

Destination Africa

There's nowhere on earth quite like Africa. Yes, to speak of Africa as a single entity can be profoundly misleading – Africa is the unwieldy sum total of around 50 countries, tens of thousands of ethnic groups, and landscapes that span the full spectrum of the natural world's repertoire. But if we could distil Africa's appeal to its essence it would be this: wherever you go, and more than any other continent, human and natural history come together in Africa with rare power. This is a place where all the world's beauty and tragedy seem to be concentrated in one (albeit vast) corner of the earth, a diverse continent that is soulful, deeply troubled and profoundly uplifting all at once. In short, there's something special about Africa, and whether you're a hardened African veteran or a wide-eyed first timer, this is a continent that cannot fail to get under your skin.

The canvas upon which Africa's epic story is written is itself astonishing, and reason enough to visit. From the tropical rainforests of Central Africa to the endless dune scapes and waterless tracts of the Sahara, from the signature savannah of the east to jagged mountains and green-tinged highlands all across the continent, Africa has few peers when it comes to natural beauty. It is sunset on the Serengeti, and the sunrise at Assekrem, deep in the Algerian Sahara, whose name means the 'End of the World'; it is scaling the Mountains of the Moon in Uganda, and standing where sand dunes meet the sea in Namibia; or it is the deserted palm-fringed beaches of Mozambique, São Tomé & Príncipe, Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone, and a slow boat journey through the blissful solitude of Botswana's Okavango Delta. Exploring these stirring wilderness areas could easily occupy a lifetime and you would still scarcely have touched the surface.

Inhabiting these wilderness areas, and often living just beyond the flimsy fence of the African farmer, Africa's wildlife brings these landscapes to life, a tangible and sometimes profoundly mysterious presence that adds so much personality to the wild. The list of Africa's megafauna reads like a who's who of the animal kingdom, and so many of the great beasts, whose existence we learned about as children, call Africa home. Elephants, gorillas, lions, leopards, cheetahs, giraffes, zebras, rhinos, hippos and chimpanzees all roam free in Africa, often in massive herds, but just as often as small, precarious outposts in a sea of humanity that cling to life as wars rage around them. Going on an African safari may be something of a travellers' cliché, but we're yet to find a traveller who has watched the wildlife world in motion in the Masai Mara, stumbled upon the paradise that is the Ngorongoro Crater, or communed with gorillas in Uganda's Bwindi Impenetrable Forest, and has not been reduced to an ecstatic state of childlike wonder.

But there's so much more to Africa than nature's considerable bounty. On this continent where human beings first came into existence, customs, traditions and ancient rites tie Africans to generations past and to the collective memory of myriad people. In many rural areas, it can feel as though the modern world might never have happened, and old ways of doing things – a certain grace and civility, hospitality and a community spirit – survive. Welcome to Old Africa.

And yet, even as the past retains its hold over the lives of many Africans, just as many have embraced the future, bringing creativity and sophistication to the continent's cities and urban centres. Sometimes this New Africa is expressed in a restless search for solutions to the continent's problems, or in an eagerness to break free of the restrictive chains of the past. But just as

FAST FACTS

Population: 1 billion

Most populous country:
Nigeria (146 million)

Total area: 30.2 million
sq km

Largest/smallest country:
Sudan/Gambia

Proportion of population
living in rural areas:
around 60%

Number of African
countries ranked among
the lowest 24 in the UN's
2009 Human Development
Index: 22

Highest life expectancy at
birth: Libya and Tunisia
(73.8 years)

Lowest life expectancy
at birth: Zambia (44.5
years)

Countries with highest
proportion of national
parks and other protected
areas: Zambia (41.8%)
and Tanzania (38.4%)

Proportion of Africa
covered by deserts/
rainforests: 60%/20%

often, modern Africans are taking all that is new and fusing it onto the best of the old. Leading the way have been Africa's endlessly talented musicians, who give voice in equal measure to a continent yearning for a return to the past and for a better future – the fruits of their labours provide a constantly evolving playlist to the continent's diversity and an unforgettable soundtrack to your African journey. The results can be stunning and are always unmistakably African.

'once Africa has you in its thrall, it very rarely lets go'

For all this talk of past and future, there's no denying that the African present is plagued with difficulties that read like a catalogue of human and environmental calamity. Corruption is widespread (though by no means universal) among Africa's rulers, diseases kill Africans at an unconscionable rate, wars and lawlessness continue to blight the lives of millions, and the continent's staggering wealth of natural resources has more often meant misery than a better life for people from Nigeria to Congo. Such problems are exacerbated by deserts eating away at the land and livelihoods of millions, and by deforestation, drought, loss of biodiversity and land degradation. Little wonder, then, that Africa remains the poorest continent on earth.

At the same time, Africa has an impressive array of good news stories and most of them are, by their very nature, rarely considered newsworthy by the international media. Democracy and good governance have taken hold from Benin to Botswana and countries formerly at war – Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire and Angola for example – have taken the first tentative steps along the road to peace and stability. Even Zimbabwe, that exemplification of African potential gone to ruin, has new, if fragile, reasons to hope. When it comes to environmental issues, the continent's problems can seem overwhelming, but governments, as well as local and international conservation groups, have had some stunning successes, from the stabilisation of once-threatened elephant, rhino and primate populations, to Gabon's ground-breaking creation of a slew of national parks, which protect some of Central Africa's most pristine wilderness. And then there are the millions of small but significant successes engineered daily by Africans themselves. Whether it's an overworked mother who puts food on the table for her children against the odds or a community-based conservation program that puts power and prosperity into the hands of a local community, these are the real African success stories.

And one final thing: travel African-style can be hard travel. While you can see Africa in five-star luxury, the African road can be a long and dusty one, particularly in areas less trammelled by tourists. In such places, and even in countries where you'd least expect it, infrastructure is often poor or nonexistent, transport is slow and uncomfortable, and the frustrations of African bureaucracy and border-crossing politics can confound even the best-laid plans. But in Africa, the journey in all its complexity will put you in close proximity with Africans who live with such difficulties on a daily basis. We can think of no people on earth with whom we'd rather share the ride. And when, in spite of it all, they smile and begin to dance, you'll find it hard to resist joining in. It's at moments like these that you begin to understand why so many travellers are passionate about Africa: once Africa has you in its thrall, it very rarely lets go.

Getting Started

By visiting Africa, you're embarking on a major expedition that requires careful planning and, for many travellers, involves setting out into the unknown. Addressing both elements – the practical and the stuff of dreams – should occupy most of your pre-departure planning. The following section is only intended to give you a mix of general and inspirational information that might be useful before you set off. For more specific tidbits, flip to the Africa Directory on p1132, while for advice on travelling responsibly, turn to p54. No matter how prepared you are, however, nothing will quite prepare you for the overwhelming sensory and cultural experience that is a first visit to Africa. But isn't that why you're going?

WHEN TO GO

Most tourists tie in their trip with Africa's dry seasons – dirt tracks become a sea of mud when it rains. There are regional variations, but essentially it goes like this: East Africa has two dry seasons – December to February/March and June to October – with rainy seasons in between; by around January or February, East African wildlife is concentrated around diminishing water sources and is therefore easier to spot. In southern Africa it's dry from May/June, gets really hot in October, then rains November to April/May. In West Africa the dry season is October/November to April/May, and it gets very hot at the end of this period. In Central Africa, June to September is the dry time. In North Africa, rain isn't the main issue – it's temperature. The best time to travel is the cooler period from October to March.

Although dry seasons are usually the popular times, don't automatically avoid the rainy season everywhere. In some countries it only rains for a few hours each day (often at night) and then the air is crystal clear and views go on forever. It's also a good time for birdwatching, hotel rates are cheaper and popular tourist haunts are much quieter too. And generally the local people are also happier because good rains mean good crops, so traditional festivals are often held at this time.

Other elements to consider when planning your trip include the continent's fascinating festivals (see p17 and the individual country chapters for details), or local holiday periods (see p1140 and the individual country chapters for details). In the case of holidays, for example, you may want to avoid travelling in Islamic countries during Ramadan.

COSTS & MONEY

Africa can be as cheap or expensive as you want it to be. Travelling around like a maniac is going to cost much more than taking time to explore a small region slowly and in depth.

The actual cost of living (food, transport etc) varies greatly around the continent, and travellers commonly blow big chunks of their budget on car hire (US\$30 to US\$150 per day), internal flights, adrenaline sports and organised safaris or treks (at least \$100 a day in East/southern Africa). Prevailing petrol prices will have a major impact on your costs, whether you're hiring a car or buying food. Sometimes it costs the same as in Europe, but in Libya, for example, it costs as little as US\$0.10 per litre.

Africa is thought of as expensive among some budget travellers, but you can still scrape by for under US\$30 per day. If you'd like a few more

For climate information about each country, see the relevant country chapters. General climate information is given on p1137.

Apart from being expensive, African visa requirements are one of the most irritating hurdles for the traveller. Accept that they are a form of retaliation for the obstacles the West puts in the way of Africans migrants; go armed with photos, and cultivate a sense of humour.

WHAT TO TAKE?

- Cash – you can't go wrong with a wad of US dollars or euros in your pocket (or, better, strapped about your person). ATM cards are good too, but not always viable.
- Memory cards – bring more than you think you'll need as they'll come in handy if one gets damaged
- Photocopies of important documents – photocopy your passport data pages (and those with relevant visas), tickets and travellers cheques, and pack them separately from the originals
- Water purifier – bottled water is available almost everywhere, but the plastic bottles are an environmental nightmare
- Sealable plastic bags – to protect your belongings from moisture and dust
- Travel insurance (p1140) – accidents do happen
- One smart set of clothes – advisable for visa applications, crossing borders or if you're invited to somebody's house
- Basic medical kit (see p1165)
- Mosquito net and repellent
- Light sleeping bag (for cold desert nights) or a sleeping sheet (for less-than-clean hotels)
- Sunglasses, hat and sunscreen (as essential in the Sahara as on the beach)
- Torch (flashlight) and spare batteries – electricity can be a stop-start affair
- Universal washbasin plug and length of cord for drying clothes
- Sanitary towels or tampons
- Condoms
- An emergency stash of toilet paper
- Frisbee or small (size-three) football – a great way to meet local kids
- Contact-lens-cleaning-and-soaking solutions and a pair of prescription glasses as a back-up
- Patience – most transport does leave eventually

comforts (such as an in-room shower), reckon on US\$40, plus a slush fund of, say, US\$100 to US\$150 a month for unexpected expenses. Beyond that, the scope for spending money is limited only by your bank account or credit limit...

For more on money issues, see p1141. The Fast Facts boxes in the country chapters provide more specific country budgets.

TOP AFRICAN READS

The following selection of books should give you a starting point for travel literature that covers the broader geographical spectrum. We also cover reading matter about Africa on opposite, p39 and p1135.

The Tree Where Man Was Born, by Peter Matthiessen, dates from the early '60s, but it's beautifully written and remains for many the definitive African travelogue. His *African Silences* and *Sand Rivers* are also outstanding.

Shadow of the Sun, by Ryszard Kapuściński, gets under the skin of Africa like few other books with illuminating anecdotes garnered during decades as a foreign correspondent in Africa.

The Zanzibar Chest, by Aidan Hartley, is a searing, no-holds-barred memoir of the author's time as a foreign correspondent in the war zones of Africa.

TOP 10

UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE—LISTED SITES

- **Pyramids of Giza** (Egypt, p91) The pharaohs' extraordinary gift to the world
- **Dogon Country** (Mali, p412) Dramatic scenery and intriguing traditional villages
- **Serengeti National Park** (Tanzania, p798) The largest collection of wildlife on the planet
- **Victoria Falls** (Zambia, p1098; Zimbabwe, p1124) One of Africa's most spectacular sights, with activities to match
- **Churches of Lalibela** (Ethiopia, p692) An other-worldly, ancient and deeply spiritual place with churches hewn from the rock
- **Bwindi Impenetrable National Park** (Uganda, p836) Home to half of the world's mountain gorillas and rainforest
- **Ghadames** (Libya, p135) Ancient and labyrinthine Saharan caravan town
- **Medina of Fez** (Morocco, p169) Islamic city that seems to spring from the imagination
- **Coastal forts and castles** (Ghana, p349) The oldest colonial buildings in Africa with echoes of the slave-trading past
- **Robben Island** (South Africa, p1023) Follow Nelson Mandela's (and South Africa's) walk to freedom

NOVELS

- *The Famished Road* (Ben Okri) Extraordinary magic realism epic from Nigeria
- *Petals of Blood* (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o) A whodunnit underpinned by biting political satire
- *Disgrace* (JM Coetzee) Confronting tale of post-apartheid South Africa
- *Things Fall Apart* (Chinua Achebe) Classic tragedy by the Nigerian master
- *Little Boys Come from the Stars* (Emmanuel Dongala) Comic yet heart-breaking Congolese story through a child's eyes
- *Half of a Yellow Sun* (Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie) Masterful storytelling set during Nigeria's Biafran War
- *The Cairo Trilogy* (Naguib Mahfouz) Sweeping family drama set in 1940s Egypt
- *Abyssinian Chronicles* (Moses Isegawa) Accomplished evocation of Idi Amin's Uganda
- *In the Country of Men* (Hisham Matar) Harrowing drama in Colonel Qaddafi's Libya
- *Waiting for the Wild Beasts to Vote* (Ahmadou Kourouma) Fantastical tale following the sweep of West African history

FESTIVALS

- **La Cure Salée** (p456) World-famous annual celebration by Fula herders, near In-Gall in Niger; September
- **Festival of the Dhow Countries** (www.ziff.or.tz; p807) Film and music festival held in Zanzibar; July
- **Festival in the Desert** (www.festival-au-desert.org; p418) Tuareg culture meets rock music near Timbuktu in Mali; early January
- **Festival Sur Le Niger** (p407) Performances along the Niger riverbank in Ségou by Mali's leading musicians; late January/early February
- **Kano Durbar** (p473) Spectacular traditional parade of horsemen, held annually in Kano, Nigeria; end of Ramadan
- **Tabaski** (p294) The festivities surrounding Eid al-Adha are celebrated throughout Muslim West Africa, but the mix of Islamic and local traditions is at its best in Foumban, Cameroon
- **Fespaco** (www.fespaco.bf, in French; p265) Africa's biggest film fest, held in odd years in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso; February/March
- **Timkat Ethiopian Epiphany celebration** (p697) Colourful and ceremonial celebration of Ethiopia's Christian heritage; 19 January
- **Umhlanga** (p1079) One of southern Africa's most vibrant spectacles; August/September
- **Sauti za Busara** (www.busaramusic.com; p807) Swahili and world-music festival in Zanzibar; February

Journey Without Maps, by Graham Greene, is a wonderful narrative by one of the 20th century's best writers as he travelled through the forests of Liberia and Sierra Leone in 1935.

Dark Star Safari, by Paul Theroux, chronicles one of the author's returns to Africa (he was a Peace Corps volunteer in Malawi in the 1960s) as he travels from Cairo to Cape Town.

Blood River – A Journey to Africa's Broken Heart, by Tim Butcher, follows HM Stanley's route into the African interior and reads like a thriller, combining gripping suspense with an engaging writing style.

The Lost Kingdoms of Africa, by Jeffrey Taylor, is a highly readable account of a modern journey through the Sahel, especially northern Nigeria, Niger and Mali; it was published in the US as *Angry Wind*.

Travels in the White Man's Grave, by Donald MacIntosh, is a little-known classic by a writer who spent much of his working life in the forests of Liberia, Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire and Cameroon.

If you can't get enough of African literature, check out the website of literary magazine *The African Review of Books* (www.africanreviewofbooks.com), which has a Top 100 list as well as reams of news, reviews and book gossip.

INTERNET RESOURCES

For specific country overviews and hundreds of useful links, including Thorn Tree, Lonely Planet's online forum, head to lonelyplanet.com. For good news websites covering Africa, see p35. Information on Africa can also be found at the following websites:

African Studies Center (www.africa.upenn.edu//Home_Page/Country.html) Extensive links from the University of Pennsylvania's Africa program.

Bootsnall (www.bootsnall.com) Although its information about Africa varies in usefulness, the Africa message board is indispensable.

Norwegian Council for Africa (www.afrika.no) A comprehensive site with 'Index on Africa' links for each country, chat forums and more.

Sahara Overland (www.sahara-overland.com) The best practical guide for travellers to the Sahara, with useful forums, route information and book reviews.

The Africa Guide (www.africaguide.com) An all-purpose, all-Africa site with everything from extensive background information to NGOs and travel links.

Travel Africa (www.travelafricamag.com) The best print magazine on Africa, with articles on every corner of the continent and a useful 'Safari Planner' on its website.

Itineraries

CLASSIC ROUTES

TOP TO BOTTOM

One Year/Tunisia to Cape Town

Begin in **Tunisia** (p213), then cross the border into Libya where cosmopolitan **Tripoli** (p130) serves as a launch pad for a foray into the **Libyan Sahara** (p135). Stop off in **Leptis Magna** (p133) and **Cyrene** (p134) en route to **Egypt** (p82) where ancient sites and a felucca trip down the Nile await. Continue south across Lake Nasser into Sudan where the glorious **Meroe Sites** (p204) and the rest of **northern Sudan** (p204) are the highlights. **Ethiopia** (p675) has some exceptional sites, especially **Lalibela** (p692), before you journey down to **Nairobi** (p707).

The wildlife-sprinkled plains of **Kenya** (p700) and **Tanzania** (p768) form the centrepiece of many classic African journeys, but don't neglect the warm and welcoming villages of **Malawi** (p935), with a detour to **Mozambique** (p961) en route to **Zambia** (p1082); in the latter, **Victoria Falls** (p1096) is breathtaking. From here, it's back into wildlife territory with Botswana's **Okavango Delta** (p875) and Namibia's **Etosha National Park** (p1000), before reaching the very bottom of Africa in stunning **Cape Town** (p1021), South Africa.



Cairo to the Cape may be the best-known north-south African odyssey, but why not take in a bit of North Africa and travel from the very top to the very bottom?

SOUTHERN AFRICA SMORGASBORD

Three Months/
Cape Town to Cape Town

Start in South Africa's mother city, vibrant **Cape Town** (p1021), then head north into Namibia to take in the spectacular landscapes of **Fish River Canyon National Park** (p1005), the endless sand dunes of Namibia in **Namib-Naukluft Park** (p995), and the high-adrenaline activities of **Swakopmund** (p992). Continue north to **Etosha National Park** (p1000), then east along the Caprivi strip to **Kasane** (p882), the gateway to Botswana's **Chobe National Park** (p883) and its amazing concentration of elephants. Fly to **Maun** (p879) for a few days poling through the swampy maze of the **Okavango Delta** (p875). Back in Kasane, it's a short hop into Zambia's **Livingstone** (p1096), for some high-speed thrills and the spectacular **Victoria Falls** (p1098).

From Zambia, cross into Malawi, then head south to the white Lake Malawi beaches of **Cape Maclear** (p955), **Blantyre** (p948) and **Liwonde National Park** (p953) for an up-close encounter with elephants.

Once across the border in Mozambique, take the train from Cuamba to **Nampula** (p974), the jumping-off point for trips to the unforgettable **Mozambique Island** (p974). Take a trip to the lost-in-time **Quirimbas Archipelago** (p976) then head south via the sleepy towns of **Quelimane** (p973), **Beira** (p972), **Vilankulo** (p971), for the **Bazaruto Archipelago** (p972), and **Inhambane** (p970). Next stop is beguiling **Maputo** (p965) for a fiesta of seafood and caipirinhas. Then it's on to **Swaziland** (p1068) en route to **Johannesburg** (p1048), South Africa's hustling, bustling commercial capital. From here you can head to the **Kruger National Park** (p1046) or venture south to the **Drakensberg Mountains** (p1044), for great hiking, even across the border into **Lesotho** (p890). Drop down to the coast at **Durban** (p1037) before following the trail all the way back to Cape Town.

This itinerary takes in nine countries and the best southern Africa has to offer – most places are easily accessible, English is widely spoken and the countries are well set up for foreign visitors.



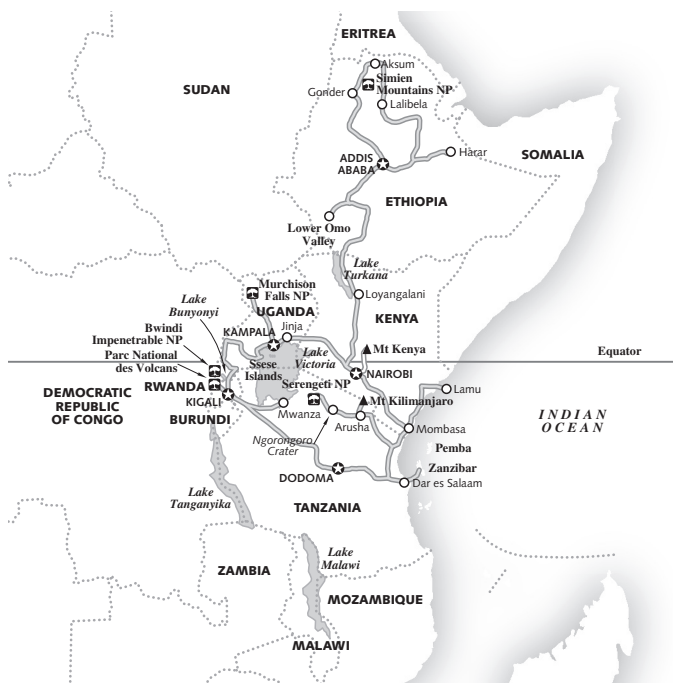
EAST AFRICAN EXTRAVANGANZA

Three Months/
Nairobi to Addis Ababa

Fly into Kenya's **Nairobi** (p707) and explore the Central Highlands around **Mt Kenya** (p715), then head east via **Mombasa** (p721) to the palm-fringed beaches and coral reefs of the **Lamu archipelago** (p727).

Head south into Tanzania to **Arusha** (p791), from where you can arrange 4WD safaris to the **Ngorongoro crater** (p798) or **Serengeti National Park** (p798), and trekking trips up **Mt Kilimanjaro** (p789). From **Dar es Salaam** (p773), hop offshore to drink in the Swahili history and culture of **Zanzibar** (p778) and **Pemba** (p785). From Dar es Salaam head northwest into Rwanda where soulful **Kigali** (p745) is worth seeing before you detour to the silverback gorillas of **Parc National des Volcans** (p750). Cross into western Uganda, stopping off at stunning **Lake Bunyonyi** (p838) before searching for mountain gorillas in **Bwindi Impenetrable National Park** (p836). Also possible is the chance to kick back for a few days at the **Crater Lakes** (p833) or **Ssese Islands** (p840), or go white-water rafting at **Jinja** (p828); in the north, **Murchison Falls National Park** (p841) is a gem.

From Uganda travel east into Kenya to remote **Loyangalani** (p718), before heading north into Ethiopia. In Ethiopia's south, the **Lower Omo Valley** (p695) is one of East Africa's most underrated wilderness areas, while the north is home to the castles of **Gonder** (p688), the rock churches of **Lalibela** (p692), the ancient city of **Aksum** (p690) and fantastic hiking in the **Simien Mountains National Park** (p690). After a detour to the fascinating walled city of **Harar** (p694), head to **Addis Ababa** (p681) for your flight back to Nairobi.



The wildlife of Kenya and Tanzania, and the island of Zanzibar, are well known, but there's so much more to East Africa, including gorillas in Rwanda and Uganda, and the other-worldly natural and cultural attractions of Ethiopia.

ROADS LESS TRAVELLED

FRENCH FOOTSTEPS

Begin in Morocco in the cities of **Marrakesh** (p177) and **Fez** (p169), with excursions to **Essaouira** (p165), the **High Atlas Mountains** (p182) and the **Drâa Valley** (p185). The long journey south through the Western Sahara, via **Dakhla**, takes you to **Nouâdhibou** (p434) in Mauritania. After desert detours to **Ben Amira** (p436), **Chinguetti** (p436) and **Ouadâne** (p437), head back to the coast, via **Terjit** (p436), to **Nouakchott** (p431), then across the border to **Saint-Louis** (p493) in Senegal. **Dakar** (p484) is one of West Africa's cultural capitals, with great live music and nightlife, while the bird-rich **Siné-Saloum Delta** (p492) couldn't be quieter, with pirogues drifting quietly through the mangroves. Out east, the **Parc National de Niokolo-Koba** (p497) is a worthwhile stop en route to Guinea, where the **Fouta Djallon highlands** (p371) offer fine hiking in stunning country.

Across the border in Mali, **Bamako** (p401) has terrific live music. The vast, ornate mud mosque and Monday market in **Djenné** (p408), trekking in the fascinating **Dogon Country** (p412), and a boat trip up the **Niger River** (see the boxed text, p412) to the legendary desert outpost of **Timbuktu** (p416), are Mali's stand-out attractions. In Burkina Faso, **Bobo-Dioulasso** (p269) and the **Sindou Peaks** (p272) are the highlights of this friendly country. Niger's capital **Niamey** (p446) is an agreeable base for the wonderful Sunday market in **Ayorou** (p450) and an excursion to the Sahel's last giraffes at **Kouré** (p450). In the north, **Agadez** (p454) is Niger's premier ancient city and, if the security situation permits, the gateway to some of the Sahara's most beautiful scenery.

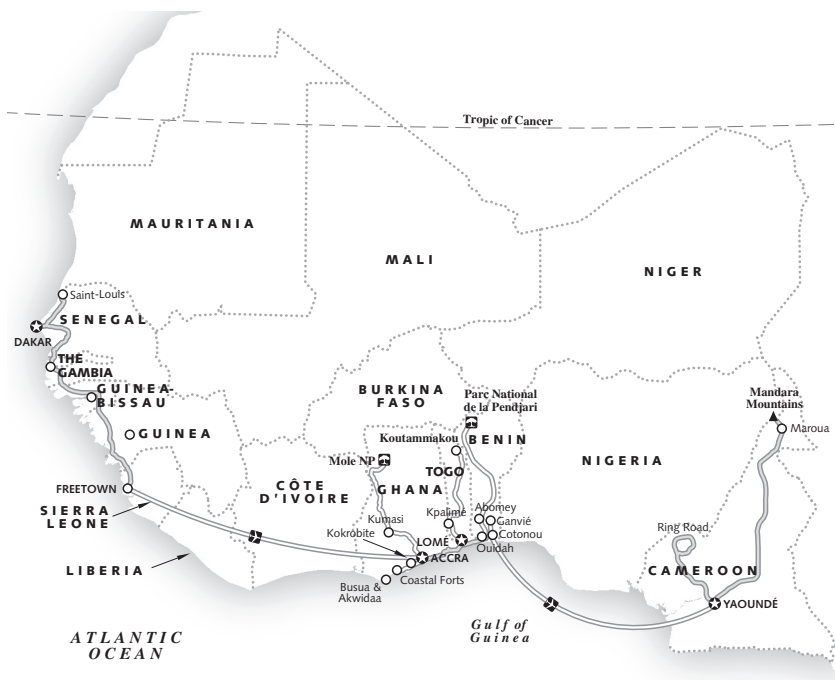
Pack a French phrasebook and hone your sign language for this trip that takes you through the fascinating human and cultural landscape of Sahara and Sahel.



ATLANTIC WEST AFRICA

From the arid coastlines of the northwest to the palm-fringed tropics of Cameroon, West Africa's coastline has it all. Senegal's capital, **Dakar** (p484), with its African sophistication, serves both as a starting point and a base for the first part of your journey. To the north, **Saint-Louis** (p493) is like stepping back into pre-colonial Africa. From Dakar, head south via **The Gambia** (p318), **Guinea-Bissau** (p376) and **Guinea** (p361) to **Sierra Leone** (p505), a country very much on the rebound, with some of Africa's best **beaches** (p513). From **Freetown** (p509), consider flying to agreeable **Accra** (p341) in Ghana, from where excursions to the old **coastal forts** (p347) and stunning beaches at **Kokrobite** (p347) and **Busua & Akwidaa** (p349) never disappoint. Don't fail to detour north to **Kumasi** (p350) in the Ashanti heartland, or even further north to elephant-rich **Mole National Park** (p355). There's plenty of onward transport to the fascinating markets and fine museum of **Lomé** (p524) and don't miss an inland hiking detour around **Kpalimé** (see the boxed text, p529) or the clay-and-straw fortresses of **Koutammakou** (p532) in the far north. Not far away is Benin, with **Ouidah** (p253), the evocative former slaving port and home of voodoo; the history-rich town of **Abomey** (p255); the stilt-villages of **Ganvié** (p252); and the **Parc National de la Pendjari** (p257). **Cotonou** (p247) has all the steamy appeal of the tropics; from here fly to **Yaoundé** (p282) in Cameroon, which has a distinctive Central African feel. After a circuit of the **Ring Road** (p293) through the traditional kingdoms of Cameroon's northwestern highlands, head north to **Maroua** (p298) and the **Mandara Mountains** (p300).

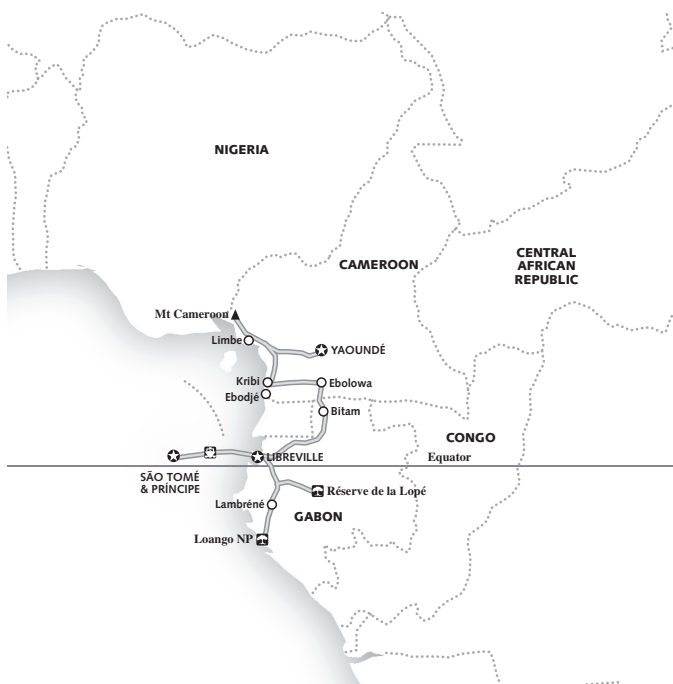
For much of this route along coastal West Africa, you're likely to be the only Western traveller. In the process, you'll discover an Africa every bit as beautiful as more famous destinations.



SURFING HIPPOS & NESTING TURTLES

Fly into Cameroon's capital, **Yaoundé** (p282), then head west to the lazy, chocolate-coloured beaches around **Limbe** (p289), where the Limbe Wildlife Centre is home to rescued gorillas, chimps and drills, all refugees from Cameroon's thriving bushmeat trade. After exploring **Mt Cameroon** (p289) head south to the lovely white-sand beaches of **Kribi** (p295). Even better for wildlife enthusiasts, continue down the coast to **Ebodjé** (p296) with its nesting turtles and impressive ecotourism project. From **Ebolowa** (p295), you leave behind well-travelled paths and venture across the Gabon border to **Bitam** (p614). From Gabon's capital, **Libreville** (p608), a number of outstanding wildlife-watching experiences are possible in the country's many pristine and newly created national parks. If you could choose just two, watch the surfing hippos and strolling elephants on the beaches at **Loango National Park** (p615), and more elephants and the vibrant mandrill troupes of **Réserve de la Lopé** (p617) in eastern Gabon. Most of these unique ecotourism opportunities are only accessible by plane from Libreville, so you may have to base yourself there and shuttle back and forth – it's not cheap, but it's worth it for the chance to see some of Africa's quietest wilderness areas before mass tourism takes hold. Accessible by road is **Lambréné** (p614), the site of Albert Schweizer's famous hospital. Finish the trip with a jaunt to one of Africa's smallest countries, **São Tomé & Príncipe** (p621), where the highlights include watching nesting turtles at Praia Jalé, snorkelling with dolphins and watching whales at Lagoa Azul, and the deserted and generally perfect Banana Beach.

Throw yourself into some of West Africa's most unexplored natural regions with this way-off-the-beaten-track itinerary. Throw in several tribal kingdoms and sultanates, and it's an ecotraveller's paradise.



TAILORED TRIPS

GETTING ACTIVE

Many travellers are drawn to Africa by the lure of high-adrenaline thrills. If you're among them, you'll want to make a beeline for **Victoria Falls** (p1098 and p1124), where just about anything's possible from both the Zambian and Zimbabwean sides. Also in southern Africa, **Swakopmund** (p992) in Namibia is becoming world famous for its chances to get sweaty and breathless, while tiny **Swaziland** (see the boxed text, p1076) is gaining a following among discerning white-water rafters. Not to be outdone by southern Africa's more famous adventure sports capitals, Uganda's **Jinja** (see the boxed text, p831), combines the Source of the Nile with white-water rafting, kayaking, mountain biking and quad bikes. If you're an experienced climber, **La Main de Fatima** (p420) in Mali is renowned for its challenging climbs (British grades around E4, French grades around 7A).

More sedate perhaps, but diving and snorkelling in Africa is some of the best in the world. Egypt's **Red Sea** (p97 and p102) ranks among the elite. Elsewhere, the waters off southern Mozambique, especially the **Bazaruto Archipelago** (p972), and relatively untrammelled **São Tomé & Príncipe** (see the boxed text, p626) are quieter but stunning. **Zanzibar** (p781) is also popular, while there's considerable novelty about the freshwater options beneath **Lake Malawi** (p956).



THE WILDEST SHOWS ON EARTH

If you're the type who spent their childhood glued to the TV watching BBC nature documentaries, it's time to make your wildest dreams come true. In Tanzania the **Serengeti National Park** (p798) is the venue for the great wildebeest migration and epic collections of other large mammals, while the **Ngorongoro Conservation Area** (p798) is another iconic wildlife-watching experience. Kenya's most prolific wildlife concentrations are found at **Masai Mara National Reserve** (p719) and **Amboseli National Park** (p730). Uganda's **Bwindi Impenetrable Forest** (p836) and Rwanda's **Parc National des Volcans** (p750) are home to mountain gorillas. Across Central Africa to the west, Congo's **Parc National Nouabalé-Ndoki** (p571) and Central African Republic's **Dzanga-Sangha Reserve** (p546) are remote, scarcely visited by tourists, and home to western lowland gorillas as well as other large mammals. Down in southern Africa, a sunset river cruise in Botswana's **Chobe National Park** (p883) allows you to see hundreds of elephants drinking and romping in the water within metres of your boat. Other southern highlights include South Africa's **Kruger National Park** (p1046), Namibia's **Etosha National Park** (p1000), and Zambia's **South Luangwa National Park** (p1091) and **Lower Zambezi National Park** (p1095). Over in **Madagascar** (p903), get up early to hear the eerie shriek of the indri.



TREKKING TALES

There are world-class hiking trails all across Africa. The arduous, rewarding climb to the snowy summit of Tanzania's **Mt Kilimanjaro** (p789), Africa's highest point, never disappoints, not least for its unforgettable view of the Serengeti at sunrise. Nearby **Mt Meru** (p796) offers some lovely (and much cheaper) hiking. In neighbouring Kenya, **Mt Kenya** (p715) crowns some wonderful hiking country, while **Mt Elgon National Park** (p830) and **Rwenzori Mountains National Park** (p835), both in Uganda, rank among Africa's most beautiful trails. Away to the northeast, Ethiopia's challenging **Simien Mountains** (p690) are simply breathtaking. In South Africa, the magical milkwood forests of the **Otter Trail** (p1034) drop down to wild and windy beaches, while the **Southern Drakensberg Wilderness Area** (p1045)

climbs up South Africa's highest point and down into Lesotho.

West Africa's trails are far less frequented than those in the east, but they're every bit as spectacular. Trails climb **Mt Cameroon** (p289), West Africa's highest peak, while hiking the Bandiagara Escarpment in Mali's **Dogon Country** (p412) combines natural beauty with fascinating culture – if you make one hike in West Africa, make it here. Far quieter but nonetheless wonderful is Guinea's **Fouta Djallon** (see the boxed text, p371). In Morocco's **Atlas Mountains** (p183), you can climb steep paths past flat-roofed, earthen Berber villages, terraced gardens and walnut groves.



PUT YOUR FEET UP

The rigours of travelling in Africa mean that many travellers looking to rest from life on the road end up on a beach. And what beaches!

Most East African travellers choose to do their R & R in Tanzania's **Zanzibar** (p778), a spicy heaven of perfume plantations, endless white beaches and whispering palm trees. For somewhere even quieter, head to Kenya's **Lamu** (p727), where the hardest decision you'll make all day is when to take the next nap. Southern Africa's best-loved beach hang-out is the shore of turquoise **Lake Malawi** (p955) with its fresh waters, laid-back locals and reggae bars. Further south, the **Bazaruto** (p972) and **Quirimbas** (p976) islands of Mozambique have a Latin vibe and generally feel like paradise.

But don't neglect West Africa in your search for the perfect beach. Cameroon's **Kribi** (p295) and nearby **Ebodjé** (p296) are simply gorgeous, as are the beaches of **São Tomé & Príncipe** (p621). Elsewhere, Senegal's **Cap Skiring** (p501) is less popular than it deserves to be, while the beaches of **Sierra Leone** (p513), Guinea-Bissau's **Arquipélago dos Bijagós** (p381) and **Assinie** (p312) in Côte d'Ivoire rank among Africa's most beautiful (and most deserted). The beaches in **Ghana** (p347) are busier but every bit as beautiful.



The Authors



ANTHONY HAM

Coordinating Author, Libya & Mali

Anthony's love affair with Africa began on his first trip to Niger, when he fell irretrievably in love with the people and landscapes of the Sahel and Sahara. Since then, he has returned many times, visiting every Sahelian and Saharan country as he seeks out stories about the people and wildlife of West and North Africa. He loves nothing better than finding a remote corner of the Sahara and spending nights around the campfire with his Tuareg friends. In addition to Lonely Planet's *West Africa*, *Africa*, *Libya* and *Algeria* guides, Anthony writes for numerous newspapers and magazines around the world. When he's not in Africa, Anthony lives in Madrid with his wife and daughter.



KATE ARMSTRONG

Lesotho & Swaziland

Kate was bitten by the African bug when she lived and worked in Mozambique, and has returned to southern Africa frequently. For this edition she coaxed her wheels for hundreds of kilometres over Lesotho's remote mountainous passes in a 2WD (and learnt more about catalytic converters than she ever intended) and danced her way through Swaziland. Kate is continually humbled by the generosity of the local Swazi and Basotho people. When she's not eating, hiking and talking her way around parts of Africa, Europe and South America, her itchy feet are grounded in Sydney, where she is a freelance writer.



JAMES BAINBRIDGE

South Africa

Pictured here on Lion's Head in Cape Town, James was lucky enough to visit the rainbow nation twice in the space of six months for Lonely Planet. He explored the north while coordinating *South Africa*, *Lesotho & Swaziland*, then updated the South Africa chapter of *Southern Africa*, catching President Zuma's inauguration and driving a few thousand kilometres in the process. The London-based journalist's writing about Africa has appeared in publications including the *Guardian*, *Songlines* world-music magazine, Lonely Planet's *West Africa*, and the previous edition of this book.

LONELY PLANET AUTHORS

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TIM BEWER

**Central African Republic, Congo,
Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone & Uganda**

While growing up, Tim didn't travel much except for the obligatory pilgrimage to Disney World and an annual summer week at the lake. He's spent most of his adult life making up for this, and has visited more than 60 nations, including 22 in Africa. After university he worked briefly as a legislative assistant before quitting Capitol life in 1994 to backpack around West Africa. It was during this trip that the idea of becoming a freelance travel writer and photographer was hatched, and he's been at it ever since. The half of the year when he isn't shouldering a backpack somewhere for work or pleasure he lives in Khon Kaen, Thailand.



STUART BUTLER

Sudan, Chad & Ethiopia

With £200 in his pocket and three months to spare, English-born Stuart first hit Africa after hitchhiking across Europe and into Morocco in the early '90s. As soon as he arrived he knew Africa was for him, and he has since returned numerous times travelling through every region in the continent and over half the countries. Updating Ethiopia for this book involved covering old, and much loved, ground. Sudan was an unexpected surprise and shot quickly towards the top of his favourite countries list, and Chad – well that was an experience! When not in Africa he lives on the beautiful beaches of southwest France.



JEAN-BERNARD CARILLET

**Burkina Faso, São Tomé & Príncipe,
Djibouti, Eritrea & Somaliland, Puntland & Somalia**

A Paris-based journalist and photographer, Jean-Bernard is a die-hard Africa lover who never misses an opportunity to explore the dark continent. He has travelled the length and breadth of the continent for nearly 20 years now, from the desolate landscapes of Djibouti and the remote corners of the Sahel to the buzz of Jo'burg and the markets of Addis Ababa. For this book he has crossed weird borders, sipped dozens of macchiatos, met leading artists, and got up close and personal with truck-sized elephants. In addition to Lonely Planet's *Africa*, *West Africa* and *Ethiopia & Eritrea* guides, Jean-Bernard writes for various newspapers and magazines around the world.



PAUL CLAMMER

Morocco, Mauritania & Nigeria

Once a molecular biologist, Paul has long since traded his test tubes for a backpack and the vicarious life of a travel writer. Overlanding in Africa was his first significant travel experience, and he has returned to the continent many times since, including a stint working as a tour guide in Morocco. For this book, Paul sampled the nightlife of Lagos, slept under desert stars in Mauritania and – on his 100th visit – still found a new part of the Fez medina to get lost in.



LUCY CORNE

Angola

Lucy graduated with a degree in journalism but soon swapped the news desk for a backpack, and hasn't stopped moving since. She has penned several guidebooks and writes regularly on her three greatest passions – travel, food and beer. Despite visiting more than 40 countries, she still hasn't quite got the hang of it and was delighted to travel through Angola without leaving her camera on a bus, her money belt under a pillow, or falling off any horses. This is her first book for Lonely Planet.



EMILIE FILOU

Benin & Togo

Emilie first travelled to West Africa aged eight to visit her grandparents, who had taken up a late career opportunity in Mali. More visits ensued, including an epic family holiday in Togo and Benin, the highlight of which was the beautiful and amusingly named Grand Popo ('big poo' in French – simply hilarious when you're aged 10). Emilie pursued her interest in Africa at university where she studied geography and did her dissertation on health-care provision for nomadic people in Niger. For this book she has crossed borders, visited national parks and zoomed across Benin and Togo's cities, all aboard the dreaded *zemi-johns* (motorcycle taxis) – she is glad to be alive to tell the tale.



MATTHEW D FIRESTONE

Burundi, Egypt, Kenya, Namibia & Rwanda

Matt is a trained biological anthropologist and epidemiologist, who is particularly interested in the health and nutrition of indigenous populations. His first visit to sub-Saharan Africa in 2001 took him deep into the Kalahari, where he performed a field study on the traditional diet of the San. Unfortunately, Matt's promising academic career was postponed due to a severe case of wanderlust, though he has relentlessly travelled to more than 50 countries in search of a cure. Matt is hoping that this book will help ease the pain of other individuals bitten by the travel bug, though he fears that there is a growing epidemic on the horizon.



MARY FITZPATRICK

Tanzania & Mozambique

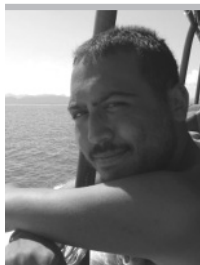
Mary is from the USA, where she spent her early years in Washington, DC – dreaming, more often than not, of how to get across an ocean or two to more exotic locales. After finishing graduate studies, she set off for several years in Europe. Her fascination with languages and cultures soon led her further south to Africa, where she has spent the past 15 years living and working all around the continent, including in Tanzania and Mozambique. When not travelling, she sates her wanderlust by writing, and has authored and co-authored numerous other Africa guidebooks.



KATHARINA LOBECK KANE

**The Gambia, Guinea,
Guinea-Bissau & Senegal**

Over the last decade, Katharina has earned enough bush-taxi miles to tour the entire continent at least a dozen times. Ever since the seductive tremor of a Fula flute first lured her to West Africa in 1997, she hasn't been able to spend more than a few months without a stint in Africa. A year of PhD research in Guinea was followed by work visits to dozens of countries on the continent, usually clutching a camera and voice recorder, to dig up gems of the local music scenes. When London threw her out in 2005, she moved to Senegal. Katharina currently works as a writer, radio presenter and project manager from Dakar and Berlin.



ADAM KARLIN

Cameroon & Botswana

A trip to South Africa at age 20 was Adam's first real independent travel experience, and he has been locked in a long relationship with the mother continent ever since. Fast forward eight years, and Adam has worked on five Africa titles for Lonely Planet. He's slept in Moroccan mud castles, been charged by a pissed-off elephant in Botswana, briefly arrested in Cameroon (a shout out to the Wum police department) and found heaven in sacred forests on the Kenyan coast. All in a day's work and, for Adam, there are few places as rewarding in which to work or travel, or both.



NANA LUCKHAM

Malawi

Born in Tanzania to a Ghanaian mother and an English father, Nana started life criss-crossing Africa by plane and bumping along the roughest of roads. She first made it to southern Africa in 1994 when she spent six months living in Zimbabwe. After several years as an editor and a UN press officer she got into travel writing full time, and has hauled her backpack all over Africa researching guidebooks to destinations such as Algeria, Kenya, South Africa and Benin. She was thrilled to return to Malawi (the scene of her very first Lonely Planet assignment) for this book.



TOM MASTERS

Algeria, Niger & Liberia

Long a fan of places most people do their best to avoid, Tom was a natural choice to cover three of Africa's least visited nations, all now largely peaceful and safe after decades of troubles. Travelling through the Sahara in Algeria and Niger is an experience that he won't quickly forget, while crossing Liberia as it gradually gets back on its feet was one of the most exciting journeys imaginable. Tom lives in Berlin and more of his work can be seen on www.mastersmafia.com.



ALAN MURPHY

Zambia

Alan remembers falling under southern Africa's ambient spell after bouncing around in the rear of a *bakkie* (pick-up truck) on the way from Jo'burg airport in 1999. Since then he's been back several times working for Lonely Planet, including this trip to Zambia. Whether watching elephants crossing a river, tracking lions in the bush, glimpsing elusive wild dogs or chuckling at the clownish behaviour of curious baboons, he finds wildlife-watching exhilarating. The logistical difficulties of getting around Zambia hit home, though, when he got told: 'go down the track and then take a right at the turn-off where the sign has fallen down.' This trip was one big adventure, made even more enjoyable by a 4WD named Bessie and a travelling companion named Smitzzy.



HELEN RANGER

Madagascar

Captivated by indris and giraffe-necked weevils on her first visit to Madagascar in 1999, Helen relished the chance to return to the Big Red Island. Arriving shortly after a political crisis, she often found herself the only traveller on the road. But the Malagasy never fail to charm and the country is a fascinating repository of weird and wonderful animals and plants. Helen spent most of her life in Cape Town, but now lives in Fez; there's something about Africa that she can't tear herself away from. She has contributed to Lonely Planet's *Fez Encounter*, *South Africa, Lesotho & Swaziland* and *Cape Town*. Helen will have to go back to Madagascar again – she hasn't seen an aye-aye yet.



NICOLA SIMMONDS

Zimbabwe

Nicola has worked in and backpacked around Indonesia, India, Sri Lanka, Europe, Japan and Central and South America. She then lived in Angola and Zimbabwe for seven years (with her husband and, eventually, three kids), mastering water shortages, African bureaucracy and out-of-control economies, so covering Zimbabwe post 'dollarisation' was nothing but joy. She has just spent a year in Sri Lanka and is currently figuring out where to go next...



KATE THOMAS

Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Equatorial Guinea & Gabon

Kate has been based on the continent ever since finding herself on a press trip to West Africa while working for a national British paper. Two months after returning from that trip, she packed her bags for Liberia, where she spent a couple of years writing about everything from food and fashion to hospitals and mental health. Since then she's watched mountain gorillas in the Democratic Republic of Congo, bused her way from Accra to Dakar, danced about architecture in Guinea-Bissau and read her way through Equatorial Guinea's literary greats. Kate also writes for news and arts media, taking every opportunity to champion the good stuff coming out of Africa.



DONNA WHEELER

Tunisia

Donna had long gazed at the Mediterranean's African shore from France and Italy and, with this chapter, was thrilled to finally be able to experience the Maghreb first hand. Apart from indulging her fish couscous obsession and poking around the Punic and Roman ruins she'd been dreaming about since high school Latin classes, she was also excited to discover a contemporary Tunisia that is every bit as intriguing and vibrant as its historical counterpart. After many years working as an editor, digital producer and content strategist, Donna is now a full-time travel writer, specialising in art, design, history and food. This is her fourth title for Lonely Planet.

CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

Jane Cornwell is an Australian-born, UK-based journalist, author and broadcaster, who wrote the African Music chapter. After graduating with a Masters degree in anthropology, she left for London where she worked, variously, at the Institute of Contemporary Arts and for Peter Gabriel's Real World company. She currently writes about arts, books and music – most notably world music – for a range of UK and antipodean publications, including the *Times*, *Evening Standard* and *Telegraph* newspapers, *Songlines* magazine and the *Australian* newspaper. She travels about the planet regularly, interviewing world musicians.

Dr Caroline Evans wrote the Health chapter. Caroline studied medicine at the University of London, and completed General Practice training in Cambridge. She is the medical adviser to Nomad Travel Clinic, a private travel-health clinic in London, and is also a GP specialising in travel medicine. She has been an expedition doctor for Raleigh International and Coral Cay expeditions.

Michela Wrong, who wrote the Africa & Development chapter, has spent the last 14 years reporting on Africa. She is author of the award-winning *In the Footsteps of Mr Kurtz*, which traces the rise and fall of the dictator Mobutu, and *I Didn't Do It for You*, about the tiny nation of Eritrea.

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