

Angie

CHANNELLING CREATIVITY

After trying a creative holiday experience in New York, Angie Stone, 56, discovered hidden talents and a brilliant new career.

“In 2017, with both my children at university, I suddenly had the freedom to take a long holiday with my husband, Jeremy. I didn’t just want to go on a sightseeing trip, so I started thinking about what other kinds of holiday experiences we might enjoy. After doing some research online, I realised I was really craving a break away that would involve personal development and self-discovery.

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– Angie Stone, 56

I wanted to travel somewhere, connect with local people, learn new skills and immerse myself in the creative culture of an awesome city. New York seemed the perfect destination, so we booked our tickets, then signed up for classes in different creative arts.

Our amazing holiday lasted seven weeks. Most days, I enjoyed a yoga session in a beautiful Soho studio, then, between us, attended different classes in acting, life drawing or painting, taught by incredibly talented high-profile teachers in their field. Though it was a little daunting at times to be trying so many new things, it was also exhilarating. Every day, I didn’t know what to expect and I was pushed out of my comfort zone. In acting class, Jeremy learned and shared with me how to sharpen my communication and presentation skills. In the classes at the Art Studio NY, I improved my painting technique, and then studied design and drawing at The Art Students League of New York.

For the entire holiday, I lived like a local, explored like a tourist and learnt new skills with all the freedom and abandonment of a child. On my ‘days off’ from classes, I went to amazing art galleries like the Met and the Guggenheim. I also visited lovely parks and gardens, and enjoyed open-air cinema and off-Broadway productions. Another highlight was going on a walking tour of street art featuring famous people like Andy Warhol and Jean-Michel Basquiat.

In the evenings, Jeremy and I often sat looking out at the New York skyline from the private rooftop of our 6th-floor ‘walk-up’ accommodation. Having special one-on-one time together made the holiday feel like a second honeymoon. Every night, we went out to try fabulous bars and up-market restaurants.

I set a personal goal to make a real effort to connect with strangers and meet locals from the community. By the time I left, I’d met 42 new people, and I still stay in touch with some of them regularly. Almost every day, we also encountered celebrities, including Robert DeNiro, Liam Hemsworth, Rebel Wilson and Woody Allen. But the real and everyday stars were the ‘normal’ people like us, who were there finding a way to flourish and succeed in a wonderful, dynamic and competitive city. They reminded me that to make the most out of life, you have to always keep growing and grab every opportunity with both hands.

When I came back to Australia, I had new energy and enthusiasm, and continued practising yoga and doing painting classes. As we talked to others about our American adventure and how inspiring it was, many people wanted to know how they could organise a similar holiday experience. So, three months later, we started Creative Cities 21. Since then, I’ve gradually reduced my hours working as a nurse in a dermatology clinic to help build the business. We host one trip a year, but we’re hoping that will increase over time and that we will expand to other destinations. For our most recent New York holiday, we were very excited to include a session on creating music with an opera singer and composer from The Metropolitan Opera.

Going on my New York holiday has taken my life in completely new directions. It has made me feel more motivated to try new things and reminded me just how important creative expression is for nurturing my body, mind and spirit.” ►

