

Highways? No way!

I am going to open my heart and tell you that I have always hated driving; even the bumper cars in the county fairs make me feel that my life is under serious risk. To be honest, one of the purposes of my life is to have enough money to buy a fancy car and hire a 24 hours driver, just for me. I would have never imagined that coming to USA was going to force me to face my unjustified aversion to cars.

When I received my acceptance letter from the University of Delaware, I was honestly thrilled and, after telling my whole family about the good news, my wife and I had a long deep conversation, where basically we promised ourselves to do our best for adapting to the American lifestyle. We watched a lot of youtubers talking about their experiences and the Top 10 things you should or should not do in USA. The first advice they always said was to start creating a credit record; as somebody told me once “you are no one if you do not have a credit card”. Well, that was not difficult; there are many options for international students; you just need to go online a make some clicks. The second biggest advice anyone mentioned was to get the driver license as soon as the air plane lands. “That can’t be true!” I said, “In ‘*How I met your mother*’, Lilly, Marshall and even Barney take the train; this youtuber is trying us to buy a car, he is probably a dealer”. “Don’t be a chicken and let’s go to get an international driver license”, my wife said. “Well, I could, but I really think these guys from youtube are messing with us; nowadays, any fool can upload a video”. At the end, I refused to get the license in my home country, hoping that all what I watched in ‘*How I met your mother*’ was true.

The first moths here in Newark were actually amazing; I remember seeing Main street for the first time and say to myself: “There is no way I get bored here; I don’t know why Americans buy a car if everything you need is in a single street”. But, as time passed, I started to think that maybe there

was something cooler than the half price Mondays burgers in Kates. Do not get me wrong, Kates is delicious, but when you already ate the whole options in the menu, it is time to explore new lands. Deep in my heart I knew that we were missing a lot, and the only way to get in touch with the American culture was buying a car. “We must buy a car as soon as possible, but you’ll drive it”, I told my wife; “Are you serious, if we buy a car we both should drive it, not excuses”, she said; “I’ll drive it if you teach me”. Then the adventure began.

Luckily for me, my wife is even a better driver than the bold guy from ‘Fast and Furious’. She has over 8 years of driving experience (in manual car) in La Paz, the chaotic and stressful capital city of Bolivia. The first time I took the wheel, it was a nightmare; I did not have the control of the car and I was constantly confusing the brake and the gas pedal; “Just stop or you are going to make us crash”, and that was the end of the first class. 10 classes later, I finally could go out from the neighborhood and took the enormous risk to go to ACME, two block away from home; “try to be calm and do not forget to sign the turns”, my wife said; “Ok, ok do not try me like a baby”, I yelled at her. To welcome me to the roads, one driver beeped the horn like 100 times because I did not sign my left turn. Two months after I started the driving lessons, I was confident and thought I was ready for the test. My wife reminded me that we have not been started yet; I was doing a good job but I did not know how to park or parallel park. “Parallel what?”; that was my true reaction.

Even for Americans who have been driving long time, the parallel parking can be a painful experience. You can find videos on youtube of people trying to parallel park for hours, without achieving it. I thought that everything was over for me and that I would never get my license. “No way, you can do it, you have improved a lot and I won’t let you quit, let’s work”, my wife cheered me up; “That’s why I love you, let’s do it”, I told her. The same day, we were trying to parallel park behind an unknown car. I think we did it ten times and all of them were awfully wrong; at the

11th time, the owner of the car went out and yelled: “Hey, what are you doing to my car”; “push the gas pedal and let’s go, now!”, my wife said; “Look at us, we are like Bonny and Clyde”, “Do not talk while we escape”, she answered back.

This story is not over; I already pass the written DVM test; to be honest it was not that difficult. However, the driving test is on the 31st of October. Usually I am not superstitious, but, what are the odds of you having the driving test the same day all the spirits, zombies and demons go out to scare people?. I am actually thinking about the chance to wear a Jeff Gordon costume that day. “Once you pass the test, you will be ready to drive on highways, but keep in mind that your speed should not be less than 65 mph”, my wife said; “Well darling I’ll try my best to pass the test, but driving on highways?, no way!”.