

Sailing Miss Sadie



Eccentric social entrepreneur Sadie Kaye smuggles three young offenders to the Caribbean for an empowering, white-knuckle voyage of self-exploration.

TV presenter and award-winning comedienne Sadie Kaye takes three persistent young offenders on a unique voyage half way around the world in a bid to change their lives.

Sadie “smuggles” the trio out of Britain in the hope she can steer them away from a life of crime and takes them to one of the world’s most notorious jails — Venezuela’s anarchic and violent El Rodeo Prison — to show them where it can lead too.

Between them the group have been in and out of a string young offender institutions, including Feltham and Woodhill, for crimes ranging from serious assaults, including GBH, possessing class-A drugs, intent to supply, breaking and entering, theft, vandalism and joyriding.

Voyage of discovery: (From left to right) Chris Tahanney, Geoffrey Nganga and Sam Todd

One of the trio, Chris Tahanney, 20, shows the horrendous scars he’s suffered as a result of being caught up in Glasgow’s gang culture.

From an early age he says they started out using bricks and knives, and by the time he was 16 to 17 they’d moved to using swords and machetes. “By 19 to 20 you start to buy guns,” said Chris.

Along the way, Chris, and his travel companions Geoffrey Nganga, 20, from London, and Sam Todd, 22, from Southampton, met Brian, an ex-con living on an island in the Caribbean who's become a pillar of the local community and shows the young offenders there can be a life other than crime.

During their epic Sailing with Sadie trip, which includes sailing to Venezuela, Geoffrey, who's previous crimes have included common assault, theft and possession of drugs with intent to supply, is moved to tears by the life-changing experience and having to say goodbye to Brian.

And the experience seems to have worked. Whilst still in Venezuela they persuade violent street gangs in the slums of Caracas to disarm and join the pioneering Alcatraz Project. Back home, Sam, an ex-heroin addict who was constantly in trouble with the law is now clean and teaching sailing in Devon. In his spare time he works with the Discovery Sailing Project, which uses sailing as a therapy to help other young offenders. He's now planning to sail back to the Caribbean with Sadie and a fresh team to build orphanages in Haiti later this year.

Geoffrey, who never knew his father and lost his mother when he was 11, said it was this that led him to start losing his way in life, drifting into drug dealing, theft and assault. He now works at vintage clothing store in trendy Notting Hill, in between training to be an actor with the National Youth Theatre.

Chris, who had the worst criminal record of the three, including GBH and gang related violence in Glasgow as part of the notorious Valley Gang, has left gang culture behind him and is learning Spanish so that he can return to Venezuela and work with The Alcatraz Project, which rehabilitates street gangs. After the sailing project, Chris joined Sadie on another project training wild horses so that they could be donated to disabled riding schools.

All three were selected for the project by The Prince's Trust, where Sadie is an Ambassador.

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