



Own it **Feel it** Live it®
Diane Danvers Simmons

“My Gutsy Story®” Diane **Danvers** Simmons

Up Up and Away and I Lived to Tell The Story!

OWN IT

My gutsy story is not simply one of travel. It's sitting here painstakingly tapping my fingers two at a time on my laptop as I attempt to transfer the truth of my heart, the tone of my voice, and the nuances of my English wit and spelling into the written word. I'd have no problem talking in front of the United Nations about the virtues of Brussels sprouts, but honing down one day of my journey to Morocco into 1000 words is terrifying.



When I started this narration I intended to simply share the tale of a rather eventful day in my quest to overcome my fear of heights, which baffled me as I was a dare devil in training as a child. But as I began to write, it became obvious I had lost my wings to fly and I needed to get them back again.

This experience highlights the freedom, growth and the opportunities that we allow ourselves when we travel and go beyond our day-to-day lives, even if it is before the birds are up and singing. The sunrise, excitement and loss for words were worth every added wrinkle, and dark circles under my eyes.

FEEL IT

May 6th ...Sunrise... Somewhere in the desert an hour or two outside of Marrakech!

I never thought I'd find myself floating high in the sky, suspended in a wicker basket under a huge balloon envelope, fueled by the flame of intense heat and the folly of the wind gods. My daughter and I were traveling in the oldest form of human-carrying air technology that's dependent on the currents of the wind, and in our case, a French man with unruly peppered tinged hair, who exclaimed, "Oh Sheeit," every few minutes, albeit in a rather lovely accent! I was vigilantly obeying the French man's orders to hold on tightly to the basket's leather straps with my knees bent and feet astride (not a flattering pose for the camera!) as we were unleashed from the stability of the earth into the atmosphere. This was the moment where I clutched my St. Christopher and prayed that God remembered all the good things I've done in my life and had forgotten the naughty ones. My only comfort at this juncture is the knowledge that the French pioneered hot air ballooning in 1733, so hopefully they had mastered the skill by now. But then again, interestingly, all eight passengers were British, so I was trying to figure out if the Brits had done anything to upset the French lately, other than root for the Italians in the World Cup and drain their wine cellars of Champagne. I can assure you a glass or ten, would have been much appreciated at this point!!

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All aside, this expedition is a tick (American translation-check) on my bucket list! Hot air ballooning is unbelievable; the pure silence and chilled freshness of the air calms, but also exhilarates. I can honestly say I have never experienced such awe-inspiring quietness, such peace, even if it was interrupted by the occasional blast of heat from the burner, or the exclamations, "bloody brilliant" or "oh f..." as the cameras clued to our eye sockets repeatedly clicked away capturing the beauty of this newly found thrill.



Marrakech shined in all her morning glory on the horizon as the call for prayer awakened the city. Daily life stirred below inside the mud walls of the hidden Berber villages as the routine of daily life unfolded; a Sheppard was herding his flock to new pastures while women worked the fields, and animated children jumped, waved, and shouted to welcome us as our balloon cast shadows on the ground where they ran.

This journey was magical, which was apparent by the enormous grins on our faces...even if our pilot couldn't seem to land the balloon after his 5th attempt!! OH SHIT!! No, none of us did...we're all British remember!

When I took flight that day I never expected it to be the metaphor for my life. I had to allow myself to feel totally uncomfortable in the moment and trust the unexpected. But what I learned from the experience was much more. The resolution to take flight in a hot air balloon was more than overcoming a fear and seeing the world from a different perspective. It was about observing life through a clear lens with an open mind and ultimately letting go of the chains that bound me. I freed myself that day and I left with a renewed sense of confidence, belief and purpose ...But most of all a memory shared with my daughter that will stay in our hearts forever.



This day, and the days that followed in Morocco, became the catalyst that challenged me to reach further and develop a Forum to inspire and empower women. It doesn't involve hot air balloons ...but it does encourage you to follow your dreams and live your life the way you choose in your very own brilliance at any age.



My new venture launched at "Own it, Feel it, Live it.com™" on March 3rd 2013 and features the workshops I have created for women, Spirituality in Stiletto's™, which provide a safe haven where real women, living real lives, can reignite their spirit and regain their life balance all while having a "bloody good laugh".

I am now living my own Gutsy Story!
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