

Where in the world is Brenda Sellers?

From Maryville to Mount Everest, the Amazon and around the globe

By **Bonny C. Millard** | Correspondent

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Brenda Sellers' obsession with chasing adventures started in the fourth grade.

It's a passion that has sparked her imagination her whole life. It's led her to all 50 states, to six of the seven continents (Antarctica being the lone holdout), to all four sets of the Seven Wonders of the World, to haunted places, to sleeping in weird locations and to attending many events around the world.

Sellers's "Been there, Done that list," as she calls it, started long before the movie, "The Bucket List," about a dying man bent on discovering the world before his days came to an end. But Sellers is not dying; she's just a natural-born explorer.

The idea of traveling to see unique facets of the world started with a coloring contest.

"In the fourth grade, we had a coloring contest, and it was of the San Francisco Bridge," she recalls. "I said, 'Someday I will see that bridge.' That bridge was on my list."

Describing herself as a "bored individual," Sellers said she starting making a to do list, and one activity led to the next. For instance, a wedding that she attended at the (President Richard) Nixon Presidential Library & Museum resulted in visits to all the other presidential libraries.

Her love of photography became the adult version of the coloring contest. She grew up in Blount County with the Great Smoky Mountain National Park in her backyard and started taking photos of the park. Then she wanted to visit the other national parks and has been to most of them. Then came the bridges with a visit to San Francisco, of course.

"I really started photographing the wonders of the world and that kind of led to a lot of different things."

Sellers said of the four sets of Seven Wonders of the World, she's completed the Natural Wonders, the Middle Wonders, and most of the Modern Wonders, and she's been to the locations where some of the Ancient Wonders used to be.

In 2003, she flew into Lukla, Nepal, to take a photograph of Mount Everest. She had a Sherpa guide and someone who carried her equipment. Although she didn't make it to the basecamp of Mount Everest, she did get as far as 13,000 or 14,000 feet. She had to sign a waiver of responsibility, and the Sherpa told her if she died, her body would be covered with rocks and left there.

Sellers said she doesn't remember three days of that trip, probably due to altitude sickness, and nothing was written in her journal.

"I said my biggest accomplishment climbing Mount Everest was that I didn't break a nail," she says, grinning.

When she learned to scuba dive, that hobby offered new opportunities. She's swum with sharks, sting rays, dolphins, sea lions, manatees and piranhas in the Amazon River.

"I had all these lists. Depends on what I was into," she says. "I'd be like, check, check, check, and then I'd get them all off my list."

Her scuba diving adventures led her to the Underwater Hotel in Key Largo, Fla. She said she had to scuba dive down to the hotel, where she spent the night. Sleeping in unusual places became another list.

"I was one of the first 50 people to stay in the Ice Hotel in Quebec."

She laughs when she explains about sleeping in a hotel shaped like 30-foot tall dog in Cottonwood, Idaho.

"It's a big Beagle dog, and you climb up in his belly," she says. "It's just hilarious."

Strange accommodations led to the 10 most haunted hotels, the [Stanley Hotel](#) in Colorado (the scary setting of [Stephen King's](#) novel, "The Shining"), and the home of [Lizzie Borden](#), who was suspected but never convicted of the axe-murders of her father and stepmother.

"I had one incident, and I had a witness," she says about something that happened in a hotel that wasn't supposed to be haunted. She and her husband, Ed, were preparing to check out, and she was spending a few minutes on the balcony. He asked her why she kept coming back into the room, but she hadn't. Sellers saw the carpet moving as if someone was walking across the floor followed by the door's handle wiggling. She looked to see if the room was rigged, but she never could find anything.

And yes, she keeps a list of all the places she's been, weird festivals and rallies she's attended, the prisons she's visited, and major sporting events (Super Bowl and Indy 500 race to name a couple) that she's attended.

Sellers has about 450 photo albums and is working on a humorous memoir-type story of her travels. The adventurer still has places she'd like to visit including the ruins at Machu Picchu, Peru, but for now, her ailing mother is her focus.

Longevity runs in her family, which will give her time for future explorations, but don't ask her age. She won't tell you, but she does share an insight into her genes.

"My uncle lived to be 108 and was driving a car at 104," she says. "He did the Tennessee Waltz with three different women when he was 100 years old. My dad lived to be 90, and he was sharp as a tack."

Sellers loves to tell funny stories, and she can reel them off. That could lead to a new journey she's been considering: Stand-up comedy.