About eight years ago, Peggy Uselding of Port Washington realized that if she wanted to see the places she's long dreamed of visiting, she better get going.

So she turned to her favorite travel partner, her son Tim Grasse, who lives in Oshkosh.

"We just kind of think the same way, and we like doing something that's different," Uselding said.

When her son was young, they went on lots of vacations together, but that changed when he started working. Then she asked if he wanted to go to New Mexico with her in 2004.

She had always wanted to go white-water rafting and knew her son would join her without hesitation.

They enjoyed the trip so much that the next year they went on a week-long rafting trip through the Grand Canyon.

"That was phenomenal," Uselding said.

Their sense of adventure has resulted in the two riding a hot air balloon over Arches National Park, enjoying meals prepared by Peruvian and Egyptian families while not always sure what they were eating and exploring the Amazon River in a rowboat with a snake on the bottom of the craft.

"Our guide caught it and was taking it back to the boat so the biologists could photograph it, then he took it back to where he got it and released it," Uselding said.

The two decided to explore the Amazon aboard an old boat that used to transport rubber. They and a group of biologists from Catalina Island were the only passengers.

"It was a refurbished rubber boat and quite basic. The toilets didn't flush. You had to dump in water. We were told to take showers when we were hot and sweaty so we wouldn't mind the cold water," Uselding said.

"We stopped and looked at a lot of strange bugs and we went hiking and fishing in the Amazon."

It was fun, she said, much better than being on a river boat with all the amenities.

“Since little on, I’ve wanted to see the Amazon,” Uselding said. “When you wake up in the morning and you have pink dolphins all around you, it’s unbelievable.”

The rubber boat was interesting, Grasse said.

“It was an ideal experience to explore the rain forest in this old rubber that brought the industrialized world to the rain forest,” he said.

“It was run by an old British ex-patriot. You don’t have those strong personalities when you go on tourist boats. It’s not only the area you go to, but the people you meet. You meet people who travel a lot and they have stories of places they’ve been that makes you want to go there.”

The mother and son have taken comfortable cruises also, going to the Mediterranean Sea, China and Vietnam via ship, but it’s the unusual side trips that attract them most.

“It’s become a kind of bucket list for me now,” Uselding said. “When we started, we did things in the States, then we got our passports and ventured out more.”

The Amazon River adventure was part of their trip to Machu Picchu in Peru.

In Egypt, they rode camels in the desert on the hottest day they were there, explored temples, hiked and took a felucca, an old sailboat, on the Nile River.

Uselding’s favorite trip was near the bottom of the world to hike the Patagonia Trail in Argentina and Chile and explore Antarctica.

“We took a small ship around Cape Horn, where the Pacific and Atlantic oceans meet, but it was too stormy to get off,” she said.

They went on small motorized boats to get close to glaciers, hiked on one glacier and stopped at an island filled with penguins.

“We went in March, which is their fall. The young penguins had already left (to go north for the winter) and the older ones were going to leave in a week or two,” she said. “Hiking on the glacier was the best.”

In Chile, Uselding and her son stayed in a eco-dome for three nights and did a lot of hiking.

“One hike was all day,” she said. “Tim figured we hit all four seasons in the one day.”

Eating the local cuisine is part of the fun, Grasse said.

“We don’t have any fear of weird food,” he said. “To experience the culture, you have to participate in the local cuisine. I don’t think there is anything we wouldn’t try.”

Grasse doesn't research boats and accommodations, preferring to be surprised and not have expectations.

His mother tends to be the same way.

This year, Grasse wasn't able to take a long vacation to another country because of work commitments, so he and his mother traveled to Utah, where they went in the hot air balloon and went rafting down the Colorado River.

They also did a lot of hiking.

Hiking is what Grasse, 37, most likes to do, often taking long weekends to explore places on foot. He reserves his major trips to travel with his mother.

"It's a good opportunity once a year to spend some time together," he said. "When you go to different places, you get to know something about a person.

"I find her a lot more adventurous when she travels. I think we've both grown as individuals. You always do when you get out of your safety zone.

"I'm an outdoors person. I don't like being isolated in a touring bus looking at a mountain. I want to run up that mountain and experience what it's like."

If one says a trip, such as Patagonia last year, is something they always wanted to do, they do it.

"I bet 90% of the people I tell I went to Patagonia think I went to the clothing store," Grasse said. "It's such an interesting and remote area. To be standing next to penguins is crazy."

Uselding also travels with her 15-year-old granddaughter, but those trips, which have included cruises to Hawaii and the Mediterranean, are tamer than the ones she takes with her son.

Their next trip will likely be to South Africa.

"I want to see the great white sharks and go in a diving cage," Grasse said. "And go to Victoria Falls. In Egypt, we were on the Nile River and it would be cool to see the source of the Nile in Victoria Falls."

Image Information: TRAVELING PARTNERS Peggy Uselding and her son Tim Grasse posed in front of pyramids in Egypt. More photographs of their travels are on display in this week's edition of the Ozaukee Press.