

**T**URN LEFT, TURN RIGHT, floor the throttle!” screamed a spotter as his driver attempted to go past a massive slush pit in a Mahindra Thar. This is the 2019 Mahindra Adventure Off-roading Trophy that took place last weekend in Igatpuri at Mahindra’s Off-Road Training Academy where 31 winners from 10 Great Escapes across the country competed against each other.

The trails in Igatpuri are suited for off-roading experts and the level is extremely tough. The objective was to collect as many flags as possible, without hitting the cones or breaking the tape. Each flag is worth 10 points while the most awkwardly placed super flag earns you 20 points. That apart, points are also awarded for vehicle

preservation and completing the obstacle within the given time frame.

Participants tackled several obstacles over the course of two days. The first obstacle had a series of tight inclines and declines that were filled with plenty of loose gravel. Participants floored the throttle and on most occasions, the Thar went past in just one attempt. They also drove through slushy climbs and navigated through tricky pits. This required participants to strategise and throttle control played an integral part in finishing the obstacle. The Thar however was in its natural habitat and looked indestructible.

On day two the difficulty level was taken a notch higher. The slush pits were deep and the climbs were much steeper.

The super flags looked out of reach but the heavy downpour helped as the soil eroded, exposing the rocks beneath and helping the cars get some traction. The last obstacle named Blind Zone had everything from water fording to steep descents, testing the Thar’s wheel articulation and the drivers’ skills. This was a game changer for many as the flags collected here earned them the final set of points.

After two days of gruelling obstacles, Bopaiah K from Kodagu emerged as the winner and won the Mahindra Thar 700, followed by Vipin Varghese from Wayanad and Alan K Abraham from Ernakulam. In the ladies category, Sapna Gurukar was crowned the winner for the second year in a row. ✕

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# A dirty weekend

31 participants lit up the show in Igatpuri at the Mahindra Adventure Off-roading Trophy 2019

