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Business Ideas

Events & Company / French Links Tours

Rachel Kaplan

Rachel Kaplan is a woman of tremendous energy and business flair. She oversees five successful web businesses, all specializing in customized tours, events and concierge services in France. She has had the pleasure and privilege of hosting President Gerald Ford, Senator Tom Daschle and Governor Ann Richards, as well as the heads of Bechtel, Lucent, Merrill Lynch, Gap and many other Fortune 500 companies. Her clients have included Eurogroup, Disney, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Parker Aerospace, Diesel Jeans, Livestrong Foundation, Pride International and many more.



In her spare time, Rachel has authored a series of unique guidebooks published by Harry N. Abrams, Inc. titled Little-known Museums In and Around Paris, London, Berlin and Rome, as well as a shopping guide, Best Buys to French Chic. She is also working now on creating interactive tours which connect visitors to local Parisians, including artists, clothing designers and artisans specializing in chocolate and bread-making.

Expat Women's Interview With Rachel

Expat Women: Rachel, tell us more about Events & Company / French Links Tours.

Rachel: The company has been operating for twelve years. My company is a boutique niche company that has a full-time staff of two people, as well as a team of over 100 guides in France and other European destinations. In good years, we handle over 300 requests a year - now we are doing about 200 requests. We work with clients from all over the world-most of whom are English-speaking, from the United States (the bulk of our business), Canada, Australia, Sri Lanka, Dubai and more. We work exclusively with the high-end market or small niche groups such as schools or museums, both of which may seek unique trips and activities.

We have also hosted a number of celebrities including a former US President, Senators, Governors, and even Hollywood luminaries and their families. We pride ourselves on our discretion and do not exploit their good will.

Expat Women: What originally inspired you to start your business abroad?

Rachel: As a person who has had a life-long love affair with French art and culture, I started touring to share what I love and make it highly accessible. I wanted to show people things they have neither seen nor read about, whether it's a two-thousand-year-old Roman amphitheater where gladiators once fought for their lives, a miniature map of all the major monuments of France which you and the children can literally walk your way through, to a splendid mansion furnished with eighteenth-century antiques and tapestries, Rembrandts, Canalettos and Chardins.

Expat Women: What have been your greatest business hurdles over the last twelve years and how did you overcome them?

Rachel: Setting up a company in a foreign country where there is a different legal and banking system than the one I was knew proved to be the biggest challenge. If I wasn't assisted by my life partner who is French I would not have been able to have the business I am running today. Secondly, I learned that is was essential to run my business with bilingual Anglophones who understood my business philosophy and who had excellent written and spoken communication skills. Lastly, and perhaps most important of all - I have learned to see every aspect of business in a foreign country as a learning experience and a growth opportunity.

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completely revised & updated.

Jo Parfitt

Expat Women: What words of wisdom can you share with expat women interested in starting their own businesses?

Rachel: First, I would say to know the local language. Without fluency in French, I could not imagine working in France as I do. Secondly, be sure that you love the country and the culture because your love for both has to outweigh any hurdles you are bound to encounter. Find a local business partner who knows the ins and outs of the legal and banking systems and who is also trustworthy. Seek out a niche that you can develop and where there is relatively little competition. Although France remains the most visited country in world, there are few businesses in our field that provide travel programs with such a high level of service and originality.

Expat Women: What's next in your business plan?

Rachel: I am currently seeking to expand my business in Europe and would love to find expat women who have excellent client contacts and who might know people seeking the types of services that we offer. I would offer a commission on each contact and sale that they bring to my company, so if anyone is interested, please contact me directly. Thanks.

Expat Women: Looking back, what was it about Paris that attracted you many years ago?

Rachel: I moved to Paris in April 1994 with the idea of both writing books and supporting myself through my communication and marketing skills, which I had developed in New York City. I wanted to change my lifestyle and approach to work, and fulfil some of my creative imperatives both as a writer and as a businesswoman. I also wanted to enjoy the quality of life that Paris afforded which includes excellent public services, an exciting and dynamic artistic and cultural environment, as well as the benefits of a well-maintained and aesthetically beautiful city

Expat Women: Do you see yourself returning to New York anytime soon?

Rachel: After 15 years, Paris city continues to have a powerful hold on me, and since then I have married a Frenchman - another great reason to stay! I have had numerous opportunities to return to New York City, my former home town, as well as to visit many other European capitals. Paris remains not only the world's most visited city, but a city that is constantly renewing and improving itself. That as much as anything, has kept me enthralled.

Expat Women: Rachel, our warmest congratulations on your impressive entrepreneurial record. Best wishes with your expansion plans and may France continue to treat you well.

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French Links Tours
<http://www.frenchlinks.com>

Events and Company
<http://www.eventsandcompany.com>

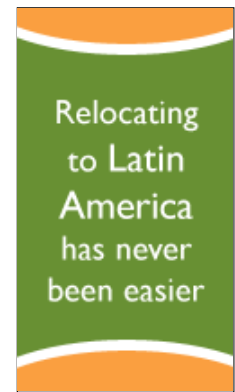
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