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JUNE 2011

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**AUSTRALIA**



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**Thailand Champion**

Rebuilding an award-winning hotel after the tsunami

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EMIGRATE AUSTRALIA NEW ZEALAND CANADA AMERICA SOUTH AFRICA



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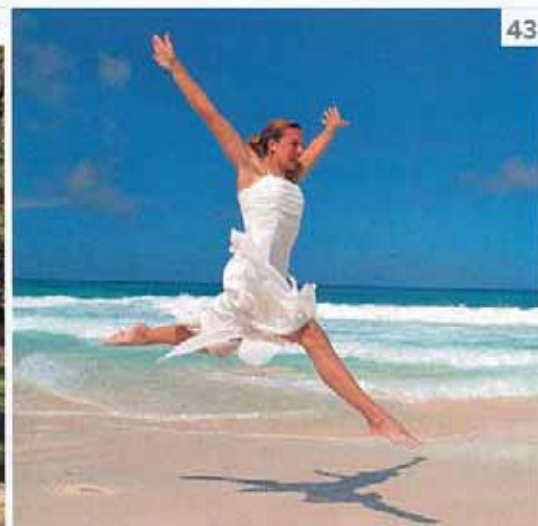
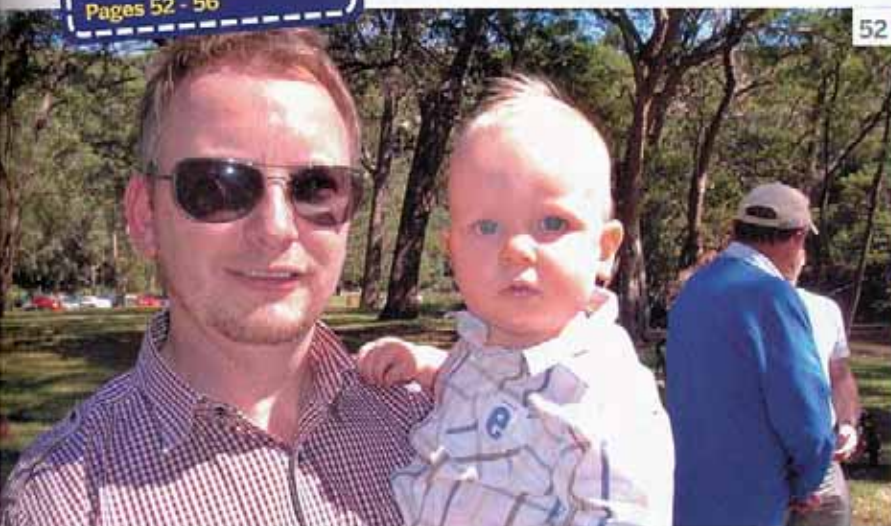
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AUSTRALIA

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# Editor's Letter

## Stride into a new life

This month at *Living Abroad* magazine, we're celebrating the mavericks, those happy few that don't let fear of failure hold them back from trying something new.

Mavericks like Alexander Hall, who realised that his high-pressure job in the City wasn't giving him much of a chance to indulge his first love, wine. He sold his house, packed up his car and headed for the vineyards of France, ready to be a student again at 36. After lots of hard work, he's happily settled with his wine-expert wife, Emma, their little boy, William, and a new business that lets him enjoy his favourite tippie as much as he wants to - he's advising prospective vineyard owners on buying into their dream.

One too many Guinneses inspired the Kemp family to pour all their resources into building a five-star hotel in beautiful Khao Lak, Thailand. Just as they were about to complete the project, the Boxing Day tsunami destroyed all their hard work. Being a former Olympic hopeful, Kate Kemp wasn't deterred, and along with husband Andrew began to rebuild. They finally opened in 2005, and their story proves that determination really does pay off, as they celebrate their fifth year of success.



Alexander Hall and his wife Emma are both wine experts and met in Bordeaux, where they now live

Another resort owner who found that persistence really does pay off is Jane Worrall, who moved to Turkey with her brother Ian and set up a yoga retreat, building almost everything from the ground up. Their remote location meant it took a long time to get their business going, but with the help of family, friends and the community they've made a place they can really be proud to call home.

If you've got a crazy idea that you think just might work, we've got all the advice you need to take the first step. Get those creative juices flowing with a massage at a top European spa, pick up the perfect property in Portugal or Italy, or get the next generation on the right path with the French school system. We're behind you all the way!

**Sue Hitchen, Editor**

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## New places, new lives



### Jane Worrall

Running a yoga retreat in Turkey  
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### The Kemps

Rebuilding in Thailand after the tsunami  
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Family comes first on the island of Cyprus  
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### Lee Taylor

From a Working Holiday Visa to a new life in Sydney  
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### Livingabroad Vol 4; Issue 46

Published monthly by The Media Company Publications Ltd, 21 Royal Circus, Edinburgh EH3 6TL, Tel: 0131 226 7766, Fax: 0131 225 4567  
www.livingabroadmagazine.com UK subscriptions (12 issues including postage) £44.40





# Championing Thailand

Athletics star Kate Kemp may have missed out on the Olympics in her teens, but she deserves a medal for her work in Thailand.  
Words **Anna Gizowska**

“I didn’t make it to the Olympics, but this was my gold medal,” says 44-year-old Kate Kemp. “Being able to stand by a community and to tell the whole world that Thailand, and especially the Sarojin and Khao Lak, are okay and safe to come back to, gives us a tremendous sense of pride.”

Kate is a remarkable woman. She used the determination gained from her athletics training and successful sales and marketing career to start a dream new business in Thailand

Kate and Andrew’s hotel opened in 2005

**“Being able to stand by a community gives us a sense of pride”**

with her husband Andrew, only to rebuild their lives when they were shattered overnight by the 30 foot waves of the tsunami.

Kate, a middle distance runner, had only one dream growing up in the small country village of Peasedown St John, near Bath – to get to the Olympics. “I had to be very disciplined. My parents didn’t have heaps of money, so I did a paper round and worked on Saturdays for extra cash to fund my athletic training and trips,” says Kate, who was already representing her

school and country, running 50 miles each week in training, and working hard to pass her A Level get to Loughborough University then on to the Olympics.

She got her place at university but her dream of joining the Olympic team was not to be. “I wasn’t good enough,” admits Kate. But all was not lost, because Andrew, the 19-year-old she ran into on her very first day at university, became her husband in 1994.

“After university we both worked hard and saved like crazy to travel the





world. We planned a route from Africa, India, Nepal, Hong Kong, China, and Asia to Australia, back across the States, and home. But we got as far as Hong Kong in November 1992, and instead of staying a week we stayed ten years," laughs Kate.

While she enjoyed a successful career in international sales and marketing for top Hong Kong firms, husband Andrew excelled in resort management. They had always shared a dream of setting up their own business, though. "We thought >







at South Africa, but it was just  
re Mandela's release and the  
ing time to invest."  
men, in September 1998, on their  
back to Hong Kong via Cape  
n, inspiration struck. "We had  
oo many Guinneses in an Irish  
nd came up with the idea of a  
l in Thailand. We even have a  
re of us in the departure lounge  
ollowing morning, with a glass  
ampagne, toasting our new  
l." Just three months later  
rew had found the land for their  
ect.

o Lak, which means mountain  
e sea, is famous for its pristine  
e beaches, stunning waterfalls,  
ons, mangroves and wildlife, and  
ome to some of the oldest  
ary forest in the world. The  
ps fell in love with it the minute  
rew found the land.  
We hired a lawyer and set up a  
i company to buy it, which cost  
uch as a four-bedroom detached  
se in Surrey at the time. It was  
e money than we had, so we  
hed in our pensions and other  
ds and borrowed money from  
nds and family, but we drew up

## "We had far too many Guinneses in an Irish bar and came up with the idea of a hotel in Thailand"



proper agreements and paid them  
back with interest."

It took the Kemps another four  
years to get a bank loan and start the  
build. "It was really hard, but we  
persevered. It was one of the hardest  
times, because we were apart for four  
years and we couldn't raise the  
money. I was the only one earning  
anything, and we were at maximum  
debt with the bank. Andrew was in

The Kemp family enjoy a  
hula party in the gardens

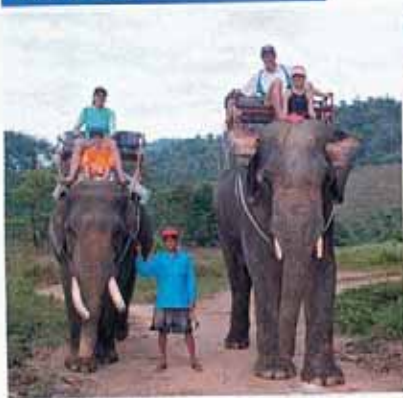
Thailand and I was in Hong Kong.  
He'd come back every four-to-six  
weeks, but each time he came over it  
cost us an air fare, which got us into  
more debt. It was extremely difficult  
living apart, especially when our  
daughter, Charlotte, was born in  
2000.

"Our family and friends were very  
concerned about us. But we finally  
got the loan in June 2002 and  
moved to Phuket in August. Our son  
Jeremy was born seven weeks later.  
People thought we were crazy,  
expanding the family, but I said to  
Andrew: "What's the point of having  
the best resort in the world if you  
don't have any children?"

"Thailand is a super place to bring  
up kids. The Thais are very respectful  
and it's good to be part of a society  
like that. We eat well – lots of fruit,  
vegetables and seafood – and we're  
lucky having an international school  
here that follows the British  
curriculum. Andrew speaks Thai and  
the children are picking it up, which  
helps them to integrate."

They set to work on the hotel  
build, and two years on it seemed  
that everything was finally coming





together for the family. The Kemps' beautiful new five star hotel – the Sarojin – was all but complete in mid January 2005 after six years in the planning, when disaster struck. In the early hours of Boxing Day 2004, the deadliest tsunami in recorded history struck the coast of Khao Lak in the Phang Nga province of Thailand, taking 2,000 lives and destroying all that was in its path, including the Sarojin.

"It was hugely hard, but the luckiest thing is that we gave our 500 hotel and contract staff a holiday on the 25 and 26 December that year, so we lost buildings and the hotel, but amazingly we didn't lose any people."

The extraordinary couple stayed on to help keep hope alive in the flood-ravaged community they called home. "Andrew and I made the decision very quickly to carry on. Khao Lak was still a very special place and a wonderful location."

Kate and Andrew kept all their staff on full pay and started a local community rescue fund while they put the devastated resort back together again. "I remember hearing a line in a film: 'If you are in a position to take action, you have the responsibility to take action.' And the one thing we could do to help the community was to rebuild our hotel and encourage tourism to return to Thailand, especially the tsunami-affected areas such as Khao

The Kemps are able to take advantage of many wonderful opportunities unique to Thailand

Lak. If there were no hotels, there would be no work for the locals," says Kate.

And instead of room numbers, Kate and Andrew dedicated a room to each of the men and women who stuck by them during those tough months. "Of over a hundred staff working for us during the tsunami, 78 returned to help rebuild and 53 were still working with us when we opened in October 2005. After one year of service, each of the staff are also given two free nights' full board with a friend each

year, as guests of the Sarojin."

Nearly 25 years since they first met, Kate and Andrew couldn't be happier with their award-winning beachside oasis. Today, the husband and wife team have not only rebuilt their dream luxury boutique hotel but have also rebuilt the lives and confidence of the Thai people around them by providing them with much needed support, work and hope for the future.

Who needs the Olympics with winning results like that? Success well deserved.



**The one thing we could do to help the community was to rebuild**

## FURTHER INFORMATION

The Sarojin has established 'The Sarojin Khao Lak Community Fund'. 100% of the fund will be distributed to community projects in the Khao Lak area. To make your donation please visit [www.sarojin.com](http://www.sarojin.com)  
Tel: 0066 (0) 76 427 900, [reservations@sarojin.com](mailto:reservations@sarojin.com)

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