



Journeys by Design

25 JOURNEYS

'Let the beauty of what you love be what you do.'

RUMI

Celebrating 25 years
under the African sun





The Cloud

A poem by Percy Shelley, 1820

I bring fresh showers for the thirsting flowers,
From the seas and the streams;
I bear light shade for the leaves when laid
In their noonday dreams.
From my wings are shaken the dews that waken
The sweet buds every one,
When rocked to rest on their mother's breast,
As she dances about the sun.
I wield the flail of the lashing hail,
And whiten the green plains under,
And then again I dissolve it in rain,
And laugh as I pass in thunder.

I sift the snow on the mountains below,
And their great pines groan aghast;
And all the night 'tis my pillow white,
While I sleep in the arms of the blast.
Sublime on the towers of my skiey bowers,
Lightning my pilot sits;
In a cavern under is fettered the thunder,
It struggles and howls at fits;
Over earth and ocean, with gentle motion,
This pilot is guiding me,
Lured by the love of the genii that move
In the depths of the purple sea;
Over the rills, and the crags, and the hills,
Over the lakes and the plains,
Wherever he dream, under mountain or stream,
The Spirit he loves remains;
And I all the while bask in Heaven's blue smile,
Whilst he is dissolving in rains.

The sanguine Sunrise, with his meteor eyes,
And his burning plumes outspread,
Leaps on the back of my sailing rack,
When the morning star shines dead;
As on the jag of a mountain crag,
Which an earthquake rocks and swings,
An eagle alit one moment may sit
In the light of its golden wings.
And when Sunset may breathe, from the lit sea beneath,
Its ardours of rest and of love,
And the crimson pall of eve may fall
From the depth of Heaven above,
With wings folded I rest, on mine aëry nest,
As still as a brooding dove.

That orbèd maiden with white fire laden,
Whom mortals call the Moon,
Glides glimmering o'er my fleece-like floor,
By the midnight breezes strewn;
And wherever the beat of her unseen feet,
Which only the angels hear,
May have broken the woof of my tent's thin roof,
The stars peep behind her and peer;
And I laugh to see them whirl and flee,
Like a swarm of golden bees,
When I widen the rent in my wind-built tent,
Till calm the rivers, lakes, and seas,
Like strips of the sky fallen through me on high,
Are each paved with the moon and these.

I bind the Sun's throne with a burning zone,
And the Moon's with a girdle of pearl;
The volcanoes are dim, and the stars reel and swim,
When the whirlwinds my banner unfurl.
From cape to cape, with a bridge-like shape,
Over a torrent sea,
Sunbeam-proof, I hang like a roof,
The mountains its columns be.
The triumphal arch through which I march
With hurricane, fire, and snow,
When the Powers of the air are chained to my chair,
Is the million-coloured bow;
The sphere-fire above its soft colours wove,
While the moist Earth was laughing below.

I am the daughter of Earth and Water,
And the nursling of the Sky;
I pass through the pores of the ocean and shores;
I change, but I cannot die.
For after the rain when with never a stain
The pavilion of Heaven is bare,
And the winds and sunbeams with their convex gleams
Build up the blue dome of air,
I silently laugh at my own cenotaph,
And out of the caverns of rain,
Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from the tomb,
I arise and unbuild it again.





Welcome to 25 Journeys

I've always loved Shelley's *The Cloud*, particularly its opening and closing verses. They remind me of the enduring and transformational qualities of nature, and set the tone for this celebration of *Journeys by Design* turning 25-years-old.

It has been quite the journey since our beginnings in 1999, a story told here by a most wonderful cohort of writers and photographers. It is their stories of travel, of adventure, and of finding meaning that we share in the name of everything that we stand for: life-changing travel.

In celebrating this milestone, we tell a story of what travel means to us; the many ways in which it has shaped and challenged our understanding of the world and its changing landscapes; how it has moved us, and how, somewhere between arrivals and departures, it has left us forever changed.

Here's to 25 journeys, where we've been, and to all the adventures that lie ahead—an ode, as Shelley might say, to the places explored, the people met, the wonder and spectacle of nature witnessed, and the many beautiful memories and friends made along the way.

May we continue to explore miles from nowhere, far from the madding crowd, and perhaps even dare to stray off the map entirely.

Will Jones

Chief Exploration Officer

The following excerpts are from a collection of press pieces and memories that have contributed to defining us over the last 25 years. Together, they tell the story of Journeys by Design—past, present, and future.





*In the
beginning*

25 JOURNEYS

A potted history



1969

The story of Journeys by Design begins far earlier than its inception in 1999. My parents move to Africa in 1969, during the Biafran War.

1983

My father's work for the Red Cross and Save the Children mean we move around a lot. As a result, my sisters and I are lucky enough to be raised in six African countries, one being Kenya, where we live in the Ngong Forest, Nairobi. An extraordinary back garden, the forest is a daily source of great adventure, had with my dog Nimrod.

1990

My first big wildlife adventure as a young adult is in India, where I go on a Muir Scholarship to study tiger in Kanha National Park. It's here that I work with Tara the Elephant, owned by my lifelong hero, the late Mark Shand.

1993

Having trained as an environmental scientist, I have to confess that the last thing I wanted to do – once I'd graduated – was don a suit and try my luck in the city. Instead, I head out to Ethiopia, where I'd spent a great deal of my childhood. Here, I first work on a community education programme with the Afar and Isas in Awash National Park.

1994

Travelling the country, I stumble across some of Ethiopia's last remaining natural forest on the shores of Lake Langano. I spend the next three years living in a tent, helping start the country's first community-managed nature reserve. This experience gives me the confidence to pursue my Journeys by Design dreams.

1999

After Ethiopia, I head to Tsavo East National Park, Kenya, where I cut my rhino guiding teeth hosting walking safaris. In 1999, I return to the UK to marry Laura Marshall-Andrews, who I had fallen in love with at university, and is training to be a doctor. Again, I refuse to put a tie on, preferring to set up Journeys by Design from my brother-in-law's bedroom.







Selassie come home

In 2000, AA Gill travels to Ethiopia to cover the funeral of Emperor Haile Selassie. Selassie had died in 1975, and his remains had been exhumed in preparation for a very private state burial. As per Gill's amusing and no-pulled-punches style, the piece describes his quest to attend the funeral of what is described by royalists as the last in a family line that can be traced back to King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, and who remains even in death a living god to the Rastafarian faith.

© Photographs by Peter Marlow

IN THE BEGINNING



Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

'The priests process round the church, swinging clouds of incense, carrying their elaborate silver Ethiopian crosses and richly bound Bibles. There's much genuflecting and kissing and we are given T-shaped croziers to lean on. The congregation looks like an ethnic heat for One Man and His Dog. We are an odd bunch. The royal family confused and nervous in black, some of the granddaughters sobbing behind their veils. A couple of big-haired and elaborately shrouded Rastafarians, including Bob Marley's widow, the very laid-back Rita. And then beside me, a porcine pink gent in a pinstripe suit with polished socks and a large signet ring, who could only be English and turns out to be Sir Conrad Swann, KCVO, PhD, FSA, Garter Principal, King of Arms Emeritus. What on earth is he doing here? The service is long, over three hours, delivered in monotonous Amharic and an older ecclesiastical language like Latin, called Ge'ez. It makes the hair stand up on your neck and dries the mouth.'

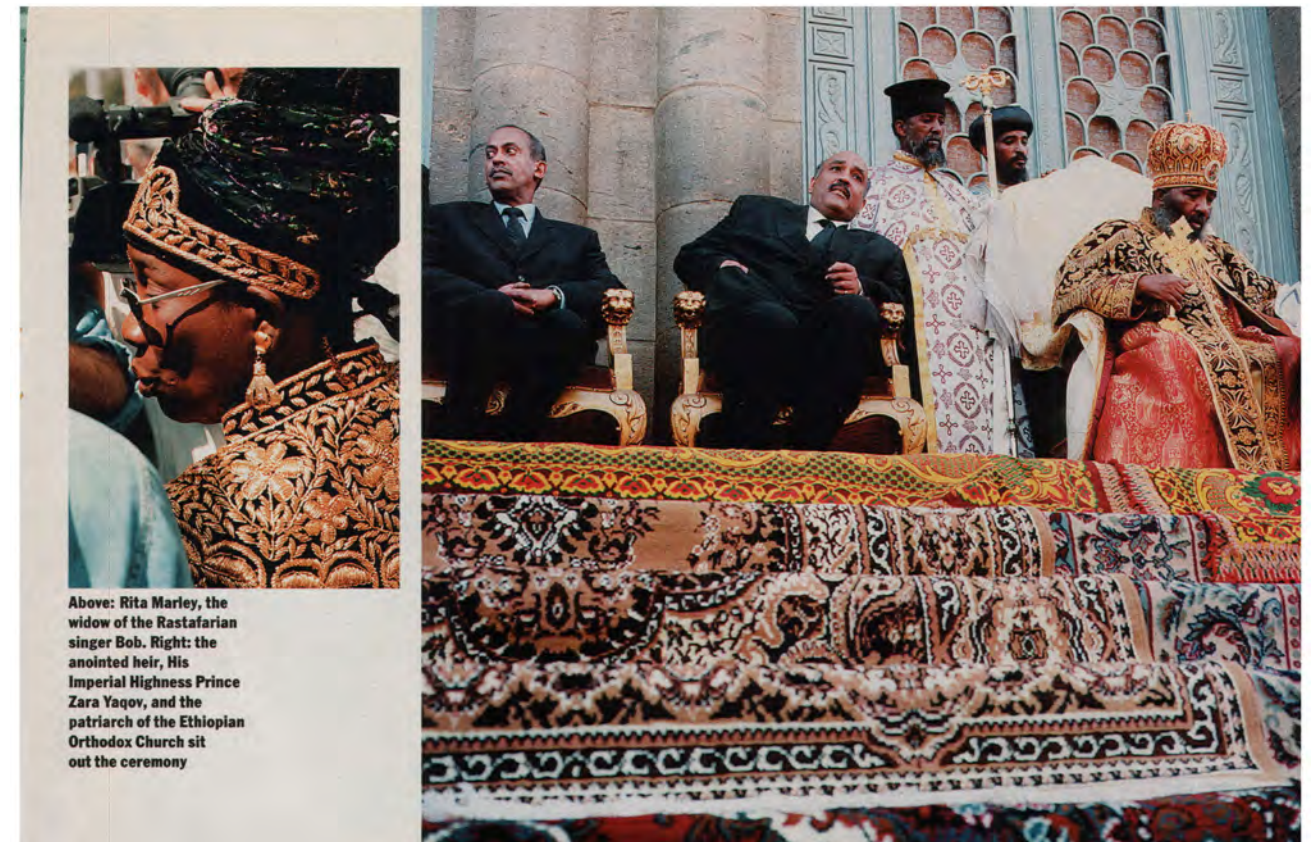
AA GILL | SELASSIE COME HOME
THE SUNDAY TIMES, 2000

Medals and memories: two former members of Haile Selassie's Imperial Guard, resplendent in gelada (baboon) hats, watch as their former emperor is laid to rest. Opposite: A A Gill gets into the spirit of things, with a little baboon-fur headdress of his own



'I was extremely sad when AA Gill died in 2016 from what he had himself described as the 'Full English' of cancers. We had met at a trade show in 1999, me on the hunt for a storyteller and he for a decent travel story, the eminent food writer looking to spread his wings. A year later we were in Ethiopia, chasing the story of the death of a living god. Adrian would go on to travel with us elsewhere, but this, for me, was a trip among trips. A final wonderful anecdote: Sometime between that first piece and his dying, my wife would ring him from my mobile, mistaking him for AA Grill, our local kebab joint. The irony and the incongruousness of the call amused him no end. I miss him.'

WILL JONES | REMEMBERING AA GILL



Above: Rita Marley, the widow of the Rastafarian singer Bob. Right: the anointed heir, His Imperial Highness Prince Zara Yaqov, and the patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church sit out the ceremony



Safari society: The next revolution

Lucia van der Post reports on a new wave of eco-tourism is hitting the continent. Located in Laikipia, Il Ngwesi lodge is the first community-run lodge and conservancy in Africa. High-value, low-impact tourism mean that cash flow gets to the local community and so to the new generation of conservationists.

IN THE BEGINNING



*Laikipia Highlands,
northern Kenya*

‘The strategy behind the national parks in almost all the great African wildlife countries has been to move all the indigenous people out of their ancestral lands, put up a lot of fences and then bring in white-owned safari outfits to attract high-paying tourists with most of the revenue going to said white-owned safari outfits. There is now a growing realisation that this isn’t only morally wrong - it’s actually unsustainable. Increasing and justifiable resentment from the local peoples has led to friction and is often behind the poaching problems—it’s obvious to even the most obtuse that if local communities see no benefit coming to them from the wildlife they will have no incentive to look after it and may indeed have to poach just to survive. Many of the more forward-thinking

safari outfits have tried to grapple with these problems by involving local people in more interesting roles—helping them to develop farms to supply the lodges with food, to build factories to provide the building materials—to ensure that some of the revenues are returned to the local communities. But this still leaves out the fact that many safari-goers not only feel guilty swanning through a country totally insulated from its indigenous people, behaving as if they were of no conceivable interest, but they also feel they’re missing out. They want to talk to them, see how they live, hear their stories, add a cultural dimension to the whole wildlife experience. It’s this kind of thinking that is behind a whole new set of enterprising community-owned tourist initiatives that are starting up all over Africa.’

LUCIA VAN DER POST | SAFARI SOCIETY
FINANCIAL TIMES, 2002



Among Kalashnikovs and crocodiles

Life in Ethiopia's Omo Valley is a world away from Africa's designer lodge circuit. Lucia van der Post reports. Photographs by Don McCullin

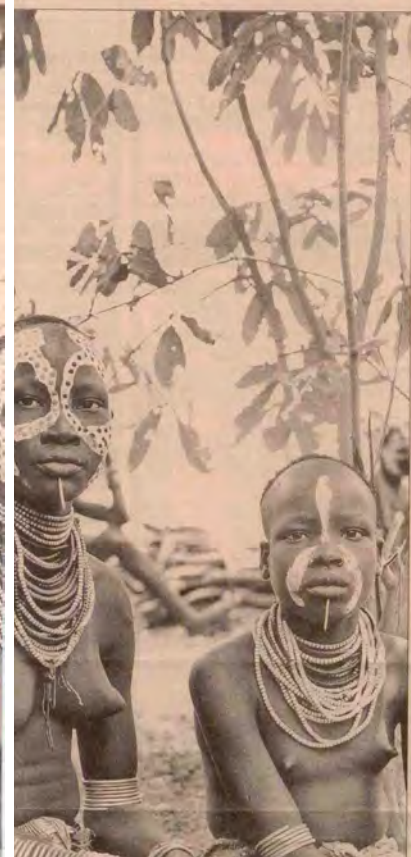
Halewijn Sheerman, whose Jade Sea Journeys operates in some of the most inhospitable, wind-blown and remote parts of Kenya, makes it quite clear that he doesn't do designer camps. "My guests, you see, don't come all the way here to meet Kenya cowboys," he says. "They come to meet Africans. They come for more of an anthropological than a wildlife experience and I'm here to share with my guests my passion for these different places, to share with them what I love - the spirit of Africa."

Which isn't to say that you don't eat splendid food and sleep in perfectly comfortable circumstances. It's just that the coordinated cushions, the croissants, the smoked salmon and the spas don't make it into the starkly beautiful country of Kenya's north-western corner or down into the wetlands of the Omo Valley. Which is precisely why we're here.

We're looking for the parts of

Lake Turkana is a shimmering inland lake 200 miles long and 40 miles wide that has the biggest concentration of Nile crocodiles in Africa

Africa that designer lodges haven't reached. All of us, Mark Shand (adventurer and chronicler of elephant lore), Don McCullin (the distinguished photographer) and I haven't come for posh lodges and fancy grub. We've come for something more precious - a glimpse of an Africa that few get to see, a journey up an entrancing river into lands where the peoples and the cultures are as pristine and unpolluted as it is possible to find in these fast-changing times.



Turkana carry spears while in Ethiopia they carry a Kalashnikov. As Halewijn puts it: "If your neighbour has a gun, you need a gun."

We travel along the river by day, stopping off to take photographs, to see the villages, for Halewijn and his guides to chat with the local people, all the while telling us of their different rites and customs. We come upon a group of young river Nyngallon hunters for crocodiles. They're a tough warrior Nilotic tribe that are uncircumcised. Many of the women wear elaborate jewellery.

Sometimes we come upon ceremonies - amazing courtship dances, where all the warriors elaborately paint their bodies. To witness these Halewijn's guide has to negotiate carefully with the tribal elders. We don't get to see the famous bull-jumping ceremony of the Hamar, when, after many preparatory rituals, young warriors have to jump the bulls in order to earn the right to marry, but we do spend our days in and among the river tribes.

By night we sleep in two-man tents and we eat under the stars. We're never uncomfortable and we're amazingly well fed. Mark and Don, who've been shot at by tribes in Borneo, who've had adventures all around the world, are astonished by the comfort.

Not that there weren't some moments when I wondered what I was doing there and longed to

Sometimes we come upon ceremonies - amazing courtship dances, where all the warriors elaborately paint their bodies

be safely back home in London. Like the time I was woken in the middle of the night by the shocking sound of a Kalashnikov going off (hearts, you may be interested to know, really do "race"). Just as I was wondering if my life was to end here, being slaughtered by tribesmen in the wilds of Ethiopia, there was another round of gun-shot. There were men running, voices shouting, the flash of swinging oil-lamps as Halewijn rushed to see what was up. "It was only the night watchman, scaring off a hyena that was lurking round the camp." "Ah-



Omo Valley,
southern Ethiopia

'All of us, Mark Shand (adventurer and chronicler of elephant lore), Don McCullin (the distinguished photographer) and I haven't come for posh lodges and fancy grub. We've come for something more precious—a glimpse of an Africa that few get to see, a journey up an entrancing river into lands where the peoples and the cultures are as pristine and unpolluted as it is possible to find in these fast-changing times.'

LUCIA VAN DER POST | AMONG KALASHNIKOVS & CROCODILES
FINANCIAL TIMES, 2005



IN THE BEGINNING

'Who could ever forget those moments like when we got lost trying to cross over the border into northern Kenya and finding Humphrey, our helicopter pilot emerge from the heat and dust, immaculate in his khakis, with his carpet bag full of chilled drinks, or the sunset wallows in the Omo River, or Mark Shand, naked as the day he was born, emerging from his tent on Lake Turkana.

That first trip to Ethiopia inspired me enough to return and create a photographic book out of the material. I've always thought Will Jones as the best of men; calm, open, agreeable, with a lack of pretension and a knack for treating everyone as equals that is refreshing in a transactional world. When Will and his team are involved in your travel plans, you know the journey is going to be full of wonder and surprise.'

SIR DON MCCULLIN, PHOTOGRAPHER

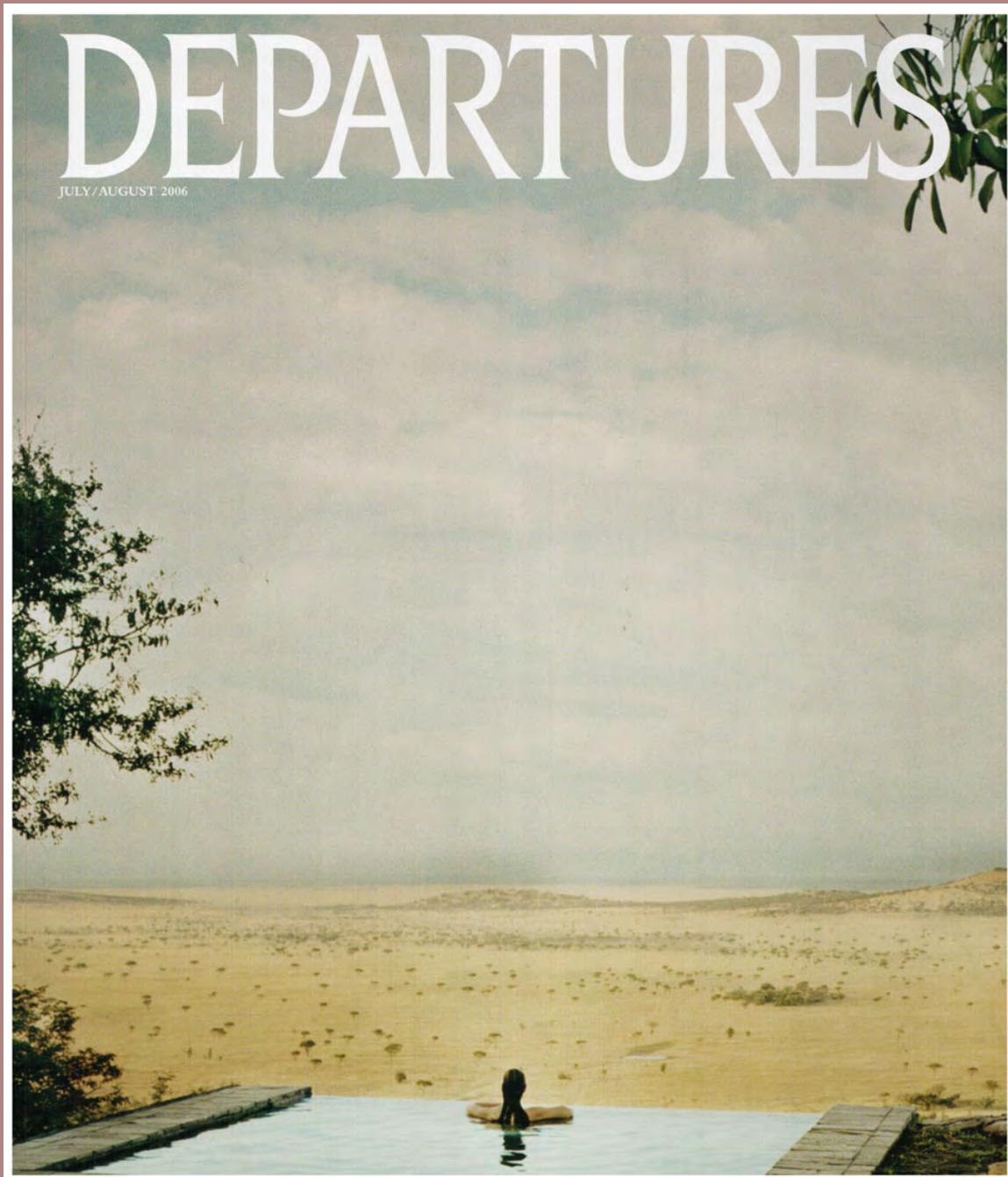




 *Red Sea Coast, Eritrea*

'I've had the good fortune to travel with Don McCullin and his partner the writer and journalist Catherine Fairweather a few times, most recently to Eritrea. Don once said: 'I only use a camera like a toothbrush'. I love this, his approach, his irreverence, his humanity, the fact that he never forgets why he does what he does. And I love Catherine's writing, her beautifully paced descriptions, the tapestry of her prose. As I write, Catherine and Don are planning a trip to South Sudan. He's 89 years-old. Extraordinary.'

WILL JONES | SEEING WITH A TOOTHBRUSH



Wild kingdom

DEPARTURES MAGAZINE RICHARD STORY VISITS PAUL TUDOR JONES'S NEW GRUMETI RESERVES IN THE SERENGETI, TANZANIA. THIS IS THE YEAR WE BREAK INTO THE US WITH THE STORY GENERATING AN EXTRAORDINARY \$1 MILLION IN SALES.

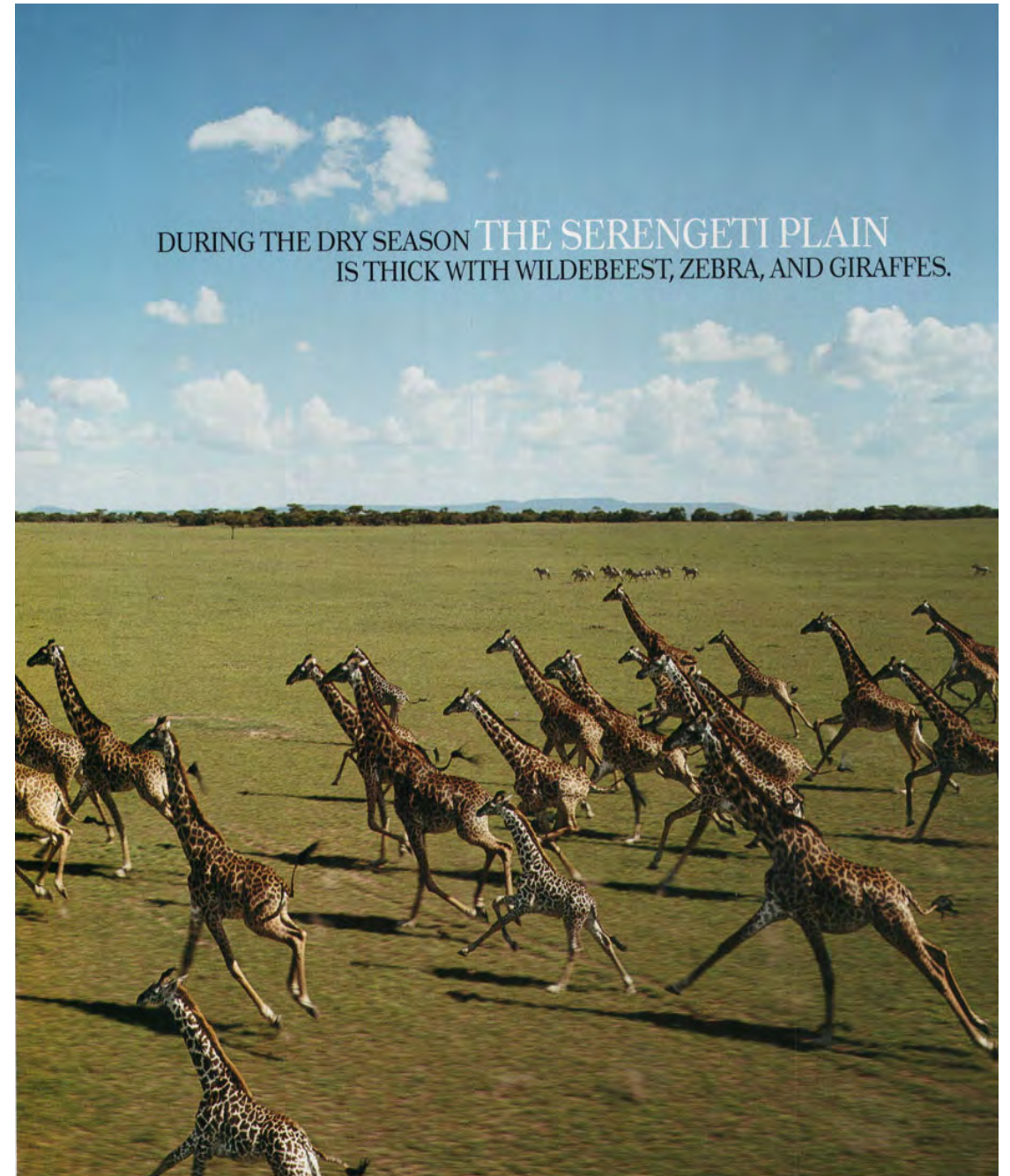
IN THE BEGINNING



Serengeti-Mara Ecosystem, Tanzania

“Grumeti has the potential to become one of the great and most iconic African preserves in the world,” says Bailes, who owns three camps in Sabi Sands Game Reserve, on the border of South Africa’s Kruger National Park. He should know. After all, it was Bailes who refined the “boutique” safari with touches like gourmet dining, air-conditioning, world-class architecture, and hot-stone massages. All was done while emphasising an “authentic” experience that is also painstakingly ecologically sound. If the Singita properties have come to represent the modern boutique safari, Grumeti Reserves may be the new benchmark, pushing the envelope even further.’

RICHARD STORY | WILD KINGDOM
DEPARTURES, 2006



DURING THE DRY SEASON THE SERENGETI PLAIN
IS THICK WITH WILDEBEEST, ZEBRA, AND GIRAFFES.

'Richard Story died unexpectedly in 2021. Journeys by Design owes him the world. As well as his piece for Departures turning the American market onto JbD, he also introduced Ralph and Ricky Lauren to us, resulting in a highly memorable highly influential trip to Kenya. Who knows what would have happened without the publishing of Wild Kingdom.'

WILL JONES | THE AMERICAN



of Kenya

by SHELLA GIBSON STOODLEY

ROBB REPORT OCTOBER 2007

The Pride

East Africa just became a bit less rugged, thanks to **OLDONYO LARO**. The private Kenyan estate offers custom-blended mixes of adventure and leisure that might range from a helicopter ride to the top of Mount Kenya to a poolside pedicure.

ROBB REPORT OCTOBER 2007

IN THE BEGINNING



Great Rift Valley, Kenya

'Just outside of Hell's Gate, we touch down on a patch of grass that is framed by cliffs whose rock faces emit puffs of steam. Silvester [guide] explains that, because of these steam vents, this area is considered sacred by the Maasai, nomadic, cattle-herding tribespeople who have lived in Kenya and Tanzania since the 17th century. Silvester descends a nearby riverbank and touches the mouth of a vent, covering his fingers with a rust-colored goo. The steam brings minerals to the surface, and one of those minerals, iron, turns red when it is exposed to air. The red ochre is part of the Maasai's tribal identity Silvester explains. They wear it as war paint and also for ceremonial purposes.'

SHELLA GIBSON STOODLEY | THE PRIDE OF KENYA
ROBB REPORT, 2007





“Too good. It’s too bloody good,” says my guide, Richard Knocker. We’ve come across a pack of wild dogs—remorseless animals that eat their prey alive—sunning themselves on the Serengeti Plain. “I love this place,” he says of the remote pocket of northern Tanzania. “The freedom to go where you want when you want, with no curfews. I love it for its sheer possibility, that in Africa you can still find your own private patch of wildness and exist with very few rules.” Knocker is leading me on a six-day safari in and around Loliondo, a 1,500-square mile block of wilderness east of Serengeti National Park and just below the Kenyan border.

Specifically, we spend most of our time in Piyaya, off-radar Maasai ancestral lands visited by few outsiders and where there are no permanent commercial camps. This is far from a typical African safari. It is conducted almost entirely on foot, our light canvas tents and supplies transported separately by Jeep. Knocker and I are accompanied by photographer Bill Phelps and a nine-member crew that includes Maasai watchmen, waiters, chefs, and attendants. Unlike the more fashionable safari experience, where the campsite is fixed, ours gives us the freedom to change locations, making day trips into the bush and across the plain.’

SOPHY ROBERTS | TOTAL SURRENDER
DEPARTURES, 2008



flesh reflects the abundance of the
migration period; in leaner times
there would be nothing left but bones

‘Friend and travel companion, the writer and journalist Sophy Roberts has been part and parcel of many a Journeys by Design trip around the sun. I love her wit, her bottomless interest in people, and her ability to frame moments few of us see. Sophy sees like a poet and she has given so much of that way of seeing to us, something for which I am forever in her debt.’

WILL JONES | EYE OF THE POET



25 JOURNEYS

*A dream
come true*

A potted history

2010

Pioneering the use of helicopters in Ethiopia, we open up hidden corners of an already niche destination. We host Horatio Claire and Vanity Fair in Ethiopia, the resulting piece, Rock of Ages, winning Conde Nast Traveler's best travel article of the year.

2011

Having flown to New York to meet with Ralph and Ricky Lauren, I end up hosting the family in Kenya. Behind the travel operator scenes, we launch Nomadic Professionals, which is designed to support philanthropic endeavours. We help manage Oldonyo Laro for Jan Bonde Nielsen. We raise \$1 million for charities globally.

2012

We auction a safari for ARK worth \$950,000, a world first. A truly life changing event, we are increasingly cognisant of the well-done safari as perfect catalyst and support for wider sustainable development.

2013

First-time travellers to Africa's wildernesses begin by imagining the animals they will see. Their memories are always of the people they meet along the way. These host communities, very often remote and traditional cultures, are celebrated in this year's brochure Cultures on the Move. This is also the first year that we're nominated a Conde Nast Global Specialist—something we have had every year since.

2015

We set up the world's first luxury mobile camp in the Danakil Depression, where we host Stanley Stewart and Conde Nast Traveler. It's in this year that we launch Wild Philanthropy. Teaming up with Roland Purcell, our first project protecting chimpanzee sees Sophy Roberts and the Financial Times visit Ntakata Forest. I am lucky enough to squeeze onto Conde Nast Traveler's list of 50 Most Influential Travelers to Know.



 *Hadar, Ethiopia*

'The Journeys by Design team was one of the most knowledgeable and capable I have ever experienced. The trip was challenging, exhilarating, and enlightening. I highly recommend Journeys by Design for African travel, particularly in Ethiopia: The Land of Origins, where you will reconnect to your roots.'

PROFESSOR DONALD JOHANSON | PALEOANTHROPOLOGIST WHO DISCOVERED LUCY,
AUSTRALOPITHECUS AFARENSIS IN, 1974

Rock OF AGES



Lalibela, northern Ethiopia

'Long before dawn, I joined white-robed pilgrims gathered in Biete Medhani Alem —the House of the Saviour of the World—the largest of all Lalibela's churches. Around me, worshippers kissed rock pillars worn smooth and dark by centuries of lips, caresses and tears. The interior thrummed with the murmur of prayer: white robes, prayer sticks, young monks in alcoves reading handwritten scriptures, an older monk chanting the scriptures by the light of a tallow candle, a man shaking his head in ecstasy as the words flowed over us. A peasant woman knelt, kissed the ground and rose to her feet again with her hands in supplication and repeated this over and over again. Here there were old and young, mothers and babies, wealthy and poor. They were a people unbothered by self-doubt or loss of conviction. I sensed we could all learn something here.'

HORATIO CLARE | ROCK OF AGES
VANITY FAIR, 2010





Sudan

ON HIS FIRST TRIP TO SUDAN, CONDE NAST TRAVELLER'S STANLEY STEWART ENCOUNTERS PEOPLE WHO, TO HIS EYE, TELL THE STORY OF THE LAND THEY INHABIT: A DESERT NOMAD WITH WEATHERED SKIN; A GOLD-TOOTHED MATRIARCH; AN ENTERPRISING CAMEL HERDER PALMING OFF HIS 'BEAUTY'. STEWART CAME FOR THE DESERT AND LEFT WITH MEMORIES OF ITS PEOPLE.

© Photographs by Alistair Taylor-Young



Bayuda Desert, Sudan

“He is yours,” he cried. “Take him. Only 20,000 Sudanese pounds.” He had already thrust the reins into my hand. “A man without a camel is half a man,” he said. “Take this beauty. He suits you. Take him to England. Your friends will die of envy, 20,000 is a small price to pay for such a camel. Look—he likes you.” The camel was looking at me as if I was something unpleasant he had stepped on. Hassan shrugged. He was beginning to see I was not a serious player in the camel market, and I had no news of his cousins over in Wadi Abu Tuleih. As a desert encounter, I was proving a bit of disappointment.

He shook our hands and bade us farewell. In a moment, he was back aboard the camel and on his way, waving over his shoulder. Back in the car, I turned to mark his progress. At first I couldn’t see him. And then I spotted him, already small and inconsequential in a vast landscape, trotting through a mirage in the middle distance. But what was curious was that Hassan and his beastly camel cast a reflection. Their mirror image was shimmering on the silver surface of a lake that didn’t exist. In that strange moment, the desert’s illusions and its realities merged.’

STANLEY STEWART | SUDAN
CONDE NAST TRAVELER, 2013





The anti-safari

Ntakata Forest lies relatively close to Greystoke Mahale, a camp set up by Roland Purcell. The Tongwe people's new cultural heartland, Ntakata was secured as a Village Land Forest Reserve by the Tongwe Trust, which was set up in response to the loss of the Tongwe's original heartland in Mahale. Purcell built Ntakata's only accommodation, Chimp's Nest, along with the Trust, and it is as off-piste, difficult to get to and basic as one can get, sleeping in hammocks rigged up under the thick canopy of the forest.

A DREAM COME TRUE



*Tongweland,
western Tanzania*

'On our longest walk, Tongwe trackers lead us on to a whaleback ridge. Mountains roll into the distance, their clefts forested in green. We weave through matchstick trees charred by lightning strikes until we fall into the emerald bowl below. The deeper we penetrate, the darker the tree-cover becomes as we descend towards a spring. In the valley's inner crease, the water is clean enough for us to drink. Trunks are strung with corkscrew necklaces of vines. Palms burst up like giant shuttlecocks. The haunting pant-hoots of chimpanzees bounce off valley walls. "If I can hear them, I am in their world," says Purcell. "That has always been enough for me."

To know what he means, I pull back to be alone. Despite the wild animals skulking somewhere in bamboo, including leopard, this forest somehow enchants more than it incites fear. I feel it where the canopy opens up to reveal new growth splattered with bright limes and crimson pom-pom-headed flowers. I sense it in the sinewy embrace of root systems, which stretch across the floor until one tree is entwined with another, knitting the forest together in a web of flying buttresses and burnished bark. Bit by bit, the living power of these holy groves starts to emerge.'

SOPHY ROBERTS | THE ANTI-SAFARI
FINANCIAL TIMES, 2015



 *Lake Tanganyika, Tanzania*

“The favourite family memory that comes up over again is hiking in Ntakata Forest with Roland, trying to find the ranger station and finally arriving at midnight. It was such an adventure, made all the better when we came down the mountain the next day to the fabulous boat and sublime Lake Tanganyika. The whole trek was otherworldly and truly off the beaten path. There were so many characters involved that it has made for the best memories.’

MEGAN KIRLEY | JBD TRAVELLER

I first met Roland Purcell in the early 1990s. He was sitting in bed, his children gathered about him. He was reading them a bedtime story. I remember the delight and the wonder that such moments are made of, and thoroughly enjoyed the unexpected domesticity of the scene. This was the same man who first brought our attention to the extraordinary beauty of the Mahale Mountains, who with just a Land rover, a trailer and provisions for company chose to dedicate a large part of his life living in perfect solitude, in a forest full of wild chimpanzee. I have since shared many an adventure with Roland. He is an absolute wild joy.'

WILL JONES | A WILD JOY





Of rivers and rituals

Andrew McCarthy's piece for the New York Times is a visceral, unflinching, and marvellously-paced piece of storytelling, revealing much about the plight of the Omo Valley in southern Ethiopia.

© Photographs by Andy Haslam

A DREAM COME TRUE



*Omo Valley,
Ethiopia*

'As the sun was setting, a dozen bulls were led to a clearing and aligned flank to flank. The women clustered together and began jumping, their bells ringing out, their horns blasting. Others began to chant. Suddenly a naked young man leapt up on the back of the first bull and raced across the spine of each. He jumped down after the last bull, but then he was up again, racing across their backs in the other direction. He repeated the back-and-forth exercise threetimes. If he fell it would be a disgrace he would carry for life, Mr. Biwa had warned me. But the youth never faltered—the next morning he would awake a man, able to sit among the elders.'

ANDREW MCCARTHY | OF RIVERS AND RITUALS
THE NEW YORK TIMES, 2017

'I've had the pleasure of travelling with Andrew McCarthy on several assignments. Exciting, playful, urbane, adventurous, and curious, he is the arch-disruptor, disrupting not for disruption's sake, but rather to uncover the deeper truth. He is, in every respect, a master storyteller.'

WILL JONES | THE GREAT MCCARTHY





Title track

TRAVELLING LARGELY BY PRIVATE MOBILE, CONDE NAST TRAVELLER'S STANLEY STEWART'S EXPERIENCE OF KAOKOLAND IN NAMIBIA IS AN EVER-DEEPENING SENSE OF WHAT IT MEANS TO BE IN LAND THAT FOR A LONG TIME NO ONE —'OTHER THAN THE SCATTERED PEOPLE WHO LIVED THERE'— KNEW MUCH ABOUT, A LAND THAT HAS 'SLEPT UNDISTURBED' BY OUTSIDERS, AND THAT EVEN TODAY REMAINS 'A PLACE FEW PEOPLE COULD POINT TO ON A MAP.'

© Photographs by Alistair Taylor-Young

A DREAM COME TRUE



*Kaokoland & Skeleton
Coast, Namibia*

'On the last night, when everybody else had retired to their tents, I sat up late by the embers of the fire, surrounded by fathomless dark. I sat and listened to Africa. An owl was hooting. A bird I did not know offered a rising series of notes ending in a screech. Somewhere out there, camouflaged in the darkness, I could hear zebra snorting, and then the sound of galloping, their hooves pounding. And somewhere far off, an elephant trumpeted. Across the blackness the stars were thick as grapes. I watched an entire constellation rise above the ridge opposite, climbing slowly to join the others in their transit from east to west. Alone here, it was easy to see the night sky as a canvas of stories and

images and visions, to interpret the sounds of animals and birds as voices, to search the embers for patterns. On this riverbank, the natural world became something more than just fascinating. It became significant, as if its elements had meanings to be discovered. This, I realized, is how early man must have thought, sitting by his fire, reading omens in the night sky, portents in the sound of an elephant's rumble. Perhaps this was how the Himba still think, sitting by their fires at night beneath that dense array of stars, investing the natural world with meanings. Namibia has many gifts. On that night, this sense of connection was one of its sweetest.'

STANLEY STEWART TITLE TRACK
CONDE NAST TRAVELLER, 2019



'If you're ever up for a trip that makes you see in a totally different way about how people think, feel, and act, then travel with the writer Stanley Stewart and photographer Alistair Taylor-Young. Stewart is a writer whose prose gives a kind of magic to his subject. Taylor-Young possesses a way of seeing that rubs out the unnecessary. Together, they make a very special thing of all they encounter.'

WILL JONES | TWO GREAT FRIENDS



 Okavango Delta, Botswana

'The Okavango Delta is part Edenic—no roads, almost entirely unmarked by the trespass of man—and part Jurassic Park: the fence, the lost-worldness of it, the giant spur-winged geese flying under us like pterodactyls, the four-metre dinosaur-like crocodiles on the banks, the prehistoric-looking baobab trees.'

MIKE CARTER | WATER WORLD, FINANCIAL TIMES, 2019

© Jack Johns and Owen Tozer



A DREAM COME TRUE



*Lamu Island,
Kenya*

'A vessel such as Tusitiri is a languorous base for exploring Lamu's bustling villages and emptier margins, if even just for a night or two. Measuring 65 feet from almond-shaped bow to stern, with a deck polished to a rich brown patina, she moves with surprising grace and speed; it takes seven sailors to raise anchor and hoist her imposing sails. I joined the dhow from the village of Shela, one of just four settlements on Lamu and a honeypot for royalty, artists, rock stars and actors.

We sailed past Lamu Town, the oldest and best-preserved Swahili settlement in East Africa, and on to Matondoni, where Tusitiri was built and Bwana Mzee lives quietly in the simple coral-brick house he was born in. From there we continued our circumnavigation of the island to anchor at remote Kipungani, a tiny cluster of thatched houses fronted by a deserted, dune-backed beach, where we slept soundly on deck beneath the sparkling equatorial skies.'

PETER BROWNE | CATCH THE DRIFT
CONDE NAST TRAVELLER, 2019



Ennedi Desert, Chad © Kyle de Nobrega

*Miles from
nowhere*

25 JOURNEYS

A potted history



2020

Covid-19 hits the UK travel industry February. In April, we launch the African Tourism Crisis Fund to support rangers and camp staff jobs and raise just over \$100,000. Using the time to refine the brand, we introduce the Rare safari, lay out our five-year plan, and declare a climate emergency. In December, we replace the African Tourism Crisis Fund with the African Travel Recovery Fund.

2021

While good news abounds with regards to Covid-19 vaccines, the challenge of rolling them out means travel continues to be dictated by appetites for risk, by lockdowns, and by border protocols. We adapt and replace the Friends of Wild Philanthropy programme with our Donor Traveller programme. In September, we are devastated by the sudden death of Angela Sacha, who has been with the company since 2005. We set up the Angela Sacha Conservation Fund.

2022

Angela's death and surviving Covid triggers a year of change and doubling down on our approach. Keen to push the meaningful frontier travel envelope, we double down on our efforts in west and Sahel Africa, particularly in Sao Tome, Gabon, Republic of the Congo, Central African Republic, and Chad.

2023

One of our best years in business. The refined business model, which as well including professional guides sees half of the sales team working out of either Kenya and Botswana, is working a treat. Our push west continues, particularly in Benin and Togo. We become the first operator to be invited by NGO African Parks into South Sudan.

2024

This feels like the first 'normal' year since the pandemic. We continue to explore Rare landscapes, variously travelling to and guiding in Nouabalé-Ndoki in ROC and northern Cameroon. We host Condé Nast Traveler along with Aminatta Forna and Alistair Taylor-Young in Chad, the result a breathtakingly beautiful cover story.





A journey off the map

Described as a model for low-volume, high-value post-pandemic adventure travel, A Journey off the Map sees Catherine Fairweather and Don McCullin travel to Eritrea, linking the capital Asmara with wild camping experiences along the Red Sea coast with the nomadic Rashaida and in the Dahlak Archipelago.

© Photographs by Don McCullin

MILES FROM NOWHERE



*Asmara & Dahlak
Islands, Eritrea*

‘Such generous-spirited, self-reliant resourcefulness is a striking Eritrean characteristic that we experience, memorably, on the country’s old steam train, which takes us out of the city on, surely, one of the great train journeys of the world. We leave on a chilly morning, huffing slowly down through groves of eucalyptus, rattling around mist-filled gorges and across lofty viaducts. A girl roasts coffee beans over embers in the carriage on her recycled olive-oil-drum-turned-stove. Children wave from the terraced escarpment, where they coax a harvest of sorghum out of the rubble in green swatches. Built by the Italians in the 1920s, the train has been recently resurrected by former rail workers coming out of retirement for free. They repurposed the tracks that were used to strengthen bunkers and trenches during the war.’

CATHERINE FAIRWEATHER | A JOURNEY OFF THE MAP
FINANCIAL TIMES, 2020

I've travelled with Journeys by Design to over half a dozen African countries and the trips haven't just been rich pickings for a travel writer, but the kind of adventure that shifts perspectives, encourages a re-evaluation of life priorities and tests your own sense of self. I was (I think) the first guinea pig at the start, for an exciting recce in Ethiopia, over three weeks with photographer Don McCullin, who would end up becoming my husband. I feel privileged now to reflect back on the decades since and to celebrate JbD's coming of age; their flow of fresh ideas for travel; their spirit undaunted and forever curious.'

GATHERINE FAIRWEATHER, JOURNALIST



'Maybe the best meal of my whole life; the fish, this table, this moment, in this square.'

DON MCCULLIN | A JOURNEY OFF THE MAP, FINANCIAL TIMES 2020



Laikipia Plateau, northern Kenya

“The walking is easy and addictive. On the first day, we were full of excited chatter. Now our voices have fallen to a librarian’s whisper. We spend long spells in silence with only the synchronised crunch of our feet on the parched earth to mark time.”

DAVID PILLING | WALKING WITH CAMELS, FINANCIAL TIMES 2022



Travel



Central Africa | An epic journey through the Congo Basin by boat, 4x4 and on foot brings David Pilling to a remote jungle clearing where forest elephants gather in greater numbers than anywhere else on earth

With only mild hyperbole, National Geographic once called the place to which we were headed “The Last Place on Earth”. Tramping for weeks in the Congo Basin rainforest through what he wrote were “hip-deep marshes of muck, leeches, tsetse flies and dwarf crocodiles”, the author described the experience as “like being passed through the guts of the forest and slowly digested”. On the upside, he found an ecosystem dense with monkeys, forest antelope, genets, hippos, elephants and gorillas –



broccoli stalks forming an impenetrable barrier at the water’s edge. Apart from the odd fish eagle or heron there is little sign of the life we know is hiding in the forest. The country’s gorilla population alone is estimated at 125,000. To put that in perspective, the more visited mountain gorillas of Rwanda, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo number around 1,000. It feels like a menacing Garden of Eden. Talk turns to malaria and snakes. “It’s as inhospitable and deadly a place as you can think of,” says Jones, scanning the banks with his binoculars.

Clockwise from top: an elephant in Wali Bai in Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park; South African naturalist Rod Cassidy; Sangha Lodge in the Central African Republic; Dzanga Bai, where large numbers of forest elephants gather; poling a canoe through the undergrowth en route to Mbéli Bai; a western lowland silverback gorilla at

The next morning, Jones, Karjalainen and I head off along an elephant-made path for the hour-long walk to Wali Bai, one of three forest clearings we will visit. As we enter the forest, our voices lower as if in church. A putty-nosed monkey plays overhead. The ground is crunchy with leaves and dotted with black boomerang-sized seed pods. Birds and insects trill. We reach the bai (a Ba’Aka word for clearing) and climb on to the platform. Wali Bai, about two football fields in size, is filled with shallow water. Three buffalo are loitering in the pool. Kingfishers whistle and dart. As dusk falls, our own sounds magnify. It feels wrong to rustle through a rucksack for a head torch or fumble with a packet of Pringles. A fish plops. Crickets thrum. Then two elephants steal silently out of the forest, announcing their arrival with a sloosh as they surge

Sangha Lodge, Rod Cassidy’s jungle sanctuary, where we find a safari camp-style building with dining table, bar and 180-degree view of the Sangha river. Cassidy is there to greet us. He is in his sixties, with a long white beard, and the comparison with Gandalf is irresistible. “Your room is the best,” he says, handing me the key to my cabin. “Though it wasn’t yesterday afternoon when a tree went straight through the roof.” Though Sangha Lodge is situated in what Cassidy considers one of the most significant ecosystems in the world, the business has struggled. Not long after he built it, civil war broke out. Though the war has subsided and he is hundreds of miles from any trouble, the UK and US governments still advise against all travel to the country. The logistics are not straightforward. You can come the way we did, from Congo. Alternatively, Bangui, capital of the Central African

pushing tree branches at us, charging and even punching.” Kingo is still going strong, but the next morning we find a different group just 800 metres from camp. A Congolese researcher, squatting a short distance from the muscle-bound silverback, records every detail on an iPad, part of a rolling programme of world-class research. We leave Mbénda by dugout canoe through a narrow creek, brushing against the forest and occasionally ducking to avoid branches. There’s a soporific sound of the paddle hitting the water and the gentle whine of tsetse flies. We spend the night on a rickety platform at Mbéli Bai, a clearing favoured by gorilla groups – though not during our stay. Next day we backtrack to Bomassa and the following morning we’re on the Sangha river again for the final push to the Central African Republic.

No visa is required for visitors to the national parks straddling the tri-border area, but some formalities are called for. The boat pulls up to a hut where an official meticulously fills out several muldeed forms. Perfectly friendly, he intimates that he might go quicker if offered a little consideration. A hat hangs upside down beside his desk. After a few hours on the muddy-brown river, we round a bend – and there is



Congo Basin, Central Africa

“Our ultimate goal was Bayanga, a small town beside the Sangha River in the southwestern corner of the Central African Republic. Bayanga is a legendary destination for conservationists because of a jungle clearing, Dzanga Bai (also known as “the village of the elephants”), where forest elephants emerge from the impenetrable foliage to congregate in greater numbers than anywhere else on earth. The lodge nearby is run by Rod Cassidy, an almost equally legendary South African naturalist who many years ago sold up and moved to a bend on the river in the rainforest. Cassidy had taken on an almost mythical status. “Rod has been rewilded,” someone told me.

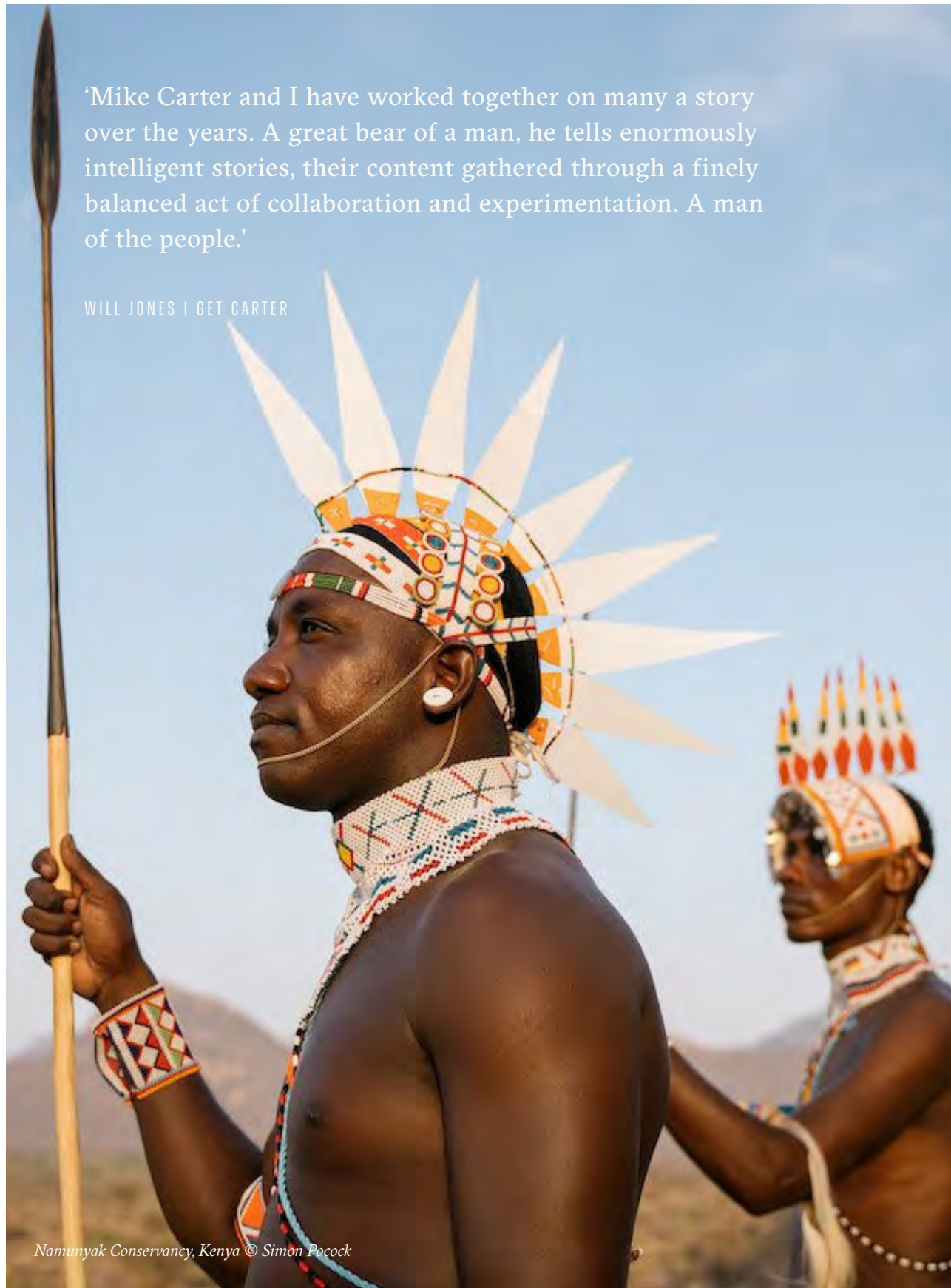
“We lost him to the forest.” First we had to get there. Our journey began in Brazzaville, the sleepy capital of the Republic of Congo, a former French colony not to be muddled with its bigger and badder near-namesake, the Democratic Republic of Congo. Congo-Brazzaville, as it is sometimes called, is an altogether easier proposition, about one-tenth the size, with only 6mn people and few security concerns. On our first night, we sat on plastic stools in an open-air bar by a lazy stretch of the Congo river, mud underfoot, drinking beer and watching the twinkling lights of Kinshasa, capital of the other Congo, a mile across the black water.’

DAVID PILLING | IN THE VILLAGE OF THE ELEPHANTS
FINANCIAL TIMES, 2023

David Pilling, Africa editor for the Financial Times, travels from the Republic of Congo to Sangha Lodge in Dzanga Sangha Special Reserve in Central African Republic, spending time with Rod and Tamar Cassidy, visiting the ‘mother of all bays’, and accompanying the Ba’aka net hunters on an excursion into the forest.

Published in the Financial Times, 2023





‘Mike Carter and I have worked together on many a story over the years. A great bear of a man, he tells enormously intelligent stories, their content gathered through a finely balanced act of collaboration and experimentation. A man of the people.’

WILL JONES | GET CARTER

Namunyak Conservancy, Kenya © Simon Pocock

MILES FROM NOWHERE



*Samburuland,
northern Kenya*

“Neighbouring tribes call us ‘the Butterfly People,’” said my Samburu guide, Kalamon Leogusa, himself cutting quite the dash in his cerise kikoi skirt and his nkerinn beads worn like bandoliers. It wasn’t difficult to see why. The women, many of whom had been walking for two hours, clutched bottles, which they handed to the village matriarch squatting under a giant acacia. She decanted the contents into giant urns and said something to a man in Maa, the Nilotic language the Samburu share with the Maasai, their more famous cousins. He scribbled notes in a ledger and loaded the urns on to a truck. This was the daily goat’s milk market—a timeless, ancient scene, you might think. In fact, it was established only two years ago, just the latest example of how the Samburu—semi-nomadic pastoralists who live in the remote, scorched lands of northern Kenya’s Great Rift Valley, between the turquoise waters of Lake Turkana and the muddy whorls of the Ewaso Nyiro river—are adapting to a fast-changing world.’

MIKE CARTER | WELCOME TO SAMBURULAND
FINANCIAL TIMES, 2023



On wildlife tourism's frontline

Will Jones and Kyle de Nobrega guided clients alongside Martin Fletcher to South Sudan, where they were all hosted by African Parks. A first for us, African Parks, and our clients, it was a wonderfully adventurous trip into one of the last real wildernesses left in Africa.

© Photographs by Kyle de Nobrega

MILES FROM NOWHERE



*Badingilo & Boma,
South Sudan*

“The relatively easy-to-poach zebra and rhinos were gone, as were most of the buffalo. Only a few hundred elephants remained. But the more mobile, migratory creatures abounded. African Parks’s team found healthy populations of lions, cheetahs, leopards and hyenas. They found rare Nile lechwe and sitatunga. They found herds of Nubian giraffes, a critically endangered subspecies. The birds were astonishing, too. Here were huge numbers of vultures, poisoned almost to extinction elsewhere in Africa and Asia, and rare shoebill storks, eagles, cranes, herons, pelicans, buzzards and bustards. “For large birds alone it’s like a World Heritage Site times 10,” says Fay.

“For large birds alone it’s like a World Above all, they found that vast herds of antelope—white-eared kob, tiang, reedbuck and Mongalla gazelles—were still migrating down to the parks from the north and east during the rainy season in what they believe to be the biggest movement of large mammals anywhere in the world, beating even that of the Serengeti’s wildebeest. “The migration is absolutely spectacular,” says Simpson, who reckons there are more than 2mn kob alone with perhaps as many tiang, reedbuck and Mongalla gazelles again. “My first flight over I was nearly in tears it was so incredible and unbelievable.”

MARTIN FLETCHER | ON WILDLIFE TOURISM'S FRONTLINE
FINANCIAL TIMES, 2023



'It's one of the most remarkable wilderness areas I've ever been to.'

RICHARD HARVEY | ON WILDLIFE TOURISM'S FRONTLINE





Lope National Park, Gabon © Kyle de Nobrega

MILES FROM NOWHERE



*Lope National Park,
Gabon*

'We heard a faint static hiss, which built up until it became like a crashing waterfall, the entire forest vibrating. "That," said David, "is what 1,000 mandrills flying through the canopy sounds like." The troop is what's called "tolerant", which means that they will allow groups—limited to four guests at a time, twice a day—to come within 70 or 80 metres of them, but no closer. The static stopped. We stood stock still, binoculars trained on the dense green veil, beyond which came guttural barks and grunts.

"There!" David whispered. I followed his finger until, staring back at me through a gap in the foliage, was a huge male mandrill, his lips and nose the most extraordinary vermilion, flanked by thick ridges of cerulean blue, his chin sporting a goatee that looked woven from golden thread; like God had spent at least some of day six on iboga.'

MIKE CARTER | INTO THE WILD
FINANCIAL TIMES, 2024

'Once you pass through the difficulties, you can appreciate this vast wilderness. Its ancient, natural habitats are largely intact down to good conservation practices, so the wildlife is spectacular, the people lovely. It just takes a little bit of work.'

KYLE DE NOBREGA | INTO THE WILD





Sands of time

AMINATTA FORNA WRITES FOR CONDÉ NAST TRAVELER ABOUT HER TIME TRAVELLING WITH WILL JONES AND SOCIÉTÉ DE VOYAGES SAHARIENS'S ROCCO AND TOMMASO RAVÀ TO THE ENNEDI MASSIF IN NORTHEASTERN CHAD. A JOURNEY INTO DEEP TIME, FORNA TAKES US INTO THE 'EMPTIEST LANDSCAPE I HAD EVER EXPERIENCED', A 'PLACE OF ANCIENT WONDERS', LANDING AT THE DISCOVERY THAT THE DESERT IS ANYTHING BUT EMPTY.

© Photographs by Alistair Taylor-Young

MILES FROM NOWHERE



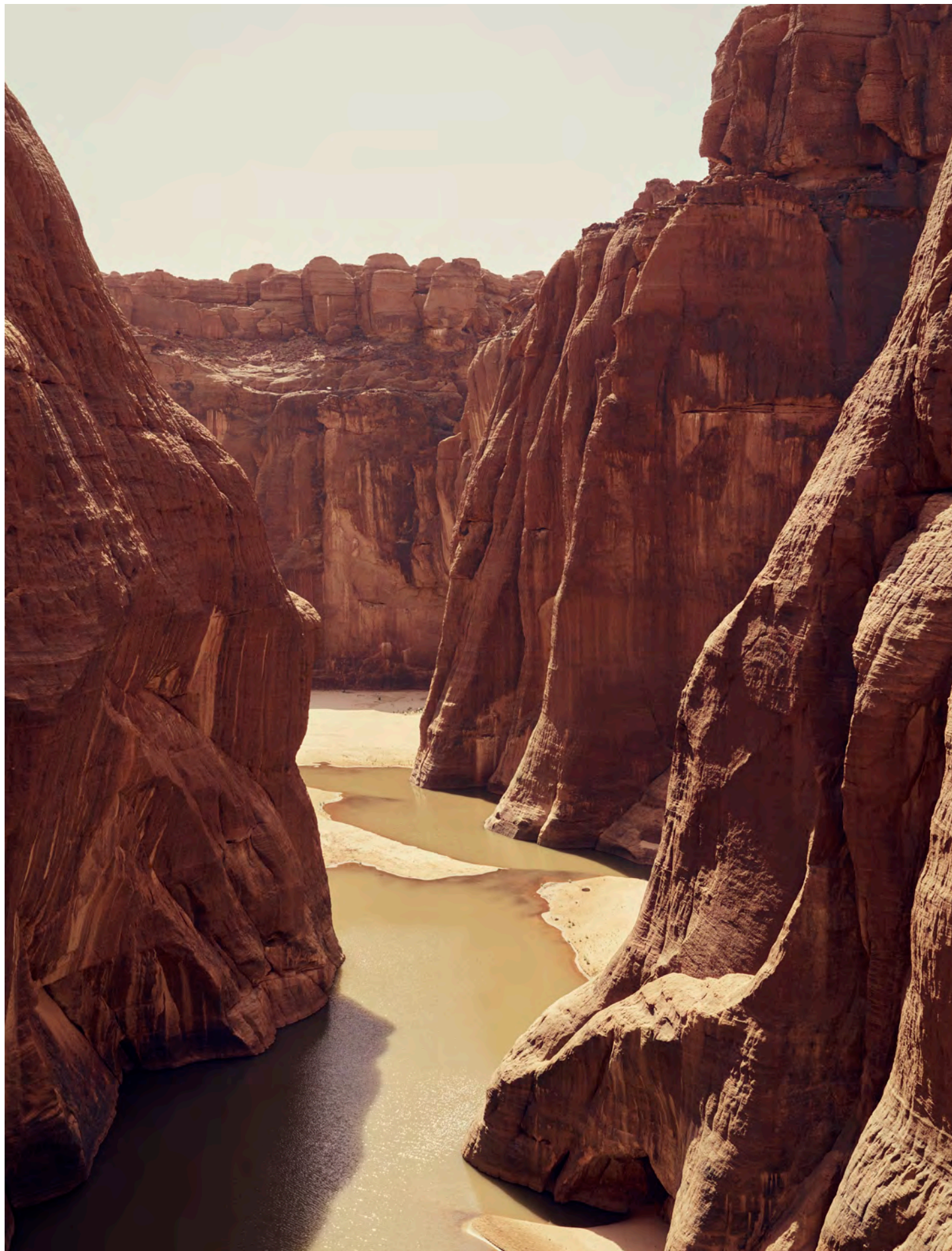
Ennedi Massif, Chad

'From a distance, the sandstone pillars resembled a gathering of giants turned to stone by a displeased god. Our group of eight travelers had set out when the sun was at its zenith, and now, as it made its descent, we arrived at this place with air so pure it seemed to hold no scent. The only sound was the wind, as faint as breath. The rocks are called tassili, and some stand more than 300 feet high. They have been carved by this same disarmingly gentle wind over many thousands of years. This is what deep time feels like.

When I was a child, a teacher tried to give my class some sense of eternity. Imagine a rock 10,000 miles by 10,000 miles. Every 10,000 years a small bird comes and wipes its beak this way and that upon the rock. Deep time, Earth time, captures the entire process of erosion, until the rock is finally worn away.

The 15,000-square-mile Ennedi Massif, in northeastern Chad, is a plateau the size of Switzerland. Between 350 million and 500 million years ago, this part of the globe was an ocean. Then the ocean disappeared, leaving the sandstone floor exposed. The climate shifted from rain-soaked to arid. Sun, wind, and water sculpted the sandstone into a dramatic, desolate, unearthly landscape of gorges and valleys, inselbergs and stacks, towering tassili and natural arches. In the desert the delicate threads of life become apparent in trails of tiny footprints scattered across the sands: here, the tear-shaped tracks of a lizard; there, the dimpled prints of a gerbil. I have traveled to many deserts, but as I lay in bed in the open air and gazed directly into the face of the moon, it was clear to me that the Ennedi was the emptiest landscape I had ever experienced.'

AMINATTA FORNA | SANDS OF TIME
CONDÉ NAST TRAVELER, 2024





'So, where will the wind blow you next? What will you do with your one wild and precious life? We hope that wind blows you our way as we continue to explore the vastness and spirit of Africa in search of original adventure. We are now preparing ourselves for the next 25 years of our journey. Do join us.'

WILL JONES



