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Seat 3A: Rana Florida, CEO, Creative Class Group

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Entrepreneurs are natural-born travellers and Seat 3A takes you along for the globe-trotting ride, delivering travel tips, insights and candid photos from self-made men and women.

Name: Rana Florida

Occupation: CEO, [Creative Class Group](#), Author of the best-seller *Upgrade*, Contributor, *Huffington Post*

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Bio: Rana Florida is the CEO of the [Creative Class Group](#), managing new business development, marketing, consulting, research and global operations. The firm's clients include BMW, Starwood, IBM, Philips, Pinewood Studios, Zappos, and Johnson & Johnson to name just a few.

Rana has appeared as a guest on [The Today Show](#) and MSNBC. She writes [Your Start-up Life](#), a business advice column for the Huffington Post where she answers readers' questions and interviews successful creatives and leaders such as [President Bill Clinton](#), [Tory Burch](#), [Mark](#)

[Cuban](#), [Mario Batali](#), [Andre Agassi](#) and others. Rana is the author of the bestseller [Upgrade](#), *Taking Your Work and Life from Ordinary to Extraordinary*.

Q: Most visited destination for business

A: New York: the center of media, creativity and business.

Q: Local knowledge tip

A: The weather and the hotel make or break the trip, double-check both and reroute or postpone if needed!

Q: DIY vs. travel agent

A: Travel team! If you need to get to Dubai, Tokyo or Hong Kong and back seamlessly in 36 hours and onto your next destination, it takes a team on the ground to have your back. We've endured reports of toxic orange snow in Siberia to being trapped in the men's room in the Dallas Fort Worth airport because 12 tornados touched down. When everything goes wrong, and at some point it always will, it's helpful to have a team!

Q: Most impressive airport

A: While I haven't been there, I'm so impressed with Singapore Changi Airport. Singapore is the garden city, so the airport was designed to be an open, airy space with lots of green. It has lots of gardens, outdoor access, and comfortable seating areas to reduce stress. And get this – it has a butterfly garden, rooftop pool, movie theaters, hotels, spas, and more. Now that's a place I wouldn't mind a delay.

While most of the beautiful airports are international and Asia, some U.S. airports have moments of beauty, such as artist Michele Oka Doner's sea life embedded floor at Miami International, and [Madrid](#)'s Barajas airport designed by Richard Rogers is gorgeous.

Please God, let La Guardia get a facelift soon!

Q: Preferred luggage

A: Anything that is 20 inches and carry-on size. I never check luggage . . . never ever.

Q: Preferred airline

A: Emirates, the new Airbus 380 is amazing. Private cabins, flat beds, big screens with iPad controls, individual mini bar, a desk, spa showers on board, Dom Perignon, it's insane!

Q: Aisle or window

A: Richard is taller, so he gets the aisle and I'm stuck in the window seat. But if you ever get stuck in the middle, claim both arm rests right away. Whoever gets their arms up first gets the spot for the remainder of the flight and you don't want to be that person in the middle with no arm rests.

Q: What three things are on your must-pack-or-will-suffer-a-meltdown list?

A: Bose noise-cancelling headphones, iPhone, and my Cat Bird NYC eye mask. Do not disturb and never wake me up for food.



Q: Jet lag strategy

A: Lots of green tea! Stay hydrated.

Q: Staying in shape on the road

A: Forget about it. It's too hard and sneakers take up too much room in the 20-inch carry-on.

Q: Preferred in-flight activity – i.e. sleep, work, read, watch movies/TV

A: Drink wine, watch a movie and sleep, sleep, sleep.

Q: Best hotel bar for networking with other entrepreneurs

A: The Mandarin Oriental in Hong Kong. We boarded a 16-hour flight hoping to get work done but the MacBook Air was dead. Upon arrival their staff helped us to the Apple store across the street and had it working within minutes.

Q: Time & money saving tips

A: Reverse booking. If you know you're going to return to the same place, and you're traveling from a cold weather city to a warm weather city, try booking a one-way and the reverse round-trip. For example, Toronto to Miami round-trip in winter months can be hugely expensive. But if you buy a one-way ticket YYZ to MIA, then buy a round-trip, Miami to Toronto, it will be much less expensive and you will have the an extra ticket to return one day because the airlines know Toronto or say Detroit or Chicago or Minneapolis are not big destinations in the winter months so they don't hike the rates.

Q: What hotel has truly lived up to the hype?

A: So many amazing hotels...

Eden-Roc, in Cap D'Antibes

Villa Cimbrone (where we were married) in Ravello

Emirates Palace in Abu Dhabi

Burj Al Arab in Dubai

Hayman in the Hayman Islands, Australia
Blow Up Hotel in Poznan, Poland
Swissôtel in Moscow
Rocco Forte Hotel De Rome in Berlin
Prince de Galles, Paris

Q: On the flip side, a hotel that has been a crashing disappointment?

A: Our hotel in Krasnoyarsk Krai Siberia, when they left us waiting in the lobby for three hours for our room after a 25-hour journey (even though we were guaranteed early check-in). And when they finally gave us our room, it was already occupied by a large naked Russian man who came chasing after me in the hallway when I “broke into” his room.

Also the Four Seasons Hotel in Amman, Jordan. I’m Jordanian, so I was excited to show Richard the gorgeous Petra and the Old City. Sadly, the hotel still has barricades, security screening and armed guards. Once inside it’s a sea of heavy smoke, even though we were on a non-smoking floor. Some dignitary thought it was okay for his guards to smoke. I had finally had enough, so I came out of my room in my pajamas yelling at the armed guards, half in my broken Arabic and half English. They looked a bit shocked but got the message and moved floors. Then the following day, Petra was closed due to an unforeseen snowstorm.

Q: What do you enjoy finding most in a mini-bar?

A: Pringles. Especially when travelling to Asia, I wake up at 3 am starving and unable to go back to sleep. I don’t want to wake up Richard so I don’t order room service. But I tiptoe over to the mini bar and look for that half can of Pringles and then slide back into bed and munch each one, savoring every salty crunch. Inevitably, this wakes Richard who says, “What are you doing?” and I will say, “Nothing” with Pringle crumbs all over the sheets.

Q: Describe your guilty pleasure when traveling

A: Eating, sleeping, drinking. I bank sleep whenever I can get it. I sleep everywhere, the back of taxis, buses, the hotel room in the middle of the day.

Q: What foreign phrase do you most enjoy tossing about?

A: “What habbass is going on here?” It’s a made up Arabic word which means, “what the jacked up cursing confusion is going on here?!” Happens a lot when traveling internationally.



Q: Brushes with greatness: Most famous or interesting person you have spotted or bantered with on your travels . . .

A: My favourite musician Jack White! Richard and I met him in Nashville. He gave us and Mayor Karl Dean a tour of his studio, Third Man Records. Then he invited us into his recording booth to sing a track, which was the oldest recording booth in the US, he had just acquired. We sang Happy Birthday to Mayor Dean, and he named the record *The Detroit Move* (because he and I both hail from Detroit) and we walked out with a track we sang with Jack White! Take a listen:

[http://www.creativeclass.com/richard_florida/multimedia_showcase#Happy Birthday for Mayor Dean](http://www.creativeclass.com/richard_florida/multimedia_showcase#Happy_Birthday_for_Mayor_Dean)

Q: Tell us about a great little place you recommend to friends

A: The Kruishernhotel in Maastricht, Netherlands. It's a renovated 15th century monastery of the "Crutched Friars" in the center of the city.

Q: "I would do almost anything to relive every minute of this hotel stay . . ."

A: The hotels in Africa were amazing, I went for the Great Migration and stayed in the Maasai Mara in Kenya and the Serengeti in Tanzania. I could hear lions roaring so loudly outside our hotel room door, that I called the front desk to make sure we were safe! In Tanzania, we stayed in an open-air hotel where the elephants came and frolicked in mud baths beneath our balcony. Africa is a trip everyone must take. Breathtaking wildlife!

Q: Confess to one thing you've nicked from your hotel room

A: The slippers. I always take the slippers. I love when we have guests for a visit; I pull out a pair of slippers and tuck them by their beds. They are embossed with Four Seasons Tokyo, Mandarin Oriental Hong Kong or St. Regis San Francisco – a fun little treat.

Q: Favourite island

A: Capri, in the Amalfi Coast. Perfect blend of natural beauty, great food, shops and a beachy chic feel.

Q: UNESCO World Heritage Site that blows your mind

A: Noosa, Australia.

We did some work there with a local developer and the mayor to educate the community on striking the right balance on the built and natural environment, with an aim toward conservation and sustainable development.



Noosa's beaches, parks and river are stunning. I took my first surfing lesson during a press conference with an Olympic swimmer at Main Beach in Noosa. It's naturally striking and has the perfect scale of the built and natural environment.

Q: The coolest hotel you've ever stayed in

A: The Villa D'este on Lake Como is so beautiful and is commonly referred to as "heaven on earth." The property has 25 acres of luxuriously landscaped park and terraced water gardens. The hotel has two historic mansions, one from the 16th century, and the other was built for a queen of England. The floating pools have the most breathtaking views of Lake Como and views of the Alpine foothills. If you sleep with your windows open, you rise to the sound of lapping water and breakfast is served on the terrace.

Q: The best spa experience of your life

A: My family went to Tel Aviv and stayed at the Movenpick on the Dead Sea. Instead of going in to the spa for a mud treatment, my three sisters and I just dove into the Dead Sea and slathered ourselves with the therapeutic minerals. I can't say it was very relaxing but we had a blast.

Q: A travel themed film that has really moved you

A: Anything by Wes Anderson. His films are usually about an exotic place: *Moonrise Kingdom*, *Hotel Chevalier*, *The Darjeeling Limited*. And looking forward to *The Grand Budapest Hotel*.

Q: A beloved travel book, fiction or non-fiction

A: Jack Kerouac, *On The Road* influenced me at a young age to have this wanderlust for exploration and travel. Reading Anais Nin and Henry Miller piqued my interest for international travel.