

Driving in the United States

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Coming to the United States and learning how to drive at age 68 is not a joke

Being an independent college professor teaching chemistry at Delhi University, driving through crowded Delhi streets came as second nature to me. Of course there are no hard and fast rules when you drive in India. Sure you can have a cow, a dog or a human being jump in front of your car at any minute but dealing with that was less daunting as compared to driving in the US and making sure that I stopped at a stop sign and waited patiently and counted till 30 before driving past it!

In Delhi there is no concept of driving in lanes, waiting patiently in lanes, not cutting in front of anyone and honking at other cars is like a necessity to get other vehicles out of your way as you slide along through the choking bellowing fumes of smoke jetting out from the back of a car or truck. So you can imagine it was quite a learning curve to restrict myself to one lane, use indicators every time I wanted to move from one lane to another and to understand that the horn is more like a vestigial organ in American cars.

From driving into oncoming traffic, to pressing the hazard lights and not knowing how to make them stop blinking and being honked on for breaking the rules about who gets the parking space, has all been quite a journey but the crowning glory is the independence and sense of freedom that comes with learning a simple thing like driving in the United States.