Her constant craving for wanderlust

Travel addict Adrianna Tan refuses to be stuck in the rat race and will rather save money to go travelling than to buy a car or condo.

ADRIANNA Tan works two jobs — as a salesgirl and a cashier.

Her day often begins at 11am, going on all the way to 2am — and then the second-year political science and psychology student at Singapore Management University (SMU) manages to study a bit, too.

She is not working so hard to support a poor family, aiding relatives or even to kick-start her career. She is doing it because she wants to travel.

"Some nights, I'll be studying and I find myself getting bored out of my skull, and before I know it I'm looking at a travel website," said Miss Tan, 20.

A plan begins to take shape and she is off within a week.

This year, she has already travelled twice: a three-week trip to Thailand and Cambodia in April, and a 12-day holiday to Thailand in August.

Miss Tan was 15 when she travelled abroad for the first time, to the International Model United Nations Conference in Vienna.

Her father, a laboratory technician at the National University of Singapore, and her retired-nurse mother stepped out of Singapore for the first time only after they got married — when they were 23.

"They never really thought about travelling when they were in their teens," said Miss Tan. "Their parents were too busy trying to make ends meet, and so were they. Today, when I want to travel, I work two jobs. I can save and spend as I like — freedom which my parents didn't have in their teens. I have the freedom, and I intend to use it."

She has also travelled to India, going up to the hill station of Darjeeling, famous for its tea and spectacular views of Mount Kanchenjunga, one of the world's highest peaks, and intends to go back there again next year.

When possible, she shuns planes and travels by road to immerse herself in the country, and takes lots of pictures. The budding travel photographer has already had her pictures published in travel journals, and is aiming to do more.

But the primary aim is travel, for travel's sake.

Miss Tan gets upset when she is accused of wasting time and money. And even more furious if she is asked why she is not — like a good girl — saving up money to buy a car or house.

"Ironically, I'm more ambitious. I don't want to be soulless and trapped in routine — which is what I would be if I kept chasing after a car or condo," she said.

The thought of settling into a regular job is worrying: "It's scary. The thought of having just 14 days of leave a year is so constricting," said the SMU student who would like to do a PhD in political science or journalism.

"I've never seen myself as 'settling down'. I want to be able to get up and go if I get a good job anywhere in the world."

"Travelling has sparked several changes in her, and will inspire some more. "I prefer to travel by road — in cars, buses and trains — because it teaches me so much. Looking at how people live so happily on so little makes me wonder."

According to the Singapore Department of Statistics, more young Singaporeans are venturing overseas, both for business and for pleasure. It says that, of all Singapore residents aged 15 to 29, 34 per cent travelled overseas in 2000 — the latest year for which figures are available. And among those aged 25 to 29, a whopping 60 per cent went abroad in that year.

Miss Tan is happy to be part of those statistics: "I travel two to three times a year — during every school holiday. I'm doing my thing, and I'm happy to be doing it."

ROBIN GANGULY

HAVE FREEDOM, USE IT

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MISS ADRIANNA TAN, 20