

World of Wonder



From the moon, the earth is so small and fragile and such a precious little spot in the universe that you can block it with your thumb. Then you realize that on that little blue and white thing is everything that means anything to you- all of the history and music and poetry and art and death and birth and love; tears, joy, games, all of it on that little spot out there that you can cover with your thumb.

Rusty Schweickart- Astronaut



World of Wonder

When I orbited the Earth in a spaceship, I saw for the first time how beautiful our planet is. Mankind, let us preserve and increase this beauty, and not destroy it.

Yuri Gagarin

Throughout history there have always been names who have spoken out for nature, for the earth, and for our need to live in harmony with her. These include indigenous people, Wordsworth, Shelley, Thoreau, Emerson, Ruskin, Rachel Carson, John Muir and Jacques Cousteau. In 1966 James Lovelock suggested in his Gaia hypothesis that the Earth was a living, self-regulating system, similar to the indigenous view of Pachamama. In the same year, the first black and white images of the whole Earth taken from space were revealed. Two years later the first colour image of Earth from space followed, called Earthrise. As if in response to those images, in 1969 Friends of the Earth was founded to protect this planet and its environment. The following year the first Earth Day was established. In 1972 the first Earth Summit was held in Stockholm and in 1988 the first Intergovernmental panel on climate change was established.

It seems that there was a huge shift in human consciousness during these years and the emergence of a global environmental movement, as people finally got the perspective of seeing their home from space as a tiny, blue marble surrounded by vast black nothingness. Seeing it as our one precious, shared home with its invisible, man-created borders, in all its beauty. Realizing that we live on what Buckminster Fuller called 'Spaceship Earth' as one human race and that we are also its guardians.

As humans explore the universe further, it has become apparent that our Earth is the most beautiful place and the only habitable planet that we know of. Every one of us, regardless of nationality or religious faith, can experience a feeling of admiration, love and reverence when we see the beauty of the Earth. These feelings, based on firm evidence, have the power to unite the citizens of the Earth and remove all separation and discrimination. Caring about the environment is not an obligation, but a matter of personal and collective happiness and survival. We will survive and thrive with Mother Earth, or we will not survive at all.

Thich Nhat Hanh

There seems to be a vital need for humanity to have a uniting focus. One that brings all people and nations together as one. Perhaps that could be as simple and yet profound as collectively honouring and respecting our own home, Mother Earth. Focussing on being kind to her and to each other, our human brothers and sisters, as well as all the flora and animals, on this one home we share. The choice seems to be either that, which could be a wonderful and necessary evolution, or all of us collectively winning the Darwin award. We can and must choose to live sustainably with the earth and protect this World of Wonder.

On my travels to over 90 countries on 6 continents leading trips and teaching yoga, I have come across so much natural beauty, goodness, seemingly magical synchronicities, healthy diversity and the kindness of strangers countless times. The world currently faces environmental crisis, and there are innumerable things that need improving. That is abundantly evident and yet, as a counterbalance to the daily bombardment of doom, gloom and fear, with this book I'd like to take your hand and lead you to another perspective, that in fact we truly live in a world of wonder.

This book combines photos from my travels with some personal stories and inspiring quotes throughout in the hope of sharing some of this earth's beauty.

I believe that we are all one and that everything is interconnected. I have noticed far more similarities than differences in people worldwide. I celebrate our oneness in diversity and believe that focussing on our unity as a human race and protecting our home, this earth, are the keys to a brighter future. It is my hope that we can create a beautiful future living harmoniously and sustainably with the earth and each other.

This book is, in a way, my ode to Mother Earth. My hope is to illuminate her wonders from the Arctic to Zimbabwe. Call it insights from a female nomad.

Jacqueline Wigglesworth 2018

I am in love with this world. I have climbed its mountains, roamed its forests, sailed its waters, crossed its deserts, felt the sting of its frosts, the oppression of its heat, the drench of its rains, the fury of its winds; and always have beauty and joy waited upon my comings and goings."

John Burroughs

I get up every morning determined to both change the world and have one hell of a good time. Sometimes that makes planning my day difficult.

E.B. White

Give yourself to the journey. Do only what you do not regret and fill yourself with joy.

Buddha



Arctic Norway. The Northern Lights

I'm restless. Things are calling me away. My hair is being pulled by the stars again.

Anais Nin



Be humble for you are made of earth
Be noble for you are made of stars

Serbian proverb







From space the planet is blue. From space the planet is the territory not of the human, but of the whale, with it's fifty million year old smile.

Heathcote Williams





When one tugs on a single thing in nature, he finds it connected to the rest of the world.

John Muir





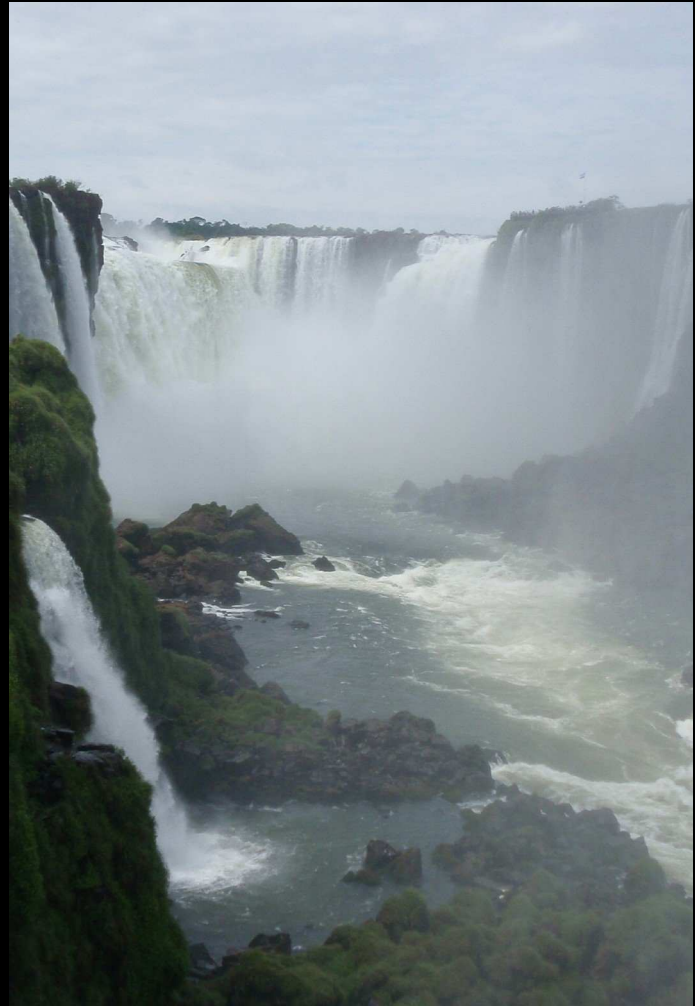




I had long dreamed of seeing the Aurora Borealis, or Northern Lights in the Arctic. You can never guarantee you'll see them but fortunately lady luck intervened and those elusive, dazzling lights showed up in all their glory three nights in a row. It's a real blessing to witness them dance across the sky like electric ribbons of green living light. It almost doesn't matter whether you believe, as the ancients did, that they are mystical signs from the gods, or that they're electrically charged particles from the sun entering the earth's atmosphere, colliding with oxygen and nitrogen. It's just utterly magical either way. Add to that the joys of Huskie sledding, whale watching and spending time with the Sami tribe as they herded their reindeer, sang and shared their stories and their food. It was a magical, if cold, experience and sparked a love in me for the polar regions. (NASA footage shows that when the aurora Borealis appears, the Aurora Australis simultaneously shines in Antarctica.)

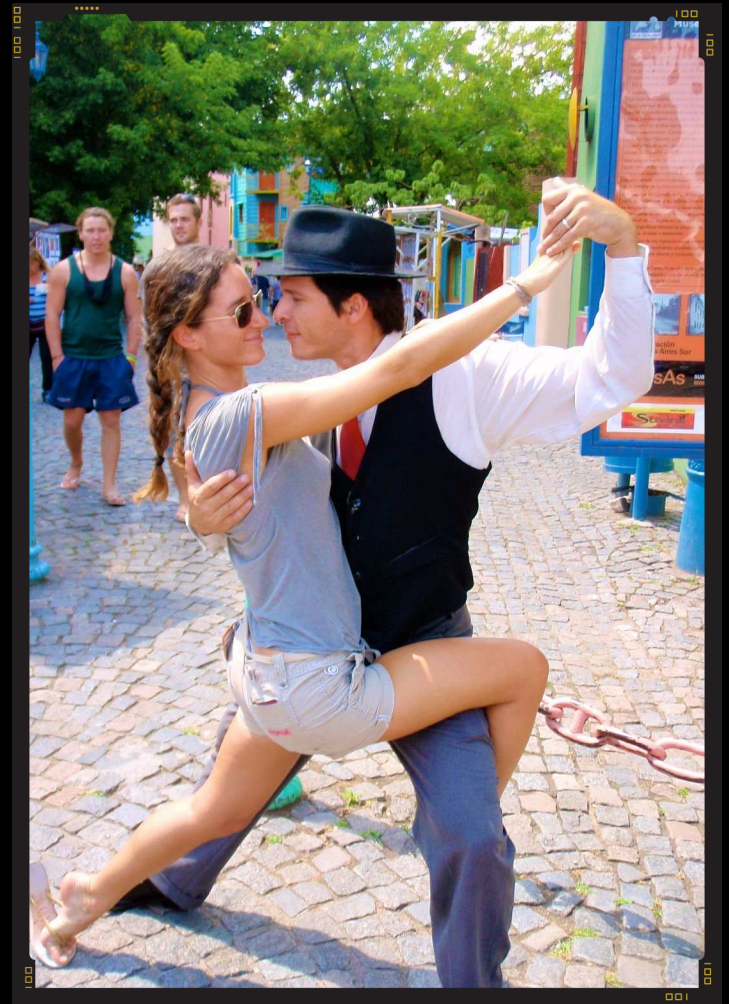
Argentina

Iguassu Falls



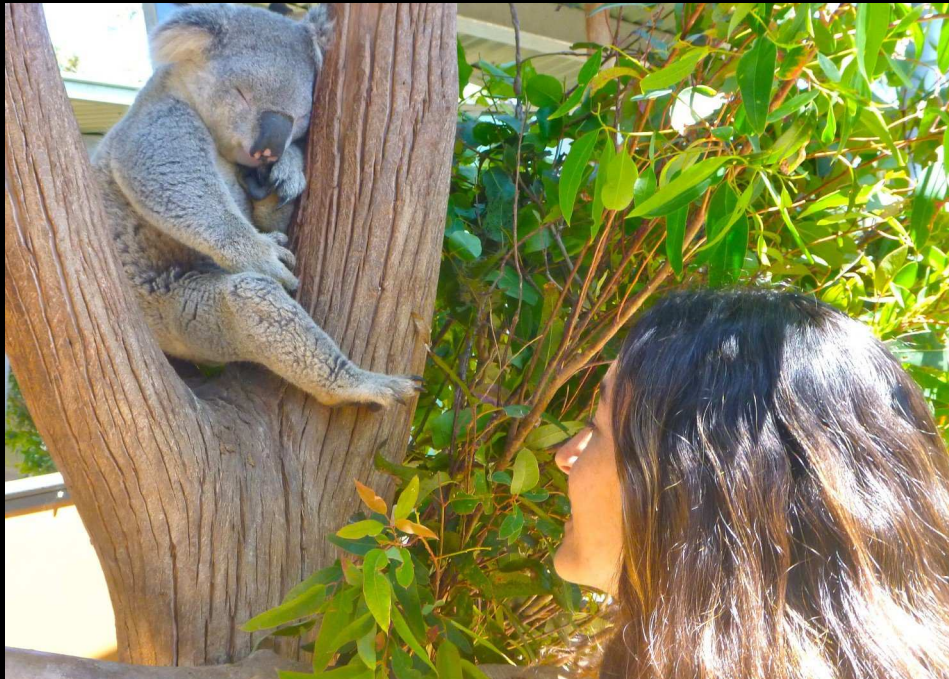
Below Left: Don't drink and fly! An amusing sign in Alta Gracia, the town where Che Guevara grew up.

Right: When in Rome..... Dancing Tango in Buenos Aires.



Australia





Sydney

Overleaf- Uluru







My friend they will return again. All over the earth they will return again. Ancient teachings of the earth, ancient songs of the earth. They are returning again my friend.....and through them, you will see.

Crazy Horse

Alice took me
'walkabout' with her
around Uluru/ Ayers
rock, sharing some
of the dreamtime
stories and skills of
the ancient
Aboriginal people of
Australia. It was
truly a privilege.





Bahamas

This is a favourite memory of mine. I had gone for a morning research shark dive surrounded by 60-80 sharks. The afternoon dive was just for fun. I was the first to go into these clear Bahamian waters and to my utter delight, within a minute, three Atlantic spotted dolphins showed up and stayed playing with me for over an hour! It was an enormous privilege as they chose to be there, in their own wild aquatic territory.

I could feel their echolocation going right through me, hear their clicks and whistles reverberating around me and certainly experienced the euphoria that dolphins seem to instill in people who swim with them. I adore dolphins, they have always been my favourite animal so I felt incredibly grateful and blissed out by the experience. The memory will stay with me forever.

About a month before, the freediver Jacques Mayol (whose life the film *The Big Blue* was based on) had given me his book: *Homo Delphinus*, and written inside "They (the dolphins) are waiting for you." Maybe he knew. He died soon afterwards so it all meant so much more to me.

(Right) Me hiding behind the three of them, in my element.





Belize

Tree house home

If you can sit quietly after difficult news, if in financial downturns you can remain perfectly calm, if you can see your neighbours travel to fantastic places without a twinge of jealousy; if you can happily eat whatever is put on your plate; if you can fall asleep after a day of running around without the need for a drink or a pill. If you can always find contentment wherever you are, you are probably.....a dog.

Jack Kornfield



Bonaire





Botswana

Above: Occasionally on my travels or my commutes to work in Africa, I would come across a pleasant surprise like this elephant family crossing the road, just doing their thing. A beautiful vision and gift.

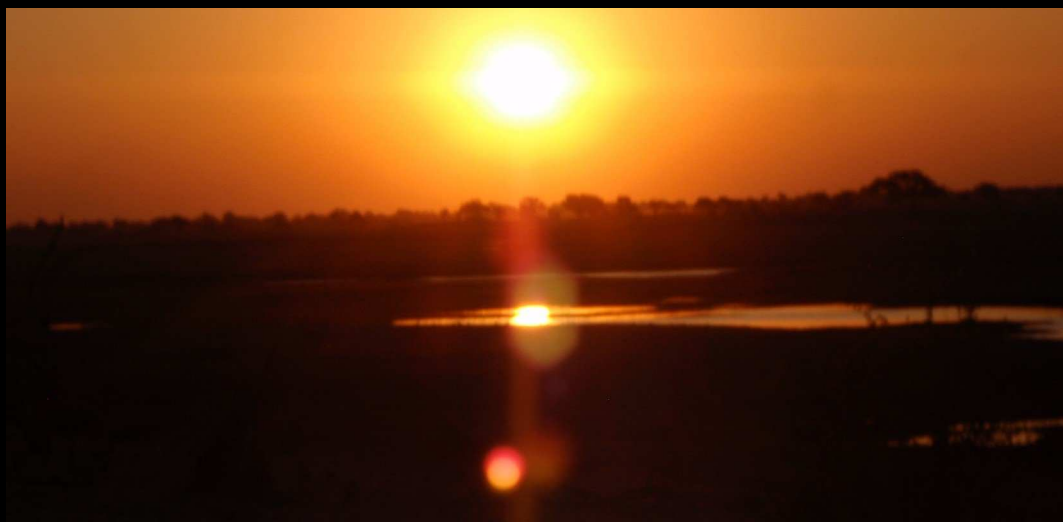
Right: This elephant herd crossed the river in front of our boat; the babies went first and as the water rose and their skin darkened, they lifted their trunks into the air to act as periscopes as they were submerged, under the watchful eyes of the adults behind them. It was an adorable sight.





Above: The outrageously colourful Lilac Breasted Roller. National Bird of Botswana.

Animals and scenery of Chobe National Park.



Brazil- Rio



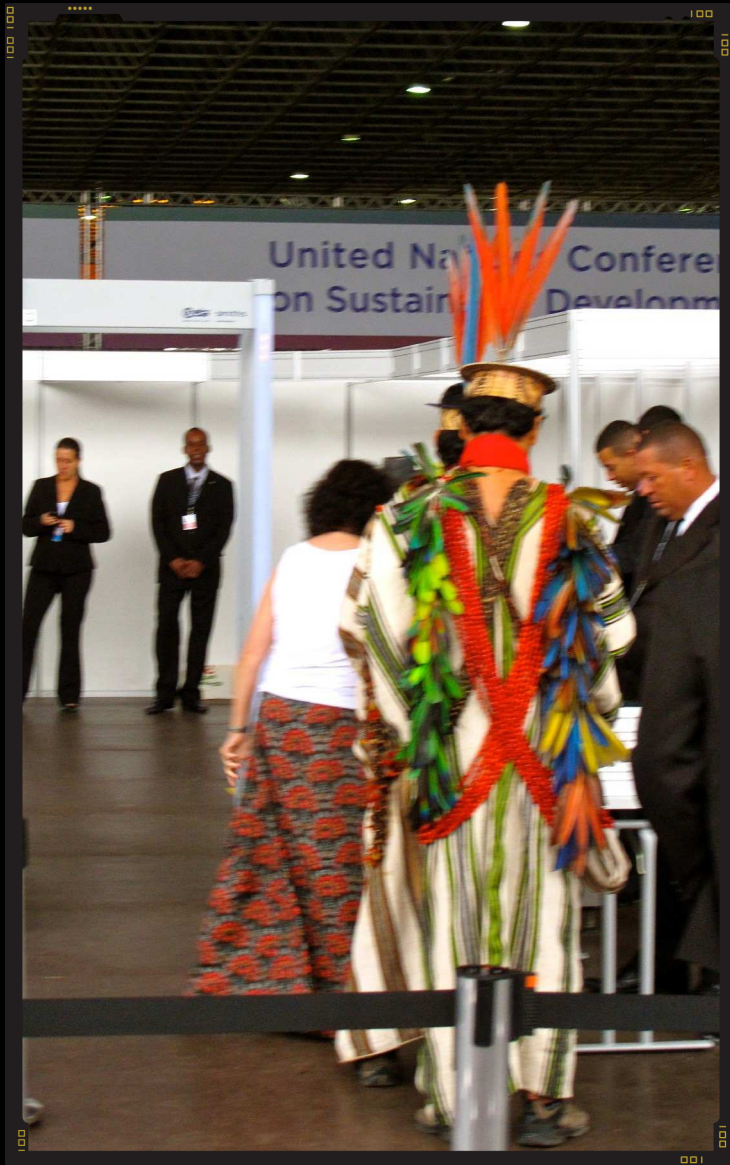


This Andean woman was in Rio for the 2012 Earth Summit. Many indigenous people came to collectively be a voice for Pachamama or Mother Earth. No doubt this was her first sight of that immense blue expanse; the sea.

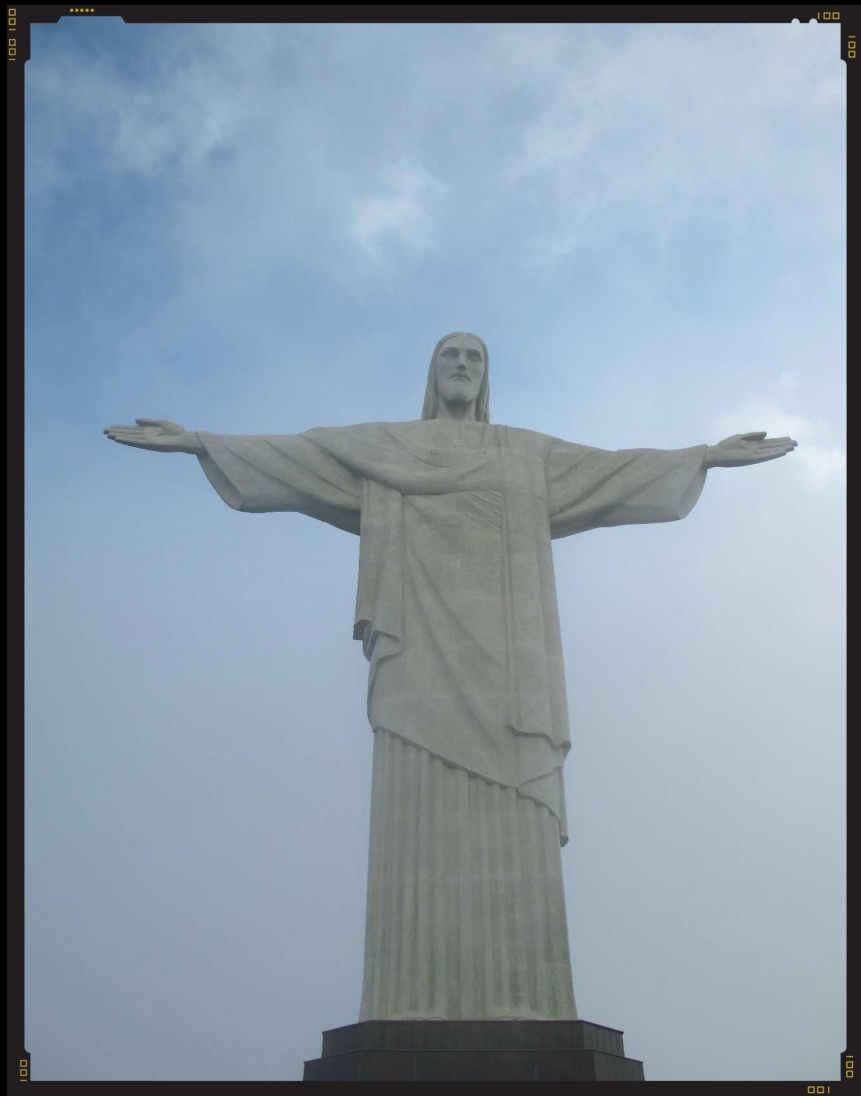


Rio during the Earth summit 2012. My friend Julie and I were there to make a documentary. Many of the world's indigenous people showed up to speak up for the protection and honouring of their land and Pachamama or Mother Earth in general. This powerful woman above, Shayla is the leader of her Amazonian tribe and spoke with such clarity, integrity and passion in a room full of world leaders and top businessmen, about the river and trees that were both her home and her relations, that it helped turn around action on building a dam in that part of Brazil.

The man on the right here walked towards the UN building with such dignity in full feathered regalia. As he was asked to stop for security (as if he'd have shown up armed) I found myself pondering on how we define civilization and progress.









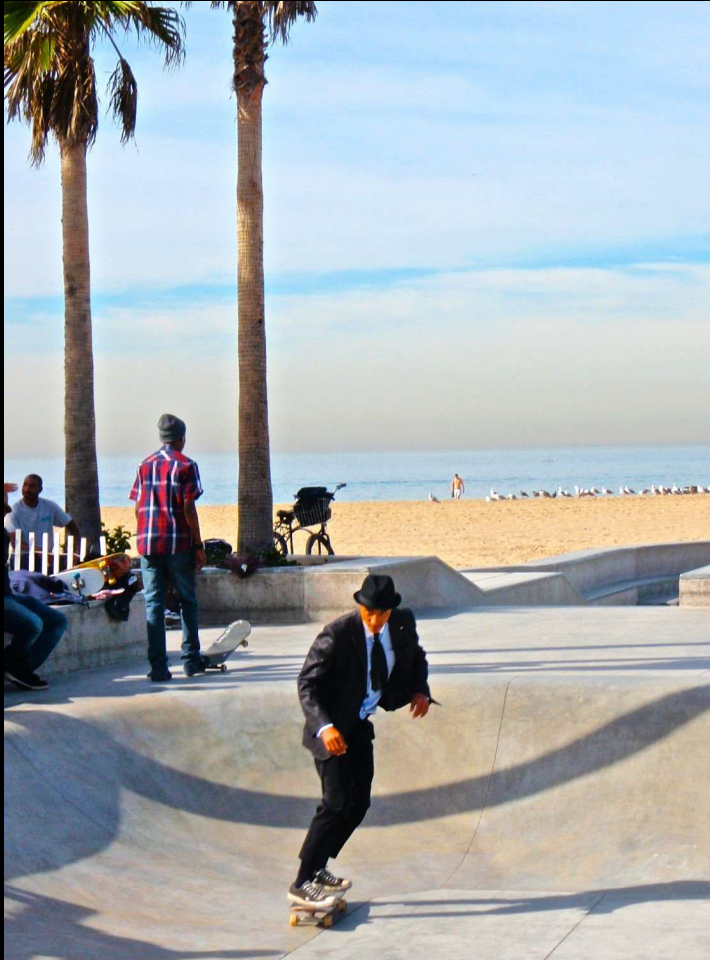
California

California (particularly the Venice beach/ Malibu/Topanga region of LA) has become like a second home to me, where I can go in between trips and stay with friends, for which I'm super grateful.

Left- Malibu

Right- A message left in the sand on a beach along the Pacific Coast Highway.





Typical Venice Beach scene



Maid of honour to my friend Evy, Malibu







Left: Chumash carving on the wall of a cave in Malibu
Above: Yosemite

Overleaf: Malibu sunset

Beauty before me
Beauty behind,
Beauty to my right,
Beauty to my left,
Beauty above me,
Beauty below,
Beauty, beauty wherever I go.

Native American prayer





Cambodia

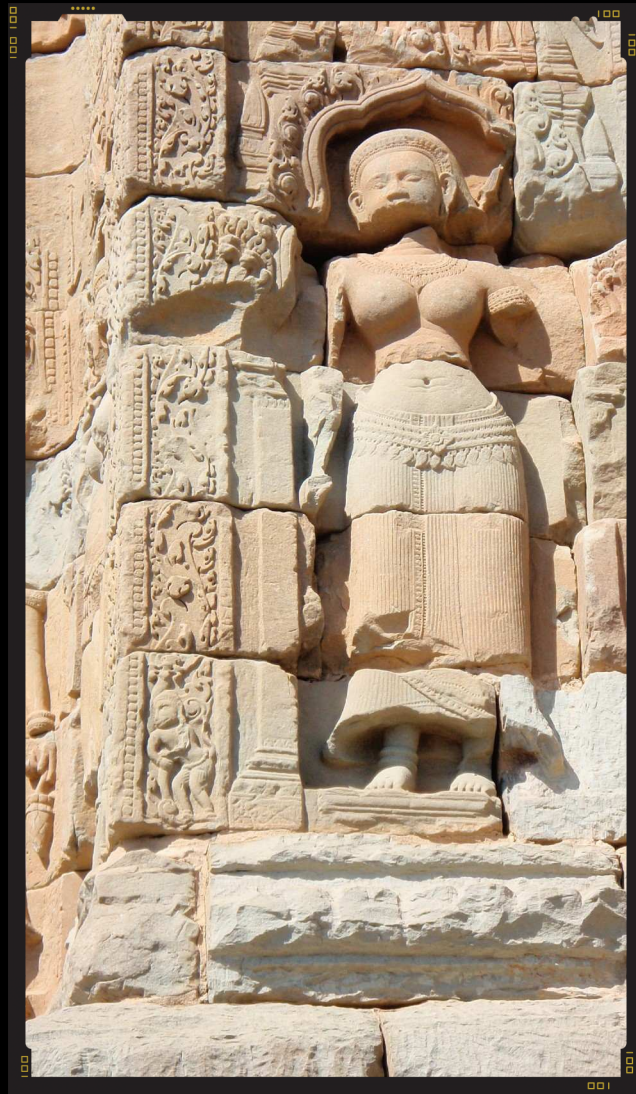
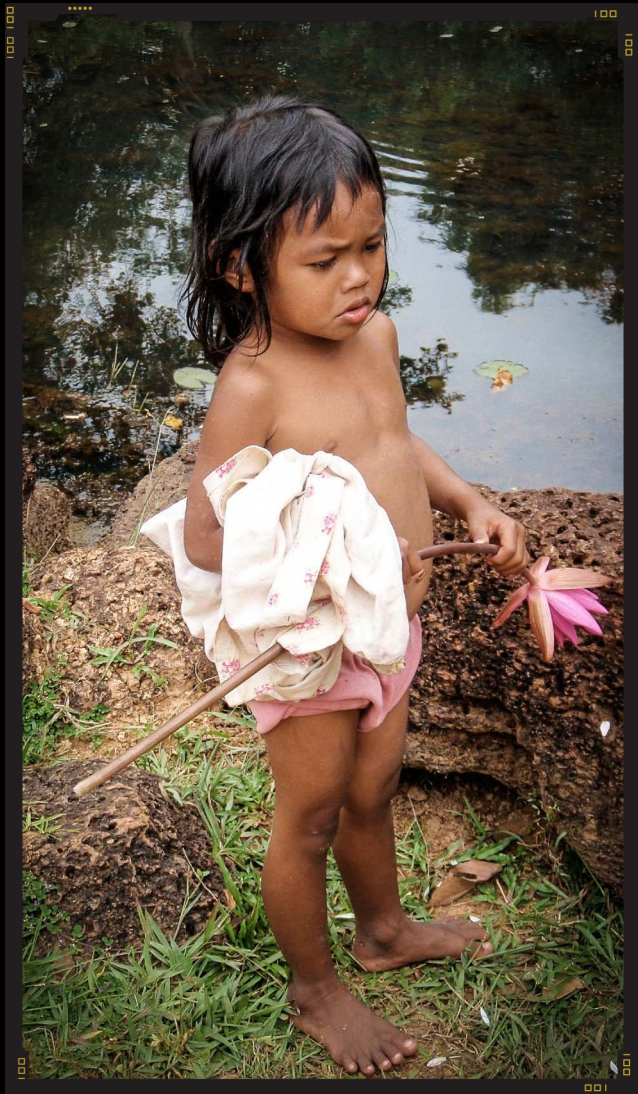
Angkor Wat





My heart holds within it every form; it contains a pasture for gazelles, a monastery for Christian monks. There is a temple for idol-worshippers, a holy shrine for pilgrims; There is the table of the Torah and the book of the Koran. I follow the religion of love and go whichever way his camel leads me. This is the true religion.

Ibn Arabi









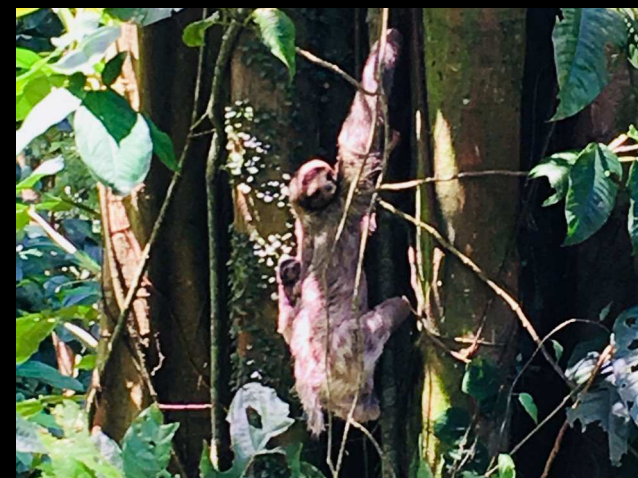
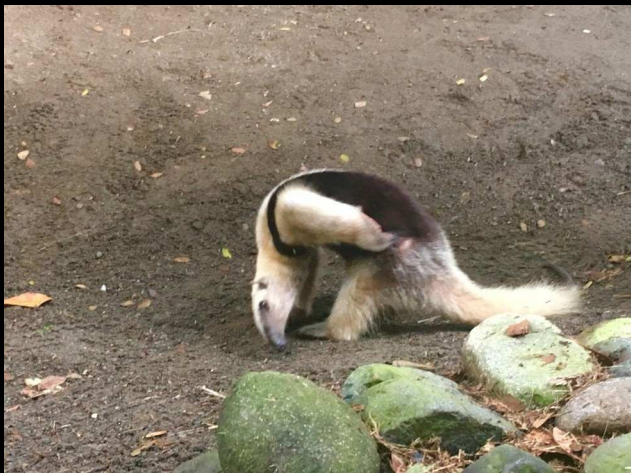
Angkor Wat by night and Ta Prohm, of Lara Croft fame



Costa Rica

Nature and animal heaven,
especially if you love sloths (right.)







Cuba

Dirección

World of Wonder



Arriving in Havana involves having your senses benevolently accosted by seemingly endless colours, all styles and shades of old 50's cars, music leaking out of every doorway and bar, sincere smiles aimed at you from all sides, pollution cloaking the scene and the less palpable taste of history, of revolution, of Castro's breath and rule hovering in the air. It's a city of extreme contradictions, of both poverty and decadence, of evocative music and disappointments, (half hidden because the walls have ears,) of light and dark co-existing as old friends. Within hours of arriving, I found myself in love with its spirit and discovered I had 'Havanaitus' which could be incurable and require many return visits!

(Snippet from my journal from Cuba.)



I have felt Guatemalan in Guatemala, Mexican in Mexico, Peruvian in Peru and Cuban in Cuba, whilst always being Argentinean everywhere.

Che Guevara

Left- Che's presence was everywhere, even lighting up the headlamps!







I celebrate myself,
and what I assume
you shall assume, for
every atom belonging
to me as good
belongs to you.

Walt Whitman







Czechoslovakia- Prague



Easter Island/ Rapa Nui





Easter Island has everything I love. It's a remote island, in fact it's the most remote inhabited place on earth. It has wild horses roaming everywhere which you can ride and is a diver and surfer's paradise. It has the Polynesian vibe yet they speak Spanish as it is currently owned by Chile. On top of all that of course it has the enchanting, mysterious Moai heads and the Rongo rongo script hyroglyphs which still have not been deciphered (there's a closet anthropologist/ archaeologist in me!) For me, it is one of the most magical places on earth.



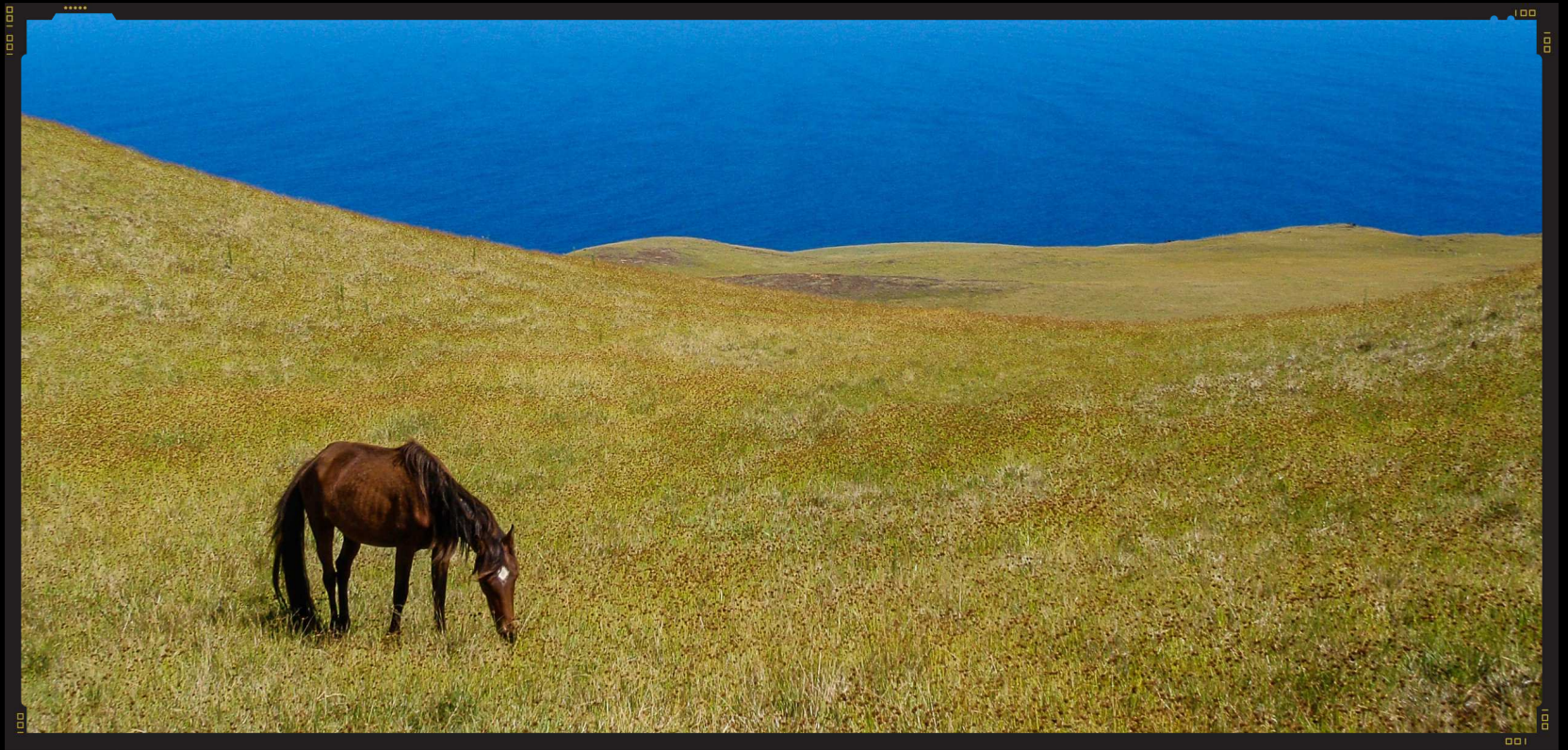








One of my all time favourite spots on this earth. Anakena beach on Easter Island.

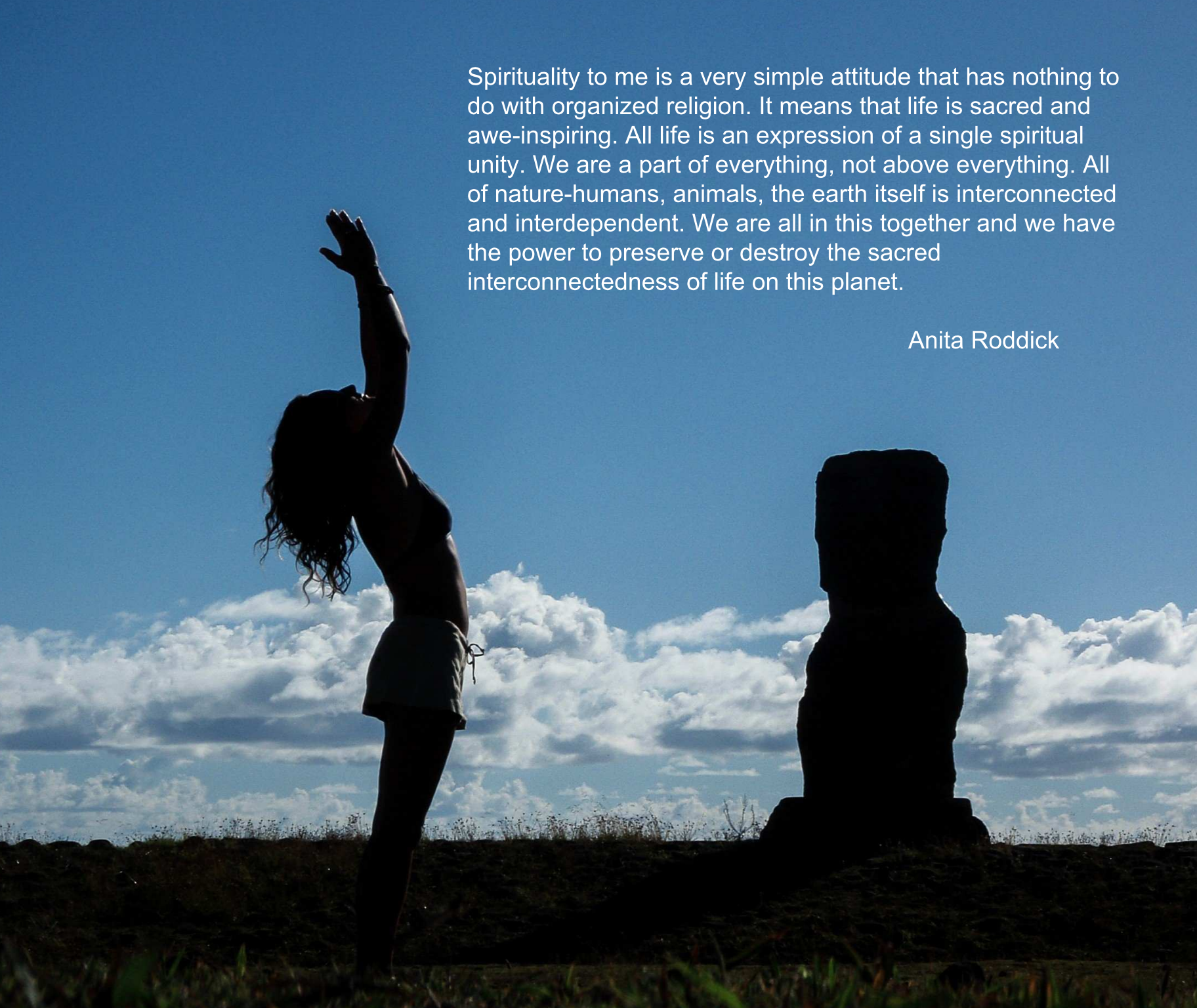


All good things are wild and free.

Thoreau

Spirituality to me is a very simple attitude that has nothing to do with organized religion. It means that life is sacred and awe-inspiring. All life is an expression of a single spiritual unity. We are a part of everything, not above everything. All of nature-humans, animals, the earth itself is interconnected and interdependent. We are all in this together and we have the power to preserve or destroy the sacred interconnectedness of life on this planet.

Anita Roddick







You must experience all of life, not just one little part of it. That is why you must read, look at the stars, sing, dance, write poems, suffer and understand, for all of that is life.

Krishnamurti





Going Freediving with Javier in the astonishingly blue waters off Rapa Nui.





Ecuador

I lived in a remote part of the Amazon, by the Rio Napo working on an environmental project for Global Vision International in 2008. It involved running the GVI base, collecting, observing then releasing butterfly and bird species and teaching English to local villagers amongst other things. During that time we came across one orange, egg eating snake and one frog that had never been seen before.

Left-hazards for cleaners in the Amazon!















A nun leaving Otavalo market happy with her days purchases, a calf and a Guinea pig.

Egypt



This moment in The Valley of the Kings was priceless. Bring back ancient wisdom! What would the ancient Egyptians who built the Pyramids rapidly from enormous chunks of stone in ancient times with absolute precision, make of watching these ten men and their epic efforts to move five blocks in modern Egypt. The mind boggles.





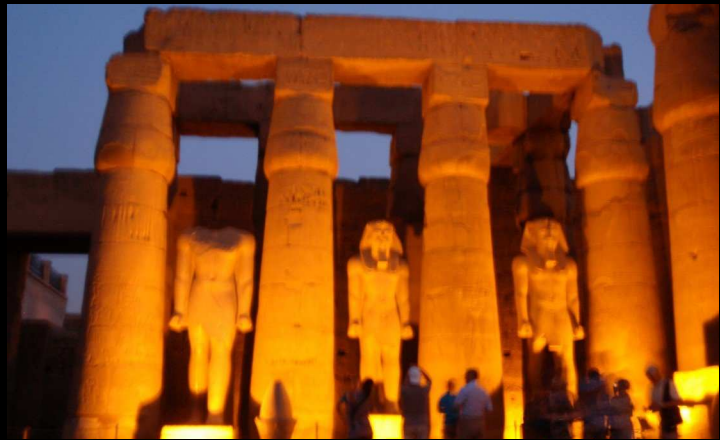
The Great Pyramid and Sphinx. The debate about their real age goes on.



Luxor



Top: A recipe for Lotus perfume set in stone.



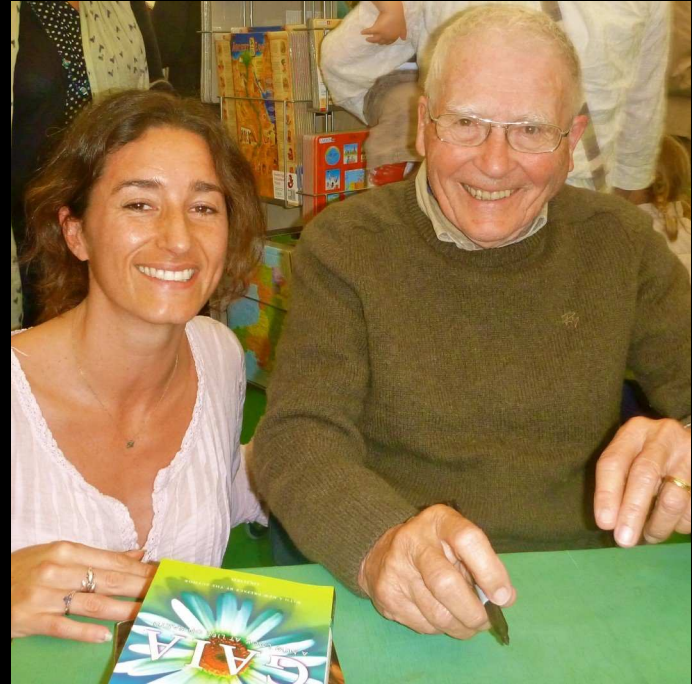


England



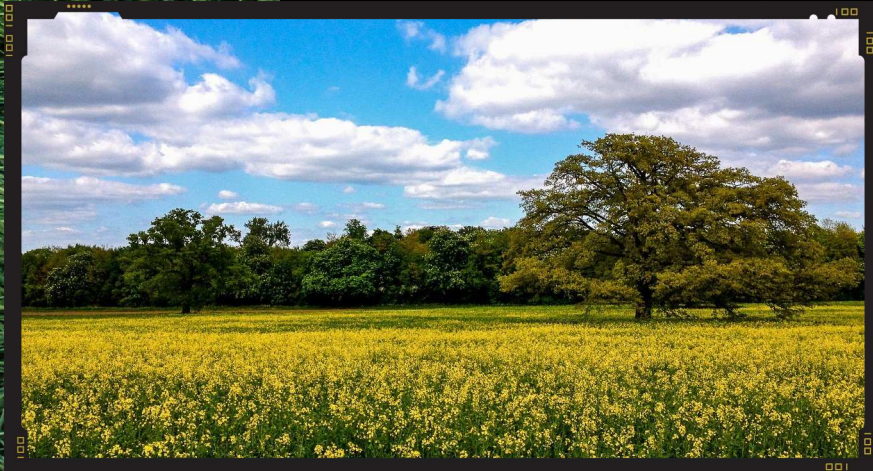
Previous page: Stonehenge during the Summer Solstice.

A fresh 'Crop Circle' in Wiltshire. The mysterious phenomenon continues to occur every year, with 90% of them appearing in that region of England.



With James Lovelock, discussing collaborating on a film about Mother Earth, Gaia.

Left: Silbury Hill







Glastonbury Tor







Flying upside down in
a Comanche plane
above Henley.

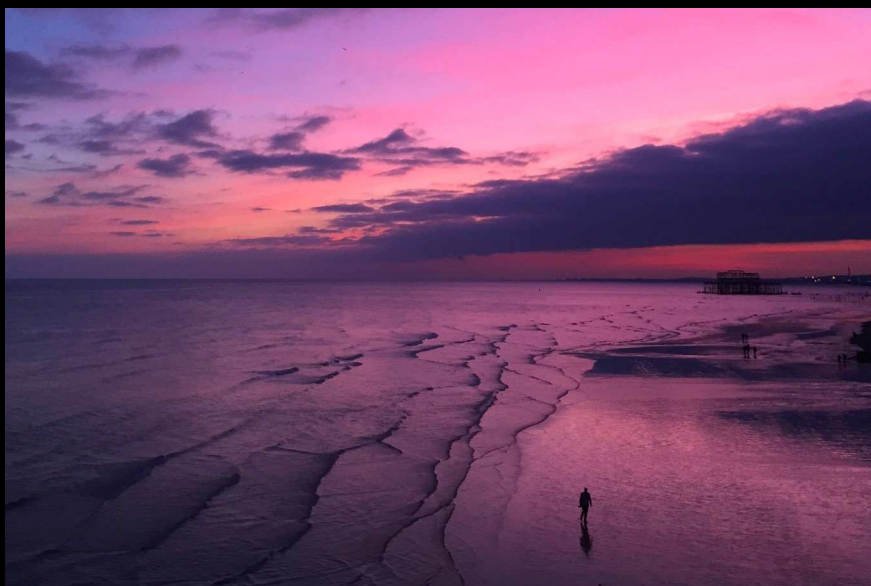


World of Wonder

I got to be Crew Leader on the Gipsy Moth yacht for the last leg of her round the world tour, taking children who otherwise would never get the opportunity to sail. Here I am at the wheel as we sailed towards Cowes in the Isle of Wight for the grand homecoming, with Ellen MacArthur on board! She is an inspiration.



Brighton sunset



London 2012 Olympic Games. I've always loved the Olympics which brings people together from around the globe to celebrate sport and what humans are capable of achieving at their best. I had always wanted to be there at the Opening Ceremony and through a series of lucky last minute synchronicities, I was.



The Olympic flame was magnificent with 204 flames, one for each country competing, which then all rose up to merge together as one. It perfectly captured the idea that we are all unique and diverse yet essentially one and interconnected as humans. It was an incredibly beautiful, unifying moment in a great Olympics.





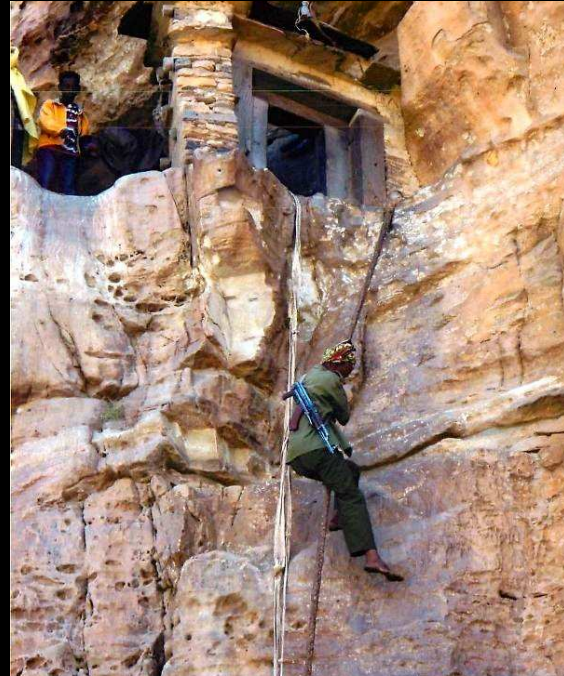
Typical quintessentially English thatched cottage



The Houses of Parliament

Right- Exeter, where I spent four wonderful years at the University.





I was enchanted by Ethiopia. Far from the image of drought and poverty the world saw during Live Aid, I witnessed a lush, beautiful land full of very civilized and well educated, elegant people who were proud of their culture and heritage. It has 17th century castles, Lucy-the earliest human skeleton, archaeological sites going back to 800BC in Yeha and is the home of coffee and some of the best food in Africa.

Most exciting though was that I had the unexpected privilege of coming face to face with the man considered to be the one and only guardian of the original Ark of the Covenant! There's a detailed retelling of the story in a text called the Kebra Nagast explaining that the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon had a romantic liaison which led to a child called Menelik. When he grew up and went to Jerusalem to visit his father, his entourage brought the Ark back with them in secret. All Ethiopians believe that it has been there in Axum ever since. Since no one else knows where it is, why not?

Whether the story is true or not, this man (right) mesmerized me. He called me over to him, spoke to me in Gez, the ancient language, and blessed me. I soon came to realize that that was a very rare privilege. He doesn't have visitors or engage with tourists as a rule. I will always remember that occasion. His name, as I recall it, was Abba Tekla Mariam.

Left: Tunnel entrance in Axum.

Man with AK47 climbing a rope up to the Debra Damo church in the Tigray region of Ethiopia.

Ethiopia

This page: The alleged guardian of The Ark of the Covenant.





Climbing a vertical mountain in the Tigray region, up to a hidden 4th century church, with the help of these trusty local guides. It was quite an adventure!



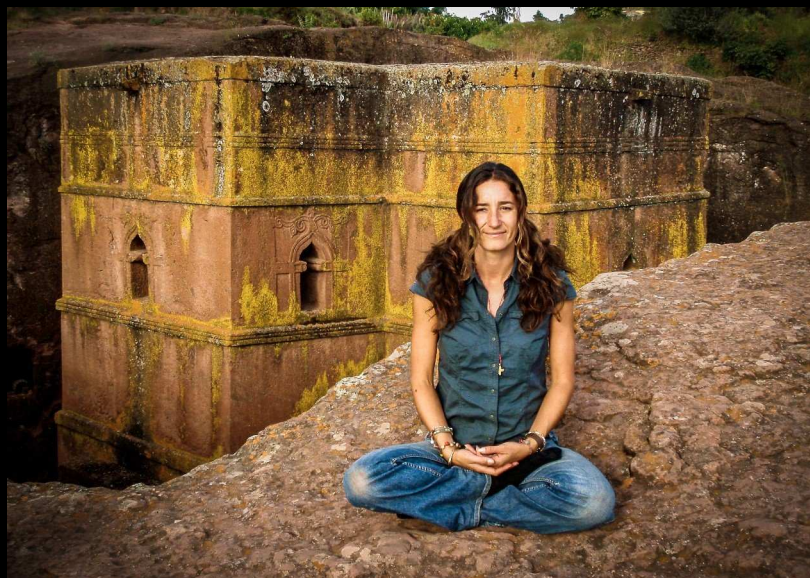
The church's
interior.

Below- 4th
century bibles.

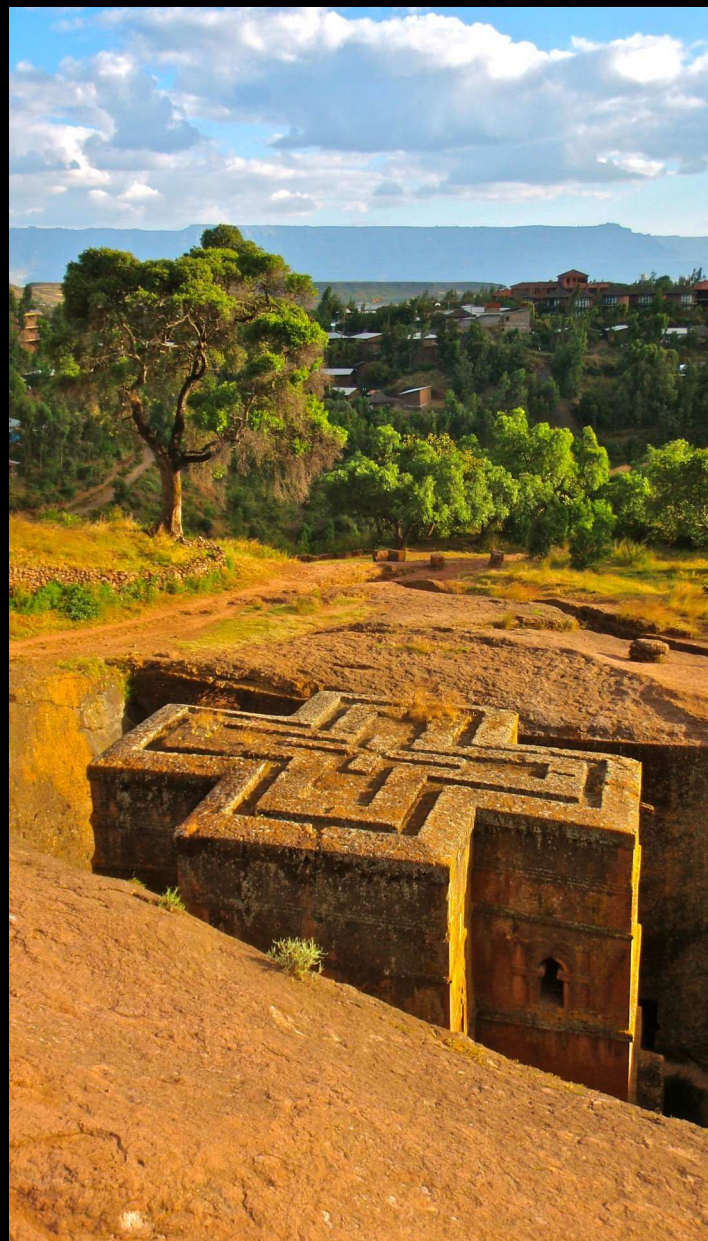


Exploring other
hidden caves and
churches.





Lalibela's St George stone church.





Below left: 17th Century castle. Europe? No Ethiopia- Gondar.

Below right: The wonderful men on Lalibela Hudad, a table top mountain where we stayed (see previous page.) They told us stories by the fire, cooked delicious Ethiopian food and even massaged our feet, a very welcome local tradition. They also gave us a top tip on how to make a leopard run away if we saw one; shout "Babu" at it! I didn't fancy my chances if I came across one.



The desire to go to Africa seemed to have been an obscure yearning to return, a nostalgic inherited need to migrate back to where our ancestors came from. It was a memory carried in my genes, the urge to fly home, like the swallows.

Kuki Gallman



Fear not but be full of light and love.

Ben Okri

Fiji



I lived on a tiny, remote island in Fiji called Nanuya Lai Lai (right) in 2012. I was there working for Global Vision International; running their base as staff with our volunteers and working on education projects in schools on nearby islands, installing rainwater harvesting tanks in remote island villages (which involved mixing cement wearing sarongs or sulus!) and setting up a marine protected area. I loved calling that tiny island home and came to see the locals as family and slipped with ease into 'Fiji time.' You certainly get a sense of perspective living in a place like that, a tiny dot in the middle of the vast Pacific ocean, when a cyclone is on its way! We actually paused our work for a week to go and help the Red Cross with their efforts on the main island which was badly effected. One day I was invited to join the Easter 'island to island' swim procession, a Christian ritual with a Polynesian twist which was an adventure and a real privilege. All in all, it was a wonderful experience and I hope one day to show up there again and surprise the children with a visit.

I somehow manifested the job by posting my desire to live on a South Pacific Island on Facebook whilst working in Africa. Two months later, Fiji was home! Sometimes you've got to put your desires out there. 'Ask and it is given.'

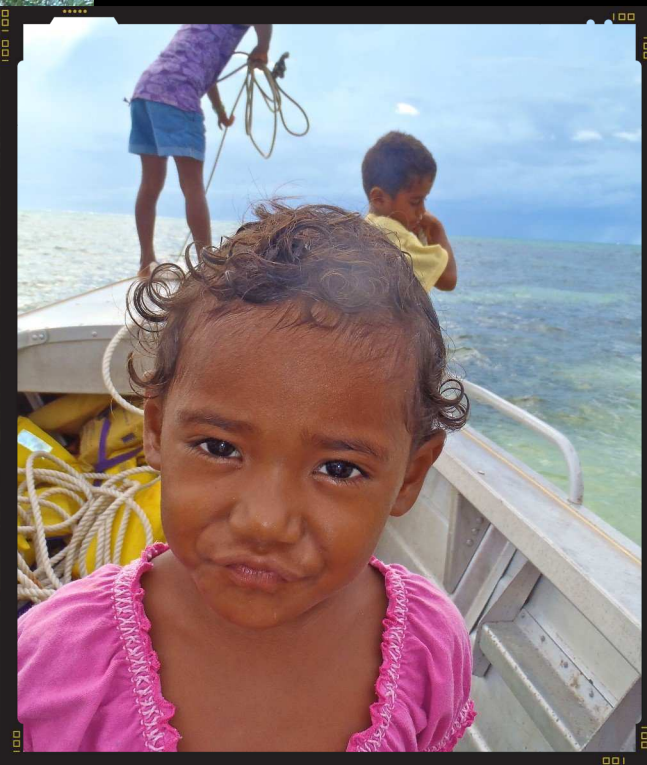
Right- My home was the pink house on the right & the best football pitch in the world.











In spite of everything, I truly believe that people are good at heart.

Anne Frank



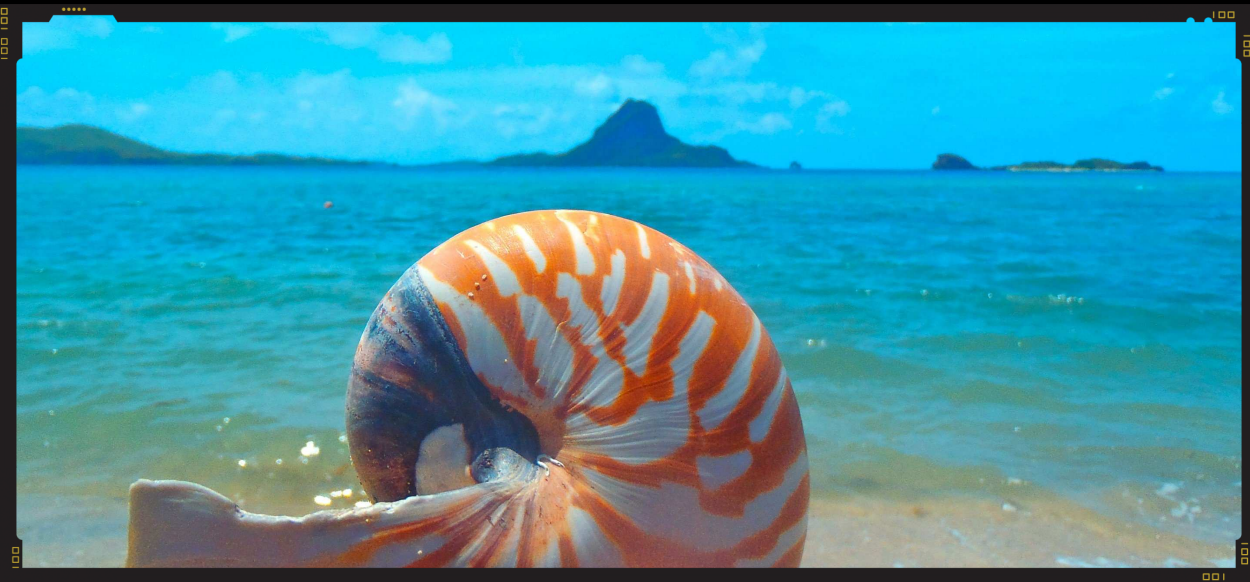
The locals of Navatua island performing songs and dances for us (just the 4 of us who were working on that island with them.) This was followed by the traditional cava drinking ritual.

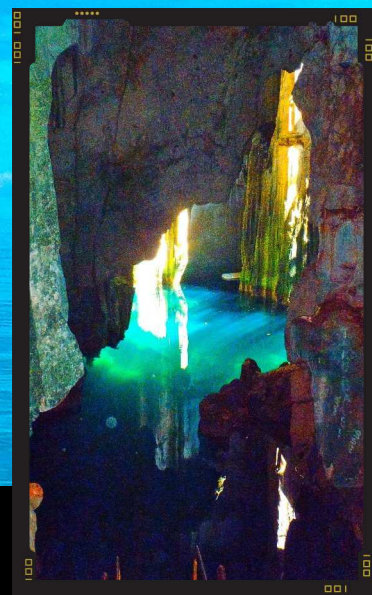
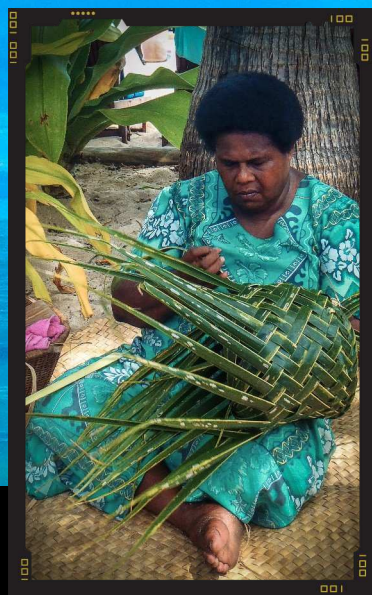
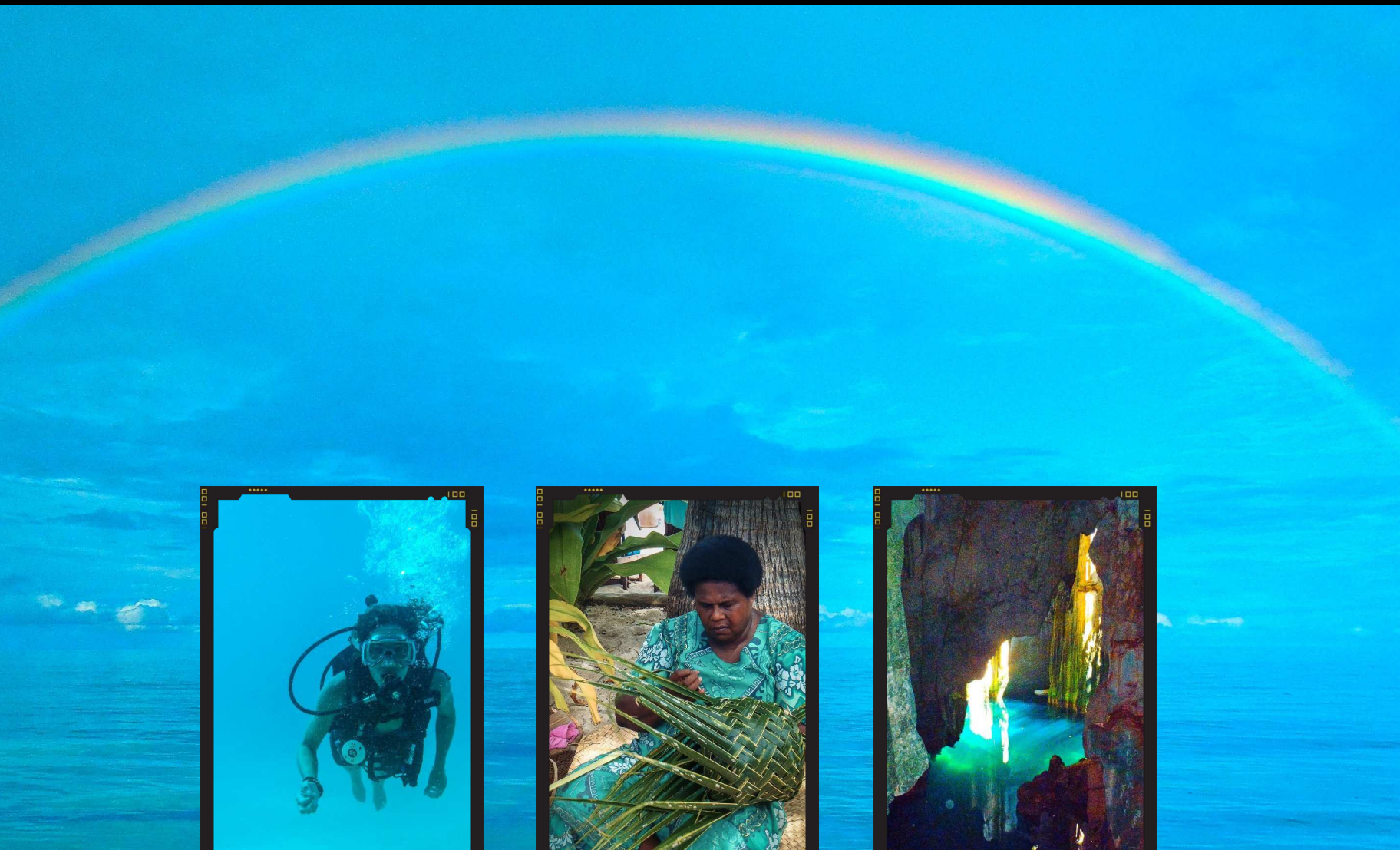






Left: The famous Blue Lagoon









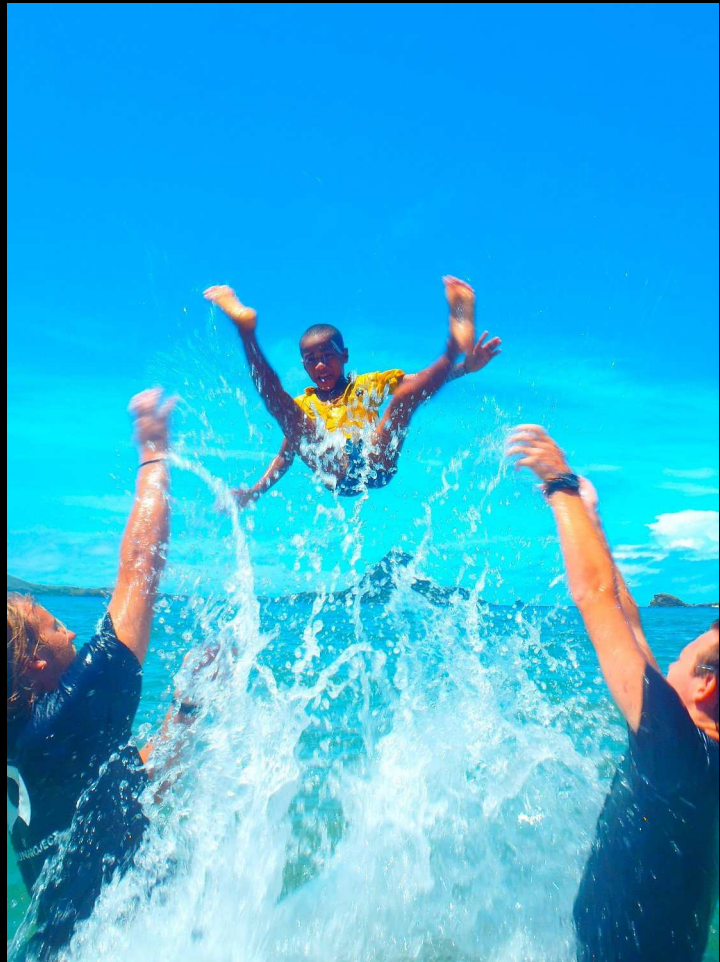
View towards the
sacred cave from
Navatua.



Diving fun in my
spare time.









Left- One on one reading session on the beach, and fun during a swimming class! Navatua.

Above - Mixing cement in a sulu (sarong) to make the base for our 10,000 litre rainwater tanks (right) which provide the remote villages with enough water throughout the dry seasons.



World of Wonder

It is always sunrise somewhere, eternal sunset.

John Muir

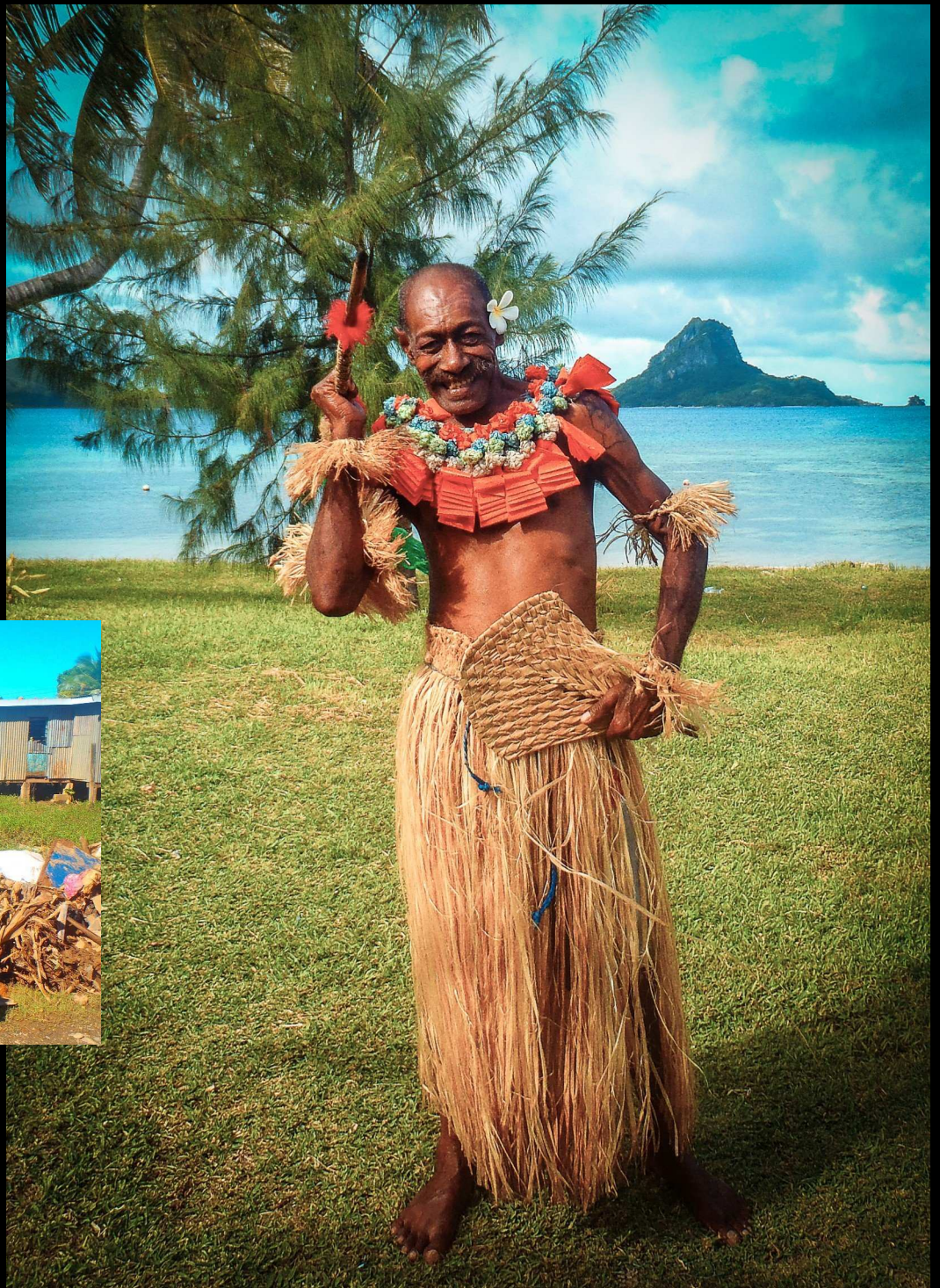




Previous page: Sunrise from my bure (hut)

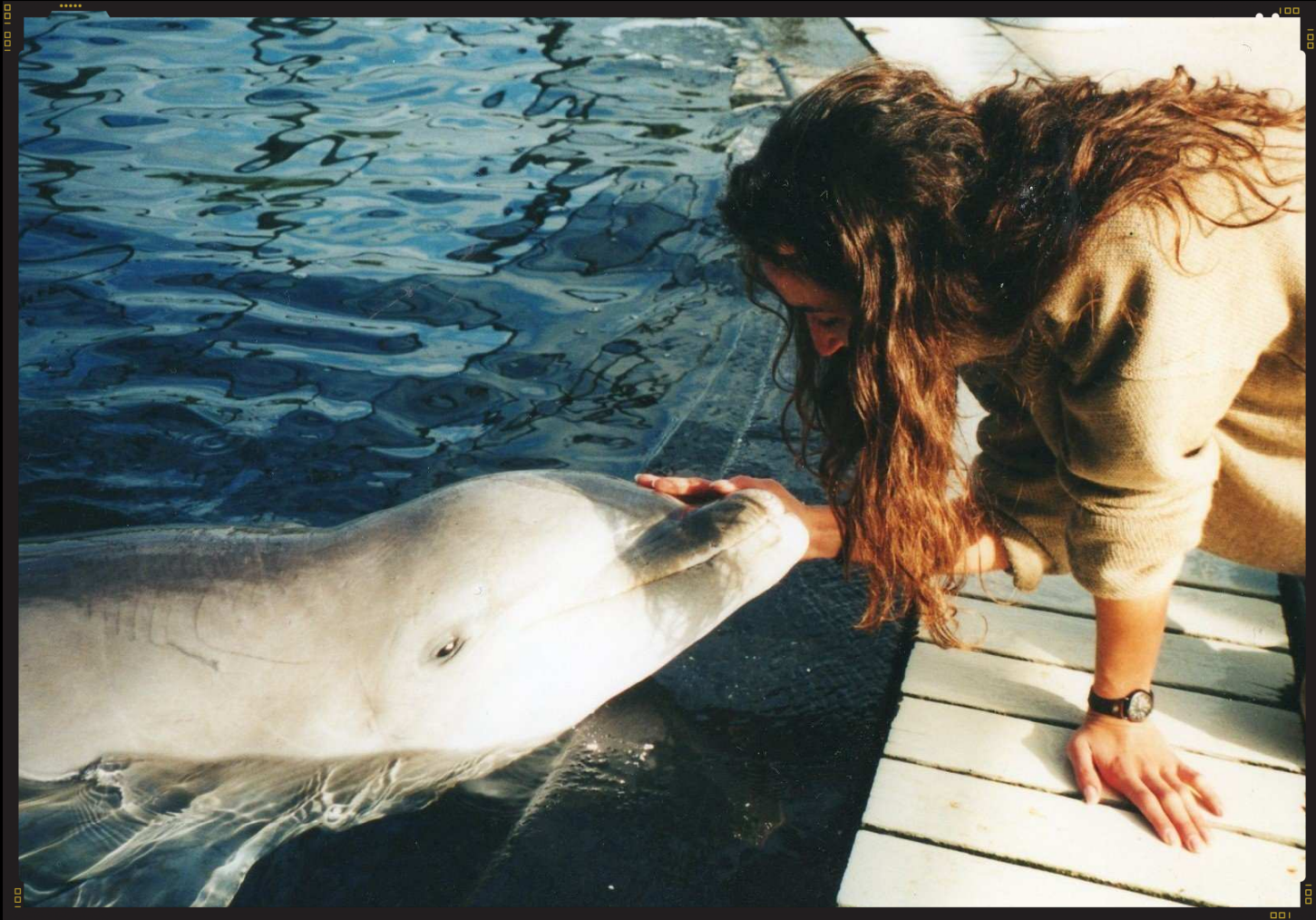
Below: Getting stuck in with the Red Cross on the main island after the cyclone

Right: Local Navatua elder





Florida



This little fella was in rehab before being released back into the wild.



France



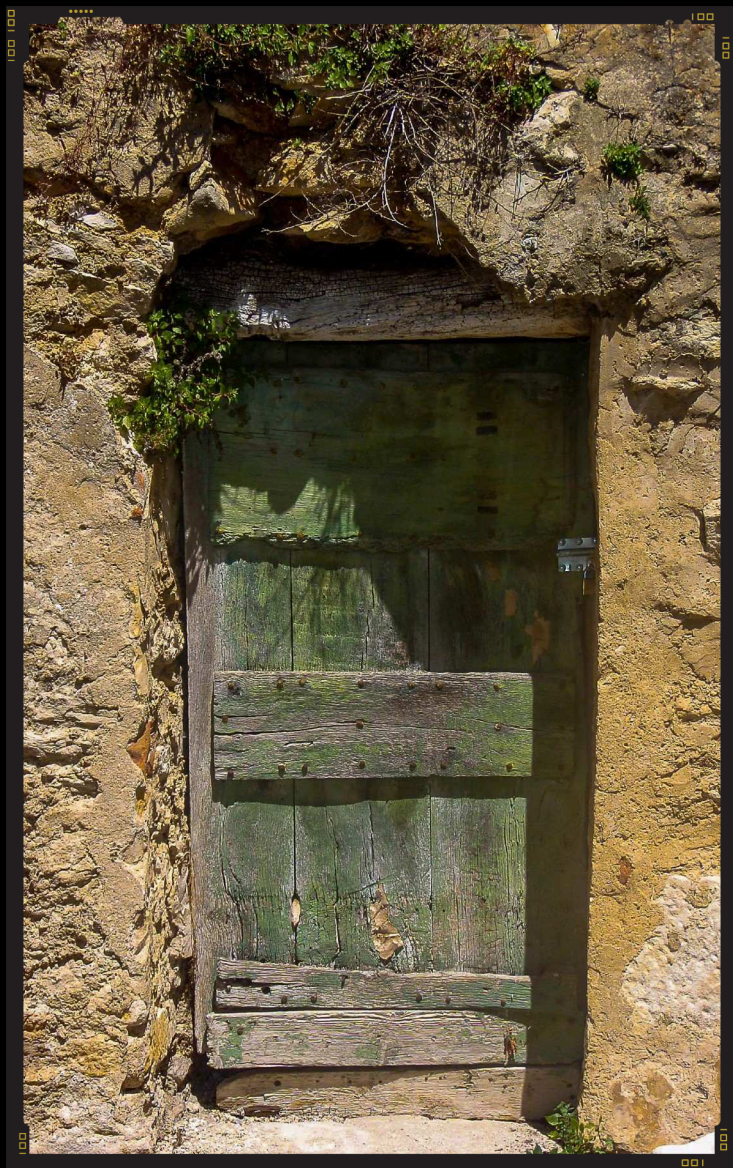




Left: The blue window at Chartres Cathedral.



Above: Chalet D'Or, where I lead Yoga and Skiing retreats in the French Alps.





Lourdes





Galapagos



It's no myth that the animals on the Galapagos islands are uniquely unafraid of humans. This was a special moment for me. I'd gone into the sea for a swim when a head popped up belonging to this sea lion. He swam with me for a while then when I got out and lay down to sunbathe, he waddled up and flopped down next to me! My favourite sunbathing buddy!



Right- the incredible, enormous giant tortoises.

Next page: Galapagos beach and the famous Blue footed Booby.







Germany

Above: Neuschwanstein Castle, Bavaria.

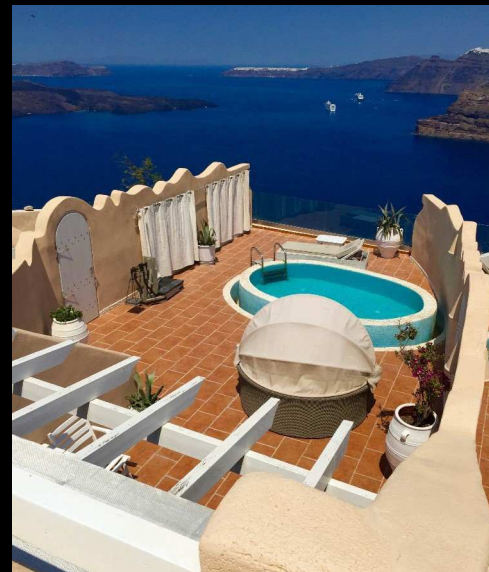
Right: Tobias.



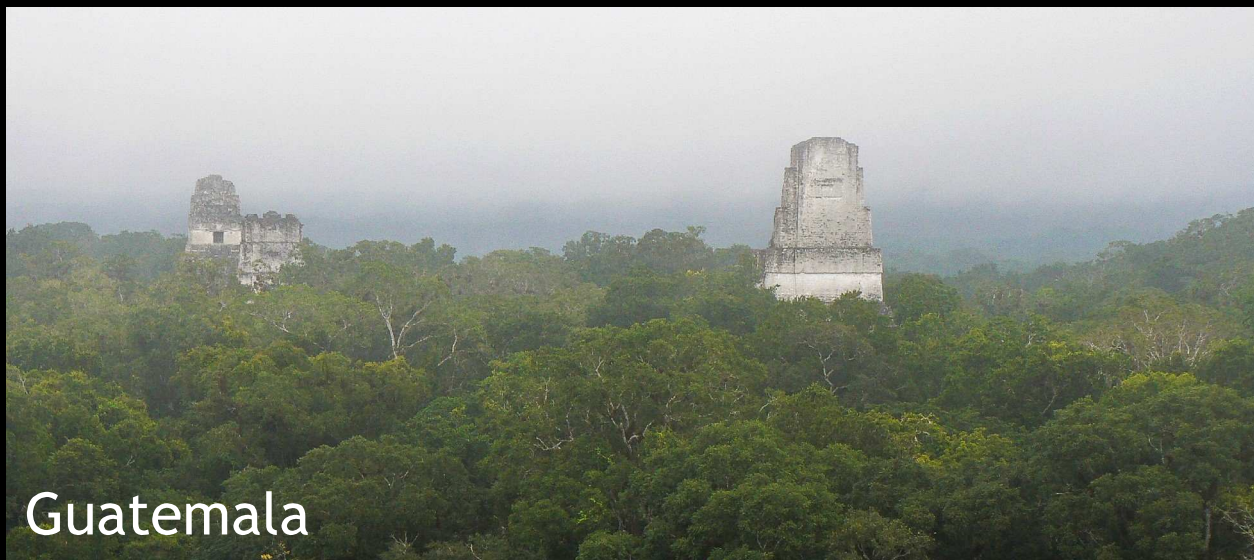


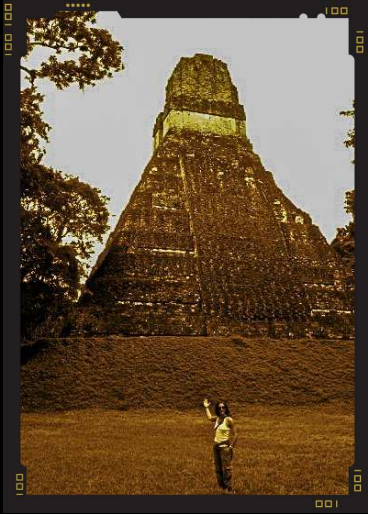
Greece

Santorini









Tikal

Dawn, Jan 1st 2008, seeing in the New Year at this impressive Mayan site from the Classical period; 200-900 AD, with the sound of howler monkeys all around and a rare glimpse of a Toucan to start the year off well.

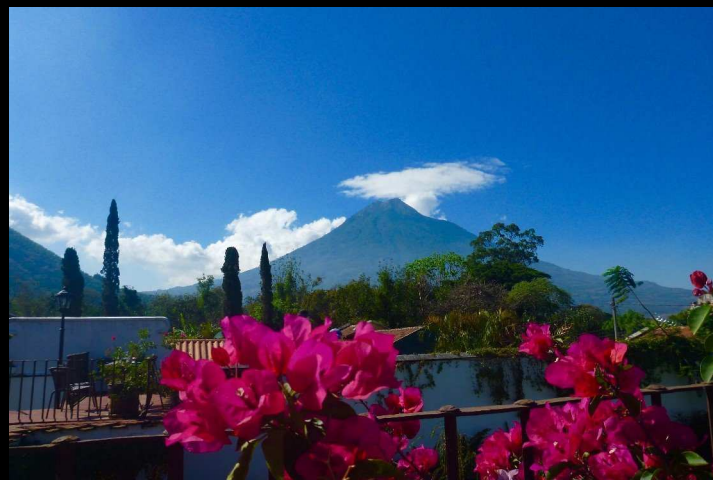
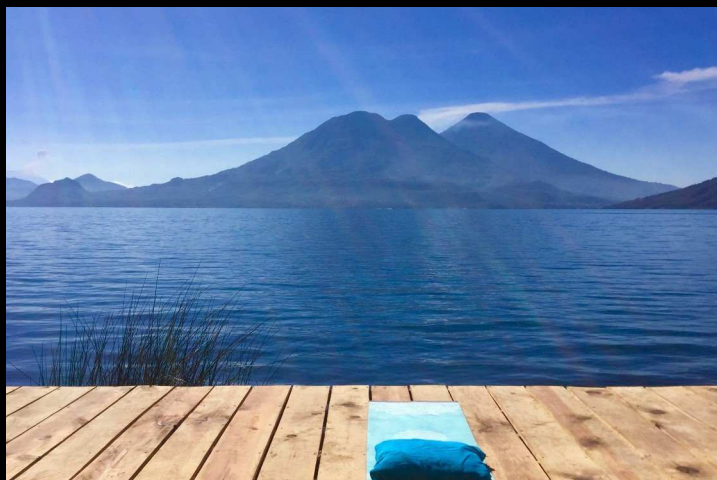
Previous page, top- Tikal landscape familiar from Star Wars. Bottom- Antigua.

Overleaf- Beautiful Lake Atitlan and Antigua.



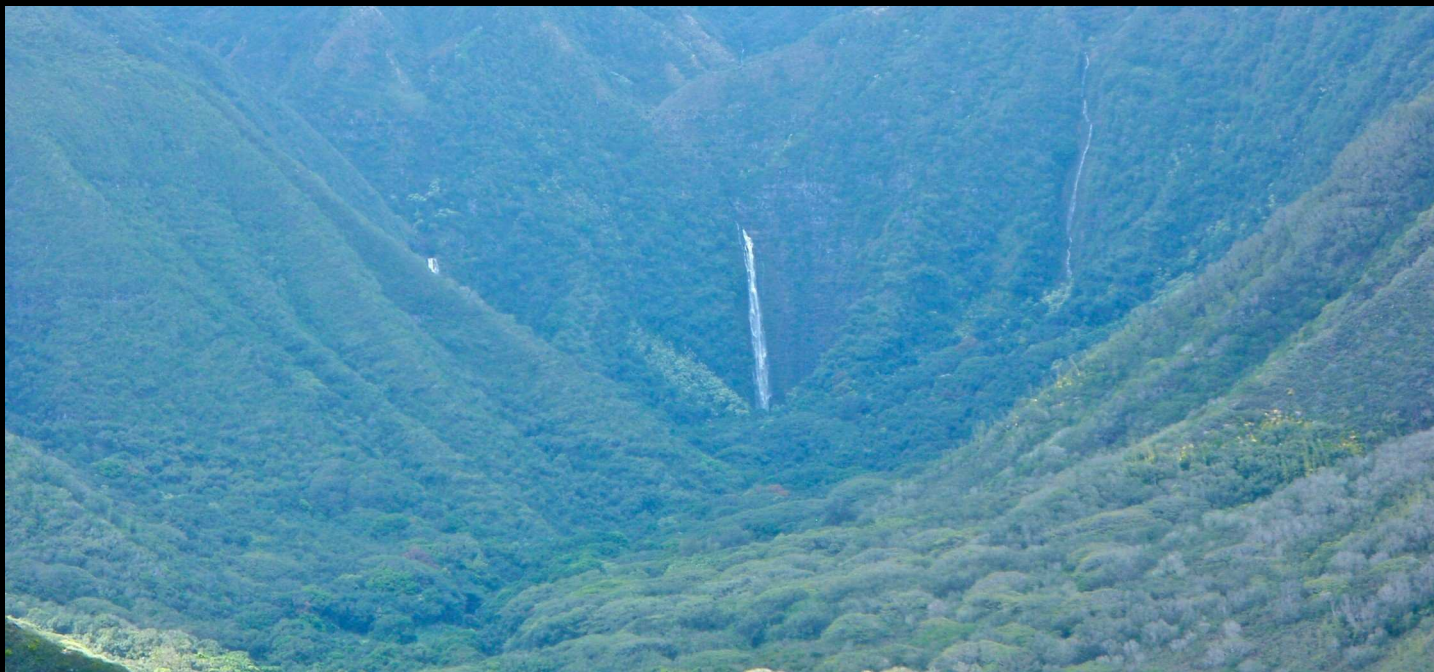






Hawaii



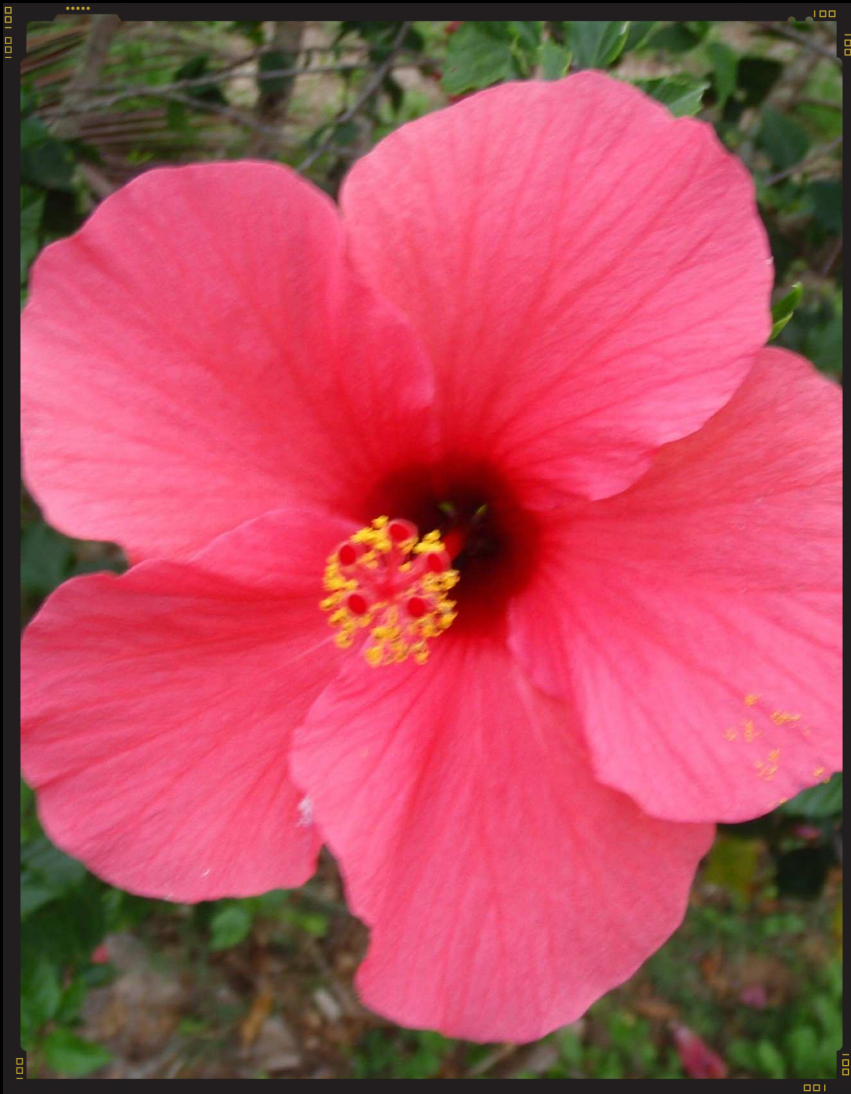




For attractive lips, speak words of kindness. For lovely eyes, seek out the good in people. For a slim figure, share your food with the hungry. For beautiful hair, let a child run their fingers through it. For poise, walk with the knowledge you never walk alone.

Audrey Hepburn

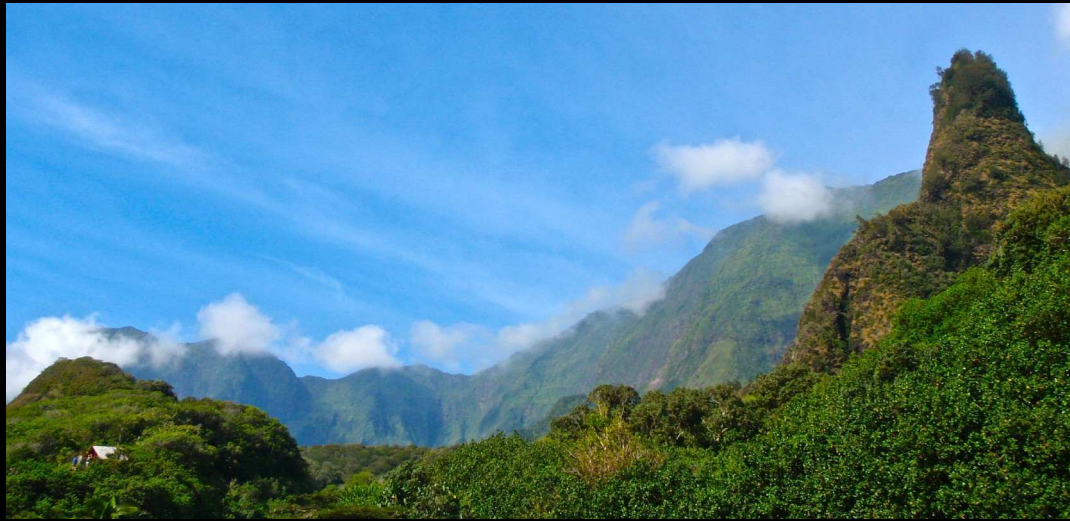




Maui



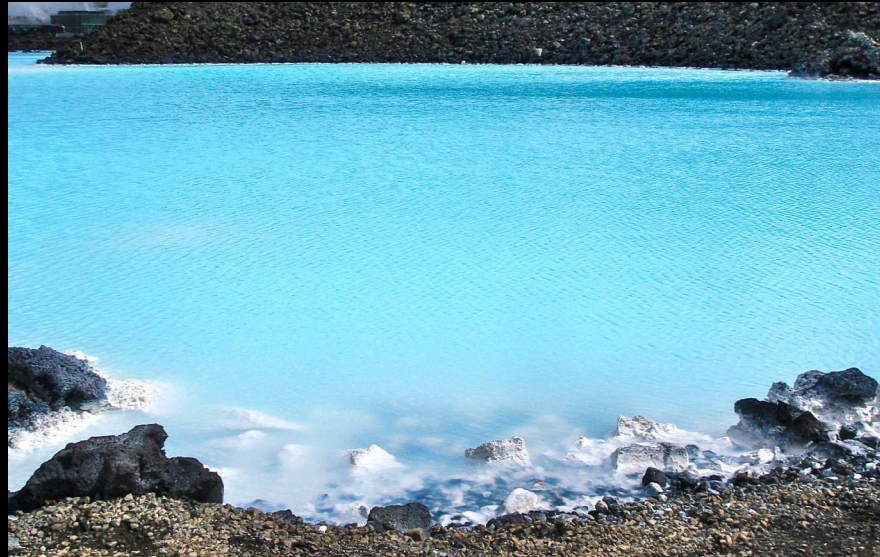
The remains of an old Heiau or sacred temple site in Molokai.



Haleakala Crater- Maui



Iceland



The magical, silica filled Blue Lagoon.





I love Iceland and it's an unusual country with lots of fun claims to fame. It is the most literate country on the planet, it's where the European and American tectonic plates meet and are moving apart a fraction each year. It's the only country in the world to have a member of the Government to liaise between humans and the elementals! You can ride horses to waterfalls at midnight in 'daylight' in the summer and in the winter it has the Northern Lights. What a fantastic combination. Reykjavik is a fantastic city and finally it has the famous 'Blue Lagoon.' (See previous page.)

Left: I gazed down into this geezer from above as it blobbed unimpressively, when suddenly it erupted skywards and left me running for my life, before coughing, and acting cool again as if I'd always known that was about to happen. A funny and humbling moment.



Italy



Florence



Assisi- Umbria



Tuscany

The following pages are images from two expeditions I led: an epic 15 week trip I led for VentureCo called 'Inca Amazon Venture,' through Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile, and a shorter one in Peru called 'Inca Summer Venture.'

These trips included Spanish schools in Quito and Cusco, climbing Cotopaxi volcano, working with The Book Bus in the Amazon and on the coast with children, building a house for local Quechua people in the sacred valley, visiting mysterious ancient Inca and pre-Inca sites, trekking, sandboarding and horse riding in the Atacama desert, hanging with Boa constrictors and sloths and plenty more fun and madness.

Mark Twain said: "Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry and narrow mindedness."



One of the fascinating things about travel is discovering other culture's beliefs, traditions, customs and tastes and keeping an open mind to it all. In Japan knives and forks are considered dirty, the lithe toned Massai people live off cow's blood, Namibian women wear ankle bracelets both for decoration and to prevent snake bites, in Spain they eat late, in America early, some people eat meat, others swear by vegetarian diets, in some countries it's normal to give up all worldly goals and surrender your life to God, in others the norm is pursuing wealth and success. Some people cremate, others bury, some Tibetans have sky burials, in some cultures punctuality is highly important, in others time takes on a much more relaxed pace... I find the vast diversity inspiring, fun and humbling as it suggests there is no one definitive rule book (other than the basic universal Golden Rule 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you' or what goes around comes around,) otherwise anything goes. I enjoy being exposed to and honouring other countries customs whilst never losing sight of my own.



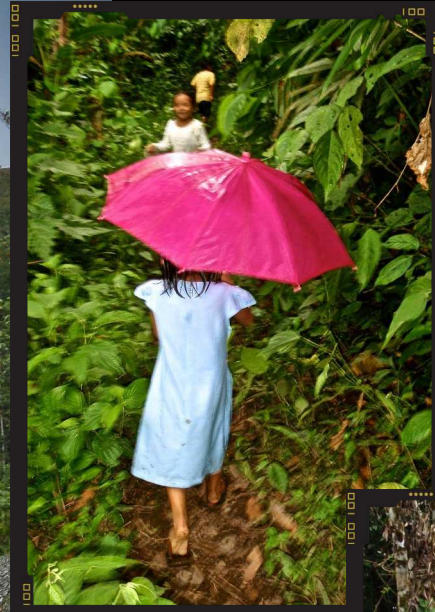
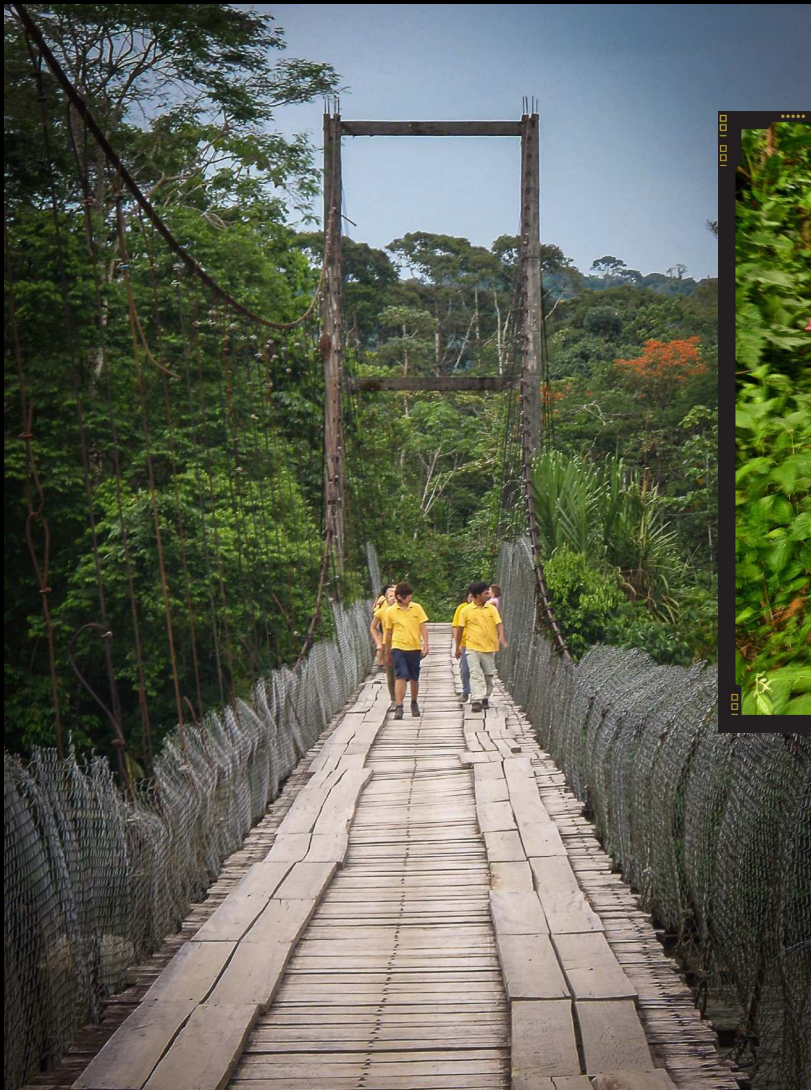
Here's just one visual example. If you find yourself in Peru you will likely end up with this delicacy (above left) on your plate at some point. What is it? Cuy. What's Cuy? That cute animal that children in England have as pets; guinea pig. In fact, if you go to Cusco Cathedral and walk up to the Altar. There above it is a painting (left) of The Last Supper, and you can see that the food on Jesus' plate is, yes you've guessed it, Cuy! Who'd have guessed?





Above: I often asked the children we worked with on The Book Bus in the Amazon if they had any pets at home. The answers included monkeys, snakes, parrots and felines ,and the kids were always keen to introduce us to these animals afterwards.

Previous page: Cotopaxi Volcano, Ecuador.



Amazonian adventures. Indiana Jones bridges, girl with parasol and Gabriel, who speaks several tribal languages and shared his encyclopedic knowledge with us about the medicinal properties of the plants, what to eat and not eat (unfortunately grubs were good to eat) and what to wear and not to wear. He even brought his pet Boa Constrictor on board The Book Bus. Our driver nearly fainted!



Spectacular structures in Northern Peru. Above: the Chimu site Chan Chan in Trujillo, and right the Moche culture's vast pyramid of the sun with the paintings inside still intact (from around AD 100-800) There are also pyramids in Nazca not far from the famous Nazca lines that are off the beaten track and few know about.

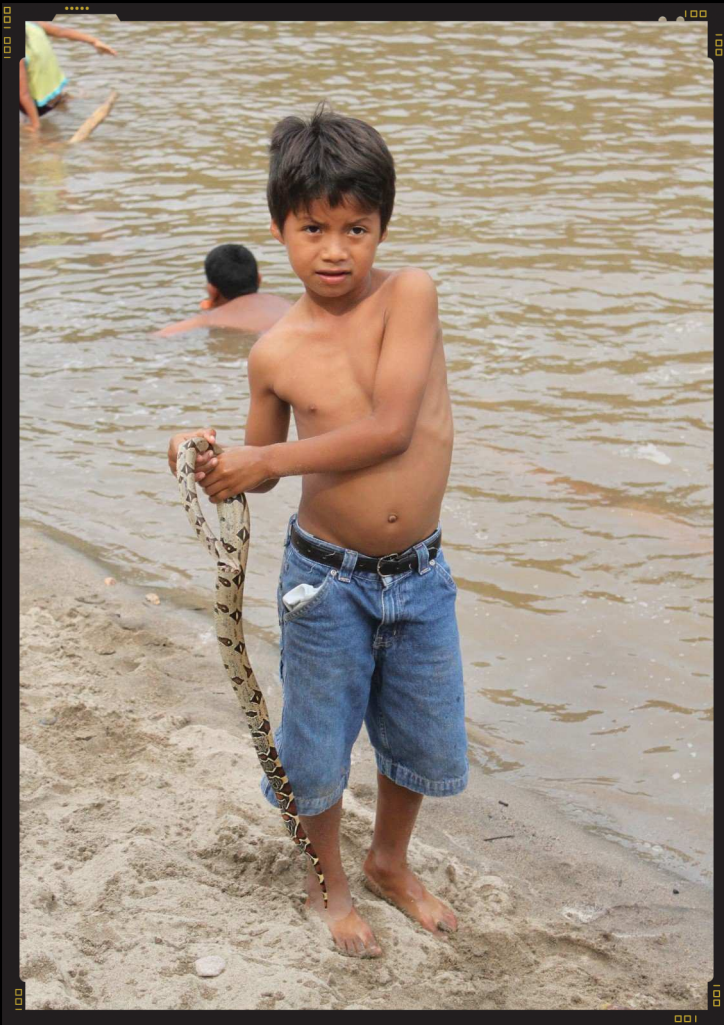




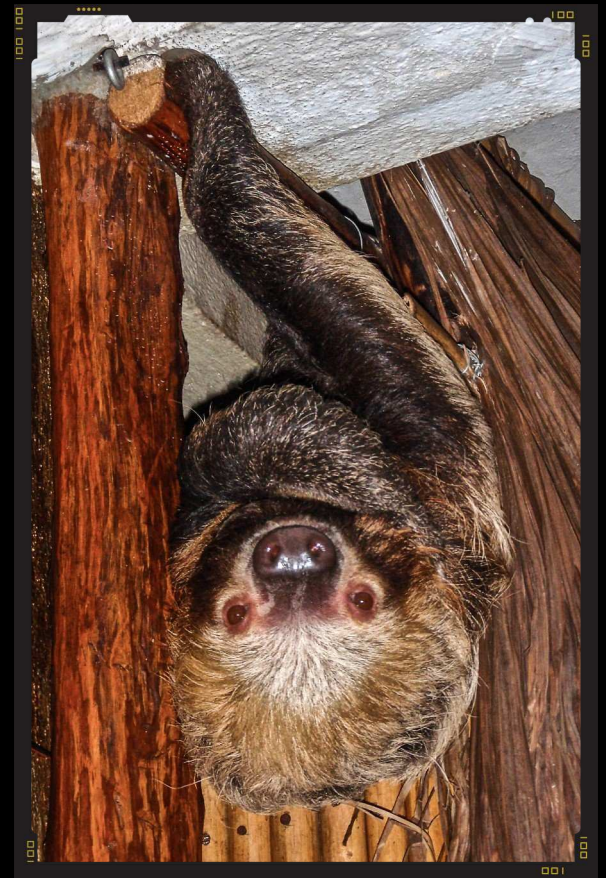
Whilst working on The Book Bus in the Amazon in Ecuador, one day we stopped by the river in Misahualli and I was greeted by this rather large creature. I generally love all animals, but snakes are the one that I have a healthy fear of. I respect them enormously and, as with other animals, have studied their shamanic symbolism (in this case shed your past as it sheds its skin.) They are also associated with healing and allowing your Kundalini energy to rise up to Enlightenment. I have come across many on my travels, including a coral snake outside my bedroom in Mexico, and an Anaconda close up from a canoe, but there's something about them that keeps me at a distance, so this was quite a big moment for me. I wanted to face that fear and hold this Boa Constrictor. My first reaction was amazement at the sheer weight of it, it's pure muscle! Will I make a habit of it? Probably not, but I'm glad I did it, and I honour them.

As fear did her no good, she ceased to be afraid.

Angela Carter



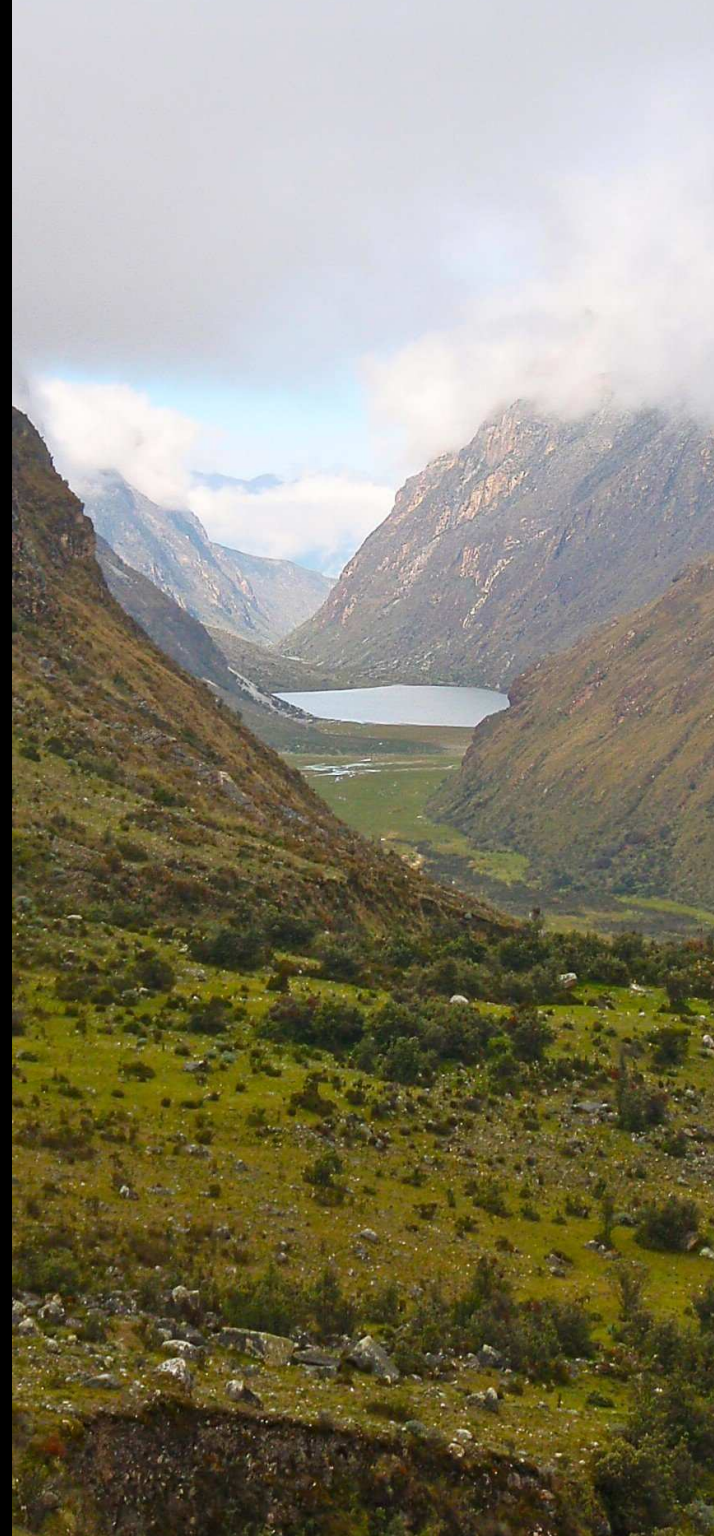
Above: No buckets and spades needed for children on the shores of the Amazon rivers! Young and fearless.



Whilst eating in a restaurant in the Amazon, this chappy (a sloth) poked his head through the thatch to greet us.



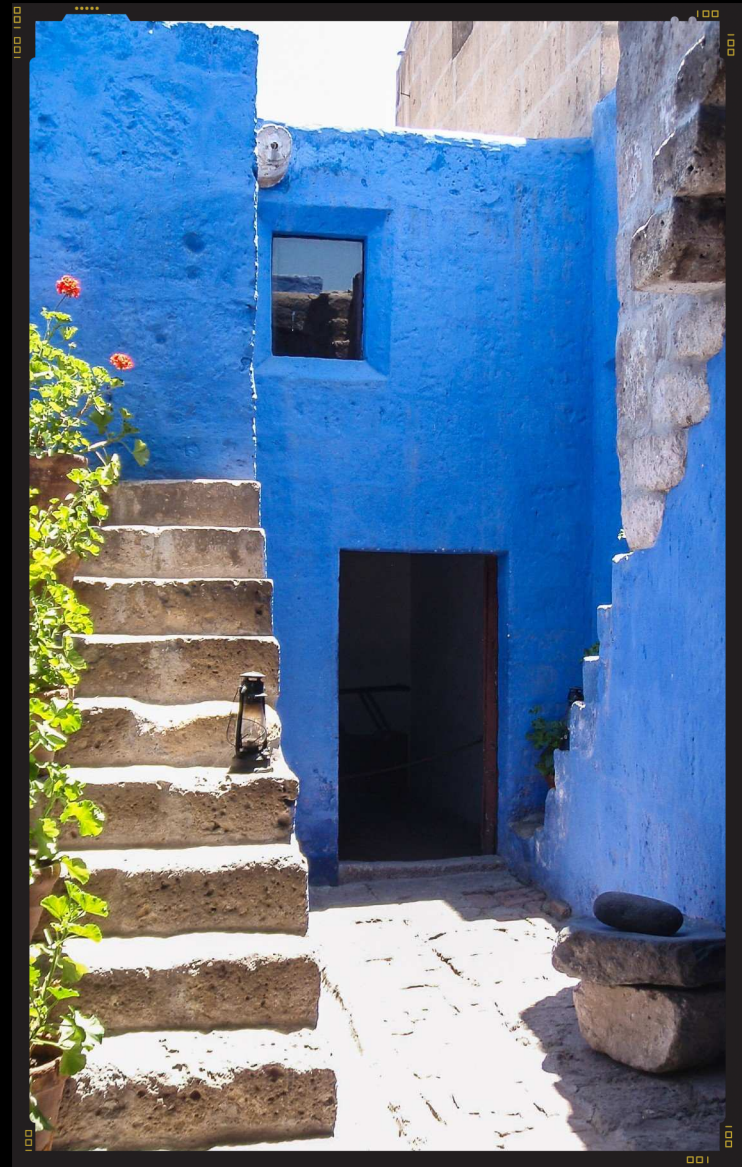








Arequipa







Above and right: A serene and striking convent in Arequipa, Peru.

Right: I was lucky enough to capture this moment. I love hummingbirds and the setting was just perfect. In the shamanic world they represent sucking the nectar out of life, i.e. seizing the day, and also knowing anything is possible as tiny delicate hummingbirds can cross oceans!



Los Uros islands, Lake Titicaca



I'm always blown away by the beauty of these floating islands, and the colours of their inhabitant's clothes.





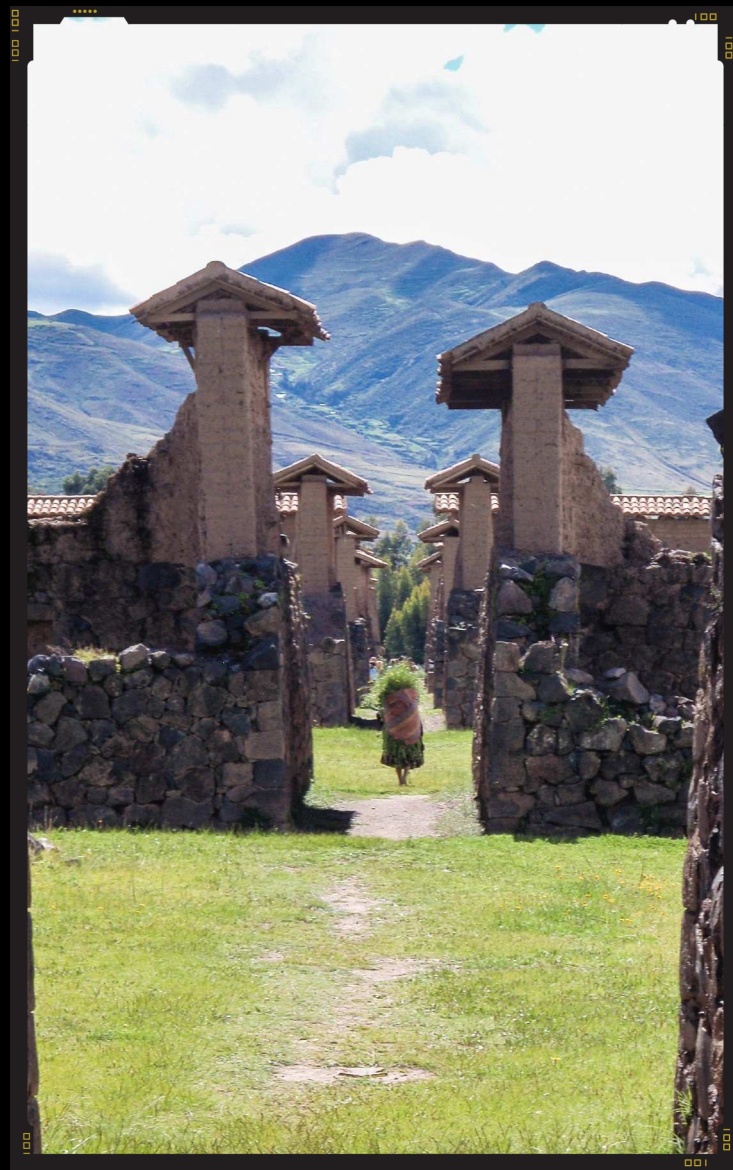
Llama, alpaca and an elusive condor in Colca canyon. Peru.



Above: Local children at Pisac market. Sacred valley-Peru.

Right: a Shaman reading Coca leaves to tell my fortune on Lake Titicaca.





This and the following two pages:

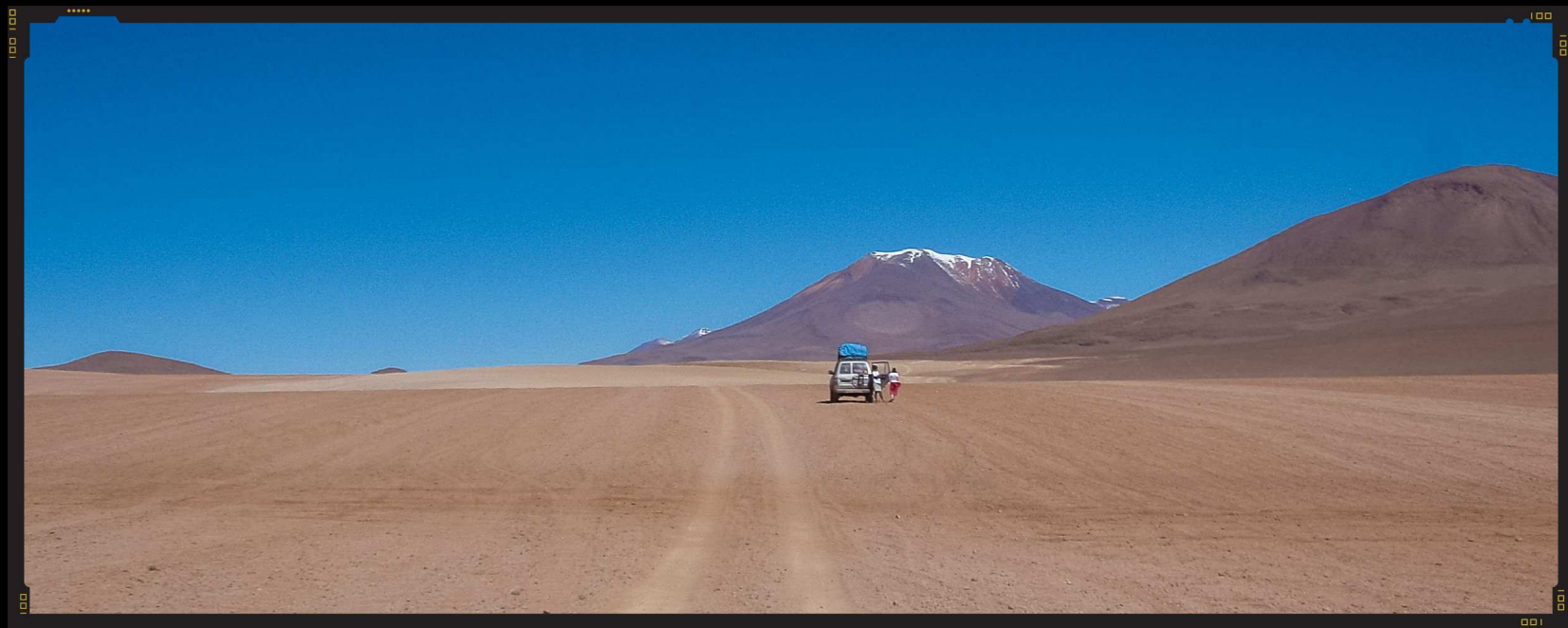
Adventures in the Atacama desert- Chile: sandboarding (one of the most fun things I've ever done,) horse riding and off roading in 4x4s.



Left: Girl in Cusco.

Temple of Wiracocha.









Left: Moray in the sacred Valley

Right: Salt fields. Peru.





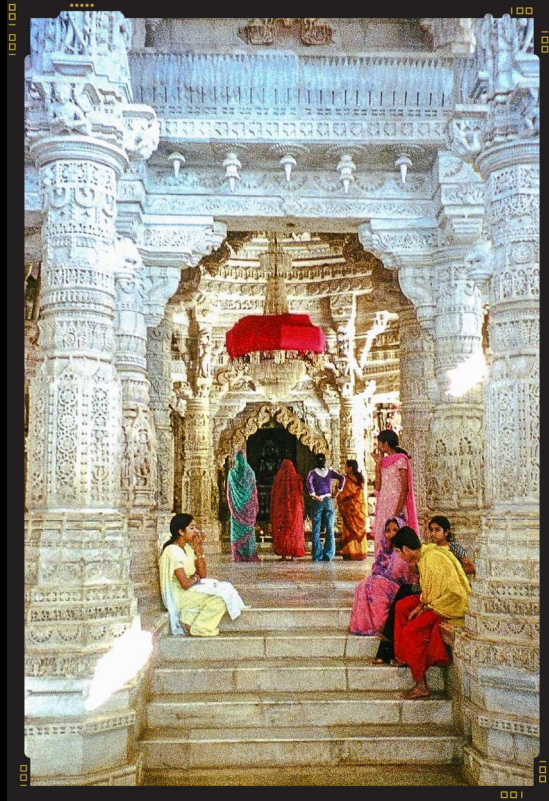
Left: Machu Picchu, one of my favourite sacred sites. The energy there is magical and I've always had amazing experiences partly thanks to meeting a man there on my first visit, who, each time I go, shows me the real, hidden Machu Picchu including underground tunnels, and having what I can only describe as an out of body experience there in the Temple of the Sun. A very beautiful and benevolent experience, but a story for another book.

Below: The Nazca lines. The hummingbird and the astronaut. Built to be seen from the sky, before there were aeroplanes!? Theories abound. Draw your own conclusions.



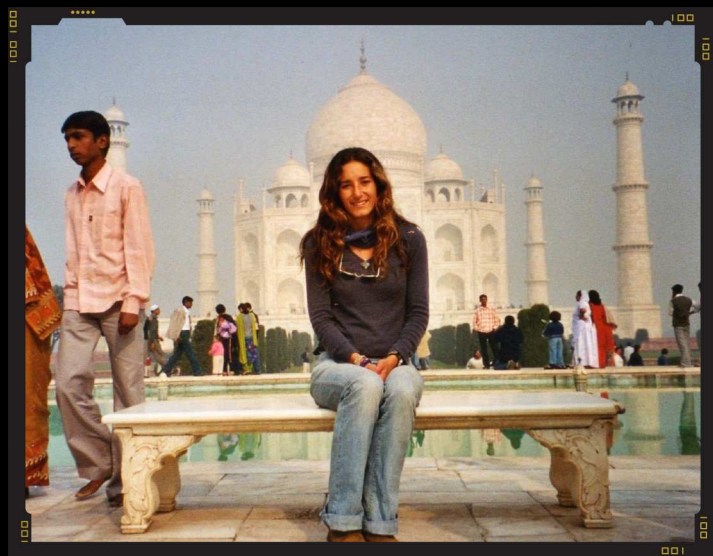






India

Rajasthan, Agra and Goa. 2004





Kerala

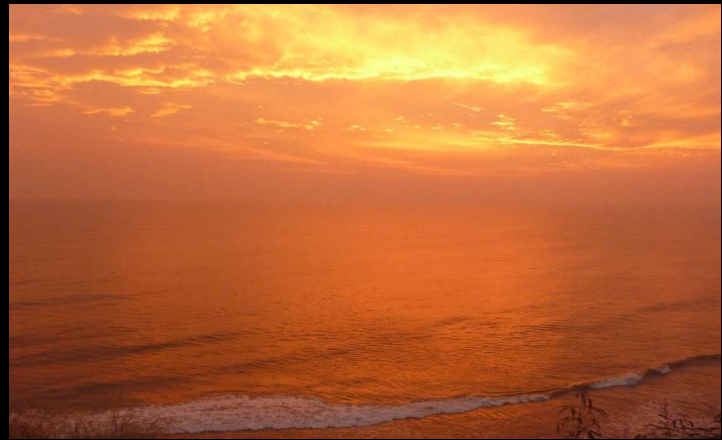
2014 & 2015



Left: Traditional Keralan backwater boat, beach scene, helping wash an elephant at a rehabilitation centre and a local boy jumping into the river.



Above: Traditional Kathakali performance.



Luminous sunsets- Varkala and Kollam





Lakshmi illuminated.



Tara illuminated.



Amma. Embodiment of Love, considered to be an Avatar., the Divine Mother Goddess incarnate I stayed at her Ashram -Amritapuri before and after leading my yoga retreat in Kovalam. No photos are allowed so this is a postcard image.



Borobudur- Another of my favourite sacred sites and the largest Buddhist temple structure on earth. 9th C.

Indonesia





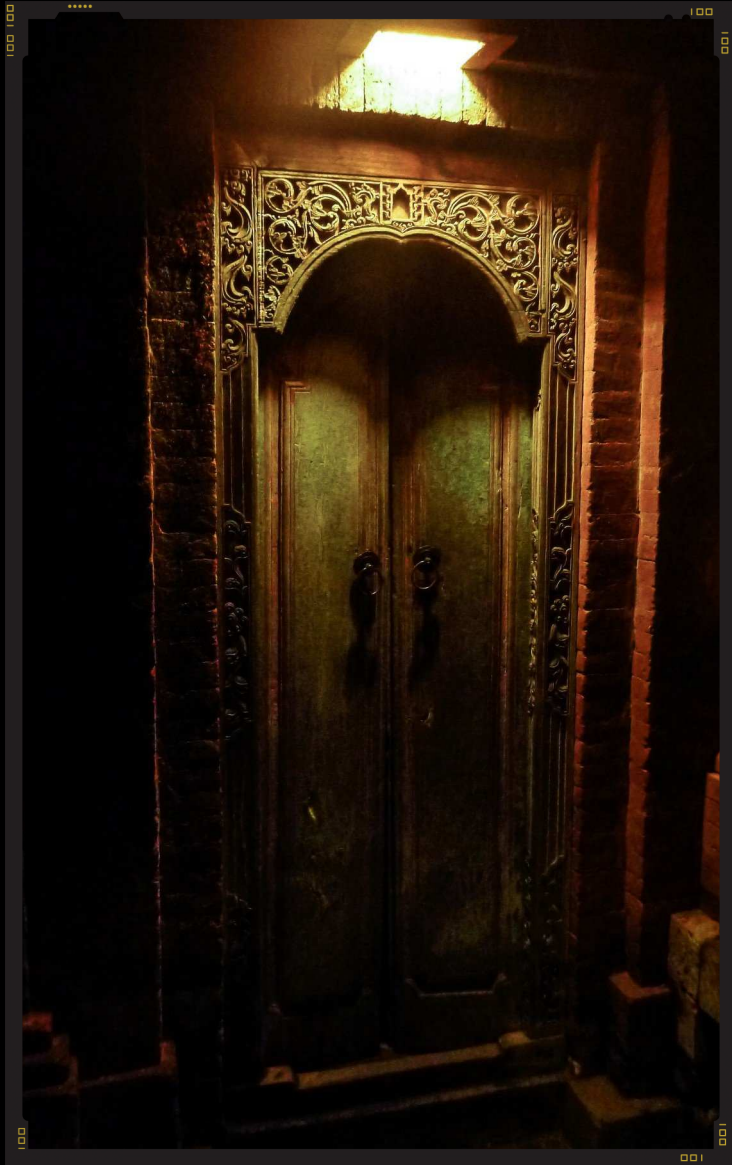
Right: The Kecak Fire Dance in Bali, Indonesia. It's based on a section of the Ramayana. I had longed to see it live ever since first witnessing it in one of my all time favourite films 'Baraka' many years ago. In 2012 I finally got my opportunity and it did not disappoint one bit. It was Mesmerizing.



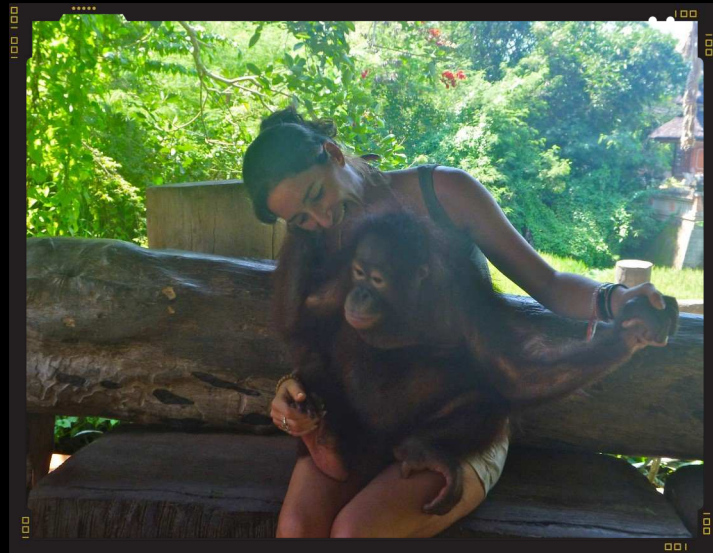
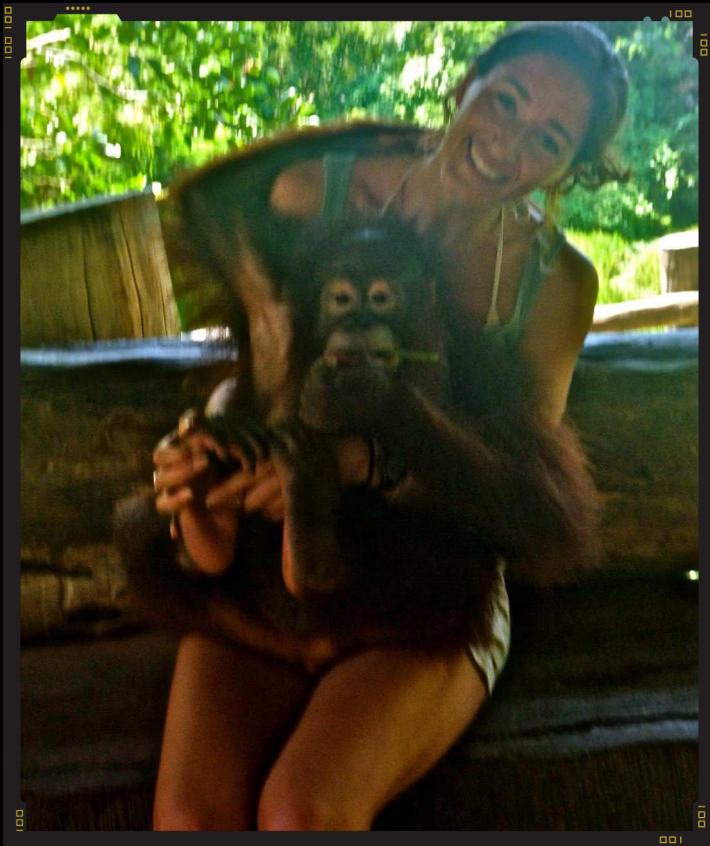


I belong to no religion. My religion is love. Every heart is my temple.

Rumi.



Hanging out with Eva, the
adorable Orang Utan. Indonesia.





Our highest art is the
way we live each day.

Balinese saying





Jamaica



This page: Colourful locals

Right: top- Pelican bar, in the middle of the sea.
bottom- Goldeneye, where Ian Fleming lived and wrote
all 14 James Bond books, and Port Antonio.





This page: Hiroshima, with
the Peace Pagoda in the
centre.

Japan



Above: Tokyo's Zojoji Temple

Below: Parasols- Kyoto



Right: The Kimono I bought at Toji Temple antiques market. Kyoto.

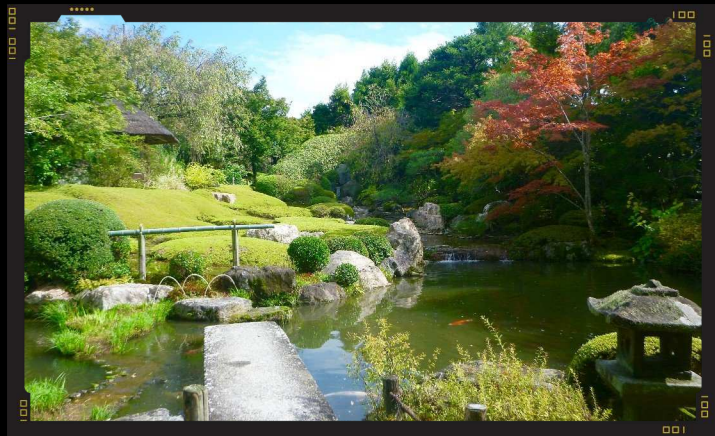
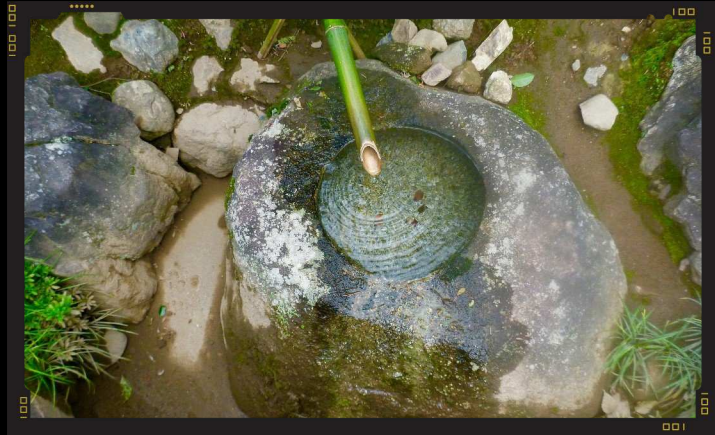
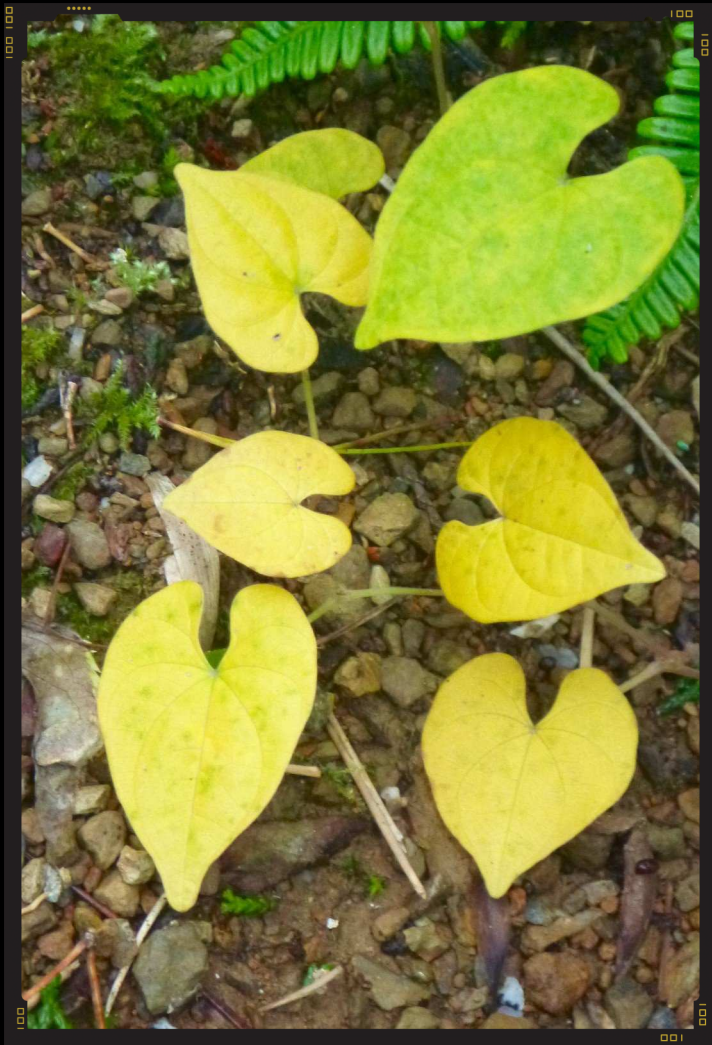


Following pages:

Geisha or Geiko and Zen Rock Gardens. Kyoto.







Garden at Taizo-in Temple within Myoshinji Temple. Kyoto.

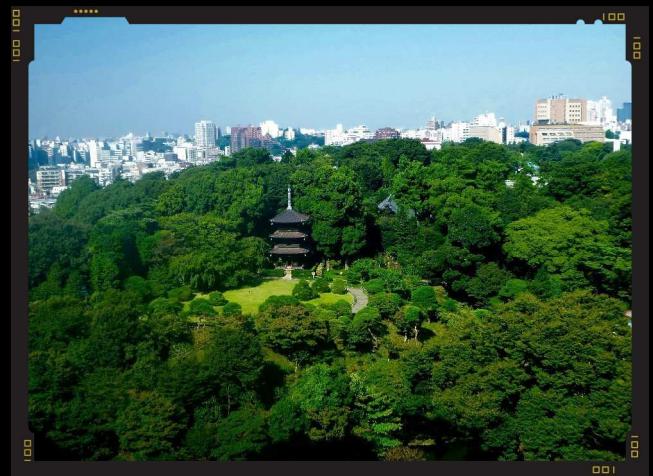
The Dome of Peace. Hiroshima. One of the only buildings that remained standing after the A-bomb, with a crane for peace.



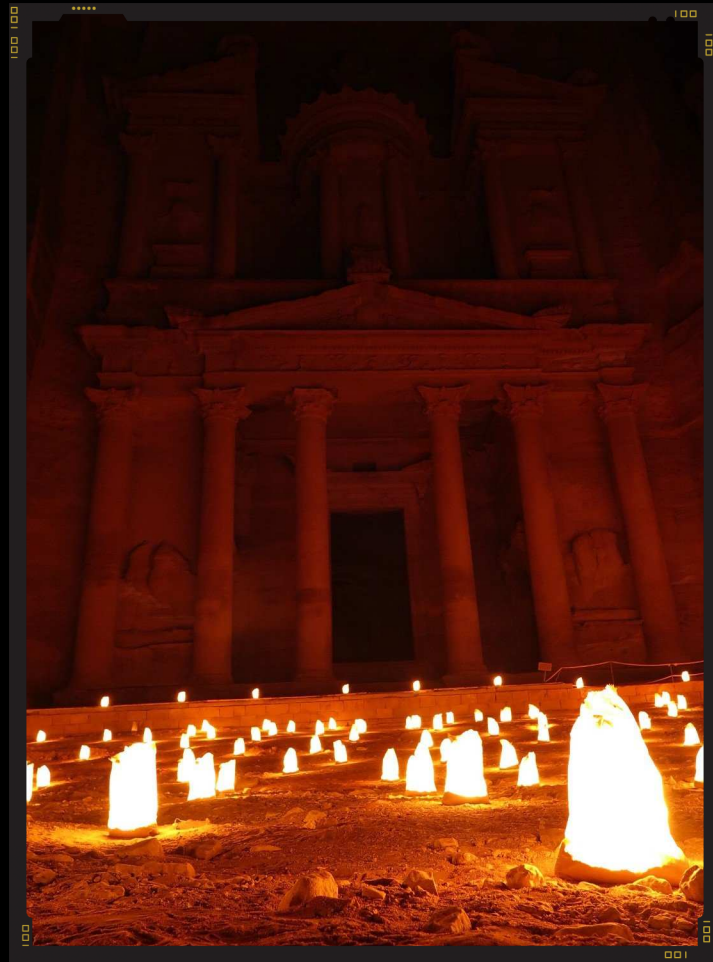
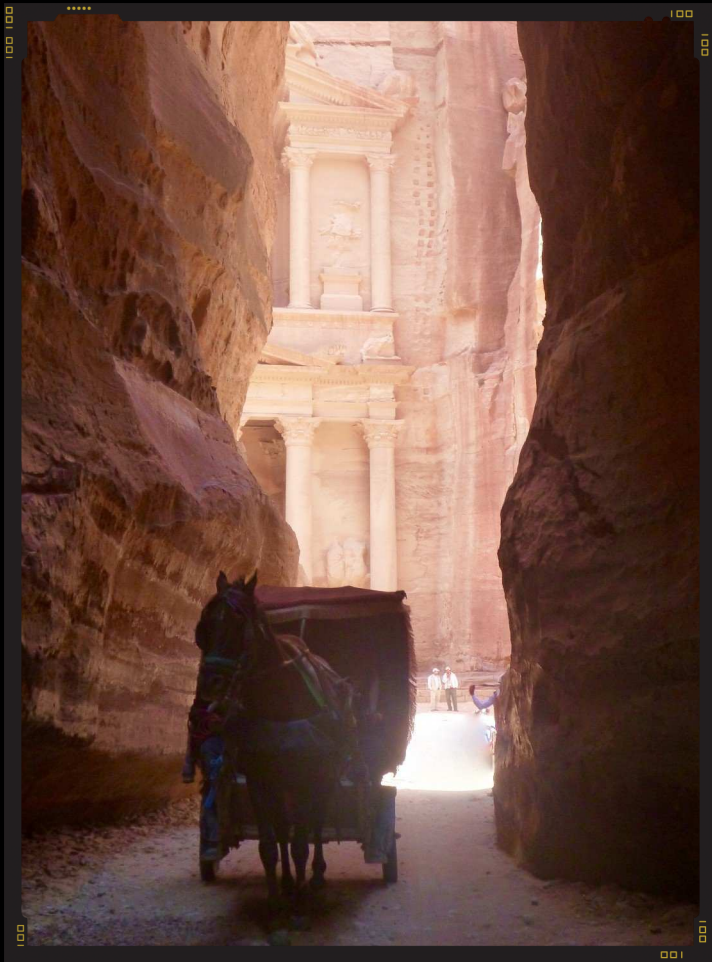
Cheeky boy running around Kenninji Temple. The oldest Zen temple in Kyoto.



Girl at Meiji Shinto shrine in Tokyo

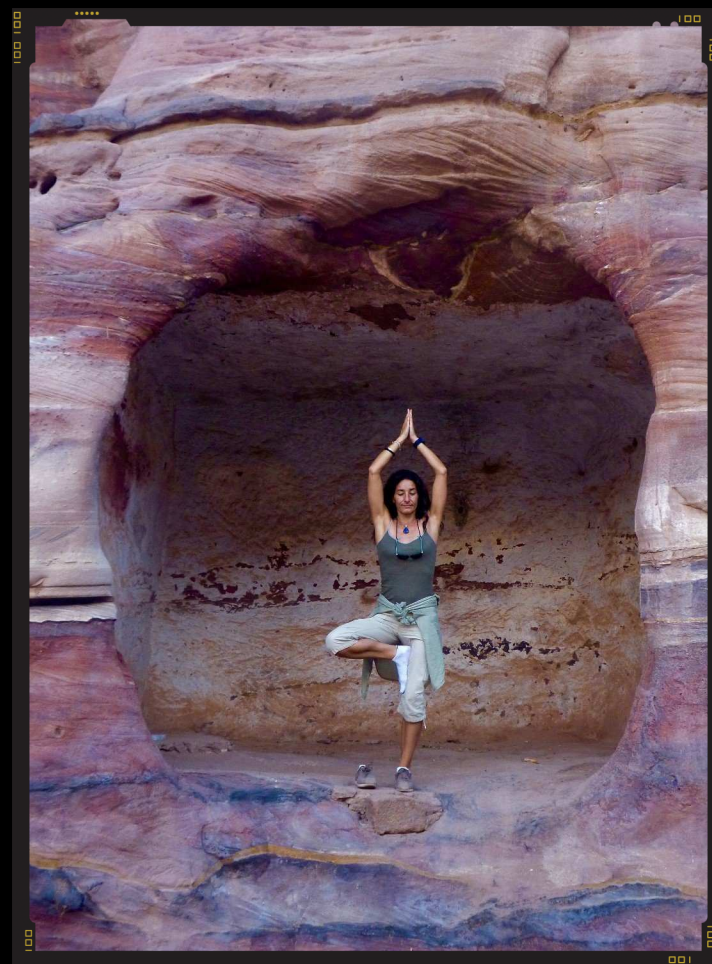
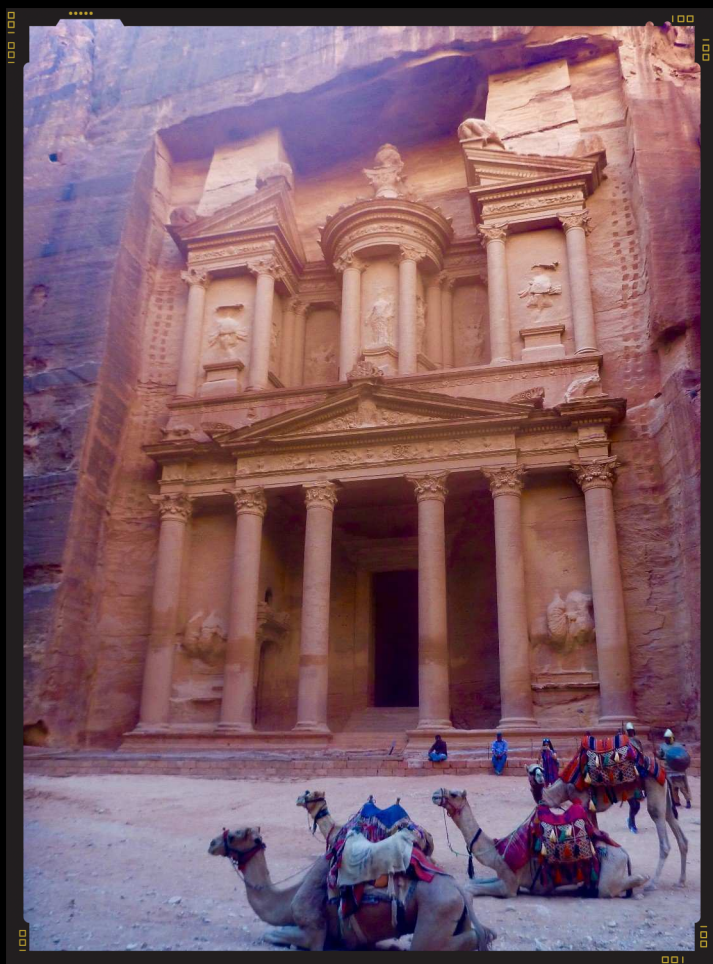


Tokyo, from Chinzanso Hotel.



Jordan

A long held bucket list dream fulfilled



Petra



I went to Kenya and Tanzania for a month on my own at age 19 using money I'd earned working at Elstree Film Studios over the summer. Everyone told me I was mad, that I'd get ill, mugged, or worse alone there. I went anyway. I didn't even get a mosquito bite and had the time of my life. That's when I first fell for Africa and her vast wild horizons, magnificent animals and warm people. Everything seemed bigger there; the stars, the sun, the animals, the sky. I also made a strong mental 'note to self' never to listen to the nay sayers or fear mongering. Always follow your gut instinct and live your dreams, even if they seem mad. Perhaps the madder the better.



Kenya

These pages: The Massai. One night around the fire as they told us stories of Massai life and hunting lions, someone asked Jackson (left) when he was born. The reply: "Rainy season." How refreshing in this age obsessed world!

Above and right: Massai homes and the women dancing.





We don't own anything. We're just passing through.

Dennis Finch Hatton- Out of Africa



I believe in kindness, also
in mischief.

Mary Oliver



Laos

Laos means 'Land of a million elephants' and is one of my favourite countries. They say it retains a lot of the ambiance and traditions which have been lost in much of South East Asia so you can sense how it used to be. You can be transported back in time on a cruise down the Mekong river past ancient caves used for meditation for centuries. Sadly it also has the dubious claim to fame of being the most bombed country in the world, however you wouldn't know it by peaceful vibe with monks walking around at 4am collecting alms.



Beautiful and serene Laos with its colourful markets, but you wouldn't want to be a cobra in that country, you'd end up like this one, pickled in a bottle of whiskey!



We worked with The Book Bus in schools around Lake Malawi, during The Lake of Stars Music Festival.

Children displaying their art work after reading with The Book Bus.



A beautiful, typical village with huge Baobab trees. I love Baobabs and enjoyed hearing all the creation stories about Mother Goddess and the Baobab tree creating the earth. Some myths say they grow upside down with their roots in the air because hyenas were given the job of planting their seeds. They can live as long as 2000 years and store enormous amounts of water. Their bark is used to make fishing nets and clothing.

Malawi





Good Luck, Bad Luck story

There was a Chinese farmer who used just one horse to till his fields. One day, the horse escaped into the hills. The farmer's neighbours sympathized with him saying "what bad luck!" The farmer simply replied "Good luck, bad luck, who knows?"

A week later, the horse returned with a whole herd of wild horses. The neighbours congratulated him on his good luck. "Good luck, bad luck. Who knows?"

When the farmer's son was attempting to tame one of these horses, he fell and broke his leg. Everyone thought this was bad luck, but not the farmer, whose only reaction was "good luck, bad luck. Who knows?"

Two weeks later the army marched into town to conscript all the able bodied young men to go to war. Of course his son was unable to go with them. Good luck, bad luck. Who knows? It's all about perspective.

Mexico

Tulum, in the Yucatan region of Mexico was my home for 9 months. I taught English and sustainable development to adults in the town for Global Vision International, and cycled to the beach at weekends to teach yoga. Later I moved to Amansala on the beach where I taught yoga daily, took people kayaking on a lagoon, cycling to Mayan temples and snorkeling in sacred cenotes (underground fresh water caves) and gave them the local history. It was a joy.

The locals became friends and I was fortunate to be invited to a monthly ceremony for peace at the Tulum ruins, and to experience rituals like this Temazcal or sweat lodge-Left, led by Gabriel who grew up within the Chichen Itza complex and had an encyclopedic knowledge of all things Mayan.

One time a Mayan friend even led me through the jungle to an undiscovered, unexcavated Mayan pyramid! You'd never know it was there unless taken. To this day I've never told anyone where it is.





Precious cargo! Tulum.



Chiapas



Waterfall hidden away
in the jungle behind
Palenque.



Palenque. The
remains of what was a
thriving Mayan
civilization from
300BC-800AD. It's
ruins are surrounded
by jungle and much
remains to be
excavated. It's most
famous ruler was
Pacal the great,
whose tomb was found
there.



I had the enormous privilege of playing midwife to this turtle as she laid her eggs, and later helping release the babies on their epic journey out into the sea.



Until he extends his circle of compassion to all living things, man will not himself find peace.

Albert Schweitzer





Tulum Mayan Temple, one of my favourite spots on earth. It's just picture perfect and was a significant Mayan trade centre around 550-1520 AD in the Classic to post Classic period. The city was dedicated to the planet Venus and connected to the Goddess Ix Chel.

I was fortunate to be invited to attend a monthly ceremony there before opening time every full moon with locals. We would open sacred space, cleanse the site and offer prayers for world peace.



Left: My 'home' while I lived on the beach, by the Caribbean teaching yoga and taking people to Mayan sites.

Far Left and bottom: Magnificent Tulum. Mayan temple by the Caribbean sea, one of the most beautiful sites on earth. I loved living there. It felt like home.



The Rat Race Explained by the Mexicans

A Mexican fisherman was lying in a hammock by the sea, watching the sunset while his wife was inside their beach hut cooking up a fish dinner. A boat docked nearby and an American tourist noticed the man and asked what he did. The Mexican replied that he was a fisherman. Noticing some specimens, the American complimented the Mexican fisherman on the quality of his fish and asked how long it took him to catch them.

"Not very long," answered the Mexican.

"Well, then, why didn't you stay out longer and catch more?" asked the American.

The Mexican explained that his small catch was sufficient to meet his needs and those of his family and a few friends.

The American asked, "But what do you do with the rest of your time?"

"I sleep late, fish a little, play with my children, and take a siesta with my wife. In the evenings, I go into the village to see my friends, have a few drinks, play the guitar, and sing a few songs...I have a full life."

The American interrupted, "I have an MBA from Harvard and I can help you! You should start by fishing longer every day. You can then sell the extra fish you catch. With the extra revenue, you can buy a bigger boat. With the extra money the larger boat will bring, you can buy a second one and a third one and so on until you have an entire fleet of trawlers. Instead of selling your fish to a middle man, you can negotiate directly with the processing plants and maybe even open your own plant. You can then leave this little village and move to Mexico City, Los Angeles, or even New York City! From there you can direct your huge enterprise."

"How long would that take?" asked the Mexican.

"Twenty, perhaps twenty-five years," replied the American.

"And after that?"

"Afterwards? That's when it gets really interesting," answered the American, laughing. "When your business gets really big, you can start selling stocks and make millions!"

"Millions? Really? And after that?"

"After that you'll be able to retire, live in a tiny village near the coast, sleep late, play with your children, catch a few fish, take siestas with your wife, and spend your evenings drinking, watching sunsets and enjoying your friends..... Oh."





I led two 10 day horse riding trips in Mongolia for VentureCo and the British Horse Society. On both we rode over 100 miles, over 45 miles in full gallop! They were laughter filled journeys through vast, wild, remote, beautiful landscape with no fences or walls in sight. We slept in Yurts/ Gers and tents. Our Mongolian friends made phenomenal hosts and guides. They tended to our sore muscles and sang to us under the stars. They are phenomenal horse people. We attended a Nadaam festival watching wrestling and epic horse races and had the time of our lives, raising money for animal welfare in the process. The nomad in me loved it.





Dressed like a local.



Above: An elderly woman enjoying the Nadaam festival.



The beautiful interior of a yurt.

The Nadaam Festival, during which the country's best wrestlers battle it out, there are archery competitions, games where you throw sheep's bones to a specific target (see photo to the right) and the main event is an epic 30 km horse race at full gallop and the riders are all children! Between ages 5-13 (See overleaf) In Mongolia you get put on a saddle at age two and are a pro by five. They almost literally speak horse and have been an exceptional horse riding nation since the days of Genghis Khan.

Below: Mongolia's champion wrestler, with legs to prove it.







Each morning we dismantled the yurt (or Ger) which took about 30 minutes, then it went off on a camel cart. After our daily 6-8 hour ride, we would see our portable home again and set up camp for the evening.

The Mongolians often sang to us under the stars at night, and here (right) I'm having my fortune read in the traditional Mongolian way using sheep bones. The interpretations vary depending on how the bones fall.





Mandar fooling around on his horse. He would tickle her to make her jump for us. His horsemanship was legendary.



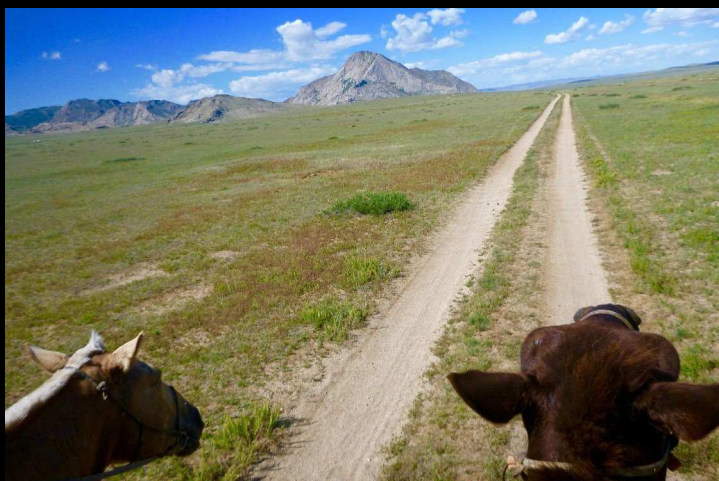


Above: Inside my luxurious Yurt when we finally got to a Yurt camp for the last two nights. We camped before that. It also became the party Yurt.

Our beloved horses taking a well earned rest in the Gobi desert while we stopped for lunch.

Right: Mare's milk. Yes, horse milk. It's what the locals drink and tastes warm and bitter.





2016 Above- Horsing around, Mongolian style.

Left- A typical view from the front.

Having no particular home,
but equally at home everywhere

Thoreau

Those who dwell among the beauties and
mysteries of the earth are never alone or
weary of life.

Rachel Carson

Humankind has not woven the web of life.
We are but a thread within it. Whatever
we do to the web, we do to ourselves.

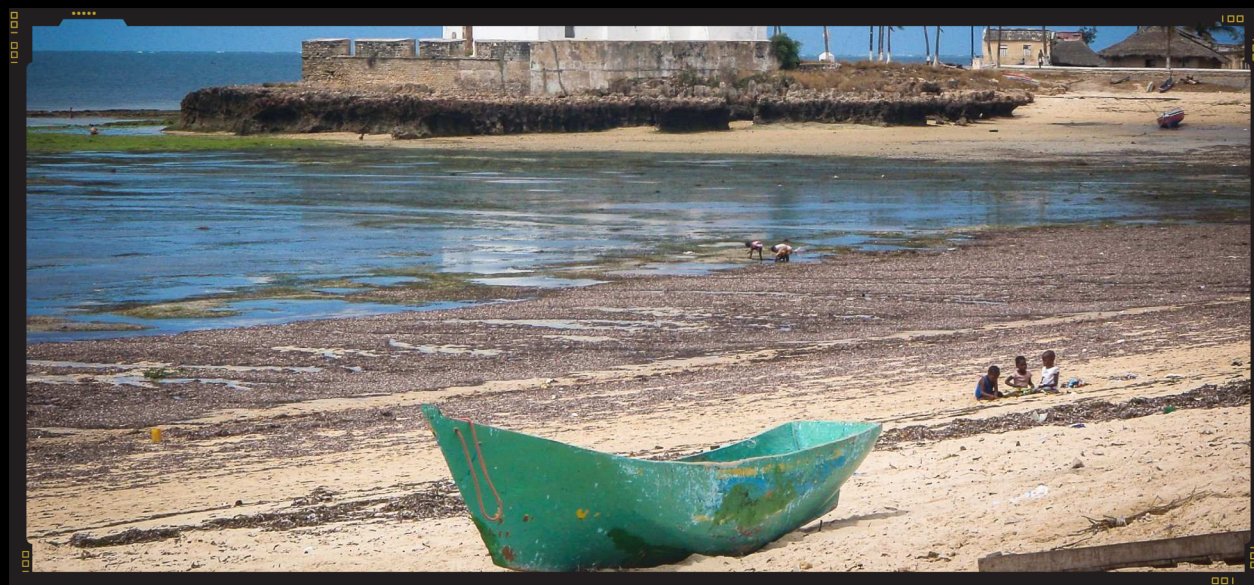
Chief Seattle

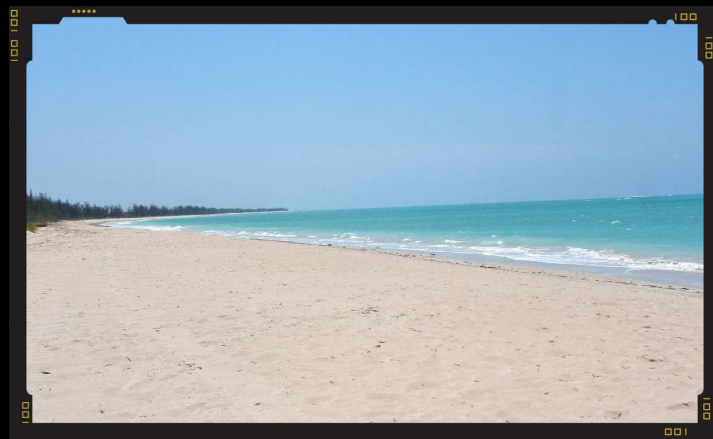
Mozambique











Pembe beach.

A *wooden* fire escape sign. Isle de Mozambique.



Dream home on the beach in Mozambique between working on The Book Bus in Zambia and moving to Malawi to join another Book Bus group.



Namibia

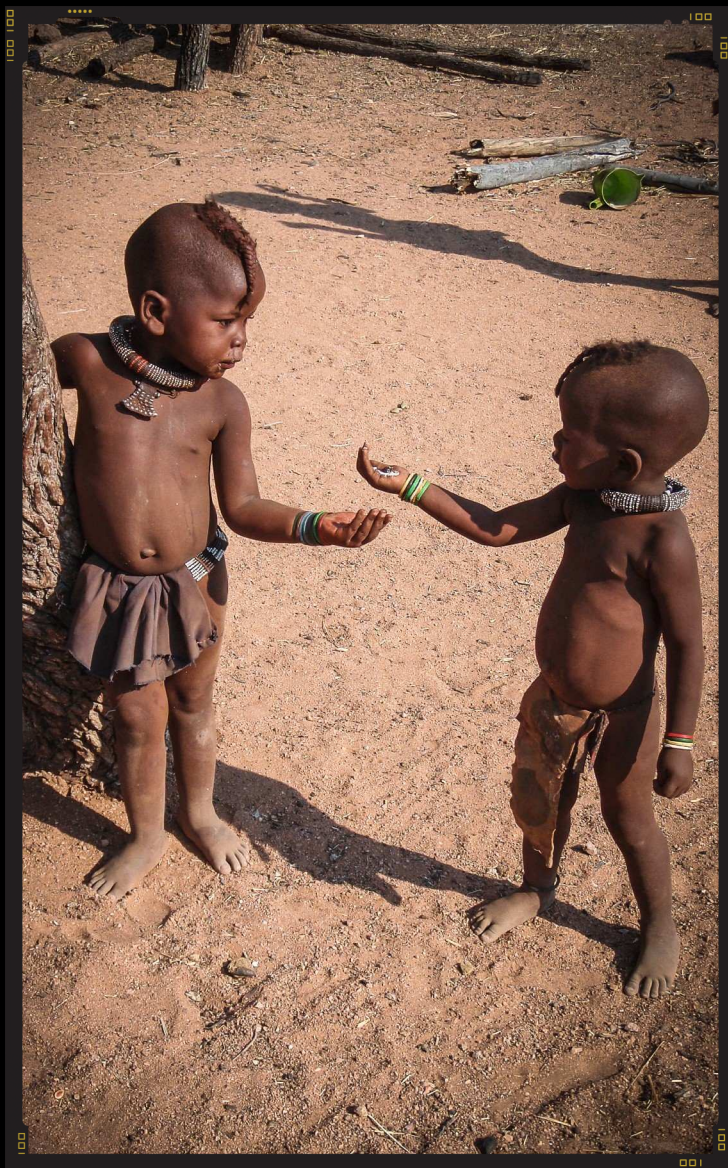
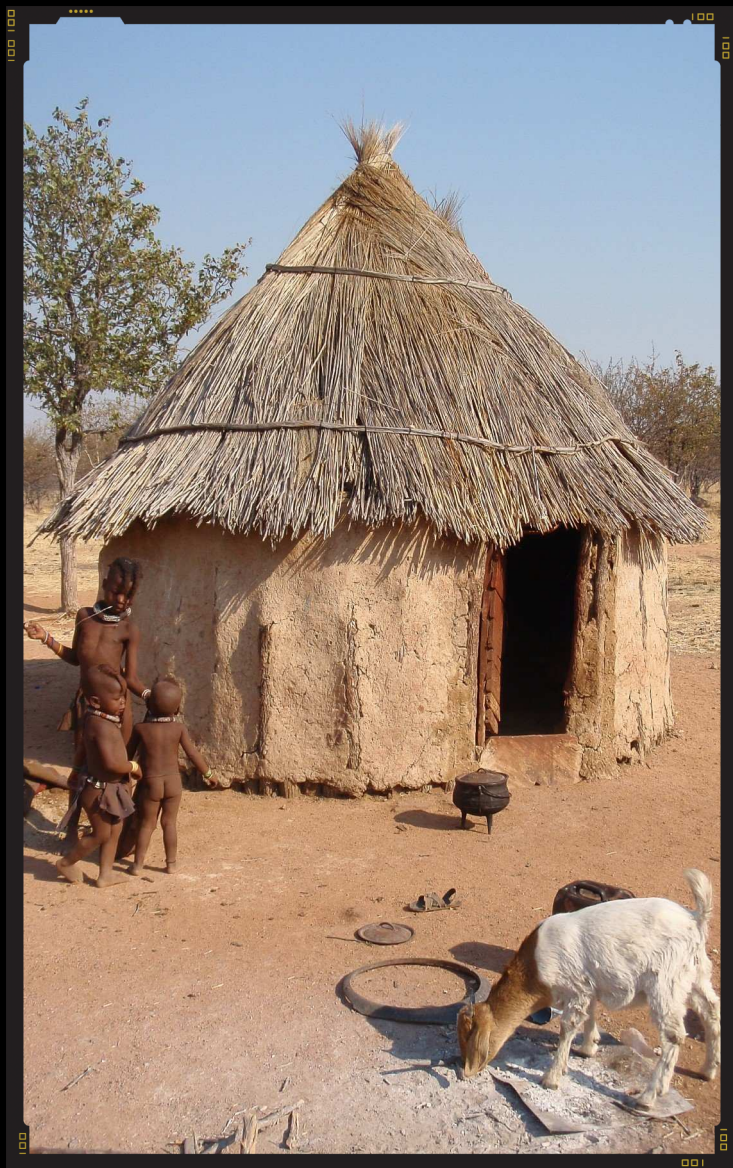
The Himba Tribe.

Plain living,
high thinking.

Wordsworth





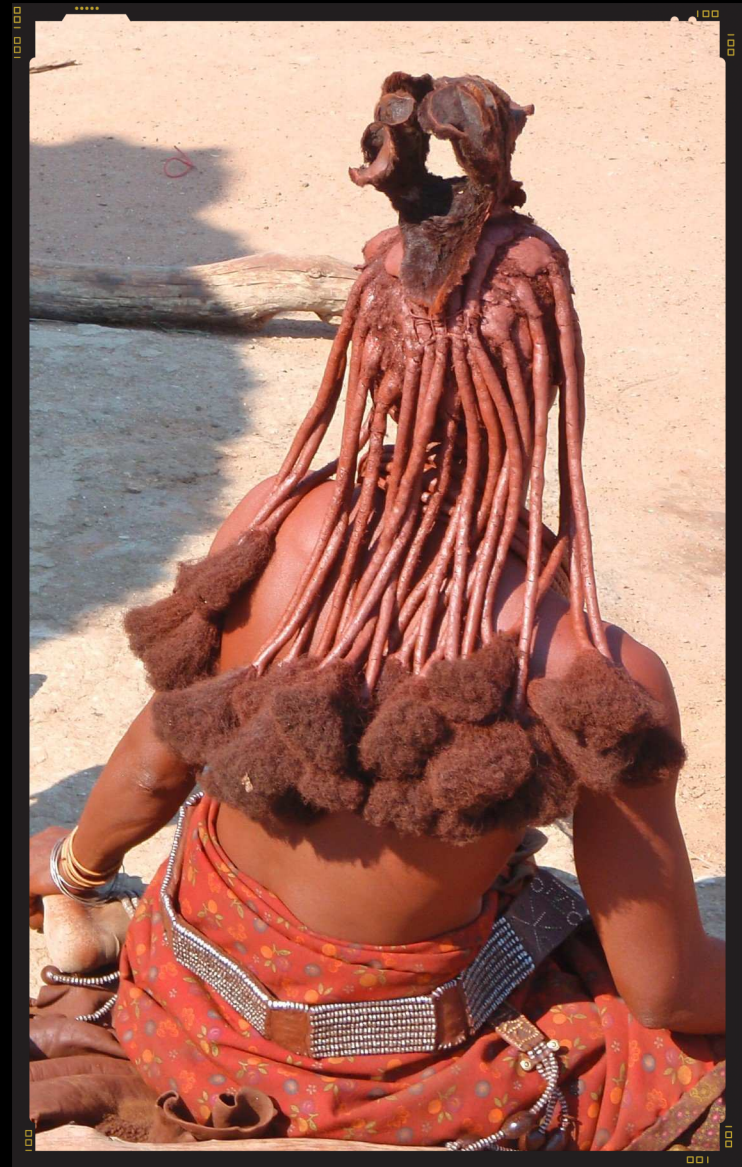






Whenever I am with Indigenous people, particularly nomadic people, I get the feeling that I've come home. Things are somehow as they should be.

Anita Roddick



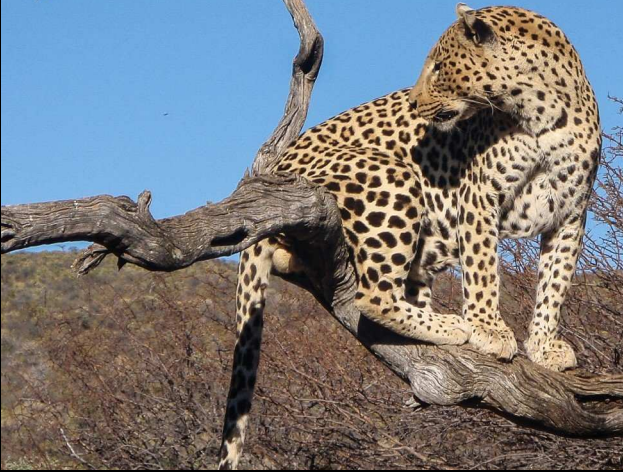




Simplify, simplify.

Thoreau



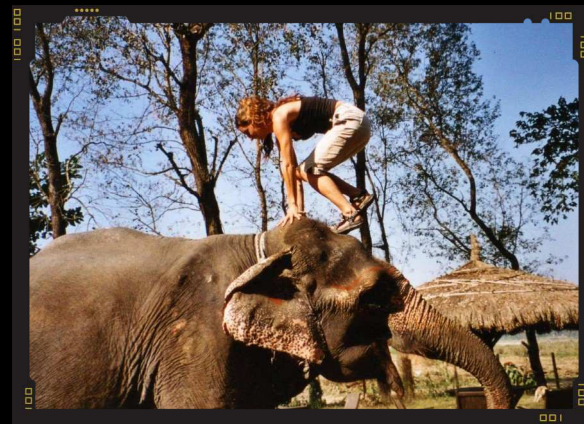
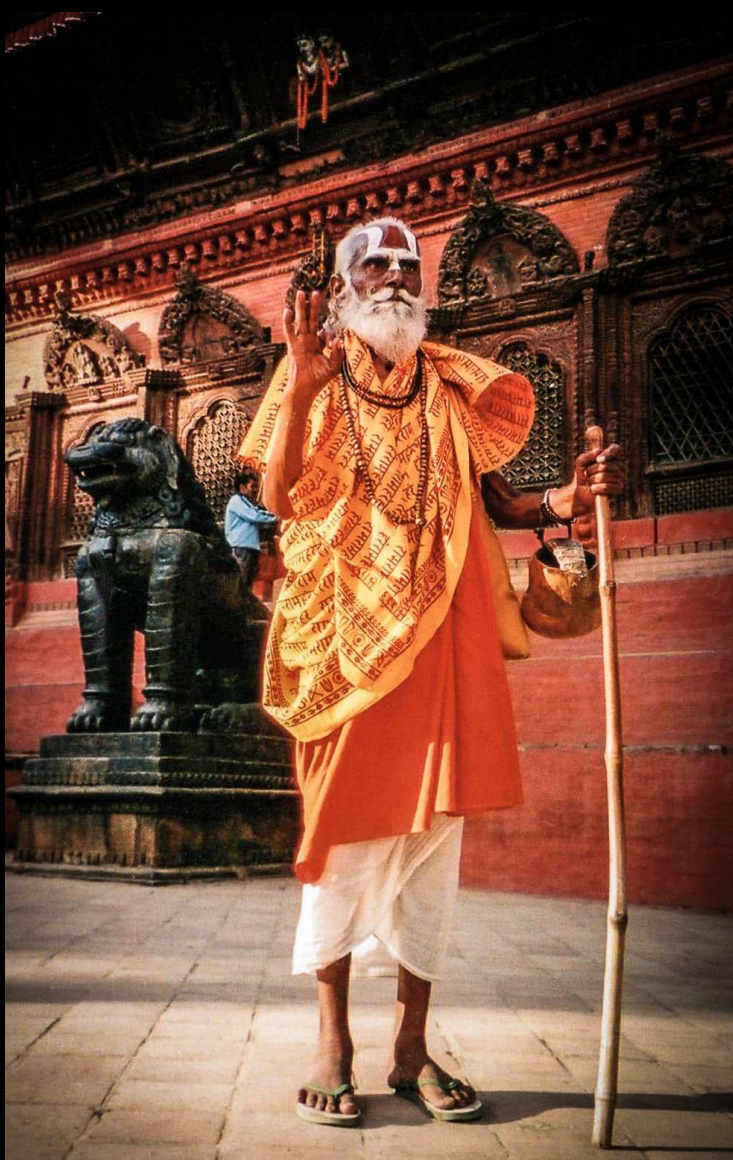




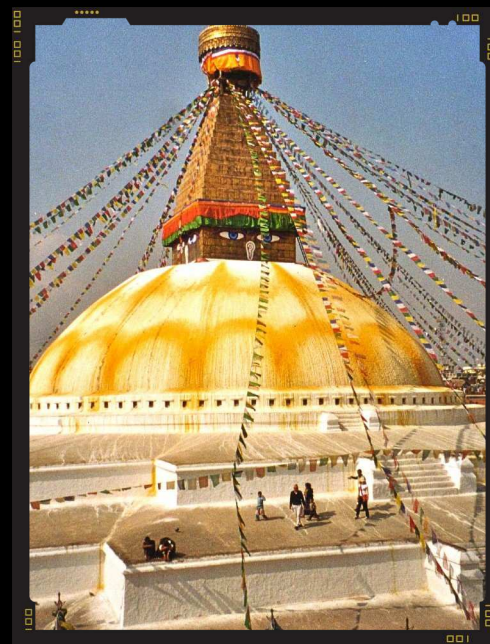
No more do we
Bushmen hunt in
these hills. The fire is
cold, our songs are
quiet. But listen
carefully, you will
hear us in the water.
Look carefully, you
will see us in the
rocks.

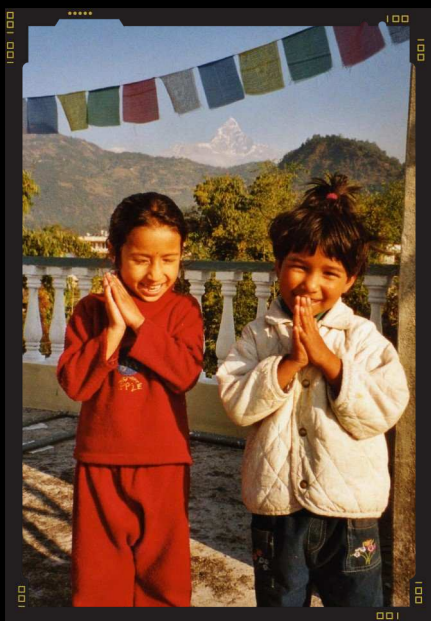
Bushman Art on rocks in
Namibia with their 'footprint
signature.'





Nepal

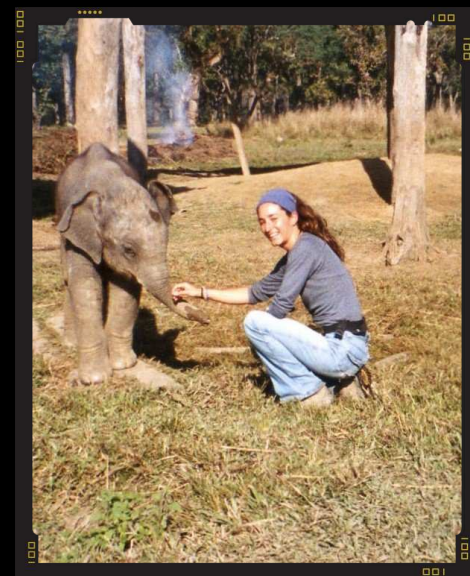




In 2004 I spent time in Nepal, travelling and helping out at an orphanage in Pokhara. Here (left) are Mamata and Punam on the roof of the orphanage with Machapuchare mountain behind them. They taught me more than I taught them.

Right: Baby elephant at an elephant orphanage in Chitwan national park.

Above: Paragliding in the Himalayas. As fate would have it, the pilot was Venezuelan and knew my cousin! So we flew with eagles in the Himalayan thermals, speaking Spanish. The joys of travel.



If I'd ever been asked to invent a festival, it would definitely have been a festival of light because, very simply, light transcends all differences, beliefs, religions etc and I've always just had a thing about light, ever since I can remember. However some other genius thought of it a good few centuries before me! But what a great thing that is because it is the best festival in the world (in my humble opinion) and so much fun and I can enjoy it! I was lucky enough to experience Tihar (the Nepalese festival of light, the equivalent of India's Diwali festival) in the beautiful, ancient city of Bhaktapur in the Kathmandu valley in 2004. Every building there is hundreds of years old and a work of art, and during Tihar the entire place is illuminated at dusk and transformed into a fairytale-like city all awash with light. It looked so magical, there were candles and butter lamps everywhere; along the streets, on every window sill, even floating on the lake. Music filled the streets while children were singing and dancing all around with candles inside lotus flowers. We even managed to find ourselves in the middle of a peace parade. Flickering candles were handed to us as we joined a long line of Nepalis singing 'let there be peace in Nepal and the world'. Not your average night out, but one I'll never forget!

It also makes deeper sense of the lovely Nepalese/ Eastern greeting with palms pressed together: 'Namaste' meaning 'the light in me salutes the light in you.' They carry their spirituality into normal everyday life with such gestures (amongst paying bills, working, getting ill, suffering like anyone else.) They are always reminded of their light within, their self luminous Atman or Buddha nature, a spark of the big bang within them, as at the subatomic level, everything, from a tree to us or the stars, is made up of the same stuff; of energy or light.

No wonder so many cultures around the globe throughout history, from the Egyptians, Tibetans and Mayans, to the Hopi, Aborigines and Incas, have honoured and worshipped the sun, our planet's physical representation of that light, and in yoga you literally do so through sun salutations, a way of physically paying homage to the sun, and taking in its light, warmth and life giving energy. Suffice it to say that I love light and think festivals of light rock, as they remind us to honour the light of the sun, moon and stars, candles and fire, but also our own internal light, and to let that light shine fully.

(snippet from my Nepal journal- 2004)



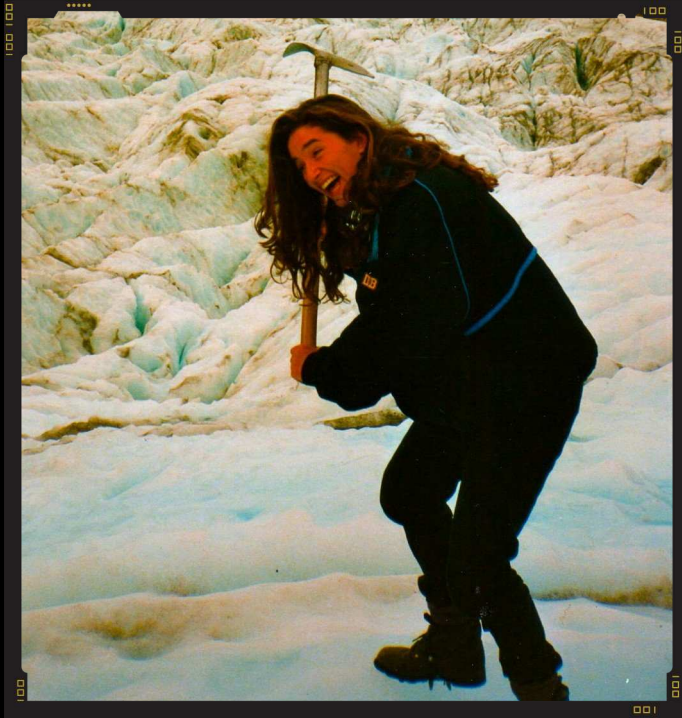


High Lamas celebrating the anniversary of the Dalai Lama's Nobel Peace Prize in Pokhara.



Elephant Polo! Chitwan National Park.

New Zealand



Above: Don't mess with me! On Mount Cook with my ice pick.



Right: White water rafting madness.

These are images of a 12 week expedition I led called Patagonia Venture, through Peru, Bolivia, Chile and Argentina for VentureCo.

It began with Spanish school in Cusco, then two community projects; creating a weaving workshop for a remote Quechua community in the sacred valley of Peru with them, and creating a 'comedor' for children to eat on their way to school from their mountain homes and to give them energy for the return hike. Both projects were a privilege. Then weeks of fun and adventures, including trekking to Machu Picchu, and across Patagonia and crossing the salt flats of Bolivia into the Atacama desert! Horse riding, zip lining, sky diving and much silliness ensued on this fantastic trip, which ended in style in Buenos Aires.

Right: Dramatic Torres del Paine- Patagonia, during a 5 day trek.





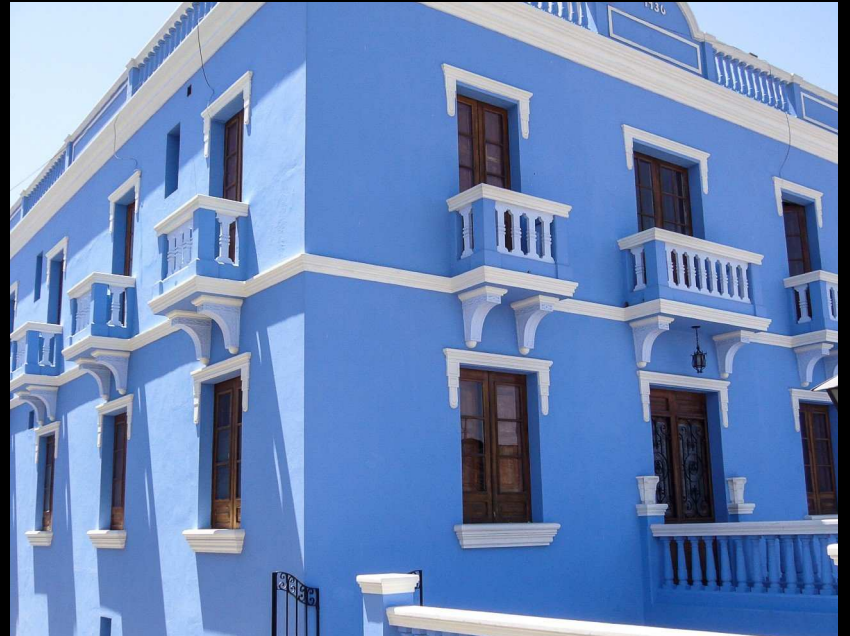


It was a huge honour to spend some weeks living with this Quechua community in Cuncani, as we collectively built them a weaving workshop so that they could then sell their wares to trekkers who occasionally go by en route to Machu Picchu. They made us feel completely welcome and became friends. My group thought they'd dressed up for our arrival but this is their daily traditional clothing, not just for special occasions. We also did some extreme planting of trees on near vertical cliffs nearby in places where the llamas wouldn't be able to go and eat them. Fortunately our stay coincided with their annual festival which involved running and horse races, Chicha (local beer) drinking contests and even carrot peeling competitions! I kid you not. (See below.) I think that's how the men decide who they want to marry. It was a joyful experience for all involved and a successful project.



Miguel Angel, Sophia and Coco the dog.





Above- Arequipa, Peru.

Left: Trekking in stunning Patagonia- Torres del Paine, Chile with David Gordon.

Right: Llamas at Machu Picchu.





Above: The Witchcraft market in La Paz. Want a potion for abundance, success or love, that's your place!

Right: A wall from Tiahuanaco which depicts faces of all races long before people were supposedly travelling. The question is how did they know?





Tiahuanaco-Bolivia. Location of a fascinating, advanced, pre-Inca civilization. Possibly one of the oldest on Earth with some people dating it back to 15,000BC. Archaeologists continue to argue over the dates. Legends speak of it as the cradle of humanity. It has the usual megalithic structures and pyramids aligned to the constellations.



Salt flats-
Bolivia.



Thrill ride. Zip
lining in Pucon,
Chile.





Above: Walking into a packet of Pringles on the Bolivian salt flats, as you do!

Right: This was a real highlight during a trek in Patagonia, hearing a thunderous noise behind me while I walked, and turning around to see this sensational herd of wild horses galloping along, with that backdrop. Stunning.



I wish to speak a word for nature. For absolute freedom and wildness.

Thoreau



Above: Spectacular landscape on the border of Bolivia and Chile.

Right: Wondrous Machu Picchu, once described as "Impossibly Picturesque." It's true, and it has a palpably magical energy. I have been there about eight times and will never tire of that abode of the children of the sun.







Peruvian portraits.





The Sacred Valley. Peru.



Gorgeous Epiphenia. Tambohualla-Peru. We camped out in the grounds of her school in the middle of nowhere while we built a 'Casa Comunal' for the community of villagers in the area. As we were there for three weeks we got to know the children pretty well and I taught them some English in the afternoons, and they taught me some Quechua. I have very fond memories of that time.



Panama

Panama City



Bocas Del Toro

Portugal

(The Azores- A yoga and dolphin swim retreat I led there in 2007)

To be free
As wild animals are.
To dive naked,
Swift, silent and serene
Into the depths of the sea.
To fly high up into the
Infinite blue of the sky,
And glide quietly
Over modern man's
shabby world.
To blend with the air,
Or melt with the water.
Becoming one with
nature,
And rediscovering the self.
This is my motto.

Jacques Mayol.







Let nature be your teacher

Wordsworth



Natural Atlantic swimming pool, and even the clouds look like dolphins in the Azores.

I am fundamentally an optimist. Whether that comes from nature or nurture I cannot say. Part of being optimistic is keeping one's head pointed toward the sun, one's feet moving forward. There were many dark moments when my faith in humanity was sorely tested, but I would not give myself up to despair. That way leads to defeat and death.

Nelson Mandela



South Africa

Left- Table mountain

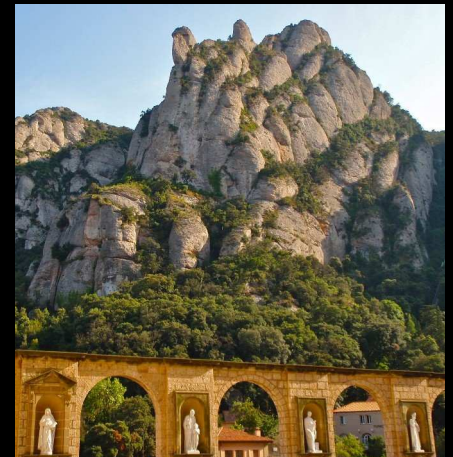
Below- Nelson Mandela's cell on Robben island. He remains one of my biggest heroes.





Spain

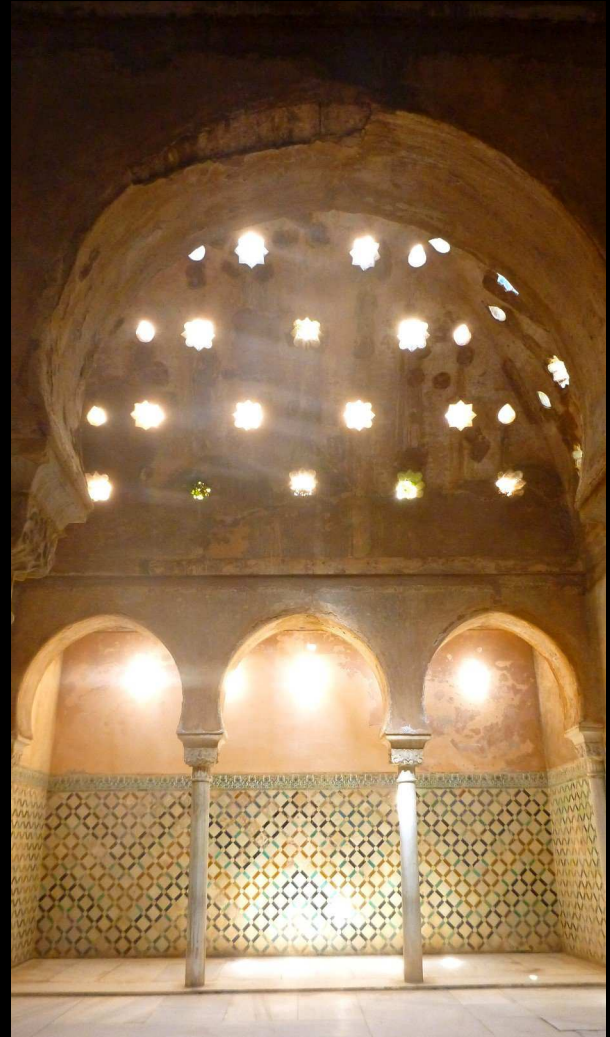
Costa Brava.



Montserrat. Site of a famous Black Madonna and mystical mountains.



Freefalling and riding into my 30s.



The Alhambra, Granada.

Ibiza

Yoga.



With Bruce Parry.







Sri Lanka



Previous page: The Dambulla caves and a wood carver in Galle showing us his latest mask

This page: Duruthu festival celebrating Buddha's first visit to Sri Lanka



Thailand

Koh Samui and Bangkok.



Chang Mai.



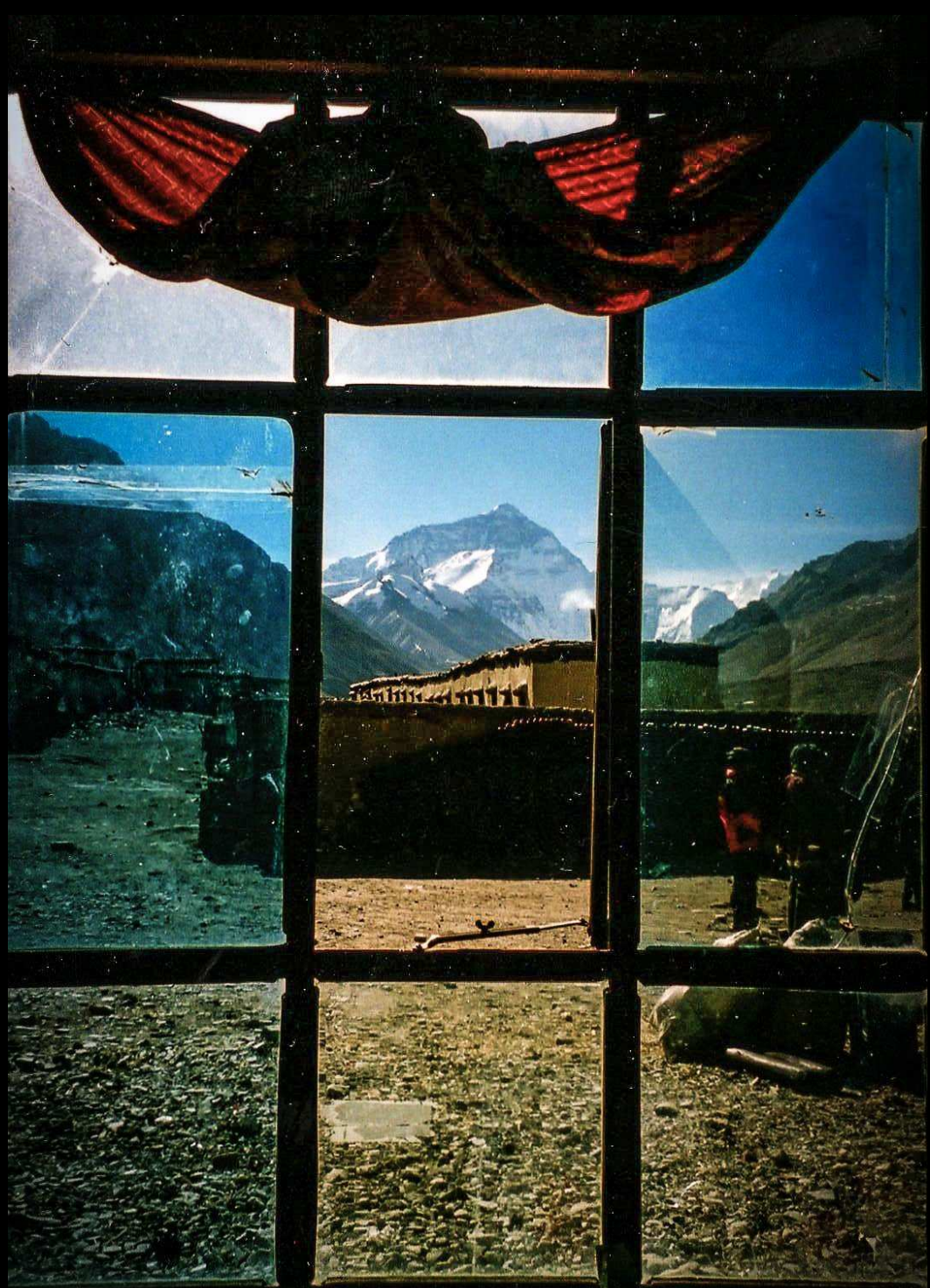
Tibet

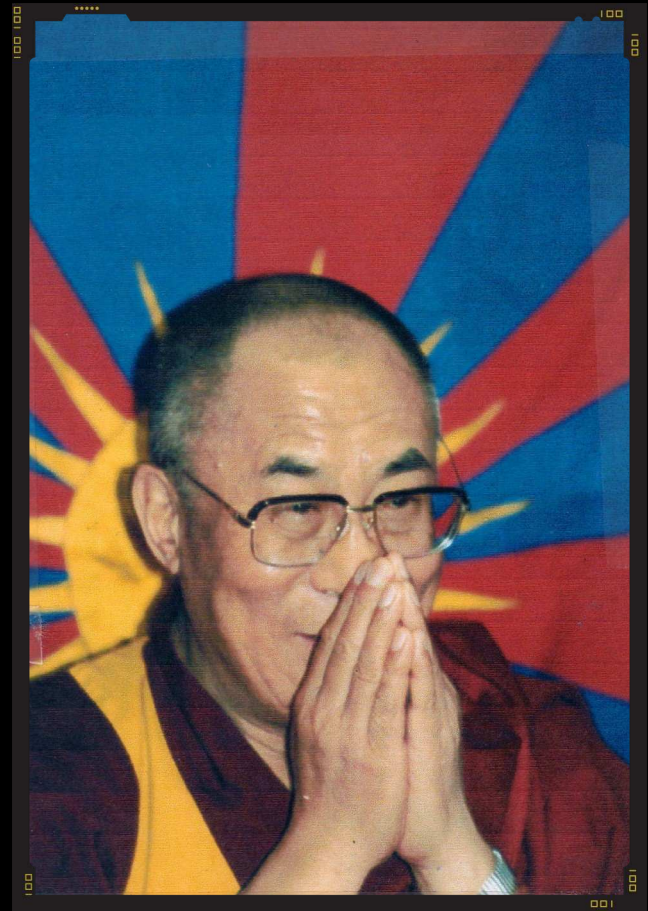


Previous page- The Potala Palace.
Lhasa, Tibet. 2004. Previously the
home of the Dalai Lama before he
fled to Dharamsala, India.

Right. My view of Mount Everest
from Rongbuk monastery in Tibet
(the highest monastery in the
world.) The locals call Everest Mount
Quomolangma- Mother Goddess of
the universe, and see themselves as
guardians of the majestic mountain.
(Officially you have to enter Tibet
on a Chinese group visa, but I
managed to escape my group
temporarily in Tingri to trek to
Everest base camp, and then join
them to cross the border back into
Nepal! The plan worked perfectly.)

Tibet is a country I had been drawn
to since childhood and has a very
special place in my heart. I just
hope it manages to keep its
'Tibetanness' under current Chinese
rule.





This is my simple religion. There is no need for temples, no need for complicated philosophy. Our own brain, our own heart is the temple, the philosophy is kindness.

HH The Dalai Lama

Far left- Chogye Trichen Rinpoche. Teacher of the Dalai Lama who I came across through a series of synchronicities at the Sakya Monlam festival in Lumbini, Nepal in 2004. On arriving in Lumbini one night, my instinct told me to go exploring. I was mesmerized by some flickering lights in the distance so crossed a field to what turned out to be a Tibetan Monastery where there was just one bed left available and I was told I was not there by coincidence as I'd showed up for the annual world peace festival attended by the highest Tibetan Lamas and Rinpoches. I found myself to be the only woman and only non monk in a room full of monks chanting for world peace! The multi coloured string bracelet he gave me as a blessing stayed on for 3 years, and finally fell off in 2007, coinciding with his death.

HH the Dalai Lama in London in 1999. (I met neither in Tibet, sadly, but they're certainly Tibetan!)

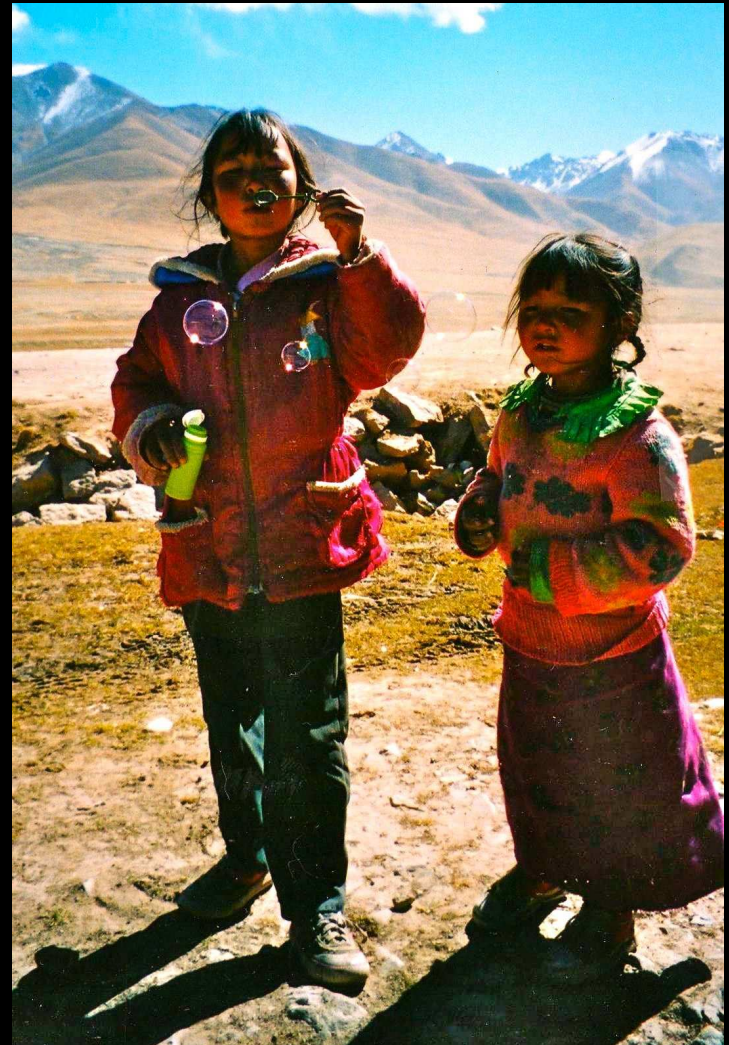




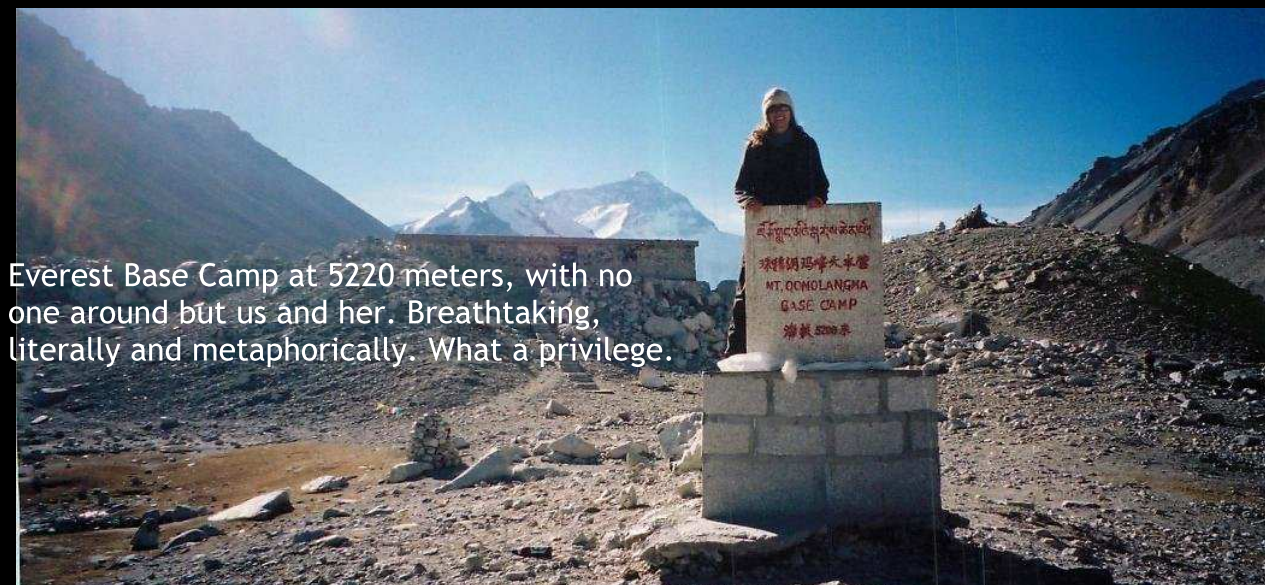


Left: Thousands of scintillating, luminous Tibetan butter lamps.

Above: A girl singing outside a monastery and Tibetan ladies in Lhasa.



Sharing the joys of bubbles with Tibetan girls.



Everest Base Camp at 5220 meters, with no one around but us and her. Breathtaking, literally and metaphorically. What a privilege.



Turkey



I have led three Yoga Retreats in the South West of Turkey where we explored local Roman ruins and this 4th stunning Century King's tomb in Dalyan, enjoyed boat trips around islands, local markets, swimming and lots of daily yoga. We stayed in a magical region surrounded by pine forests, olive groves and the Mediterranean sea.



Uruguay

Uruguay is a hidden real gem in South America. It's capital Montevideo has the highest quality of life on the continent. After finishing leading a 12 week expedition through South America I went there for a rest and loved everything about it. La Colonia, or Colonia del Sacramento (this page) is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and only a 30 minute ferry ride from Buenos Aires. The beaches are wonderful, bizarrely there are thatched cottages and old American cars dotted around everywhere and everyone you see is drinking Mate through a straw, like in Argentina. Education is also amongst the best on the continent and generally the whole experience was a very pleasant and civilized one. If you get the chance, go.



Venezuela



Los Roques. Heaven on earth.





To me, Venezuela is a precious gem. Undoubtedly one of the most beautiful countries I've been to in terms of the stunning, varied landscapes with the largest Caribbean coast, the Andes, the Amazon, the Orinocco, the plains, desert and cities. Also the warmth of it's people, the music, the colours, the exotic food and animals and famously beautiful women. It should be one of the richest countries in the world due to its vast natural resources, especially oil, but sadly it is currently in a bad way, with poverty and crime on the rise. I might be a little biased as I'm half Venezuelan but anyone who has explored the country, particularly a decade or more ago will know what I mean. Thankfully the nature of life is change so I just dearly hope that things improve for beautiful Venezuela and its people.





The Starfish Story

One day there was a huge storm with powerful winds causing massive waves at sea. The next morning, a little girl walked down to a beach and saw that there were thousands of starfish washed ashore!

She walked up to one of them, picked it up and looked at it in detail. It was beautiful. She took it to the sea and put it back there, then picked up another one, admired it and put it in the sea, and continued on in this way.

A man was watching what she was doing and went over to her saying "why bother? There are thousands of starfish, it won't make any difference."

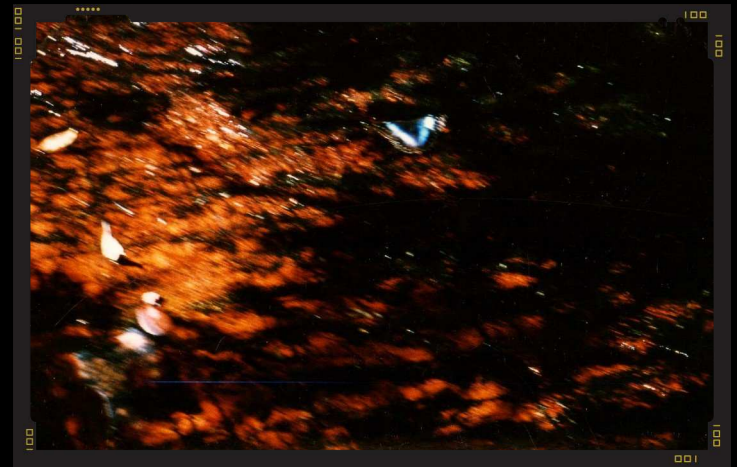
The girl showed him the one in her hand, then placed it gently back in the sea and said:

"It makes a difference to that one."



La Gran Sabana and the Angel Falls.





This page: A woman in the Orinocco region carrying wood on her back. Orinocco girl.

Jasper Falls. One of the most spectacular things I've ever seen; a stunning waterfall, the base of which is the semi precious stone red Jasper! And, it had electric blue butterflies flying all around it! It was like a scene from Narnia.

Mount Roraima, definitely one of the most special places I've visited. It is a vast table top mountain which is considered sacred by the local indigenous people. Most of the animal and plant life on top are completely unique to Roraima. There are frogs that roll instead of hop and various carnivorous plants. There's a 'Crystal Valley' where clear Quartz crystals grow in abundance and the rock formations appear to be naturally formed like animals (right: a lion?) David Attenborough announced that it was one of his favourite places, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle wrote 'The Lost World' inspired by this magical spot and it was the inspiration for the recent film 'Up.'

When I was Venezuela in 1993 I had one of the most magical weeks of my life in Los Roques and Canaima where everything unfolded perfectly and synchronicities happened at every turn. I fell in love with Los Roques (pages 304-307) from above in the plane and never wanted to leave. I slept on the deck of a boat watching shooting stars all night as there was a meteor shower (but my only wish was to stay longer.) It was granted the following day when our small plane had a problem on take off so we had to stay until it was fixed. I got to spend another two days in paradise. For the next three days I was booked to join a small group on a trip to see Canaima. I thought I'd missed it due to the delay but as fate would have it the trip had been postponed by two days! So I went. We had not intended to go to Roraima but one night around the fire whilst eating I told them what I'd heard about it. There was a National Geographic photographer amongst us who looked excited. The next day as we headed towards Brazil, we came across only one person, who just happened to be a helicopter pilot heading for Roraima! The others had the money to go, I couldn't afford it but insisted they must. The Nat Geo guy handed me his camera and some films and said he'd pay for me if I'd take lots of pictures. We had a deal! We flew up and I felt like an explorer of old when I found the crystal valley, it was mesmerizing and I had an internal debate about whether to take a piece down with me. As it's a sacred spot I eventually opted not to. After a couple of hours in awe at this otherworldly place, we flew back down, all super content. Then, as I walked from the helicopter towards our 4x4, a young Pemon indigenous man approached me wearing only a loin cloth. He opened my hand, put a large clear quartz crystal in it, closed it and left! I was speechless. I can only conclude that he knew what had happened up there and honoured me making the right decision. Otherwise it was a bizarre coincidence. I still have the crystal today.



Canaima

The 'curtain' waterfall.
You can walk behind it
from one side to the
other.



Vietnam

Halong Bay.









Zambia

Left: Victoria Falls

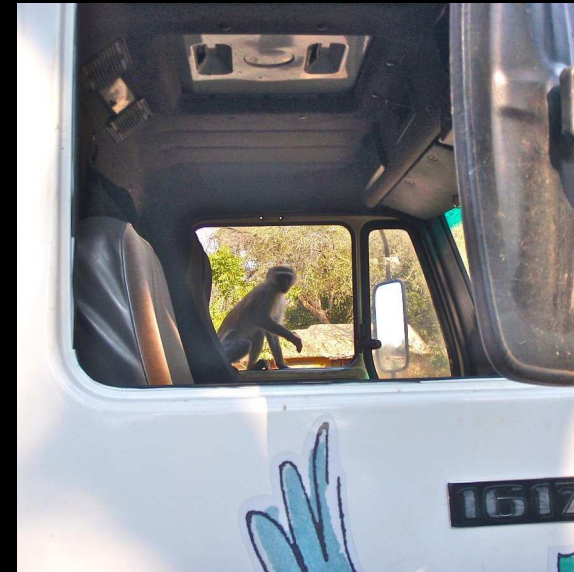
Above inset: Boys who showed up to sing and dance for us at Meheba Refugee Settlement

Main image: one of many African Villages we have visited with The Book Bus project, after reading a book about lions!

In 2012 I spent 5 months in Africa which included being project leader of the Book Bus in Zambia and in Malawi. I took The Book Bus to Meheba UNHCR refugee settlement for 6 weeks, which was one of the most powerful, profound and inspiring experiences I have had. We met so many incredible, vulnerable yet strong people, some of whom had gone through terrifying ordeals. In a world where resources are few and nothing seems guaranteed, they lived very much in the present treated each day as a precious bonus not to be taken for granted. They taught us a great deal about life, forgiveness and gratitude and very much enjoyed the presence of the Book Bus.

My personal goal with The Book Bus now is to collate local stories from the areas where we work and put them into a book to give back to the local people. Never to replace the oral culture of story telling but just as a gift for them to hold in their hands and share with the community.

In free time, I hung out with Chief Mukuni's lions and cheetahs, microlighted over Victoria falls, saw nocturnal lunar rainbows, had high tea at The Royal Livingstone and enjoyed Africa's magnificent, unique animals on safaris.



Above left: With Upale at Meheba Refugee Camp.

Above right: Our driver nearly lost his job when this cheeky monkey hopped into The Book Bus and sat in the driver seat ready to take over!

The Book Bus Malawi



I helped the publisher Tom Maschler set up The Book Bus charity which exposes children (who otherwise would not have access to books) to the joy of reading. It is now running successfully in Zambia, Malawi, Ecuador and India.

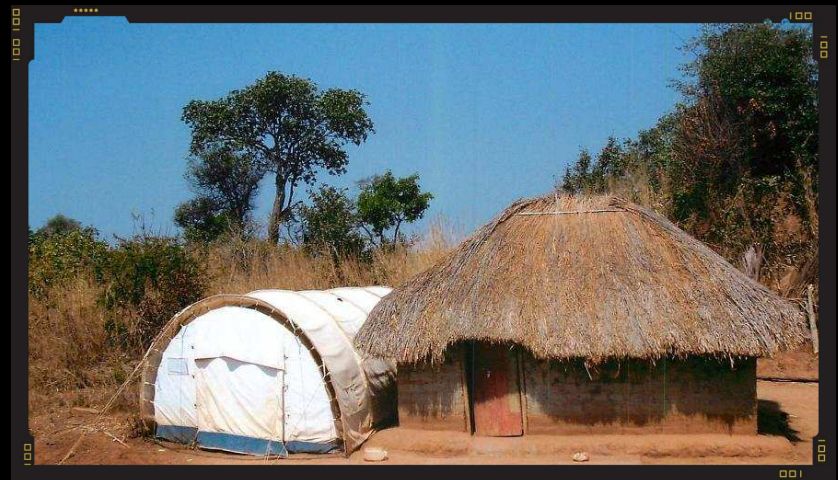
Volunteers go out and read with groups of children who are then able to illustrate aspects of the book's story with our art materials on board. It's a joy for all involved and is improving literacy where we work.

The Book Bus Ecuador.



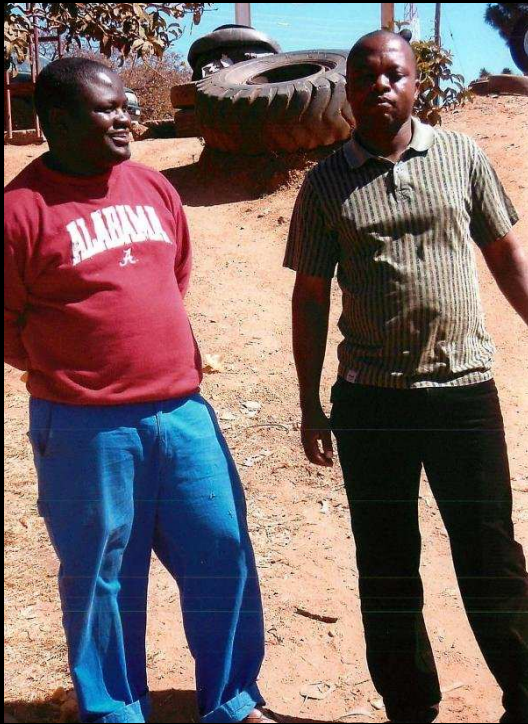
We were lucky enough to have Quentin Blake personally design the artwork for each bus so they look amazing and put smiles on the kid's faces! Come and join in the fun.

www.thebookbus.org



The Kindness of Strangers

In 2012 I took the Book Bus to a refugee camp in Northern Zambia for 6 weeks. At the half way point, we drove to an airport three hours away to drop off the first group of volunteers who had been wonderful, and collect the second group and a new driver for the bus. After fond farewells and welcomes, we set off back towards the camp. All was going swimmingly until our new driver, the lovely Douglas, started feeling ill and kept having to get out and go into the bushes. I assured the new volunteers that all would be well and soon we were on our way again. About twenty minutes later the bus started swerving and it was clear that Douglas was in a bad way and only continuing to show willing. I insisted that he stop and said that I'd come up with a 'Plan B.' But what would that plan be?! It was starting to get dark. We did have tents and food on board so we could, if absolutely necessary, sleep by the roadside but I definitely didn't want that to be the group's first impression of life in Africa. I even contemplated driving the bus myself but I wasn't qualified and had no relevant papers to show at check points...I closed my eyes, went within and asked for help. Two minutes later a car pulled up in front of us (the first we'd seen for hours.) Three large African men got out and came to my passenger window asking if everything was ok. I was torn between relief and fear, but instinct told me to trust them as I'd only ever experienced kindness from people in Zambia. By some miracle, it transpired that one of them was a doctor with a clinic nearby, another was a truck driver with his own truck company and the third knew and had worked in the refugee camp where we were heading. In short we'd been sent Angels! Three hours later we all stood smiling at the refugee camp, Douglas felt much improved, the volunteers had had a first day adventure and all had unfolded perfectly, against the odds. The three men asked for nothing in return for their help but I made sure they were well looked after and we became firm friends for the duration of our time in Africa.



Left: One of my favourite things at the Refugee settlement, was to carry containers to the nearest water pump, where I would encounter women or children doing the same thing, and get to chat to them about all sorts as we waited for them to fill. They were real moments of connection and I cherished them.

When refugees first arrive at Meheba they live in a UN tent like this one, then over time, if they stay longer they build an adobe brick house (the bricks are provided for them.) I occasionally went to visit families in these homes and heard their astonishing stories as I got to know them better.

Above: Angels come in all shapes and sizes. Two of the three men that came to our rescue in the story on the previous page.

Above right: Mother with 9 children reading a book from our bus.





Life is either a daring adventure or nothing.

Helen Keller



It's not every day you get the opportunity to get up close and personal with felines like this and it was such a privilege to do so. We had taken The Book Bus to Chief Mukuni's villages. Chief Mukuni is a real life 'Lion King,' Head chief of a large part of Zambia and care taker (in the real sense) of Victoria Falls. These lions and Cheetahs belong to him and he allowed me to get to know them a bit. There are always two men with sticks by your side and you never forget the wild nature of the animal you're dealing with, but I cherished every moment I spent with them. The lions have this majestic power, and the cheetahs licked me and purred away contentedly. What a gift.





Above left: Microlighting over Mosi oa Tunya- 'the smoke that thunders' on my Birthday.
Right: The incredible night time lunar rainbow over Victoria Falls.

Angels in their flight would have paused to marvel at Victoria Falls.

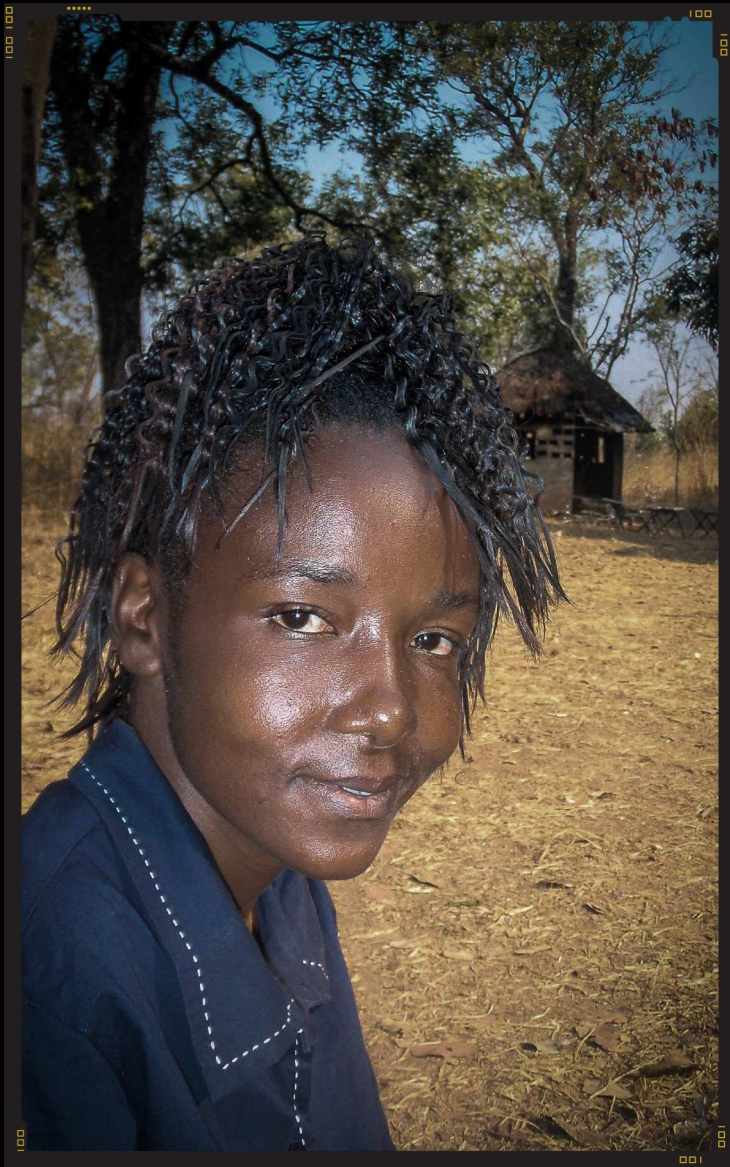
David Livingstone



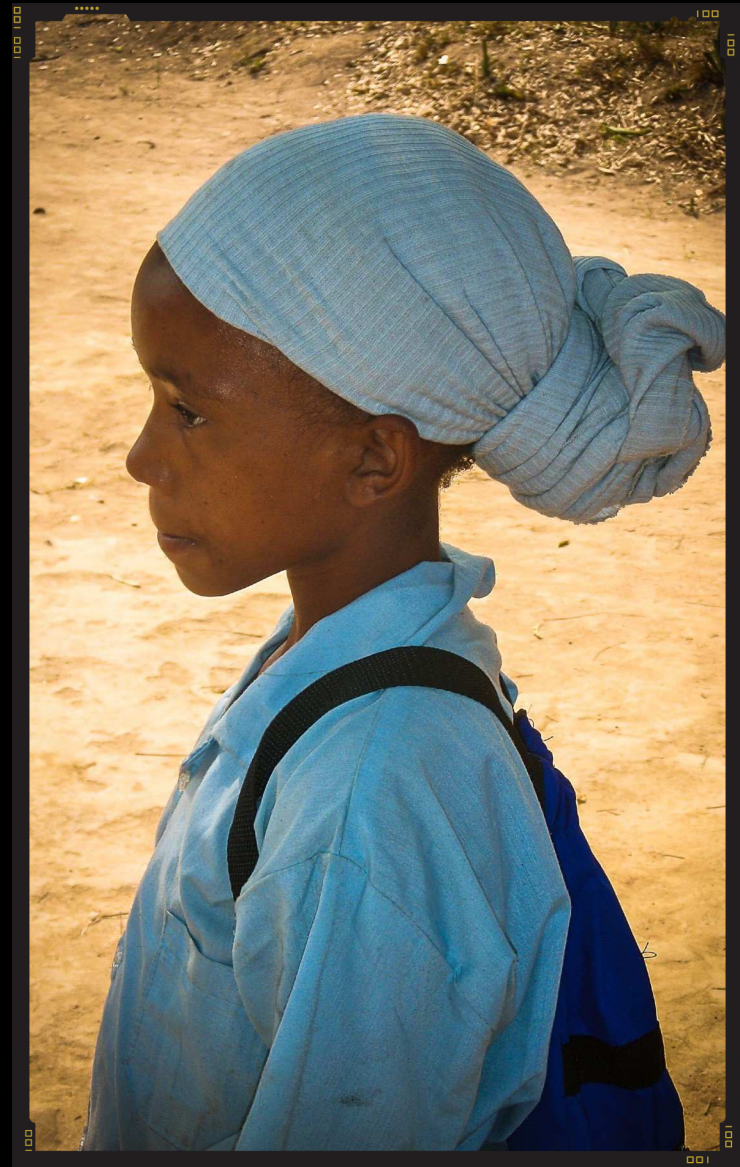
The following pages show some of the incredible people I met at Meheba Refugee Camp in Zambia whilst working there with the Book Bus. Some had simply been displaced because of their country's situation, others had experienced things that nobody should have to, particularly children, yet they were living role models and examples of how humans can cope with almost anything that is thrown at them, survive and move on with dignity and a sense of perspective and humour. I learnt a great deal from these amazing people.

I got to know one of them particularly well as one day at his school I gave him batteries for a camera he had and he later walked for 2 hours to come and say thank you. That led to several visits from him and a friendship formed. We'd sit on an ant hill and talk in a combination of French, Swahili, English and body language while we watched the sun set and over time he told me his story. When age six and living in the Congo (DRC) he witnessed members of the opposing tribe march into his village and machete his mother to death in front of him, then raise the village to the ground. His father was away at the time so with no close family left and in the company of these men, he believed he had no option but to become a child soldier. Years later he was reunited with his father who took him to the camp to start a new life. It's astonishing, shocking stuff and doesn't bear thinking about, yet when I met him at age 18, he had a smile that would light up a room (or in this case a UN tent where I visited him and his father) and all he wanted to do was go to school, catch up on his education, play football and enjoy each day of his new found 'free' life. The memories remained and he carried his burden like a cross on his back but few people know better the power of the mind and of the thoughts you choose to dwell on, and the gift of living in the present moment with gratitude for all the little blessings, of which everyone has many. I will never forget him.





Lee



Innocent

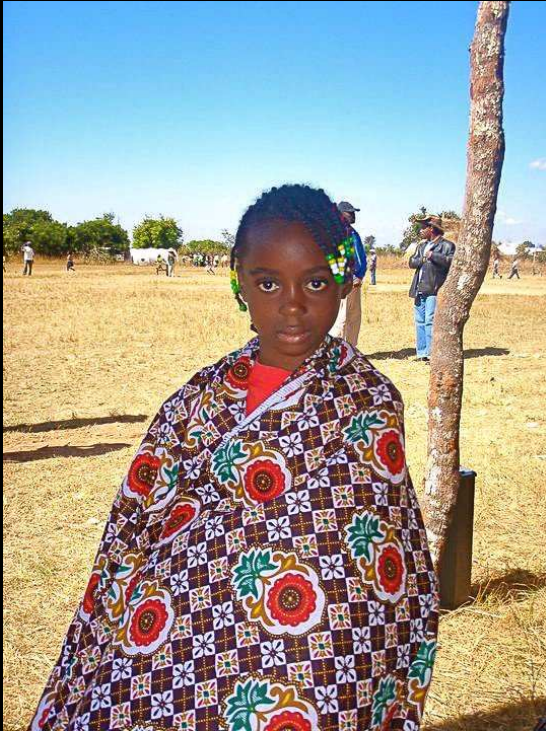


Upale



Choklate





Everything can be taken from a man but one thing, the last of human freedoms; To choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances.

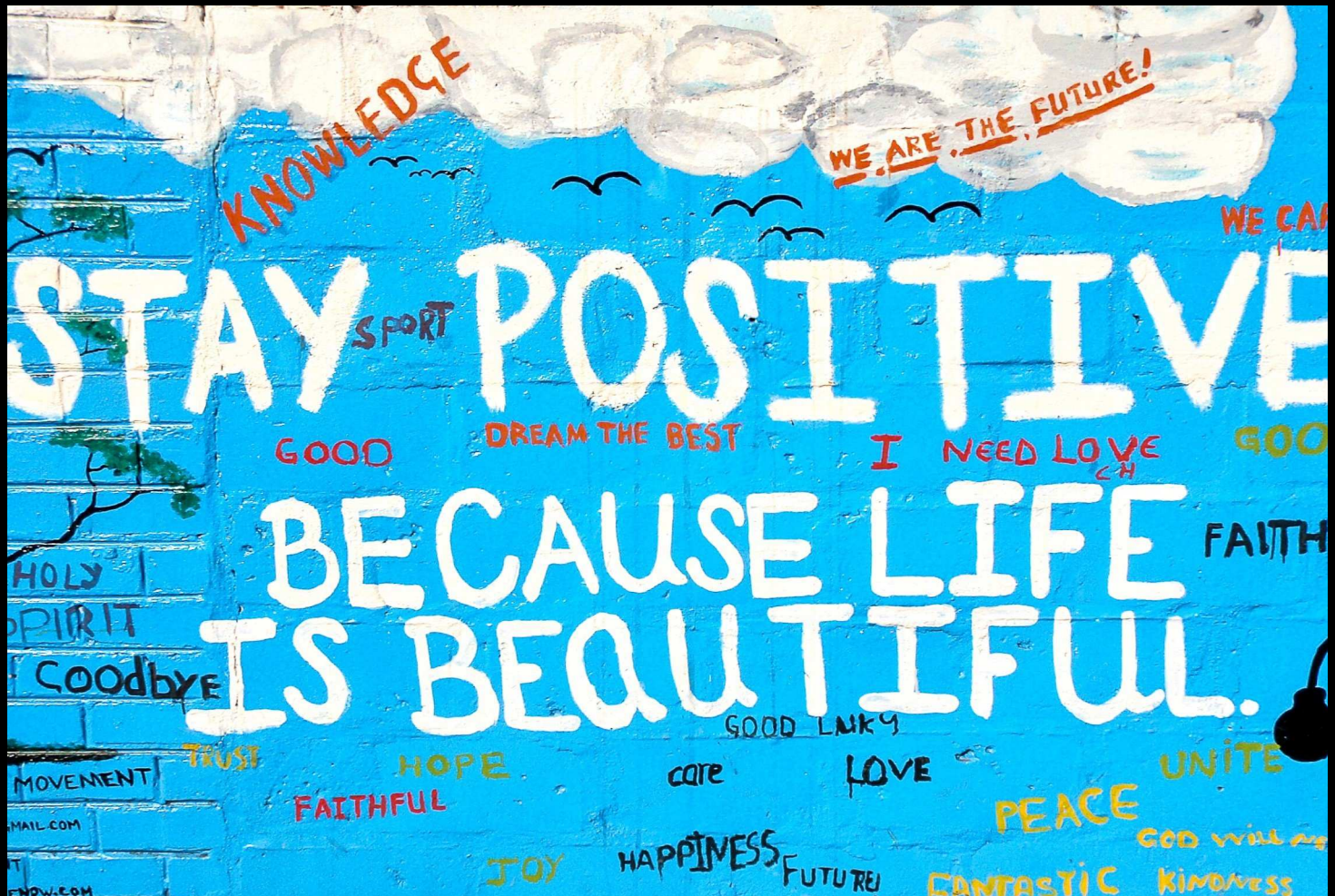
Victor Frankl- Man's search for meaning



Einstein: The most important question you can ask yourself is 'do I live in a friendly universe or a hostile universe?'

Reporter: Why is that the most important question?

Einstein: Because your answer will determine your future.



Mural on a wall in Livingstone- Zambia.

Go out, go out I beg you, and
taste the beauty of the wild.
Behold the miracle of earth
with all the wonder of a child.

Edna Jacques

Let the world change you, then
you can change the world.

(From The Motorcycle Diaries.)

Zimbabwe



To laugh often and much; to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends. To appreciate beauty; to find the best in others; to leave the world a bit better whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition. To know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Everything you have seen,
every flower, every bird,
every rock, will pass away
and turn to dust. But the fact
that you have seen them will
not pass away.

Cabbalistic saying

Doesn't everything die at last,
and too soon? Tell me, what
is it you plan to do with your
one wild and precious life?

Mary Oliver

With two hands joined, I appeal to you to make the rest of your life as meaningful as possible.

HH Dalai Lama

May you live all the days of your life

Jonathan Swift

Thank you for everything, I have no complaints whatsoever.

Zen saying



Lokah Samastha Sukhino Bhavantu

May all beings everywhere be happy and free from suffering,
and may the thoughts, words, and actions of my own life
contribute in some way to that happiness and freedom for all.

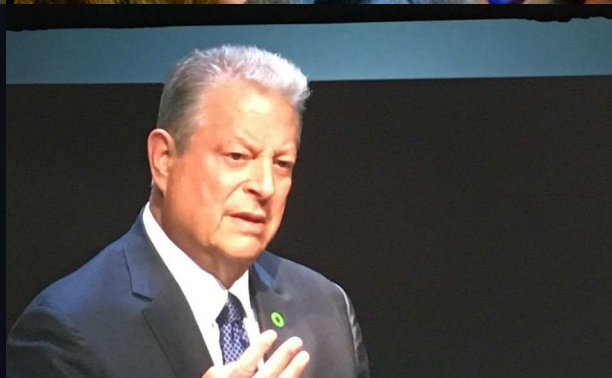
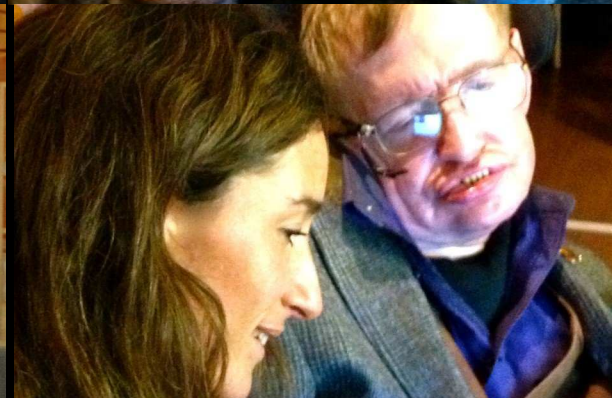
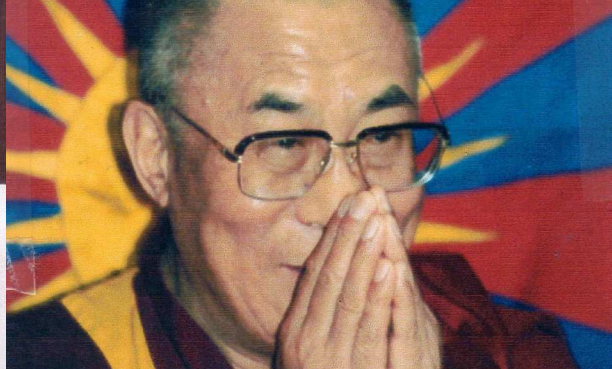
Here are some of my inspirations that I've been lucky enough to come across along the way, who have kept me believing that anything is possible and that kindness, compassion, humility, strength of heart, staying positive, courage, wisdom and a sense of humour are what matter in life.

Left to right, top to bottom:

Nelson Mandela
HH the Dalai Lama
Marianne Williamson
Sir Ranulph Fiennes
Bear Grylls
Sir David Attenborough
Anita Roddick
Stephen Hawking
Richard Branson
Bob Geldof
Al Gore
Jane Goodall

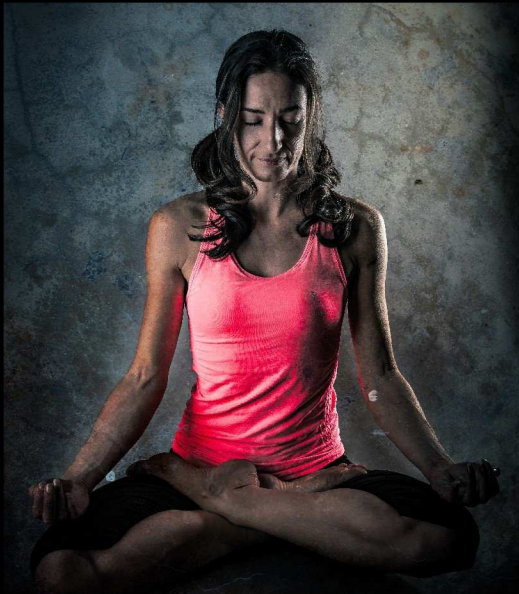
As we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give others permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.

Marianne Williamson



When I'm not leading trips, I teach Yoga and lead retreats to beautiful sacred parts of the world. Each trip is about enhancing your wellbeing through yoga, breathing exercises and meditation, whilst having a life enhancing adventure visiting magical parts of the world and their cultures, and giving back through donating solar powered lanterns to people and areas that are off the grid, literally leaving luminous trails.

For more information visit: www.luminoustrails.com



Left- Lotus pose. Opposite page: Left to right, top to bottom:

Machu Picchu- Dancer's pose
Angkor Wat- Headstand
California- Warrior I
Hawaii- Crow pose
Cambodia- Warrior III
Spain- Half lotus
Tulum- Lotus in shoulderstand
Ibiza- Warrior II
Mexico- Triangle pose
Ibiza- Ashtavakrasana
Peru- Balancing the cat
Assisi, Italy- Flying pigeon

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