



Two years ago, the Smith family of Piedmont did what a lot of families only dream about: They left home, quit their jobs and pulled their two children out of school to travel around the world. They lived in more than 80 places on five continents during a ten-month period and taught their two children their third and sixth-grade school curriculms along the way.

“It was the most difficult, risky and costly thing we’ve ever done—and absolutely the best year of our lives,” says Sarah Lavender Smith, pictured to the left with Kyle, 8, Colly, 11, and her husband Morgan Smith in Barcelona in March 2010. “It strengthened our family, prompted a career shift and changed us all for the better.”

Now Sarah is the Bay Area host for a multi-city national event that aims to inspire and inform other would-be globe-trotters and career-breakers to fulfill their travel dreams. The event is called “Meet, Plan, Go!” and takes place from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 18, in San Francisco.

While folks are meeting at the Sports Basement 1590 Bryant St., San Francisco, travelers will host 16 other similar gatherings nationwide.

Each city’s event features a panel discussion with speakers who will answer questions about how they fulfilled their own dreams of traveling around the world. Sarah’s husband, Morgan Smith, will be one of the San Francisco panelists. Morgan is an attorney who left his law firm partnership to travel. He started a new business in Oakland—a litigation graphics and consulting firm called Cogent Legal—after their trip wrapped up in the summer of 2010.

“The ability to work long distance from almost anywhere that has WiFi, along with the popularity

of backpackers' blogs and books like "Eat, Pray, Love," has prompted a lot of people to consider altering their career for the sake of long-term travel," says Sarah. "But, most of the people thinking about it are solo travelers or couples without kids, and they tend to be in their 20s or 30s. Morgan and I hope to show others how it's possible to do this mid-career and mid-life with school-age kids."

Together, the Smiths and the other speakers will offer practical advice and insight on:

- how to handle the professional, personal, financial and logistical challenges of an extended journey

- how to budget and pay for a months- or years-long trip

- how to manage relationships as a couple or family while spending almost every hour of every day together and sharing small spaces during travel

- how to fulfill your kids' educational requirements through "roadschooling"

- how to plan where to go, what types of accommodations to stay in, and how long to stay in each place

- how to travel light and live nomadically

- how to figure out whether to work, how much to work, and what type of work to do while traveling

- how to handle the re-entry to home and work, or how to adjust to a new home and new job

The Smiths will be joined on the panel by these world travel experts:

- Sherry Ott, a former corporate IT worker who has traveled full time and worked as a photographer and blogger since 2006; her site, "Ottsworld: Travel and Life Experiences of a Corporate America Runaway" (www.ottsworld.com) was named one of the Best Around the World Travel Blogs on Boots'n'All travel website. She co-founded the website Briefcase to Backpack, which gave rise to Meet, Plan, Go! to help others make extended-travel and career-break dreams come true. Sherry has traveled to over 23 countries, primarily solo, and just finished driving 10,000 miles from London to Mongolia as part of an adventure-travel event called The Mongol Rally.

- Spencer Spellman, who blogs about travel and food at The Traveling Philosopher (thetravelingphilosopher.com). He left his job and home in the South to see Europe, Central America and the U.S. and to branch out in a new career direction, which he details in "The Event that Changed My Life" (<http://thetravelingphilosopher.com/featured/event-changed-life>).

- Kristin Zibell, who left corporate life to start a consulting career while traveling for two years around India, Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Europe. She is back to work in San Francisco and continues to write about travel planning at her blog Take Your Big Trip (www.takeyourbigtrip.com).

More information and a link to purchase tickets can be found on Sarah's website, The Runner's Trip: Run Long, Travel Far, Discover More (www.TheRunnersTrip.com).

Tickets cost \$15 each, and the Smiths are donating the ticket proceeds to The AFAR Foundation to promote cross-cultural exchange and international travel for underserved high school students. The event is organized by Meet, Plan, Go!, formerly known as "Briefcase to Backpack"; for more info, see <http://meetplango.com> or read the profile "Making the Dream Trip a Reality" in the New York Times.

More information about the Smith's trip and their travel advice can be found in the archives of

their family blog, <http://away-together.com>, or in the “Meet, Plan, Go!” section of Sarah’s new website, <http://TheRunnersTrip.com> .--- KB