

Cosmetic Plastic Surgery

With the increased availability of cosmetic surgeries worldwide, advances in technology that have introduced less invasive procedures, and better social acceptance, many people have changed from being negative or sceptical about cosmetic surgery to being more open to it. But is cosmetic surgery right for you, and what do you need to know to make a well-informed decision?

INTRODUCTION

Cosmetic and reconstructive surgeries are included in the same surgical speciality - plastic surgery. Cosmetic surgery is performed to reshape normal structures of the body to improve appearance and self-esteem. Reconstructive Surgery is performed on abnormal structures of the body caused by birth defects, injuries or disease, mainly to improve function but also appearance.

The word plastic derives from the Greek 'plastikos', meaning to mould or give form. History suggests that the plasticity of the body is not a modern discovery, as traditional and multicultural practices such as foot binding, corseting, the use of arsenic powders to whiten skin, and plates placed in the lips to extend them can attest. One of the first illustrated guides of plastic surgery comes from the University of Bologna in 1597 where physicians describe techniques to mask evidence of Syphilis, which was spreading rapidly throughout the continent at the time and produced marked disfigurements to its victim's noses. It was not until World War I, however, that plastic surgery became a fully recognised speciality.

TRENDS

Today there is a wide range of treatments available: from chin and buttock implants to ears and breast reshaping. Some believe cosmetic surgery thrives on vanity, denial of ageing and envy (an interesting article on this view is on www.thenewatlantis.com/archive/5/rosen.htm), but recent surveys have shown that the number of people approving of it has significantly increased. 48 percent of Russians, one in three Irish, 28 percent of Italians and Portuguese, and one in four in the United States said they would consider cosmetic surgery to maintain their looks. The number of cosmetic surgeries being performed has soared with some interesting trends. In the USA the total number of cosmetic procedures went from 320 000 in 1992 to 1172 000 in 2005, a 266% increase. In 1992 the most common surgeries were eyelid and nose reshaping. In 2005 breast augmentation and liposuction were at the top. The popularity of cosmetic surgery in the USA is followed by South American countries such as Brazil, Argentina and Venezuela, by Spain and by more recent Asian newcomers: Korea, China, and Japan. In the Asian countries the most commonly performed cosmetic surgery is eyelid surgery, designed to make the eyes look bigger and rounder.

I interviewed a Dutch plastic surgeon, Dr. Eric Timmenga, based in the Reinier de Graaf hospitals in Delft and Voorburg regarding the trends in his department. He said that the most frequent surgery is the excision of a facial mole, followed by eyelid surgery, but that breast surgery is also very common in the Netherlands. He said he had noticed that there appeared to be less 'taboo' on body contouring procedures. He also noted that abdominoplasty (a 'tummy tuck') is performed more often. Regarding age of the patients, Dr. Timmenga told me his youngest patients were children with prominent ears and he very recently had a seventy-year old lady request a lower eyelid correction. After a careful examination he had decided, however, not to operate in that case because of an increased risk of complications.

IS COSMETIC SURGERY RIGHT FOR YOU?

Cosmetic surgery can improve quality of life by bringing a positive impact to someone's physical appearance and self-esteem. But it should not be considered if what the person really wants to change is their core personality or current mood, or if someone is seeking surgery in the hope of influencing a change in someone other than themselves.

If you are contemplating surgery, it is very important that you are sure about why you want it and what you are expecting it will do for you. The surgeon will need to understand your expectations and will be able to advise on whether your expectations are realistic. For example insisting on having a certain celebrity's nose or having an underlying emotional problem driving your need for surgery, will not make you a good candidate.

Try to choose the right timing. Avoid surgery if you have recently experienced major life events such as moving house, losing a loved one, changing job, break-up of a relationship. Stress is likely to make the recovery period longer and more difficult.

You will also have to accept that there is no way to exactly predict a surgical outcome. Medical history, age, skin type, genetic background, whether or not you smoke, or if you have sun-damaged skin, are all factors that can affect the final result.



Dr Zelia Araujo-Muggli graduated from medical school in her native Portugal. She is a member of the UK Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, and has worked as a paediatrician in Portugal, the UK and Oman. She is a Shell spouse and mother of two children.

WHAT YOU NEED TO ASK

Whether you decide to have the procedure done in your base country, in the country you are posted or in another country, being well informed from the outset will maximise your chances of being satisfied with your treatment. Preferably you should receive written information in all aspects of the procedure, and be cautious about personal recommendations - their situation may be different from yours.

A good plastic surgeon will answer all your questions; things to ask include:

- Do you hold a qualification as a plastic surgeon? Are you registered with the Medical Board in this country that regulates the practice of plastic surgery? Do you belong to any professional organisations, for example the International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons?
- How many procedures of this type have you performed recently? How many of these needed further corrective surgery?
- Am I a good candidate for this procedure? How long will the results last and do I need to repeat the procedure to maintain results?
- What are the risks involved with my procedure? What about pain and scarring?
- How long a recovery period can I expect, and what kind of help will I need during recovery?

- Are the follow up consultations going to be done by the doctor that will carry out the surgery?
- What type of anaesthesia do I need? What are the qualifications of the anaesthetist?
- What type of facility will the operation be done in - General hospital with Accident & Emergency and intensive care unit? Large clinic with resuscitation equipment? Day clinic. If the surgery is performed in a smaller facility, make sure there is easy access to a nearby fully equipped hospital.
- What is included in the price? You should have a written quote including consultations; photos before and after surgery; blood tests and X-rays if needed; the surgeon and anaesthetist fees; hospital or clinic charges including accommodation, nursing care, medications; and treatment of complications. Consider that health insurance policies will cover most Reconstructive Surgery interventions, but cosmetic surgery is your choice, not seen as a medical necessity and therefore insurance will not cover its costs.

If you think that cosmetic plastic surgery is right for you, allow some time to reflect between the consultation and the surgery, at least 2 weeks. No surgeon or surgery will be 100% risk free and you need to make sure you are comfortable with your decision, after all it is your choice, your body, your life.

IN THE NEWS

On January this year, after investigating the deaths of three infants between 1 and 6 months of age linked to cough and cold medication use, officials with the US Centres for Disease Control (CDC) are emphasising that these drugs should be used only after talking with a physician. Research indicates

that cough and cold medications are no more effective than placebo in children younger than 2 years of age. Safer and probably more effective treatments for young patients' symptoms include softening nasal secretions with saline nose drops or a cool-mist humidifier.

Planned Travel London

Laurianne Bradford

Laurianne is based in The Hague. Her website, developed during her time here, has become her full-time occupation.

It has always been my ambition to set up my own business, so when for the second time I had to give up my job for my husband to go to the Netherlands, it occurred to me that this might be the best, and possibly only time, to realise my dream.

I didn't have a business idea initially so I had to start at the drawing board. This took several months of listing and rejecting ideas, before my husband and I found something that we both thought would actually work. The idea was simple - an internet guide to London that would be more up-to-date and easier to use than paper guides like Lonely Planet, more accurate than the many websites available on the web, and with more novel features than what was currently on offer electronically. And this was how, in 2004, my business journey with Planned Travel London began.

The site was to be based on a unique feature that allowed visitors to plan their time in London by using a database of the opening times of over 200 attractions. Putting together the required technology wasn't simple, but I was determined (for copyright and cost reasons) to develop the site by myself, despite having no previous IT experience!

I would soon learn that designing the website was only half the challenge, there were also the hundreds of pages on London attractions and practical information to write, the listings of hotels to record, and files of pictures to take. As an important business step, and armed with our digital cameras and notebooks, my husband and I 'toured' London for a week. We went our own ways to explore the city we thought we knew well, and found that in London as in everywhere, there is always something new to discover.

In October last year www.plannedtravel.co.uk went live. A proud moment for myself and everyone involved.

The aim of Planned Travel is to help visitors to London to make best use of their precious holiday time by being better able to plan their trip - the day-to-day, hour-by-hour details. The site has a large, free public area with information about over 200 London attractions and tips on eating out and accommodation. It also has a members-only, subscription-based service where people can build a personal travel plan by using our database of attractions, opening times and information on travel links. The service is priced favourably when compared with guide-books and should pay back subscribers many times over in terms of time and money saved in London (including in planning the trip).

I also have lots of ideas for developing the business further, including beginning work on a website for Paris. But I realise that to make this venture a proper success, one woman and a supportive husband will not be enough. So if any of you Destinations readers out there have a passion for large cities, knowledge of IT or the tourism industry or translating skills, please get in touch with us on info@plannedtravel.co.uk. Or if you simply have a passion for travel and know the value of time keep checking in on www.plannedtravel.co.uk to see what we have to offer.



'Who am I now that I don't work anymore?'

Corine Regelink

I've been in Singapore since last April. This is our first posting, so you could say I'm a total rookie in my new role as 'expat wife'. The greatest impact for me was the getting used to not having to work. Without a job, I seemed to lose my identity along with my financial independence. But it has given me a wonderful opportunity: a chance to do something completely different with my life without having to worry about the financial consequences - which is quite a luxury in a time where everything needs to be both time and cost efficient. I'm fortunate indeed, but it took me a while to realise it!

GLORIFICATION OF A FRESH START

Before Expat life (BE), I was working practically full time as an advertising exec. A classic story: Loved my job but felt guilty that I could not keep up with my colleagues, and I loved my baby but felt guilty and heartbroken every time the daycare ladies had the premiere of his First anything. Then my husband called to say we could move to Singapore. There it was: The New Life. Now I would have all the time in the world for my son. I would never look like a sleep-deprived slob again because my new me would always find time to shave legs, dye hair and do nails. No more morning stress to get into the office on time since I would become a successful best-seller writer, conveniently working from home. It all was going to be fabulous.

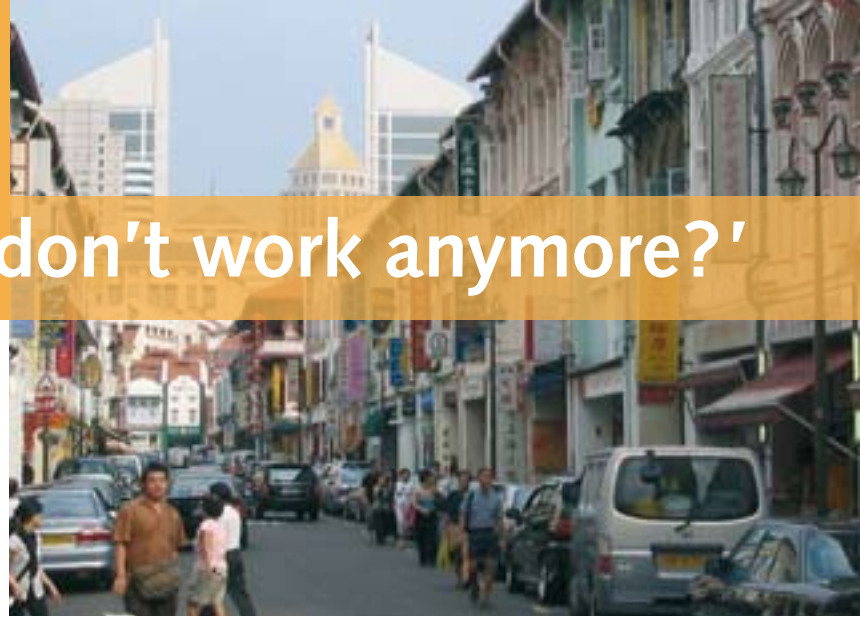
ADRENALINE RUSH

Off we went. Well, my husband went with a suitcase. I was following two months later with our two-year old after handling the paperwork, renting out the house and sorting, cleaning and packing up all our stuff. Which I loved doing! It was a 'project' and it made me feel very useful. We then moved in with my parents, and the idea of being taken care of for the next eight weeks seemed a bliss. Of course, that feeling only lasted a week. Although I love my parents to death, I was glad to catch that plane to Singapore eight weeks of puberty-flashbacks later.

The time in our serviced apartment was big fun, even when moving into 'our' house was delayed 4 weeks. It was like camping in a hotel, which gave me survival-of-the-fittest energy. My husband was both suspicious and thrilled I was handling things so well. We joined the Dutch club and I instantly met a few nice people there. I took our son out for long, long walks to get to know Singapore. I wrote a column for a local magazine and it got published. I was on a natural high! Of course, what goes up, must come down.

NOW WHAT?

The night before we were to move into our 'own' house, the bubble burst. It suddenly freaked me out to give up my tiny-serviced-apartment-world and the daily routine I had built up. Moving out meant that I was no longer 'in transit' -and thus excused from any 'structural activities'- but had finally 'arrived'. After unpacking and settling in, then what?



Financial security, a beautiful home, a new car out front, both my son and husband in good health and me not having to do anything but enjoy it all. It must sound awful to those surrounded by misery and poverty, but at that point in time, it was the cherry on the top of my depression. The who-am-I-now-I-don't-work-anymore syndrome hit me full force. What was I to write in my once so stuffed agenda? Coffee morning with so and so? Do laundry? Don't forget to pay road tax? It all seemed so futile to me. These were things I once did 'on the side' and now they made up my entire daily practice.

It was clearly time to give myself a big kick in the caboose and re-invent myself. Or as I was taught: either stop whining and fix it, or shut up about it. So we signed up our son for pre-school and hired a maid, allowing me no more excuses to sulk about changing nappies and doing laundry all day. Work-wise, I had a bit of luck. The magazine I had written some columns for asked me to do a few articles, so I became a 'freelance journalist' overnight. And via a pediatrician I interviewed, I got hooked up with some fun publicity work for a charity organisation. Socially, things were good too. I met a great group of female kindred spirits and we frequently meet up together. As a family we have become far closer than we ever would have been back home.

So, a happy ending after all. The only thing I still haven't got the hang of is dealing with people leaving all the time, be they visitors or newly found friends. But I suppose that's a different story altogether.



Café society

Andrew Rudge

Cafes, restaurants and bars the world over are welcome places of entertainment, information and sustenance. Here in Den Haag we're spoilt for choice, with everything from laid back beach bars to formal Japanese teahouses rubbing shoulders with smoky jazz cafes and minimalist, open plan eateries. It works and that may well be because the competition keeps each place on its toes, while the international background and knowledge of the clientele keep them true to their stated origins. Elsewhere expats may not be so lucky, with only the occasional fly-blown local bar to supplement in-house entertainment and wistful daydreams. But wherever they are in the world these refreshment havens provide the people watchers among us with an unparalleled window on society and source of much amusement.

Sometimes it's the whole concept that amuses. For instance, there's a so-called typically English pub in Colorado Springs, complete with fixtures and fittings shipped across from London at the beginning of the last century. No competition or knowledgeable clientele to keep the proprietors on the straight and narrow here! Customers are treated to a slice of a mythical England in which everyone is a Cockney and the staple diet is shepherds' pie or bangers and mash (sausages and mashed potato) washed down with gallons of warm beer. Oh, and the pub works hard to convince its customers that, for entertainment, we English love nothing so much as singing along to music hall songs from the 1930s. We English aren't the only ones to lose something in translation. In Penang there's an 'authentic' Korean restaurant, complete with tinkling music, ginseng wine and fragrant blossoms. The air of tranquillity and tradition is marred somewhat, however, when one spots that the kimono-clad waitresses are sporting the latest and most brightly coloured trainers.

Other times it might be the conversation that, quite literally, screams for attention. In some countries (and the US is one) it seems totally acceptable for someone on one side of a restaurant to have a shouted conversation with someone on the other. It's a cultural thing, sort of: "Hey! Look at me. I'm starring in my own movie!" Maybe it's a form of self-expression separated only by decibels from Picasso's habit of doodling on tablecloths. But back to conversation, which can be a tricky thing. In years gone by the sound of someone speaking your own tongue in a foreign bar would have brought smiles and introductions all round. Nowadays, travel brings escape and the appearance of a fellow countryman causes panic followed by a switch to another language or bar. The English do it, so do the Dutch and I'd bet we're not the only ones. But the real gems are the overheard comments. In Nepal a woman of ripening years and physique, third or fourth gin and tonic in hand, declined an invitation to trek into the mountains with the words "It's not that I wouldn't enjoy the walk, it's just that I find Annapurna base camp much too crowded at this time of year". Don't we all, my dear! Don't we all.

Tot ziens!



The JMS Literary Prize 2007

Sharon Montgomery

I tried to get away, honestly I did, but they wouldn't let me go. The long tentacles of DESTINATIONS reached out and grabbed me - so there I was, eight months after leaving the editor's chair in Carel van Bylandtlaan, back again judging the JMS Prize.

It was easy going through the issues I edited, as I was familiar with every word on each page. The later issues, edited by Janet Carson, took me longer, of course. But it was not hard to make a shortlist. In each issue a couple of articles jumped off the page. Yes, here was a writer who had something to say about life outside the 'expat bubble'. Here was someone who was not afraid to find out about the place in which they'd landed up, had made the best of things, been humble, and learnt. DESTINATIONS contributors are not, in the main, professional writers, so it often falls to the sub-editing team to restructure their work, sometimes cutting out less interesting material and encouraging more detail on the really engrossing stuff. However, the core of the story comes from the writer - they lived it, and they want to tell it. I suppose you'd call it passion.

How many of us, on a posting to Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, would notice those uncared-for mosaics described by Louise van Alenburg in 'The last mosaics of Sakhalin' (issue 37), which won the prize? For Louise, tracking them down before they decayed or were destroyed became a mission, and she has revealed to us a valuable example of folk art from the Soviet era. In doing so, she travelled around, talked to people and got under the skin of a place others might dread living in. She must also have inspired her fellow expats, because several of them

*Lousie van Alenburg's winning article
'The last mosaics of Sakhalin'*

About the prize

The JMS Literary prize was established in 2001 to recognise the most outstanding article published in DESTINATIONS over a two-year period. It is named after a long-time supporter of Outpost and DESTINATIONS, Lady Judy Moody-Stuart. The prize is administered and awarded by Global Outpost Services on the recommendation of the JMS Literary Prize Panel.

This year the panel members were:

*Glenda Lewin - Chair of the Outpost Archive Centre Board
Roxanne Decyk - Corporate Affairs Director, Shell
Sharon Montgomery - Editor Destinations 2003 - 2006*

27

sent her photos of mosaics they had come upon. However, Louise took most of the delightful photos herself, trudging around in the snow and slipping on ice.

The same adventurous spirit and curiosity pervades Mary Broekhuijsen's article 'My suitcase' (issue 36), which was awarded a special 'runner up' prize. Mary got the most out of a posting to the Dominican Republic, but not in the usual expat way of weekends on the beach, golf and rum and cokes (not that there's anything wrong with that!) I also spent several years in that complex country, and have the greatest respect for Mary's determination to integrate and become 'somewhat aplanado'. Well done, Louise and Mary - and keep on writing for DESTINATIONS.

Winner 2007

*Lousie Van Alenburg for
'The last mosaics of Sakhalin'
(issue 37)*

Special runner-up 2007

*Mary Broekhuijsen for
'My suitcase' (issue 36)*



Filming in Iran

Rebecca Hathaway

If you have seen more than one of the films that Shell Outposts have made for various locations you will know that they are all completely different - in style not just content. After five years in Iran I was lucky enough to be trusted by Shell to make a film here. Having studied for an MA in Iranian Studies here in Tehran, I had a lot of ideas that I wished to convey about Iran, and this seemed the ideal opportunity to show something of the Iranian culture and people. I wanted the film to speak for itself, without a narration but instead using the voices of many people speaking for themselves, both foreign and local people.

Further it seemed to me that Iran was probably always going to attract people who want to be fairly independent and I wanted to film to show possibilities and options about how life in Iran might be rather than a prescriptive - you will live here - you will shop here formula. Shell in Iran has been a fairly small development company until the signing of the PLNG contract and this now means that where there have been few families there will probably be lots in the next couple of years.

Iran has an established film industry and by luck I was introduced to one of the country's best known and talented cameramen, Turaj Mansouri. The first job was to put together a proposal and budget - and here we had help both from Outpost and through other contacts. Shell sponsored the film but otherwise we were given full autonomy. Permission from government ministries, police departments, heritage departments was granted based on our proposal.

Iran is a fascinating and beautiful country and we could have carried on filming for ever. It was wonderful to travel from mountain to desert accompanied by the crew and to revisit many places where we had stayed or camped as a family. We ended up with 56 hours of raw material which we condensed into 37 minutes, balanced between life in Tehran, where all the expats live, and the vast diverse country outside of the capital city. I tried to show things that would leave questions for the future, which would open people's minds to the possibilities of life in Iran but at the same time without spelling it out completely, reveal that this country feels both safe and welcoming.

Iran is full of surprises for the outsider, mostly good but of course there are aspects which are tricky to understand or just downright annoying - like any country really, and by talking to a wide variety of people I think we managed to avoid glossing over things - such as the compulsory wearing of Islamic dress for women or the perception for some of a lack of things to do. At the same time I wanted to show the best of this country and that wasn't always easy.



A couple of things just weren't possible to film, mainly for the modesty of those there, one being the fabulous beauty parlours of Tehran where women go to be pampered and tweaked in every possible way and the other being some of the great restaurants that have opened up in this city in the last few years which are sophisticated and cool places to go and eat.

It wasn't really easy to talk either about how it's possible to buy or do almost anything you want here, restrictions are operated in a flexible and tolerable way. We just hope that you can see that we live open and sociable lives here.

One of the best things about the film for me in the end was the music, where again through friendship and a curiosity with the project we were able to get some of Iran's most famous musicians to compose and perform music especially for us using traditional Iranian instruments, including a piece of acoustic rock for the skiing sequence. It enabled us to reveal one more fabulous aspect of Iranian culture in an indirect way - and struck a chord with both the ministry of culture and our Iranian staff that has opened the way to further projects.

A surprise for all of us was that we managed to complete a totally beautiful professional film on time and on budget in a country where this can be tricky to put it mildly. I personally learnt a lot about getting things done here, my farsi improved and I ended up loving the country even more than before. I am grateful to Shell in Iran for trusting me with this project.

The DVD is available from all outposts, or directly from Shell Iran.

Rebecca Hathaway, Hathaway_home@yahoo.co.uk



Coming up in the next issue (June 2007):

Focus on Scotland

Contributions by 25 April 2007 welcome (janet.carson@shell.com)