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Work

Just Doing My Job - Ela Clark



Welcome to the Travel Awards

This month, we interview Ela Clark, whose jet-setting job has taken her from the Algarve, round the world and back again.

Tell us a bit about your childhood and background

I was born in Devon in the south-west of England and brought up in the Western Algarve, Portugal from age four, along with my youngest brother Paul. (I am the youngest of six siblings.)

My parents built a villa powered by renewable energy resources. We didn't have any electricity except for a generator until I was 12 when solar, and later wind power systems, were installed. It was homework and dinner by candlelight in the winters and no heating except for a central log fire.

We had a very free childhood, mostly spent outdoors and using our imaginations. We were given a replica World War II paratrooper 50cc motorbike at the age of eight to ride around our land, which was great fun!

My mother is a watercolour artist (Oxford University Graduate) and still exhibits her work. She took after my great grandfather, FSR Frederick Stuart Richardson, a renowned turn-of-the-19th-century watercolour artist who exhibited at the Royal Academy of Art, London. My great grandfather on my grandmother's side worked with Winston Churchill during the First and Second World Wars and they became great family friends.

My father had been a champion stock-car racer and Renault garage owner in the UK. He was also a keen snooker player and taught me how to play. I entered

pool, snooker and darts competitions, teaming up with adult teams and winning trophies.

Where did you go to school?

I went to nine schools in three countries and was taught in four languages. Portuguese school, French secondary school, Normandy, English international schools, German Rudolph Steiner school, UK grammar school and a UK comprehensive school for a short time. By the age of 12, I spoke four languages and started taking my IGCSEs one each year.

At the Nobel International School, Porches, Algarve, I excelled at sports and was awarded Athlete of the Year, along with a part-scholarship. I was later appointed head girl, where I learnt to address the school in assemblies and my lack of fear of public speaking became apparent.

What were your early career ambitions?

At the age of 13, I joined the Air Training Corps (under 16 RAF) where I flew a light aircraft for the first time - I was immediately hooked! I later attended an interview with the RAF when 16, hoping to have the opportunity to fly but they were more interested in my linguistic skills and invited me to join as an interpreter. My close family put me off the idea of joining the RAF due to the risk involved in possible military conflicts.

So what did you do instead?

I studied sports, then languages but at the last minute decided to follow my passion for the stage. I hadn't taken A-level Drama or English literature as they

were not available at international schools at the time. This meant I needed to win a place at drama school based solely on a live audition. After having taken seven months to save up the cash by working as a deckhand on a 30ft sailing boat six days a week, 11 hours a day, I headed to London aged 18.

As drama schools did not receive government subsidies, tuition fees were GBP 33,000, and with living costs, the total would be GBP 50,000 over three years. I therefore needed to gain a full scholarship.

I auditioned at the seven top drama schools and accepted one of only five scholarships awarded from 1,500 candidates at ALRA (The Academy of Live & Recorded Arts).

So how did your career develop from there?

Throughout drama school, I worked part-time in television commercials and as a sports model for Gossard & Berlei.

I also worked in silver service for the Royal Family during which time I served Prince Philip coffee at Windsor Palace and spilt it as I placed it in front of him, to which he responded by pushing it to one side. I was mortified but I did get to play with the Queen's corgis at Buckingham Palace, which made up for it!

I fell into radio work, (voice-overs and news/weather reader) corporate video presenting and hosting charity events and openings of high-end hotels such as the Hilton.

In 2012, due to a Portuguese television presenter having to cancel just 48 hours before a prestigious event, I was asked to step in to host The World Travel Awards Europe Gala (the Oscars of the Travel Industry).

The same year, I played the protagonist in a short film advertisement for the Portuguese Alentejo region; Alentejo, Tempo Para Ser Feliz (Time to be happy) directed by Los Angeles filmmaker, Tito da Costa. It is shown around the world in Portuguese embassies and won a Cannes Film Festival Silver Award in 2013. It has since received over 420,000 hits on [YouTube](#).

I was later asked to host the World Ski Awards World Gala, Kitzbühel, Austria and the World [Golf Awards World Gala, Portugal](#), co-hosting with well-known



Ela Clark tees off at the Santo Antonio Golf Club, Algarve, Portugal



TV Sports Presenter Steve Rider with Ela Clark at the World Golf Awards

British Sports Television presenter Steve Rider – (Formula 1 motor sports and golf commentator), which I continue to co-host with Steve Rider annually. In 2016, I hosted The World Travel Awards Europe Gala in Sardinia, Italy.

Your job takes you all over the world and you were brought up in Portugal but now live in the UK - do you feel Portuguese or British?

My blood is English but my heart is Portuguese. Moving to the UK was difficult as I am a foreigner there as much as I am in Portugal. We expats have a nationality of our own, a European amalgamation of different influences. There were 24 nationalities within 100 children at the International School alone. The Algarve seems to be the melting pot of Europe, with 'different' being the norm and flamboyance and emotion accepted as the Southern European way.

How do you see your working life developing from here?

This year I have been approached to host and play at Pro-am golf tours around Europe, starting in Marbella, so I am having to up my game and put in some practice time. I am also booked to host a club tournament finale (golf) in Orlando USA next year and have the Annual World Golf Awards gala to co-host in November again, with Steve Rider at La Manga Club, Spain. I also represent an international currency business in the public relations sector - Sol Capital Currency, whereby my communication and language skills are key for their global clients. www.solcapitalcurrency.com

Do you have any further ambitions - for example, to get into television?

Television allows you to reach a wider audience, which is great. I had a small part as a landlady in the film Four Feathers, at 18, which included a scene with the late Heath Ledger who was a lovely person. I played a maternity nurse in Holby City, where lunchtimes were spent with Barbara Windsor (Peggy Mitchell) and June Brown (Dot Cotton) from EastEnders.

It was a strange world to be in, catching the first tube at 5 am, arriving at Elstree Studios at 7 am for hair and make-up, spending copious amounts of time in the green room drinking tea and eating biscuits and 14 hours later, catching the tube home, only to wake up at 3.30 am the next day and do it all again.

I would be very happy to present for a travel, golf or property-related channel, should the opportunity arise in the future, but I feel most at home hosting international events surrounded by multiple nationalities from around the world.

Who are your role models - who do you admire?

I used to have actor role models - John Malkovich and Geoffrey Rush - but these days, I see life in a different light and take my hat off to all working mums out there. Both my sisters have balanced work with motherhood. I am so proud of them, and my mum, a strong lady to say the very least. I hope I can get marginally close to their level of achievement.

Do you have any plans to get married and have children?

I suppose I hope one day I will have a family of my own but for the time being, I am running with what weird and wonderful things come into my life. I am becoming increasingly aware that the most important thing is to follow your heart but always put happiness, health and family before wealth.

Many thanks but I think you'd better dash if you are going to be in time for the next ceremony!

Ela's Typical Award Ceremony Schedule

DAY BEFORE departure	DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3 day of the event	DAY 4
 <p>Source gown and shoes or select clothes sponsored by designer – pack two suitcases – one for gown.</p> 	<p>Morning Catch flight to location.</p>	<p>Morning Join one of the golf tournaments.</p>	<p>Morning Two-hour rehearsal, including working on tongue-twisters and tricky names.</p>	<p>Early pick up for those who need to leave early. Lie in for those with sore heads.</p>
	<p>Afternoon Met by chauffeur, driven to resort. Briefing with award team, receive and read script.</p>	<p>Afternoon Go through script with highlighter, ideally while sunbathing on the beach. Go to gym and spa.</p>	<p>Afternoon Make final adjustments to script. Go to hairdressing salon. Light mid-afternoon snack. Make-up artist. Assisted with gown.</p> 	<p>DAY 4 + 5 A couple of days R&R at the resort if possible.</p> 
	<p>Evening Go to dinner in local restaurant.</p> 	<p>Evening Select cocktail dress. Have dinner with guests attending award ceremony.</p>	<p>Evening Go backstage for final script run through. Meet fashion models who will be handing over the awards. Final briefing for everyone. Award ceremony takes place. After dinner party.</p> 	

Language Test

Without referring back to the interview, match the answers to the questions.

1	Tell us a bit about your childhood and background.	a	I studied sports, then languages but at the last minute decided to follow my passion for the stage.
2	What were your early career ambitions?	b	Moving to the UK was difficult as I am a foreigner there as much as I am in Portugal.
3	So what did you do instead?	c	This year I have been approached to host and play at pro-am golf tours around Europe.
4	So how did your career develop from there?	d	I suppose I hope one day I will have a family of my own but for the time being, I am running with what weird and wonderful things come into my life.
5	Do you feel Portuguese or British?	e	At the age of 13, I joined the Air Training Corps (under 16 RAF) where I flew a light aircraft for the first time.
6	How do you see your working life developing from here?	f	I take my hat off to all working mums out there.
7	Who are your role models – who do you admire?	g	Throughout drama school, I worked part-time in television commercials and as a sports model for Gossard & Berlei.
8	Do you have any plans to get married and have children?	h	We had a very free childhood, mostly spent outdoors and using our imaginations.

Vocabulary

Jet-setting – a glamorous lifestyle of international travel

Generator – a machine for converting mechanical energy into electricity

To take after someone – to inherit their characteristics

Stock car – an ordinary car that has been strengthened to run in a race in which cars collide

Head girl – a senior female student who is chosen to represent the school

Deckhand – a member of a ship's crew whose duties involving cleaning, maintenance and mooring

Silver service – a style of serving food at formal meals involving the server using silver cutlery

Mortified – a deep sense of embarrassment or shame

To make up for something – to compensate, to diminish the negative effect of something

To fall into X – to end up doing X by chance

Voice-over – a piece of narration to a film or advert

Protagonist – main actor or character

Expat – short form of expatriate, a person living outside of their native country

Amalgamation – mixture, combination, the result of different elements

Melting pot – a place where many cultures or nationalities meet and mix

Flamboyance – exuberance, confident extroversion

To up one's game – to work harder to improve one's performance

Landlady – a female owner of a rented property or proprietor of a pub

Maternity – pertaining to pregnancy and childbirth

Tube – Inf. Brit. The London underground train network and trains

Green room – a room in a theatre or studio where performers relax when not performing

Biscuits – note, the Brits eat biscuits while Americans eat cookies

To take one's hat off to someone – to express respect and admiration

Dash – run, leave quickly

Gown – a long, elegant dress worn on formal occasions

Cocktail dress – a smart dress worn at dinner and cocktail parties

Tongue-twister – a sequence of words or sounds that is difficult to pronounce

To lie in – to stay in bed until later in the morning

R&R – rest and relaxation/recreation