

JETSETTER

Rana Florida

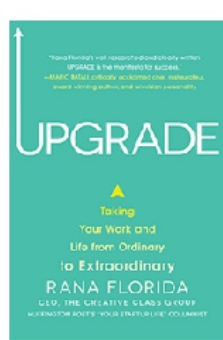
CEO of the Creative Class Group and Author

Rana Florida is knows a thing or two about jetsetting and taking it up a notch. The Jordanian glamazon (and wife of best-selling *Creative Class* series author and urban studies theorist Richard Florida), is a trifecta of beauty, brains and branding. Born and raised in Troy, Michigan and landing in Toronto after living in New York, Washington, Jordan, and Abu Dhabi, Rana is the CEO of the Creative Class Group in Toronto and the author of *Upgrade: Taking Your Work and Life from Ordinary to Extraordinary*. While directing the creative consultancy, she also writes for *Huffington Post*, HGTV and has appeared on The Today Show and led marketing communications at HMS Host, one of the world's largest airport developers.

We talk to Rana this as week she unveils her new book, *Upgrade: Taking Your Work and Life from Ordinary to Extraordinary*.



Upgrade: Taking Your Work and Life from Ordinary to Extraordinary by Rana Florida



MacBook Air



Bose Noise Cancelling Headphones



iPhone 5

5 essential travel items

1. My passport
2. Mac Book Air
3. Bose noise cancelling headphones
4. iPhone 5 with FaceTime
5. My husband (required accessory)

Most memorable vacation

Valentine's Day in Krasnoyarsk Krai, Siberia. We flew from Washington, DC to Moscow and then rode a minister's private jet to Siberia. The entire trip was an adventure. Before we left there were scary news reports about a mysterious fall of orange snow. The temperature was 13 degrees below zero and when we finally arrived, the hotel assigned us the wrong room, the large naked man we walked in on chased us down the hall, screaming at us in Russian. Our tour guide went AWOL after we all attended a raucous bonfire party on the ski slopes and left us in the lurch at a really inopportune moment. Those are just a few of the twists and turns.

Favourite travel destination

The Amalfi coast, which is listed at a UNESCO World Heritage site as a cultural landscape. Positano [Salerno, Italy] is the most beautiful beach town with amazing food and wine. We were married in the 11th century Villa Cimbrone in Ravella, just up the way and we honeymooned at the Capri Palace and Resort in Ana Capri. I love swimming in the stunning blue grotto, which is flooded with brilliant blue and emerald light.

Favourite hotel and why

Villa D'este in Cernobbio Province of Como, Italy. The views of Lake Como are spectacular and just a short walk to Harry's Bar on the Lake for a Bellini!

Describe your dream vacation

I recently took one with my husband, sisters, my mother and nephews. They came to visit us in Abu Dhabi and we took our nephews dune bashing in the desert. Hands down, it was one of the most fun and possibly the craziest experience of my life. My sisters and I lost our voices from screaming so much!

First thing you check out when checking into a hotel room

The guest arrival experience. My husband and I are cultural curators for Le Meridien hotels worldwide. Working with creative tastemakers such as Ricardo Illy, Chef Jean Georges Vongerichten, artistic director Jerome Sans and several others, we helped transform traditional lobbies into intellectual cultural hubs.

Q & A

Favourite city to live

With my last name? Miami Beach, Florida! Where else can you go paddleboarding, Vespa riding, play tennis, take in water views, enjoy 80 degree weather in January and be surrounded by a diverse international population, not to mention 5 star restaurants, hotels and amenities, arts and culture and a terrific international airport? Miami Beach is dense and has the ease of walkability, but you're surrounded by lush green vegetation and crystal blue ocean water, the intercostal and Biscayne bay.

Favourite hotel amenity/luxury extra

My list is long. Surprisingly high-speed internet is still a luxury. My husband likes to watch me go bananas when the connection is slower than a dial up. I also like a nonsmoking hotel, an extra bathroom, slippers, a soft bathrobe, a gym and 24 hour room service, especially when I travel to Asia and wake up my husband at 3 am because I can't sleep and want to order French fries and champagne.

Where will you go on your next vacation

I'm so excited to check out Bangkok, one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the world and full of contrasts. I want to take a few extra days to check out Angkor Wat in Siem Reap, Cambodia, the 12th century Buddhist temple and the largest religious complex in the world. Then we'll take some time to chill in Phuket, Thailand and Bali, Indonesia.

I'm also excited about an upcoming trip to Mexico City, my first visit to this city of almost 9 million people, one of the largest in the world.

Best city for...

shopping: New York. From food and wine to the season's latest fashions, everything can be delivered right to your front door in minutes. Like no other city!

food: Noosa, Australia in the Sunshine Coast region of South East Queensland. Restaurants on the beach offer fresh ingredients, great local flavors, the catch of the day and amazing wine pairings. The Noosa International Food and Wine Festival, which highlights the region's culinary richness, recently celebrated their 10-year anniversary.

art & culture: Barcelona is a bustling city of more than 1.5 million people, which offers something for everyone. I love the natural beauty of its beaches, its culinary experiences, its historic buildings and architecture, and its many art museums and galleries, theaters, ballets and concert halls.

nature: Maasai Mara in Kenya, which is famous for its large population of lions, leopards and cheetahs. I went for the annual Great Migration and saw herds of zebra, gazelles, and wildebeest moving across the Serengeti. It's amazing to see these majestic creatures up close in their natural environment. It's also pretty surreal to go to bed and hear the lions roaring right outside your hotel room.

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Krasnoyarsk Krai, Siberia



Rana Florida On A Camel



"Hands down, it [dune bashing] was one of the most fun and possibly the craziest experience of my life."
 Abu Dhabi, UAE



"Positano is the most beautiful beach town with amazing food and wine."
 Positano, Salerno

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