

BOOK
Exclusive

DEBBIE TRAVIS

THE TV STAR CHATS TO HELLO! ABOUT FAMILY LIFE, FOLLOWING YOUR DREAMS AND HER ADVENTURES UNDER THE TUSCAN SUN

It's almost impossible to pin down Debbie Travis! In addition to being a TV star, bestselling author, newspaper columnist, public speaker and head of her own business empire, the U.K.-born lifestyle icon has managed to convert an entire 13th-century Tuscan farmhouse into a luxury retreat.

All in a day's work, it seems, for the 58-year-old mom of two, who tells *Hello!*: "I love rising to a challenge." And her latest book tells us how it all began. In *Design Your Next Chapter*, Debbie sets out to inspire us with tales of her own journey, both figurative and literal. "I made this leap from doing television shows in Canada for 20-odd years to sitting on a hillside in the rain in Italy with 80 builders, thinking, 'What the hell have I done?'"

At the same time, it was a refreshing change. Before she took off to Tuscany, "I started to get this feeling of déjà vu every day," she explains. The book – aimed at readers who, like her, feel stuck in the same old routine – taps into both Debbie's own Italian adventures as well as retelling uplifting stories of women who have reinvigorated their lives after spending time at her Tuscan retreat.

Here, the mogul opens up about her newest venture, her supportive family and her own next steps.

How did you ever fit writing this book into your hectic schedule? I got myself a little hut in Thailand, thinking, "Where can I go as far away from other human beings as possible?" It was magical. It was the rainy season, and I just sat in the pouring rain writing this and kind of weeping as I wrote it because there are so many moving stories. And I started to realize, "Wow, there's something here."

How long did the process take? It took about two years. It was a lot of research. I interviewed a lot of people about starting again, the risks you could take, getting rid of the fear, and all the questions that we all have. Self-doubt is the biggest factor for everyone, and so I really wanted to address that.

What do you want readers to take away from this book? Everybody has a dream and it can be realized. Everybody's got a seed of an idea in their head, but we push it back. We push it back because we think we're not capable or we're fearful or it's not the right time. And even if you decide to try it, we get hung up on the "how." The book is three sections: dream it, do it, live it. We all want to live our best life, but sometimes you need to be shown how. I want to reach people who just want to

smile more and be happy and just do something that really makes their hearts sing.

You've followed many different paths. Which one feels the most true to you? Well, after being a model in my late teens, it gave me a lot of confidence. If you can stand in front of executives in a bikini, dying inside at 17, you can basically do anything. Once I became a decorator and married a Canadian and moved to Canada, we started a show called *Painted House*, which was the first decorating show in North America. That was what I loved, but as human beings you have to keep evolving, and that's when I would discover new things that fascinated me, like writing books and adopting the Tuscan lifestyle.

What drew you to Tuscany? I was fascinated by the lifestyle. I mean, it's just an incredible way to

live. And every time we visited I felt so healthy and so alive and full of vitality. We had this dream of buying a little house, and the dream kept growing and growing until we started looking at 40-bedroom monasteries! Then I thought: "What if I shared it? What if I invited people to live this dream with me?"

While you were going through this entire journey, how supportive were your family for you? They were great! When you take on something that vast, they have to be on board. It can be so destructive for a person to have a dream that their partner doesn't believe in. My whole family was very supportive although I think my kids thought I was [crazy]...and it's kind of funny because I guess I did become deranged after a bit!

Who are your role models? When it comes to my Tuscan project, the role model was really Frances Mayes, who wrote *Under the Tuscan Sun*. When I read that book many years ago, I just wept all the way through the book, going: "I want this. I want to do what she did." I rang her up when I was alone over there and she let me come over to talk about all the problems I was dealing with. And then, of course, there's always Martha Stewart and Oprah.

Throughout your book you want the reader to ask what's next for themselves, but what's next for Debbie Travis? I'm going to India for a vacation, because when I come back I'm going to be on the book tour, so I'm going to an ashram in the Himalayas to be by myself for a bit. But, of course, already there's another book that's in my head that I'd quite like to write. There's always a next, I think. There will be another next until they put me into my grave. **Q**

INTERVIEW: BIANCA TEIXEIRA

DESIGN
Your
NEXT
CHAPTER
HOW TO REALISE YOUR DREAMS
AND REINVENT YOUR LIFE
DEBBIE TRAVIS

'My kids thought I was crazy. I guess I did become deranged after a bit!'

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: NO CREDIT; MAX ROSENSTEIN; GEORGE ROSS (2); TRAE PATTON/NBC/GETTY IMAGES; NO CREDIT; PATTI PERRIET/UNIVERSAL PICTURES; ROY ROCHLIN



During the process of renovating her Tuscan villa (right), Debbie admits she'd lose focus quite often: 'I'd ask my friends where I should put a particular vase and they'd say, "Debbie, you don't even have a roof yet!"'



THE TO-DO LIST

HELLO!'s pick of the week's events and new releases



TOUR A HILARIOUS EVENING WITH ALEC BALDWIN

Known as the master of characters, *SNL* and *30 Rock* star Alec Baldwin, 60, will be in Canada to delight fans with several special nights of laughter, impersonations and political insights. Tour dates include Winnipeg (Nov. 29), Calgary (Nov. 30), Toronto (Dec. 3) and Ottawa (Dec. 4).



MOVIE GREEN BOOK

Shining a spotlight on a piece of southern history, the Oscar-buzzed drama tells the true story of Tony Lip (Viggo Mortensen), an Italian-American bouncer hired to drive a famous black pianist (Mahershala Ali) on a concert tour through the Deep South. The pair use *The Green Book* – a segregation-era travel guide – to help them safely navigate their route.

MUSIC THE PAINS OF GROWING

In her second studio album, set for a Nov. 30 release, Canada's Alessia Cara digs a little deeper with her lyrics. Despite the 22-year-old's bubbly, upbeat image, "there are so many different facets to me," she says now. "I go through things like everyone else, so I want to start talking about that more."



TV A LEGENDARY CHRISTMAS WITH JOHN AND CHRISSEY

Fan-favourite celebrity couple John Legend and Chrissy Teigen are here to spread some holiday cheer! Hosting their first-ever TV Christmas special, the pair will celebrate the season of joy with friends, family and special guests, including Stevie Wonder and Kelly Clarkson.