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"Freeways to Flip-Flops is a memoir that reads like a novel."

—Lan Sluder
(*Easy Belize, Fodor's Belize, Living Abroad in Belize*)

"A book that reads like a breath of fresh air."

—Lynnete Brasfield,
author of *Nature Lessons*

"Sonia Marsh and her family give new meaning to the term 'flipping out!' Sombreros off to them for showing us the roads less traveled can often be the most rewarding—even when our trips don't go as planned."

—Franz Wisner, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Honeymoon with My Brother* and *How the World Makes Love*

"I loved the story and Sonia's courage in telling it."

—Susan Pohlman, author of *Halfway to Each Other: How a Year in Italy Brought our Family Home*

(Lake Forest, California, July 31, 2012)—**What do you do when life in sunny Southern California starts to seem plastic, materialistic and just plain hellish?**

For Sonia and Duke Marsh, the answer was to sell their worldly goods and move to the Central American island of Belize, a third-world country without all the comforts—or distractions—of life in the developed world.

Sonia hopes the move will bring her shattered family back together. Instead, things begin to go wrong immediately. As the days turn into months, Sonia finds herself questioning the family's decision to move on a nearly daily basis.

Today, back in the United States after her family's adventure in Belize, Sonia has chronicled her story in *Freeways to Flip-Flops: A Family's Year of Gutsy Living on a Tropical Island*. The book will be released on August 21, 2012.

Sonia also is a speaker who guides and motivates others to get out of their comfort zone, take a risk and pursue their gutsy dreams. She writes the Gutsy Living blog at <http://www.soniamarsh.com> and created the popular "My Gutsy Story" series, now an [e-book](#) that celebrates inspiring and life-changing experiences.

Sonia is available for interviews and speaking engagements on a variety of topics:

- How a Year in Belize, Changed My Family: Life Lessons
- How to Find Balance Within Your Family
- How to Get Your Kids Away From Peer Pressures and Entitlement Attitudes.
- From Materialism to Simplicity: Lessons Learned
- Don't Let Your Budget Get in the Way of Your Dreams
- Be Gutsy: Live the Life You've Dreamed About
- 5 Ways to Be Gutsy and Find Your Passion
- Secrets to Finding Your Paradise Within
- What You Need to Know Before Living the Expat Life
- How to Become a Gutsy Indie Publisher
- Successful Blogging to Build Your Author Platform (your audience)



**Sonia Marsh: Author, blogger,
motivational speaker and adventurer**

"Life is too short to play it safe."

Sonia Marsh Challenges You to Live a Gutsy Life

Sonia Marsh is a gutsy woman who, together with her husband and three sons, swapped a comfy, materialistic life in Orange County, California, to live a modern-day Swiss Family Robinson adventure on an island in Belize, Central America. That led to her memoir, *Freeways to Flip-Flops: A Family's Year of Gutsy Living on a Tropical Island*; the popular Gutsy Living blog; and a speaking career. Sonia now guides and motivates others to get out of their comfort zone, take a risk and pursue their gutsy dreams.



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get energized and inspired!**

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About Freeways to Flip-Flops: A Family's Year of Gutsy Living on a Tropical Island

What do you do when life in sunny Southern California starts to seem plastic, materialistic and just plain hellish? For Sonia and Duke Marsh, the answer was to sell their worldly goods and move to an unspoiled, simpler life with their three sons in Belize, a third-world country in Central America, without all the comforts and distractions of life in the developed world.

Belize was not quite the paradise Sonia envisioned. But in the face of a growing number of challenges, members of the family grow closer and learn valuable lessons that help Sonia realize that paradise is not a place—it's a state of mind.

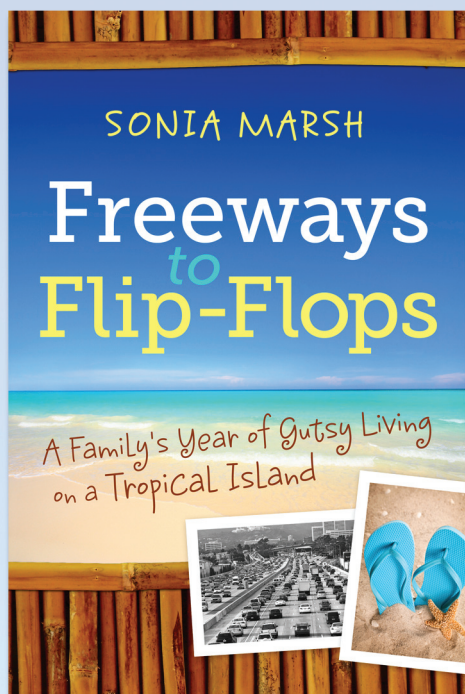
About My Gutsy Story—Mini-Anthology (e-Book)

Sonia created the popular "My Gutsy Story" series, presently posted on her *Gutsy Living* blog and on *Patch.com*. The series celebrates inspiring and life-changing stories. The e-book chronicles 14 such stories. An expanded version with 50 tales is in the works, along with a live "My Gutsy Story" event.

Sonia's Favorite Topics

Sonia can customize her topics to address your specific audience.

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Life Lessons

- **Be Gutsy: Live the Life You've Dreamed About** Sonia teaches how to step outside your comfort zone, take risks and emerge on the other side as a values-based, more confident person.
- **How to Reconnect a Family in Turmoil** Sonia describes her unique way of reconnecting her family by trading materialism for a simple life.
- **5 Ways to Be Gutsy and Find Your Passion** Are you doing what you want to be doing with your life? Sonia will lay out the actions you need to take to get Gutsy and make it happen.
- **Finding Paradise Within** Sonia describes how living on a tropical island taught her that paradise isn't a place, it's a state of mind.

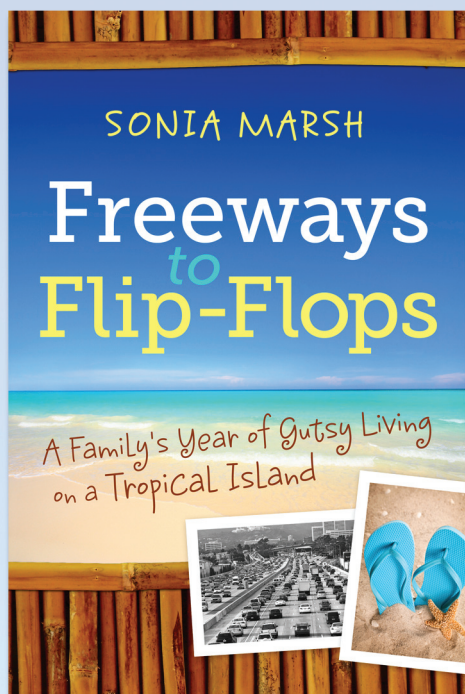
Travel

- **Living the Expat Life** Sonia regales audiences with her tales of living around the world, including a childhood in Nigeria, schooling in Paris and London, and her family's adventurous sojourn in Belize.
- **Don't Let Your Budget Get in the Way of Your Dreams** Sonia shows you how you don't have to be rich to move to a Caribbean location. There are always options in life, you just need to change the way you look at things.

Literary Pursuits

- **Secrets of Self-Publishing** Sonia has been there, done that. She'll take you through the steps she followed, so you can repeat her success.
- **Blogging to Build Your Author Platform (Audience)** Sonia describes how to use your blog to create a community and build your brand.

Born to a Danish mother and an English father, Sonia speaks Danish, French and English. She credits her parents for teaching her to be an independent thinker and adventurer, and has tried to instill those qualities in her own children. Now that they're out of the house, Sonia revels in her ability to pack her suitcase in an hour and be off on her next Gutsy adventure.



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Suggested Interview Questions for Sonia Marsh and her travel memoir: *Freeways to Flip-Flops: A Family's Year of Gutsy Living on a Tropical Island*

What prompted you to chuck it all and uproot your family to a third-world country?

Many things, all building up to a point where my husband and I couldn't wait to leave Orange County's comforts and move to a hut on stilts in Belize. My husband was overworked and fed up with Los Angeles' gridlocked freeways. He longed for adventure. I was fed up with our oldest son's teenage defiance, peer pressures facing him and the entitlement attitude of kids in our neighborhood. I wanted my own Caribbean paradise.

How did this move change your family?

Our value system changed: We became grateful for what we had in life. All of us became less selfish, the kids included—and I've heard other parents say that about them since our return. We no longer need to buy "stuff" to feel good, or to show off what we have. We are perfectly content driving used, compact cars; downsizing to a much smaller home; and pursuing our passions rather than yearning for "things." Our kids have not begged for cars, electronic gizmos, clothes or money. They value education because they saw how Belizean kids treated education as a privilege, not a right.

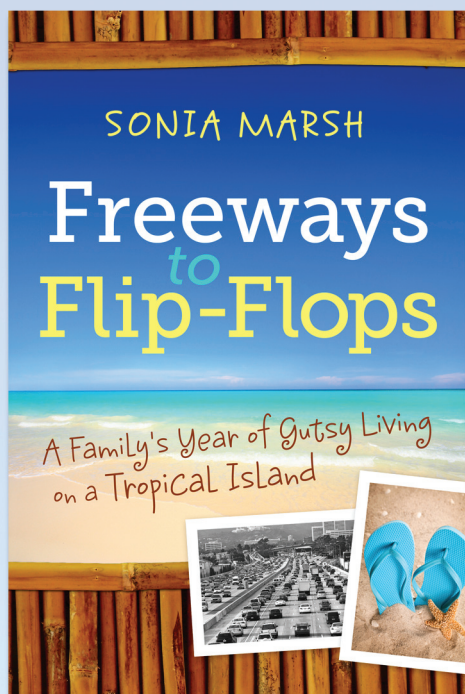
What did your kids think about this move?

At first, they thought my husband and I were joking when we said we were moving to Belize. My middle son was the most reluctant to leave. He had some very close friends in his neighborhood and was thirteen at the time. Surprisingly, my oldest, a sixteen-year-old who was getting in trouble in high school, never complained once about our move. My youngest son, ten, thought he wouldn't have to go to school in Belize, so he was happy. He didn't seem to mind as long as Cookie, our rat terrier, came with us.

What did your children learn?

Each child is different, so each one learned something different from our year in Belize. My oldest learned that his family loved him enough to pull him away from a bad situation, but as a family unit, rather than send him away to school. He became less selfish and felt

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good about helping our caretaker's four-year-old son learn English. He started bonding with his brothers.

My middle son grew more assertive and independent, and my youngest son far more compassionate. When we returned to Orange County, he decided he didn't fit in any longer and has enlisted in the Army.

What did you learn about your children?

I learned that they react to change in different ways. Adapting to anything new depends on your personality, and I discovered traits about my children that weren't apparent when we were living our daily routine in suburban America. For example, my oldest son almost seemed relieved that we took him away from his complicated life in Orange County. I didn't realize at the time that he might have been waiting for us to "rescue" him from his own bad choices. My middle son was more fragile than I had anticipated, both emotionally and physically. I also realized that he does not adapt well to change and prefers to live in cooler climates. My youngest son adapts quickly to change and can rough it more readily than his brothers. He is easygoing and makes new friends quickly. This may explain why he joined the Army and appears to thrive when challenged physically.

What was your day-to-day schedule like?

A good chunk of our day was spent on the basics: finding a store that carried the food we wanted, buying five-gallon jugs of water and transporting them home on a boat, getting butane gas tanks filled for cooking, cooking meals from scratch and being more creative with the limited number of ingredients available. Washing clothes, but then when your cistern has very little water left due to lack of rain, transporting your clothes to town to wash them.

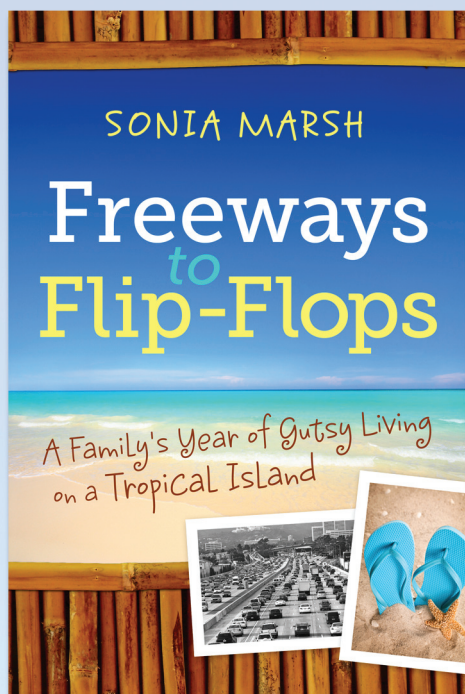
What did you miss the most from back home?

Coffee shops; bookstores; libraries; affordable wine; good cheese, including gorgonzola and Boursin; salads; good steaks; and whole wheat, grainy bread. The kids missed fresh milk, ice cream, and pizza.

How did your kids adapt to the lack of a television set?

They complained at the beginning, until they started fishing, swimming and snorkeling, and learned how to catch iguanas with a strip of palm frond. What is amazing is how they became more social, especially when tourists visited the island of Ambergris Caye, where we lived.

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Did you accomplish your goals?

Yes. The strange part is that even though things were not what I had expected, in the end, we learned some important lessons about life and what's important: relationships, people, expat life, working in a third-world country, and much more. My main goal was to get my oldest son away from negative peer pressure and make sure he got back on track. From that perspective, I can say our goal was accomplished. When he returned to high school as a senior, his grades were excellent and he was able to attend a great engineering school. The kids also learned not to take even simple things for granted, such as water, electricity, the large variety of food choices, and accumulating unnecessary stuff.

As far as me finding "my paradise," I learned that paradise is not a physical location, but a place within yourself.

How is the Belizean culture different from our own?

It's more family-oriented and less money-oriented. Money really drives American society, which I suppose gives us the work ethic we're known for on a global scale. In Belize, as long as you have enough money in your pocket for food today, you're fine. This results in a more laid-back atmosphere, where people don't stress and worry like we do in the U.S. Things get done when they get done; forget rigid schedules. Families help one another out. There are many other differences, such as climate, food, housing, and how kids are raised.

How did you support yourself?

We sold our house when the housing market was doing well in 2004. This gave us sufficient savings to last a year. We did try two businesses, but unfortunately, neither one worked out.

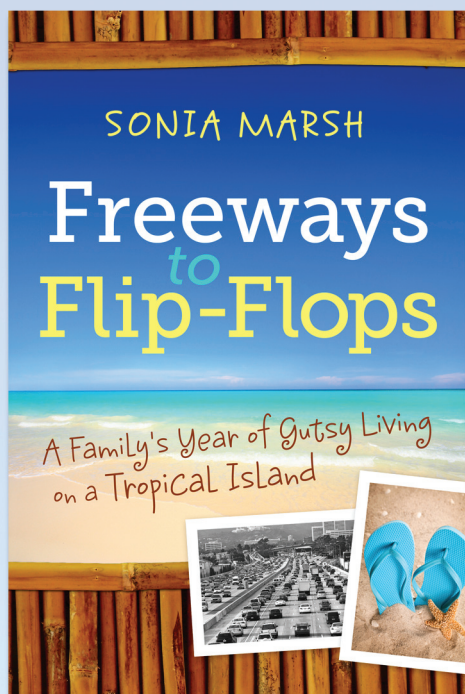
Do you have to be rich to just chuck it all and move?

That depends on where you move and your standard of living there. Many Americans retire to Belize because they can afford a small house and live comfortably on their Social Security check. They say they are better off in Belize; and medical expenses are also much lower. When our son had to go to the local hospital, we didn't get a bill. The hospital just asked for a donation.

What lessons did you take away from this experience?

I learned that there are always options in life when you're dealing with problems that seem overwhelming. You just need to take a risk and become flexible in your thinking. If your problems involve family, money, health issues or lack of work, sometimes you can solve them by moving to a less-expensive area, downsizing, selling stuff, or moving

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to another country where you can live for a fraction of what it costs in the U.S. For example, you can get medical treatment in another country where costs are much lower, but doctors have been trained in the U.S. My husband had a year to de-stress and get away from LA's gridlocked freeways. He realized that even in "paradise" there are problems trying to find work and support a family.

Did it take awhile to adapt to the U.S. again when you returned?

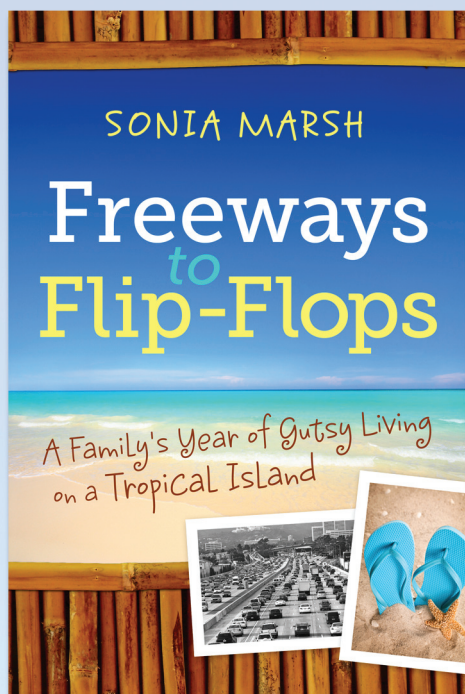
Yes, it took us awhile to adapt, especially me. I remember the first time I shopped at a grocery store, I got stuck in the cereal aisle, staring at the vast assortment. A sales clerk thought something was wrong and asked me if I needed help. I replied, "I can't decide which cereal. There are too many to choose from." He thought I was crazy.

You forget how we are surrounded by noise all the time: cars, sirens, planes and helicopters. It took me several months to get used to the hectic pace of life here. I got upset when people were in a hurry and wouldn't make eye contact. People seemed so focused on themselves.

My sons had slowed down, too. After we refused to get TV when we returned, my sons adapted by sitting down together and talking to one another.

What did your kids think of the experience?

When we ask them, they won't admit that it made a difference in their lives, yet I know they talk about it in a positive way with others, especially adults who ask them. My sons have written college application essays where they mention how they mentored a young Belizean kid and taught him English, and how their year in Belize changed them. When they are in their 30s and 40s, I'm sure they will thank us for showing them a simpler way of life. I know this has changed their value systems. They are far more frugal today.



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Praise for: *Freeways to Flip-Flops: A Family's Year of Gutsy Living on a Tropical Island*

"Sonia is an exceptional connector and communicator. She has the unique ability to bring people together within a global community and is a tremendous resource for that community, gathering and disseminating information both on her blogsite and in her writing."

—Kimberly Keilbach

Author of *Global Warming is Good for Business*

"Sonia's blog has become one of my favorites! She is smart, informative, & witty. I look forward to reading her posts; she is full of insight & drive!"

—Connie Visconte

President, Spectrum Specialties and Awards

"During your presentation you had everyone spell bound! You were great!"

—Stella Togo

Author of *In Honor of Women*
Co-Founder of WomenROK

"I know some wonderful writers who are shy about sharing their work; myself included. Sonia, you helped me come a little bit more out of my own shell. For that, I thank you!"

—Rhonda

"You did an excellent job of presenting useful information at the Laguna Woods Writers Club yesterday. You stimulated a lot of audience members to seriously consider your ideas. Your handout was packed full of useful ideas, too."

—California Writers' Club Orange County