



News

Rita Ranch couple circles the globe before settling down; book published

[Print Page](#)

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Thelma Grimes /Vail Sun

For many, traveling the world is a distant dream. For Lisa and Bob Riel it's a dream that has come true - twice.

The Rita Ranch couple said after getting married they wanted to take chances and experience the world before having children.

"We wanted to take this adventure before settling down," Bob Riel said. "Before we had our children and bought a house. When you are traveling from country to country, you don't have to worry about paying electric bills. You grow together. We came out of this trip so much closer."

Lisa said the couple was fortunate to take time out of their careers, take two trips around the world and come back as different people.

The journeys came to mean so much to the couple that Bob Riel has since written a book: "Two Laps Around the World."

The book talks about how the couple traveled as cheaply as possible and experienced more than they had ever expected in the two trips.

The Riels said they were wary about anti-America sentiment, something that made Lisa hesitate to take the trip.

"We went to the Taj Mahal and the pyramids," Bob said. "But that's not what you remember on a trip like this. You remember the people."

The couple recalled at one point being on a boat with 900 other people, and estimating that only 10 of them were westerners. The couple agreed that the circumstances forced them to get closer to other cultures to understand the people and to understand America's impact on the world.

"We were treated unbelievably well by people in these other countries," Lisa said. "People don't seem to be fans of President (George) Bush or the Iraq war. Many people said to us 'I don't like your government, but I love your people.'"

Recalling time the couple spent in Egypt, not all moments of the two-part trip that took a total of seven months over a three-year period were comfortable.

The couple talked about a terrorist attack that took place while they were in Egypt.

In what was to be the couple's last day touring cities in Egypt, three bombs exploded during the night in Sharm el Sheikh, and more than 80 people were killed.

"The single statement changed the arc of your Egyptian journey," Bob wrote in his book. "Even though we went ahead with the rest of our planned itinerary for that day and, after much discussion, for another week in Egypt, everything that happened from then on was in some way filtered through the prism of that moment.

"Not only was that now a cause for concern, but we rightly wondered if we should even go on with the present day's



World travelers: Bob and Lisa Riel at the Great Wall of China. The Rita Ranch couple have traversed the earth twice, which inspired Bob Riel to publish a book. The couple says the cost to take such a trip could surprise folks. (Photo courtesy Riel family.)

activities. We didn't have details about the bombing and didn't know if there was any risk of a follow-up attack, but regardless, it somehow seemed wrong to do anything remotely enjoyable in the aftermath of such an incident.

"As we stood there and looked at the strangely normal street scene around us, though, Mohammed convinced us to go ahead with our plans. There would be more security, he said, and we should focus on the moment."

Lisa said as she debated whether or not to leave, as many Americans already were doing, so many Egyptians begged them to stay, stating they don't agree with the bombing, that it's not who they are.

Lisa said the couple's entire mindset was changed with that aspect of the journey, and even though they were horrified at the time, staying turned out to be one of the best decisions they made.

Lisa said going to Egypt

was one of the main things she wanted to do in the tour.

Besides seeing some of the world's more famous sites, the couple said they also got a glimpse at other cultures.

Bob said it was interesting to see how people in Japan punish their children. While Americans tend to punish children with grounding and keeping them inside the house, Japanese parents make their children leave, and in turn the kids beg to be let back in.

Advocating that others try the same trip before settling down, or even to get away from everyday life, the Reils said a trip around the world is cheaper than one might expect.

The couple said they never spent more than \$18 for a hotel room by staying away from western hotels and restaurant chains.

After flight expenses, the Reils took advantage of buses and the sea for travel.

The couple took three weeks to tour Vietnam by bus.

For more on the Reils journey and how they made a dream become a reality, check out the book at www.bobrieland.com.

Now, the couple has settled down in Rita Ranch where they have a 9-month-old son. Lisa said she has already started the process to get her son's passport, since she wants him to have the same opportunities and adventures they have had.

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