



ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE

For House Sitters!

by Andrew Redfern & Lori Grant

Lori Grant and Andrew Redfern appeared in a community theater production of **Calendar Girls** whilst they were both house sitting in popular expat location, Ajijic, in Mexico.

Read about their experiences below and get some tips of how you too can get involved in a theater production whilst traveling and house sitting.

Getting involved

Lori - I saw the audition notice on a local Facebook group page and thought to myself, "*Why not?*" I try to push myself beyond my comfort zone whenever possible, so this event presented itself as the perfect opportunity to do just that.

The auditions were held over two days, so I made sure to arrive bright and early on the very first day. I was super nervous and have always held the firm belief that auditioning for anything is the scariest part of the whole process. It really tests my vulnerabilities and since this was an open audition (everyone is in the same room and watches everyone else), I had even more butterflies in my stomach than usual.

After the auditions concluded on the second day, the director said she'd contact each of us to let us know if we had been cast or not. Sure enough, I ran into the director a few hours later and she told me that I'd been cast in the role of Elaine. I was ecstatic!

Andrew - Whilst at our first American Thanksgiving Party, hosted by the sister of our homeowner, I met the director and said, *"I've always wanted to do Calendar Girls in the role of the photographer."*

Candace gave me a surprised look and responded with, *"Really?"* I thought nothing further of it until two days later, she rang me and asked if I had been serious, as it wasn't working out with the person who had been cast.

I said I was and she dropped the script off for me to read with my promise of letting her know the next day as opening night was only eight days away! Christopher and I had both been heavily involved with theater in Sydney, Australia and I'd been involved in over 50 productions. So, after reading the script and thinking I could do the role, I accepted.



Juggling house sitting tasks with theater responsibilities

Lori - Once I learned I'd been cast, I checked my calendar to determine if I was available for all the rehearsal dates, and the actual run dates for the show itself. Randy and I had a three week trip planned to trek to Machu Picchu in Peru during this time, so I received special permission from the play's director to miss some rehearsals in order to make the trip possible. However, if I had been cast in a larger role, I would have had to choose between the trip or the play. I was very fortunate to be able to do both.

Our house and pet sit happened to be in a neighborhood directly next door to the theater where we would be rehearsing, so that was a definite plus for me. I simply made the brief walk down the road to the frequent rehearsals, which were at least three hours long.

As for juggling the house sitting and pet duties, my husband, Randy, did a great job helping pick up my slack. He walked the dog, changed kitty litter for the cats, and cooked for me so that I had a hot meal waiting when I arrived home from the theater. His support was very much appreciated!

Andrew - With only eight days before opening night, I really didn't have much time to learn lines, stage movements, have photos taken etc. It was a busy time and there was really no time to do much else. However, because house sitting allows you a certain degree of free time, it was not too difficult to fit in the extra responsibilities.

Christopher was a great support with anything that needed doing, including feeding the animals (and me). I did continue to walk the dog, Toby, and used this time to rehearse my lines, although I'm sure the neighbors thought it a bit odd to see me walking the dog talking to myself.

Favorite memories from the show

Lori - Our director had an actual Calendar Girls 2018 calendar printed. Each of us had our own special photo-shoot with a professional photographer. The only catch was, that just like the characters in the movie, we had to be comfortable with "baring all" for the calendar.

That's why my photo shoot is indelibly etched in my memory forever.

The location for my shoot was a local beauty shop (after hours) and only the photographer, our director and the stage manager were there. I was filled with trepidation about being nude in front of people I'd met just days earlier, but the whole experience was amazingly comfortable and professional.

Oh, and the two beers that I downed right before the first click of the camera may have helped a bit too.

The semi-nude photos were very tasteful and discreet. I was super proud of the finished product. Each calendar girl looked like the best version of herself, just wearing much less clothing than usual.



Andrew - For me it was definitely the people involved in the production, including cast, crew and production team. From my very first rehearsal they were so welcoming and friendly and really helpful in getting me up to speed with their movements.

Christopher and I were quickly included into the social circle that naturally forms around theater productions, and we instantly gained several more friends. Getting to know other cast and crew members back stage during breaks was awesome.

One such conversation actually led to a house sit in San Miguel de Allende after Georgette suggested we post our availability on a local yahoo community group. Two days later we were contacted and subsequently secured a twelve day sit complete with gardener and maid.

People in the streets of Ajijic also began recognizing me (without my costume and makeup) and took the time to talk to me about the show and my character, which was such a nice buzz.

Tips for getting involved in a local theater production

Lori - My main tip for other thespians out there in house sitting land is... never try, never know. If you're at a house sit that's at least a few months, and are able to commit to the structured theater schedule and responsibilities, then go for it!

If I'd let my nerves get the better of me, I would have missed out on so much fun and camaraderie.

Andrew - Do it as you won't regret it. Becoming involved behind the scenes is a great first step - you can see what goes on and what is involved.

Community theaters are always looking for people to assist rather than to be on stage. Helping out with props, costumes or any other aspects can give great insight into the whole process of theater making. And... if you do want to act, you can see how the cast, crew and director all work together to create the magic on stage.

Generally you would need to be in the same community for a couple of months due to the time commitment involved, but it will definitely be worth it!

Making new friends

Lori - Theater is one of the most effective ways to make friends while slow traveling around the world. Each production promotes a team atmosphere and everyone, cast and crew included, bonds much more quickly and easily than when making acquaintances in almost any other situation.

Andrew - Appearing in a production is not something I thought would be possible whilst house sitting, but I have been proven wrong. The way the opportunity came about is so serendipitous, and it proves that anything is possible.

The power of social media has meant we have kept in touch with many theater community members in Ajijic and we look forward to returning there later this year to care for the same pets and home.

Christopher has been asked to design the set for a 2019 production so we will definitely be involved in the theater again.

author bio

Andrew Redfern is one half of [Global Wanderers](#). He and his partner Christopher have been on the road since May 2016 and have house sat in Australia, New Zealand, USA and Mexico. Follow them at [Facebook](#) & [Instagram](#).

Lori Grant and husband, Randy, are early retirees from the USA who are now traveling full time. You can learn more about how they retired early at their blog - <https://freetirement.weebly.com/> and connect with them at [Facebook](#).

