

Local author gives passport a workout

Books offer tips on travel, languages

By MATT WILSON

For all of her life, Susanna Zaraysky's friends, acquaintances and even strangers, have asked her two questions: How did you learn so many languages, and how have you been able to travel to so many countries?

Zaraysky, a 32-year-old Cupertino resident, will reveal the secrets that have made her a global citizen in two upcoming books about traveling on the cheap and learning foreign languages. Her website currently is holding a contest that allows readers to preview the full versions of each book.

Zaraysky was born in the former Soviet Union but grew up in the Santa Clara Valley with her Russian-speaking family before moving to Cupertino in 1989. She has lived in nine countries, traveled to 50, studied 10 languages and has learned seven fluently. Through the U.S. State Department and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, she has observed elections in Armenia, Tajikistan, Ukraine and, in two weeks, in Macedonia. She has taught English in three nations, studied abroad, written for an English-language newspaper in Argentina, used her Italian speaking skills to market wines in San Francisco and developed economic development projects in Bosnia.

Music of language

Zaraysky was born with vision problems, which she credits with strengthening her overly sensitive ears to pick up the nuances in sounds necessary to learn a foreign language.

"I found that I was doing things a lot differently than what other people do. I listen to language the same way I listen to music," she says.

Her book *Language is Music* focuses on demystifying the process of learning a foreign languages. Zaraysky says that learning languages can be fun and done by anyone with a desire to communicate.

"You can go from frustration to exhilaration and back to frustration," she says.

Zaraysky says that most people are taught memorization words, conjugation tables, rules and other rote learning methods. Rather than



Photograph courtesy of Susanna Zaraysky

Susanna Zaraysky, a Cupertino resident, is the author and publisher of two books about learning languages easily and inexpensive travel solutions. Zaraysky speaks seven languages, has traveled to 50 countries and lived in nine of them.

rely on just those methods, studying abroad or hiring an expensive private tutor, Zaraysky provides 65 tips that can supplement language learning through such everyday activities as listening to music, watching movies or searching the Internet.

"Most people need to realize that the television and the radio is a great resource for learning language and putting words into context," she says.

Budget travel

Zaraysky says that most travel books focus on one specific location. In *Travel Happy, Budget Low*, Zaraysky supplies practical advice for any domestic or foreign adventure. Zaraysky provides 190 tips she has personally used and more than 130 Internet resources readers can use to snare cheaper accommodations or obscure deals. Other topics include health and safety rules, packing, passports, visas, communication technology, transportation, and dealing with exotic food. Many of her entries include a personal story from her journeys highlighting the importance of the tip.

Zaraysky argues that traveling on the cheap allows travelers to feel more immersed in the local culture and get a sense of what an average

day is like for a local person.

"I define traveling as putting yourself in another place where people live," she says. "Budget travel does not mean you must travel on dilapidated and smelly buses or spend the night in rundown hostels. There are many, many ways to travel well at a low cost."

Contest

Zaraysky is holding a contest through her website. Visitors can read both books online for free if they submit their e-mail addresses.

The contest encourages readers to suggest content for the books before publication in May. After reading the books, readers can submit foreign language tips, travel advice or interesting stories about their experiences with both topics.

Winners will receive autographed hard copies of a book and travel- or language-related prizes. The contest lasts until April 5, and winners will be announced April 15. There is a maximum of four entries per person, and readers do not have to enter the contest to read the books for free.

For more information about the contest, books and author go to www.createyourworldbooks.com.