

Couple travels 18,000km across Europe for 16th wedding anniv

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Pune: How do you celebrate 18 years of togetherness and at the same time take part in a cultural exchange with people of other countries?

Why, if you're motorcycle enthusiasts, and your names happen to be Anuradha and Manas Dewan, you ride a sports bike across Europe, of course. It is, after all, a matter of a mere 18,000 kilometres.

To undertake this mind-boggling adventure, Pune-based Dewan quit a cushy job in Oman. "We have been married 16 years, and were together for two years before that," Dewan said.

It so happened that they were both motorcycle enthusiasts, so this trip came as naturally to them as revving up their Ducati beast. "Initially we planned to start from Europe and ride to India, but a few pla-



ON A SWISS LEG: Manas and Anuradha on their trip near Zugersee lake in Switzerland

ces along the way are unstable these days. We decided living to ride another time is more important," Manas said, tongue firmly in cheek. The trip started in Spain and to that end, they waded through copious amounts of paperwork (six sets of documents, to be precise) and had the bike shipped to the port city of Valencia.

The couple reached Europe in the beginning of June and found that their bike was stuck in customs. "We nearly gave up hope, but the local Ducati dealer heard our story and offered us a bike from his showroom so that we could complete our trip," Manas said.

As things turned out, the dealer's largehearted gesture

was not needed as their bike got cleared by customs.

The Dewans rode across Portugal, France, Germany, Austria, Liechtenstein, and the Czech Republic, before turning south to Switzerland, Italy, Slovenia, and Croatia. Before they could enter Bosnia and Herzegovina, people warned them as it was a country still recovering from a war in the 90s. "The border control, however, were extremely excited to see Indians visiting their country, and took pictures with us, and showered us with contacts and places to visit. Bosnia, and most of eastern Europe was very beautiful," Dewan recalled.

In Albania, they were in for quite the welcome. "We went to a tiny village and to our surprise, most people knew India, our leaders, and politics, mainly through Indian soaps dubbed in their language ... they opened their homes and hearts to us," he said.