



AS IT IS

Photographer Helps People Say 'Goodbye' to Dubai

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When the coronavirus health crisis hit Dubai this spring, photographer Paula Hainey immediately lost all of her jobs.

She was not alone.

Within weeks, the health crisis closed borders and grounded airplanes in the Persian Gulf city, one of the world's busiest international travel centers. Tens of thousands of foreign workers on temporary visas lost their jobs.

To fill her newly free hours, Hainey had an idea. She offered free photo shoots to those who are forced to leave the lives they had built in the United Arab Emirates.

Hainey said she remembered that, before COVID-19, families of foreign workers would pay her to take their pictures in front of well-known structures. Here is the Burj Al Arab hotel shaped like a sail. Over there is Burj Khalifa, the tallest building on the planet.

"If you've been living here for 15 years," she said, "you want something to remember it by."

Hainey said it was "**crazy**." Her phone exploded with texts from people on all forms of social media. When Dubai reopened after **lockdown**, she spent her mornings on the white-sand Palace Beach, photographing over a hundred families at sunrise.

Most of her subjects are pilots and others who work at Dubai airport and in the travel industry. "They've been here for 15-20 years. Their **kids** were raised here, then they're sent back 'home,'" Hainey said. "But their home has been Dubai."

Darrin Chapman is a 49-year-old pilot who came from Greenwich, Connecticut. He met his wife during a stop in Australia six years ago.

Chapman threw his one-year-old daughter, Harper, into the air as Hainey's camera captured the moment. His wife looked on lovingly while the ocean waves washed against the sand.

"A picture tells the biggest story, and we wanted some memories," Chapman said, for when his daughter grows up.

"It was our dream to raise her here," he added. "We're not too **excited** to raise her in the States, but **it is what it is.**"

The health crisis has been especially damaging to those like Chapman. He piloted one of the Emirates' Airbus A380s, the biggest passenger airplanes in the world. The planes are no longer flying without the crowd of travelers.

Chapman lost his job after surviving the first three rounds of **layoffs** at state-owned Emirates. He is moving his family to Laguna Hills, California, to find work near his mother and sister.

"We're quite sad, it is home for us," he said after 11 years in Dubai.

Paula Hainey, a Brazilian, has lived in the city for seven years. Even with her own difficulties and uncertain future, she finds **solace** in helping others say goodbye to Dubai.

"Everybody is trying to help during COVID. Restaurants are giving food or people are supporting medical **staff**," she said. "This is my way of helping."

I'm Anna Matteo.

The Associated Press reported this story from Dubai. Anna Matteo adapted it for VOA Learning English. Hai Do was the editor.

Words in This Story

lockdown – *n.* the confinement of prisoners to their cells for a temporary period as a security measure

crazy – *adj.* wild or uncontrolled

kid – *n.* a young person

excited – *adj.* very enthusiastic and eager about something

it is what it is – *idiomatic phrase*: an expression used to describe a frustrating or challenging situation that a person believes cannot be changed and must just be accepted

layoff – *n.* the act of ending the employment of a worker or group of workers

solace – *n.* to give comfort to in grief or misfortune

staff – *n.* a group of people who work for an organization or business
