

TravelPros

Meet two road warriors who have turned their love for travel into full-time careers.



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You watched your grandmother fill up three passports. What kind of impression did that make on you as a child?

My grandmother's travels put it in my awareness that travelling was something that you should do. I never really thought about where I would go or if I would go; it was a given that I would because I had watched her travel throughout her life. So I expected that I'd do the same.

Your book, *Exploring Chicago Blues: Inside the Scene Past and Present*, highlights the Windy City's blues history. What would travelers be surprised to know about Chicago?

That Chicago boasts 26 miles of beaches. There are 24 different beaches lining the lake, and they are quite popular during the extremely short summers.

Best travel tip?

No matter where you go, try to get off the tourist track and connect with the local culture. That's how you tap into the real essence of a place.

Next on your must-go list? India

Your top three favorite destinations?

Brazil, St. Lucia, London

Your favorite airline? Porter Airlines

What's always in your suitcase?

A book, a notepad and a camera.

Favorite travel app?

Trippit app, which organizes itineraries, flight info, hotel reservations, weather and maps. My other fave is XE Currency for calculating exchange rates.

What do you wear while on the plane?

A scarf and dark jeans. I like to dress for warmth and polish.

Most memorable vacation?

A family vacation to the Dominican Republic, which I was torn about because of the human rights issues that plague the country. I learned how to navigate around political propaganda and reach out to locals so they can benefit directly from tourism dollars.

Your book, *Moon Belize*, is the only Belize guidebook on the market with 100 percent color photographs. Why was it important to include so many colorful images?

Belize is visually stunning, from rainforests to reef and offshore islands, as well as intriguing culturally. More than ever, travelers want to see and feel their next destination before they get there. Social media and the Internet have made us more visually oriented people, and destinations are competing for vacationers' attention.

What's one thing travelers would be surprised to know about Belize?

Travelers are often surprised to find so much diversity. Belize has over eight cultural groups—including the Maya, the Garinagu, the Mestizos, the Creole, the Mennonites, and more—each with their own foods, music, events and rituals. And they all live in harmony in one small country.

What about traveling do you love the most?

I love that travel makes me a better person, a more compassionate soul.

What has been your most fun or challenging research story?

I just completed for an in-flight magazine a story and photo shoot of a particular Jamaican street food. It was fascinating researching the history, learning how to make it, photographing the whole process and sampling it all in a Jamaican kitchen.

What's always in your suitcase?

I always pack a cocktail dress, with blazer, clutch and a pair of heels. You never know when you'll need them for a night out or an event.

Favorite travel app?

AFAR's new travel app is my current obsession. I love that you can look up local expert tips or highlights for your destination and download them for later use offline.

Best travel tip?

Go with the flow. Don't plan too many activities ahead of your trip. Leave space for the magic of serendipity on the road.

Your top three favorite destinations?

Jamaica, Belize and most recently, Guadeloupe Islands. Deep down, I have a Caribbean soul.

What do you wear while on the plane?

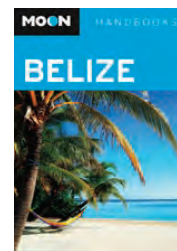
I like to be comfortable and warm, so I'm almost always in jeans or pants, with a blouse and a cardigan. Layers are key.

Next on your must-go list?

My mind is set on Ethiopia. I haven't been back in 12 years, and now that I'm a travel journalist and photographer, I'd love to return to cover my birthplace.



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