

LONELY PLANET'S

BEST IN TRAVEL

2013

**THE BEST TRENDS, DESTINATIONS, JOURNEYS
& EXPERIENCES FOR THE UPCOMING YEAR**



MELBOURNE ✦ OAKLAND ✦ LONDON

40 YEARS OF TRAVEL 6

TOP 10 COUNTRIES 16

SRI LANKA	18	SOLOMON ISLANDS	38
MONTENEGRO	22	ICELAND	42
SOUTH KOREA	26	TURKEY	46
ECUADOR	30	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	50
SLOVAKIA	34	MADAGASCAR	54

TOP 10 REGIONS 58

CORSICA, FRANCE	60	THE GULF COAST, USA	80
THE NEGEV, ISRAEL	64	CARINTHIA, AUSTRIA	84
MUSTANG, NEPAL	68	PALAWAN, THE PHILIPPINES	88
THE YUKON, CANADA	72	INLAND SEA, JAPAN	92
CHACHAPOYAS & KUÉLAP, PERU ..	76	CAMPANIA, ITALY	96

TOP 10 CITIES 100

SAN FRANCISCO	102	CHRISTCHURCH	122
AMSTERDAM	106	HOBART	126
HYDERABAD	110	MONTREAL	130
DERRY/LONDONDERRY	114	ADDIS ABABA	134
BEIJING	118	PUERTO IGUAZÚ	138

TOP TRAVEL LISTS 142

BEST-VALUE DESTINATIONS	144
BEST BACK-IN-TIME ENTERTAINMENTS	148
THE UNLUCKIEST PLACES IN THE WORLD	152
CITIES WITH BIKE-SHARING SCHEMES	156
BEST PLACES TO SEE ELEPHANTS (UP CLOSE)	160
BEST PLACES TO DO SOMETHING NEW	164
THE BEST CAPITAL CITIES BUILT FROM SCRATCH	168
MARVELLOUS METEOROLOGICAL SITES	172
BEST PLACES TO GET A TATTOO	176
SNAKES ALIVE!	180
BEST PLACES TO GET FIT	184
GREAT WALL WALKS	188
LEGENDARY LAST STANDS	192
BEST PLACES TO HUNT FOR BURIED TREASURE	196
ODDEST FOOD MUSEUMS	200

INDEX	204
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	206
BEST IN TRAVEL PLANNER 2013	208

40 YEARS of TRAVEL!

2013 IS FULL OF AMAZING TRAVEL OPPORTUNITIES BUT IT WILL ALSO BE A YEAR IN WHICH LONELY PLANET CELEBRATES 40 YEARS OF TRAVEL. WE'VE ASKED CO-FOUNDER TONY WHEELER AND FIVE OTHER TRAVEL-GUIDE GURUS FOR THEIR TAKE ON WHAT THE LAST 40 YEARS HAVE MEANT.

TONY WHEELER CO-FOUNDER, LONELY PLANET

Why do I travel? Because it's never boring. It can be uncomfortable at times – but never boring.

The 'I want to go there' list just keeps getting longer. The more places you go the bigger the world seems to get.

Travel doesn't really start with your first trip, because every kid discovers that travel with parents is never real travel.

It's only when you get out on your own that you really *travel* and those first solo

teenage expeditions never leave you.

I lived in Pakistan with my parents when I was very small and there are so many clear memories – camels, beggars, magicians, jellyfish on the beach, fishing for crabs from a dhow on Karachi harbour, monsoon floods, vultures, an episode with a rabid dog – and all those memories must have been by the time I was five years old, because that's how old I was when I left.

My Dad – who was an RAF pilot – worked for BOAC (which became British Airways) so I was definitely going to be a pilot. I never did, but I can't



understand why I never got around to at least getting a pilot's licence.

Sir Joseph Banks was the rich, young and endlessly curious scientist who accompanied Captain Cook on his first great voyage. So many times that amazing trip was like a real-life *Close Encounter of the Third Kind*. If I had a time machine that's where it would take me, back on board HMS *Endeavour*.

Travel starts when you leave the airport, dump the pre-booked hotel and get off the tour bus, when there's nobody holding your hand any longer. Up to that point you've been a tourist.

**I SOMETIMES THINK
ANTARCTICA TOPS THE LOT. IT'S A
CONTINENT OF ABSOLUTES,
EVEN THE COLOURS ARE UTTERLY
ABSOLUTE, EVERYTHING IS EITHER
BLUE OR BLACK OR WHITE, NOTHING
FALLS IN BETWEEN.**

— TONY WHEELER —

Today's technology doesn't change travel into mere tourism. Recently I've crossed from one country (the Solomon Islands) to another (Papua New Guinea) in a small village boat. Did it matter that my GPS could show me where I was and how much more sea we had to cross?

You could earn a university degree from travel, I've learnt so much stuff about so many things.

If I hadn't got into travel publishing perhaps I'd have ended up a travel guide.

I'd be a lousy guide in some ways. I'd quickly lose all patience with people who want their hand held and their luggage lifted off the carousel, but I find when I'm with people I do a pretty good job (if I say so myself!) of explaining things in an interesting fashion.

For a long time now I've tried to spend at least one week each year exploring on foot and although I've not managed that every year, last year I spent nearly a month on multi-day walks in South Korea, Israel and Nepal. As well as the day walks.

I have to admit, I do love the view from airline windows.

I've often said my favourite place is the airport departure lounge, because it means you're about to go somewhere.

I have two homes and when I'm home in Melbourne (the bigger house) I never miss the home in London (the smaller one). Or vice versa. When I'm on the road I don't miss either.

When I do get home, to either home, about six weeks is the maximum I can take before my itchy feet want to head off somewhere else.

I sometimes think Antarctica tops the lot. It's a continent of absolutes, even the colours are utterly absolute, everything is either blue or black or white, nothing falls in between.

If there's a golden rule of travel, it's to leave your preconceptions at home, however far you've gone down the road you're still likely to meet somebody who has gone even further.

How you travel and who you travel

with – these can change from trip to trip. There's no right way, no right combination.

When I started out it was all about shoestring travel, making your money go as far as it could.

There are so many travel experiences that only money can buy. These days I don't worry about costs, but I haven't lost sight of the value of experiences that only travelling close to street level (on street costs) can bring you.

Travelling alone, you meet people you wouldn't meet if you were already with somebody else and you certainly never have any arguments about what you should be doing!

Travel with kids can be a strain, but it's amazing how they open doors for you. In lots of places an offspring or two can instantly convert you from just another tourist to a real human being.

For me travel has been a job as well as a pleasure for so long it's hard to separate the two reasons for my travelling. Even when I don't need to I can't help taking notes, 'somebody might like to know about that restaurant, that great shortcut, that interesting new museum, that great bar.'

I'm always looking forward to the next trip, there's always a wish list and sometimes it amazes me how long things have been on that 'must do' list. Why have I never travelled across Russia on the Trans-Siberian Express?

I never really thought of it as work, I reckon I'd have paid to have my job.

STEFAN LOOSE **FOUNDER, STEFAN LOOSE GUIDES**

Our parents travelled only where the world spoke German but the post-war generation used their school English to discover the world. They'd had enough of German society's stuffy atmosphere in the 1960s and they just pulled out, always a little further, going overland to Italy, Ibiza, Morocco, and then India and Nepal – the world seemed limitless. Those who returned months or even years later told their friends about their adventures and gave tips for the trip. And some made notes and had them printed.

In the 1970s, more than a dozen 'one author-one book' publishers came into existence with titles like *The Cheapest Trip to India, Afghanistan and Nepal* or *Africa for Self-Driving*. The flippantly written texts were peppered with spelling mistakes and hand-drawn maps but they were also packed with insider tips and concrete information about cheap places to sleep. They were very practical and up-to-date.

In 1975 during a garden party in Berlin some travellers founded a club, the 'German Centre for Globetrotters'. In their magazine, *Trotter*, they published travel stories and an event calendar. Once a year, insiders and newcomers met, slept in tents, cooked together and exchanged experiences.

The oil crises of 1973 and 1979, regional wars in Afghanistan and new complicated visa rules made overland travelling more arduous. Student travel agencies



discovered the grey market for cheap airline tickets. Now, you could travel to distant places for a short time without giving up career and home. Guidebooks became increasingly professional and the authors of the alternative guides, now in regular jobs, had no time to update their books. It didn't take long till their guides disappeared from the shelves. Many pioneers of the 1960s and 1970s have retired but their passion for travelling remains. The *Trotter* still exists, publishing the exploits of globetrotters, mountaineers and motorcyclists. Others, like me, turned their hobby into a career.

The founder of Stefan Loose Verlag, Stefan is working with Help Tourism in Kolkata and is currently fundraising for a school in Eastern Arunachal.

MARK ELLINGHAM FOUNDER, ROUGH GUIDES

I set up Rough Guides as a 22-year-old, fresh out of university. I wrote about Greece because I liked the place and had noticed there wasn't a decent guidebook to be found. Not one that reflected my interests, anyway. I wanted a survival guide, with decent tips on living cheap, but also a book that opened up contemporary life and culture and politics. Greece was only five years out of the Colonels' dictatorship yet the other guides seemed to cut off somewhere around the fall of Byzantium. And nobody seemed to think we travellers might want to experience local festivals, music clubs and the like. **I hadn't heard of Lonely Planet** at the

time because I hadn't been to southeast Asia, where that original yellow bible was making waves. But I met Tony Wheeler the year we published *Greece*. He had just brought out an awesome tome on India. 'Are you going to keep covering Europe?' Tony asked. 'Our focus is Asia.' And for the best part of a decade we had an unspoken detente, until we each ran out of space on the map. LP moved into the Mediterranean. Rough Guides set off for China.

I LIKE TO THINK WE HELPED SHAPE AN ATTITUDE THAT TRAVEL COULD BE A GOOD THING. YOU COULD SPREAD YOUR MONEY AROUND LOCAL ENTERPRISES AND TREAT PEOPLE WITH RESPECT AND CURIOSITY...

— MARK ELLINGHAM —

In retrospect, we were all hugely lucky.

Guidebooks had fallen into a generational black hole. The good early ones – the Baedekers – had disappeared after the war, tarnished by the Nazis. Their place had been taken by the banalities of Frommer's five-dollars-a-day and the mid-budget platitudes of Fodor's. It was a space for new punks on the block. And so was the world.

Was there ever a better decade for travel than the 1980s? Cheap(er) flights brought places like Peru or Zimbabwe (fun, post-Independence) or Nepal within reach of us Europeans, while Eastern Europe and China were opening their gates. It was a thrill producing a guide to a country that had never previously been

covered and drawing up the first decent – well, half-decent – maps. Guidebooks had powerful knowledge. I like to think we helped shape an attitude: that travel could be a good thing. You could spread your money around small, local enterprises. Treat people with a respect and curiosity perhaps lacking in previous generations of Western travellers. Maybe even give something back by getting involved in local projects and charities.

The guidebook is supposed to be in crisis, crushed by the free knowledge of Wikipedia, Google, Twitter, Facebook, or the tiresome complaints of TripAdvisor. But I'm not so sure about crisis. I think it's more like a transition. Sure, we've all gone crazy for social media, for someone telling us they went to a bar – just now! – and how great it is. But we also want a take on, say, Tangier or Budapest or Amsterdam, from someone who has scratched below their surface. And, of course, social networks aren't very useful for places where nobody is tweeting. What's hot in Kigali, anyone?

My hope for travel is that it becomes slower and longer. We don't need to burn up CO² ticking off a mass of destinations. Far better a month or a year's travel in one place, taking time to become a part of it, getting the language and the culture. That could be Greece or India, those first Rough/LP destinations. Though if I was setting off, right now, for an extended trip, I'd head for Africa, where things are changing fast and generally for the better.

To Addis, then ... and beyond.

Mark Ellingham founded Rough Guides in 1982. He is currently involved in a new venture, Cool Places (www.coolplaces.co.uk), which reviews the best of everything in the UK. And he is a trustee of the charity Camara (www.camara.org), which refurbishes computers and sets up IT rooms in African schools. Camara welcomes volunteers with good IT skills.

HILARY BRADT CO-FOUNDER, BRADT GUIDES

The focus of our 1970s travels in South America was backpacking in the original American sense of the word – hiking for several days in the wilderness, carrying all our needs on our back. It was the questions from other gringos about 'how' and 'where' that prompted us to write a little book about five routes (including the now-famous Inca Trail) in Peru and Bolivia. The opportunity came when we took a river barge for three days down a tributary of the Amazon. At the Bolivian jungle town of Trinidad we borrowed a typewriter and George (my ex-husband) typed it up and sent it to his mother to print in Boston. It retailed for \$1.95. And that, we thought, was that.

The internet has made an incalculable difference in the way we travel. In the Olden Days, George and I would get off the bus and, while one guarded the luggage, the other looked for a hotel. The cheap ones were always near the bus station so it was never a problem. These days most

travellers will have booked at least their first night's accommodation online.

The backpacker hostel that doesn't have a website is doomed to failure.

I sometimes miss our total ignorance of what to see! I was never as bad as a friend who drove through Italy in the 1960s. 'There's a town here called Firenze', she told her boyfriend, 'should we stop, do you think?' 'Never heard of it', he responded. And so they continued south.

George and I were almost as clueless about Ecuador and Peru, but we learned to look at postcards to find out which sights the towns prided themselves on. It worked pretty well. If we spotted other gringos – a startling occurrence which happened infrequently – we would make a beeline in order to learn of their recommendations of places to stay and things to do. We realised that the clever thing was to travel from south to north, so we could tap into the

IT WAS THE QUESTIONS FROM OTHER GRINGOS ABOUT 'HOW' AND 'WHERE' THAT PROMPTED US TO WRITE.

— HILARY BRADT —

experiences of the majority of travellers going the other way.

One very noticeable attribute of travel today is the rise in responsible travel. Backpackers in the 1960s and '70s were ever ready to sneak into game parks or museums – and out of hotels – without paying. They boasted about it; in those hippy days it was the badge of an experienced



traveller. It sounds po-faced but it was not something I was comfortable with, so the rise of Tourism Concern and the general concept of travelling responsibly has come as a relief. It is a much better world for our host nations these days; and that's certainly something to celebrate.

Hilary Bradt is the co-founder and director of Bradt Travel Guides. She wrote her first book in 1974 and continues to write and lecture widely on travel.

TREMAYNE CAREW POLE

FOUNDER, A HEDONIST'S GUIDE

I love cities. I love getting under their skin and finding experiences that you wouldn't normally find in a weekend away. And I hate looking like an outsider when I visit. People treat you differently. We've always wanted readers to explore local neighbourhoods. Others do the practical information or the history very well. We specialise in a city's decadent side – it's all about comfortable beds, great food, the best parties.

The idea for the Hedonist's Guides came after a frustrating weekend in

Budapest. I went away with a group of friends and we couldn't find the right places to eat or drink and wasted a weekend. At that time there was nothing that focused purely on where to eat, stay and play. I quit my job and moved to Prague to research the first book.

I had no writing, travel or publishing experience so it was a huge learning curve.

I had to go through the whole process for myself. You can't tell others what to do and how to do it if you haven't done it yourself first. We started off with second tier destinations – we felt we couldn't compete on London, New York, Paris – and went for smaller ones like Marrakech, Madrid, Tallinn, Beirut. The selection process is fairly arbitrary and there is no set formula.

A guidebook is a companion, a faceless friend who takes your hand and leads you through a new city. Travellers want an experience from a guidebook, they want a story to tell not just a slideshow of historical monuments. Thirty years ago it was about the monuments, today it is about the experience and Tony Wheeler was the person who gave the idea of getting off the beaten track to a generation. He has opened up the world to so many people.

In recent years I have moved away from everyday tourism and started going to slightly edgier, back-of-beyond destinations and meeting politicians and business people. I enjoy trying to understand what makes a country and people tick.

I loved Freetown, Sierra Leone. I had no preconceptions but we ended up having the most monumental week seeing everything the country had to offer. I love that tingling feel of not knowing what to expect when you land somewhere.

Tremayne Carew Pole founded the *A Hedonist's Guide to...series* in 2004.

BILL DALTON

FOUNDER, MOON PUBLICATIONS

Ever since the doors of an old prop plane were flung open in downtown Jakarta 40 years ago, I've been intrigued by the complexity, the diversity and the mystique of Indonesia. As a wall of suffocating heat and dust mixed with the smells of diesel and clove cigarettes rushed into the cabin, my first thought was: 'I love this place!'

Walking onto the hot tarmac of the old Kebayoran Airport that day was to ultimately lead to my whole professional life writing about this maddening, fascinating country. It started with the publication of six mimeographed pages of gypsy traveller's notes and crude handmade maps, stapled together and sold in the flea markets of Australia, and it culminated two decades later in the 6th edition of the *Indonesia Handbook*, a 1000-page behemoth and the first comprehensive guidebook on Indonesia published in the post-war period.

There was a time when one lone, determined guidebook writer – red-faced and sweat-drenched at the end of each day – could actually cover this sprawling string of islands during one three-month trip, working without competition for royalties and retaining full copyright ownership. But by the early 1990s, with the country's infrastructure exploding, competing guidebooks arrived and it became impossible for just one writer to

research all of Indonesia. Instead, teams of writers were assigned to regions. Travel guidebooks have since metamorphosed into smartphone apps, but I still believe that disciplined professionals give the best obtainable version of the truth.

I glean fresh information from other travellers met along the way or from historical novels, which give more of a feel for the subtleties of the culture and the character of the people. If writers

THE EXTREMITIES OF INDONESIA'S ARCHIPELAGO STILL OFFER HIGH ADVENTURE STRAIGHT OUT OF A JOSEPH CONRAD NOVEL.

— BILL DALTON —

lavish too much praise on a hotel, beach or locale, I hit the other direction to avoid places that have been sabotaged by their own success. It beats the hell out of throwing a dart at a map on a wall.

The extremities of Indonesia's archipelago still offer high adventure, right out of a Joseph Conrad novel. In the far-flung southeastern islands, crew members onboard your *perahu* wear bandanas and stick knives in their belts, and a bottle of rice wine and a fellow traveller's yarn will lead you through the night like the North Star.

Bill Dalton founded Moon Publications in a youth hostel in Queensland. He published the *Indonesia Handbook* in 1973 and now lives with his Indonesian wife on a farm in West Bali.