

Country hopping

JULY 2021



Jessica was finally done with high school and now that the world was going back to normal after the pandemic, she thought she could celebrate the occasion with a good old country-hopping trip. Born and raised in rural US, she was eager to explore something different, so she decided to use all her savings to experience something really extraordinary.

She wasn't used to travelling at all, in fact, she had barely ever left her home State. Her family was also quite conservative and saw no need in getting familiar with cultures other than their own.

Jessica's family was rooted in the German and Scandinavian American communities migrated there centuries ago, so any background different from that was seen with hostility by them.

However, Jessica was more curious than afraid of other cultures. She knew that the world was changing itself, countries becoming more diverse and new superpowers emerging globally so she wanted to experience more of that.

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She took all her savings and decided not to plan the whole trip in detail, but to decide her next destination from time to time, each single time.

Her first flight was to London, but she wasn't planning on stopping there. She only chose it to buy herself some time in a European country where they spoke a language she knew, so that she could then easily get on a cheap flight to a different European destination or proceed to fly to a different continent for the next step of her trip.

Visiting a large airport and a large, multiethnic city like London made her curious about all the different cultures she might explore next, but she took some time before deciding what her next destination would be.

Eventually, she settled for...

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A.France

B.Italy

C.Spain

D.Russia

E.Greece

F.Beijing

G.Dubai

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Dubai!

Jessica felt the need for some thrilling experiences in a truly exotic place, so the Middle East was more appealing than some European country. After a long flight she landed there and visited the city straight away. She visited the skyscrapers and the old market and paid attention to how fascinating and exotic the locals were. She loved their dark hair and eyes and how well they matched their slightly tanned skin tones. She loved the experience, but also felt strangely dizzy and tired, so she decided to get some rest. When she woke up, she looked in the mirror and noticed, fascinated, how her blonde hair had turned jet black, her blue eyes had turned deep brown and her skin got tanned. Instead of freaking out, she realised what a gorgeous brunette she was now and enjoyed her reflection. Then she headed out, somehow managing to convince the guy at the reception it was still her, after a hair dye and wearing colour contacts to stand out more and to feel safer.

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Jessica realised how she actually stood out less now and loved feeling less of a stranger. However, her facial features had remained pretty much the same, suggesting a possibly south European background to a more careful look. She observed more attentively the local women and realised they often had vaguely Asian-shaped eyes, and a more prominent nose. Although exotic and different from the facial features she had always found beautiful in herself and others, she grew increasingly fascinated by these details and deep down wished to own them herself.

After a while, she noticed how shop owners and other locals began to talk to her in Arabic, assuming she was one of them. Starting to worry, she checked herself in a mirror in a toilet and realised the changes went even further: her eyes took a slightly slanted shape, her nose got the characteristic shape of Middle Eastern women, her lips widened and her skin darkened a little more too. She couldn't pass for anything else than a Middle Eastern girl now, which fascinated, scared but also turned her on.

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Jessica realised she had no chances to get back to her hotel with her new face or to be able to use her passport, so she was stuck there for the time being, with little clothes or cash.

Again, being forced to stay there and to look like this stirred something deep in her and exited her more than she wanted to admit to herself.

She used her last cash to get a more fashionable dress and started looking for shops looking for English speaking shop assistants in the airport area. Luckily for her, there was a huge demand for that given the influx of tourists, her looks did the rest so she quickly found a job in a luxury perfume shop as Jamila, which allowed her to afford a little room in an old hotel where they weren't too strict about passports.

She tried to avoid contact with her family, simply texting them from time to time and sending them old pictures of herself to gain some time but was clueless about what to do next.

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She spent a few weeks there, during which she gained a surprisingly good knowledge of Arabic. It somehow felt natural to her to speak it, and she began to feel a connection to the place, the people, the culture. However, it scared her to think she might even forget who she was and accept a new life as a local Arab woman, so she kept on looking for alternatives and eventually realised she could get a job as a hostess for an airline company.

She managed to get a fake ID stating she was a local woman named Jamila Bakir and got the job.

After a few weeks, she managed to save a good amount of money and realised she had an easy chance to escape to another country. She was still uncertain about what to do next, until one day during a scheduled personnel check they found her ID to be fake. Fearing to be jailed, she decided to jump on the first flight departing wearing her uniform and to pass as a regular hostess.

What happens next?

A. She doesn't manage to get on the plane

B. She flies to India

C. She flies to China

D. She flies to Nigeria

E. She flies to Rio de Janeiro