

Travel with a Purpose

by: KIM JACKSON

Sucheta Rawal is the founder of GoEatGive, a travel with a purpose company that combines the ideal mix of travel to exotic locales with helping those whose life consists of day-to-day struggles. Since launching her blog in 2011, Sucheta's followers include people from over 70 countries. GoEatGive supports numerous charities throughout the world, and coordinates trips for those who seek to combine altruism with travel. From the Bali's Children's Project to delivering food door-to-door to poor people in Peru and teaching English to businessmen and women in Spain, Sucheta's trips enlighten while providing life-changing experiences. ▶



Travel with a purpose was placed squarely in my path last January when Don Ashlock, founder of the AHEAD Foundation, visited our office to discuss humanitarian concepts with me. He was exploring ways and means to raise money for a school his family supports in India. I came across this topic again via the GoEatGive blog on LinkedIn. As a social media site designed to enrich one in a business sense, rather than the time-wasting self-gratification of Facebook, one is more likely to be productive and make valuable networking contacts on LinkedIn than by spending countless hours viewing pictures of Grumpy Cat or friends on vacation.

Sucheta Rawal, an Atlantan by way of Chandigarh, India, is the founder of GoEatGive. A graduate of Georgia State University, she obtained degrees (BBA and MS) in Finance from the J. Mack Robinson College of Business. After being one of the few women to work on the trading floor (Dutch Bank, ING) and experiencing the lifestyle a high-powered finance job can provide, Sucheta found herself feeling dissatisfied.

As we sit on the patio of the hip Muss & Turner restaurant in Atlanta having lunch, she compares our experience with growing up in India, where the mix of people is substantially different than other parts of the world. Her pretty face is framed by an abundance of dark hair, and her eyes are serious as she conveys her message. "After I had the money and time to travel, I found myself taking trips that left me feeling as if I had missed out experiencing the real country I visited. Everyone sees the same sights, takes the same pictures, and comes away with the same experience - the tourist viewpoint. I wanted to feel like I was a part of where I was visiting and making a difference somehow while I was there," she says as she continues. "I had an adequate amount of vacation time which allowed me to start exploring ways to travel outside of the standard tourist route. When my friends found out, they suddenly all wanted to accompany me on my trips, or have me design a trip for them. Out of this, GoEatGive was born."

Sucheta's not-for-profit movement offers travelers a unique way to visit countries, such as Indonesia and Cuba, where they have the opportunity to learn cultural insights from natives as well as support community projects by volunteering a week at a time. On all trips organized and lead by Sucheta, travelers sign up for short excursions where they spend a portion of their time interacting with the locals through community projects and service. "In Bali, few people realize that just blocks from the resort is abject poverty. These people work in the hotels, but have no running water in their home and no beds to sleep on," explains Sucheta. "The Bali Children's Project, which GoEatGive supports, helps teach hygiene and nutrition to children. Recently, we realized that the reason they >





are not washing their hands is they have no sinks or soap!” With this need identified, fundraising is underway to purchase sinks and have them installed at the village schools.

“People have life-changing experiences on these trips,” explains Sucheta. She has led projects that delivered food door-to-door to poor people in Peru and taught English to women in Morocco. One of the travelers on the trip to Spain had never been outside the United States before. Now, that person has moved to Spain to continue the work she started while on her GoEatGive trip. Sucheta believes the woman’s experience with GoEatGive gave her “empowerment to take that risk. Our mission,” she says, “is to encourage people to learn about different cultures through travel, food and community service.”

In addition to the trips, Sucheta organizes monthly destination dinners in and around Atlanta to encourage cultural understanding. Dawali Mela, a recent benefit at Chai Pani Indian restaurant, was designed to showcase the culture and food of India. “I believe cultural understanding comes from experiencing the people of a country. Atlanta’s Ariana Afghan Cuisine is the first Afghan restaurant in Atlanta (or perhaps even the entire state of Georgia). “It’s located on Roswell Road, and at first glance, doesn’t offer much curb appeal,” says Sucheta. “They have been struggling, because, who wants to support an Afghan restaurant in America? GoEatGive hosted an event there, and it was transformative. People loved it, and they loved learning about Afghanistan outside of what the media portrays. Meeting Afghan people and finding out they are not all terrorists made a big impression on everyone who attended that event.”

If thinking outside of the vacation box is appealing to you, it might be time to walk the road less traveled with GoEatGive. See what a difference you can make. ❖



1. Los Martincitos in Peru. (Photo by Cheryl Garin)
2. Village school in Bali
3. Volunteering at Bali Childrens Project.
4. Teaching English in Spain.
5. Orphanage in Russia.
6. Sucheta Rawal, founder of GoEatGive.

GoEatGive became a 501(c)(3) registered non-profit in 2012. Since summer 2012, Go Eat Give has offered Atlanta residents to go global locally through monthly Destination Dinners. We have taken groups on memorable trips around the world and are continuously supporting grassroots nonprofits, immigrant owned restaurants, and sustainable businesses in the travel industry.

Places and organizations Go Eat Give has helped so far...

- ◆ Indonesia – Teaching Hygiene & Nutrition Curriculum at Bali Children’s Project
- ◆ Kenya – Helping Women’s Enterprises at the Village Cooperative
- ◆ Nepal – Assisting K-12 Schools and Monasteries, Constructing Toilets, and Managing Health Post Through Volunteer Initiative Nepal
- ◆ Spain – Imparting Business Communication Skills at Vaughan Town
- ◆ El Salvador – Environment with EcoTours
- ◆ Cuba – Assisting farmers at UBPC Vivero Organopónico Alamar; Participating in Community Art Project of José Fuster
- ◆ Morocco – Teaching English at Le Feminin Pluriel Women’s Empowerment Center
- ◆ Peru – Delivering Pre-Cooked Meals to Elderly Through Cross-Cultural Solutions
- ◆ Russia – Engaging Children in Sports and Arts and Crafts at Orphanages

More info is available at www.goeatgive.com.

