

The Palm Beach Post

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TRAVEL

Five hotels where the rooms
are works of art. **6H**

Can you name the
NEW seven wonders?

Great Wall, Taj Mahal,
Petra among leaders as
deadline approaches.

By ELIANE ENGELER
and ALEXANDER G. HIGGINS
The Associated Press

The Great Wall, the Colosseum and Machu Picchu are among the leading contenders to be named new Seven Wonders of the World as a five-year poll enters its final month with votes cast by more than 50 million people, organizers say. The July 6 voting deadline approaches, but rankings can still change, the organizers say. So far in the top 10 are Greece's Acropolis, Mexico's Chichen Itza pyramid, the Eiffel Tower, the Statue of Liberty, Brazil's Christ the Redeemer, the Taj Mahal and Jordan's Petra. The Great Pyramids of Giza, the only surviving structures from the original seven wonders of the ancient world, are assured of keeping their status in addition to the new seven after final Egyptian officials said it was a disgrace to let them compete for a spot. The winners will be announced on Saturday in Lisbon, Portugal. Americans and Asians have been the most enthusiastic voters so far in the final round of candidates for the world's top architectural wonders, but people from every country in the world have voted by Internet or phone, says the poll organization conducting the balloting. "This is the first ever global vote," said Tia Berg, spokeswoman for the "New 7 Wonders of the World" campaign. The organizers are hoping for a final surge in support from the United States and Europe to make the selection truly global. The new wonders include the Colosseum, China's Great Wall, Peru's

See WONDERS, 4H ▶



FLAGGING THE TOP FLORIDA GOLF RESORTS

Magazine reader
survey says ...

Readers of *Condé Nast Traveler* magazine ranked 16 of the top 100 golf resorts in North America in Florida.

Readers evaluated resorts on course design, speed of service, staff, accommodations, service, food and dining facilities. Here is how Florida courses rated:

- 5: Ritz-Carlton Golf Resort, Naples
- 4: Ritz-Carlton Grande Lakes, Orlando
- 3: Hyatt Regency Grand Cypress, Orlando
- 2: Ritz-Carlton, Amelia Island
- 1: LaPlaya Golf and Beach Resort, Naples
- 8: The Breakers, Palm Beach
- 10: JW Marriott Orlando Grande Lakes
- 2: Naples Grande Resort & Club
- 5: Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort, Destin
- 6: Ritz-Carlton, Key Biscayne (tie)
- 6: Sawgrass Marriott Resort & Spa, Ponte Vedra Beach (tie)
- 8: Saddlebrook Resort, Wesley Chapel
- 1: Hyatt Regency Coconut Point Resort & Spa, Bonita Springs
- 5: Ponte Vedra Inn & Club, Ponte Vedra Beach
- 7: Innisbrook Resort and Golf Club, Palm Harbor
- 9: World Golf Village, St. Augustine

No. 1 golf resort? Four Seasons Resort, The Lodge at Koele, in Lanai, Hawaii

'VIEWS FROM A BROAD'

51-year-old Suzan Crane gave up a cushy life to travel gypsy-style wherever the wind blows her.

Does she get lonely?

Does she miss the U.S.?

And how does she fit all her stuff in one bag?

By SUZAN CRANE
Special to *The Palm Beach Post*

At 47, the alarm sounded. I was bored and lethargic, uninspired and unemployed.

The slippery spiral down was a lot quicker than the arduous trek up to the top of my career, where I had been blissfully residing for quite some time. But one fateful call, informing me the record company for which I served as senior vice president of media relations had shuttered its doors, well ...

Crash, boom, bang. Splattered like Humpty Dumpty with no one to pick up the pieces.

Having suddenly found myself out of work, and much to my shock and horror, seemingly unemployable, I had reached a crossroads. Victim of ageism, sexism, whatever-ism. It didn't matter. I couldn't get a gig. The few available jobs in a dwindling business were going to the kids I trained.

The reality was that, while I still fancied myself young and hip, I was single, childless (with parents retired in Lake Worth) and growing older in Los Angeles.

So, was this it? A high-velocity, high-profile career demised. A fab house in the

See CRANE, 4H ▶

Want to quit your job and travel for months?

10 working stiffs tell how they did it

By LORI ROBERTSON
The Washington Post

For years, when people would ask what my plans were for the future, I would say something about my goals as a writer, then add, "And someday I'll quit my job and go to Latin America for six months." It was a real desire, yes — but a pipe dream.

Until I actually did it. Saved money, sold my car, had a yard sale, put stuff in storage, rented my condo, designated my boyfriend as power of attorney (just in case) and flew to Guatemala.

The pre-trip planning was filled with anxiety: Would I run out of money? Would I, nearing age 35, be the "old" traveler staying in hostels? Was this career-ending suicide?

Answer to all of the above: No. Leaving the real world behind to travel

See TRAVEL, 5H ▶



Suzan Crane with children at a gypsy camp outside Pushkar, Rajasthan in India.

'Running away? No, running toward' adventure

► CRANE from 1H

Hollywood Hills barren. A sleek BMW convertible out of gas. And me, out of gas, too. A hard-working professional rendered superfluous, burnt out before hitting 50?

No, I wasn't willing to accept those terms, so I set out to revise the script. I sold the house and most of the contents, liquidating 5,000 albums and 200 pairs of shoes — the tip of the conspicuous-consumption iceberg. Put a few boxes in storage, bought a backpack and a one-way ticket to ride. And off I went, newly unencumbered, into the unknown, taking a leap of faith heretofore unfathomable, I set out to rediscover my passion and whatever other mysteries awaited me.

While some deemed it reckless, most people lauded my courage. Running away? No, running toward. Irresponsible? No, taking responsibility for my own happiness. Losing the plot? No, gaining perspective and gratitude.

That was nearly four years ago, and in that time, I've grown as a human being in ways previously unimaginable. I keep my eyes, ears, heart and options open, a philosophy that bestows upon me incalculable rewards as I traverse the globe and encounter remarkable, illuminating, magical people, places and things.

From navigating the treacherous mountain terrain of Songpan, China, on horseback to paragliding over the Himalayas in Nepal; to camping beneath the glistening night sky in the outback of Australia to freezing my butt off at Mount Everest base camp in Tibet.

From performing *pojas* with the sadhus (holy men) in India and dancing with the Bedouins in Sinai; to visiting the mystical Plain of Jars in Laos and marveling at the mysterious terrain of Cappadocia, Turkey.

From witnessing the biblical sites of Jerusalem and the wonders of Petra to providing tsunami aid work in India.

From creating the Namaste Cross Cultural Pen Pal Program for an impoverished secondary school in Nepal; to crying for the senseless loss of life at Cambodia's Killing Fields and laughing at myself for falling in a Chinese squat toilet; to dancing under the full moon on the beaches of Sri Lanka and chanting under the setting sun on the shores of southern India.

From riding camels in Egypt and a monster mo-



Suzan Crane has made friends all over the world. She says she's grown as a human being in ways previously unimaginable.

torbike through Kashmir and Ladakh; to studying reiki and tai chi in India and tantric yoga in Thailand, to learning about Buddhism, Islam and Hinduism, and falling victim to thieves twice in two months in Costa Rica.

Life is just a big adventure, and I'm a willing participant.

Is it perfect? Certainly not. Bad moods can mar even paradise; a broken heart is a broken heart in any language. But the lifestyle is unpredictable and galvanizing, and I wouldn't trade it for anything.

Do you ever get lonely? Sure, sometimes I miss the people with whom I have history, my friends and loved ones who accept and understand me no matter what. But sacrificing that comfort and familiarity is a small price to pay for the opportunity to interact with a global community. Today, I boast friends all over the world.

There's a relatively small gypsy circuit, and I continually encounter people with whom I've shared a moment — or more — along the path.

Recently, I ran into a guy in San Jose, Costa Rica, with whom I had trekked the Great Wall of China three years ago.

Are you ever scared? I am rarely scared. Scared of what? The world is teeming with amazing, beautiful and spiritual people.

I'm from New York, so I just embrace the same attitude I did there: Be smart, carry yourself with confidence, stay alert, don't be

naive or take foolish chances. Learn some of the local language, communicate with smiles. Sometimes, there are challenges but nothing insurmountable. Even robberies and health issues can be handled with relative ease if you keep your wits about you.

What about relationships? Well, I've met more interesting men along this journey than I ever did driving along the L.A. freeways, so the odds of meeting the right one are incrementally increased as I continue to move. Particularly as I encounter guys who share my lifestyle and passion for traveling.

I've had relationships out there — the French guy, the Italian guy and most recently the Bedouin man in Jordan. I fall in love with each of them, but I'm a traveler, a professional nomad. I invariably move on. Although, if it's right, I'm willing to change directions.

Do you miss anything about your old life? Hmmmm ... well, not the stress of mortgage payments and bills. Not the thankless task of working for the Man, and not the redundancy of replicating yesterday's activities yet again tomorrow.

What do you miss about the U.S.? Well, my friends and family, of course. But I stay in contact via e-mail. And if I'm MIA for too long, I'll invariably receive messages reminding me that I'm out of sight but not out of mind. I know my real friends will be my real friends no matter

where in the world I am. I'm wanting for very little. Being a vegetarian can be challenging in some places, such as China and Malaysia, but one gets by.

What happens if you get sick? I go to the doctor. I've been quite ill in India on two occasions and was rendered healthy for a whopping \$60 the first time, doctor's visits, blood tests and medication all inclusive.

On the second occasion, I visited an oracle who miraculously returned me to health when traditional medicine failed.

I recently suffered a bout of dengue fever in Costa Rica and was treated by local physicians who are more familiar with a malady indigenous to the area.

How do you support your constant travels? I work when possible. I'm a fairly prolific freelance journalist, and I design hand-crafted jewelry, which I sell at markets and on the beach.

Occasionally, I'll pick up a waitress or retail position. And it's always possible to barter for stuff on the road.

Friends cut my hair, and I pay for the services with jewelry I make. Stuff like that. I've camped, lived in squats, cheap beach bungalows ... It's rarely an issue.

How do you live out of one bag? Ah, that I've learned to do — no problem. It's taught me humility and resourcefulness. Why do I need 200 pairs of shoes when I only have two feet?



Crane poses near a marker on a monthlong motorbike journey from Dharamsala to Kashmir and Ladakh, India — all in the high Himalayas. It was summer but cold in the high mountains. Crane navigated her bike along the highest motorable road in the world.

I match colors as best I can and maintain my personal style by employing minimal pieces and maximum creativity ... If I change climates, I just buy the things I need at that time. Then I trade or donate them to keep the pack as light as possible.

Do you plan where you're going? Well, I used to be very organized, meticulous, really, in orchestrating my overland routes from say, Thailand to Cambodia, Laos into China, etc.

But now I'm much more haphazard. An Israeli friend recently shoved an atlas in front of me, insisting I review the maps so I could make more prudent and cost-effective travel decisions.

I no longer make advance purchases because I've lost too many tickets and too much money that way. Often, I meet people who lead me in another direction.

What's in your bag? I use those travel space bags to organize my stuff. One bag for pants and skirts, another for tops, another for underwear, bathing suits and scarves.

I've got one toiletry bag, which also includes rudimentary first-aid things. I've got a bag full of electronic stuff — wires and adapters, headphones, battery charger, card reader.

Perhaps the heaviest burden are the supplies I use for designing my jewelry — semi-precious stones, silver beads, tools. I collect feathers, so I've got thousands of beautiful plumes that I use to embellish clothing and make earrings.

A small digital camera, my laptop — my most essential companion as a writer.

Notebooks, a flashlight and some personal items to

make my temporary spaces feel a bit more homey, such as a Buddha wall hanging. Candles, incense, a deck of cards, some dice.

Backup eyeglasses. A travel towel and my indispensable sleeping bag.

A blowup travel pillow someone gave me. A big shawl from India that doubles as a blanket.

When did you start, and where did you go first?

I've been traveling since March 31, 2003. My first stop was Australia and then Fiji, where I spent about 3½ months, but I hungered for more culture and headed to Asia, where I spent the better part of four years (minus the few months I returned to the U.S. for a visit).

What will you do when you get old?

I don't plan to get old. Age is a state of mind (OK, maybe a bit in the bones and around the eyes, as well!).

But seriously, no one believes I'm 51 because I don't act, think or behave according to the preconceived ideas of what a 51-year-old woman should look, act and feel like.

I suppose in the back of my mind, I am always looking for a place where I can plant roots, perhaps buy a little land, but I haven't found a place that I want to commit to yet. I'm searching.

Where to next? Back to L.A. to visit my friends and take care of some business and then down to South America to explore the indigenous cultures of Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru. After that, who knows.

I've been invited to Mali, so that's always a possibility.

But I never know until I know — and then I go. See you on the trail.