

Money granted so far

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I loved seeing the turtles in Costa Rica



We met the Kogi people of Colombia



The kids in Santa Marta were so happy



The children loved seeing themselves on camera

Life through a LENS

We believe telling people's stories can help make the world a better place

I always believed I had a purpose in life, and when I met John I instantly knew he'd be a part of it.

From the moment we bumped into each other at a mutual friend's house, we knew it was meant to be. So much so, we married four months later! Some people thought we were nuts, but we just knew we were crazy in love.

At the time, I was working as an online business coach and professional blogger, and John was a bar manager. Between us, we'd travelled throughout Europe and Asia but still had itchy feet and wanted to explore.

Now, we dreamt about embarking on an incredible, once-in-a-lifetime journey.

"I've always wanted to travel through South America," I told John one day.

"Me, too," he said.

Over the next few months we often talked about our South American dream; we were both intrigued by the culture. But it wasn't until we walked past a travel agency one day that we

decided to make it a reality.

"Should we book our tickets?" John asked.

"Let's do it!" I said.

Without any plan we walked in, sat down with an agent and booked one-way tickets from Sydney to Caracas, the capital of Venezuela.

"I can't believe we're really doing this!"

I excitedly told John.

"Now we need to figure out what we'll do over there," he said.

We didn't want to travel just for the sake of it. We wanted to somehow help others on the way, and that's how I came up with the idea of making mini documentaries.

"We could talk to people who dedicate their lives to making the world a better place," I suggested.

"What a great idea," John said.

Neither one of us had

Every story shared a theme: people helping others

videography experience but we weren't afraid to learn. As we'd be travelling indefinitely, we spent the next few months selling our furniture and personal belongings online. We then spent about \$400 on a digital camera which took still photos and video.

We'd depart for South

America with a few thousand dollars in our pockets, and I planned to continue blogging and doing business coaching online to support our travels. John

had also started trading currency online.

A few weeks before leaving, we got in touch with a charity in Santa Marta, Colombia, called Mariposas Amarillas (yellow butterflies). It

supported disadvantaged children by providing education and recreation.

Oscar, the founder, said he'd

been homeless as a child but managed to turn his life around and now ran two schools for disadvantaged kids. He said he'd be honoured to feature in one of our documentaries.

"What an inspirational story to start with," I said.

John and I didn't know what to expect when our journey began. Arriving in Caracas was a real eye-opener. Thick smog blanketed the skyline as we took a taxi from the airport to the city, passing hillsides covered in slum houses.

"People really do it tough here," I said, shocked by the living conditions.

We spent the next month trying to learn some Spanish as we explored Venezuela, including hiking through the Andes mountain ranges.

After a month of settling in, John and I were ready to start our real journey in Colombia.

"Let's head to Santa Marta," I said, excited.

As we neared the slums to

meet Oscar, kids ran onto the dusty road to greet us. Oscar welcomed us with open arms and we spent the following couple of weeks in Santa Marta capturing his story.

John comfortably fell into the role of directing and filming, while I interviewed our subjects.

Living on basic meals of soup, rice and vegetables, we got a taste of what life was like for the local children.

"They barely have a thing, yet they're so happy," I marvelled.

It really made us feel grateful for all that we had.

After completing our first project, we headed to Costa Rica. There, we volunteered to help save the giant leatherback turtles from extinction.

We went on nightly patrols along the beaches - where the turtles lay their eggs - to protect them from poachers.

I was in awe when we saw a 400kg turtle heave herself up the beach, dig a hole in the sand and lay her eggs.

Over the following months we experienced many more amazing moments with new places and people as we made our documentaries.

From former sex workers who now educate others to a group of women who collect plastic bags from the beach to create colourful accessories, every story was different but all shared a common theme: people helping others.

Recently we were in the US, visiting family in San Francisco, and had time to launch our website for our documentaries. We've called it Five Point Five, to honour a quote from prominent Indian social worker Narayanan Krishnan.

He said, "Everyone has 5.5L of blood. I am just a human being; for me everybody is the same."

We believe everybody, with their 5.5L, can make a difference in the world.

Since launching the website in April, we've had more than 6000 people watch our videos.

Now we're in Ecuador and plan to spend a couple of years travelling through Asia and Africa to continue our work.

However, we're definitely due for a camera upgrade.

We still have the same digital camera we left Australia with and, now that we're getting more experienced with our documentaries, we need a professional camcorder.

We want to continue helping others and creating great work.

Take 5, can you help?
Serena Star-Leonard,
33, St Kilda, Vic.

Serena's reaction:

Thank you so much for helping us to fund our new camcorder, we're thrilled! Now John and I will no longer have to share one camera for photos and video, and the overall result of our documentaries will be much better.

WISH GRANTED!
\$800