

#theexpat



WEATHER



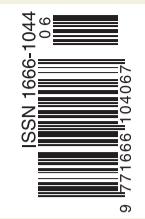
TODAY

High 25°C/76°F
Low 17°C/63°F
Sunny

TOMORROW

High 23°C/73°F
Low 15°C/59°F
Cloudy

MONDAY

High 22°C/72°F
Low 13°C/56°F
Sunny

CV

From: York, England
Lives in: Palermo Hollywood
Age: 32
Profession: Shop Hop BA fashion tour guide, freelance journalist
Education: English literature and French at Edinburgh University
Reading: The Psychopath Test by Jon Ronson
Gadget: I'm no good at gadgets, I like my clothes'

BY JAYSON McNAMARA
FOR THE HERALD
@jaysonmcnamara

Like thousands of European explorers before her, Sophie Lloyd began to feel like Asia wasn't quite cutting it any more; she'd been in Shanghai for five years. The twenty-something-year-old soon began noticing a glimpse of the Americas on her horizon. And sure enough, before she knew it she was sailing — flying really — toward Buenos Aires, where instead of the endless reservoirs of New World gold or River Plate silver of yesteryear, Sophie found contemporary Argentine fashion. Today, after nine years abroad, she makes a living *a la moda*, taking tourists, expats and locals on fashion tours across Argentina's trendy capital with her business, Shop Hop BA.

Born in York, England, Sophie Lloyd's story — at least in a nutshell — begins much like one would imagine: family life, school, an English literature degree from the University of Edinburgh — oh, and the cold, miserable weather of northern England that sends thousands flocking to the south of Spain in summer, or permanently, as far south as Australia. But Sophie's not the average British expat; she's not brutally sunburnt (some call that a "perma-tan"), and the innate adventurer has already accepted, at a comparatively early age, that she'll probably never live in the UK again. (She also mixes HP sauce with her *empanadas*.)

"I did try leaving BA briefly. I came back just over a year ago, realizing it was probably for the wrong reasons," she explains. "I went back and lasted about three and a half months and realized I'd made a mistake. I think I needed that closure to accept that this is my life and this is what I'm doing. Obviously I miss my family and friends, but this is the path I've chosen. I don't know whether I'll stay here forever. I never say never."

Sophie might not have any reason to either, with her business, Shop Hop BA, now thriving. "It's my first business and I'm really loving it at the moment. I get to meet so many different people, which is something I've always been drawn to," Sophie explains, rattling off a few details of last week's tours, which she customized according to the taste and style of her clients — locals, expats and visiting foreign tourists.

It's a niche concept in a city where fashion tours seem obvious; fashion coming out of Buenos Aires is celebrated the world over.

On a personal level, it also ticks many boxes for this style-savvy Brit, who says she's fortunate enough to be doing something she loves. "It's been a learning experience but I definitely think I've got an eye for what people want. Sometimes I'll

Sophie Lloyd, journalist and fashion tour guide

From noodles to ñoquis

send out the questionnaire but it's hard for people to express themselves or express what they want or describe their style," she explains. "But usually as soon as I meet the person I can work out what they want, gauge what they might be interested in. Once I meet them, the fashion route I take them on often changes."

SHANGHAI CALLING

Accepting that there's curiosity about fashion doesn't necessarily guarantee work in the industry, Sophie has managed to wrangle up some pretty impressive experience in the world of style. In 2005, she packed up and moved to Shanghai, at a moment when the emerging Chinese market was barely finishing off its hemline.

"When I was there it was that time when China was a real up-and-coming country, an emerging market, that was 2005," she recalls. "There weren't so many foreigners. You wouldn't see a foreigner in the streets for days when I first got there. But by the end of it at certain bars you wouldn't spot a single Chinese person."

Sophie scored a gig as a freelance fashion journalist for a couple of lifestyle magazines in China, which was a launch pad for the English literature graduate to move onto bigger and better things — and seemingly just at the right time.

"I also had my own column for a few months in the *China Daily*, which was great as I got to go to fashion events all over China and meet some really interesting people. I did some guide book writing and shopping-related stuff about Shanghai, and I also got involved in costume designing for theatres."

Her overall experience in China was a positive one, but the massive differences between local culture and her own were a challenge, Sophie explains.

"Shanghai is an amazing city in a fascinating country, but it's not somewhere I could live forever. More than in Argentina, you live in a real expat bubble there, given that the culture and the mentalities are so different," she says. "It's a very cosmopolitan city but there's still that Chinese mentality, which for better or worse is challenging for someone who's not from there."

Sophie ended up spending a whopping five years in China, and by the time she arrived in BA it was noticeable, she recalls.

"Business cards in China are a big deal. They're one of the first things you exchange when you meet someone," she explains. "So at one point here in BA I handed someone my business card with both hands, which is how it's done in China, and they asked me, 'You've been in China, haven't you?'"

IN SEARCH OF GOOD AIR, IN SEARCH OF BUENOS AIRES

From noodles to ñoquis, the long and short of the story behind Sophie's eventual move from China to Argentina was a simple desire for a change of scenery — or perhaps for the good air of Buenos Aires, after a foggy time in Shanghai.

"I had had enough of living in East Asia and didn't really want to go back to England," she explains. "I felt like I had done what I needed to do in China. Looking back,

it was amazing."

For the next leg of her slow but sure journey around the globe, Sophie had no expectations.

"I really loved the vibe of the city. I guess it also had to do with moving here with an ex boyfriend as well," she reveals.

"There was the outdoor café culture and finding people sitting out on the streets all

explains, conceding that in this hot-blooded part of the world many expats who arrive with partners eventually end up going it alone.

"A lot of people tend to come here for one to two years and then leave," she explains. "And it's actually around summer — this time of the year — that people start to go. I've got a going-away dinner lined

'The expat life is always changing; you're constantly meeting new people. But it has its disadvantages too as you tend to find yourself going through cycles of friends. A lot of people say expat life isn't real life, but I don't agree. I think it's just a different style of living.'

the time — day or night, and especially in summer. I like the mentality here, too. Obviously I enjoy working, but Argentines work to live. It's not such a stressed, money-hungry culture which is one of the reasons why I have no desire to go back to England, or London specifically," she adds.

And what happened to that boyfriend of hers?

"He moved back to the States after about a year and I chose to stay," a single Sophie

up for Friday."

However, Sophie insists she's gotten used to goodbyes.

"It's part of the expat lifestyle. Obviously living in Shanghai and here, I've gone through a lot of friends. At the same time I've also got a lot of really good friends all over the world who I can go and visit."

And visit it shall be. This expat, if it's not yet clear, is a BA stayer.



Sophie Lloyd