

A busy life.....

One is the director of a sales company, who managed to start up a business on three locations with more than 50 employees, who drives a big car and has a good salary. The other completed a Bachelor and Masters study, had a job as a Project Manager, followed by a new job as a Marketing Advisor, took on further study next to her full-time job, and had big plans for her career.

a new lifestyle

LIFE CHANGING



Chantal and Ybo in their new backyard! Co

FROM SUIT TO SHORT

They left everything behind and moved to a totally different and sometimes crazy country. They still have to work hard, but instead of suits, they are wearing shorts, get to kite a lot, and make sure that others kites have the holiday of their life.

This is, in short, the story of Chantal and Ybo, a couple from Holland who built an apartment complex and kite center in Cabarete: 'Hooked Cabarete'. How did they come to a radical decision like that...

How did you come up with the idea to move to the Dominican Republic?

(Ybo) Why not?

(Chantal) We had already talked about moving abroad some time, but it was never really concrete. We put it off at the time because of jobs, studies, companies, family, etc. But, just over a year ago, we were talking about it again and we were actually thinking why not do it right now? Why wait? So we looked at different options in Spain and Brazil and then Ybo came up with the great idea of looking for something in Cabarete. (Ybo) So we went there, loved the place and decided that that it should be there. Then, of course, there was a long period of preparation, starting with the building, but now, one year later, our business is almost ready to start. (Chantal) The reason we wanted to go was also because we got a bit tired of the busy, stressful, career making life in Europe. There is a lot you have to do because everybody expects you to. Like

having a career, having a lot of friends, having a nice car, etc. (Ybo) When you talk about material things, I used to be someone who found it really important to have a nice car, nice audio installation, nice clothes, etc. (Chantal) And I used to be someone who really wanted to have a good career. (Ybo) This changed last year. For some reason these things became less important for us, and it became more important to do something we really wanted to do and do it together. (Chantal) It is not that we did not do something we liked in Holland; we had a really nice life. But here it is totally different. It doesn't matter what you have done before, which clothes you wear, what studies you did, how big your car is or what you look like. (Ybo) And then of course coming here and starting something together is also a big challenge.

How did it work to start a business in Cabarete?

(Chantal) It takes a lot of time and it is totally different than in Europe. (Ybo) Well, it is, but there are also similarities. I have started three companies in Holland and that also took a lot of time to follow all the rules about personnel, taxes and these are things we also have to deal with here. The most time consuming thing is the building. A big part of the day we are busy making sure that everybody does what they should do at the building site.



ould be worse!

Was it easy?

(Ybo) No, not at all. (Chantal) But you can't expect it to be. We moved to a completely different country, where they speak another language, there are different rules and nothing works the same as in Holland. Nobody told us that it would be easy and it isn't. (Chantal) When it rains in the morning, nobody works here the whole day. (Ybo) We have to pay twice as much as we expected because the architect has expensive taste, the plumber decided to stop working for a few weeks, they bought new blocks for the poolhouse instead of using the ones we already had, and the electrician works so slow that we would like to kick his ass, etc. (Chantal) But now that it is almost ready, it feels like it was all worth it. (Ybo) Yes, it is. But, I have to say that if I knew certain things before we began, I might have done things differently.

What is it like, living in the Dominican Republic?

(Ybo) Just come here and see for yourself. Just kidding, but it is hard to describe. Of course, different than in western coun-

tries. Some basic things that are normal to have in Europe, are a luxury here. Like electricity all day, or hot water, or a phone connection. (Chantal) But these are things you get used to really easily. And the lifestyle is so different here, people are more relaxed. (Ybo) People drive here like crazy idiots and are using their horns all the time. (Chantal) From outside it looks like people drive like stressed chickens, but if you look more closely, you see that people are sitting in the car pretty relaxed, it's just a habit to blow one's horn all the time. (Chantal) And when you have an appointment, nobody is on time. (Ybo) The good thing about people here is that everybody is really friendly. Everytime we needed help, there was always somebody to help us. (Chantal) And these were all kinds of people; foreign people who live here like us, but also many Dominicans. For us it is nice of course that in Cabarete you have a lot of foreigners who live here, but we also like to hang out with Dominicans and to see how they live. One Dominican guy we met introduced us to a lot of people. And it is not only good to know these people, when we need people like a painter or carpenter, but also just to meet them and to become friends with them. (Ybo) When we came here we knew only a few people and we needed to start up our whole social life again. (Chantal) But this happened really fast here, much faster actually than in Holland. Maybe because now we have to.

Is it like you expected it to be?

(Chantal) Not at all. What we knew was that it would be different and that we would live much more outside than inside. Which is different because in Holland most of the life is inside houses and buildings. Living outside is like we expected it to be, although we still need to sit behind the computer more than we want to. But for the rest, I did not really know what to expect. (Ybo) We did expect that we would have a much more relaxed life. But this didn't come to reality at all. We still have stress and we still have to work hard. But this is okay. We do what we want to do and like doing it, so that is the most important thing.

What do you do all day? Only kitesurfing?

(Chantal) We are really lucky to live in Cabarete with wind most of the time, but unfortunately this doesn't mean we have the time to kite that much. (Ybo) But we do find the time sometimes to go kiting of course, even if it is only for half an hour.

Do you miss your previous lifestyle? Why?

(Chantal) Not at all. (Ybo) It is not that we did not like our previous lifestyle, but this one is much better. We are just as busy, or maybe even more busy than we were before and it is not like we have complete free evenings or weekends or anything, but we are able to schedule our own time, kite when we want to and run these two great kite businesses. (Chantal) And living in this beautiful country, being outside much more, living near the beach, this is all part of why we love living here.

Are you planning to stay in Cabarete for the rest of your lives?

(Chantal) I have no idea. (Ybo) We stopped planning things a long time ago. (Chantal) Maybe we will stay here for 5 years, maybe for 10 and maybe for the rest of our lives. We'll see.!