

# The National



## Adventurers nearing their journey's end get a fix in Dubai

Ramola Talwar Badam

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DUBAI // An Estonian couple who have made a motorbike their home for two years arrived in Dubai on the last leg of their journey around the world.

Margus Sootla, 29, a computer software professional, and Kariina Tsursin, 27, a language specialist, arrived by boat in Sharjah from Bandar Abbas, Iran, last week to repair the broken suspension of their 1,100cc BMW bike.

Mr Sootla and Ms Tsursin have visited 38 countries, from Canada to Australia, riding more than 114,000km since October 1, 2008.

They have seen the beauty of Bolivia, the colours of Brazil, the splendour of Alaska and the expanse of Australia.

Stickers of Thailand, Cambodia and other countries are slapped on two small boxes that carry clothes, a laptop, camera and cooking gear. Strapped to the back of the black and silver bike is a camping tent.

Their journey is made more special by the fact they set out three days after their marriage.

The couple will be in Dubai for at least a week to repair the bike before riding to Oman and Yemen, then via ship to Djibouti and road to Ethiopia. They will ride through Africa before heading home to the red-tiled roofs and cobbled streets of the second-largest city in Estonia, Tartu.

The bike is being repaired at a workshop run by Nelson Suresh Kumar, the director of Classic Motorcycles in Dubai's Al Quoz industrial area. Mr Kumar is also a bike enthusiast: he travelled almost 29,000km from Argentina to Alaska two years ago.



Kariina Tsursin and Margus Sootla have covered 114,000 kilometres since hitting the road three days after their marriage.  
Pawan Singh / The National

"It's difficult to explain what drives people," Mr Kumar said. "It's simply the spirit of adventure – the freedom the bike gives you to do something different."

The couple write up reports on a popular website, Adventure Rider (advrider.com).

They were warned against riding through Colombia, Iran and Pakistan because of unrest but each country surprised them with the warm hospitality from locals.

"We were told we were crazy. Our parents were very worried, but we met friendly people," Ms Tsursin said. "You read in the news about criminals or radicals in some countries. When you visit, you see how people really live. There are some people who don't trust foreigners, but that cannot change a country's character."

A greater challenge arose when Mr Sootla suffered altitude sickness and needed emergency oxygen after riding on winding mountain roads from Chile to the high

plateaus of Bolivia's Altiplano.

"There are no people around; we were lucky we found a factory," he said. "Fortunately, there was a doctor who gave me oxygen and the medication I needed."

The landscapes were as breathtaking as the altitude.

"Altiplano was like another planet. There were flamingos, clouds you could touch high up in the mountains," Ms Tsursin said.

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And they still enjoy the journey.

“Riding is excellent stress relief, for places like this [Dubai] where people work too much. It puts a grin on your face even if you go for a ride over the weekend,” Mr Sootla said.

[rtalwar@thenational.ae](mailto:rtalwar@thenational.ae)

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