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Indagare Insider: Q & A with Fashion Designer Shoshanna Gruss



Courtesy Four Seasons Bora Bora; Shoshanna Gruss; Sayulita, Mexico

A born traveler, fashion designer Shoshanna Gruss has explored a range of places, rarely returning to the same place twice. As the founder and creative director of *Shoshanna*, her womenswear collection that debuted in 1998, Gruss designs clothing that celebrates the female body in all its unique forms. When she isn't designing dresses, tops, swimwear and even children's clothing, Gruss continues to travel the globe with her family. Here, the entrepreneur speaks with Indagare about the evolution of her brand, her love for Bora Bora and what's always in her carry-on.

Tell us about your brand, Shoshanna. What was the original inspiration, and how has it evolved?

I started my company 20 years ago, but it really was the brainchild of my 16-year-old self. Some may say I was blessed (others cursed) with a large chest. Throughout my teen and college years, I was forced to either size up

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COLUMN

and get the waist taken in, or add fabric to the bust in my dresses. My mom became a regular at our local tailor. During college, I worked at Tracey Ross in [Los Angeles](#). I watched and took notes as customers shopped, and I secretly studied every piece. After graduating—and some 100-odd custom dresses later—I decided I was going to make my own dresses. I wanted to design pieces that actually fit women and that women wanted to wear.

A few years after launching ready-to-wear, I set out on a new mission: swimwear. The industry norm at the time was that you bought a swimsuit as a set; a small top was sold with a small bottom. There was no mixing and matching. I knew firsthand that women were not always the same size on top as they were on bottom. This led me to design the first bra cup-sized bikini tops so that women could choose their sizes separately.

Fast forward to present day. My inspiration for Shoshanna is still the same. I want to continue designing pieces that all women can wear. I most recently launched an exclusive collection with Gwynnie Bee featuring extended sizing. This was important to me, as my goal has always been to design pieces that make every woman feel beautiful and confident no matter what size she is.



Courtesy Shoshanna Gruss

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What made you fall in love with travel?

Growing up, my parents took me all over the planet, starting as an infant. They never left me and my brother at home, no matter how far away they were going or what kind of trip they were taking. Growing up in [New York City](#), people around me traveled to beautiful locales, but often did the same thing year after year, like going to the same beach or ski spot. I understood the ease and convenience of that, but I was always so excited to try something new. Every winter, spring and summer break, we traveled. We went to Asia, all over South America, all over [Australia](#), Europe and certainly the [Caribbean](#). The only trip my father could never convince my mom to do was a safari in Africa. My parents still travel like crazy, and I find it so fascinating. It definitely keeps them

young and energetic, and they're always coming home with great stories. The travel certainly helped me when starting my business, in terms of knowing what the global markets had to offer and what was not out there yet. And I hope to instill that same sense of adventure, curiosity and wanderlust in my children. This past summer, while my children were away for a week, I traveled to [Athens](#) and [Mykonos](#) by myself. It was exhilarating!

What are your favorite places to travel?

I almost never visit the same place twice; there are just too many fabulous places in the world to go! But some of my favorite places are [Bora Bora](#), [St. Barth's](#), [Stockholm](#), [Paris](#), [London](#), [Tel Aviv](#), [Lisbon](#), [Seville](#) and the Canary Islands. I am a beach girl, through and through! I'm happiest barefoot with sand and salt on my skin. I most recently went to [Punta Mita](#) in [Mexico](#) and fell in love. Not only is the scenery gorgeous (blue waters with mountains floating in the distance), but the town a few miles away, Sayulita, is this beautiful, colorful, little hippie surfing town. It has such a unique personality.

What's on your travel bucket list?

I am dying to go to [Fiji](#) and the [Maldives](#) and to explore [Greece](#) more. Although I have been many times, I really want to take my children to [Japan](#) ([Tokyo](#) and [Kyoto](#)). I also want to take a train through [Scotland](#). My list is endless, but those are the top few spots.



Golden Pavilion, Kyoto

What is always in your carry-on bag?

Books, books, books, a charger, an extra charger, pens, paper, my journal, lip balm and a Shoshanna bikini!

Who are your favorite travel partners?

My three children. I love being able to show them a new city, new foods and different cultures and ways of life. They are also becoming excellent sea glass and seashell hunters, which is one of my favorite pastimes.

Do you have a favorite hotel?

The [Four Seasons Resort](#) in [Bora Bora](#) has the most incredible service, and the bungalows over the water are so much fun. I'd say if I was going to return to any place soon in the near future, it would be Bora Bora. Tahiti is my all-time favorite. I've been three times, and each time is more magical. I love the flora and fauna. I could spend all day underwater looking at the sea life. It's just heaven to me.



Courtesy Four Seasons Bora Bora

What are your favorite boutiques and restaurants in Bora Bora?

The shopping in Bora Bora is mostly for local crafts and jewelry, but of course you can also get black pearls, which are just so special. There are many opportunities to go fishing with a local fisherman, catch your lunch and grill it right on the beach! One fun restaurant that I remember going to with my parents (and then taking my children to) is **Bloody Mary's**. It's a little touristy, but a must.

What advice would you give to young women interested in launching their own companies?

Listen to those around you; whether it's your friends, family, industry peers or potential customers. Use these people as sounding boards to test out ideas. Know that you are going to make mistakes, and that's okay. Use each

mistake as a way to better your product or business. No matter what, don't give up. Today's world is a testament to the fact that women can accomplish whatever they want if they stick with it.

– Avery Carmichael on April 22, 2019