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Couple go on scavenger hunt around world

by **Kendall Wright** - Apr. 16, 2009 05:26 PM
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It sounds like a plot right out of an Indiana Jones movie.

A couple is sent on a three-week global scavenger hunt across four continents and through at least 10 countries. They compete against other teams to solve riddles, unravel cryptic clues and uncover hints, all while visiting sacred sites, famous museums and lost cities and participating in cultural events.

But they have no idea where they are going.

Richard "Buz" Nason, 74, and Beverly Nason, 62, of Scottsdale, will take part in this real-life adventure that starts Friday and continues through May 9 as part of the Global Scavenger Hunt. The event is put on by the Great Escape Foundation, a non-profit organization whose goal is to raise \$1 million for international humanitarian projects such as Doctors Without Borders, Kiva, CARE and smaller charities around the world.

The Nasons will travel 40,000 kilometers, or 24,855 miles, with 100 percent of donations pledged per kilometer to the team going to charity. The Nasons will be competing against 25 other international teams of two for the "World's Greatest Travelers" title and a chance to go on the trip for free next year.

"Everybody has their addictions, and traveling is ours," said Beverly, who met her husband on a boat trip to Antarctica. She and her husband have traveled to more than 200 nations each.

"When we heard about the event, we thought it would be the perfect way to see things as more than just tourists and give something back to the world that has already given so much to us," she said.

The Nasons have made a big financial commitment to take part in the global hunt. Participants are expected to fill out a 15-page application, submit to interviews, and pay \$10,000 overhead for travel and accommodations. That doesn't count the cost of food and other expenses while on the trip.

"Let's just say that we're making a commitment that we think is worthwhile to an event that's worthwhile," Buz said.

As the Great Escape Foundation puts it, the Nasons' trip will truly be "a blind date with the world."

So far, all the couple knows about the trip is that they will be leaving from Seattle and ending up in Boston after three weeks. To prepare, they have started making a language matrix of simple phrases to communicate with locals, since they will not be allowed to use guides, computers or papers. They plan to pack light.

In the past, teams have been asked to do things like swim with a bull shark inside a cage at the Singapore Aquarium, learn the Cyrillic alphabet over a pint of beer with a new friend in Bulgaria, attend a midnight Orthodox Easter Mass in Greece and take an elephant safari in search of black rhinos and Bengal tigers. The Nasons, who are already adventurous, are hoping to do the elephant safari again.

"We wouldn't be doing this if we didn't think it was an excellent cause," Buz said. "You have to be a little crazy to do this, but we see it as an opportunity to test our wits and make a few new friends along the way."