



After losing her advertising job, Tierza Davis-Eichner founded a surf camp in Costa Rica.

A SURFING BUSINESS
IN
COSTA RICA

TOUR GUIDING IN
PARIS

A BOUTIQUE IN
CAMBODIA

LIVING (AND MAKING A LIVING) IN ANOTHER COUNTRY
MAY SOUND LIKE A DREAM. BUT THESE SIX WOMEN DROPPED EVERYTHING TO
MAKE IT COME TRUE BY NICOLE BLADES
PHOTOGRAPHED BY ROBERT MAXWELL, AMBROISE TEZENAS
AND ANDREA FAZZARI





FORMER JOB: Account manager for a San Francisco Internet advertising company.

WHAT SHE DOES NOW: Owns a surfing school and yoga retreat, Pura Vida Adventures (puravidaadventures.com).

THE BACKSTORY: After eight years in the dot-com business, Davis-Eichner was laid off in 2001 and never wanted to see another cubicle. “The fluorescent lights, the 60-hour weeks—I knew I couldn’t do that for the rest of my life,” she says. Instead of diving into a job search, she headed for Costa Rica’s beaches for an eight-month surfing vacation.

THE INSPIRATION: She fell in love with Mal Pais, a small coastal community on the southeastern tip of Costa Rica’s Nicoya Peninsula. “I was drawn to the area because of its natural beauty,” she says. “Life here is mellow and tranquil, and the sunsets are incredible. People let life flow. Plus, you can surf every day!” She acquired a Costa Rican boyfriend who spoke no English, and that helped her improve her Spanish. By the end of her stay, she thought, I’ve got to get back here—somehow. Recalling that as a novice surfer, she’d wiped out countless times until an instructor transformed her experience, she decided to start a surf camp for women.

MAKING IT HAPPEN: Back in San Francisco, Davis-Eichner got to work on a business plan, and friends helped with copywriting, design and Web development. She invested \$50,000 from her savings to pay for advertising, a website, legal work, office equipment and a van to drive surfers from local hotels to the beach. She set up partnerships with Mal Pais-area hotels and hired her mother as a full-time employee in the U.S. to handle reservations while she managed the camp in Costa Rica.

In January 2004—exactly two years after her life-changing vacation—Pura Vida Adventures welcomed its first surf-camp group. “We have a max of 12 women at each session,” she says. “The cheapest package is \$2,100, which covers six-day, seven-night beachfront accommodations, surf instruction, yoga, massage, all meals, equipment and off-site activities.” Pura Vida Adventures made a profit in its first year, and revenues grew 15 to 20 percent every year until the 2008 recession took a toll.

Recently married, Davis-Eichner and her husband, an American, now spend half the year in Mal Pais and the other six months in Oregon, where he has a construction company and she runs her business from home. When in Costa Rica, the couple lives in a rented two-bedroom beach house “with coral and tide pools right outside the front door,” she says. “My favorite thing to do is lie out on the hammock. I’m a type A personality, so I need to get my hammock time every day.”

GLOBAL CITIZEN

LYNANN BRADBURY



Africa,
South Asia,
Latin America

FORMER JOB: Senior marketing VP at a Seattle international communications firm.

WHAT SHE DOES NOW: Consults for nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and socially progressive companies, helping them bring Internet technology and training to rural and poor communities.

THE BACKSTORY: In 2003, Bradbury was enduring her third bout of thyroid cancer. “I went into bargaining mode with God: Get me through this, and I promise to help others the best way I can,” she says. “When you’re on your deathbed, no one gives a damn what it says on your business card.”

Two years later, her cancer was in remission. As her marriage dissolved, she felt renewed and began taking annual “voluntouring” vacations. “Each trip was sparked by an idea or an interest in a country or something I wanted to learn,” she says.

THE INSPIRATION: “Cancer propelled me to live my life differently,” Bradbury says. She created a bucket list—countries where she wanted to live, things to accomplish before dying—with the goal of contributing to the world.

MAKING IT HAPPEN: In 2008, Bradbury quit her job, sold her cherry-red convertible, put her house up for rent and became a full-time freelance consultant (lynannbradbury.com).

“I took my communications expertise,” she says, “and combined it with my interest in overseas volunteer work.” She travels cheaply, often using stockpiled frequent-flier miles, and the rental income from her Seattle home covers a portion of her travel and living expenses abroad. In 2010, Bradbury spent six months living in Cape Town, helping a South African tech company bring Internet access to rural schools. Her furnished rental offered views of the ocean and gorgeous sunsets. “Around the corner from my apartment, I could buy Indian takeout for the equivalent of \$3,” she says. Bradbury’s consultancy rates vary from \$2,500 to \$25,000 per project (or \$75 to \$225 per hour), depending on local market rates and visa regulations. Recently she began working with NetHope, a network of 32 of the world’s biggest NGOs, to set up technology-training academies in Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania and Senegal. She’ll live in each country for six to 12 months, immersing herself in the culture, soaking up all she can learn.

Bradbury still spends a few months in the U.S. every year to be with her elderly parents and get her health checked. When she travels, she takes mementos from home: photos, trinkets and gifts from family and friends. Adjusting to a new community is not without challenges, she says. “But I’ve gained a sense of purpose, and that makes every trade-off worthwhile.”



A tour company and shopping guides enabled Karen Henrich to live in Paris.



FORMER JOB: Owned a boutique PR agency in Vancouver that specialized in tech companies.

WHAT SHE DOES NOW: Lives in a studio apartment in Paris near the Paris Opéra; owns Nuit Blanche Tours (nuitblanche.tours.com), a company that takes English-speaking women on custom-

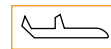
ized visits; and publishes travel guides in book and app formats.

THE BACKSTORY: In 2004, after 18 years in the tech industry, Henrich was weary and bored with the business. She'd recently ended a 10-year relationship and was craving some freshness in her life. The solution? A girlfriends' trip to Paris. "I had always wanted to visit the city, but something would usually happen to alter the plan," she says. This particular visit ended up altering many of Henrich's plans.

THE INSPIRATION: The French call it a *coup de foudre*, an intense and instant feeling of love, and it hit Henrich within an hour of landing in Paris. "Everything about the city—the architecture, how

it's laid out, the people, the cafés, the waiters—is pure romance," she says. "I knew I had to move there and turn my discoveries of the fabulous retail spots into a business."

MAKING IT HAPPEN: Henrich sold her agency and cashed in her stock options and most of her nest egg. She allotted \$35,000 to cover a year's living expenses and round-trip flights to Canada for three years. "To save money, I traded writing, Web or PR skills and house-sat," she says. She listened to a friend's French-language CDs for 30 minutes every day for six months. "But essentially I learned the language by immersion—talking to waiters, people in the markets," she says. By April 2005, Nuit Blanche Tours ("for girls who want to have fun") was in business, and since it's an online business registered in Canada, she doesn't need a work visa. All her clients came by referral, and after two years, her income was almost at pre-Paris level. In 2008 she started writing a guidebook, *Practical Paris* (just released as an e-book from tapbooks.net), and creating shopping guides in app format (chicwalks.com). Her Nuit Blanche fees range from 140 euros (for a "shop till you drop" tour for two) to 1,200 euros (for a day trip to Giverny). An explorer by nature, she still travels extensively (sometimes with her new Canadian husband), but the City of Light is her beacon. "Whenever I leave Paris, I feel this strong pang in my heart," she says.



BAHAMAS E-COMMERCE

LISA-MARIE CABRELLI
Bahamas

FORMER JOB: Business systems analyst and senior manager at AT&T in Reston, Virginia.

WHAT SHE DOES NOW: Owns Emily Rose Doll Clothes and Furniture (dolls.clothes-emilyrose.com), named after her daughter, and two spinoff sites. »



A volunteer vacation in Cambodia led Elizabeth Kiester to open her boutique, Wanderlust.

MAKING IT HAPPEN: To launch her online store selling affordable accessories, Cabrelli spent \$500, which went toward inventory, “Yahoo! Store” fees, domain name registration and books on e-commerce. Initially she bought clothes from U.S. distributors, but soon she decided to create her own line and sell wholesale. Emily pitched in from the beginning—designing clothes, picking styles, giving reviews. In 2007, Cabrelli crossed off the next item on her dream-life checklist by moving her family to an oceanfront home in the Bahamas, close enough to the U.S. for Emily to visit her father in northern Virginia. Now Cabrelli enjoys daily early-morning walks, watches the sun rise over the ocean and spends evenings listening to the waves. Her company was profitable in its first year, with gross revenues just over \$100,000, and she’s since launched two more doll-related businesses. “They pay me enough to cover our \$4,000 to \$5,000 monthly expenses,” she says.”

In 2011, with her ex-husband’s blessing, Cabrelli plans to roll out phase two of her reinvention plan: Her family will move to Spain (“I love the architecture, the history, the tapas”), and Mark will homeschool Emily. “I love traveling and exploring new cultures,” she says. “Watching my daughter live this great experience has been the best payoff.”

THE BACKSTORY: In 2002, six months into her separation from her first husband, Lisa-Marie Dowler (going by her maiden name then) and a friend, Mark Cabrelli, got into a serious conversation over dinner one evening about the question, What would you do with a million dollars? “Travel and living abroad were big on both our lists,” she says. But neither of them was living the life they wanted. When the pair married in late 2006, Cabrelli made a decision: “I couldn’t do the 9-to-5 rat race anymore,” she says. “I wanted to stop the crazy business-

travel schedule, and be able to pick Emily [then eight] up after school.” That year, AT&T offered a voluntary layoff package equivalent to a year’s salary, and she grabbed it.

THE INSPIRATION: “Emily was a recent convert to American Girl dolls, but we couldn’t keep up with the company’s high-priced accessories,” says Cabrelli. Knowing she wanted to start a portable online business, she checked out search engine keywords, looking for a niche market where lots of people were searching for a particular item. When she plugged in “American Girl doll accessories,” she knew she’d hit the mother lode.

☆ A ☆
BOUTIQUE IN
CAMBODIA

ELIZABETH KIESTER
SIEM REAP

FORMER JOB: Global creative director at LeSportsac, New York City, and, earlier, fashion editor at *Mademoiselle*, *Marie Claire*, *Jane* and *YM*.

WHAT SHE DOES NOW: Owns Wanderlust (wanderlustcambodia.com), selling handmade clothing (some of which she designs), jewelry and accessories made by local artisans.



Find tips and inspiring stories at more.com/reinventabroad.

THE BACKSTORY: For years, New York's glamorous fashion world was all Kiester knew. The lifestyle was manic. "I ate a lot of dinners in the back of taxicabs, not knowing what time zone I was in," she says. "I was constantly jet-lagged." Three years ago, she faced divorce and her mother's illness. The onslaught left her hungry for more depth and balance in her life, so she signed up with Global Volunteers.

On her second tour, in Cambodia, with an organization called Globe Aware, she helped build water pumps and paint orphanages. Though she was there for only 16 days, Cambodia thrilled her. "There's a sense of hopefulness and a creative spirit that resonates the minute you get off the plane," she says. "It's magical."

THE INSPIRATION: Kiester was invited to a party and had nothing to wear. "I couldn't find anything in town other than very fancy silk garments that weren't really me," she says. "It got me thinking about other Westerners living in the area and where they shopped." When she learned that many of the women went all the way to Bangkok to buy clothes, she knew she had to return to Siem Reap to build a boutique, a business and a life.

MAKING IT HAPPEN: Back in New York, Kiester did extensive research about Cambodia and applied for a business visa and license. She opened Wanderlust's doors in October 2008, investing \$30,000 of her savings and later securing investment from friends. "The goal wasn't just about starting a business. It was about giving other women opportunities to own their own business and work with me, not for me," she says. "I subcontract six local seamstresses, and the income they make from Wanderlust is enough to pay for a motorbike, have a nice place to live, support their parents and children," she says.

Recently Kiester hired more than 30 women to make a new line of dresses and accessories for Madewell (an offshoot of the megabrand J.Crew). "It was a total Cambodian enterprise," she says. "And so many people were sustained because of it. I can't tell you how proud and happy it's made me."

UNDER THE TUSCAN SUN

LILY MORDA
FLORENCE
ITALY

FORMER JOB: Owned a bead shop in Seattle.

WHAT SHE DOES NOW: Handcrafts jewelry, teaches jewelry making and— with her husband, Tim Morda—owns Beaded Lily (beadedlily.com), a shop selling the couple's handmade glass beads and artisan jewelry.

THE BACKSTORY: When Morda opened her Seattle store in 1990, it was one of just three bead shops in the city. Ten years later, there were 15 others. "What started out as a fun and creative business turned into a rat race," she says. "Constant pressure to keep up with the competition led to a lot of expenses and stress." She closed the store. Tim had closed the café he owned for similar reasons a year earlier. The couple decided the time was right for an extended vacation in Italy. Morda, with Italian roots on both sides of her family, had always dreamed of moving there.

THE INSPIRATION: Arriving in Tuscany, Morda instantly felt part of the community of artisans making stained glass lamps, cabinetry, ceramics, even violins. She loved the region's rolling hillsides and rich artistic and cultural history. "I had this wonderful feeling of being at home," says Morda. "I got a sense of what things must have been like in the early American towns: a feeling of innocence, community and simplicity."

MAKING IT HAPPEN: The couple, who married in 1999, settled in Lucca, where Tim learned to make glass lampwork beads in the Venetian tradition, and Morda began crafting jewelry from his beads. In 2005 they moved to Florence and opened Beaded Lily (monthly rent: \$760), selling their designs. "Tim would make the beads at home," says Morda. "Often I would wake up in the morning, and there would be a plate

of freshly made artisan beads sitting on the dining room table waiting for me." They subsequently moved to a larger, 600-square-foot shop-studio, with tall arched ceilings, vintage chairs and walls decorated with their merchandise. "We do everything ourselves, including maintaining our websites, filling orders, teaching and procuring inventory," says Morda, whose lineage allowed her to become an Italian citizen in 2003. She no longer worries about competition. "In Florence there is no one else doing what we do."

Five years into the business, they gross less money than they did in the U.S., but the overhead in Florence is much lower, and they love the lifestyle.

"Small-business owners close their shops and go home to eat lunch with their families or head to local eateries with friends and colleagues," she says. "It's one of Italy's best traditions. We've never been happier, both with ourselves as individuals and with the quality of our day-to-day lives." 🍷

NICOLE BLADES, a former editor at *Women's Health* and ESPN.com, published her first novel, *Earth's Waters*, in 2007.

TIPS FROM THE TRENCHES

- **From Lily Morda:** "Check out expat websites and blogs to find out what it's really like to live in a particular country or city. For example, if you Google 'expat Florence,' you'll find links to dozens of informative sites."
- **From Lisa-Marie Cabrelli:** "If you need a U.S. address, Earth Class Mail [earthclassmail.com] can provide you with an official mailing address. The company will e-mail you when you get mail and will even pay bills."
- **From Karen Henrich:** "Set up a business PayPal account and link it to your bank account. That way you can invoice clients, take their payments and pay contract workers in any country."