

How did you come into the tourism industry?

It was not a planned move, though I am a traveller with a capital 'T', and in my college days, I nursed dreams of wandering all over the world. After my graduation from Mumbai's Sydenham College, a job was more a matter of survival. I enrolled later at Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies but dropped out. Somehow, I continued to stay in the industry.

Perhaps it had something to do with losing my first job, which was with an international airline—I had to stay in the battlefield to prove myself. I have written all about it in my book, *Wise Enough to be Foolish*, out in July. After twenty-one years in the industry, I realize that this is exactly what I was born to do.

You've been with travel operator Globus for years. Your experience?

Globus pioneered experiential touring, showcasing places with local flavours and experiences. My role as its regional director for South Asia and the Middle East has been to grow the outbound business from these regions to Europe, North and South America. I've travelled between Asia, Europe and the US for work.

With such a busy job, how did you start Active Holiday, and how do you juggle the two?

I have always been involved in sports. I am a long-distance runner. I love cycling (even to work), trekking, rafting and so on. I started travelling overseas for these activities and became convinced that there are more people who would love to do this. This type of holidaying allows you to get behind the scenes, chat with the locals, stay at quaint little locally run inns, eat the food people cook at home... that is the essence of an active holiday experience. This is how the thought of The Active Holiday Company was born.

I set up my own travel company in Bangalore in 2002. When I got a job at Globus, my husband took over the supervision of that company. So it was not very difficult for me to start Active Holiday by expanding the team. Some discomfort is good. It is what challenges you and inspires you to create.

What's the difference between working at Active Holiday and in a corporate entity?

Running Active Holiday is not 'work'—it allows me to have a lot of fun and do the things that I love to do. In a small company, one has to think hard before taking decisions as all resources are scarce, but you have creative freedom. Big brands open a lot of doors for you, but you have to operate 'in the box' to fulfil corporate objectives. I enjoy the best of both worlds.

What is an average working day for you?

The high season is to get things off the



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ground— sales, marketing, communication, partnerships... The low season is to get ready for the next one. Apart from working extra hours, my lifestyle hasn't changed too much since I set up Active Holiday. I play squash and swim a kilometre once a week. On weekdays, I train thrice a week with a running group called the 'Pacemakers' and I cycle to work. I also make time to have fun with my daughters and my husband. I have one life to live, and I live in the moment!

Your most adventurous trip?

My ability to take risks has lessened drastically since I had children. So, in recent years, I have leaned towards 'safe' adventures. I have travelled to Jordan to run the Dead Sea Ultra Race, returned home to change bags and then trekked up to the Everest Base Camp. I also had an amazing time discovering the Inca history in Peru and cycling in Tuscany. My

most memorable experience was a whitewater rafting trip some years ago—I fell off the raft and almost drowned!

This summer, I am headed to Tromso in Norway to run the Midnight Sun Marathon. And I still have climbing the Kilimanjaro, the London Triathlon, the Great Migration safari and scuba-diving on my bucket list!

Do your Indian clients make typical demands?

The one that beats me all the time is our need for Indian food! Despite all the exposure that Indians have today, a majority of them still want their own food when travelling. One request that I found funny was when a single male traveller asked us to find a single female traveller to share his room. We cheekily responded that we were a travel company and not a dating service!

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