

# Duo's incredible charity drive

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[By James Mortlock](#)



George Vlasto and Max Benitz

MOST students bundle their worldly goods into a car and head home when they leave college.

But friends George Vlasto and Max Benitz opted for a hair-raising two-and-a-half month, 15,000km adventure through 14 different countries, three mountain ranges and two deserts as they journeyed between India and England.

Not only did the 22-year-olds have to contend with some of the world's most treacherous roads and nightmarish drivers as they made their way back from Calcutta University - they did it all in an Ambassador, a 1947-designed car which is still built in India.

George, from Monks Eleigh, near Sudbury, and Max, of London, finally arrived back at Dover this weekend to the relief and delight of their families.

Their adventure has already raised almost £12,000 for charity and they hope their fund for London's Royal Marsden Hospital and the Calcutta-based charity Future Hope, which provides homes and education for street children, will be further boosted now they have completed the trek.

George and his friend, who are both Edinburgh University students, completed 10 months studying Indian history in Calcutta in June and did not want to make the trip home by “just getting on a plane”.

So the 75-day drive - which took in China to avoid Afghanistan - was devised and George, who as the only qualified driver spent the entire trip behind the wheel, says it was the experience of a lifetime: “It was absolutely amazing but it was wonderful to see the white cliffs of Dover.”

The young driver said Pakistan was one of the most difficult countries to get into - particularly with an Indian-built car - but he said it was well worth the trouble: "The country - particularly the north - is absolutely beautiful and the people are so friendly."

He said the driving and the roads the pair encountered was astonishing: "I think the worst was India - the standard of driving was diabolical - we'd find lorries on the wrong side of the road, lots of drivers seemed to be drunk and the roads were awful."

However, the trickiest part of the trip came when the Ambassador crossed between Pakistan and China, he said. "I think the car had altitude sickness - we were at almost 5,000 metres and it was not very happy at all at this height."

But the trusty vehicle kept going despite the breath-taking moments and the friends are now recovering from their journey with their respective families. However, George said: "Although we're glad to be home I think things are going to get boring very quickly."

To support the duo visit [www.justgiving.com/royalmarsdendrivehome](http://www.justgiving.com/royalmarsdendrivehome) or [/futurehopedrivehome](http://futurehopedrivehome)