

TRIBAL WIVES



Where are they now?

2 x 60 minutes

Six women, six tribes ... The Broadcast Awards nominated series Tribal Wives followed six women as they left the UK in 2007 to live for a month with different tribes across the globe. Where are they now? How has this extraordinary experience affected their lives ...?

Sass with the Kuna



The strong bond formed between Sass and Analida of the Kuna tribe was an unforgettable feature of the first programme in the series.

Analida became a role model to Sass, demonstrating how a mother was also a teacher, giving confidence and self-belief to her children. Sass had not seen her own mother since making the (unknowingly) fateful choice, as a child, to live with her father at the custody hearing following her parents' divorce.

Since returning to the UK Sass has formed a strong and lasting relationship and, after six months travelling in South America, has found a new career. Previously she worked for Oxford County Council; now, inspired by her time with the Kuna, she works for the social and environmental charity 'Earthwatch'. She would love to go back to the community – and promised Analida she would go back when she was married.

Karen with the Waorani



Karen had escaped an abusive marriage with two young daughters and no income. From the ashes of her former life she built up a successful career in HR only to realise that she was glued to her laptop and a slave to

her Blackberry. Where had her life gone?

During her weeks with the Waorani in Ecuador she totally immersed herself in tribal life from hunting and butchering

a pig, helping build the chief a new house and assisting with the domestic chores. Perhaps best remembered for undergoing a marriage ceremony with the community's foremost hunter, Karen developed strong relationships with several members of the tribe and since returning to the UK has become heavily involved with the ecological issues surrounding the Amazonian rainforest. Earlier this year she helped organise a book launch calling for western governments to aid the promotion of eco tourism in Ecuador by 'buying off' the oil interests in the country.

She continues to be in contact with Penti, the community chief and hopes to welcome him into her home near Milton Keynes later this year. She now takes time for herself and rarely uses her Blackberry.

Andrea with the Mentawi



Andrea applied to become a 'tribal wife' as a high achieving career woman who suddenly realised she had left herself behind. A qualified doctor, NHS anaesthetist who additionally worked

in dental sedation Andrea was a keen motorbiker, ran marathons and fenced for Britain in the 1998 Commonwealth games where she won a medal. With no special person in her life and not sure whether she should feel guilty at not wanting children she surrounded herself with cats in her south London home. During her time in the Indonesian jungle with the Mentawi Andrea became fascinated with their culture, their belief that everything has a spirit which must be respected but she was especially fascinated by their approach to medicine and their use of plants. Her time away gave her the space to reflect on her life. She realised that in order to achieve

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Andrea with the Mentawi continued

the personal and intellectual satisfaction she seeks in everything she does and do something useful with her life she needed financial security.

On returning to the UK she withdrew from her hospital post and rejected the academic medical career path she was set upon. She started her own company and has now embarked on a series of expedition medicine courses which will find her in the Arctic Circle in February, in the Namibian desert in April and in November the Costa Rican jungle. She has also featured in a book examining the lives of 'serial high achievers'.

Andrea sees her life this year as being in transition. It will always involve medicine but in a more interesting context. She loved making the programme and intends to return to the Mentawi to learn more about their medicine. She still does not know whether she wants children but she did adopt Bo-Rong the dog she befriended in the jungle and brought him back to the UK.

Yvonne with the Himba



Yvonne was brought up in a strict Irish Catholic home and her parents did not welcome the news that, unmarried and still at school, she was expecting a baby. So much so they insisted she marry the

father of her child – but the wedding had to take place on a weekday so few could attend and witness 'her shame'. This has haunted her adult life ever since.

Divorced from her first husband and separated from her second, she spent a month with the Himba in Namibia. Since returning to the UK she has divorced her husband and changed her job.

She regularly sends money to the school close to the Himba village where she stayed and is paying for the education of one of the children from the homestead. Yvonne believes her tribal life has affected her deeply and changed her for the better.

Lana with the Afar



"I know now that I probably thought that going to live with a tribe was going to cure me of my alcoholism once and for all." But after initial euphoria on her return, feelings of guilt and shame over the choices

she had previously made in her life overwhelmed Lana and she once again sought refuge in the bottle.

However, Lana's experience of living with the Afar has given her the inner strength to achieve a balance and order in her life. She now lives in Holland and is due to marry her boyfriend Jan in March in Sri Lanka. She works as a flight attendant for a private airline and is particularly pleased that being part of the series enabled her to spread awareness of the dangers of alcohol. Lana has received over 1,000 emails from people who could identify with her story, expressing support and thanking her for her honesty and courage.

"I even have a tattoo on my back now, reminding me of my journey to Ethiopia. I feel like Hawa, Isla, Fatuma, Karerra and Kadiga are all with me, all the time. I would love to go back and see them all again with Jan."

Dionne with the Maasai



Dionne's father left home when she was very young, but she was helped and influenced by a mentor who became a role model for her. She works in education with problem children and very much

wanted to marry and have a family herself but had a trail of broken relationships behind her.

Dionne's time with the Maasai in Tanzania opened her eyes and gave her a different perspective on relationships. She is now in a long term relationship and considering leaving the UK to live with her new boyfriend.