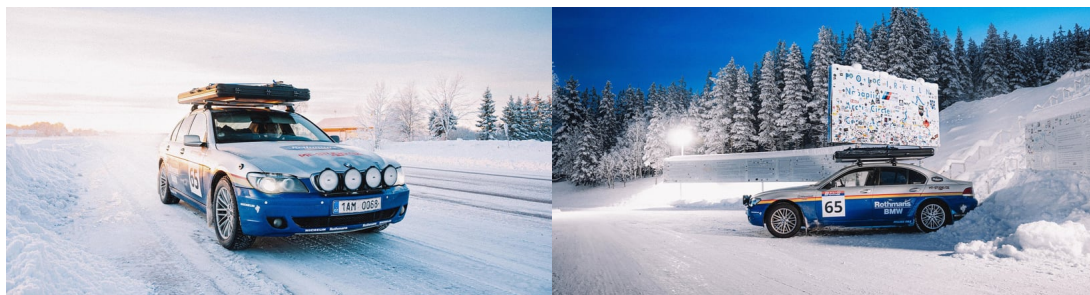


CLASSIC DRIVER

This couple ditched their SUV to create the ultimate Group-Barge BMW off-roader

Lead

BMW is no stranger to a rugged off-roader or two, but for Czech Republic-based Tomas and his partner Karolina, the brand's X-models just didn't scream adventure enough. Instead, they created the ultimate all-terrain land-yacht in the form of an E65 7 Series.



We may have just stumbled upon a brand-new rally discipline we need to invest in. Forget the Super 1600s, forget Group B, leave the Camel Trophy in the dirt, for we're all about Group-Barge. The idea is simple, you take the largest, most luxurious saloon you can find, be it a Mercedes-Benz S600L, Rolls-Royce Ghost, or, if you're feeling particularly brave, Citroën C6, raise the suspension as high as possible and fit the meatiest tyres you can find. The rest (we're hoping) will be history, but for BMW fanatics Tomas and his partner Karolina, their entry to our newly-establish and completely made-up rally championship has already been accepted in the form of their Rothman's BMW 7 Series.

Sure, it's not the first time the world has seen a rallying BMW, the E30 generation M3 was more than competitive in the capable hands of Patrick Snejders and others, but for Tomas, the E65 makes for a worthy rival to the M3, or at least a far more comfortable alternative. We were immediately intrigued to discover more about Tomas' background in cars, whose life-long love for BMWs led him to this unique creation. "My first car was actually a BMW E30 which I owned when I was 18 years old. Now, I'm 30 and nothing has changed about my love for BMW, and own an E34 Alpina B10, a 1602 turbo project and various others. I own and manage a BMW performance service in Prague, Czech Republic, and we like to make custom and crazy things, alongside my girlfriend Karolina who took the photos you see in this article. We are true BMW fanatics!"



Tomas' love for the ultimate driving machines certainly runs deep, and his years of experience has led him to explore multiple countries along the way, no doubt trailering new project cars back home to the Czech Republic. It was the couple's love of travelling that led to the creation of this overlanding luxury saloon. While their fully-built expedition Ford Excursion, complete with powerstroke diesel engine, might be, on paper, the right choice, navigating Europe's often twisty and narrow roads in such a machine can sometimes be tricky. "Despite travelling to Albania, Turkey and Greece in the Ford, I really wanted to build something faster and smaller, while retaining the same principles as the Ford. Naturally, BMW's flagship 7 series is one of the most comfortable cars around, so for long journeys it is perfect."



The 7 Series itself had lived a rather interesting life even before Tomas took to lifting it. "It has only two owners from new, the first of which was an Embassy, who no doubt used the car for many long trips to and from the airports. The second owner was a local gentleman, a customer of our garage, who had brought it in one day with a broken transmission." It's hardly surprising, considering the E65 had covered a staggering 540,000 kilometres! Tomas set about giving this stately cruiser an entirely new mission, and promptly rebuilt the transmission to begin the overland-themed overhaul.



“The suspension is lifted by 2 inches, with lift blocks and adjusted top mounts to fix the alignment issues after the lift. The front axle has polyurethane bushings for extra durability, and the differential has a limited slip insert from racingdiffs, but we’re aiming to fit a fully-fledged LSD soon. Also, in the future we’re looking to create custom-made long-travel coil-over suspension, allowing us to really test the BMW’s off-road capabilities!”



Even before all of these fundamental changes, Tomas and Karolina have certainly put the 7-Series through its paces. Their biggest trip thus far was a polar expedition spanning Sweden, Norway and beyond, where Karoline captured many of these stunning images. With temperatures often dropping below -30C, many cars would have suffered the chill, but the couple were mightily impressed with the BMW’s capability and durability. No doubt many more adventures await, so be sure to [follow their progress on their rapidly-growing Instagram page.](#)

Gallery

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