

THE TRAVEL CLUB

E-ZINE #18: OCTOBER, 2021

Which way to The Gambia

A remarkable cycling adventure

The Travel Photographer's Way

A new handbook for budding photographers

Half-term adventures

Inspiration for family wildlife
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Searching for the spiritual

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Bradt GUIDES

TRAVEL TAKEN SERIOUSLY



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Photographing the sunrise,
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ON PHOTOGRAPHY



Award-winning travel photographer **Nori Jemil** shares the journey and inspiration behind her new ground-breaking practical handbook.

I'm lying on the cobblestones in Sultanahmet in Istanbul, trying to capture the entire façade of the Hagia Sophia mosque in a puddle. I'm not normally one to fling myself down on my own city's pavements, but transport me somewhere unfamiliar and put a camera in my hand, and all concerns about getting dirty or looking foolish become secondary. My strange behaviour attracts a group of inquisitive, young tourists, and I have

to gently ask them to move back and out of the reflection, at least until I can fully capture the edifice in all its Byzantine and Ottoman glory. Then I get to work incorporating their feet in the composition – all shiny, patent leather shoes, trainers and broderie anglaise fringed ankle socks. It's a strange business, this photography lark.

Later, when editing the pictures, I ponder over whether to Photoshop out the cigarette stub from

the cobblestones that I hadn't noticed earlier. My nephew looks over my shoulder and says he likes it. He also tells me I should include the image in the selection I'm curating for a photography competition. It's 2010, and 12 months earlier I'd been a finalist in *Wanderlust* magazine's annual photography awards. I'm not convinced about the fag butt or the photo, but Miles was, and the convictions of the young are very persuasive. I send it off and it turns out he was right. It was third time lucky for me (having been a finalist in 2009, and runner-up in 2008) and it was in 2010 that I won the Travel Photo of the Year.

From mentee to mentor

In mid-August this year, working on the final draft for *The Travel Photographer's Way*, my new practical photography book for Bradt, I was more than aware that it is a round ten years since I was in Australia's red centre on the commission that was part of my prize. Sitting by the campfire at night, watching fellow photographers sort through their photos from the day and charge camera batteries by plugging adaptors into the slots powered by the noisy generator – a bit incongruous out there in the desert – it was a fairly surreal introduction to the world of professional travel photography, but one that's become familiar territory now, and left an indelible mark.

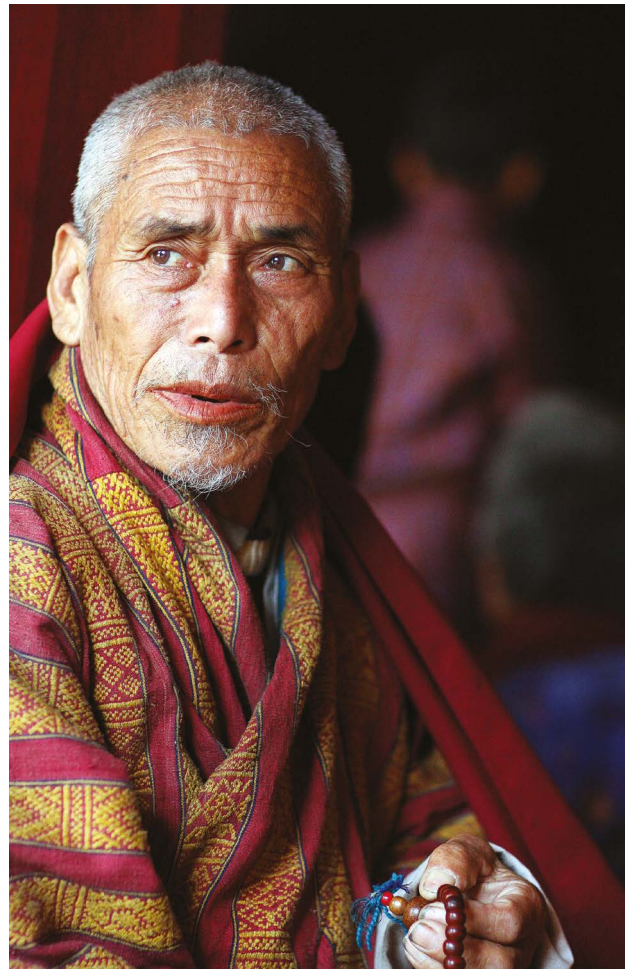
© NORIJEMIL



The image that won *Wanderlust's* Travel Photo of the Year in 2010

Sleeping under the stars in a swag bag for six or seven consecutive nights was a new experience too, and one I hadn't thought I would embrace as much as I did. Though rolling up the swag in the morning, usually well before dawn, left me panting and covered in sand, I did get slightly better at it as time wore on. Similarly, my outdoor photography skills really developed, building on what I'd learned previously from years of travelling around South America, from Argentina to the Angel Falls, often on extended trips and with backpack in tow.

And many of *The Travel Photographer's Ways* tips on planning for treks and expeditions – keeping dust away from a camera's sensor by using rolltop dry bags, or what to pack for hot, difficult road trips where weight and space might be an issue – I began to finesse on that assignment in 2011. We all learn from our experiences, sifting out the good and the bad through trial and error. But being on the road and developing a new skill, I've felt it was immensely helpful to travel with a guide or someone who was a little further down the track than I was. From Grenville in Australia a decade ago to Tewfic, and his New York-based travel company that took me to Thailand, it was the early photography tours I did with on-hand tutors where I really began to hone my skills. Borrowing a portrait lens from Dan in Bhutan, or taking on Paul's little nuggets of advice in the Arctic, it's what psychologist Leo



Just one image from my photography tour of Bhutan

© NORIJEMIL

Vygotsky called the zone of proximal learning – that basically being supported by or close to those who know more than us can help us to reach the next level of our own understanding. Just fleetingly holding a shiny reflector while a more experienced photographer works with off-camera portrait

lighting is akin to many hours in a classroom and, for me, worth its weight in gold.

And now, as I've become the guide on tours, it often occurs to me that people sometimes just need a little nudge in the right direction, or even a confidence boost that comes from the camaraderie of being alongside others who share their passion. During the pandemic, we've mostly been left to our own devices, and perhaps not everyone's inclined to join a group tour just yet. So, what if there was a guide we could take along with us on our solo jaunts that acts like that little reassuring voice we all crave – 'Yes, that's good!' – or offers support and advice – 'Think about increasing the ISO a little, as the sky is getting dark'?

The Travel Photographer's Way was borne out of the experiences I've had over the past two decades. From figuring things out as I went along to taking a diploma in digital photography in Chile to formalise my learning, pulling everything I'd gleaned over the years together in a book that puts experience and reflection at its heart seemed like the obvious thing to do. I won't say that the book wrote itself, but the initial idea flourished without too much conscious effort.

More than just 'pretty pictures'

But I'm all too aware as I write this that all the wonderful and helpful photography mentors I had

were male. Despite knowing many great female photographers now, it often seems that women, for whatever reason, aren't always front and centre as guides and published photographers. And it was Susan Sontag's *On Photography*, a volume sent to me years ago by my good friend Laura, that really sowed the seed that a book that explores the philosophy behind travel photography as well as giving technical advice – the *why* in addition to the *how* – could fill a gap in what's already out there for the avid travel photographer. Don't get me wrong – those very technical reference books have their place on my bookshelf too – but they're not always the ones I reach for when I want a good read or something to make me reflect.

I do believe there's still a lot of unconscious bias about what a photographer should look like, in what continues to be a male-dominated industry, and I hope that this book serves to show that photography is for everyone. No matter our gender, age or ethnicity, photography has the power to unite, to enthrall and to bring us to a state of meditative happiness. I'm very interested in the work of [Equal Lens](#), a collective that seeks to amplify the voices of women and non-binary photographers – a group that makes up the majority of photography students around the world, but the minority when it comes to working professionals.



© NORI JEMIL

Working in Patagonia

There's a balance of voices in *The Travel Photographer's Way*, including a vast range of expert women – from interviews with working photographers, to quotes of those from the past. Cristina Mittermeier, along with her colleagues at [SeaLegacy](#), has been instrumental in encouraging us to consider how we treat our oceans, putting photography at the forefront of everything. As

she says, the idea to use photography to rally for conservation is not a new one, but 'born in the 1800s when photographers went out to Yellowstone and brought back images to Washington DC, and that gave birth to the national parks'. Brian Skerry takes it a step further, eschewing the idea of just making 'pretty pictures' and wanting to document the damage that it is being done to



Uluru at dusk

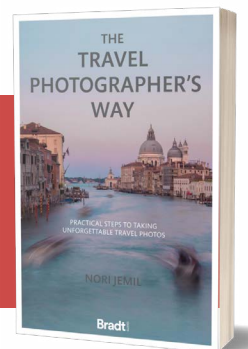
the natural world: 'As a photojournalist I sort of felt a sense of responsibility and a sense of urgency to begin turning my lens towards those things. I wanted it to be more like war photography.' If there's one thing I'm certain of – even more so since researching this book – it's that photography has the power to change the way we think about the world. And it might just provoke the kind of reactions we need in our race against climate change and the imminent threat that brings.

And the transformative power of photography is what draws so many of us to the practice. Dorothea Lange once said that 'Beauty appears when one feels deeply, and art is an act of total attention'. It's this mindful practice that has kept

Nori Jemil is a UK-based award-winning photographer, writer and videographer, specialising in travel. Her new book, *The Travel Photographer's Way: Practical steps to taking unforgettable travel photos*, is out this month – The Travel Club members can get their copy for just **£9.50** with the code **TRAVELCLUB50**.

me in thrall to the world of photography for most of my life, and I see the same joy in the eyes of people who turn up for photography talks and tours. From the youngest child using a compact camera, to a grandparent sending a smiling selfie to stay connected with distant family, expressing our deep feeling through the creative act of photography seems to come naturally to us all.

Waking a decade or so ago to see the full moon set and a warming sun rise from the comfort of my swag, hours after we'd watched dingoes quietly stroll through the camp is something I've remembered in my core long after the thrill of winning a prize had left me. And that's something I hope is conveyed in the pages of *The Travel Photographer's Way* – that most of us want to capture the best images we can, but the experiences we have while doing so are as valuable as any award or trophy photograph. Immersing ourselves in the culture of a destination, paying attention to its atmosphere, and really listening to those we meet and spend time with – these are the hallmarks of a good traveller, and similarly, a good travel photographer.



HALF-TERM ADVENTURES: THE BEST FAMILY WILDLIFE TRIPS IN BRITAIN



*October is always an exciting month in the British wildlife calendar, with everything from rutting red deer to rummaging red squirrels, leaping salmon to tumbling geese. Author of our new guide to Britain's best family wildlife experiences, **William Gray** shows you how to make the most of a really wild October half-term.*



The red deer rut

This is without doubt one of Britain's greatest wildlife spectacles. During autumn, red deer stags and fallow deer bucks compete for females, displaying to rivals with deep-throated roars and barks. Two males will often parallel-walk to assess each other's size and condition. Sometimes, they will thrash about in bracken to create leafy headdresses to big themselves up. The weaker of the two is usually chased away, but if neither backs down, they will lock antlers in tests of strength to decide who will hold the biggest harems.

There are several locations in Britain where you can experience it – from Exmoor National Park to Scotland's Galloway Forest – but it seems particularly remarkable to witness it in Richmond Park, against the backdrop of the Shard and London's city skyline.

This is a family wildlife adventure best undertaken on foot. Treat it as if you're on a walking safari: moving slowly, senses alert. Or, pack a picnic and spend a few hours in the shade of a mighty oak – Richmond Park has about 1,200 ancient trees, some of which are thought to be 750 years old. Each is, quite literally, a 'tree of life'. As you rest your back against ancient, wrinkled bark, gaze across the grassland lorded over by strutting red deer stags and listen to parakeets squabbling through the treetops. Yes, this really is London.



© MARK CAUNT/SHUTTERSTOCK

In search of nocturnal wildlife

October is a great month for a spot of nocturnal wildlife watching: tawny owls are particularly vocal as this year's youngsters seek out territories of their own, while badgers are busy gorging on acorns, beech mast and other seasonal treats. One of the best night-time experiences can be had in Cropton Forest, North Yorkshire, where a dense canopy of oak, ash and birch casts dappled shadows over an understory of hazel – a secretive world where wildlife is not easily seen. But guided evening walks, run by [Forest Holidays](#), can reveal a range of nocturnal species.

Following your forest ranger into the twilight world of an ancient wood, you're conscious of every twig and leaf crackling beneath your feet. Tawny owls call and you freeze. There it is again: the male's long, vibrato hoot, answered by the female's terse '*keewik*'. They're somewhere in the trees ahead. Peering through night-vision optics you glimpse bats weaving between pale tree trunks, hunting moths. There's also something moving on the forest floor. Probably a wood mouse, whispers the ranger, and you wonder whether the owls have seen it too. Later, you spot a lone roe deer, a ghostly shape tiptoeing through a stand of pines, but the highlight is your badger encounter. With night vision, you clearly see the black-and-white-striped muzzle and the shimmy of silvery fur as it ambles across your path.

On the trail of leaping salmon

A wildlife adventure in search of salmon? If you're wondering whether this fishy quest might be a hard sell to children, don't worry. Forget boring fish paste sandwiches – you're about to experience a feast of wild scenery, tingling suspense and bursts of action – along with a blockbuster narrative that rivals anything in the animal kingdom. If the Atlantic salmon was a Marvel character its superpowers would include body morphing and mind-bending memory skills. Its athleticism is equivalent to Olympian Tom Daley propelling himself from the swimming pool back on to the high diving platform.

Following spring or autumn rains, Scotland's wild rivers swell and the salmon migration gets underway, the fish swimming, squirming and leaping upriver to reach spawning beds in the highlands. One of the best spots to witness this spectacle is the Philiphaugh Salmon Viewing Centre on the Philiphaugh Estate, near Selkirk. As well as watching fish leap the weir on Ettrick Water, live video feeds from underwater cameras provide a glimpse of the epic struggle taking place beneath the churning surface.

Stake out a prime spot, like Ettrick Weir, and your patience can be rewarded by the spectacle of these silvery-pink fish erupting from foaming torrents and hurling themselves up seemingly

unassailable chutes and rapids. You hold your breath for a few short seconds as an airborne salmon beats its powerful tail from side to side, pectoral fins tucked in as it drives itself forwards and upwards through the spray. But just when you think it will make it, the fish loses momentum and falls back into the turbulent pool at the base

of the weir. Almost immediately, another salmon takes up the challenge. Your emotions rise and fall with every leaping, flailing, struggling fish. You become deeply invested in their ordeal. When one fish jumps high and slices like an arrow into the smooth water above the weir, you instinctively cheer. It deserves your applause.



© CHANONRY/SHUTTERSTOCK



Spend the night in a tree house

Hidden in a wildwood on the slopes of the Dyfi Valley in mid-Wales, six tree houses have been created that take arboreal living to new heights. Designed by [Living Room Experiences](#), these are proper tree houses – not a stilt in sight. Each elaborate structure is suspended in the treetops using an ingenious clamp system that grips the trunk of the host tree without damaging it. As you walk through the forest, the tree houses are difficult to spot – spaced well-apart and crafted using locally sourced, sustainably harvested wood.

It's small wonder that children love it here. When they're not monkeying around in the treetops, there are dens to be built on terra firma, streams to be dammed in the valley and plenty of wildlife to be discovered. Imagine falling asleep to the sound of a tawny owl hooting in the tree next to you, or spying a fox or badger slip past beneath your lofty lookout. Buzzards, woodpeckers and nuthatches become familiar neighbours on a tree house adventure, while 'going ape' also allows you to discover the diverse range of moths, butterflies, weevils and other minibeads that also call an oak tree home.

A wild goose chase

Let's face it, most children (and plenty of adults too) don't like geese. It all stems from those early encounters with nipping, hissing farmyard ganders. But all that posturing and aggression is mainly due to the fact that domestic geese are large, clumsy birds with nowhere to hide when they feel threatened. A wild goose is completely different. For starters, you give it space. Lots of space. Vast floodplains. Whole estuaries. There's no question of a close encounter. Wild geese are best appreciated en masse, filling an entire landscape – or skyline – with yelping, babbling, murmuring hordes of a thousand or more birds.

To witness such a spectacle, however, you need to know how to plan a proper wild goose chase. And the Solway Firth makes a fantastic destination, with two excellent reserves. Start at **Caerlaverock National Nature Reserve**; aka, goose heaven. Stretching 16km along the northern shore of the firth, this soggy mishmash of mudflats, sandbanks and saltmarsh is the winter refuge for the entire Svalbard population of 33,000 barnacle geese. At any moment, a flock may take flight, but dawn and dusk are the best times to witness long skeins of geese etched across the sky.

A 40-minute drive from Caerlaverock, **RSPB Mersehead Reserve** also provides ideal feeding and roosting grounds for migrant geese. As well

as a visitor centre and hides, the reserve has two trails – one leading through wetlands and fields (carefully managed to provide winter stubble for

finches, larks and sparrows); the other tracing the coast, where you could see rafts of sea duck, like scaup and scoter.



© WILLIAM GRAY



A bushcraft adventure

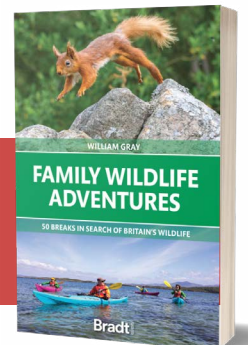
In a world where technology is their future, what, you may ask, is the point of ‘going bush’ with your kids, roughing it in a rudimentary woodland shelter and learning how to make fire the prehistoric way? The simple answer is written all over James’ face in the photograph above: it’s fun. But there’s more to this than simply mucking about in the woods. A day

or two of bushcraft skills and wildlife tracking is not only an engaging way to reconnect children with the natural world – touching it, feeling it, smelling it, even sleeping in it – but it can also be an effective

The following suggestions were taken from William’s new book, *Family Wildlife Adventures: 50 Breaks in Search of Britain’s Wildlife*, which is out this month. The Travel Club members can get their copy for just **£8.49** with the code **TRAVELCLUB50**.

catalyst to boost self-confidence and encourage free thinking and environmental awareness.

Founded in 2002 by Hannah Nicholls, [Natural Pathways](#) specialises in bushcraft and nature awareness, and offers several courses for families, ranging from a three-hour Mini Survival Adventure to a three-day Wilderness Camp, where you overnight in the woods, cooking on open fires, identifying plants and trees, making utensils and tracking wildlife. Although the minimum age is five, these are family courses where parental supervision (and participation) is encouraged. Children aged ten and over can also join flint-knapping workshops with prehistoric man, Will Lord, and staff-making days with wizard whittler, Andrew Duncan. The rewilding of your children takes place in a remote patch of woodland somewhere between Canterbury and Dover (you’re given the exact location when you book). Soon after you turn down the muddy track and enter the leafy embrace of oak and sweet chestnut, mobile phones and modern-day life are quickly forgotten as Hannah focuses your mind on the fundamentals of woodland survival.



AMONG THE TSAATAN



*For **Anna Cohen Kaminski**, Mongolian food is some of the worst in the world. But in this extract from her new book, she explains how a chance encounter with a Tsaatan woman led to one of the best meals she's had anywhere.*

What's the worst meal you've ever had?' I get asked. Because, having reviewed thousands of eating establishments over nearly fifteen years, I must've had a few bad experiences. And I have. There were also places, prior to my becoming a travel writer, that made me physically sick. When taking a summer Spanish course in Santander as a nineteen-year-old, I caught salmonella, as did everyone who had eggs that day at the university canteen.

This happened on 9/11, and when we watched the footage of the planes flying into the Twin Towers on an endless loop that afternoon, I thought that the fever and vomiting was triggered by the emotional shock. My friend Magda – the only person who didn't have eggs that day – took me to see a young Spanish doctor, whose attractiveness and great bedside manner led Magda to wish she were in need of TLC as well.

Then there was the eight-course fiasco at the Rock and Sea Bubble Ecolodge in Watamu, on the Kenyan coast, where the chef laboured under the misapprehension that if you threw together the most exotic ingredients you can think of – including no less than six types of salt – you get gastronomic masterpieces. Alas. The 'lobster in her corals sauce' was the saddest crustacean I'd ever seen. The poor thing had clearly died of old age and then lay there, preserved in ice, awaiting

some luckless diner. It was also bright blue. A bill that threatened to bankrupt me added insult to injury.

But if we are talking countries with consistently bad food, then the grand prize must go to the homeland of Chinggis Khan. Mongolian food is more often horrible than not. During my first visit to Mongolia, while researching the Trailblazer *Trans-Siberian Handbook*, I discovered that being omnivorous and open-minded didn't save me there. Some things – such as gristly, elderly mutton that's unavoidable outside the capital – I just cannot and will not eat. When I returned three years later to cover half the country for Lonely Planet, I came bearing my weight in camping food rather than chance the horrors of roadside dining.

The following story was the exception.

A broad valley flanked by spruce-covered hills, and snow-tipped mountains beyond, opens up in front of us. The valley floor is dotted with a couple dozen nomad dwellings that look like tepees (locally known as *ortz*) arranged in two clusters. I

“I feel as though I've walked into a childhood dream of cowboys and Indians.”

feel as though I've walked into a childhood dream of cowboys and Indians. Human presence is indicated by smoke rising from the tents. A chorus of barks and howls from husky-like hunting dogs greets our arrival. An ancient-looking woman dressed in a traditional Mongolian *deel* (kaftan) ushers my guide, Mishig, and me inside the nearest tepee. I judge her to be around seventy, going by her weathered face and a handful of remaining teeth, but when a teenage girl serves us the ubiquitous, milky tea from a boiling cauldron, Mishig tells me that she's the woman's daughter. This is what a lifetime of hard living does to a forty-year-old.

Inside, the wooden skeleton of the *ortz* is strung with bits of string, from which pieces of smoked meat dangle freely. I hope it's not dinner, and then remember that I have several packs of camping food left. 'Please thank our hosts for their hospitality, but tell them that I'll be sleeping by myself,' I tell Mishig, and stagger outside to put up my tent. Setting up separate sleeping quarters is all I've got energy for, besides tipping boiling water into the food pouch to rehydrate my mash and peas.

No sooner have I retreated inside my tent, a young woman's face peers through the open flap.

'Anna, right?' she asks in perfect English.

I gawp at her. Outside Ulaanbaatar I hadn't encountered a single English speaker, and Mishig and I are able to communicate only because he attended the University of Karaganda in Kazakhstan in his youth and speaks fluent, heavily accented Russian.

'Mishig's mentioned that he brought a travel writer with him. He also said that you're weird,' she smiles. I suppose it's hard to argue with that assessment. Weird in what respects, though?

'Would you like to come to my tent for some *buuz*?' she continues. I don't need to be asked twice, and lurch painfully to my feet to follow her. Her being Zaya. She grew up in Colorado, she tells me when I compliment her on her English.

'This is me.' She points to a large *ortz* with a husky lying in front of it, and a small solar panel next to it.

'I wasn't really expecting canvas and solar panels,' I confess, and then immediately feel guilty. I'm very critical of travellers who seem to think that remote indigenous cultures should remain technology free in perpetuity, for the sole viewing pleasure of those who come in search of 'primitive' peoples. Why wouldn't the Tsaatan want modern conveniences, just like everyone else?

'We used to cover our tents with animal skins, back in the day, but that's not practical,' she explains. 'So now we use waterproof canvas. And pretty much everyone in the countryside owns a solar panel. Luckily, we get a lot of sunlight.'

Inside, while Zaya busies herself with kneading dough for the *buuz*, I ask her about the Tsaatan. I know that they're nomadic reindeer herders, that they number around five hundred people split between two groups, and that they live in the mountains and the taiga, a harsh and remote corner of the country.

'Actually, we call ourselves the Dukha,' Zaya says. "'Tsaatan" is the Mongolian name for us.'

'But aren't you Mongolian?'

'Yes and no. Me – yes. My husband is Dukha. The Dukha are a Mongolian people originally from Tuva, across the border in Russia, and we speak both Mongolian and Tuvan. Before 1944, the Dukha were able to herd our reindeer freely into Tuva and back. But now we can't.'

'Here.' Zaya pours salt into my hand. 'You can feed Led Zeppelin.'

She motions to five more reindeer who are making a beeline for the tent. They push their warm muzzles into my hand. It's clear that Zaya

treats her reindeer with great affection, as if they are family members, and I tell her so.

'Well, they kind of are. They look after us. We don't dress in reindeer hides anymore, but we still get most of what we need from our reindeer. Wolves killed two of our young reindeer the other week. A massive loss, since every animal is precious.'

Before collectivisation, the Dukha, like the Sami, would have had over a hundred reindeer per family, but now they are lucky if it's fifteen or twenty.

'So you never eat them?' I ask.

'Very, very rarely. Only if they are injured. We can't spare them for food, because we need them for the milk and as pack animals.'

Having finished kneading the dough, Zaya swiftly closes the dough circles around lumps of meat filling – 'Our hunters shot an elk a few days ago' – and sets them to steam while she grabs a tin pail and beckons for me to follow her.

'So what do you guys eat?'

'We fish, we hunt, we gather wild berries in the summer. Sometimes we pick up extra supplies from Murun, but not often.'

'It sounds like a rather precarious existence.'

Zaya agrees.

'We have to watch out for wolves and bears, all the time. We have a shaman – a healer – but if

“Mishig's mentioned that he brought a travel writer with him. He also said that you're weird.”



Zaya giving Britney Spears her salt lick

someone is seriously ill or hurt, medical help is really far away. And it's not as if they can get to us easily, either... we have to move every few weeks, to find fresh grazing for the reindeer..'

She points to a large cloth bundle hanging in the back of the tent and explains that it's a sacred sack, used in shamanist rituals that play an important part in their lives.

'Juniper branches are burned under it as an offering in the mornings,' she says. Shamans assume the twin roles of healer and spiritual leader.

'Do you actually ride the reindeer?' I interrupt. 'That's what the Tsaatan are supposedly known for, compared to the other reindeer people.'

'Most adults don't. Reindeer can only carry about 130 pounds, tops. But the kids, and some of the older people, yes.'

Walking across the clearing, Zaya ties one of her reindeer's front legs together with a length of rope, to stop her from bolting. She then squats down, milking the animal with quick, practised squeezes.

'Reindeer produce only around half a pint per session. We milk them twice a day.'

The Tsaatan don't drink the milk; they make crumbly, salty cheese out of it.

'I don't remember the Sami milking their reindeer,' I tell her, thinking back to a research trip to arctic Sweden.

'They don't,' Zaya responds. 'When some Sami visitors from Finland came to stay with us, they took photos of us milking our reindeer to show their families back home, since they don't milk their own reindeer anymore; there's no need.' Which is true. Modern-day Sami in Scandinavia often hold other jobs and herd reindeer on the side.

By the time we get back to Zaya's *ortz* the *buuz* are ready, and she encourages me to dig in. I make an utter mess of myself, trying to manoeuvre a giant dumpling into my mouth. The meat juices go all over my jacket. Zaya sees me struggling and teaches me how to eat the *buuz* properly:

'Here – bite a tiny hole in the dough, drink the hot meat juice, and then eat the rest.'

I do it her way. Yes, I'm ravenous from the day's riding, but it's utterly remarkable what you can do with limited ingredients. The broth inside the dumpling sings with wild herbs and the elk meat is juicy and salty and gamey-tasting. I'm not exaggerating when I say that it's not just the best meal I've had in Mongolia (because that's really not much of a horse race), but also one of the best things I've had on the road, anywhere.

From the *pelmeni* of my childhood, my love affair with dumplings progressed to encompass Chinese dim sum, Japanese gyoza, Korean mandu, Nepalese momo, Central Asian *manty*, and now, *buuz*. 'If you think about it,' Zaya tells me, 'it's the

ideal food for nomads. It's easy to make – all you need is flour, water, salt and meat – and it's two dishes in one: soup and entrée.'

'But sometimes we don't have much to eat,' she continues. 'Particularly between January and March. Tsaagan Sar (White Moon) festival in February is traditionally celebrated by making dumplings, which we can only do if our men have been successful during their hunting expeditions.'

Outsiders are not always put off by the challenges of the Tsaatan way of life. 'I'm not the only one who's not from here originally,' Zaya tells me. 'There's this Frenchwoman who comes here every summer to visit her sons. One of our men is the father, and she felt that the boys should live with their dad.'

Zaya's been here six years, but intends to live as a nomad for the rest of her life.

'What keeps you here?' I ask.

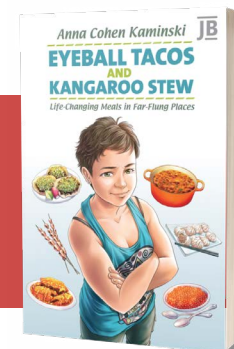
'Love,' Zaya responds, taking in with a glance her beloved reindeer, her and her husband's simple home, the darkening taiga outside.

As I trudge back to my tent, past the silhouettes of *ortz* aglow from the inside with fires from their

hearths, with the shadows of their inhabitants moving within, my throat tightens with a familiar bittersweetness. It's as if I'm a child, my face pressed against the window, always on the outside and looking in. But at the same time, this wistfulness is underpinned by the thrill of exhilaration at being right here, right now, under these very stars.

Through the mesh skylight in my tent, I try to spot Orion – the constellation that my mother first pointed out to me in the night sky when I was little, and one that I always look for, wherever I happen to be in the world. I think back to my visit to the Saramaccans, years back, and of our boatman, paddling us upstream in almost total darkness, guided by his intimate knowledge of the river's every rock and every bend, the stars his only source of light. Back then, I found myself contemplating the twists and turns of my strange life that brought a small-town Soviet kid to the Surinamese jungle. I ponder the same thing now. As I drift off, I wonder also whether my ancestors, thousands of years ago, also found themselves looking up at the night sky, feeling profoundly moved, and not knowing why.

A freelance travel writer for nearly fifteen years, **Anna Cohen Kaminski** is also an incorrigible foodie, prepared to travel great distances in search of memorable meals. The above feature is an extract from her new book, *EyeBall Tacos and Kangaroo Stew: Life-Changing Meals in Far-Flung Places*, which publishes this month.

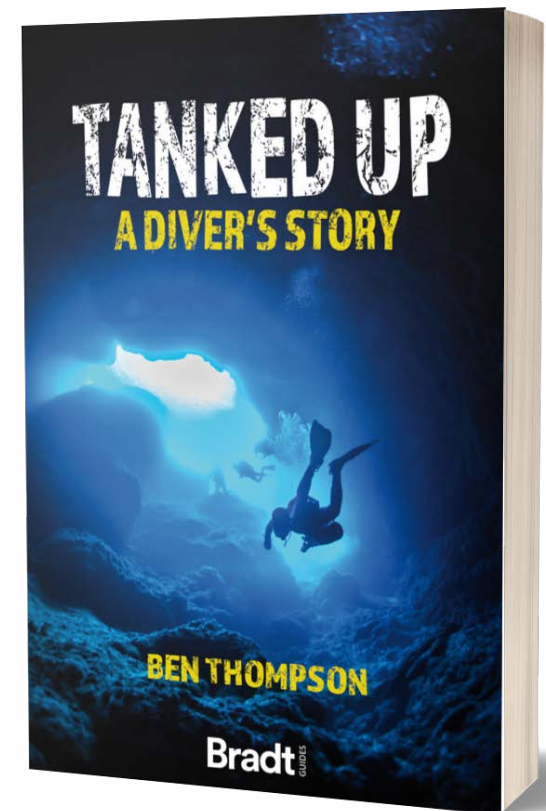


THE TRAVEL CLUB TALKS

FREE to attend for Travel Club members, the Travel Club Talks is an exciting new series of online events offering an opportunity to hear from our authors firsthand and put your questions directly to them.

Following on from the success of our inaugural event with Tharik Hussain, our next talk will be **Diving Into the Unknown**, with author Ben Thompson, on 13 October. As well as reminiscing on stories taken from his new book, *Tanked Up*, Ben will explore the importance of serendipity in travel and reflect on major life decisions that happened while he was making other plans.

[Click here](#) to register for your free ticket (usually £5) using the code **TTCEVENTS**.



SEARCHING FOR THE SPIRITUAL: STORIES FROM A PAINTER-PHOTOGRAPHER

On his travels around the world, Adam Balogh's mission is to seek out the true face of the destinations he is visiting, the local people and their underlying sacrality. As both a painter and a photographer, his creations are always something unique and special. We caught up with Adam to find out more about his work and inspirations.



Tell us a little bit about yourself.

I'm qualified as an economic engineer and began my career working in a bank. It took me more than a decade to climb the ladder there – but then the hand of fate intervened, and I became an artist. To tell you the truth, I had always wondered, right from day one, what type of profession could satisfy my creativity and serve the community at the same time.

How did you get into travel photography?

I've always wanted to see and experience things. I decided to embark on a kind of pilgrimage, to journey through life while always listening to my inner voice. How else can you really notice the path chosen for you? You certainly can't if you keep knocking against the boundaries of your own rational mind. Eventually, I thought I shouldn't let myself be influenced by anything else. So, I decided: use your eyes and open your soul before pressing the button on your camera.

As for my photography, it improved picture by picture, and new doors always seemed to open up for me.

Landscapes, architecture, people... What is your favourite subject to photograph?

Everywhere I go, I try to discover and reveal the extraordinary in the ordinary. Something that



The traditional houses of Sana'a, Yemen

primarily catches my eye, attracts my attention. I'm sensitive to those symbols that to many seem insignificant at first glance – I recognise the indelible marks and traces of the past, of civilisations and cultures which stand out to the photographer's eye.

I don't think of myself as looking through a camera lens. Rather, I'm viewing the world through my own, human, eyes; I see certain 'elements', which enchant me, that appear and move before

a particular light, or in front of a face, a natural landscape, a street, or a church. In other words, first I feel and then I 'snap' these fragments – fragments of life and reality.

What are the most rewarding/memorable destinations you've visited?

One truly unforgettable experience was my trip to Armenia. On the second day, we met



Reflections of Sana'a

a man who was selling pre-Christian coins – Darius silver pieces – at the market in Yerevan. Talking with him, we soon learnt that he wasn't a salesman at all, but a professor of astrophysics. His monthly salary was not enough to provide for his family with two children, so he was selling the coins to earn additional income. While we

were talking, he suddenly offered to drive us to see a ceremony at Geghard Monastery, which we had been wanting to visit. We agreed to let him take us, and the trip went so well that we stayed with him and his family for the remaining ten days, in their apartment on the ninth storey of a high-rise block.

I had a very special experience in Armenia because that family enabled me to visit places that regular tourists can only dream about. I felt so inspired; I totally gave myself to this country. And I feel that the photos I took there have a special spiritual value. Indeed, Armenia is a homeland of Christianity, which was made a state religion there as early as AD303.

My photographs – all deeply sacral images, of people, of ancient walls and buildings, and of church interiors – feature inside and on the cover of a book published on the history of the Armenian Church.

How do you work on the road?

I travel out of curiosity, to satisfy my desire to learn. 'A jewel that never leaves the mine is never polished,' as the Sufi poet Saadi wrote.

I just buy a plane ticket and set out as a backpack tourist, without any particular advance planning. Usually people prepare for a long journey, read up before they go. But somehow, for me, everything happens quite spontaneously. I let go of the reins. Being an open-minded, inquisitive sort of person, I have become a kind of travel addict – the more I see and the more I talk with people of various nationalities, the more I'm able to build connections and understanding among people

living in different places. Understanding how differently people view the world is truly a special experience.

If you could, which destination would you travel to over and over again?

Honestly, I fell in love with the Middle East. The whole thing started when a friend of mine and I travelled to Petra, Jordan many years ago. The journey took us through Damascus, and the city just felt like home for me. (I've travelled back to Syria three times since then, including to Aleppo – at one time a free bus ride away from Damascus Airport – where the *Orient Express* used to go to. Sadly, that train no longer goes there, and it's too dangerous to visit the country because of its unpredictable situation.)

Visiting the Old Town of Damascus for me was like rediscovering something I'd read about as a child in the *Tales of the Thousand and One Nights*. Those narrow, rambling streets seemed all so familiar. It was unbelievable. So, right there and then, I decided that I must somehow visit other Middle Eastern countries where you can still find this same timelessness and hospitality. There are still some countries like that left – I have been to Iran, Yemen and Lebanon since then.

What I was faced with in Sana'a, Yemen was nothing short of breathtaking. Time has stopped

there. It's the only place in the world with buildings up to eight storeys high made of stone and clay. The houses in the city's Old Town have painted glass windows. Since public access to electricity is very scarce, people light their homes by putting candles in the windows, which makes the ambiance incredibly magical in the evening, especially viewed from the top of a building.

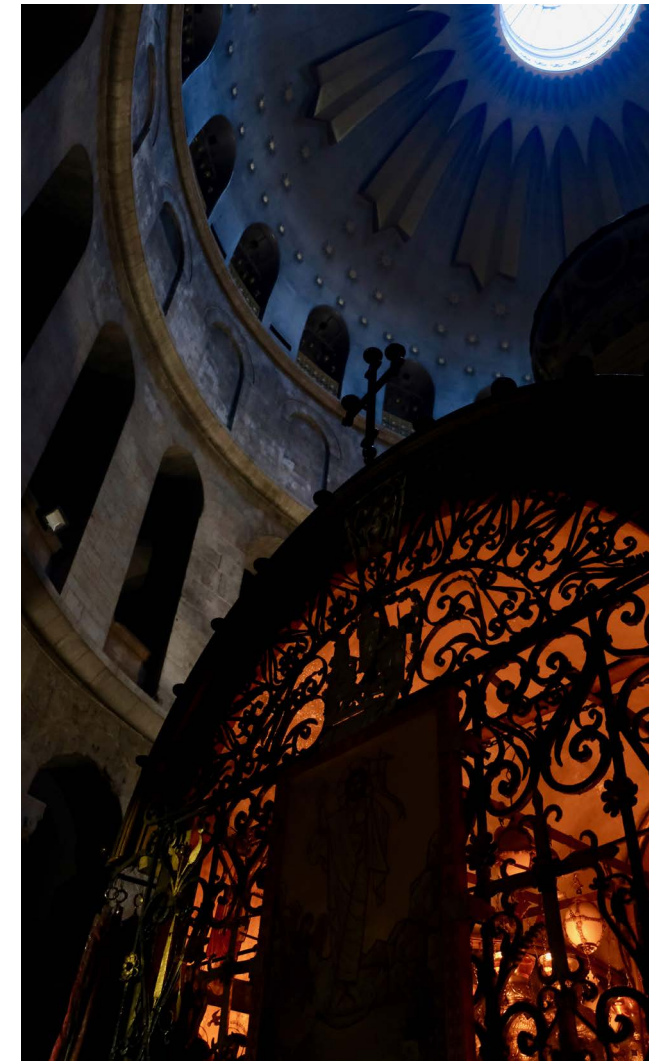
Where did you take your latest photos?

In Jerusalem. I'd always wanted to go there, but fate had never allowed it for some reason. I've observed a hundred times in my life that everything has its time and nothing happens before you're ready, mature enough, for it.

Considered the holiest place by the three most important monotheistic religions, Jerusalem is where heaven and earth meet, according to traditional beliefs.

One reason I wanted to go there was the Jerusalem Temple. I don't think there is any other structure in the world that is so important for so many people or for which so many have fought and sacrificed their lives through millennia. The Ark of the Covenant was kept there, the rock to which Abraham tied Isaac to have him sacrificed was there, and Muhammad ascended to the heavens on a winged horse from the same rock to call Abraham, Moses and Jesus to prayer.

The Temple of Solomon, the first temple that stood at this site, was rebuilt by King Herod; the second temple was burned to the ground by the Romans in AD70. Even by today's standards, the



The Holy Sepulchre Church, Jerusalem

original construction took on gigantic proportions: it involved an area of 144,000m², roughly the size of 12 football pitches. Almost incomprehensible. The Temple Mount itself was surrounded by 30m-high walls and this huge building sat on top of it.

Only the western wall of original temple, Solomon's Temple, remains. It's known now as the Wailing Wall and Jews come here to mourn the destruction of their temple.

Aside from photography, you're also a painter...

As strange as it sounds, I've always known I had to become a painter. It's just that I never had enough time for it somehow. I've always loved playing football and if I hadn't suffered a sports injury, perhaps things would have turned out differently. But, as we all know, what will be will be. Rehabilitation gifted me several months of free time, so I started painting. My creations had something original, something truly sacral and ethereal about them. My first exhibitions gave my life a new perspective and opened more and more doors for me. By the age of 33, I would say I had become an artist.

During the last two decades, I have held more than 100 exhibitions around the world and received four international awards.

Tell us more about your current painting project.

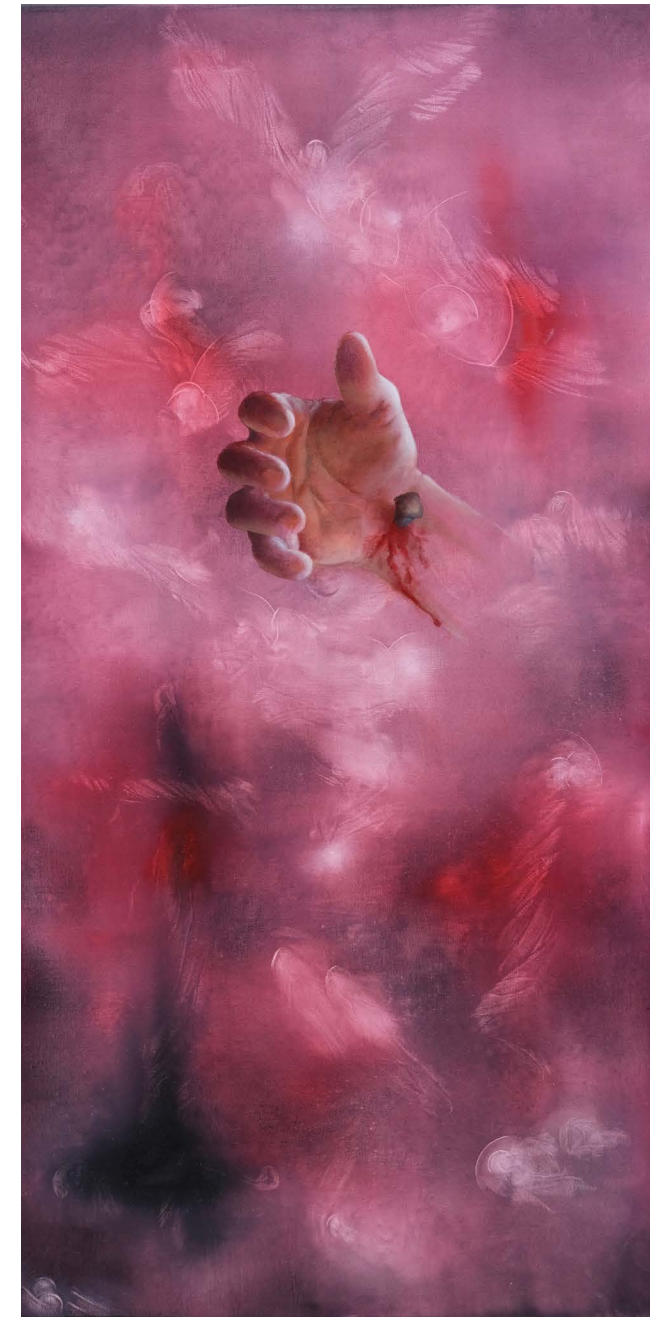
Since I returned from my group exhibition at the Grand Palais in Paris last year, I have been working – throughout the pandemic – on a series of paintings together with an old Hungarian master, Tamás Csató.


Depicting the *Way of the Cross* is one of the most difficult yet spiritually rewarding challenges in the history of Christian art. In each piece of our *Cross* series, the events are shown through the representation of Jesus' arm, hand, fingers and fist. The visual effect created from the meeting of two painters has resulted in an exceptional series – unique in contemporary art – in which each 'part' represents the reality of the 'whole', *pars pro toto*.

Following our successful collaboration, we plan to exhibit our works first in Budapest, this October, and then next year at church sites and sacral places in Hungary and Italy.

Where are you hoping to travel next?

I would like to 'wear the pilgrim's cloak' again and travel back, this time with my family, to Georgia. To see the mystical scenes of its ancient monasteries and visit cave shrines lit by honey-scented golden-yellow candles, to capture special moments in that hospitable world of





Christianity. I'd like to discover some of the hidden snow-capped peaks in the fabulous Caucasus Mountains and visit the ancient wine-making areas.

What advice or knowledge would you pass on to budding photographers?

I was never taught painting or photography. I just picked up whatever I could. But I think you can

get the knack of all that. For photography you need to know your camera and its limitations. I never take lots of photos as I prefer quality over quantity in shooting.

Sadly, we live in a world in which our souls seem to be asleep: we have eyes, but we don't see; we have ears, but we don't hear. Lengthy preparation, careful planning and quick reactions might get you a competent shot, but you won't necessarily capture the spirit of the moment.

You can find out more about Adam Balogh and his work on his [website](#), and follow him on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

CONNECTIONS WITH NATURE

*Created in a time when much of the world stood still, **Kate Stephenson's** new anthology celebrates our powerful bond with the natural world.*

'The water trembles at the wriggle of my toes, sending a gentle ripple trundling outwards from the edge of my foot until it touches the invisible corners of the infinity pool and makes its escape by spilling over the edge.

A slosh, as the water hits the hidden overflow channel, and I look up from where I'm seated to see an Antillean crested hummingbird flit by and hover for a second at a bright pink flower, purposefully extracting its irresistible nectar.

Breathe in. The Saint Lucia rainforest air drifts up from the trees below and fills my lungs with a new freshness. Exhale; and with it some of the heaviness of pregnancy seems to leave my swollen, aching body.'

So began the piece of travel writing that would ignite a series of remarkable events. Back in January 2020, ahead of the most life-changing of events that many of us will ever face – and certainly the most life-changing that we have all faced collectively – an extraordinary thing happened.

I entered Terra Incognita's Travel Writer of the Year competition, centred around ethical tourism – and the judges selected me as a prize winner! Literally days after leaving my job at *National Geographic Kids* magazine to venture into the world of freelance writing (can you imagine now

how poorly timed that decision was?!), I had landed the most amazing start – an award, some writing publicity and, most unbelievably, a trip of lifetime to Costa Rica and the Peruvian Amazon to experience ethical travel tours. I couldn't wait to see sloths for the first time, to stay in fabulous eco lodges, enjoy birdwatching tours and many other exciting plans. All of which, of course, I would write about.

I planned, prepped and saved – as with many of these competition prizes, the cost of the flights was not included, but I knew that, with a little determination and a few freelance roles, it wouldn't be a problem.

Fast forward two months and we all know the story. The world was shut down and the realisation that I'd left a steady and successful career to become a freelancer at a time where no-one could take the risk of using their finances to commission any outside work was beginning to hit home. The idea of taking any kind of exotic trip turned into a cruel joke.

Never one to be beaten, I decided that now would be a great time for two things; an online support network of like-minded people, and the chance to feel like a valued professional again. A

stay-at-home freelancer that wasn't freelancing just wouldn't cut it for me.

And so, the idea of the [Wildlife Blogger Crowd](#) was born.

A crowd, not a club

The Wildlife Blogger Crowd is a diverse community of storytellers from across the globe; a collective of wildlife and eco content creators, spanning online bloggers, social media curators, podcasters, filmmakers and more, working together to amplify one another's voices in sharing a common passion for wildlife, nature and conservation – and communicating a desperate need to save the natural world.

Founded to mark the 10th anniversary of my own blog, [KateonConservation.com](#), the platform was designed as a positive and safe space for wildlife and nature bloggers to share posts, join discussions and support other content creators.

A 'crowd' and not a 'club', the community was named to give a sense of leveling out. A club raised connotations of exclusivity, membership fees and hierarchy; a crowd symbolised the collective: infinite in its ability to grow, yet still each individual remains equal in status in raising

“Never one to be beaten, I decided that now would be a great time for two things.”

the collective voice. The more we stand and speak together, the greater the strength of the crowd.

After 10 years of blogging, and constantly reaffirming the power of storytelling, my vision for The Wildlife Blogger Crowd came from a desire to create a wildlife and nature blog community dedicated to supporting one another, sharing articles, organising collaborations, asking questions and seeking brand opportunities.

Finding the 'holy grail'

As our community grew and connections between members became stronger, plans for a free mentoring scheme developed; and then the 'holy grail' of a printed book crossed my mind. A chance to give every single member of this talented community the chance to list themselves as a published writer.

Six months after launching the Wildlife Blogger Crowd – and too many weeks of Covid-19 restrictions to even differentiate between the months anymore – I thought about those savings accrued for my flights to South America, and instead put them all into creating this book.

Staying grounded (quite literally – and figuratively too, as it would happen) at the beginning of this new stage of my career had changed my perception; and building up the opportunities available to my beloved online community now

seemed more far important than chasing those that I would keep to myself.

If I could not get out there and explore the world to enjoy its natural offerings and write about it, then I would bring the world to me, share in other people's experiences and create a book out of it! Hopefully one that will inspire all members of our collective blogger crowd, and beyond. I pitched the idea to Journey Books, Bradt's self-publishing imprint, and *Connections with Nature* secured its official beginnings.

When I tasked members of the crowd with the incredibly open brief of sharing their most memorable connections with nature – to be submitted in whichever medium they were most comfortable with working in (blog post, poetry, prose, art or photography) – I knew there was a risk that it may not 'fit together' in the way that one would expect of a book. If my days working as a magazine editor taught me anything, it's that readers like to be taken on a narrative journey – even if they don't always realise that it's happening. Even a seemingly random collection of articles and images must somehow flow, in order to please the unconscious mind.

Nonetheless, it was a risk worth taking. I wanted a genuine thing; I wanted our crowd of wordsmiths and visual storytellers to share their truths, their passionate and unrestricted tales of connections with nature.

An eternal love

When it came to it, searching for a thread to weave each piece together actually came quite easily. From connecting with nature in pregnancy to looking back on a lifetime of experiencing wildlife, the reoccurring sentiment from almost every writer was that everyone fell in love with nature when they were young; and for the lucky ones among us, that love remains eternal.

In a time of pandemic, where a diet of life and death is fed to us constantly through unnerving news reports and daily death tolls, many used the opportunity to reflect on nature as the saviour, and its dutiful presence throughout the twists and turns of human life.

'Do you feel connected?' contributor Barry Madden asks. 'I don't mean technologically, but naturally connected and in touch with the wild side of life? There is a whole wild world out there to enjoy, but

“This anthology highlights how our lives are a lot more entwined with ‘the wild’ than we often realise.”



This anthology serves to remind us of the benefits of making connections with wildlife and wild spaces

somehow it seems so many of us have become disconnected. In our Wi-Fi driven age, we have forgotten to look out of the window.'

And Barry isn't the only contributor to remind us how we can all enhance our lives with minimal cost and effort, once we step away from the screen: Tiffany Francis-Baker marvels at the moon; seven-year-old Benjamin studies the details of a barn owl feather; while Alicia Hayden experiences the spectacle of the 'moorland fairground' at dusk.

Through 50 tales of memorable moments with nature, this anthology serves to remind us of

the wonders of the natural world, the benefits of making connections with wildlife and wild spaces, and highlights how our lives are a lot more entwined with 'the wild' than we often realise.

'No Google search and no Instagram post could ever have provided me that moment.' Lucy

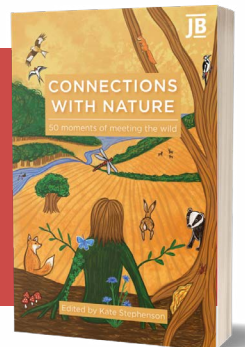
Kate Stephenson is a journalist, blogger and wildlife campaigner, as well as the creator of the successful nature and wildlife blog *Kate on Conservation*. She is also a trustee of international wildlife charity Born Free Foundation, and an ambassador for Ocean Conservation Trust and International Aid for the Protection and Welfare of Animals (IAPWA). *Connections with Nature* is available to buy from her [website](#).

Newman explains in her piece. 'I could never have predicted that the single most incredible wildlife encounter of my life to date, would have been at a gas station in the Canadian backcountry.'

By highlighting both big and small moments of connecting with nature, it is my hope that, collectively, we can show the personal, emotional value of the natural world in a very human way.

The first £100 raised from sales of *Connections with Nature* will be used to purchase one acre of rainforest land via the [World Land Trust](#) – an international conservation charity that protects some of the world's most biologically diverse and threatened habitats, acre by acre. I haven't calculated exactly what it would take to make this book publishing venture carbon-neutral, but I think protecting an acre of rainforest is a good place to start!

All-in-all, putting this book together has been the most satisfying and soulful of experiences – and who knows, if we sell enough copies, perhaps I'll get to book those flights to Costa Rica after all?!



WHICH WAY TO THE GAMBIA?

*With humour, fortitude and no Spanish whatsoever, in 2019 **Ann Cumberland** joined forces with a group of volunteers from Barcelona to embark on a cycling tour of The Gambia. Here, she shares a glimpse of a week spent with some fascinating people in a very different land.*

One spring day in 2019, while on a caravan holiday in Croatia, I saw an advert looking for keen cyclists to join a charity ride in The Gambia. The International Police Association Valles of Barcelona were organising a route around the country, in which members would also deliver charitable aid and, at the end of the trip, donate their bikes to local school children in Brikama.

I had never been to West Africa before, and I spoke no Spanish whatsoever. So, what was the attraction? The sense of adventure? A chance to change the daily routine? An opportunity to help others? A little of each, perhaps, but it was certainly a step into the unknown. Here is just a snapshot of the journey that proved to be one of the most rewarding adventures I've ever had, leaving me with a great sense of having made a small but real difference in the world.

Day 2, inauguration stage (11km)

I am woken by Islamic chants, the call to prayer is more effective than any alarm clock. I had forgotten we are in a country of mixed religions. Although I am half asleep, there is an indescribable peacefulness in the air; the rushed feeling which has been all too frequent a visitor up to now is left behind and tranquillity has entered my soul. I am beginning to feel alive again, really alive. Now I am in the adventure. It is real.

Now I am in The Gambia. The call to prayer has brought a gentle reminder I am not at home in my own bed. Turning to face the day, our eyes lock ... a new friend has paused quietly on my pillow. I am relieved he is on the other side of the mosquito net. Unsure of any consequences I make a firm and steady move, but my furry spider friend decides to sit it out. I am relieved.

In an effort to wash away the morning, I try my ablutions. The water trickles slowly from the shower, barely enough to rinse the shower gel from my body. The towel the hotel has supplied has seen better days. It is hard and crusty. Like I will be at this rate.

A breakfast of omelette and a small crusty bread roll waits for me in the the Carlton Hotel's rustic dining area in Banjul. Here is a tablecloth that has clearly witnessed many diners over the decades, but it now welcomes me and my fellow cyclists. Hot coffee reduces the fuzziness in my head. I can focus now.

We sit around waiting to meet our two-wheeled companions, but the word is out ... this little hotel has Wi-Fi. The conversation stops, heads bow down for a short blast of the void. But not for long. Our numbers are called in turn and our

bicycles are waiting. One by one, we greet our trusty rides. Sunrise presents colours I never knew existed; I pinch myself ... I am glad to be alive! Breakfast has given me a new sense of freedom. But the morning coolness never lasts long so I pile my bag on top of the truck and head off between the two support vehicles.

We cycle from the Arch 22 Monument to Denton Bridge and return for lunch, passing the National Assembly of The Gambia. This is a gentle warm-up for the days ahead before the three-hour drive to Tendaba camp and the start of the cycling proper. I sit astride my new steed. Feels good. All that training has paid off. I

ride easily, smoothly. But it is hot. Very, very hot. I think of cooler adventures.

After lunch we find the transport waiting for us. It is an old and battered minibus, with a support truck behind for the bikes. The seats are

ripped, the windscreen is covered in strips of tape, it is too small for our group so the police who accompany us have to stand at the back with the door open. There are no seat belts, nor is there any air conditioning. I am hot, squashed, and terrified in equal measure. But despite all this, after three hours we arrive safely, if sorely, at Tendaba camp

“Staying together makes it easier, encouraging each other helps keep the pedals turning.”

on the banks of the River Gambia. Some 155km of absolute agony are over.

The camp is a series of cottages, but that term should be taken with a pinch of salt. The window in mine is covered by flowery cloth. The bed seems to be a slab of concrete up against the wall, painted blue with a mattress on top and a mosquito net over that. It is very basic, but it should be enough. There is a toilet but there is little water, so a jug has been provided. The water is intermittent. Wet wipes are needed, I think. Dinner is calling. At least the setting is lovely, right

by the water, and a rustic boat is tied up nearby. After dinner my new Spanish friend, Mar, and I chat about the next day's cycle before bed. We talk about catching malaria. Happy days.

Day 5, Stage 3 (38.5km)

I may never go back to The Gambia, so making this journey worthwhile is where my energies are presently invested, seizing each opportunity to try something different whilst helping others. We are all in this together, this race, this human race. This trip is making me wonder if there is a

big stopwatch in the sky, one that starts ticking the day we are born and then the button is pushed ... it is hot, my mind is wandering.

We move on, cycling together. We spread out as the hills become a little bit tougher and the sun gets hotter. But staying together makes it easier to bear and encouraging each other helps keep the pedals turning.

Reaching Nyanga Bantang, the bicycles are loaded into the back of one of the vehicles. We travel onwards by vehicle to Kerewan, 120km away.

It seems to take hours to arrive, and our stomachs start to rumble. A few of the group have some energy bars; we share what we have, breaking up tiny pieces and handing them around, trying to curb our hunger pangs. Small distances take so much longer on Gambian roads. So, no lunch.

Arriving in Kerewan we are in tents for the night. Somehow, I look forward to these now as no mosquitos or spiders can get in and it is much cooler outside, which makes sleeping much easier and more comfortable.

For now, the showers out at the back of the school close to camp await us in the form of long black bags with a little shower fitting. There is a limited water supply, but it is enough. Just. Venturing round for a shower provides its own challenges. Open to the elements and each

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The weather was exceptionally hot, almost too hot, for cycling

other, we stand side by side rinsing off the day. Some are naked. Being shy is not an option.

Plastic plates we have eaten off earlier are rescued from the bin by young school children. I am uncertain as to whether they are hungry after class or they just want to play with the plates, a sight I have never witnessed before and again gives a new appreciation of what I take so often for granted.

Several hundred children attend this small school, with no flushing toilets, but a hole in the ground in a little outside building without toilet paper or a sink to wash their hands.

Walking past a few of the local women, taken by surprise, their eyes follow my every move. Maybe they have not seen skin so white before, a unique reaction for me, their jaws wide open. I can almost see one woman's entire eyeball as she stares at me in amazement.

As the sun sets, head torches are automatically in use and have become second nature now. This little village has no electricity, so cooking is done by torchlight. Dinner by starlight is definitely a first – the magical night sky, absent of light pollution, is simply amazing. I turn my head torch off to enjoy every moment of this incredible natural environment.

Day 7, transfer day

Travelling to Barra to cross the estuary at the mouth of the River Gambia, we board a ferry to Banjul. This is like no other ferry trip I have ever been on. Women, very colourfully dressed, carry young babies on their backs, supported by a piece of material made into a sling. Others carry bags filled with merchandise and goods, crates filled

with snakes and chickens, some carry their animals, others carry large containers on their heads and one lady even has her handbag on her head... I just cannot help wondering how that might catch on at home. We are

grateful to get a seat as the ferry fills up so quickly. With the help of the Gambian police this makes our passage run much more smoothly.

Later we meet with the Juffureh community in the hometown of Kunta Kinteh. As this is the last day, we have brought our bicycles along to donate them to the school. Many of the children walk long distances to and from school each day, not getting

“I turn my head torch off to enjoy every moment of this incredible natural environment.”

This extract was taken from **Ann Cumberland's** book, *Which Way to The Gambia?*, which is available to buy from her [website](#). For more information on travel in The Gambia, check our Bradt's [comprehensive guidebook](#) – use **TRAVELCLUB50** for a 50% discount.

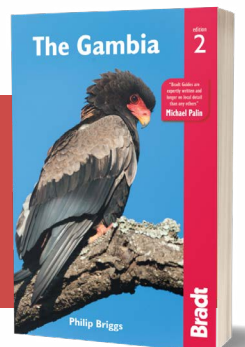
home until late in the evening. Our bicycles will make such an incredible difference to them.

Walking from our transport vehicle, pushing the bikes alongside, I pass through the gates of the school; emotions are running high. The kids shout ‘Welcome, welcome!’ excitedly and continuously as we continue past the entire school and teaching staff. My heart is pounding; I am desperately trying to suppress the intense emotion I am feeling.

Excitement is in the air; I can feel it, this is such a big deal for them. The children sing for us with so much gratitude.

I feel so humbled to be part of such a wonderful occasion, being able to make a small contribution to help others. It has left a lasting impression on my heart.

Our last night is in a hotel in Banjul. It feels like a home from home although I do feel slightly guilty now having witnessed so much poverty on my travels. Electricity, a shower that works properly, a flushing toilet, fewer insects and spiders – just basic things I take for granted, but for me, today, they are simply amazing. I now have a new appreciation of life.



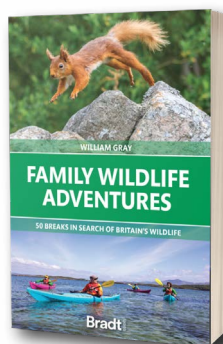
OUT THIS MONTH!

The Travel Club members can claim their exclusive **50% discount** on ALL our books by using the code **TRAVELCLUB50** at checkout. This month's new titles are:

Family Wildlife Adventures

William Gray

£16.99

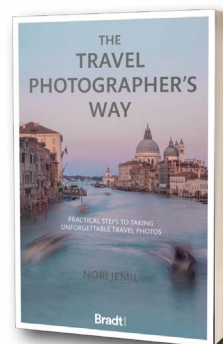


From island-hopping in the Isles of Scilly to wild camping along Scotland's Whale Route, *Family Wildlife Adventures* is full of inspiration for exploring Britain's amazing wildlife with your children. Family travel expert and father of two William Gray has your weekends and school holidays sorted with exciting ideas for adventures by canoe, bike, campervan, boat and more. From time travel along Dorset's Jurassic Coast to canoe-camping in the Norfolk Broads or sea kayaking in the Hebrides, you'll find 50 experiences in this book guaranteed to fuel any child's love of wildlife and adventure.

The Travel Photographer's Way

Nori Jemil

£18.99

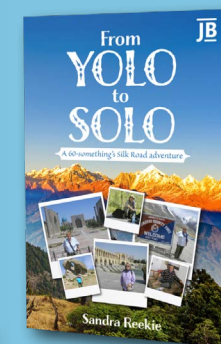
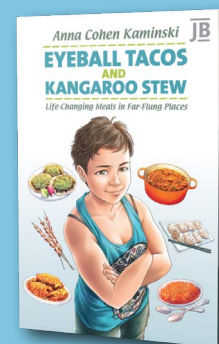


Nori Jemil's ground-breaking practical [photography book](#) considers not just how to get better images, but also why and when to take them. It guides you to becoming a more confident and reflective travel photographer, as well as covering all the technical knowhow needed. Taking a journey around the seven continents, each chapter focuses on the main areas of travel imagery, from people and landscape to architecture and adventure. Bite-size advice on how to get the best from your camera is contextualised throughout the book, so you learn as you go.

Our latest Journey Books

This month sees the publication of our latest Journey Books titles: *Eyeball Tacos and Kangaroo Stew*, *YOLO to Solo* and *Connections with Nature*.

Journey Books is our contract-publishing imprint for unpublished and previously published authors alike. If you've a tale you've always dreamed of seeing in print, or if you're an established author wishing to take a more independent route without compromising on production quality and distribution support, find out more information on our [website](#).



THE TRAVEL CLUB MEMBER BENEFITS

Our aim for The Travel Club is not only to entertain and inspire, and to bring together like-minded travellers, but to save our members money!

Aardvark Safaris: 5% off all tours

Aardvark Safaris specialise in tailor-made, high-quality African safaris away from the crowds. Just email mail@aardvarksafaris.com and mention that you are a Travel Club member when booking.

The Adventure Creators: 10% off all Pyrenees tours

This [adventure outfit](#) based in the Pyrenees specialises in tailor-made, outdoor holidays in the region. To claim, quote **Bradt10** when enquiring.

Adventurous Ink: get your first month free

[Adventurous Ink](#) is a unique subscription service. Each month you'll receive a new book or journal featuring writers, photographers and illustrators who really 'get' the great outdoors. Get your first month free with the code **BRADTINK** (valid when purchasing a two-month subscription).

Bidroom: Free Plus membership

Founded with the mission to make the hotel industry fair for both travellers and hotels, [Bidroom](#)

is the first membership-based marketplace for travel lovers. Hotels get bookings with no commission, and instead they offer discounts and added perks to members such as free room

upgrades, complimentary welcome drinks, free parking and discounts on spa treatments and dining experiences. The Travel Club members can get a one-year Plus membership for free (normally £49)



Enjoy a new book each month with Adventurous Ink

to unlock bigger discounts and a wider selection of hotels and partner extras. [Click here](#) to sign up.

The Cook's Place: 10% off cooking courses

Based in North Yorkshire, [The Cook's Place](#) is an independent cookery school offering a range of courses. Enter the code **BTG21** at checkout (valid on all half- and full-day courses until 30 November 2021).

Dog-Friendly Weekends: Free subscription

There's a new title coming to the Bradt list in 2022: *Dog-Friendly Weekends: 50 breaks in Britain for you and your dog*, written by award-winning travel writer and canine lover Lottie Gross. Lottie is in the process of carrying out her research, and has launched a regular newsletter with trip ideas, hotel recommendations and shout-outs to lovely pubs and restaurants worth travelling for – all suitable for dogs, of course. The Travel Club members can get their subscription for free (normally £40); just click this [link](#) to sign up.

Feast Box: 30% off plus a free bottle of wine

Taste the world in your kitchen with [Feast Box](#), the UK's top-rated recipe box specialising in

over 50 of the world's tastiest cuisines. Enjoy 30% off your first two boxes plus a free bottle of wine; just use the code **BRADTFEAST** at checkout.

HÔRD: 10% off everything

Yorkshire-based [HÔRD](#) create meaningful and high-quality gifts and apparel for the adventurous and wild among us. Just use the code **HORDXTRAVELCLUB10** at checkout.

Inertia Network: 5% off any booking

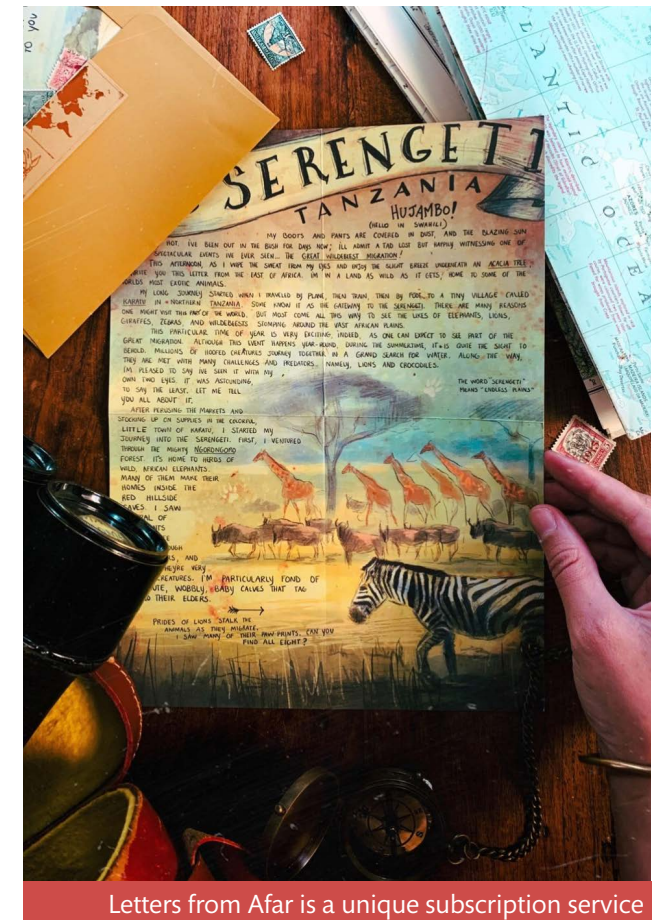
[Inertia Network](#) run immersive expeditions that support local communities in remote and threatened regions. Enter the code **Bradt2021** in the 'How Did You Hear About Us' box when making your enquiry.

Letters from Afar: 10% off

[Letters from Afar](#) is a unique subscription service that shares handcrafted letters from around the world each month. The Travel Club members can get 10% off their first subscription using the code **TRAVELCLUB** at checkout.

Lupine Travel: 5% off tours

[Lupine Travel](#) are a UK tour company specialising in unique destinations and travel ideas at



Letters from Afar is a unique subscription service

affordable prices. For your 5% discount, just email info@lupinettravel.co.uk and mention that you are a member of The Travel Club when booking.

Muddy Boots: 10% off Discovery Walks

Launched in 2020, [Muddy Boots Walking Holidays](#) run self-guided walking holidays and

guided 'Discovery Walks' in the Yorkshire Dales. Walks range from 2½ to 8 hours, with routes suitable for all ages and abilities. To claim your 10% discount, use the code **THETRAVELCLUB** at checkout.

National Geographic Traveller (UK): three issues for £3

With a reputation for compelling storytelling and a focus on off-the-beaten-track travel, *National Geographic Traveller (UK)* is a favourite with intrepid travellers. [Click here](#) to get your first three issues for just £3.

Native Eye: 5% off tours

[Native Eye](#) specialise in small-group tours to some of the world's most adventurous destinations from Chad and Congo to Saudi Arabia and Iraq. For 5% off any bookings made until 31 December 2021 (for tours in 2021 or 2022), contact them on 01473 328546 or info@nativeeyetravel.com and state you're a member.

Natural Britain: 10% off

[Natural Britain](#) are a new UK-focused tour operator with a focus on slow and sustainable travel, and are the first operator in the country to introduce carbon labelling for every trip. Enjoy 10% off two brand-new tours, [Hidden Hampshire](#)

and [Champing in Natural Northants](#); just use the code **BRADTNB** at checkout.

Safari Drive: 10% off vehicle and equipment hire

[Safari Drive](#) are a UK tour operator who have specialised in creating bespoke self-drive safari holidays in Africa since 1993. Just mention that you're a Travel Club member when booking.

Sunvil: 5% off Alentejo bookings

Award-winning holiday specialist [Sunvil](#) is offering The Travel Club members a 5% saving on any new booking to Portugal's Alentejo for travel before 31 December 2021. This is in addition to the two free PCR tests per person for stays of five nights or more (saving £120pp). To book, visit their website or call 020 8758 4722.

Tonic: 10% off subscriptions

[Tonic](#) is a brand-new biannual drink and travel magazine. Simply use the code **BRADTTC10** at checkout to redeem your discount, which currently also includes free UK and EU shipping.

Travel Africa: 20% off subscriptions

Founded in 1997, *Travel Africa* remains the only international magazine dedicated to

exploring Africa's attractions, wildlife and cultures. [Click here](#) and enter the code **BRADT2020** at checkout.

Untamed Borders: 10% off group tours

Adventure travel company [Untamed Borders](#) runs bespoke trips and small-group adventures to some of the world's most interesting and inaccessible places. Use code **BRADT10** to receive 10% off any 2021/2022 group departure.

Wanderlust: £10 off subscriptions

This legendary travel magazine is still going strong after nearly 30 years, offering issues packed full of articles on wildlife and cultural travel. [Click here](#) and enter the code **WLMAG20** at checkout.

Wild With Consent: 5% off new bookings

[Wild With Consent](#) are a new UK-based platform that allows campervanners to browse and book privately owned sites with full landowner permission. The Travel Club members can enjoy 5% off bookings with the code **BRADT2021** (valid for first-time customers only).

COMING NEXT MONTH...

In NOVEMBER's issue of The Travel Club...

Diana Darke shares her experiences of a summer trip across the Balkans, a Slow tour of one of England's oft-overlooked counties, and Julian Elliott explores some of Uzbekistan's little-visited corners.

