

A woman with long dark hair, seen from behind, stands on a dark, rocky mountain peak. She is wearing a vibrant red, flowing dress that billows in the wind. The background features a range of rugged mountains with patches of snow under a clear, bright blue sky. The overall mood is one of adventure and achievement.

Risky BUSINESS

When **Janet Forman** talked with a group of inspiring women from four corners of the travel industry, she discovered that sometimes it takes a leap of faith to reach the summit.

Reaching the top tier in something as glamorous as the travel industry requires more than hard work and a competitive spirit: Each of the following groundbreakers jumped into the fast lane by taking what they deemed to be a frightening risk.

Corporate star Sara Kearney, now Senior Vice President of Brands at Hyatt Hotels, was unsure about giving up the only job she'd ever known. Liz Biden didn't just duck lions to build her first South African boutique hotel; she entered the hospitality field completely free of experience. Aubrey Tiedt, Vice President of Guest Services at Etihad Airways, traded in her childhood dream job as a flight attendant in order to fly a desk. And photojournalist Alison Wright turned her back on a comfortable staff position to risk her life in pursuit of the powerful images that now illuminate the pages of prestige publications like *National Geographic* and the *New York Times*.

These extraordinary women took a rare free moment to tell *Premier Traveler* what sparked their journey, how they cope with the pace and what they see in the future of travel.