

King family packs it in? for trip around the world



By Mark Pavilons

A King family of five has taken the idea of taking a hike, to the extreme.

Sunny McGaw Whitehead, John Whitehead and their three children are crossing one big item off of their bucket list. It's a sabbatical year adventure and it's been in the planning stages for quite some time.

John is a business development manager at a designer stone and tile company and Sunny is the VP of marketing for a large seafood importer. Their children ? Angus, Duncan and Clementine ??are in public school and they are all competitive athletes ? tennis, gymnastics and hockey.

They'll need that energy as the family treks around the globe with only the basic necessities in hand. They're calling the adventure ?Five Backpacks.?

?We believe that this voyage will offer our children the opportunity for a more global understanding and approach to the world.

Empathy, gratitude and diversity are just some of the themes that we are embracing with this adventure,? Sunny said.

She admitted that given the extent of the journey, the budget (and safety) did play a significant role in their choice of destinations.

?We are also keen to stick mostly to warm weather/beach destinations. We are all water-sports lovers, so gym classes will often be comprised of snorkeling, surfing and swimming. And, the road less travelled suits our style as well.?

Sunny noted that as a family, they enjoy challenges.

A few years ago John spent almost a month in Nepal climbing the mountain beside Everest. Sunny has traveled to an impressive 35 countries, and has lived and worked in the Caribbean and Mexico. With their children, they have portaged, back-country camped and winter camped.

?We are interested in exploring and living a more minimalist lifestyle for a year. In our regular lives we live as most others do in the GTA ? two cars, a big home, toys, sports gear, clothes, etc. We are interested in the challenge (and the benefits) of living with less.?
The only tickets they are buying in advance of leaving for the trip are one-way tickets to Portugal. From there they will travel by planes, trains, automobiles, rickshaws, cyclos, boats, etc.

?John and I have done extensive research regarding our planned destinations and transportation options, but we want to leave a lot of room for spontaneity,? she said.

The Whiteheads are taking all of the common precautions ? getting medication and vaccinations, avoiding likely volatile or unstable areas, researching and planning.

?We recognize that there is always margin for challenges. We will approach these hurdles as we do all others.?

The family is set to head out this August, and return next June.

You can follow the Whiteheads via their blog at <https://fivebackpacks.wordpress.com/> As well, you can check out <https://www.instagram.com/fivebackpacks/>

You can also contact Sunny via email, sunny@edithleaver.com