

**TRAVEL SPECIAL** GRAND JOURNEYS: TRAINS AND BOATS AND PLANES

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# sundaylife

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*girl talk*  
**OPRAH  
AND  
FRIENDS**

DATING DANGERS / JANE CARO'S GROWING PAINS / JET-SETTING COATS  
I WAS LEFT OUT OF THE WILL / ADAM LIAW'S DINING CAR AND MORE



# THE POWER OF THREE

Get three leading actors together and the fun really starts.  
**Jenny Cooney Carrillo** meets up with Oprah and friends.

When director Ava DuVernay cast Oprah Winfrey, Reese Witherspoon and TV comedian Mindy Kaling as “celestial guides” in the fantasy film *A Wrinkle in Time*, she knew there would be no diva antics on the remote New Zealand set.

“Oprah has this aura around her and people are initially intimidated, but by the end of our film, all the grips and gaffers and union guys with tool belts who have been in the business forever would see her walk in the room and have puppy-dog eyes, they just loved her,” the trail-blazing writer, producer and director says affectionately of her close friend. “If I was a billionaire twice over, like she is, I couldn’t even get my head through the door, but she is always working to make everyone feel good around her.”

The fierce friendship that developed during that shoot is still in evidence when *Sunday Life* is invited into a spacious Hollywood hotel suite to talk with the three beloved actors – and can hardly get a word in. Hearing the introduction, Oprah immediately sings, “It’s *Sunday Liiiife*” in that booming “You get a *car!*” voice best remembered from her former TV talk show. Mindy and Reese giggle and wonder out loud how she has any energy left to still be singing.

As quickly becomes obvious, the iconic woman known the world over by her first name is remarkably skilled at disarming those around her. “I know what that feels like as that person on the other side when they meet me. I felt that way about Diana Ross when I met her and was like, ‘Oh my God, I have all of your albums, I know all the words!’” she explains. “But I want everyone to know that I’m the



same person you saw on TV so you don't have to worry about tiptoeing around me or acting any special way."

The power trio look surprisingly relaxed in big leather chairs sitting at right angles to each other. Oprah sports a high ponytail and wears black pants and a dark sweater emblazoned with a blue-and-white V-pattern that appropriately resembles a superhero logo. Both Mindy and Reese are wearing floral-print designer dresses, and all three have ditched their strappy heels for sneakers as they tackle their final chat of the day.

The colourful transformations they underwent for their characters in the film required three hours each day in make-up. That's where their friendship first sparked. "We were in the same make-up trailer every morning," Oprah reveals, "so all our bonding took place before we even set foot on set."

The mind boggles, wondering just what these three over-achievers could have been talking about all that time. Politics? Movies? Their love lives? Mindy, best known for TV roles in the US version of *The Office* and her comedy series *The Mindy Project*, looks over at Reese and teases, "You talked a lot about Jennifer Lopez!"

The producer and star of *Big Little Lies* slumps down in her chair and sheepishly responds, "Yes, we were talking about J-Lo a lot because I love J-Lo and I think about her a lot. I don't know if she knows but she's going to find out now, reading this!"

Reese is quick to add that Oprah's contributions to the morning chats were a lot more substantial. "She would just say these beautiful, amazing, profound things, usually after Deepak texted her."

Oprah lights up at the reference to her meditation partner, New Age author and speaker Deepak Chopra. "Yes, I remember the day Deepak sent the text, 'Karma never loses an address.' We started talking about karma and relationships and husbands and why you marry the person you marry and why you're in the partnership with the people you're in partnership with. We had a lot of great conversations."

In *A Wrinkle in Time*, the three stars play other-worldly visitors who have travelled across time and space to Earth with a message for a young girl; that her missing scientist father is trapped somewhere in the universe and needs their help to bring him home.



Oprah as Mrs Which in *A Wrinkle in Time*.

**"I did the thing that I encourage other people to do. Instead of looking at all your mistakes, look at what an opportunity you now have."**

Based on Madeleine L'Engle's 1962 novel, the film features bedazzling versions of the cheeky Mrs Whatsit (Reese) and the mischievous Mrs Who (Mindy), whose every line of dialogue draws on a famous quote from everyone from Shakespeare to hip-hop duo Outkast. But the oldest, wisest and most physically imposing of the group is Oprah as the colourful deity Mrs Which.

"If anyone ever asks you to be a celestial guide, Jenny, take it," Oprah suggests in amusement, dropping my name; another subtle technique she often uses to neutralise her star power. "I thought I'd be wearing, like, a choir robe with a collar and sash – and then I went in and tried on the costumes and realised, 'Wow, this is a big movie!'"

The former book-club guru admits this was one of the few classic novels she'd never read, but she said yes to the film immediately.

"Initially I wanted to do it so I could have a nice adventure for myself, hang out in New Zealand with my friend Ava and not have a lot of pressure carrying a movie," she continues. "But after I finally got to read it, I came to understand the potential impact its message could have on little boys and girls, and that made me feel great."

The unashamedly emotional film suggests that strength comes from embracing one's individuality and that the best way to triumph over fear is to stay connected to your "inner light".

All three multifaceted artists humbly admit they have also faced down fear in their own lives.

"I was afraid to start my own company and spend my own money," reveals Reese, who has found her inner mogul with her clothing and homewares company, Draper James, and her production company and website, Hello Sunshine.

"Sometimes I feel like you can get paralysed by fear, but then I think about people who've done really great things and realise they could never have done it if they let their fear overwhelm their courage."

The soft-spoken Mindy reveals that her most fearful moment happened recently – on December 15, 2017,

when she gave birth to her first child, Katherine. "I was so scared because when you see people go into labour on TV or in movies, they have their husbands and their mothers with them but I don't have a husband and my mother is dead. It was frightening until I realised, 'At least she will be born and then there will be two of us, so I'll never be alone again.'"

Oprah – who gifted the new baby a hand-carved bookcase containing 100 classic children's books – leans over instinctively to squeeze her hand before offering her own response.

"It was when I started my network and expected my audience, who watched the *Oprah* show for all those years, to flip over to OWN [Oprah Winfrey Network]," she volunteers bluntly. "They didn't, because they didn't have cable, so I was starting from scratch."

"But I didn't allow it to take me down and I just did the thing I encourage other people to do, which is to flip it. Instead of looking at all the mistakes that have been made, look at what an opportunity you now have."

Another opportunity she's reportedly been mulling over since her Golden Globes acceptance speech in January went viral is a run for the US presidency in 2020.

There were echoes of Martin Luther King jnr as Oprah put the #TimesUp movement firmly in the spotlight. "I want all the girls watching here and now to know that a new day is on the horizon," she declared.

"And when that new day finally dawns, it will be because of a lot of magnificent women ... fighting hard to make sure they become the leaders who take us to the time where nobody ever has to say 'Me too' again."

Oprah maintains that she has no plans to run for office and downplays the impact of her speech that night. "Honestly, I was just trying to meet the moment," she insists. "That was my only goal."

Reese and Mindy think differently. "Mindy and I have told her if she ever ran, we'd manage her campaign," Reese declares hopefully.

Mindy boldly agrees, adding, "If she says she is not running, that's fine. But we are running the campaign for her anyway and then she's going to have to change her mind!" •

*A Wrinkle in Time is in cinemas now.*





Oprah Winfrey, and  
opposite with co-stars  
Mindy Kaling and  
Reese Witherspoon.