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Go away with ... Wilson Cruz



“Star Trek: Discovery” actor Wilson Cruz said that visiting Egypt is on his travel bucket list. (Gene Reed)



By **JAE-HA KIM**

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Thirty years ago, Wilson Cruz made history as the first openly gay actor portraying a gay role on a television series. The critically-acclaimed "My So-Called Life" jump-started a career that would include the films "Nixon" and "After Louie," as well as shows such as "Grey's Anatomy" and "13 Reasons Why." The first half of 2024 has already kept the actor busy. He's a cast member of "Star Trek: Discovery," which is in its final season. And on May 9, he'll star alongside Brooke Shields and Benjamin Bratt in the Netflix film "Mother of the Bride." A resident of New York's Long Island City, Cruz, 50, stays in touch with fans on Instagram, Threads and Facebook (username: @wcruz73).

Q: Do you have any upcoming trips planned?

A: Aside from my week on Fire Island this summer, which I try to do at least once a year with friends, the only trip I have planned at the moment is for work on an indie film and that's to Albuquerque. I'm looking forward to the work and to exploring the city. I love discovering new places.

Q: Where did you film "Mother of the Bride"?

A: Actually, 95 percent of “Mother of the Bride” was filmed in Phuket, Thailand. I was in Phuket for about a month working. It was actually the first time I’d had the pleasure to visit any part of Asia. We filmed the movie in and around two Anantara Resorts – one in Mai Khao and the other in Layan – beautiful resorts and facilities, as you’ll see in the film. But I didn’t really get a sense of the country and its culture until my brother joined me for a week after I’d finished my work on the film. We opted to stay at a beautiful resort on Patong Beach and truly took advantage of amazing restaurants, beaches, drag shows and speed boat tours of neighboring islands and mangroves. We had a fantastic place. As beautiful as the island was, it’s the memory of the people and their kindness that has stayed with me.

Q: While on the subject of filming on location, can you share some memories of places where you shot some projects?

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A: Well, “My So-Called Life” was filmed in Southern California, which is where I lived at that time. I’m a huge fan of So-Cal. I made it my home for many years. Whether it’s the beaches, the desert or the mountains with their beautiful lakes in the summer and snow in the winter, it has it all and you could probably see them all in one weekend. “13 Reasons Why” was shot in Northern California in a town called Vallejo on an old navy shipyard [where part of it was] converted into soundstages. Vallejo is a lovely working-class town on the San Pablo Bay and adjacent to San Francisco Bay with easy access to all of the beautiful towns that surround them, including San Francisco – which has always been one of my favorite cities. I took full advantage of my proximity when I could, when I wasn’t working, which was rare since I was filming “Star Trek: Discovery” in Toronto, simultaneously! I loved Toronto. I lived in various neighborhoods during our five-season run. It’s such a metropolitan city, with a diverse population, which means a great diversity

A: As a kid, many times we used to visit Puerto Rico to visit our grandparents for Christmas and New Year's. But the trip that I remember the most was when we drove from Michigan to California in a U-Haul and a car. My folks wanted to take advantage of the opportunity to see as much of the country as we could. We saw the [Gateway Arch] in St. Louis, parts of Texas and its cowboy lore, the Grand Canyon and so much more. But the thing that broke my heart was that having just finished reading "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn," I slept right through our crossing of the Mississippi River!

Q: What's the most important thing you've learned from your travels?

A: Full disclosure. Though I longed for the opportunity, I wasn't really able to afford to travel outside of North America until 2017. Now having had the privilege of visiting England, Germany, France and Thailand, I'm determined to continue my adventures. The thing that I've learned is that no matter how far you travel, no matter how different the culture or food or climate may be, in the end we share the human race with all of its vulnerabilities, all of its joy, ingenuity and resilience. We all have those things in common and I think it binds us to each other.

Q: If you've ever gone away for the holidays, which was the best trip?

A: During the month of December of 2022, I took my first trip to France with my brother, along with his French husband and my little nephew. It was the most overwhelmingly beautiful trip. My brother and I spent a week in Paris and we did all the things. And then we made our way down to my brother-in-law's hometown Thonon-les-Bains, stopping in Strasbourg and Colmar to visit the Christmas markets for a couple of days each. After a beautiful Christmas week, we stopped in Auxerre on our way back to the airport in Paris. It was a gorgeous way to see the country and experience it through the eyes of a native French citizen. It was life altering. I'll never forget it.

Q: Do you speak any foreign languages?

A: I speak Spanish. It was my first language, actually. I'm trying to learn French. Not easy!

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Q: Where would you like to go that you have never been to before?

A: Having just really begun my world travels, I need to get to Madrid and Barcelona. I want to visit Australia, because I'm such a beach boy. I know I'll love Sydney. I'd love to visit Africa – Egypt, Nigeria and South Africa. In short, I want to see it all.

(Jae-Ha Kim is a New York Times bestselling author and travel writer. You can respond to this column by visiting her website at www.jaehakim.com. You may also follow "Go Away With..." on Twitter at @GoAwayWithJae where Jae-Ha Kim welcomes your questions and comments.)

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