

WHAT DO YOU DO FOR A LIVING?

MEET EIGHT FREE SPIRITS WHO WON'T SETTLE FOR A NINE-TO-FIVE LIFE



PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

THE MIME ARTIST

LARA MATOSSIAN-ROBERTS

FROM Armenia

What do you do for a living?

I'm a mime artist and actor.

What made you pursue this career?

A burning passion. Nothing else makes me feel more alive than mime.

Where did you train?

The Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts in London.

How do people react when you tell them what you do?

Surprised. I'm usually the only mime artist they've met in Dubai.

Tell us about a memorable day at work.

I had an entertainment contract at one of the Dubai malls and was performing there regularly on weekends. A girl of about six, who I'd performed illusions for earlier that evening, came and found me

later. She gave me a hand-written note saying she loves me. It touched my heart.

What has been your funniest day at work?

A lady dining at a mall restaurant saw me performing and jumped out of her seat in fright, nearly spilling her food.

What qualities do you need to do your job?

You need to be physically fit, confident and a creative storyteller. You have

to improvise with lightning speed and bring your illusions to life with accuracy. You also need a radar to detect rowdy teenage boys who enjoy bullying street performers. This is not a job for shrinking violets.

If I want to pursue the same career, what advice would you give?

Keep fit, keep training and be ready for anything.

✉ laramatossian.com



THE CIGAR SOMMELIER

KIMBERLEY KRIENKE

FROM Zimbabwe

What do you do for a living?

I can guide you into making an informed decision when you choose a cigar.

What made you pursue this career?

I fell into it. Years ago, I was on holiday in Cape Town. We were running low on money, so we walked into a cigar lounge to enquire about vacancies. We started training the next day.

What do you love about your job?

Cigar smoking is part of an

old, rich culture enjoyed by the discerning gentleman or lady. Cigars represent sophistication and elegance.

How did you train for it?



Most of what I know I learnt at the Hoyo De Monterrey Cigar Company in Cape Town. The rest I acquired through years of experience. Just like wine, cigars are always progressing, so cigar sommeliers are always learning.

How do people react when you tell them what you do?

I get all sorts of reactions. Most people ask what a cigar sommelier is. Many have heard of a wine sommelier, but never a cigar sommelier. Also, being female and black, the natural assumption is that I am Cuban. In fact, I am from Zimbabwe.

Tell us about a memorable day at work.

I served Sir Alex Ferguson and the Manchester United team when they came to Cape Town in 2002. That was amazing.

What has been your funniest day at work?

Once a group of guys walked into a bar I worked at and blindly ordered the most expensive cigars. They got a shock when they received the bill.

What qualities do you need to do your job?

A passion for cigars. A good nose and palate are a plus.

If I want to pursue the same career, what advice would you give?

The best way into the business is to find a cigar sommelier to act as your mentor. Do as many cigar workshops as you can – knowledge will get you far.
 🏠 *Izel, Conrad Hotel, Sheikh Zayed Road, Dubai, Tue to Sat 6.30pm to 3am. Tel: (04) 4447111. Metro: World Trade Centre. conradhotels3.hilton.com*



THE ADVENTURER

OMAR SAMRA

FROM

Egypt

What do you do for a living?

I run Wild Guanabana, an adventure travel company that takes people on life-changing journeys in wild and wonderful destinations around the world. [Samra was the first Egyptian and youngest Arab to summit Mount Everest.]

What made you pursue this career?

I worked in finance in London and Hong Kong, but never felt fulfilled. In May 2009, at the height of the financial crisis, I took a leap of faith and followed my passion for travel by starting Wild Guanabana.

What do you love about your job?

Seeing the transformation in people after they come back from trips is fantastic. Whether it's adopting a

healthier lifestyle or quitting an uninspiring job, plugging into nature always gives people the clarity of mind that they need to achieve balance in their life. Going to the mountains and calling it my office is pretty good too.

How did you train for it?

I've been climbing mountains and travelling the world for over two decades so I'm prepared for most adventures. For more challenging experiences I try to ramp up training a few months prior and get on as many hikes and climbs as I can.

In most cases the trips we do are for first-timers, and here the most important thing is just give it a go.

How do people react when you tell them what you do?

They are either envious or don't take me seriously. Some want to quit their jobs on the spot and join the team.

Tell us about a memorable day at work.

I got to the top of Kilimanjaro with one

of our clients, after supporting him for five months to lose 22kg. Since then he's climbed a couple more mountains with us. He also overcame his fear of public speaking when we invited him to talk about his experience to a room of 200 people.

What's the weirdest request you've had on the job?

Someone wanted to go to space. We ended up sending him to a Russian cosmonaut centre in Moscow for space training and then on a MiG-29 into the stratosphere to experience a few seconds of weightlessness.

What qualities do you need to do your job?

No day is like the one before so you better not like routine. Creativity, an entrepreneurial spirit and passion for serving others are assets.

If I want to pursue the same career, what advice would you give?

Take the leap of faith and do it. The day I started Wild Guanabana is the day I stopped working.

✉ wildguanabana.com



THE TRAVEL PHOTOGRAPHER

CATALIN MARIN

FROM

Romania

What do you do for a living?

I am a commercial photographer who puts a lot of emphasis on travel photography.

What made you pursue this career?

I have always loved travelling and photography was a natural extension. The further you travel, the better you want your images to become and that led me to learn about photography and pursue it as a full-time job.

What do you love about your job?

Doing this job allows me to get closer to the places I have always wanted to see. There's nothing like spending time in a remote place photographing its landscapes and its people.

How did you train for it?

I started a photography blog to share my images with family and friends. I attended photography workshops in Dubai and shot the city as much as possible. This helped me understand how to photograph a place and find new angles.

How do people react when you tell them what you do?

They usually tell me I am lucky to do this for a living. I try to explain that although luck does play a part,

there is also a lot of work involved and a lot of long days waiting for the right moment.

Tell us about a memorable day at work.

A few years ago I went to Iceland during

midsummer when it never gets dark at night. My plan was spend the nights photographing the amazing landscape. One night at about midnight I was at one of the most awe-inspiring places I have been: the Gullfoss Waterfall. Nobody was there and it felt like nature was putting on a private show for me.

What about your scariest day?

In Agra, India, a few years ago, we were taking pictures of the sunset when six aggressive monkeys surrounded us. I used my tripod to protect us until people came and scared them away.

Any funny moments?

In Antarctica we were in a boat photographing huge icebergs. We cut some ice and made a Martini chilled with 10,000-year-old ice.

What qualities do you need to do your job?

Perseverance. You have to put in the time, take as many photos as you can and be patient.

What advice do you have for people who want to do this job?

Don't shoot for someone else. Shoot for yourself and let your creativity shine. In the end the clients will come.

✉ momentaryawe.com

THE MERMAID

OLGA BARANOVA

FROM

Russia

What do you do for a living?

I perform aerial acrobatics. I currently play the mermaid in *Legend Of The Mermaid* at Dubai Dolphinarium.

What made you pursue this career?

I have always loved performing and I am lucky to have followed my dreams.

What do you love about your job?

Being in front of an audience. Hearing applause is incredible.

How did you train for it?

I trained in Russia as a gymnast and progressed from there.

How do people react when you tell them what you do?

They are astounded – it's not every day you meet a mermaid.

Tell us about a memorable day at work.

The first day at Dubai

Dolphinarium performing above the pool with the dolphins was amazing.

What was your funniest day at work?

Just a couple of weeks ago I took an accidental dip in the pool. My workmate and I were in hysterics.

Any weird requests?

Someone recently asked if they could borrow my mermaid tail.

What do you need to do your job?

Patience, dedication and strength – both physical and mental.

If I want to pursue the same career, what advice would you give?

Follow your ambition.

🏠 *Legend Of The Mermaid, Dubai Dolphinarium, Creek Park, Mon to Sat 6pm, Dhs120, children Dhs70. Tel: (04) 3369773. Taxi: Creek Park. dubaidolphinarium.ae*



THE WATERSPORTS INSTRUCTOR

SCOTT LADYMAN

FROM United Kingdom



What do you do for a living?

I manage Watercooled Dubai at JA Jebel Ali Golf Resort.

What made you pursue this career?

Beaches, girls and a tan.

What do you love about your job?

I love that I work outdoors and have an office on the beach.

How did you train for it?

Watercooled is a Royal Yachting Association (RYA) training centre, so all the staff have to complete certified instructor courses to be able to teach. I am an RYA senior sailing instructor, RYA powerboat instructor and a snorkelling instructor.

How do people react when you tell them what you do?

People often have lots of questions about watersports and are interested to come and have a go. I encourage

them to come and join the fun.

What qualities do you need to do your job?

You need to be hard working, friendly, passionate and, above all, not be afraid of hot weather.

If I want to pursue the same career, what advice would you give?

I would recommend you choose a particular activity to specialise in and concentrate on that. It is important to be passionate about what you do, so make sure you love the sport before you start working with it because, for some people, doing the same sport every day can take away the element of fun.

🏠 *Watercooled Dubai Watersports Centre, Jebel Ali Golf Resort & Spa. Tel: (04) 8876771. Taxi: Jebel Ali Golf Resort & Spa. watercooleddubai.com*

THE INDOOR SKYDIVING INSTRUCTOR

MUZAMMIL MUDASSIR SHAIKH

FROM India

What do you do for a living?

I make people fly.

What made you pursue this career?

My brother has been a wind tunnel instructor at iFLY for years. I came to Dubai and we did a skydive over the Palm and I loved it. He brought me to where he worked and I tried it. I spoke to the manager and a few months later they called me for an interview.

What do you love about your job?

The reactions I see on the children's faces are priceless.

How did you train for it?

The training was very hard: nine hours a day, six days a week for four weeks.

How do people react when

you tell them what you do?

They want to know how you can fly indoors and where they can try it.

Any weird requests?

Three Australian men came to iFLY wearing onesie animal suits. They wanted us to fly them in the suits so they could get a cool photo.



Tell us about a memorable day at work.

I will always remember the first class I taught after training. I was very nervous but it went a lot better than I could have hoped for.

What qualities do you need to do your job?

You need to be strong. It can be very tough moving people around the tunnel in 300kph wind all day. The hardest part is flying really big men.

If I want to pursue the same career, what advice would you give?

Keep strong and healthy. The training is hard but when you pass, it's worth the effort.

🏠 *iFLY Dubai, Mirdif City Centre, Dubai, Sun to Wed 10am to 11pm, Thur to Sat 10am to midnight, Dhs215. Tel: (04) 2316292. Taxi: Mirdif City Centre. theplaymania.com/ify*



THE ANIMAL BEHAVIOURIST

TRAIN STOCKER

FROM South Africa

What do you do for a living?

I work with a variety of both terrestrial and aquatic animals, both in zoological facilities as well as rehabilitation.

What made you pursue this career?

Working with animals has been a lifelong passion. I cannot remember wanting to do anything else. I spend most of my free time exploring

the coastline of the UAE and getting involved in environmental projects.

What do you love about your job?

I love the psychology of working with another species. Whether it is a

300kg dolphin or a 450gram parrot, it is a two-way relationship. I have learnt so much about myself and, of course, my aquatic counterparts. Training animals is a form of communication and a learning process for both human and animal.

How did you train for it?

I began volunteering when I was 12 years old, and that led to a full-time position. I also studied animal behaviour for two years. However, nothing beats experience and learning from other people in the industry.

I have attended international conferences, visited facilities in various countries and been exposed to many forms of animal care.

How do people react when you tell them what you do?

People are usually intrigued. I often hear the line, "I always wanted to work with marine mammals when I was a kid." I guess some just follow it through.

Tell us about a memorable day at work.

I saw the birth of a dolphin calf. It was an incredible experience and one I will never forget.

What's the weirdest request you've had on the job?

I get lots of strange questions about dolphin behaviour. Humans are definitely far weirder than animals.

What qualities do you need to do your job?

My job is a mix of animal care and working with people. For animal care you have to be incredibly patient and have a solid knowledge on the species. Being a strong swimmer is important and being extrovert and happy to engage in conversation is key.

If I want to pursue the same career, what advice would you give?

There are many routes to take. To become a behaviourist, get hands-on experience with recognised people or facilities, volunteer with NGOs, and from an academic perspective, look into psychology, ethology or marine biology.

🏠 *To see dolphins in their natural habitat, head to the fjords of Musandam in Oman. A three-hour drive from Dubai takes you to the turquoise waters around Telegraph Island, famous for its sea life.*