

FINDING *Rosalie*

By Yusrina Yusoff

After living in four European countries, global citizen ROSALIE LAMBIN of Rosalie Pompon made her home and established a career thousands of miles away in Singapore.

It was the day after Rosalie's 43rd birthday when we met up for a chat. Instead of jetting off somewhere to celebrate the event, Rosalie stayed put to run her shop.

Born in Brussels, Belgium, the ambitious mother-of-four had big dreams. At 15, she wanted to be a fighter-jet pilot. When that didn't work out, she pursued her passion for physiotherapy, and worked as a physiotherapist for two years before putting her career on hold for marriage and children.

At 22, she tied the knot with her childhood friend, John, who grew up on the same street. Within two years, they'd had a boy and a girl. Rosalie thought she'd stay in her hometown, Overijse, for the rest of her life, but her path took a different turn. John's career in real estate investment was taking off, so they moved to England when their daughter was only a month old.

As she spoke only French, Rosalie had to quickly learn English; books and television shows were her teachers, she says. England was their home for eight years before their next destination, Rome, Italy, beckoned. Again, she had to learn a new language, but this time she took private lessons. Rome wasn't to be a permanent move, either. The whole family packed up and moved to Hamburg, Germany; naturally, Rosalie picked up German.

When her son Felix turned 15, she wanted to enrol him in an IB programme so that he



Rosalie with her daughters, Aurélie and Juliette

could get into a good university. Unable to find a suitable international school in Germany, she considered relocating. At the same time, John wanted to set up his own firm in Tokyo, but Rosalie immediately put her foot down. "I didn't want to learn another language!" says Rosalie. She took out a map of Asia and chose Singapore because of United World College. Felix passed the entry exam and Singapore became their fourth stop.

Rosalie brought her four children to Singapore without John, as work commitments kept him in Europe for a while. Once all the children were going to school full-time, she yearned for a sense of purpose. "What was my role in the family?" she asks. "Previously, I'd been doing all the cooking and cleaning, but now that I had a helper to do that, what was I supposed to do?"

Despite not having any experience in fashion or business, Rosalie decided to bring a few European brands, which she had been buying since her teens, to Singapore. She started by testing the market at fairs and bazaars, and sold the garments from home, too.

It was no walk in the park, she says, and it was especially difficult to persuade the first two brands to let her sell their products. "I explained to them that high rental prices here limited the options as to how I ran my business, and that I didn't want to open a boutique," she explains.

However, after a year she took the plunge and opened Rosalie Pompon at Cluny Court. Since then, she has been in the store seven days a week, working 17 hours a day running the store, doing inventory checks and inputting data into the computer after closing hours.

"As a mum, it's difficult to have a family life and a career," admits Rosalie. She tries to do it all, though, even taking her children to Paris for Fashion Week in July this year. But her hard work has paid off: Rosalie Pompon recently moved to a much bigger unit in Cluny Court and now offers more than 20 European brands.

It's a relief to have taken on a new shop assistant, she says. Finally, the family can afford the time to take longer trips home, and also to visit their apartment in Switzerland for skiing holidays. 📷



Heading to Europe? Rosalie shares her favourite dining and shopping haunts in Rome, Paris and Hamburg.

ROME

Shopping Lemlò on via della Farnesina (Ponte Milvio; lemlo.com), viale del Parioli, via del Babuino, via del Corso

Dining Ristorante Tullio at via San Nicola da Tolentino, 26 (tullioristorante.it)

HAMBURG

Shopping Shop at Hochallee 124

Dining L'Europeo at Osdorfer Weg 27 (+49 40 8992138)

PARIS

Shopping Rue des Francs-Bourgeois, rue Etienne Marcel, boulevard du Temple, Merci at 111 boulevard Beaumarchais (merci-merci.com)

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