

A real Survivor

US reality TV star saves Tucabia's Squatters Rest

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FROM international television screens to Tucabia, American Zoe Zanidakis has made a monumental life change.

The former *Survivor* reality TV series contestant spent 17 years as a lobster fisherman and guesthouse keeper on Monhegan Island, off Maine.

Now she has bought the Squatters Rest historical museum at Tucabia, which closed in July, and is bringing it back to life.

Ms Zanidakis, who appeared on *Survivor: Marquesas* in 2002, spent five years in Australia before buying Squatters Rest with two Australian business partners from Nana Glen.

But how did she end up in Tucabia?

"I'd wanted to come to Australia and when I was here I was down in Coffs with a friend. We were supposed to go up to Cairns and hire a 4WD up there, but there were huge floods so we couldn't go anywhere," she said.

Instead she drove around the North Coast - and fell in love with it.

"I don't know if I'd had too many beers one night or what, but I decided 'I want to live here' and went and sold everything back home except my son."

She purchased a block of land in Nana Glen and spent the next few

For around 10 years it's been a unique Clarence Valley tourist attraction. Now...

Squatters Rest is closed for business



years looking for something to do. Then she found Squatters Rest.

"I'd seen the article about it and I'd been looking for something to do, but at the time I didn't know what," Ms Zanidakis said.

"But when I saw this it all made sense so I called up the current owner, came up here and saw it and just thought 'wow'."

Squatters Rest is more than a side project to Ms Zanidakis; as she points to the old farming equipment, toys, signs and household items her eyes light up and when she demonstrates the pianola, her obvious glee is infectious.

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SURVIVING SQUATTERS REST: Former *Survivor* contestant Zoe Zanidakis has bought Squatters Rest at Tucabia and is re-opening the historical museum.

Photo: JOEL HARGANS

RIGHT: How *The Daily Examiner* reported the Squatters Rest closing in July.

A real survivor

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"I'm so excited about it because I come from nine generations ... living on Monhegan Island in Maine and it's like all the antiques we used to have," she said.

"It reminds me of home a bit."

But Ms Zanidakis is halfway around the world from her home and admits the project has been daunting.

"It's been huge ... but I'm following a dream I guess and I really want to make it work."

"I want to cater to bus tours, weddings, parties, birthdays, even bringing school kids up here to check out all the old stuff - anything at all, really. We'll have morning teas, afternoon teas, damper and stew and all the camp cooking."

And while the site already seems well set up, with a stage, bar and hall, Ms Zanidakis has more ideas for the attraction.

"There's just so many things you can do with it. I'm really excited."

The museum will hold its first morning tea on Monday and there will be an open day on Saturday, October 22.