

Stranded on the Bolivian salt flats



## Armageddon Pills

When traveling the world, always pack peanut M&Ms.

**A**fter hearing the story of the Higham family, you'll never look at the chocolate-y, peanut-y treats the same way again.

It was a bag of the humble candies that saved the Higham family from near starvation when they were stranded in the middle of the Bolivian salt flats. That's how they came to call the colorful candies "Armageddon Pills" (which also happens to be the name of their forthcoming book).

So just what was a Mountain View family of four – September Higham, her husband, John, and their two children, Jordan (then eight) and Katrina (then 11) – doing on the Bolivian salt flats? The intrepid family decided to pack up their life in June 2005 and travel the world for a year. It was no flight of fancy, but something September and John, both avid travelers, had planned since before they had children. "The kids had known about this since they were little. Before they could talk, we had already planned this trip," she recalls.

Having been home for a year, the family is now sharing their story to let people know this kind of travel is a lot more affordable than people might think. "The main message we like to get across to people is 'It's doable for normal families,'" September says. "People immediately think that we must be rich, to be able to just not work for a year and travel around the world. But we just had this mindset for

many, many years that we were saving for this trip.

"People will spend \$50,000 to landscape the backyard, or \$25,000 on a minivan. It only cost us \$120,000 to be on the road for a year. The money is available to middle class families, especially in this area, if they choose to allocate their money that way."

As for taking their kids out of school, September thinks the world makes an excellent classroom. "Your kids are going to be fine if you pull them out of school. In some sense they got a little bit better education being gone," she notes. "My daughter read 111 books when she was gone. When she came home she went straight into seventh grade, and that whole year she read four books outside of the classroom."

Having survived their adventures in Bolivia, the family visited 28 countries during their 52-week global tour. But, September notes, they have yet to visit Russia, India and Australia. "We definitely have some serious traveling we still need to do." **TV**

*The Higham family will give a multimedia presentation about their yearlong adventure on Oct. 30 at 7pm, at REI Mountain View, 2450 Charleston Rd., Mountain View (650) 969-1938 [www.rei.com](http://www.rei.com). Bring your own M&Ms. To read more about them, go to [www.armageddonpills.com](http://www.armageddonpills.com).*