

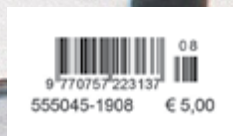
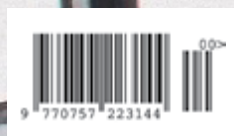
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EDITOR'S LETTER A HUMAN TRAVELLER



According to an ancient tradition, it is customary to welcome and receive a traveller. Until very recently it was the order of the day, particularly, in Europe. Especially it related to peregrines who had been perceived as attractive aliens.

Since then everything has changed dramatically. A peregrine is no more perceived as a guest – Europeans perceive them as “migrants”. A guest is unique, special, individual. Oppositely, a “migrant” seems to be just one of a crowd, as this term initially includes unlovely massive involvement. Massive involvement and falsehood.

The other day I had read Le Figaro with the article focused on Georgian migrants literally overwhelming the French Office for Immigration and Integration with their asylum applications for granting them refugee status, which number has reached ten thou-

sand files year-to-date! This amount is 80% higher year-over-year. Just think that France and Georgia maintain the visa-free regime, so Georgian citizens have no need to apply for asylum. They know and understand it. However, they expect detailed processing by the French government, whom it will take a number of months to consider all those applications – with the remark that they will not be expelled from France until the case is completed with all the inevitable prevarication. It is a minor and innocent example of excessive use of transparency, which demonstrates very well that European humanism is perceived by many people as prelapsarian naivety which may be stepped on.

Open-minded natives of Western Europe do not like it. They understand the situation well and start bothering. The issue does not relate much to race, religious or cultural origin of aliens. It is more about their bald assuredness and a mass nature of the phenomenon.

Indeed, it is unfortunate that the inspiring term “traveller” had suddenly got such unpleasant features.

Victor Loupan

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HIGHLIGHTS FOR TRAVEL

*Mass tourism is linked to travelling as little
as fast food is linked to French cuisine*

VICTOR LOUPAN,
Head of the Editorial Board



Alexandra David-Néel, a feminism icon

Like many boys in my generation, I dreamed of travelling, imagined farness, memorized the geographic atlas of the world, remembered all country names, their capitals and major rivers by heart, and was able to locate them properly on the continents. I could spin the global map for hours diving into my dreams.

This passion most probably started with reading adventure books at my early age. We had collected editions by Mayne Reid, Fenimore Cooper, Jack London, Jules Verne, Gulliver's Travels by Jonathan Swift, Treasure Island by Robert Stevenson at home. As a child I read them cover to cover, non-stop, tirelessly.

When I grew up, I moved forward to practice. Being a foreign correspondent and a special correspondent for a leading mass medium, I have beaten a half of the world so fast that I might miss home six of every twelve months during fifteen years. Such travels included everything: bloody wars, fifty-degree frost, hikes in the Himalayas, 15-hour flights, creepy overnight stops in jungle, malarial fever and throes.

Now, after leaving all this miles behind, I can only feel metaphysics of travelling. What is its more precious definition? It is like an idea of travelling which is wider than a real trip. Any particular trip consists of very common things: buying a ticket, packing luggage, taking a transport, arriving at some destination, spending some time, returning home and living further life. We keep some pictures and video pieces which quality is not perfect, so we never watch them again to avoid degradation and everydayness of our memory lane. We prefer keeping our souvenirs virtual.

Usually many people think that travelling means leaving for a vacation, even to a long distance but with everything being organized, starched, washed, prepared. However mass tourism is linked to travelling as little as fast food is linked to French cuisine.

True travel contains something delicate, and therefore metaphysical. Travelling has deep connections with

experiencing travails, lack of sleep, fatigue, malnutrition, various diseases. It is also interesting that all this taken together facilitates show of certain exaltation and strange satisfaction, almost pleasure. A traveller makes himself/herself liable to challenges and dangers not aiming at any external achievement. He or she often strives to know thyself. Even extreme physical efforts serve revelation of inner secrets and a mental core.

At a mature age I came back to reading and started publishing books written by travellers. Adventures in Russia and the Caucasus by Alexandre Dumas is an amazing book. This mostly literary work is not exceptional in all parts, but it is definitely interesting.

A decade ago I managed to publish a wonderful (from literary point of view) book written by a young French author who decided to walk from Vladivostok to Brest, France. Literally walk from the Pacific Ocean to the Atlantic Ocean. Three thousand euros received in advance from a publisher were stolen while he was sleeping in a train heading Blagoveshchensk. So then he had to walk out of cash. Folk met by him on his way shared meals and drinks with him for free, gave him a bed in their houses, cattle sheds, or barns. With this, he almost could not speak Russian. At night he resisted against bears, he met wolves in the hills. Once he had to stay wet in the moor during the night to save himself from the wolves surrounding him. Local drunks heavily damaged him in a regional center, so he had to spend around two weeks in the hospital. He often blubbered when speaking with me by telephone. To cut it short, it took him sever-

al months to almost reach the Ural Mountains. Then he gave up.

He had written a wonderful book. But when he returned to France, he got divorced his beautiful and talented wife and was sent to a mental institution. Since then he has been spending there most of the time. He has cracked. But he might be cracked earlier with me failing to note this.

Alexandra David-Néel, a Parisienne, who died in 1969 at her 100, became famous due to her arrival in Lhasa City, a capital of Tibet, in 1924



with her female personality being hidden. She wrote, "I have reached Lhasa being dried as a skeleton. I spent two months wandering along castles and monastery terraces, and no one could guess that a Western woman saw hidden mysteries of this forbidden land for the first time in the history of our planet". When she left for Asia in 1911 expecting only eighteen months of travel, husbanded Alexandra had spent there fourteen years in total roving India, China, Tibet, and Japan.

When Alexandra David-Néel became a famous writer and a feminism

icon, she set down in a small town of Digne in the south of France, where locals having no suggestion or knowledge about her life used to deride at her calling her an eccentric woman and a dreamer. They had been surprised a lot when Dalai Lama came to visit the town after her death to honour her memory.

But what does the word "travel" mean?

Emil Zola wrote, "Nothing develops intelligence like travel". But Zola was a positivist and a rationalist. Laozi, the

greatest Chinese wise man, told: "A good traveler has no fixed plans and is not intent on arriving". However, my favourite citation on travel belongs to a genius and paradoxical Englishman, G.K. Chesterton: "The traveler sees what he sees; the tourist sees what he has come to see".

At the end, I cannot miss to cite Aldous Huxley: "To travel is to discover that everyone is wrong about other countries". This statement made by the great intellectual and writer is especially relevant in the context of the existing attitude of the West toward Russia and its reality.

DISSENTING OPINION

“SOMETHING IS WRONG IN THE STATE OF DENMARK...”

When reading some stories in British newspapers, Shakespeare's words are the first thought that crosses my mind

VYACHESLAV KATAMIDZE,
writer and historian

As we know, the words cited as a headline had been told in Shakespeare's tragedy by Marcellus who anxiously observed appearance of the Shadow King and its meeting with Hamlet. This formulation is usually used to describe an unfavourable state of business or a situation getting worse in the course of time. But actually the Russian translation above is a light version of the English original. It would be better to keep closer to the original as modern translators of great Shakespeare do: “Something is rotten in the state of Denmark”.

When reading some stories in British newspapers, these words sometimes become the first thought that crosses my mind. The first week of July was marked not only by the prevailing liberal sympathies in a form of pride march (which was welcomed from the London sky by aerial stunt artists of the Royal Air Force), but also by a row of bloody circumstances which gave rise to agitation among British society. Criminals brought knives and even machetes into action in different city areas cutting dozens of people. A month before that, after a bar brawl, three criminals attacked strangers near Borough Market, killing eight and traumatizing other forty-eight people. The gangsters were killed by the police.

The Cabinet is pleading us to keep silence. They say, “crimes have decreased in number”, even though according to the statistics, the resulting number of victims has not been reduced signifi-

cantly. It is generally known, that the police have been more rarely retaining drug dealers distributing marijuana; however, observers came to a disappointing conclusion of that a growing number of the British society members support the idea of “relatively low impact of marijuana”, which in the end may lead to its consumption by both officials and ordinary citizens at the same levels as tobacco or alcohol.

Meanwhile, regardless of deviation of the number of arrested drug dealers, dangerous consumption of marijuana increases not only in fumes, but also in other terrible forms being much more critical for young people. Several London areas feature firms offering pies and sweets containing tetrahydrocannabinol that is the principal psychoactive substance of marijuana being responsible for significant increase in the risk of mental diseases in youth, including schizophrenia among others. It should be noted, that a majority of sellers of marijuana pies pays insufficient attention to governmental restrictions, with some of them being absolutely sure of their impunity and registering their firms officially with the British Companies House.

The registrars are generally aware of existence of such companies, so they contact law enforcement bodies immediately upon receipt of the information on ownership of any given firm held by drug dealers or criminals. But commonly young clients of such firms producing marijuana-contained pies and sweets avoid distribution of

such information among their parents and certainly the police.

The fact that consumption of marijuana has reached dire levels over the recent years and definitely pushes young people to switch gradually to hard drugs defeating both body and soul, is well known to health professionals. For example, they attempt to admonish pregnant women, remonstrate with them about giving up on drugs, explain that consumption of marijuana during pregnancy often ends up with preterm delivery. However, according to doctors, only around twenty percent of pregnant women feel up to back out of their deadly addiction.

Nevertheless, young people see counter examples. In early June British mass media published confessions by some British politicians, mainly conservative personalities, of their consumption of various drugs. Boris Johnson acknowledged that he inhaled cocaine and took marijuana at the University. Jeremy Hunt also revealed he consumed cannabis. Rory Stewart smoked opium. Michael Gove preferred cocaine. After reading that, thousands of young people might think of trying drugs, as long as the country leaders, graduates of reputable schools and Sloanes are not to be above...

Other fronts in the battle against organized crime are also not in their best. It recently came to light that arms and armaments are being delivered secretly to Western Europe, including the

United Kingdom: they are sold to Albanian arms dealers by gunmen from Ukrainian nationalist formations and even Ukrainian soldiers. Arms arrive from Arab countries too, for example, from Yemen. They are transported on various ships; there is information saying that some civilian vessels arriving from Mediterranean region and the Arabian Gulf have special compartments finished with unconventional reflective fabric and welded up before departure of the ship. Dealers use them to transport arms and drugs.

Obviously, it never improves crime rates in the country, because arms smuggled into the country first of all reach ethnic gang members.

Christopher B., a former policeman, back in the day having confronted ethnic gangs, has told us that gangs consisting of Somalian, Nigerian and Iraqi emigrants hold significant inventory of fire pieces and bring it into action in many engagements between different gangs. In his opinion, the “below ground surface” crime situation is much worse than Scotland Yard officers even may imagine.

There was also a row of scandals in such a “peaceful” industry as agriculture. It emerged recently that Polish, Albanian and Romanian criminal gangs recruiting seasonal workers to UK, naturally turned to slave-owning syndicates. They attract young men and women in their countries promising high salaries for harvesters, however upon arrival such migrants face poor housing conditions, share their room with a dozen of same luckless people, with the better half of earnings being deducted.

It turns out that fruits and vegetables bought by us in London supermarkets are delivered as a result of a forced labour invigilated by criminals.

Instead, all these crimes are nothing when compared to the crimes to be fittingly called “offenses against the state”. Among the newest of them, the most serious ones include the incident with top secret materials obtained from the chemical laboratory in Porton Down, a warfare base of Wiltshire. Thousands sheets of Porton Down secret archives had been wasted to trash cans located at a parking in North London; they covered a period between the early 1980s and the late 2017. In addition, the documents contained information on munitions being accessible to base guards, the access code for the computer system (in the English language) and one guard's home address.

Of course, such an incident cannot be qualified as an omission or negligence. The British Ministry of Defence immediately initiated investigation of the circumstances. However, the questions remained undetermined. They include the following: How this huge amount of secret documents had appeared in London which is 150 kilometers far from Porton Down? If someone was able to bring the documents weighting hundreds of

kilograms in total out of the laboratory, what else could they bring uninterruptedly from this base which area is as much as thirty square kilometers? Might the information contained in the documents delivered to London be used by terrorists for their own purposes? By the way, the base maintains such mortal substances as Ebola bacillus and Sarin nerve gas.

In the afterlight we more and more challenge the fact that the Skripals had been poisoned as a result of an assassination attempt organized by the Russian security services. Obviously, the theft of thousands sheets of secret documents from Porton Down could not be perpetrated by Bashirov and Petrov. The idea suggests itself: if we deal with a negligence resulting in inexcusable security leakage, then we can presume a chemical spill or, moreover, a plot aimed at facilitation of both leakages. In any case, this incident constitutes an offense against the state and, correspondingly, the British people.

We would hope that the investigation initiated by the British Ministry of Defence will be completed successfully, and British citizens will receive comprehensive data regarding the crime committed in Porton Down.

But still, “something is wrong”...



CULTURE

WHERE RUSSIAN WRITERS LOVED TO SPEND THEIR HOLIDAYS

ALEXANDRA GUZEVA

Writers loved to spend time in their country estates but many also chose to travel, to the south of Russia and even abroad.

Crimea

The dry Crimean climate, the abundance of conifers and, of course, the sea air is a combination that many find most agreeable. Even before the Bolsheviks turned Crimea into a health resort for the whole of the Soviet Union, many writers came here to improve their health and to rest. That is why traces of their presence can be found in virtually every town.

Bakhchysarai was made famous by Alexander Pushkin, who traveled to Crimea and received treatment here during his southern exile.

Anton Chekhov spent his final years at his “white dacha” in Yalta: he suffered from tuberculosis and Moscow climate did not agree with him.

Leo Tolstoy adored Crimea. He first got to know the place when he fought in the Crimean War (and wrote his famous Sevastopol Sketches), and he later came here to travel. In 1901–1902, he spent whole nine months here with his family. Incidentally, here he met Chekhov and Gorky.

In Koktebel, there is the house of the famous Russian poet Maximilian Voloshin, where many poets of the Silver Age visited: Osip Mandelstam, Nikolay Gumilyov, Marina Tsveyeva.

Mikhail Bulgakov shared his impressions of a trip to Crimea in an essay Journey to Crimea: he did not particularly enjoy Yalta, which, according to him, had



Anton Chekhov (L) and Leo Tolstoy in Gaspra, Crimea. 1901

become a very touristy place, where one had to ‘bargain’ all the time.

The Caucasus

Another place that attracted many writers and poets were the mineral springs of the Caucasus mountains. In Pyatigorsk, Lermontov drank mineral waters to improve his health and captured the life of aristocrats holidaying there in his novel A Hero of Our Time. The Caucasus turned out a fateful place for the poet: he was killed in a duel here.

Prior to Crimea, Pushkin spent two months in the Caucasus, taking hot sulfur baths in Kislovodsk and Yessentuki and writing the poem The Prisoner of the Caucasus. Later, he traveled to Georgia and Armenia, where he wrote A Journey to Arzrum.

Leo Tolstoy wrote his own The Prisoner of the Caucasus, a novella based on his experience of fighting in the Caucasus as a young man. He was interested in highlanders’ stories in his later years too: he traveled to Tiflis (present-day Tbilisi) and spent many years working on the novel Hadji Murat.

Poet Sergei Yesenin too traveled around Georgia and Azerbaijan: there are images of the Orient and Persian motifs present in many of his poems. Mayakovsky called Georgia a paradise. He loved Tiflis, same as Pasternak, who was friends with many Georgian poets and translated a lot of their works.

Italy

It was Gogol who gave birth to the tradition whereby the best works about the

Russian people and Russia were written abroad. He had gone traveling, to take a break from work and writing, and that was when he wrote his main book, Dead Souls. His beloved Rome became a second home to him.

After his second marriage, Dostoevsky went traveling to Europe (not on a honeymoon trip, but to hide from creditors). He lived in Switzerland, then moved to Italy. It was here that he wrote most of the novel The Idiot. The legend has it that it was in Florence that he came up with his famous phrase: “Beauty will save the world.”

Gorky went to Italy to be treated for tuberculosis, and ended up spending 15 years there, on and off. For a long time, his home was a villa on Capri, where many famous Russians, including Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin, came to visit. Later, the writer returned to Russia and left again, spending a long time at the villas and sanatoriums in Sorrento.

Brotsky loved Venice and – after he had emigrated to the USA – visited there every winter. Its winter weather and misty chill must have reminded him of his native Petersburg. He loved the water of its canals and loved wandering alone around the city, which for once was empty of tourists. Venice became the subject of his famous essay Embankment of Incurables.



Russian Nobel Prize for Literature in 1987, Joseph Brodsky photographed in Venice in 1989



Vladimir Mayakovsky in New York. 1925

Germany

Several years after his release from hard labor, Dostoevsky went to German resorts to improve his health. It was there that he became addicted to gambling. He played and lost a lot in Baden-Baden,

Wiesbaden and Bad Homburg, an experience that he would later reflect in his novel The Gambler.

In fact, Baden-Baden was quite a ‘Russian’ resort altogether. Ivan Turgenev loved it here and wrote some of his major works here: most of A Sportsman’s Sketches as well as novels about Russian aristocrats in Europe, Asya, Smoke, Virgin Soil.

Even the great moralizer Leo Tolstoy played the roulette here, when he was young. Although he did reproach himself for it later.

The USA

This did not always qualify as a holiday, but in the 20th century Russian writers began to travel around the United States too. Yesenin followed

his dancer wife on a tour there and, it must be said, was very bored and rather jealous of her success, because back there he was not known to anyone.

Mayakovsky traveled around several states giving performances and even had a passionate love affair with an American, Elli Jones, who later had a daughter by him.

Gorky came at the invitation of local socialists and immediately caused controversy: puritanical Americans found out that he and his companion Maria Andreyeva were not married and threw them out of the hotel in disgrace. Furthermore, he was not accepted in any other hotel either. Gorky hated New York City, comparing it to “the yellow devil”, an iron monster that devours people. And he condemned its inhabitants’ obsession with money.

One of the most famous literary testimonies about traveling around the United States was left by Ilf and Petrov. In their Little Golden America, the duo described their road trip from the east to the west coast.

rbth.com

WHAT THE SOVIET UNION WAS REALLY LIKE

By MARCEL THEROUX

In the summer of 1990, I was travelling through the Soviet Union collecting information intended for a guidebook. Though no-one realised it at the time, the days of the USSR were numbered and the guidebook never found its way into print. The current Russian president, Vladimir Putin, has declared his deep regret at the break-up of the Soviet Union. I don't feel the same way; but here, in no particular order, are things that in some way capture the strangeness of that vanished place and time.

Papirosy

The arrivals lounges of Soviet airports had a distinct smell: the strong cardboard tipped cigarettes, papirosy, that were smoked everywhere. It turned out that no-one actually liked them: they were abandoned wholesale as soon as western cigarettes became available.

The black market

The failure of the command economy meant that consumer goods from the West were coveted by many Russians. Visitors from Finland to St Petersburg used to cover the cost of a weekend-long drinking binge by selling a pair of jeans. I sold a pair of Bo Jackson crosstrainers to a man who really wanted the jacket I was wearing from a US clothing catalogue and which he had spotted from about 100 yards. "L L Bean!" was his memorable opening salutation. "I am cracked for L L Bean!"

Soviet cars

Ah, for the Lada, the Zil, the Volga! These clunky machines were hard to buy and inefficient, but their boxy shapes evoke the Soviet Union and still inspire vintage car enthusiasts in Russia.

Beryozki

Meaning, "little birch tree", a Beryozka was a special shop, open only to foreigners and to Soviet citizens who

aerials made out of forks, a bath-plug made out of a boot heel, a road sign recycled as a shovel.

Myopic fellow travellers

Right up to the very collapse of the USSR, you would still encounter monocular foreign defenders of the Soviet system, making their way around what they still believed, against all the evidence of their senses, to be a worker's paradise.



had hard currency to spend. While ordinary shops were bare of goods, the Beryozki were a weird cornucopia of caviar, Toblerone and VHS tapes.

Homemade solutions

The lack of consumer products inspired extraordinary resourcefulness among Soviet citizens: television

Propaganda posters

Part of the compelling aesthetic of the USSR was the absence of consumer advertising. Instead, huge posters celebrated the towering intellects of Marx, Engels, and Lenin; the victories of the Red Army; and the achievements of whichever five-year plan we were supposed to be in.

Badges

For some mystifying reason, there was a whole cult of badge sharing and swapping in the Soviet Union. There was a certain predictability about it. Whatever you gave someone – a Ramones badge or a Scottish flag or something you picked up from the Happy Eater – in return, you would almost certainly get Lenin.

Georgian food

Food in the former Soviet Union today is delicious and unrecognisable from the mystery meat cutlets and buckwheat that visitors used to be served. But one bright spot in the old days were the Georgian restaurants where wine, aubergine, fried chicken and cheese pasties were like a dream of plenty.

Uniforms

The ubiquity of military uniforms was a constant reminder that you were in the hostile territory of a heavily armed country that regarded you as the decadent bourgeois excrescence of a corrupt and doomed economic system.

Samizdat

Meaning "self-published", this was the term for painstakingly copied works of dissident literature that were circulated among the heartwarming large circle of people who cared about books. The Soviet Union's great respect for writers was expressed paradoxically in the efforts it took to crush them.

Young pioneers

With their white shirts and little red kerchiefs, the Young Pioneers were the USSR's youth movement. It was here that young citizens got their first taste of Soviet ideology and were introduced to exemplary children like Pavlik Morozov – murdered by his own family because he informed on them to the secret police.

Party members

The elite of the Soviet Union were all members of the Communist Party. Driving the best Soviet cars, holidaying in the most desirable Black Sea

resorts, they enjoyed privileges that seem modest beside those of today's Russian elite.

Seat belts

"Ne nado," would be the first thing a taxi driver said to you when you took your seat and reached for the seat belt. "You don't need it." It was considered a kind of derogatory statement about your driver's competence to wear one. This attitude has, happily, vanished.

Lectures on the iniquities of capitalism

Now and again you might encounter a party member (see above)

who felt the need to press upon you the superiority of the Soviet way of life. Unemployment, racism, apartheid, the plight of the coal miners were all used to predict the imminent collapse of capitalism and triumph of Marxism. You still hear similar speeches, but not in the former Soviet Union.

Houses of culture

There was a gallant and idealistic desire that everyone in the former Soviet Union should be able to share the pleasures of high culture. Even tiny provincial towns had a subsidized Dom Kultury to spread improving culture among the citizenry and – presumably – discourage drinking.

Night trains

The impenetrability of Soviet life was temporarily suspended on long railway journeys. Suddenly, you had access to private life of ordinary Soviet people, snoring, drinking tea, padding up and down train corridors and occasionally lecturing you on the superiority of their country.



TIPS

PICTURE PERFECT: TRAVEL PHOTOGRAPHY TIPS FROM PHOTOJOURNALIST AMI VITALE

OLIVIA BURCHEA

August 19 is observed as World Photography Day. Photography is not just about the camera or the beautiful images we create, it's about telling powerful stories. The camera is a tool for creating awareness and understanding across cultures, communities and countries – a tool to make sense of our shared commonalities. When we travel we want to capture everything on camera that we see and experience, yet often we come back home with hundreds of images that we don't feel like looking at again.

We've sat down with National Geographic photographer Ami Vitale and asked her for some travel photography tips that will guide you to take photos that tell the story of a place and its people.

Ami has spent the past 18 years travelling from country to country, living in remote places. About her mission as a photographer, Ami said: "My job is to become invisible and get close to people and wildlife, so I can bring their stories to life. It's no different being in my home state of Montana [US] than it is being in a country ten thousand miles away. For me, the intimate moments always matter the most. Photography has been my passport to meeting people, learning and experiencing new cultures." If you want to read more about Ami's work, have a look at our interview with her.

We believe that travel opens our minds and the door to a world where our differences are a source of inspiration and development, not intolerance and preju-

dice. Our purpose is to give courage and encourage each one of us to stay curious and be open-minded so we can all enjoy a better, more diversified world.

Go deep

Travel photography is not solely about an adventure. Although you might witness extraordinary things, it's not simply about jetting off to exotic places. The magic really begins when you stay in a place and give yourself enough time to gain insight and understanding. It requires tremendous persistence and patience. One way to get beyond surface images is to plan a trip to one location and, if you can, go back several times. Ami shared an anecdote about how she gained access and went deeper into a story in India.

"I spent a couple of days with Subita and her family. At no time were we alone; around us, hundreds of digital cameras were firing away. Before dawn broke, as we huddled around a fire, at least a half-dozen people were looking at her only through their lens. The only time any of them acknowledged me was to ask me a technical question, like what ISO would work best in the stingy light.

Later, Subita would tell me how dehumanizing the impact of eager tourists and their cameras were on her. No one even said hello to her. Those who surrounded her were after only one thing – what they considered a great shot. If some of the people who surrounded Subita had taken the time to spend even a few hours with her, learning a bit more about her life, they would have had a story and not just an image."

Be authentic and sensitive

The easiest way to take compelling and real photographs of people is by being authentic. Taking candid images of people is not a trick, it's a skill you can develop. What it requires is respect for the subject and focus on building a relationship in the time you have together. Successful pictures of people almost never happen from a distance. So, put



away the telephoto lens and become part of the moment.

Talk to people – whether it's simply a nod of acknowledgement, a greeting, an explanation of what you're doing or a long conversation – connect with the people you are photographing. Remember, we have more in common with each other than you might think. Don't look at people as different or exotic, rather, focus on the things that unite and bind us.

Know your equipment

If you exude apprehension or tension, people pick up on it and cannot

relax with the added element of a camera. Know your equipment so that you can focus on relating to your subjects. It doesn't matter if it's your phone camera or a DSLR, your confidence in yourself will instil confidence in them. The key to success is simplicity. So think carefully about bringing new gear on a trip; it might be best to test it at home and bring backups on the real trip. It's okay to use the latest and greatest technology, but know how to use it before you start your trip.

"I've been using Nikon equipment for many years. I test my cameras and lenses thoroughly, as soon as I get them. I want to be so comfortable with them that I

could operate the gear in the dark. This image of the wrestlers had beautiful but extremely tricky lighting. I had to adjust my settings quickly to capture this shot successfully before the light was gone."

Gaining access

Whether you're in a slum or a city, there's always a hierarchy. Take the time to explain why you're there and get the blessings of the leaders or elders in any community, both men and women. It will keep you safer than wandering around aimlessly and you'll be amazed at just how quickly the news of your project spreads in a community.

"Getting close and intimate with people requires time and understanding. Building relationships is the most important aspect of what photographers do. This is an image of a mother being consoled by her family at her daughter's funeral in Kashmir, India. I spent four years documenting this culture, and because I took time and built relationships, I was invited into people's lives and was able to reveal the sometimes difficult, yet always intimate moments."

Give back

Your subjects are giving of themselves, so don't abuse the gift of sharing their lives and don't treat them like models. Cherish the moment and treat them well. Whether you spend time talking to people or send back some prints, it's important to make photography not just about taking images but giving back, too. "If there is only one thing you take away from this, it's the understanding that all of us are not only photographers, but we are storytellers. There is a beautiful, universal truth everywhere and, if you peek under the veil, you'll find a wondrous commonality between us. I hope that in your travels, you use your camera not just as an extension of your eye but also as an extension of your heart."

PEOPLE

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF 7 MEN AND WOMEN WHO INSPIRE COURAGEOUS TRAVEL

FANNY OLHATS

The world can seem vast and uncertain, yet most of us dream of exploring the great unknown. When is the last time you dared to explore uncharted territories? Join the ranks of some of the most courageous pioneers in travel listed below. Though some of these people below may have been the first to reach such heights or such distances, travelling is not about being the best – we hope this list of some of our favourite travellers will inspire you, too, to embark on great travels with a purpose.

Junko Tabei

From a small town in Fukushima, Japan to the sky-scraping peaks of Mount Everest, Junko Tabei proved that she was destined to big accomplishments. From an early age, Tabei showed interest in surpassing herself and her classmates on school outings and didn't stop there. At 28, she formed a women's only climbing club and a year later joined an all-women expedition to ascend Annapurna III in Nepal.

Five years later, the black and white peaks of Mount Everest greeted her but not without a struggle. Due to terrible weather and an avalanche, Tabei almost never made it, having to tend to a hip injury from being trapped in the snow. She persevered, and seven days after the accident, after a painstaking six-day hike via the South-Ridge route, she became the first woman to stand on the summit of Mount Everest.

The unstoppable Tabei conquered the Seven Summits, the seven highest mountain peaks in the world, including the soaring 5,895-metre high Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, and the Carstensz Pyramid, Oceania's highest mountain.

Michael Palin

"Once the travel bug bites there is no known antidote, and I know that



I shall be happily infected until the end of my life." Monty Python actor Michael Palin has more than just a few jokes up his sleeve and a few thousand kilometres under his belt. While continuing his acting career, Palin also focused on fulfilling one of his greater passions: travelling.

Writing and starring in his own travel documentaries, he attempted to circumnavigate the world in 80 days, inspired by the fictional character in Jules Verne's similarly titled novel. Starting and ending in London, his misadventures brought him through the Arabian Desert and aboard the Indian Railways. Another novelist to inspire his travels was Hemingway, as Palin followed his footsteps, discovering the likes of Michigan where Hemingway liked to fish or Cuba, the author's former home.

He mentioned in an interview that his favourite place in the world may be Pongo de Mainique in Peru, but as much as faraway lands beckon to Palin, his love for (re) discovering his own country resonates strongly in his work. An episode of his series Great Railway Journeys is dedicated to train travel from Londonderry to Kerry, his ancestral homeland. Wherever you choose to go to follow in his footsteps, the sky is the limit – an asteroid honouring his accomplishments in entertainment floats around space

under the name 9621 Michaelpalin.

Karen Blixen

Sometimes life gives you lemons, other times it gives you a coffee bean. Karen Blixen, born in Denmark in 1885, soon found her life in Scandinavia traded for the African sunshine in Kenya. Her husband and she embarked on an adventure in coffee cultivation founding the Karen Coffee Company. While her husband was often off on safaris, she worked hard on the farm and passed the time perfecting her English and writing about her experiences. Of this challenge emerged stories that would bring Blixen to international fame as an author.

Upon return to Denmark, she shared her first project, the Seven Gothic Tales (1934) – these stories of a poet living in a Danish town, life in the German region of Holstein, an impossible love story in Paris reflect her love for travel. Her most recognised work



would be Out of Africa, a non-fiction book about her life in Africa. The book published in 1937, later adapted into an Oscar-winning film in 1985, depicts the hardships of working on the farm, the failures that followed, and life as a white settler in 20th-century Kenya.

The nostalgic account was greeted with criticism for being so blunt in describing interactions with locals, to the point of being racist. Yet her memoir nevertheless is a glimpse into the perspective of a young woman derooted from her comfort zone, interacting with communities she knew little about, and bringing back her experiences for the rest of the world to know.

Sir David Attenborough

If you watch his documentaries with your eyes closed, you'll recognise his British-accented voice, but don't shut them for too long, or you'll miss some of television's best images of our planet Earth. Sir David Attenborough is a naturalist and broadcaster for BBC. In series such as Planet Earth, he scours deserts and mountains, crossing the Earth from pole to pole. Have you seen the Giant salamander, the largest amphibian in Japan? Have you mingled with the gorillas at Diane Fossey's sanctuary in Rwanda? Attenborough has, and at 90 years old, there isn't



much he hasn't already crossed off of his bucket list. In a recent interview, he mentions one place he has yet to explore – the middle of the Gobi Desert.

Besides being knighted Sir David Attenborough in 1985, Attenborough counts among his accomplishments the production of series such as Life on Earth, Life in the Freezer (about the cycle of life in Antarctica), and The Blue Planet (about life in the water). In honour of his efforts as a wildlife expert, several species of plants, arthropods, and vertebrates carry his name – look out for the carnivorous Attenborough's pitcher plant! From London to the Galapagos Islands, Mozambique, and the Bahamas, he can almost say he's seen it all.

Attenborough has also been one to encourage environmental sustainability and awareness: "our planet is still full of wonders. As we explore them, so we gain not only understanding but power. It's not just the future of the whale that today lies in our hands: it's the survival of the natural world in all parts of the living planet. We can now destroy or we can cherish. The choice is ours." So, travel well and travel smart, admiring your surroundings and respecting them as you go.

Amma

Travelling sometimes doesn't have to be the discovery of a city or

country, but can be a spiritual journey with the people we meet. India-born Mata Amritanandamayi "Amma" travels the world to share love and physically embraces people of all religious and cultural backgrounds.

Recognised as a self-realised spiritual leader, called Amma (meaning "mother") by her devotees, she has been on worldwide tours offering 10-hour hugging sessions at times and bringing compassion to over 30 million strangers over the years. Preaching not just love, but also teaching others to help and serve each other, Amma dedicates her time to global charities, fighting hunger, providing health care and empowering women through the funding of charitable organisations in more than 40 countries around the world.

Her ashram in Kerala, India, also known as "God's own country", is where you can find her while she's not hugging the world. Devotees settle in at the village of Parayakadavu, participate in meditation, eat the Prasad lunches (a religious meal offering) and explore the peaceful Kerala backwaters of one of the most beautiful regions in India.

Matthew Henson

The Arctic had no idea what was going to hit them when Maryland-born Matthew Henson set out to explore the icy frontier. As a skipper, trained while working aboard a ship, he had already fuelled his desire for discovery,



son the well-deserved praise for being the first African American to reach the North Pole. It wasn't until 1937 that his remarkable journey was acknowledged as he was accepted into the Explorers Club in New York, and in 1944 he was awarded a Congressional Medal. You may want to follow in his footsteps, confronting bone-chilling winds with a pack of snow dogs, or you can recount his trials and triumphs in his 1947 biography, Dark Companion.

Karl Bushby

travelling to Asia, Africa, and Europe. A chance encounter with explorer Robert Edwin Peary led to a two-decade long expedition to the North Pole from 1891 to 1909.

Embracing local Eskimo culture in Greenland, learning the natives' language and survival skills, and charting the ice-cap were all in a few years' work. Between returns to Nicaragua, where he and his wife at the time lived, Henson continued to push further on several separate expeditions having to abandon more than once due to the risk of starvation, leaving the North Pole always just out of reach. The April of 1909, Peary and Henson, accompanied by their team of Eskimos and dogs, finally reached their destination and planted proudly the American flag.

Unfortunately, the current political scape in North America in the early 20th century didn't bring Hen-

To walk the world is no simple feat (no pun intended), yet that is the mission Karl Bushby, ex-paratrooper for the British Army, set for himself in 1998. However, his trek, known as the Goliath Expedition, is as challenging as it sounds. Although he set out to accomplish a 58,000-kilometre trek in 8 years, from Punta Arenas, Chile to his home in England, he is still out walking today.

After walking through South, Central, and North America, Bushby tried to cross the Bering Strait, from Alaska to Russia, on foot but was detained by border control for not using a correct port-of-entry. The following years became an arm-wrestle with the Russian government to obtain the correct visas and appeal bans to continue his walk.

Bushby progressed by a few thousand kilometres almost every year – his treks punctuated with trips away to Alaska and Mexico to respect visa restrictions and an unfortunate ban from visiting Russia due to lack of correct paperwork. In an attempt to get the ban revoked, Bushby set on a 4,800-kilometre protest walk from Los Angeles to the Russian Embassy in Washington. The ban was revoked after two years, and Bushby continued his trek, having to accept the terms of a 90-days visa each time he returns to Russia.

In September 2016, Bushby rejoined the Kolyma Highway, aka the Road of Bones (in reference to the skeletons of the deceased construction workers used in the foundation), a paved road that lead him out of Russia. As of March 2017, he was heading west through Mongolia, progressing on his way back home to England. He regularly posts images on his social media.



TOP 10 FOODS TO TRY IN THAILAND

AUSTIN BUSH

There are plenty of reasons to visit Thailand, from glorious golden beaches to legendary parties beneath a full moon... and that's before we mention the food.

Thai cuisine is a celebration of the fresh and fragrant. Whatever your reason for visiting, the abundance of delicious flavours will make you want to extend your stay

Don't leave Thailand without tasting...

Phat Thai



Invented in the 1930s by a Chinese-Thai chef, this dish of thin rice noodles stir-fried with egg, tofu and shrimp, and seasoned with fish sauce, sugar, tamarind, vinegar and dried chilli has subsequently reigned as the poster boy for Thai cuisine.

Tom yam

This herb-forward broth is often referred to in English-language menus as 'sour Thai soup'. The shrimp version – tom yam kung – is the most lauded, and justifiably so: the combination of fatty



prawns and a tart/spicy soup result in an unusual but delicious and distinctly Thai amalgam.

Laap



Thailand's northeast in one rustic dish; laap (also known as larb or larp) takes the form of minced meat seasoned with roasted rice powder, lime juice, fish sauce and fresh herbs. Be sure to eat it with sticky rice, short, fat grains of rice that are steamed and eaten by hand.

Khao soi

When in Thailand's north, don't miss this unique, curry-based noodle soup. Typically revolving around chicken or beef, the optional sides of lime, sliced shallots and



crunchy pickled greens provide a pleasing contrast with the rich, spice-laden, coconut milk-based broth and soft, squiggly wheat-and-egg noodles.

Som tam



Although its origins lie in Thailand's rural northeast, this dish of strips of crunchy unripe papaya bruised in a mortar and pestle with tomato, long beans, chilli, lime and fish sauce, has found a foothold in virtually every corner of the country. Couple the dish with a basket of sticky rice for a light yet piquant Thai meal.

Phat kaphrao

This street food staple combines meat flash-fried with holy basil (the eponymous kaphrao) and a generous helping of fresh chilli and garlic. Served over rice and often crowned



Green curry

For Thai food novices, there's probably no better starting point than this intersection of a piquant/herbal spice paste and rich coconut milk. Remember to do as the Thais and couple the curry with a plate of jasmine rice – it's not meant to be eaten on its own as a soup.

Yam

with a fried egg, it's the epitome of the Thai-style one dish meal.

As a side dish or drinking snack, you're bound to encounter this ubiqui-



tous Thai 'salad' that combines meat or seafood with a tart/spicy dressing and fresh herbs. A good introduction to the gen-

re is yam wun sen, slinky glass noodles paired with minced pork and shrimp.

Kai yang



Thai-style grilled chicken owes its fame to the people of the country's northeast, who marinate the bird in a unique mixture of fish sauce, coriander root and garlic. Couple the bird with sticky rice and green papaya salad, and you have one of Thailand's most legendary meals.

Khao phat



For many Thai people, fried rice is comfort food. The variations are endless, and the dish is often the result of improvisation, but a staple at seafood restaurants across the country is the simple but delicious khao phat puu, rice fried with hearty chunks of crab and egg.

THAI FRIED RICE WITH PRAWNS & PEAS

By Jennifer Joyce

Similar to pad Thai but with better-for-you brown rice, this Asian shellfish pot with egg, coriander and peas is filling and fresh

Ingredients

2 tbsp vegetable oil
1 red onion, halved and sliced
2 garlic cloves, sliced
1 red chilli, sliced
250g raw large peeled prawn
300g cooked brown rice
75g frozen pea
1 tbsp dark soy sauce
1 tbsp fish sauce
small bunch coriander, roughly chopped, plus a few leaves to serve
4 large eggs
chilli sauce, to serve (optional- we used sriracha)



Method

Heat 1 tbsp of the oil in a wok, add the onion, garlic and chilli, and cook for 2–3 mins until golden. Add the prawns and cook for 1 min. Tip in the rice and peas, and keep tossing until very hot. Add the soy and fish sauce, then stir through the chopped coriander. Keep warm while you fry the eggs.

Heat the remaining oil in a frying pan and fry the eggs with some seasoning. Divide the fried rice mix between 4 bowls and top each with a fried egg. Serve scattered with coriander, with chilli sauce, if you like.

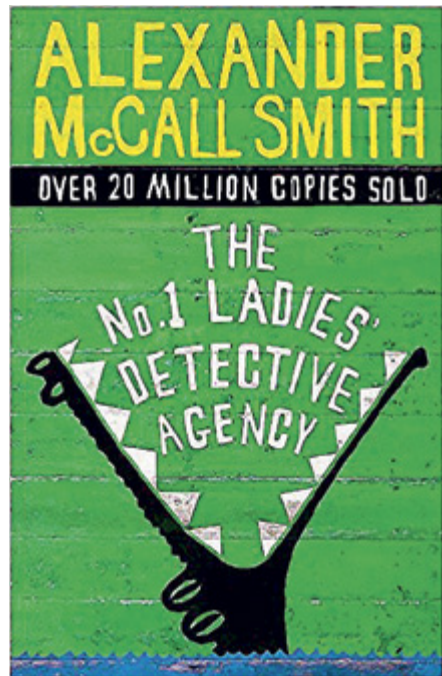
Recipe from Good Food magazine

TOP 10 BEST SUMMER HOLIDAY BOOKS

Whether you're planning a peaceful staycation, an exciting trip abroad or a visit to the seaside, we're sure you'll find the perfect book for your summer holiday in the list below. Featuring gripping thrillers, poignant romances, fun non-fiction and more, see below for the best summer holiday books for adults.

The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency *Alexander McCall Smith*

If you've got a problem and no-one else can help you, pay a visit to Precious Ramotswe, Botswana's only – and finest – female private detective. With warmth, wit and sharp intuition on her side, she's sure to solve the most mysterious cases – including wayward daughters, missing husbands, philandering partners and curious comen-



Discover the colourful Botswanan culture whilst enjoying the heart-warming and gripping story of Precious Ramotswe.

Reading Allowed *Chris Paling*

Chris Paling works in a small-town library in southern England. In this book, he introduces some of the quirky characters who regularly use this invaluable service. They include street-sleepers Brewer, Wolf and Spencer; the ever-cheerful Trish, who's always dressed in pink; and Sons of Anarchy Alan, a young man with Down's Syndrome who loves the popular American drama. Some of their stories are tragic, others amusing, and others genuinely bizarre. This poignant and humorous book celebrates libraries and their important role as one of the few places people from all backgrounds can visit to interact and explore the world of books.

Art Therapy: An Anti-Stress Colouring Book *Richard Merritt*

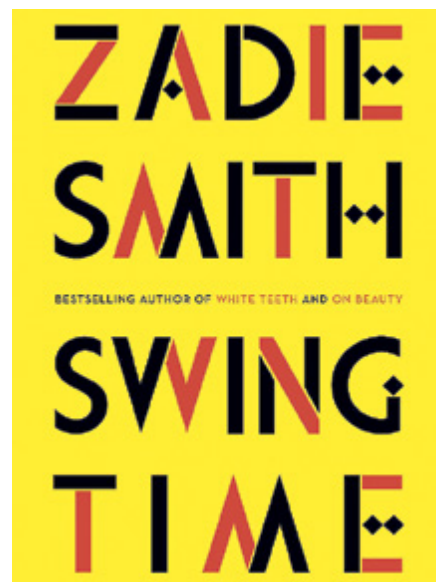
Sit back, put your feet up and unwind with this therapeutic adult colouring book. Bursting with doodling, colouring and drawing fun, you can enjoy all kinds of activities, includ-



ing creating free-flowing lines and swirls and shading in beautiful patterns. Every illustration in this stunning book has been carefully crafted so that even beginners can enjoy creating a wonderful work of art. There are no rules in this art book, making for a truly imaginative, unique and creative experience, perfect for stress relief.

Swing Time *Zadie Smith*

This enthralling novel travels from North West London to West Africa and features two girls who dream of being dancers, but only one has the talent. The other has ideas about rhythm,



time, black bodies and black music. The close and complicated friendship between the girls ends in their early 20s, but is never forgotten.

The Perplexing Theft of the Jewel in the Crown *Vaseem Khan*

For centuries, the Koh-i-Noor diamond has caused nothing but bloodshed. Now, it's part of the British Crown Jewels. Security is of utmost importance when they go on display in Mumbai, but when Inspector Chopra visits the exhibition, the diamond is stolen from under his very nose in a seemingly impossible act of theft. Will he – and his elephant – be able to find the criminal? This quirky, charming and enthralling book will delight fans of cosy crime.

Cathy Bramley Collection *Cathy Bramley*

For something a bit more cheerful, this is the perfect heart-warming collection. It features 3 feel-good reads: Appleby Farm, which follows Freya Moorcroft as she tries to find love and friendship between her farming work; Ivy Lane, in which Tilly Parker looks for a fresh start, fresh air and a fresh attitude; and Conditional Love, in which some serious surprises are in store



for Sophie Stone when a mysterious benefactor leaves her an inheritance. There's just one catch: she must meet the father she's never even seen ...

The Constant Princess *Philippa Gregory*

This sumptuous and engrossing novel follows Katherine of Aragon, the first wife of Henry VIII. Discover the story of the Spanish Infanta, born to ruthless warrior rulers and betrothed to Arthur, Prince of Wales, at the age of four. Find out how she came to be Henry VIII's queen through turbulent events, and how she rose above the dangerous politics of the English court to become a powerful ruler, despite giving birth to only one surviving child: Mary. But Henry VIII is determined to have a son, and as Katherine grows older, he will go to unprecedented lengths to get what he wants ...

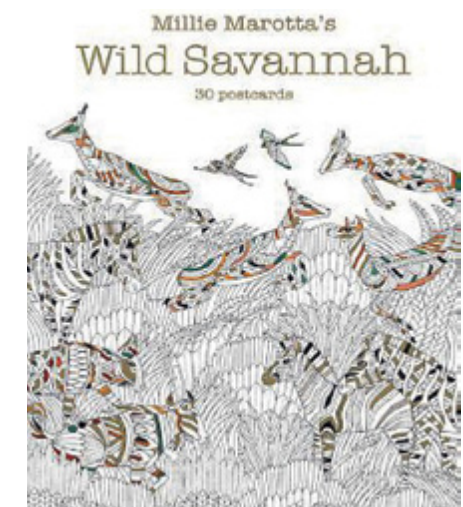
The Sunshine Diet *Shelina Permalloo*

Perfect for summer, MasterChef champion Shelina Permalloo offers an assortment of scrumptious, satisfying yet healthy recipes in this beautiful cookbook. Shelina's nutritious recipes, inspired by her exotic holidays and Mauritian heritage, feature easy-to-follow instructions and a calorie, sugar and fat count for each

portion. Highlights include Steamed Hake with Wasabi, Soy and Ginger, Baked Moroccan Eggs, Make-ahead Banana Bread and an Orange Blossom and Rose Creme Brulee – delicious!

Millie Marotta's Wild Savannah *Millie Marotta*

This beautiful colouring book is inspired by the swaying grasslands of Africa, Asia and Australia. Sit back and relax as you colour in pictures of



crocodiles, kangaroos, ostriches, gazelles and so much more, as well as a number of exotic environments, and be whisked away to exciting locations.

Still Me *Jojo Moyes*

Freshly heartbroken and more than a little lost, Lou Clark heads for New York ready to start afresh as an assistant to a dysfunctional millionaire family. But as she tries to take control of her future, she finds herself being defined by other people's expectations – her eccentric employer, her long-distance boyfriend and the cast of characters she meets in New York. This concluding volume in Jojo Moyes's much loved trilogy is a satisfying and nuanced way to say goodbye to a character we've been rooting for ever since we first met her in her bee-striped tights.

TRAVEL

THE 13 BEST PLACES TO TRAVEL ALONE

SARAH SCHLICHTER

Solo travellers can and do go just about anywhere, but there are certain places around the world that are particularly easy and even rewarding to visit by yourself. In crafting this list of the best places to travel alone, I looked at factors such as safety (especially for women traveling alone), local culture, the chance to meet other travellers, and the ease of getting around if you don't speak the language.

Read on to discover the best places to travel alone.

New Zealand

Solo travellers who love hiking, mountain biking, or other outdoor activities shouldn't miss New Zealand. It's one of the world's most relaxing places to travel; crime is low, and just about every city and town has its own visitor info centre with friendly staff who will help you find lodging or book activities (so you'll never feel lost). Best of all, there are countless adventures to be had, from the country's famous Great Walks to Lord of the Rings tours.

Denmark

Exploring Denmark, which appears frequently on top 10 lists of the world's happiest and safest countries, is a breeze for solo travellers. Most Danes speak English and are glad to help tourists find their way around; some even welcome travellers into their homes for dinner. (See MeettheDanes.com.) History lovers can enjoy Viking ruins and medieval castles,



while outdoorsy sorts can join the locals on the thousands of miles of bike paths that crisscross the country.

Thailand

Thanks to smiling locals, unforgettable sights, and a well-established



backpacker trail, Thailand is incredibly popular with people traveling alone. You can make your solo trip anything you want in Thailand: an urban adventure in Bangkok, a week on the beaches of Koh Samui, a homestay in a northern hill town, a yoga retreat on a remote island – or a mix of all of the above.

Chile

This long, skinny country is one of South America's safest, boasting incredible landscapes (beaches! Mountains! Glaciers!) as well as delicious wines. Chileans are friendly and welcoming, although they don't all speak English – so you'll want to brush up on basic Spanish phrases before you



go. Popular spots to visit include the remote Atacama Desert in the north and the sweeping mountain vistas of Patagonia in the south.

Israel

While terrorism is an ever-present concern, security is high and millions



of people safely visit Israel every year, including plenty of solo travellers. Most of them spend at least a few days exploring the holy sites and colourful markets of Jerusalem before moving on to cosmopolitan Tel Aviv, the beach town of Eilat, or the mountain fortress of Masada. You're sure to meet other travellers along the way, whether you stay in hostels or kibbutzim (farms).

Ireland

Ireland holds numerous appeals for solo travellers: It's safe, beautiful,



and an easy place for English speakers to get around. But what I love best about Ireland is how friendly it is. The locals will say hi to you on the street or strike up a conversation with you at the pub, so you'll never lack for friends even if you're traveling alone. You can also meet fellow travellers at hostels, on trains, or over the breakfast table at a B&B.

Japan

With its low crime rates and kind, respectful locals, Japan is an ideal place for solo travel, including solo female travel. Buy a rail pass and hop aboard the country's clean, fast bullet trains to explore temples and teahouses in Kyoto, hiking trails and hot springs in Hakone, and the bustling neon streets of Tokyo. Be sure to spend at least one night in a traditional ryokan, where you'll sleep on a tatami mat and enjoy a typical Japanese breakfast.





Tanzania

Is an African safari on your bucket list? Consider a solo trip to Tanzania, where you can spot the Big Five and much more. If you want to meet fellow travellers, look for a camp or lodge that offers communal meals and shared game drives, or join a group trip. Keep an eye out for tours with a discounted or waived single supplement (you'll often see these during the off season when demand is low), or book with a company such as Intrepid Travel or G Adventures, which will help you skip the supplement by matching you with a same-sex roommate.

Australia

A recent report found that Australia was the world's safest country for women, making this a particularly appealing destination for solo female travel. Men and women alike will appreciate Australia's diverse



landscapes, ranging from the famous Sydney skyline to the colourful Great Barrier Reef to the wide-open, red-dirt stretches of the Outback. There's a well-established backpacker trail of hostels where you can meet other solo travellers, and the laid-back locals speak English (albeit with their own unique vocabulary!), so you won't have trouble finding your way.

Hong Kong

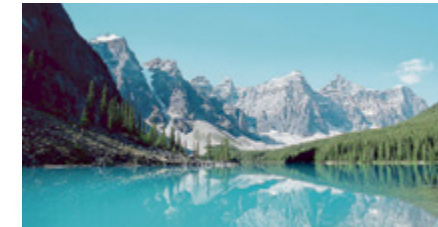
Hong Kong's low crime rate, efficient public transportation system, and unique combination of Eastern



and Western cultures make it an inviting spot for solo travellers, especially those who haven't yet travelled much on their own. Because English is one of the city's official languages, you'll never feel like you're lost in translation; nor will you run out of things to do, with countless options from harbourfront museums to the bustling restaurants of Nathan Road.

Canada

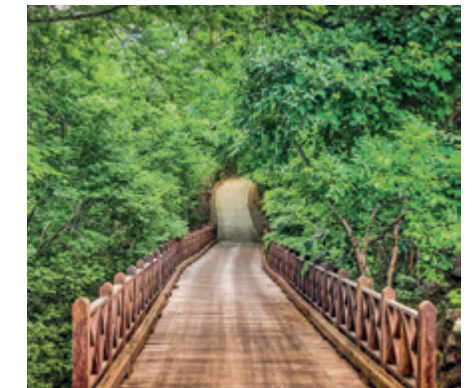
Canada's already low crime rates have dropped even further over the past decade or two, making this an even safer and more appealing place to travel alone. You can base yourself



in a cosmopolitan city like Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver to focus on museums and nightlife, or take a road trip through rugged national parks like Banff or Jasper. No matter where you travel, Canada's friendly, English-speaking locals are happy to point you in the right direction.

Iceland

Crime novels are popular in Iceland, but that may be partially because the country sees so little violence in real life. (It's topped the Global Peace Index since 2008.) Both men and women traveling alone can do so safely on this remote island, known for thundering waterfalls, steaming geysers, and craggy volcanic landscapes. Many Icelanders speak at least a little English, so it's no problem to get around and chat with locals, and the country's largest city, Reykjavik, feels more like an easily navigable large town than a giant metropolis.



Costa Rica

One of Central America's safest countries, Costa Rica draws solo travellers in search of outdoor adventure. Consider booking a stay at a jungle lodge where you can meet fellow travellers and join guided excursions into the rainforest to look for wildlife like monkeys, sloths, toucans, and macaws. Or head for the coast to take a surfing lesson or simply relax on the beach. You can also visit local farms or soak in hot springs.

THINGS TO PACK

In many ways, packing for a solo trip isn't that different than packing for a trip with someone else. If you and your partner always use packing cubes, you'll probably still rely on them when you're by yourself. Can't travel without your Kindle, no matter who you're with? Of course, you'll bring it along.

But there are certain concerns that become more pressing when you're traveling alone – particularly when it comes to personal safety. If you don't have a companion to watch your back, you'll want to take a few extra precautions and consider packing the following six items when you travel alone.

Door Stopper

Because deadbolts and other security features vary widely from hotel to hotel, packing your own door stopper can help you add an extra layer of protection. (This is especially true at many motels, where doors open to the outside, and at budget properties with shoddy locks.)

Dummy Wallet and Money Belt

When you're traveling with a companion, you can split your money and credit cards between the two of you so there's less impact if one of you is robbed. But if you're alone, you'll still want your valuables to be in more than one place.

We recommend carrying the bulk of your cash and cards in a money belt hidden under your clothes, while keeping only what you need for the day in an inexpensive wallet, which you can put in a front pocket or in a crossbody bag that's difficult to steal. If you're mugged, you can toss this dummy wallet away from you without giving up all your valuables.



WHEN TRAVELING ALONE

Medical ID Card

If you become incapacitated during a solo trip, you won't have a companion to speak on your behalf to medical personnel – which could be life-threatening if you have allergies or health conditions a doctor needs to know about. That's why it's vital to have your medical information in a place where first responders can find it easily.

Consider using a service called My Important Information, which gives you a card with a QR code on it that first responders can use to access your medical and other essential data.

You may also want to consider wearing a medical bracelet or necklace engraved with important health conditions such as heart disease, severe allergies or diabetes. And, of course, we strongly recommend purchasing travel insurance.

Inexpensive Wedding Band

Wearing a wedding band may help deter unwanted attention, even if you're not actually married. And some travellers who are married buy cheaper wedding bands to wear on the road in place of sparkling engagement rings and diamond-crusted bands. A plain band will attract less attention, and if it's lost or stolen, it won't be a big loss.

Whistle/Personal Alarm

We don't recommend carrying pepper spray when you travel, as it's illegal in many countries (as well as on planes). However, having a whistle or other noise-making device can help scare away an attacker or draw the attention of others in an emergency.

First-Aid Kit

We recommend that every traveller bring a few medical necessities, but it's even more essential when you don't have a travel buddy to run down the street to the nearest pharmacy on your behalf.

You can create your own first-aid kit with items such as antibacterial wipes, adhesive bandages, tweezers and over-the-counter pain medications.



11 MISTAKES EVERY FIRST-TIME TRAVELLER MAKES

BEN GROUNDWATER



You're excited, obviously. You're about to head off for your first overseas trip, and it's an amazing feeling.

It's also a daunting feeling. What will you find outside of Australia's borders? What will the world throw at you? How will you cope? How much money will you spend trying to deal with it?

It's inevitable that you'll make mistakes the first time you travel, just the same as you'd make mistakes in any other facet of life. These are the common ones that rookie adventurers commit.

Overbooking

It's tempting, on that first daunting trip away, to get everything locked in – every hostel, every transfer, every

breakfast, lunch and dinner. That way you don't have to worry about anything, right? But you'll soon come to realise that it pays to have some flexibility. Book in the big things, sure. But also leave yourself space to change your itinerary and take opportunities as they present themselves.

Using a travel agent... for everything

While it's now easy for you to book an entire trip yourself over the internet, I can understand the wish to have the safety net of a travel agent. But that doesn't mean you have to use them for everything. Book your flights, and maybe an accommodation package. But you'll generally save money if you look after everything else yourself.

Being scared of locals

You can always spot the first-timers, hands subconsciously guarding their money belts, faces set to "suspicion", always trying to figure out what the scam is, who's trying to rip them off. It's hard when you first start out to spot the crooks from the friendly locals, so plenty of people just mistrust everyone. That's a mistake though. The vast majority of locals aren't out to get you. It can pay to trust them every now and then – you'll make a lot more friends.

Being scammed

That said, however, there are scammers out there, and it's the naive rookie travellers that provide their easiest targets. I was scammed the first time

I travelled. And the second time. And the third time. There's no easy way around this – you're often dealing with pros who've been doing this their entire lives. Just roll with the punches and try not to part with too much cash. (Read: Ten classic travel scams)

Trying to see everything

This is why the group tours are popular, why people see things like "seven countries in 12 days" and think that that's a good thing. This is your big overseas trip and you want to see as much as possible – you want to tick as many boxes as you physically can. But that's a mistake. You have to trust that you'll travel again. Instead of trying to see everywhere at once, slow down, get to know one country, or maybe two, and your appetite will be whetted for a lifetime of similar adventures.

Underestimating costs

Here's the deal: everything is going to cost more than you think it will. From the flights you saw advertised for "\$600 return" to the beers you'll buy in a bar somewhere on a boozy night out, everything will be more expensive. You'll spend twice as much as you'd planned. And that's a conservative estimate. Before you travel, save up more money.

Packing too much

Don't take a sleeping bag unless you're actually going camping. They're useless. Most hostels won't even let you use them. Don't pack too many clothes – remember, you'll buy things while you travel. Don't take a huge first

aid kit. You really just need a few necessities. Don't take more than three pairs of shoes. Don't take more than two pairs of jeans. But do take soap – most hostels don't supply it.

Buying too much

It's tempting to walk into one of the travel shops and just go bananas. You could spend thousands in there, picking up things like special travel shirts with breathable material, compression sacks, wire mesh thingys to wrap around your backpack, money belts, karabiners, hiking shoes... But you don't need any of it. Wear clothes you're comfortable wearing. And using a money belt is like carrying around a sign saying "rob me".

Panicking

Things are going to go wrong. And that's not because you're a rookie – things are always going to go wrong. That's part of travelling. The mistake first-time travellers make is letting it get to them. So your train didn't turn up, or your hotel has lost your booking, or \$50 has gone missing from

your wallet. You'll sort it out. Getting upset or freaking out is only going to make it worse.

Not taking out insurance

You need insurance. Even if you're just planning to lie around in a resort for a week. If you're in an accident, or you get sick, or your bags go missing, or any one of a million other mishaps occur while you're travelling, you'll be extremely pleased you spent that small amount on an insurance policy. (Read: The insurance mistake travellers keep making)

Treating the guidebook as gospel

It's great to have a guidebook, something to point you in the right direction and give you background information on the places you're visiting. The mistake first-time travellers make, however, is only doing things listed in the guidebook – only visiting the restaurants, staying in the hostels and visiting the attractions that get the guidebook's stamp of approval. There's more to the world than the bits listed in those pages.



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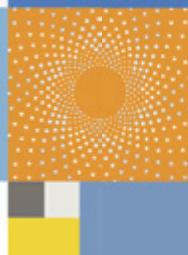


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LEGAL ADVICE

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT BUSINESS ROUTES TO MOVE TO THE UK WITH YOUR FAMILY?

MERIAM ALTAF

Innovator and Star-Up routes

There are two new immigration routes in place for entrepreneurs and businessman who want to establish a business in the UK. These are Innovator and Start-Up visas. They encourage innovation and potential for growth in the UK rather than the old concept of bringing business ideas. While these visas are extremely beneficial to the continuing success and growth of the UK's economy, the entry to either scheme rests on a notoriously difficult task of receiving an endorsement from independent bodies. Nevertheless, those who wish to apply through these routes should seek legal advice beforehand, as the application fees and procedure entails a substantial amount of effort and money.

have sufficient authority, experience and comprehension to establish a business in the UK and not own more than a certain part of the business.



be permitted to come to the UK. According to the rules, it is not up to the parents to decide what is best for the child concerned. Nevertheless, the legal test entails a number of criteria (such as for example evidence of a sole responsibility for the child), which, if met appropriately, should not impose significant difficulties for meeting the requirements, and applicants are encouraged to carry out thorough research before applying.

Important considerations when making business visa applications

This route may lead to Indefinite Leave to Remain and family members can accompany or join the main applicant.

What are the obstacles if you want to bring your family members with you?

It is common that those who want to establish a business in the UK often want to bring their family members with them to the UK. To accomplish this, applicants need to pay an additional fee, gather additional documents and book visa application appointments. While this is all standard procedure, some applicants face refusals. This often relates to those who want to come to the UK with their children while their other parent remains abroad. The Immigration Rules impose a strict test before a child will

While the above is a very brief overview of the business route options, both initial and extension requirements must be carefully considered when exploring the routes. To do so, the Immigration Rules and the guidance must be fully understood, and potential applicants must be fully satisfied that all the requirements are met. Applicants must bear in mind that the rules might entail vague guidelines which must be interpreted and applied according to the established practices.



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