

1 continent, 2 people & a 100-day ride

Motorcycling enthusiasts Manas and Anu Dewan tell Marisha Karwa that their trip of a lifetime is all about exploring Europe while making friends



Above: A group picture with the Ducatistas of Valencia; Below: Manas and Anu Dewan, all set for their European bike trip

A PREVIEW TO THE 100- DAY RIDE

Before setting off on their own, the couple rode with the Ducati Valencia Group earlier this month. Edited excerpts from Manas' account of the ride: "The Ducati Valencia group – Juan, Luis and Fran – welcomed their fellow Ducatista in the way a biker welcomes another: going for a ride. We whizzed past the city's light weekend traffic and soon were gunning down scenic high-ways. We followed the A7 until LaComa and then took to the CV520 that led us past picturesque villages. By now, we were raring for some real riding, as we entered state highway 422 along the road to Llombai. The road clung to the steep mountains towering over us. It was unusual to have a 300m road without a hairpin, and the Ducatis proved their mettle as they took to the precipitous corners guided by experienced hands. It was around 2pm when we returned to Valencia and the helmets slipped off to reveal faces plastered with smiles.

It's tough to resist the tug of wanderlust. Avid motorcyclists Manas and Anuradha Dewan knew they had to stop fooling themselves. The couple had discussed a motorbike journey across Europe, but had put the plan in deep-freeze mode when sponsorships for such a sojourn failed to come through. Two years later, "we knew it was now or never", admits Manas. "Time and money were the only constraints."

The 43-year-old quit his job as the chief marketing officer of a company in Oman earlier this year. The couple dipped into their savings to buy a Ducati Scrambler. Come Monday, the Pune residents will zip out of Mallorca in Spain, starting a "trip worth telling the grandchildren about". The journey is about clocking mileage in 18 European countries over 100 days of meeting people, creating bonds and documenting the cuisine and the pulse of the places they visit. "We call it Dosti on Wheels," says Anuradha, who has taken a sabbatical from her work as a corporate trainer and philosophy teacher.

While they've travelled in Europe earlier, eight of the 18 countries they'll be riding through are nations they'll be visiting for the first time. "These are Portugal, Lichtenstein, Italy, Slovenia, Czechia (Czech Republic), Croatia, Greece and Turkey," says Manas. "It's an audacious journey."

Passport for the ride

The duo spent months planning the nitty-gritties about ideal routes and making modifications to the bike for the ideal seat and to accommodate bags. "Thanks to the Western India Automobile Association, we were able to quickly get the carnet, the 'bike's passport' which will allow us to take the vehicle across borders," says Manas. "The luggage bracket is what took the most time as it underwent a few rounds of trial and error."

Setting off with minimum luggage, Manas and Anu aim to be footloose. "The idea is to explore something new everyday," adds Anuradha, who will take turns with her husband of 16 years to ride the bike. "And have the freedom to spontaneously decide to linger in a town for an extra day or two." To which Manas adds: "We have just one life. Why lose today's day in anticipation of tomorrow."

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