

New York Tales of a South Australian Expat

'Producer' on paper, but self-proclaimed "Jill of all trades", Rebecca Gill lives, loves and learns in New York City... where hustling is a religion and apartments are smaller than most Adelaide kitchens.

A small price to pay when chasing your dream - and New York has "always been it" for Rebecca. Her journey began in 2010, when she left Adelaide to fulfil her dream of working and living abroad. Bali was the first stop on her one-way ticket, having accepted a position as Media Manager – for an NGO that had set-up there, during a recent rabies outbreak on the island.

While worlds apart from her previous roles a Journalist at The Advertiser, working for an NGO in Asia set her up for the string of non-profits she'd go on to manage in New York, including Unicef and the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Aside from her tiny Manhattan studio, Rebecca is "living the dream", in every sense of the phrase. She runs a production company, ReAgency, with her BFF Jayde Lovell. Initially, the pair launched as a science-leaning PR agency but, given the administration's anti-science agenda, they've unintentionally morphed into a late-night-style political talk-show, with a comedic undertone.

Rebecca creates branded content for universities and environmental organisations, and has just wrapped up post-production on her first documentary. She spends most of her time overseeing video production, rubbing shoulders with other content creators, in Manhattan's *YouTube* space.

"I feel like I've done a hundred different jobs and I'm a million years old. Even in New York City, I call myself a Producer but I juggle lots of roles," Rebecca laughs. The New York way, perhaps.

Adelaide remains a calm, grounding yearly refuge for Rebecca, for a much-needed change of energy. Rebecca admits, her perception of Adelaide being "mortgage, kids and bathroom renovations" has changed over the years.

"Adelaide isn't just the suburbs. It's a cool city, with a thriving arts scene and a great quality of life. There's a bazillion other things going for it, too. I really just needed to look harder."

"You can live the creative life anywhere... you just have to find *your* people. I thought I had to get to a big city to try and be the person I wanted to be," she said.

Rebecca sees Adelaide with rose-coloured glasses, similar to what her New York friends perceive it to be. "Beaches, wine, cool little eateries, diverse people and the Fringe, of course."

As the years pass in New York, her affinity for simplicity grows – like hanging out with her folks in their backyard as rellies file through, with different styles of Sauvvy Blanc. “A backyard is something I never get to enjoy in Manhattan.”

Regardless of how expensive it is to fly home, Rebecca keeps up her end of the bargain with her parents, visiting yearly. “It’s my physical release, coming home. An undeniable surge of happiness, that goes something like, “Oh God, thank you for this peace and space.”

Her family lives only a couple of streets (“blocks”, in Rebecca’s adopted language), from the city. Having attended Grange Primary and Henley High School, the beach has always been symbolic of her childhood.

Rebecca is lucky enough to work with a tight group of Aussies.

“Jayde is constantly playing Crowded House, Matt Corby and Vancy Joy, so that always triggers memories of the nearly 30 years I spent in Adelaide.”

When posed the question that’s most common at family Christmas lunches, for almost all expats, “will you ever return?”, she replies: “hell, yeah”, in true Aussie spirit.

Of her long list of reasons, getting pregnant was the biggest one. “Even those lucky enough to have insurance can get slapped with a \$40K hospital bill, just for giving birth!”

She laughs about remaining in Adelaide, “because who wants to raise a baby without their Mum around?” Square footage is another big one, wincing when she thinks about what she can get in Adelaide, for her monthly Manhattan rent.

“My toilet is basically on top of my kitchen. One day, I’d love to live in those rambling old farmhouse style homes in Adelaide, with a red brick exterior, giant old trees, a rosebush and hardwood floors.”

“And of course, to be close to my parents. They’re both vegans, who kayak, cycle and are 7.00am joggers. And me? I’m a true New Yorker now. I eat out every night, my oven doubles as shoe storage, and ‘exercise’ is climbing subway stairs.”

The grass *isn’t* always greener. At least, not every season.

Today, though, Rebecca’s just enjoying the here and now... working on projects that ignite her. Rebecca, like many others who leave Adelaide to embrace their opportunities, has an important narrative to tell. Specifically, that life isn’t linear. And more often than not, the real adventures, are waiting for you in life’s zig-zags.