

winding road is like a shot of coffee mainlined into your veins. It comes alive, as does its driver, and as the sun peeks over the horizon the realisation dawns of the sheer epic-ness of this undertaking. A bunch of electric sports cars driving all over India! When grizzly, weathered, cynical uncles look at Porsches and ask where are the roads in India to drive these cars, this will be the answer. Over the next four days we won't be cherry-picking nice bits of road but doing the entirety of the G-Quad with all its good, bad and ugly bits.

On the former the Taycan is a revelation in how beautifully it masks the considerable weight of its batteries. It doesn't heave-ho over wavy roads. The damping is perfectly judged, even over inconsistent Indian roads. You sit nice and low in properly sporty seats. And it drives like what you'd expect a Porsche to - perfect body control and a rapacious enthusiasm for corners that makes you forget what steep climbs and a heavy throttle does to battery range.

Reality hits as we get back on the expressway after Lonavala and I am reminded that our first change-over point is at Karad, 315km away - with another mountain to climb before we get there. And



THE TAYCAN IS A REVELATION IN HOW BEAUTIFULLY IT MASKS THE WEIGHT OF ITS BATTERIES



between Pune and Satara is terribly packed, which means regularly calling upon all 423 electric horses to squirt through the gaps between trucks racing each other at 1.5kmph. It's by far and away the most inefficient way to drive an electric car, yet we reach Karad with 50km of range to spare. Here I bid Shantanu Rajda goodbye, grab my bags and the baton, and join Shalin Koticha and Paraj Rajda in the blue Taycan.

With fresh drivers, a full charge and a short 170km leg, we hope to make time but Sunday traffic is a mess, the detours get worse, and I do the smart thing. Pretend to be a gracious host and let our guest drivers have the wheel. Being Porsche owners themselves, Shalin and Parag know how to deal with sports cars on broken roads, yet it is a testament to the Taycan's build quality and the robustness of the suspension that in places we completely branch off onto dirt tracks to avoid the traffic.

The Tata Power charger behind the Marriott on the outskirts of Belgaum is our next change over point, chosen specifically as this showcases the future of sustainable electric mobility, drawing its power from a solar grid. Ranjith Gopinath and Byram Godrej join me on this leg in the silver Turbo rocking the Misson-E concept wheels, and this is where the fun starts. The road works are over, traffic is no longer a pain, and with three former rally drivers in the Turbo there's no way we can resist a couple of launch control runs - even if it is only for 4-odd seconds before backing off lest we light up the speed cameras.

Now enough has been said about the electric turn of speed of

Facing page: We flagged off from the Porsche centre in Mumbai. **Top:** The red Taycan Turbo S blasting through the night. Above: Parag hands over the baton to the next driver; the Taycan on Karnataka's brilliant roads

electric cars. The instant torque. How it punches the air out of your stomach. But I will say it again. 740bhp and 0-100kmph in 2.8 seconds is mega. It is violent. And it is addictive. So much so that we meet Fabid Ahmer, another one of our rally buddies in Chitradurga, with 10km of range left over.

Our final change-over is in Bengaluru where Prekshith from Porsche Centre Bengaluru joins us with our dinner packed in an absolutely gorgeous red Turbo. And Bengaluru being Bengaluru we have car spotters tailing and chasing us as we get out on the highway to Chennai. I don't blame them. The red Taycan Turbo looks insane!

This is what endurance drivers call the grave yard shift. It's now over 20 hours I have been in one Taycan after the other and it says something about the car that I am still behind the wheel, still chewing in the miles. No noise and vibrations, it keeps fatigue remarkably at bay. And with the Taycan there are immense reserves of power and sportiness to keep one entertained. I'm almost tempted to carry on at Chennai but Aatish politely relieves me of the baton and at 3 in the morning leg two begins from Sriperumbudur on the outskirts of Chennai with a fresh crew, fresh cars and new challenges.

■ Sirish Chandran





LEG 2

CHENNAI - ONGOLE - VIJAYWADA - VISAKHAPATNAM - BRAMHAPUR - BUBANESWAR - KHARAGPUR

START: DAY 2, 03:00 | END: DAY 3, 07:00 | 1,535 KM, 28 HOURS

WE HADN'T EVEN BEGUN DRIVING AND WE HAD OUR first crisis. The drive from Sriperumbudur to Ongole was a cool 340km, and we had 280km on the range readout. This was the base Taycan with the smallest battery and consequently the lowest range. Plus I had already chewed through 10 per cent of charge getting to the meeting point on the highway with luggage and people in tow. Gulp. I was nervous and had scouted out charging points along the route in case I needed to make an emergency halt. However, I couldn't find any reliable information online about whether these chargers were working or not. Gulp again.

Sirish's instructions were clear. Do. Not Stop. Just put it in to range mode and drive sensibly, the car would take care of me. Every fibre of my being was telling me to stick to the recharge-en-route plan, but the man had just spent nearly 24 hours non-stop in Taycans. He may know something that I didn't. I peeled out of the rest-stop, twisted the knob on the steering wheel left to select Range, and set my sights on Ongole.

Range mode did a couple of things — it lowered the Taycan to make it more aero-efficient, dialled down the acceleration and limited speed to a predetermined limit. In my case, 100kmph, which was the speed limit of the highway I was on anyway.

Left, top to bottom: Sirish hands over the baton to Aatish in Chennai; rehydrating with coconut water during the hot summer; Jeet and Shivdeep take over driving duties; we spotted a 911 on the way!

That, combined with sensible use of the AC since it was still dark outside meant the delta between the range I had and the distance to go kept dropping, evened out, and then grew again with the range being in the positive. I just had to be careful of bumps. Range mode at the Taycan down low and you needed to be extra vigilant, and if you spot a bump or breaker, slope down and lift the Taycan on its air suspension. The sun rose early, we were in the east after all — a glorious ball of orange climbing out of the horizon. Things were looking up!

We reached Ongole at 7am and things got easier from there. We still had more than a couple of 300km+ legs but the Taycan had showed me it could to these distances comfortably, and put range anxiety at bay. I could finally enjoy the drive! Ongole to Vijaywada went by in a flash — a mere 147km in a Taycan 4S, that really allowed me to flex my right foot. The roads in the east are exceptionally good. We really weren't sure what to expect in these parts since we don't visit the eastern coast of the country as much as we do the north, south or west. But half a day in, I wondered why! Traffic was light, road surfacing was better than anything I had seen around Maharashtra or Gujarat, and the Taycans were making quick work of the distances.

Jeet Tapaswi and Shivdeep Deokar — proper adrenaline junkies who spend their days on MX bikes and their nights organising the coolest underground car meets in town — were stationed at Vijaywada with the next Taycan 4S. We had another long stint ahead of us, some 315km to Visakhapatnam and with the mid-day sun beating down on us, I relinquished the wheel and took to the backseat for a nap. These boys were safe and steady hands — just what we needed in expensive cars like these on a high stakes record attempt — and they brought us, along with the Soul Electrified baton, safely to Visakhapatnam.

Visakhapatnam to Bramhapur, another long 310km stint, went by in a flash — this was in the Porsche dealer car with Vibin from the dealership joining me for the drive. Madan Choudhary,

the man behind Rajasthan Motosport and rally driver Prithveen Rajan also shared the driving on this stint. It was dark by the time I switched to the fifth Taycan of my leg in Bramhapur. The long day was taking its toll on me, but I had to push through. I had 174km to go to Bhubaneswar, but no one to share the driving with — I was on my own. Chewing gum and good music is always an ally, and just being inside a Porsche is enough to exorcise the drowsiness from the system. This stint was nothing short of therapeutic — flying through the night in this silent sports sedan, with no distractions. No phone calls, no WhatsApp notifications pinging away on CarPlay, no need to stop to refuel, no obligatory conversation with the co-passenger, nothing to interrupt the flow state I found myself in on Orissa's finest highways. If true bliss was achievable on this planet, those three hours would be close.

Karan Ramgopal, our senior correspondent, was waiting for me by the side of the highway in Bhubaneswar, and it was impossible to miss him — the gorgeous derriere of the Taycan Cross Turismo would grab the attention of a blind man. I was keen to drive this one as well, but exhaustion hit me like a wall at this point and I was happy to let Karan bring the baton to our final destination on this stint. Just as well that we had this jacked up Taycan as well — we were now in West Bengal, and the road quality was nowhere close to the ones we had experienced through the rest of the east. Potholed, riddled with breakers and with strange diversions, the Cross Turismo was perfectly appropriate for this section. It rode better and the additional ground clearance meant Karan didn't have to reach for the lift button every 5 seconds. Me? I was snoring right beside him.

It was bright and sunny at 7am (still in the east, remember), when we stumbled out of the car in Kharagpur and handed over the baton to Anand. With 28 hours on the road behind us, we had reached the halfway point of the Taycan India relay. It was then over to Anand to get the baton to Delhi!

■ **Aatish Mishra**

THE DRIVE FROM SRIPERUMBUDUR TO ONGOLE WAS A COOL 340KM, AND WE HAD 280KM ON THE RANGE READOUT



TOTAL
KMS
6021

TOTAL
HOURS
100H : 43M



GOLDEN QUADRILATERAL RELAY RECORD

City	Stint (km)	Total (km)	City	Stint (km)	Total (km)
■ Mumbai	0	0	■ Asansol	173	3209
■ Karad	309	309	■ Gaya	272	3481
■ Belgaum	171	480	■ Varanasi	244	3725
■ Chitradurga	302	782	■ Lucknow	307	4032
■ Bengaluru	191	973	■ Agra	334	4366
■ Chennai	329	1302	■ Delhi	195	4561
■ Ongole	329	1631	■ Jaipur	262	4823
■ Vijayawada	147	1778	■ Bhilwara	234	5057
■ Visakhapatnam	315	2093	■ Udaipur	162	5219
■ Bramhapur	310	2403	■ Ahmedabad	268	5487
■ Bhubaneswar	174	2577	■ Navsari	293	5780
■ Kharagpur	311	2888	■ Mumbai	241	6021
■ Kolkata	148	3036			



LEG 3

KHARAGPUR - KOLKATA - ASANSOL - GAYA - VARANASI - LUCKNOW
- AGRA - DELHI

START: DAY 3, 07:00 | END: DAY 4, 10:00 | 1,701 KM, 27 HOURS

I'M NOT SO SURE IF I WAS HAPPIER SEEING AATISH or that achingly beautiful Cross Turismo more as the car and baton reached us at Kharagpur. We had taken a call to drive back a few hours to Kharagpur instead of starting our stint in Singur on the outskirts of Kolkata because the team accompanying my aerodynamic friend had a long see-sawing experience with the roads on the East coast. From patches of the finest driving roads on the G-Quad to under-construction sections, it wasn't an easy stint. I was expecting a much better experience on my leg of the relay.

Avishek from Porsche Centre Kolkata in the python green Taycan joined us for the first stint from Kharagpur to Singur. It didn't take much for us to find out how agile the car was. West Bengal was preparing for elections and that meant the highway was littered with barricades that would crop up on you without much notice. It's a mini slalom course that requires something like a Taycan to manoeuvre without losing much time. With the perfect car for the job, deftly dodging slalom courses, it was time to hustle to Singur where Ravi Agarwal would be waiting for us. Ravi and Avishek swapped to join me with the Soul Electrified baton on our way to Asansol to meet its very first Taycan GTS.

We were chasing the sun on the fairly impressive highways of Bengal. Not a single speed breaker, just quick slaloms on the barricaded Durgapur expressway got us to the outskirts of Asansol. Just as we were about to arrive, Amol Sethi, who was waiting for us with the Taycan GTS, called with bad news: his GTS had a puncture. But Amol always packs a puncture repair kit in his bag before his toothbrush. Puncture fixed just in the nick of time for the baton to arrive, we thankfully could soldier on without a delay.

The pace was up, the optional Burmester system in the GTS was thumping and the sun was at its peak. The met department had announced a heat wave in the region, which meant we had to drop the pre-drive recommended temperature setting of 23 degrees celsius to about 20. Range anxiety was secondary to surviving a heat wave. The smooth roads out of Asansol made the 250km to Gaya seem easy—until we crossed the border into Bihar.

Bihar doesn't do highways well. Soon we'd find out that the entire stretch that would connect to the UP border on the other side was an equal mix of good roads and under-construction diversions. We took the supple ride of the GTS for granted and ended up getting another puncture, at the same spot as the last one. We were losing precious time, time I had promised Sirish I'd make up on my stint of the drive. The clock unfortunately never stops ticking. Wish I had a pause button! At Gaya, Nirbhay and Hardik were having a horrid time with the inconsistent electricity at charging stations so their Taycan 4S that would join the relay wasn't even juiced up to a 100 percent. We were losing time fixing a puncture, the roads were painfully bad in Bihar, nothing seemed to go as planned.

The only distraction from these delays was thinking about the decadent spread of Taycans at my disposal. I didn't have a Cross Turismo on this leg of the relay but nevertheless, the fleet on



THE ONLY DISTRACTION FROM THESE DELAYS WAS THINKING ABOUT THE TAYCANS AT MY DISPOSAL



Facing page: This wasn't the Cross Turismo but it didn't shy away from dirt. **Top:** The Taycan looked fabulous on our Indian highways; we got plenty of eyeballs in the hinterlands; a quick tunday kebab break in Lucknow

this leg included two base Taycans, a 4S, a GTS, and two Turbo S models. From a luxury family car to sub-3 second rocketships, it's incredible how wide the Taycan portfolio is and that there is a noticeable change in character between each of these cars. So much so that once we reached Gaya and left the GTS behind as the 4S joined our fleet, I could breathe a sigh of relief going over the more poorer road sections of Bihar. The compliance in the suspension is simply superb. If a Taycan can take you through Bihar, you can drive it anywhere in the world.

Sandeep Sharma channelled his inner rally driver to take us through the final hundred kilometres of Bihar to get us to Varanasi. He helped slow down the clock, we were finally making time, and soon enough, we'd be presented with three expressway stints to get done with our leg of the relay.

Late into the night, we were at Varanasi, where Vidit and Sahil treated us to KFC burgers and the Taycan Turbo S. I had now been up for 16 hours and they promised to keep me awake for another four hours on this rapid stint to Lucknow via Purvanchal

expressway. Just in case I'd doze off, Vidit even threatened to use launch control. Night run, an empty expressway in UP and a 751bhp/1050Nm luxury missile, I can't think of a better place to drive that car. The darkness of Purvanchal was a highlight reel from the cabin. After a quick flex of my right foot, I chose to nap a bit risking whiplash from a violently accelerating Turbo S.

The drive was so quick to the outskirts of Lucknow, I woke up after a power nap to the fragrance of Galouti Kebabs brought to us by RFC champ Gurmeet Viridi. Nothing like a 3am snack before joining us on the relay.

Gurmeet would burn the midnight oil in the Taycan he was driving to get me and the baton to Agra. I was gracefully allowed to continue napping, and I very much wanted to before my final stint in the Turbo S. Lenny, who had driven that car from Delhi to Agra and juiced it up, joined me on a blink-and-you-miss-it 200km run. Sirish was waiting for the baton at the outskirts of the new Delhi-Mumbai expressway. I had spent 24.5 hours on the road, but those last 2.5 hours were the sweetest. The crew was so tired, they wouldn't be shooting, it was just my indulgence in an incredibly powerful machine on an empty expressway. In 27 hours, we drove 1,701km in a fleet of low-slung Taycans, crossing West Bengal, Bihar and UP along the way.

■ **Anand Mohan**





LEG 4

DELHI - JAIPUR - BHILWARA - UDAIPUR - AHMEDABAD - NAVSARI - MUMBAI

START: DAY 4, 10:00 | END: DAY 5, 08:43 | 1,483 KM, 22:43 HOURS

RAJ KAPOOR ROCKS UP AT THE LEMON TREE IN

Gurgaon, and I instantly lose every semblance of reserve. As journalists we are supposed to be calmly objective, but a black Cross Turismo with a red interior... good god, I even catch myself looking at the Taycan price list and making allowances for the road tax exemption in many states. Desirability is a key factor in purchasing a luxury car and, to me, there's no cooler electric car right now than the Taycan Cross Turismo. But that's just me. I know this body style doesn't sell in India and we don't have time to dwell on the why's of it because Anand has exited the Yamuna Expressway and will be at our rendezvous point in an hour.

It's now three days into our relay record, Aatish and Anand have done a stellar job in shepherding the convoy over 4500km and it's now up to me to bring the baton home. It starts in the best possible fashion, on the Delhi - Jaipur section of the much-hyped Delhi - Mumbai expressway.

And I can confirm that the hype is real.

Clockwise from top left: Another baton swap, another Taycan joins the drive; the Soul Electrified baton was back in Mumbai in 100 hours; the Taycan Cross Turismo is the most gorgeous Taycan of the lot. **Facing page:** The team at the end of the Taycan India Relay

Sure, it is monotonous. There's no character, no charm, and it's not particularly demanding of any driving skill either. But the ease of driving, the quality of the road, the deletion of the stress and headache of road tripping on a typical Indian highway makes it a million times better than the Golden Quadrilateral - which is what we jump back on to after Dausa. Here we swap to the Turbo S that Dhruv Mohite has brought down from Jaipur and, not by design, discover the other aspects of the range-topping Taycan. The range!

A power interruption in Jaipur meant the Turbo S has little over 60 per cent charge and we have exactly 230km of range to get to Bhilwara. Which is 240km away. It's now time to discover the Range mode which lowers the Taycan to improve its aerodynamic efficiency, shuts off the passenger screen to save juice, puts the air-con in eco-mode, and limits top speed to 100kmph, which in any case is the speed limit. I'd be lying if I didn't get range anxiety but rather than stop for a quick top-up we elect to drive on and conduct proper investigative journalism. Here's what we learnt.

Even if the Taycan drops to single digit range, you can still cruise at 100kmph; it doesn't go into a limp mode limiting you



WE'RE ON THE FINAL STRETCH AND IT'S BACK TO THE MESS DUE TO THE HAPHAZARD 6-LANING WORK IN MAHARASHTRA

to 40kmph unlike other EVs. There are no bells alerting (and deafening) you to a low charge, only a yellow warning sign on the cluster telling you it's time to plug-in. The in-built navigation of the Taycan has chargers in India mapped into it. Range mode doesn't make the Taycan sluggish, just damps out the electric-sharp throttle response. And the range readout is super accurate; we join Shalin and Shantanu at Bhilwara with 3km of range left without having lost any time.

The duo have driven up the wine red Taycan from Belgaum and have a very interesting story of how the searing summer temperatures are causing the charging guns to overheat and reduce the charging speeds. Lesson - find a charger installed under the shade for fast charging. These are things you only discover when you go out on a drive.

The baton swaps to Parag at Udaipur and traffic steadily picks up as we approach Gujarat, but it's an uneventful drive save for Parag's inability to find us chicken sandwiches. We have to make do with Bombay Sandwiches (in Udaipur!). More veggie sandwiches follow at Porsche Centre Ahmedabad where we arrive at midnight. Deepak Sharma joins us here, guiding us on to National Expressway 1 to Vadodara and then onto another section of the Delhi - Mumbai expressway that's complete till Bharuch. This is another awesome road, but I don't think this saves any time because Madan Chaudhary piloting our filming

car missed all the signs for the new road and reached the final swap over point at Navsari half an hour before we did.

And so, the final stretch and it's back to the mess due to the haphazard 6-laning work in Maharashtra, made even more hazardous by the incredible volume of traffic. There are constant and incessant detours, accompanied by speed breaker after nasty speed breaker. Fortunately, Porsche do excellent ergonomics. The lift for the air suspension is a single press of a button, no diving into a hundred menus, which ensures no touching of the bumpers or the underbelly. And for the Taycan to deal with these super-messy roads without having to crawl or tip-toe is remarkable. This is an expensive car. It looks and feels expensive. There's always a certain dread with which you approach unfamiliar and hazardous roads with. Except the Taycan doesn't ask you to change your way of driving. We press on, no stopping for breakfast or even a cup of tea. We want to get into Mumbai before rush hour traffic and guided by Riyank Motta we get to Porsche Centre Mumbai and stop the clock at 08:43 after exactly 100 hours and 43 minutes over 6021km. A new record for electric cars on the golden quadrilateral. But more importantly a fitting answer to the grizzly, weathered, cynical uncles who ask where are the roads in India to drive a Porsche.

All over India, uncle!

■ Sirish Chandran