

# Five Idiots and a Dented Car

*A completely unplanned, slightly chaotic, absolutely unforgettable trip to Pondicherry*

VIT → Chennai → Pondicherry → Auroville → Mahabalipuram



*Welcome to Pondicherry where the French left their architecture and we left our dignity*

— ♦ —

*Nobody tells you that a trip to Pondicherry starts with a near-death experience in quicksand, ends with a police officer confiscating your beer at a state border, and somehow involves five grown men sharing one bed meant for two. But here we are.*

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## **Step 1 — Wake These People Up**

It started, as all great disasters do, at an ungodly hour at VIT. Five of us. One train. Zero people ready on time.

I personally had to go room to room like some kind of unpaid tour manager, physically dragging people out of bed. One guy and I won't name names but his name rhymes with Jeremy required a full rescue operation. Knocked on his door. No answer. Knocked harder. Nothing. Walked in. Found him in a state of deep spiritual peace completely unbothered by the concept of time or trains.

We reached the platform with exactly two minutes to spare, breathing like we'd run a marathon, bags half zipped, someone definitely wearing slippers. Then we checked the board and realised the train was delayed anyway. So we stood there, catching our breath, staring at each other, and did what any group of college students does in that situation took pictures.

Kshitij had a camera. Jeremy, as it turns out, is a deeply committed poser. The man found his light on a railway platform at 5am. Respect, honestly.



## Step 2 — Chennai Welcomes Us With Violence

We reached Chennai, picked up a rental car, and exactly two minutes after leaving the rental place two minutes a bike scraped the bumper. Minor scratch. Tiny. Barely visible. But in that moment the five of us looked at each other with the same silent understanding: we are going to spend this entire trip hiding this dent.

Chennai riders, for the uninitiated, operate on a completely different philosophical framework. Helmets are optional. Lanes are suggestions. Rules are more of a vibe. Our bumper never stood a chance.

From that point forward, Operation Hide The Dent became the unofficial theme of the trip. More on that later.



## Step 3 — The Road, The Music, and The Quicksand

NH road from Chennai to Pondicherry is genuinely beautiful smooth, wide, fast. Three people crammed in the back, Kshitij on one side somehow despite being thin, and Jeremy in the front seat claiming he needed to give directions. We still don't fully understand his intentions.

The music situation was a problem. Jeremy controlled the aux. I will not go into graphic detail about what he played but I will say that at one point I genuinely considered opening the car door. We overtook vehicles on the highway, I stuck my head out the window and screamed song lyrics at passing trucks. This is called coping.

We stopped at what looked from the road like a beautiful secluded beach. Walked in. Immediately sank slightly into the ground. Looked at each other. Kept walking. Sank more. Realised we were standing in mild quicksand with genuinely algae-green water around our feet, our legs slowly disappearing into the earth.

Did we leave immediately? No. We took pictures. Extensively. Risking our feet completely vanishing from existence for the gram. This is who we are as people.

*Tip: If the ground feels soft and the water looks green, that is not a hidden gem. That is quicksand. Please leave immediately. Unlike us.*



## Step 4 — Auroville, One Toilet, Five People

We arrived near Auroville in the rain, which made everything look cinematic and mysterious and also meant the roads were muddy and our car looked like it had been through a war. We pulled up to the hostel and did what we always do took pictures in front of the car, below the car, above the car, beside the car. A full automotive photoshoot in the rain. Perfectly normal behaviour.

The hostel itself was genuinely lovely. Wooden cabins, warm lighting, campfire outside with other groups singing and laughing. Very peaceful. Very Auroville. The kind of place that makes you feel like a better person just for being there.

Then we saw the room. Five people. One bathroom. One bed designed for two humans.

Jeremy predictably immediately claimed the bed. We welcomed this decision with what I can only describe as democratic fists. The matter was resolved quickly. I took the toilet test that night and emerged victorious. Some battles you fight for yourself. Some you fight for your dignity. That was both.

*Stay tip: Auroville has some incredible eco-stays and wooden cabin hostels. Book early especially if you're a group. And maybe confirm the bed situation before arrival. Just a thought.*



## Step 5 — Pondicherry, Shirts Off, Luffy Hat On

Day two. Pondicherry city. We cleaned the car first or rather, Kshitij cleaned the car while the four of us stood behind him offering enthusiastic moral support and absolutely zero physical help. He did not seem to appreciate this arrangement but he did finish the job so everyone won.

White Town is everything people say it is. The French colonial streets are clean, quiet, painted in yellows and whites, with bougainvillea spilling over compound walls and cafes that look like they belong in a different century. We walked the Promenade, visited a couple of churches, wandered down MG Road, ate at a local place that cost almost nothing and tasted extraordinary.

The beach, however, brought out the worst in some of us. Two members of our group, unprompted, unannounced removed their shirts and walked into the waves at Paradise Beach like they were in a Bollywood film. In public. In front of strangers. I kept my distance and pretended not to know them.

We did adventure sports at the beach some water activities, a bit of adrenaline, the usual. And then, in a local market, I found it. A Monkey D. Luffy hat. Bought it immediately. No regrets. Wore it for the rest of the day. This was the peak of the trip culturally speaking.

*Must visit in Pondicherry: Promenade Beach at sunrise, White Town streets, Auroville Matrimandir, Paradise Beach, Café des Arts, and literally any local restaurant on the back streets — skip the tourist menus.*



## Step 6 — The Beer, The Border, and Kshitij's License

Here is where things got interesting.

On the way back, someone and the group has collectively agreed never to name who bought two large beer bottles. We were driving back happy, full, tired in the best possible way. Good trip. No major disasters. The dent was successfully hidden. Life was good.

Then we hit the interstate border checkpoint.

Police. Checking vehicles. We realised approximately four seconds too late what was in the bag.

The officer found the bottles. Kshitij, who was driving, watched his entire future flash before his eyes. License suspension. Legal trouble. His parents. His career. All of it in one moment at a checkpoint on the Tamil Nadu-Andhra border.

In the end the officer confiscated the bottles and let us go with a warning. Kshitij spent the next two hours in silence processing his near-death experience. The rest of us pretended to be very interested in the scenery outside the window. Nobody mentioned the bottles again.

I, for the record, don't drink. I was an innocent bystander. This is my official statement.



## Step 7 — Mahabalipuram Saves Everything

Our last stop on the way back was Mahabalipuram and honestly it was the perfect ending. The Shore Temple at sunset, ancient rock sculptures, the Five Rathas it's the kind of place that makes you realise India has been doing incredible things for thousands of years and we should probably pay more attention to it.

Also and this is important the car owner checked the vehicle when we returned it and somehow missed the dent entirely. Five musketeers. One collective breath released. Mission accomplished.

*📌 Mahabalipuram is absolutely worth a half-day stop if you're doing the Chennai-Pondicherry route. The Shore Temple at golden hour is genuinely one of the most beautiful things you'll see in South India.*



## Would We Do It Again?

Yes. Immediately. Without thinking.

The scratched bumper, the quicksand, the one bed, the border incident, Jeremy's music choices — all of it. Because that's the thing about trips like this. The disasters are the memories. The chaos is the story. The moments where everything goes slightly wrong are the ones you're still talking about years later.

Pondicherry is beautiful. Auroville is peaceful. Mahabalipuram is ancient and magnificent. But honestly? The best part was five people in a car on an NH road, music too loud, heads out the window, screaming into the wind with absolutely nowhere to be except exactly where we were.

Do it. Take the trip. Wake your friends up. Rent the car. Hide the dent. Just go.

— *End of Story* —