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**'Banger and Cash'**

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A TEAM of students from Welwyn Garden City have completed a 3,500-mile trip to Croatia and back in an old banger for a Hatfield charity. Hugh Jeffrey, 21, Tom Robinson, 21, Katie Tilley, 20, and their friend James Spillard, 21, from London took part in the Student Gumball Rally during their summer holidays and have so far collected £685 for the Willow Foundation. Starting from Dover the foursome drove through France, Belgium, Austria, Germany, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia on their way their final destination, Zadar in Croatia. They nearly missed the start of the race because just 24 hours before they were due to leave they discovered that their Mitsubishi Shogun needed a complete engine re-build. With the help of a friend they managed to get the vehicle back on the road and suffered no further problems during the trip. The students paced themselves during the trip by sharing the driving, with their longest stint without a break taking eight hours. Teams of students from across the UK and around Europe took part in the trip, with some unusual choices of vehicle, including a hearse and a black cab. The arduous days of driving were broken up by parties each night in cities along the route, including Cologne, Prague and Budapest. Hugh, who comes from Welwyn village and is studying at Leeds Metropolitan University, said: "We did feel lucky that nothing went wrong with the car after the trouble we had with it before leaving. "We had a lot of fun along the way and it was great to be able to raise money for such a worthwhile cause." The rally saw them travel three and half thousand miles. The students were also sponsored by several local companies, including J&N Tyres, which generously gave them a set of new tyres, Fitness First, which paid for sign writing on the car and is also collecting money for the Willow Foundation, and First Call Signs, which gave them stickers for the car at cost price. B&R Carpets, of Mill Lane in Hampstead, donated £500 to the Willow Foundation, which was founded by former Arsenal goalkeeper Bob Wilson and provides special days out for young people with serious illnesses. Spurred on by their Gumball experience, the team is planning to take part in the Home to Rome rally in October. The car has to be worth less than £100, so they are planning to complete the trip in an old Nissan Sunny saloon.