

The crazy adventures of the traveling hugger...

Some time ago I was asked via my blog something rather unusual... It was a French guy who was looking for a part for his bike.

Since my blog led me to live a pretty incredible story a few weeks ago (and because I am super cool ;)), I decided to pay back destiny and see what I could do about this part. If it was not too hard to find, why not...

This part was called a "hugger" (or matflap, meant to be put on the back wheel and protect from the mud) and it was meant for a KTM Duke 125/200/390. And this part cannot be found anywhere but in India. This KTM brand is Austrian but they make their bikes in India, so India is the country where accessories for this brand can be found..." An amazing story about globalisation!

I googled "KTM Mumbai" and found two dealers in Mumbai. I made a colleague call – I couldn't find the guts to talk over the phone about bikes in Hindi, surprising huh? The part in question would be in stock within 2-3 days only. 4 days later I was about to go directly to the store but I couldn't find the guts to talk in person about bikes in Hindi either. So before going there I made my colleague call again. And this time she was told that the hugger is actually made of three parts (the matflap, the hugger and the side-guard) and one of them is not in stock and they don't know when it would come.

But I don't give up easily...

(To be continued)

Two days later I was in Hyderabad for work and decided to try my luck there.

My local colleague must have dialled at least three numbers before finding the right KTM dealer. Who had no stock of huggers.

I then sent a mail to the buyer announcing that it was too much for me... I am not eBay!!

(To be continued)

The next day, still in Hyderabad and on market visits, we passed in front of a KTM shop and just to be sure I stopped the car.

Today somehow I have no problem with discussing about bikes in Hindi... And surprise! The sales guy spoke very well English and understood immediately (after I showed the picture) what I wanted – a good lesson for me: when I go outside my comfort zone and interact directly with people things happen always better than expected!

So I asked if they had a hugger. And they did! But one of the parts was not in stock... But he could get it within 24-48 hours! But I was flying the same evening.

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Using all my charms (well, not all actually, it is just about a bike after all! My smile should be enough ;)), I managed to convince the sales guy to remove the hugger from the exhibit bike (a new model they had received the same day)!

Thirty minutes later and much more knowledgeable about race bikes, I left with my hugger!

But the adventure was not over...

(To be continued)

The same night I was taking the plane to Mumbai. At the check-in desk, the SpiceJet guy told me that I should probably check in my hugger but seeing me pouting, he offered to let me try my luck at the security...

At the security, one of the military woman – women have separate lines in India – asked me what it was. I explained but she was not keen on letting it go as hand baggage: she wanted me to check it in. Except that it was 9 PM, I was super pukish, I had no baggage checked in and I certainly didn't have 20 minutes to waste waiting at the belt in Mumbai at 11 PM...

One of her girlfriends seemed to take pity in me and asked her male colleagues, sitting around the next X-ray machine, for opinion. They immediately recognized the hugger and agreed to let me carry it! (My smile was doing wonders that day ;)) But my military woman would not hear anything and refused to stamp the tag. The brave woman who had decided to help me took my hugger and got its tag stamped by the military guys and voilà! For once I was glad men trump women in this country!

When I arrived on the plane, the hugger would not fit in the luggage trunk, and it bothered me the whole way at my feet – this shit had started to really annoy me now...!

And now I had to courier this thing!

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Next step: reshaping the carton in which the hugger will be sent! Fortunately I love cartons, tapes and scissors...

Then the Post Office... As much I did not know what mission it would be to find a matflap in India, I know what mission couriating it would be!

Saturday morning. I put my alarm clock at 11:20. When it rings, my whole body, exhausted by a week of traveling and tensions begs me not to react but this is the only free day I have before my holidays... And from what I remember the Post Office closes at 12 so there is no time to laze around in bed!

At 11:35 I am at the Post Office:

There are about twenty people waiting in line. I skip the line because I know there are good chances they won't take my parcel and I'd rather find out fast!

And good I did. No parcel in this Post Office... The clerk tells me the address of another Post Office. I sit in a rickshaw. I am running out of time now. He doesn't know the address so I step out – I don't have time to spend looking for the place. Same thing with the second rickshaw. The third one knows!

I arrive at a Post Office hidden in a building, funny.
Less funny, it closes at 11:00.
I knew it... It was gonna be painful couriating that piece of shit...
Except that...

(To be continued)

Except that the Speed Post is open til 2 PM!
And they even agree to send the hugger. And I wasn't so sure about that...!
They weigh it (2.2 kg) and give me the price (2,200 Rs, about 30 euros and ten times the price of the hugger, and 50% more than the normal courier). In addition it has a tracking number. I don't hesitate too long...

I sit there to finish packing and then I hear THE dreaded word. The one word I didn't want to hear: "*kapra*". *Kapra* is synonymous with big problems even though in fact it just means fabric.
When you send a parcel by post in India, God knows why, you have to wrap it in white cloth. In some Post Offices there is guy whose job is to stitch the fabric but in all cases you have to buy the fabric and in this area I had no idea where to find it...
So, I start begging, please not the *kapra*, please!
The lady at the counter insists – women will not have been my allies in this story... But I hear a guy in the back saying in Hindi that the white cloth is not mandatory with Speed Post. I give him my most beautiful smile!!

One hour to send my parcel: a record!

Lesson(s) of the story:

1. I can now recognize a KTM motorcycle in the street:
2. If you have any such request please forget me!