

# WHEN CORPORATE TYPES CHUCK IT IN

... they visit 24 countries, and this couple didn't stop there



HE WAS a manager of a company with about 50 employees under him, while she was the director of human resources at a bank. Both were highly-paid but felt nowhere near where they really wanted to be. Instead, this couple who have been married for 14 years yearned for a simple and unpredictable life. So, seven years ago, the Ligatos quit their jobs, sold all their belongings – save what fitted into their campervan – and set out on a three-year, 96,560km trek across 24 countries and four continents.

When that adventure ended, the Americans still hadn't had enough ... and embarked on a bicycle trip across Asia, spending just \$64 a day.

After almost a year and five countries – Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia and Malaysia – they are here for this weekend's Aviva Singapore Ironman 70.3 Triathlon. **DAPHNE CHUAH** (daphne@mediacorp.com.sg) caught up with them.



WEE TECK HIAN

Tell us about the day you decided to give it all up to embark on this adventure.

**R:** It all started one day when I was driving to work and chanced upon this giant billboard of the California lottery, which was for US\$14.1 million (\$21.5 million). We don't even buy the lottery but I started thinking of what we would do if we won that.

**A:** At that point, both of us had been holding regular jobs for close to six years. That was our life. We didn't do anything exciting, anything different. Every day was the same. We'd always planned to do something special during the weekends but when they came, we'd be so tired from work we'd just lie in and watch TV and not do anything.

We learned how little we needed to be happy, that we only needed a few possessions to have joy in life.

– Richard Ligato, on how much he and his wife, Amanda (picture), have changed

So, we knew we had to make a change, or this was how it was going to be forever. So, we asked ourselves one question: If money were no object, what would we want to do with our lives? And the first thing that came to our minds was to travel.

**R:** But we couldn't quit immediately or we wouldn't have enough to last us for long. So, we had a plan – everything Amanda earned for six years went straight into the bank, and we lived off my salary. We even managed to save a little bit of it. And that bought us the freedom and time to get away.

What's your impression of the various Asian countries you've visited?

**A:** Thailand is calm and relaxed, and the people are friendly. It's the same in Laos, just a little bit poorer. When we got to Vietnam,

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