

Bitten by travel blog bug

One blogger's ad income covers her travel expenses and it helps her keep a permanent record

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Ms Eunice Khong chronicles her travel experiences online. But the 31-year-old's blog, at Traveler Folio.com, is not just a hobby.

Having won the Best Photography Blog trophy at last year's Singapore Blog Awards, her readership and online advertising revenue have spiked.

Ms Khong, a professional blogger who left her office job last year, says the income is enough to cover her travel expenses although she declines to reveal how much she earns.

She is not the only popular travel blogger in town. Internet search engine results show up at least three other travel blogs authored by Singaporeans.

In the running for this year's Singapore Blog Awards in the Best Photography Blog category is www.szeping.com, managed by 29-year-old Low Sze Ping. The engineer fills his mostly Chinese language blog with details of his forays in Europe and South-east Asia.

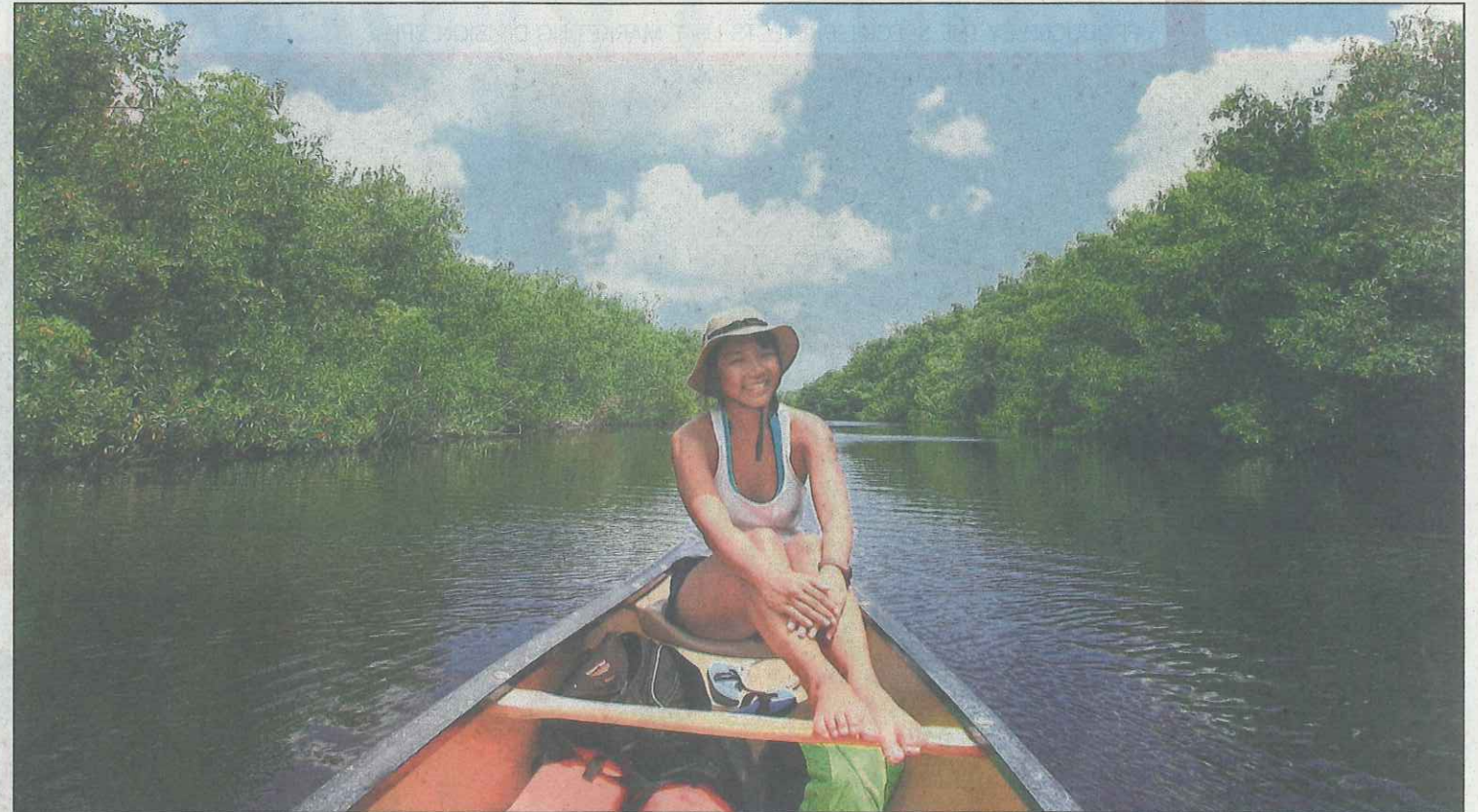
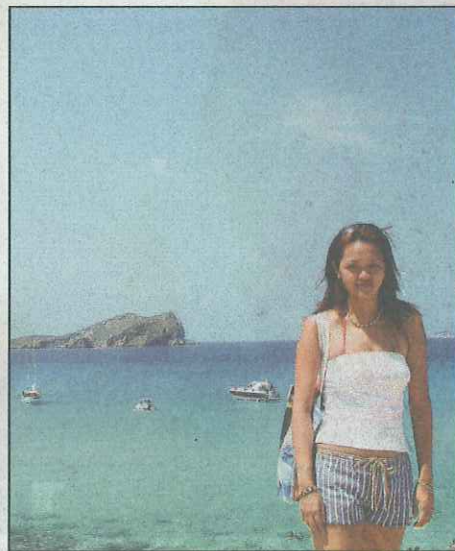
At danyilin.blogspot.com, which attracts a readership of about 2,000 a month from all over the world, Ms Tan Yi Lin, 29, and her husband of four years, Mr Dannie Cho, 33, have been documenting their travel through the Caribbean. The duo is taking a year off work, starting in March this year, to see the Americas.

Similarly, freelance travel writer Nellie Huang, 27, has been blogging about her current jaunt through Bolivia at WildJunket.com. The blog attracts a daily readership of about 200 from the United States, Singapore and the United Kingdom.

The bloggers say they write for various reasons.

Ms Khong, whose website registers about two million hits a month, started blogging as a way to keep a permanent record: "I kept a little travel journal when I backpacked in Europe with my husband and nearly could not find it when we moved house a few years ago."

Blogging, she adds, allows her to share her experiences with friends. Besides blogging about foreign destinations, she also writes about Singapore: "Many of my overseas readers love to



Mr Dannie Cho (top left) and his wife Tan Yi Lin (above) at the Everglades National Park in Florida. They keep an online travel journal at <http://danyilin.blogspot.com>. Ms Nellie Huang (left) travels 10 times a year and writes about her experiences on www.wildjunket.com. PHOTOS: DANNIE CHO, TAN YI LIN, NELLIE HUANG

also has its perks as Mr Low discovered after meeting one of his regular readers, a Shanghaiese woman in her early 20s, during a trip there.

He recalls: "She took me to some alleys to try the local cheap delicacies such as spicy crabs and duck organs."

The accessibility of travel blogs is another attraction. They can be an easy way to update friends and family when on the road.

But the Chos have discovered first-hand how difficult maintaining a blog while on the move can be.

Mr Cho says: "In the Bahamas, the wi-fi service could not reach our room, so for a couple of nights we had to endure stinging insects outside a restaurant where the service was available."

They are wary of the wide reach of the Internet and are careful to write about their stay only after leaving.

"It helps us avoid stalkers and we are also mindful to never post pictures show-

For Ms Huang, who has been traveling extensively for the past 10 years, her blog is a useful professional tool: "My blog is a platform to display my work and to draw a larger crowd."

But everyone has discovered that pictures are an integral part of any travel blog. A typical entry on the Chos' blog for example will feature several large and colourful photographs of scenery and food.

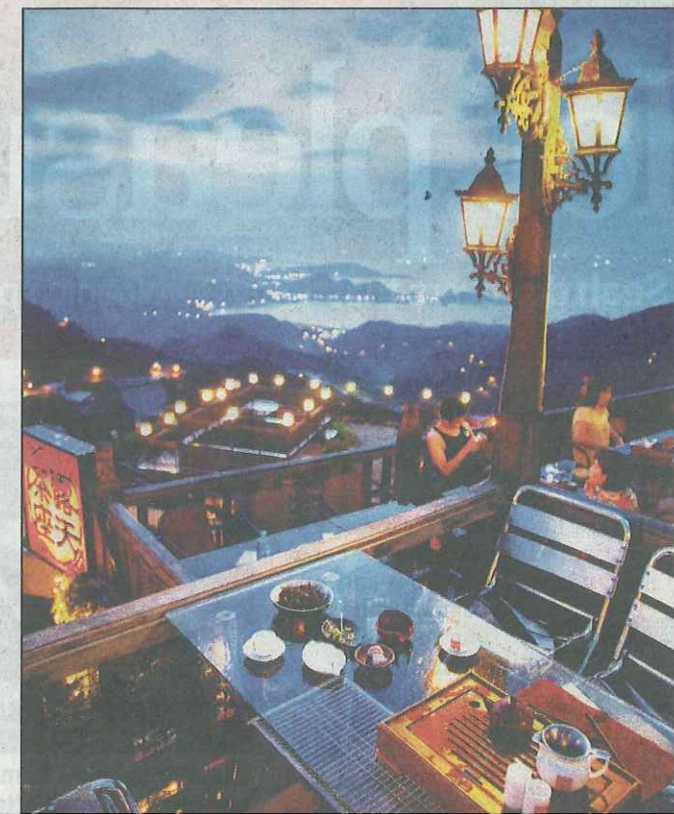
"The pictures not only have to look good but also tell the story of the place and serve to enhance the text," says Ms Tan.

And travel blogs are not just a detailed recap of the day. Ms Huang says her writing style is "straightforward and personal" but adds that she edits judiciously.

She says: "I do not think readers are interested in my entire itinerary for the day but the specific things I enjoyed."

For now, she is paying her own way as the revenue she collects from advertising is not substantial, something she hopes will change as her blog attracts more readers.

She says: "I am not too ambitious but I hope that as my blog grows more popular, I can eventually get my travels spon-



Good times, great shots

This snapshot of a tea appreciation session set against a tranquil and hilly Taipei backdrop is just one of 380 submissions that Appetites & Escapades received for its travel and food photo competition. The contest closed on July 15.

Organised by Sphere Exhibits, a subsidiary of Singapore Press Holdings, the top three finalists will be announced on Saturday at the travel, food and electronics fair that will be held at Suntec City Convention halls 402 to 404 from Friday to Sunday.

The top entry will win an Olympus professional digital camera worth