

shape. Now, the streets are clean and all over Moscow beautiful new buildings are being constructed. I noticed the difference since I was last in Moscow, back in 1997 for my honeymoon, before the huge building boom it is now experiencing. Then the buildings were grey and severe and even at that time the shopping was limited.

Everywhere you go now in Moscow, you see building cranes. The government is knocking down the old Soviet apartments and putting up stylish new buildings. The shopping has also improved 2000%. I often feel as if I could be in a major city anywhere in Europe or the US. Just about anything you need is available. There are huge shopping malls popping up all over Moscow. The prices however can be high as so many things in the shops are imported. The major brand of chicken nuggets in the shops is from Brazil, and many of the dairy products are from Finland, and juices are usually from Italy or Spain.

Ilya and I enjoy the culture, and it's an entertainment paradise. For children, there are the Russian circuses. I always thought circuses were a little dull but Russian circuses are fantastic, with Olympic quality acrobats doing amazing stunts. The acts are inventive and risky. Our family has also seen wonderful skating shows, plays, orchestras and ballets.

The Russian people themselves have been warm and friendly to us. And although I am not surprised about this when we're with Ilya, we have also received a warm reception on our own. People have often been kind to



my children. I took the metro with them quite soon after our arrival and was often embarrassed at how old people (sometimes I think in their 90's ...) would get up and offer my misbehaving boys their seats. I've also had many baboushkas (grandma in Russian) take my sons by the hand and lead them to the bathroom when it became clear I couldn't follow their directions!

For myself, I've been delighted with the number of activities available to get involved in. The International Women's Club (IWC) here is very large and very active. It has about 60 different clubs you can join. I joined the Turkish and Indian cooking club in my first year here and next year I'm hoping to join one of the three architecture groups that take tours all around Moscow.

I have also been involved with the Charities group, which is a branch of the IWC that raises money and then forwards the funds to various Russian charities. Despite the changes we have seen since our last visit, there are still areas of Russia where poverty remains an issue. I've been working on the Charities Board, approving charitable donations, and monitoring the projects. The projects I monitor are part of Operation Hope with Speranskii Hospital in Moscow. Operation Hope helps children born with hydrocephalus. Hydrocephalus is a medical condition in which cerebrospinal fluid builds up in the brain. This puts harmful pressure on the brain, and left untreated, is often fatal. The children who do survive without treatment are usually heavily handicapped. In the west, this condition is quickly diagnosed and treated, but here in Russia, treatment has only become available in the past 10 years. Operation Hope provides free treatment and surgery to drain fluid from the child's brain, giving the child a chance to live a normal life. The projects I work directly with pay for the shunts that drain the fluid. I deliver the funding to the hospital, they give me receipts, and I then have my husband confirm that the receipts are for shunts (since I don't read Cyrillic very well!). Many of the Shell partners here in Moscow are involved in other charity work.

Overall, our Russian experience has been a positive one. We've only been here a year but it really has been very busy. I am looking forward to having a couple more years to explore the countryside and to improve my fledgling Russian!





# You shall go as a bauble

**Russians love to dress up: I should know, I am one. Vypusknkiye baly, weddings, concerts, the theatre - we want to make the effort; it's one of our national traits.**

*Katyuli Lloyd*

Unfortunately it's hard for the average Muscovite to seriously frock up. Firstly, formal dress hire is hard to come by, presumably because the people invited to balls are the wealthy wasteful we know so well. I mean, why rent? What are bins for, right? Secondly, and this is also the case in England, when you do come by it, it's outrageously expensive.

At wedding salon Malinelli, which also stocks evening dresses and accessories for women, rental starts at 15,000 rubles per dress. The deposit is 100 percent of the gown's total cost, and when you've footed the dry cleaner's bill after your evening of debauchery you get only 50 percent of the deposit back, irrespective of how long you want the dress for. Roughly the same pricing policy applies to men's suits and black ties at Cavaliere.

To compare rental with purchase, and just for a chuckle, I dropped by Virginia Atelier in Novinsky Passage. The garish evening gowns here, which are like tie-dyed synthetic human-sized Barbie-doll dresses, start at 50,000 rubles, and one particular purple and pink bejewelled ball dress was 8,000 euros. It seemed that even the salesman was having to convince himself: "eto realistichnaya tsena" (rough translation: I kid you not, sweetheart).

I now look at downmarket Russian glamour shops, such as Echo of Hollywood, in a different light. I've always felt one knows when one has been in Moscow too long when you actually consider buying those unlined dresses which look like Christmas trees. But I find the Russians' love for plastic bling contagious. Indeed, what's wrong with a Swarovsky-trimmed Barbie-pink-polyester-upper-thigh-length-ball dress priced at 1,000 rubles? You may end up resembling my godfather's five-year-old daughter (who somehow doesn't look so ludicrous) but it's the carefree spirit of the outfit which is so charming.

So forget petty bourgeois pretensions, I say, and go light hearted. If you are in Moscow and looking for some glad rags get down to a steadfast fancy dress shop, such as Karnavalnaya Noch at Smolenskaya. In addition to Napoleon uniforms, vintage flapper dresses, Venetian masks and golden Pharaoh headdresses, for a mere 2,000 rubles you can also rent one of a selection of tuxedos and tailcoats or a simple black dinner jacket for 1,000 rubles. The deposit, which is usually triple the price of the rental will be reimbursed in full upon return of the item. The beauty of this place is that it does not shun the common man. "All for a ball and a ball for all" - that's my motto.



October. Domohtanovo, 1895  
 Oil on Canvas, 48.5 x 70.7 cm  
 The State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, Russia  
<http://www.russianartgallery.org/famous/serov.htm>

# The Tretyakov Gallery

*Julia Ogulenko*

*Julia is Russian. She recently moved to the Netherlands and works at Outpost The Hague.*

**Welcome to Moscow; crowds, long commutes, traffic jams, and freezing winters. But there are advantages to life in this city. You can hail a taxi for a reasonable price, most of the shops are open till midnight, fresh vegetables can be bought at any bus stop, and most medicines are available from pharmacies on every corner. You might enjoy winter sports, and eventually find that those gloomy and rude people have become sensitive and caring now that they know you. You will also discover hundreds of exhibitions, concerts and social events.**

In Soviet times, western cities were regarded as places of contrast. Now, it would be hard to find more contrast anywhere than in Moscow: glamorous shops and poverty, scientific discoveries and illiterate homeless children, religious commitment and alcoholic degradation.

Sometimes Moscow seems like any other European city: same teenagers, same television, same cars, food and clothes. But once in a while you will see something unusual, and find yourself wondering "Why?". To get some answers you can pay a visit to the Tretyakov gallery, the museum of Russian art, look at the paintings and listen to the stories.

Pavel Tretyakov was a wealthy industrialist and merchant, and a passionate collector of Russian art. His collection began with Russian masters, and progressed to struggling new artists, including the now famous Russian realists including Kramskoy, Ge, Perov, and Savrasov. When his collection outgrew his house, he constructed a separate building to house it. In 1892 he presented his collection to the city of Moscow, and his donation forms the basis of the Tretyakov Gallery's collection. The works of Russian realist painters of the end of 19th century is essential viewing: they brought the national history, folklore and contemporary life into a stagnating art scene.

In 1863, 14 students of the Saint Petersburg Academy of Arts rejected the restrictive classicism of the Academy, and refused to paint their final examination pictures on the topic proposed by the Jury. They wanted the freedom to choose their topics; most of them were more concerned about contemporary reality, and creating art that would reach the common man. They formed a co-operative, Peredvizhniki: the Wanderers. They wanted to bring the provinces into Russian art, and to take art to the provinces, which were geographically and psychologically distant from the cultural centres of the country. They organised mobile exhibitions, travelling, painting, and selling their works. Peredvizhniki evolved into the Society for Travelling Art Exhibitions in 1870, and continued to paint and exhibit until 1923. Their work showed poverty alongside beauty, suffering alongside fortitude and strength, and was critical of the autocratic rule of the time.

Their work played an important part in highlighting the struggle of everyday life in Russia in the late 19th century, and contributed to the changing mindset of the Russian people, which would eventually lead to the Cultural Revolution.

# Re-starting my career in The Hague

*Fiona Curtis*

**Fiona has lived in The Hague for six years. Her husband, Keith, is a pilot with Shell and they have two children, Caitlin (three years old) and Cameron (five years old).**

In 2001, my husband Keith and I moved to The Hague from the UK. We had just married and were excited about beginning our new life in what we deemed neutral territory as I am Australian and Keith is British. Nevertheless, I was anxious about what lay ahead for me in terms of my work. I had enjoyed a rewarding career as a Speech Pathologist for 15 years and assumed work opportunities in The Hague would be limited. Although my career prospects seemed a bit grim when we first considered moving to the Netherlands, I managed to piece together an interesting and varied private practice - which for the moment, works wonderfully around the needs of our young children who are in a sense, my other career.

Even prior to our relocation, my first thoughts were that in a very international community there must be a great need for specialised expert help with spoken English, particularly in the corporate context. Strongly accented speech can hinder social and career opportunities. Through intensive individual work, spoken English can be shaped into an accent that is clearer and natural sounding. I was lucky enough to source some expert training from a visiting American Speech Pathologist in Germany in 2001. Soon after, our son Cameron was born, followed by our daughter Caitlin in 2004 and my career took another break. As our children reach school age in another 12 months, I am very excited about expanding this part of my private practice.

Becoming a mother also introduced me to the concept of 'baby signing' - where babies and toddlers use sign language to communicate during the period that they cannot yet speak. My interest in it evolved as a natural extension of my past career, as well as from motherhood. I used sign language with both my children in the pre-speech stage and they thrived on it. Keith works as a pilot for Shell Aircraft and is often away, and I will never forget Caitlin at 14 months old looking out the window up at the sky, saying 'Daddy' and signing 'airplane'. Sign language is an amazing window into a baby's mind and a

AT 14 MONTHS OLD, ARAMINDA'S BABY SIGNING SKILLS WERE EXCELLENT.... UNFORTUNATELY HER MOTHER'S SIGN READING WAS LESS ADVANCED.

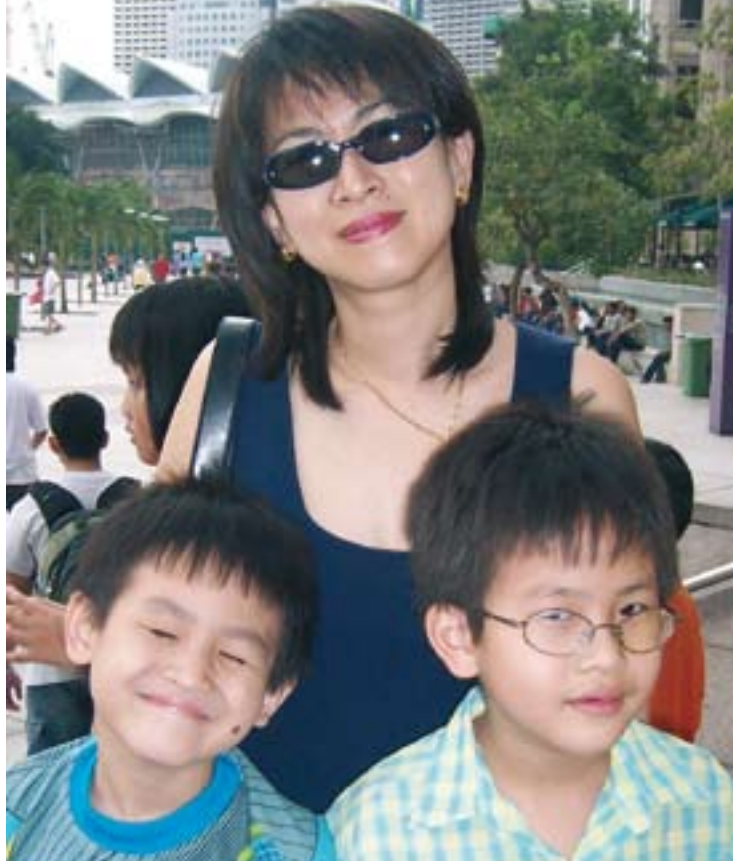


fantastic way of connecting and bonding with a baby. Fueled by this success, I developed a series of classes which I have been running since January 2006.

More recently I have returned to a more traditional type of clinical practice. I always loved my work as a Speech Pathologist, helping people with communication difficulties, so the yearning to 'make a difference' was never far away. I am using the Lidcombe Program, which was developed in Australia and is now used around the world, including the Netherlands. The other native English speaking Speech Pathologists in The Hague are all specialised in other types of speech and language disorders and were keen to have a "fluency expert" to whom they could refer young stutterers. Working with stuttering seemed ideal for me in The Hague, as there was a ready gap for me to fill.

Restarting my career in the Netherlands seemed daunting at first but with good support and plenty of determination, I am now enjoying a different way of working.

I hope to expand the Accent Reduction Therapy provision in particular in 2008. In the meantime, the Baby Signing classes are great fun and the stuttering work is challenging and satisfying.



June Goh with her two younger sons.

June is from Malaysia and has been living in The Hague, the Netherlands for two years with her husband KC and their sons, Daniel, Bryan and Michael. In addition to the numerous professional activities June has undertaken in and from the Netherlands, she has also recently joined the DESTINATIONS team as a sub-editor.

June Goh

# Keeping the business

The thought of having to give up my preschool business back home in Malaysia to join my husband in the Netherlands made me shudder. Even with three children of school age to keep me busy, I just knew that having to settle back into what I perceived as the typical expatriate wife's routine was not what I wanted. I was reluctant to give up what I had worked tirelessly for over the past few years. My business and my community of contacts and colleagues had become very much a part of who I was. And I loved being financially independent. I had stayed in Los Angeles and London previously, following my husband's career, and each time I had to drop all my plans when the time came to move. I didn't relish having to do that again, and decided I wouldn't!

My life in Malaysia was challenging - I owned and ran a preschool and I was involved in various other business activities involving setting up other preschools and designing private preschool syllabi. So instead of selling the business when we relocated to the Netherlands, I kept it. The decision was initially easier than the business practicalities - I had to reorganise my preschool team in Malaysia to ensure the structure was one that supported me being physically not there for much of the year, and put in place a system for managing the finances of the preschool from the Netherlands. I'm now doing everything via emails, internet banking, and internet telephone. Remarkably, after almost two years, the preschool has done well so far and everybody seems to be happy, and I have retained my all-important independent steady stream of income.

Even better, I have found many potential work and business development opportunities appearing in my new life here in the Netherlands. For example, as part of the Shell Spouse Vocational Development support, I attended various Orff Schulwerk music education classes and symposia. One thing

led to another, and I ended up organising a workshop in Malaysia by the world-renowned Orff Schulwerk proponent Doug Goodkin. The entire organisation of the very successful workshop was conducted by internet or by phone, and I only had to fly to Malaysia a few days before the event. Such was the success of the Malaysia workshop that I am now organising another workshop in the Netherlands by Keith Terry, a body percussionist who has significantly contributed to the Orff Schulwerk approach.

I am also managing to fit in fairly regular work as a substitute teacher in the American School of the Hague (ASH) in Wassenaar, where my three children go to school, and for a bit of fun I have also organised Chinese and Indonesian cooking classes.

Life is busy, but as long as I stay organised, getting through what I have set myself to do is easily achievable. My typical day starts with checking through my emails. For urgent matters, I will try to make the calls before the offices close at 4 or 5 pm in Malaysia (there is a 6-7 hour time difference). For urgent matters I will usually get a text message and I will reply to it. I have hired and fired staff, provided instructions, paid bills and salaries, and closed deals via phone calls or emails or the internet. Best of all, as my own boss and with no fixed schedule, I get to have a nap whenever I want to.

It continues to be a wonder to me that there have been so many opportunities for developing my interests after relocating with my family to the Netherlands. While nothing is easy, everything is possible if you believe in yourself and have a bit of luck. As I see it, with some good fortune and creativity, joining your spouse on an expatriate assignment can open up many new opportunities, including for those of us who have enjoyed successful careers back home.

# Blogging: Creating a family website

*Dave Leverton*

**Dave lives in The Hague with his wife, Kirsten, and their two daughters aged six and three. It is their fifth international posting. Dave's background is in teaching, and more recently in website administration.**

Regardless of whatever distant shore we may be inhabiting at the time, our relatives and friends in the UK have an endless need for news and photos of what we Levertons are up to. Keeping everyone up-to-date can be a time-consuming process, but thanks to email and digital photography, and more recently the advent of small website journal technology, the process is much simpler. I'm not sure if it's less time-consuming because you can spend a lot of time updating these sites, but they are an excellent way of keeping your loved ones "back home" informed.

Current technology available to us all via the Internet has reached a level that publishing on a worldwide scale has never been easier. One style of website - the 'Blog' - is increasingly popular. Its not a pretty word - "blog", which stems from a shortened version of "web log" and generally refers to a website listing articles in a journal style. Usually, the articles are in reverse order - the newest post is first on the page. "Blog" has also come to be used as a verb, meaning to edit or post to such a website.

One free blogging tool is Google's 'Blogger'. For the purposes of this article, I made a new website from scratch. The result is at <http://destinationsdemo.blogspot.com/> Given that I already had text and photos I could use for the demo site, I found that the whole process to register, set up the new site and add two articles took me less than 8 minutes to create a fully working, published page. I spent a little time afterwards adding a few links to accompany the article, notably one to Google's own video demonstration of setting up a Blogger site.

If you are looking at establishing your own site, it doesn't get any easier than Google's 'Blogger', see <http://www.blogger.com/>

Blogger's setup procedure is very straightforward, although I think the hardest hurdle to overcome is the first; that of selecting the language to use on the site. Since I accessed

Blogger from The Hague, the start page appears in Dutch. If you don't know the Dutch word for language, it this step can be tricky. (It is "taal", by the way, but if you're accessing from Ukraine I cannot help!) Perhaps the easiest solution, if you are struggling to find the language selection page, is to go directly to it from this link: <http://www.blogger.com/language.g>

From that point on, I found the on-screen instructions were very clear and guided me through the process. Clear enough, that there is no need to echo the steps in this article, especially since they may change slightly as Google modifies their software. I think the video (see the link on the demo site) provides a good supplement to the website, if required.

Text can be either added directly into the editor on the website or via cut-and-paste from another application. The text editor allows several formatting options. Images from your own hard drive can be added at the click of a button. My demonstration page makes use of only the most basic features.

There are a number of additional customisations that Blogger will allow, and I recommend looking through them to see what choices are available. One feature I will point out involves comments (click 'customise'; select the 'Settings' tab; 'Comments' menu). I chose to permit comments from 'Only Members of this Blog', this way you won't have to spend a lot of time editing or deleting unwanted comments to your posts.

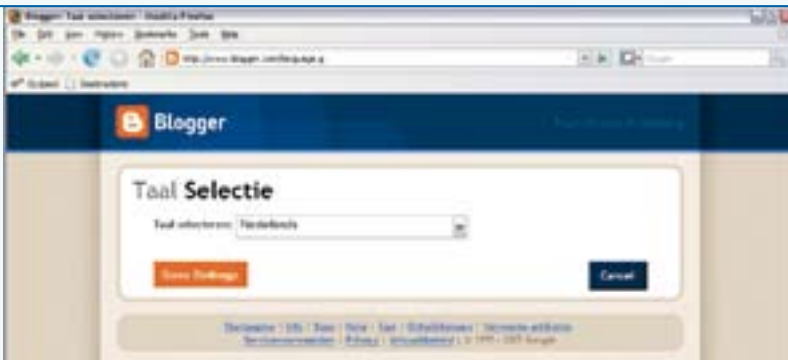
# When in Rome

Andrew Rudge

My wife, Nicky, tells me that Shell has operations of some kind or other in all but two or three countries of the world. Inevitable, then, that some of you expats find yourselves in places where the deadliness of the wildlife, the local populace, the climate, or all three make life, let's say, 'interesting'. Naturally, thoughts spring to far-flung lands of scorching deserts or icy cold wastes, to dense green jungles teeming with creepy-crawly nasties, or to man-made jungles teeming with even lower forms of life. But we're all in foreign countries and looking the wrong way as you step off the pavement can be just as deadly in London as trying to stroke those nice, big pussycats in Tanzania or stirring spoonfuls of the wrong type of white powder into your Columbian coffee.

Here in the Netherlands, motorists change lanes into gaps scarcely larger than their cars and with seeming scant regard for the driver who is suddenly inches from a car that wasn't there a moment ago. Try that in the UK where we're used to more space and you could find yourself the bewildered victim of, at best, a shaken fist or at worst a physical attack. Shake that same fist in the wrong part of the USA and you could be trying to outrun a speeding bullet. It's different strokes for different folks and sometimes, forgetting where we are and expecting things to be like they are at home can be a tad unfortunate.

Don't think it can't happen to you. It happened to me last November. And it wasn't much fun. I was driving up from Spain on a sunny Sunday morning. Just outside Madrid three men in a BMW pulled alongside, showed their police badges and insisted I pull over. The badges looked genuine, they were insistent, I was in a locked car and, after all, if you're from the UK you do what the police tell you. One very well-dressed young man came over, showed his badge again and asked to see the papers for the car. No harm in that but as I handed them over he grabbed my arm, flipped the catch on my watch and yanked it off, cutting my fingers quite badly in the process. Seconds later he and his pals were gone and I was left sitting in my locked car, shocked and bleeding. The police said I was lucky not to lose the car and everything in it. Didn't I know that only policemen in uniform would stop a car in Spain? No, I didn't; nor, I realised later, did I know the emergency number for the police or ambulance services - despite frequent visits. Ditto for France and the Netherlands. I do now. Tot ziens!



Selecting the language setting might be the hardest part of setting up a Blog!



Blogger will guide you through the whole website creation process.



A result after 8 minutes!