

Starr gazing . . . why Alex chose to chronicle travels

★ **A FORMER English teacher has written a book to help the growing community of digital nomads who travel solo.**

Plan Safe Travel Solo offers a five-stage planning process that transforms a holiday dream into a safe reality.

Mancunian Alex Starr wrote the book before the coronavirus outbreak, but she has added pandemic safety guidelines.

"Covid is just an added layer," she said. "You have to do all the paperwork, the insurance and immigration forms the same, follow all the safety guidelines, making sure you tick every box."

Digital nomads are mainly professionals, who, especially since the pandemic, have realised that they can work anywhere in the world and have given up their homes to travel the world while working.

Some countries, like Barbados, have now introduced 12-month remote work visas to facilitate the phenomenon.

But Alex, the daughter of Erika

'I realised that I was existing, not living'

and Lionel Starr, of Cheadle, Cheshire, began travelling the world long before it became the trend.

In her gap year, aged 22, she spent time in South America, where she had to work hard to support herself.

As a teacher with a flat in Didsbury, she travelled alone in the summers to Australia and New Zealand via Hong Kong. But that wasn't enough.

"For many years, I suppressed my passion and submitted to the pressures of society," the 36-year-old explained.

"But eight years of teaching high school English wore away my enthusiasm, confidence and ambition. I was stuck in a rut.

"Confined by systems and norms, life was meaningless, lacked purpose and fulfilment.

"I'd turned 31 and realised that I was existing, not living, and ambivalence was ruling.

"An ambitious goal of travelling the world was born. It seemed daunting and unachievable, but stubborn and determined, my mind was set."

She quit her job at Cheadle Hulme High School, sold her flat and set off.

Single and with no ties, she travelled the world, until she became a digital nomad by setting up an online tutoring company, working in the countries to which she travelled.

She then came up with the idea



TRAVELS:
Alex Starr

of writing a book to help people like her who wanted to travel, but were worried about the practicalities.

She said: "I came to realise that a lot of people want to travel alone, but maybe they haven't the knowledge to do it.

"I had obviously learned a lot about where things had gone right and wrong.

"The book started off as a guide for women to keep them safe, but I came to realise that men can encounter similar difficulties."

Alex's accent is on pre-planning. The workbook includes questionnaires and flow diagrams to assess the solo traveller's physical, mental and emotional capabilities, as well as their budget.

She said: "You don't work out what a country's like when you are on the plane."

Alex also stressed planning to adapt should travel plans go wrong.

Lockdown obviously meant a pause to her travelling and it certainly wasn't the time to publish her book. But when travel began to open up this summer, Alex took off again.

And she soon experienced an example of how one needs to plan to adapt.

Wanting to visit her brother in New Jersey, Alex planned to go via Barbados, as, due to Covid restrictions, it was not possible to fly straight from the UK.

But the day before Alex was due to leave, at the beginning of July, the Caribbean island was hit by a hurricane.

She recalled: "Because I had planned it, I had a bit more of a budget to pay for extra accommodation until the hurricane subsided.

"Because of Covid restrictions, I think there will be a lot of people who will go to one destination instead of travelling the world.

"When I was in Barbados I met several couples who were going to spend four weeks there, instead of spending one week in Thailand and another in Cambodia.

"People are spending more

time in one country."

Alex does not own a car, only walks and uses public transport, thus reducing her carbon footprint.

She has also encountered fellow Jews on her travels. In Australia, she saw her cousin, Rabbi Ben Elton, of the Great Synagogue, Sydney.

She also worked for actor Dustin Hoffman's wife Lisa, promoting her fragrance-based jewellery on a cruise at Rosh Hashana.

"Chabad has welcomed me all around the world, everywhere except Malaysia where they are not allowed," Alex said. "They are amazing.

"I will visit Jewish sites if they are open. You have to pre-plan —

'Chabad has welcomed me all around the world'

if you want to go to a shul, you have to take your passport and ID."

And she is keen to point out that there is a big difference between being solo and being alone.

Alex added: "Sometimes I would book myself into a hotel for the kind of people there and sometimes into a hostel for its type of people. It's about planning.

"When I was in Barbados, I googled an expat WhatsApp group and went out for dinner with a bunch of girls on a lot of days. Because of that I did not feel lonely.

"Once you're happy in yourself, it's easier to make friends and connect with people. I have met some of my best friends while travelling.

"Covid was not hard for me because most of my friendships are remote. My friends in Manchester are used to me not being here."

Plansafetravel.com



ARCHIVES: Some of the Windermere Boys

Online archive details grandparents' journeys

★ **GRANDCHILDREN of 'The Boys' have created a landmark new online archive, documenting details of their grandparents' experiences after liberation, their journeys to the UK, the hostels that received them and the people who cared for them.**

The initiative, the outcome of an in-depth research project by Holocaust charity The '45 Aid Society, was led by historical advisor ROSIE WHITEHOUSE and '45 Aid Society vice-chairman PHILIP BURTON.

They set out to create an extensive history archive, with details of all 700+ orphans who were brought to the UK in five separate groups between 1945 and 1948.

The Boys are a group of orphaned Holocaust survivors who lost their families in concentration camps and who came to the UK after liberation. They are known as The Boys even though there were more than 200 girls in the group.

Until now, detailed information on many of them was limited to SIR MARTIN GILBERT's 1996 book *The Boys: Triumph over Adversity* and to the autobiographies by some of The Boys themselves.

But the new resource contains photos, a map of The Boys' birthplaces where they grew up, what happened to them on arrival in the UK and afterwards, as well as profiles.

ZAC GREENBERG, who worked on the research team and is the grandson of one of The Boys, VICTOR GREENBERG, said: "Their stories don't end with the fact that the Holocaust happened. They are more than just Holocaust survivors.

"They created a family, established themselves in a country where they knew nobody and didn't speak the language, so ultimately it is a story of resilience and perseverance. I think it is incredibly important to share that because people can learn from it."

The '45 Aid Society team, led by Mr Burton, gathered a team of researchers – made up of grandchildren of The Boys – to undertake research using archives from around the world, including the British Library, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and Yad Vashem.

The '45 Aid Society launched the archive at the weekend, with a film called *Introducing the Archive of The Boys*.

It hopes that the online archive will be useful to many, including families of The Boys, educators, historians and academics and anyone who has an interest in learning about their remarkable stories.

Visit: Tinyurl.com/Boys-JT and watch the film: Tinyurl.com/Film-JT

War heroes remembered

★ **AJEX held a service of commemoration at the Jewish war memorial at Willesden Jewish Cemetery, London, on Sunday.**

AJEX national chairman MIKE BLUESTONE spoke about his great-uncle, LANCE CORPORAL JACOB ALBERT.

He was a member of the 2nd Battalion London Regiment and died in the First World War on June 14, 1917.

His name is mentioned at the Arras Memorial in France, but he has no known grave.

"We owe our fallen brothers and sisters the honour, the respect, of being here today," Mr Bluestone said.

RABBI REUBEN LIVINGSTONE led the memorial service.

AJEX will hold its annual remembrance parade and ceremony at The Cenotaph, in central London, on November 21 (2pm).

Details: AJEX.org.uk

HAVA LAUGH

★ **A RELIGIOUS Jew was representing Israel at the Winter Olympics in the downhill slalom skiing event.**

He was a favourite for a medal, but on the day of the final, the Frenchman won gold, America won silver and

Switzerland took bronze.

The Israeli was the slowest to go through all 20 gates on the course.

"What happened to you?" screamed his trainer.

The Olympian replied: "One of those idiots put a mezzuzah on each gate."