

VANITY FAIR

MARCH 2014

ON TRAVEL

AFRICA

THE CASE FOR ZIMBABWE

Plus: TOP GUIDES and
SAFARIS FOR KIDS

By GRAHAM BOYNTON and LUCIA VAN DER POST

PERU

IF I CAN, YOU TOUCAN

By STEVE KING

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

MAKING FRIENDS AND
HAVING THEM FOR DINNER

By STANLEY JOHNSON

"One of the gladdest moments in
life is the departure upon a distant
journey into unknown lands."

—RICHARD BURTON

FRONTIERS, NEW AND OLD

There is travel and there is going on holiday. They are not mutually exclusive, but they require a different mindset and they have different goals. The former is a quest for a life experience, the latter a jolly bit of rest and recuperation, perhaps with a temple thrown in to stop one feeling guilty.

The question is whether or not we are running out of world now that we treat our planet as a playground. This edition of *Vanity Fair On Travel* explores some of the last frontiers that the intrepid traveller might brave. Stanley Johnson discovers the point of cannibalism in Papua New Guinea and Steve King goes all *Fitzcarraldo* to Iquitos in Peru, fortunately in a new boat on the Amazon, rather than hauling an old one over a mountain like Werner Herzog's eponymous hero. Sara Wheeler explores Russia's Black Sea Riviera, of which the beating heart is Sochi, and takes the waters in the old spa resort of Pyatigorsk. They don't make them like that anymore: a genteel architectural mishmash of fin-de-siècle and neo-renaissance crisscrossed with tree-lined boardwalks. Emma Freud interviews the man who created a new frontier in hotelism, Nick Jones, creator of the Soho House phenomenon. Four Seasons is consistently the world's best hotel group, as proved by a seamless opening in notoriously difficult St Petersburg. It's a matter of frontier-busting faith. FS founder Isadore Sharp told me: "Luxury is a necessity, what people need in their lifestyle, we're just trying to make everyone more comfortable."

Sometimes geopolitical events make the familiar inaccessible, so, after a generation, rediscovery is essential, a whole new frontier. Graham Boynton, who was brought up in Zimbabwe, returns there. Before the economic holocaust, it was the top safari destination in Africa, and now travellers from America, Brazil and Europe are returning. Astonishingly, the extravagantly beautiful wilderness has survived, and so has the spirit of the people: friendly, warm, humorous and with the best-educated



guides. Boynton makes a powerful case that Zim deserves our support—the experience of travel hopefully is not all about us in these me-me-selfie days; it is also about a contribution to the places to which we travel.

Meanwhile, not three but four Graces (Victoria Hislop, Georgiana Boothby, Christopher Humphrys and Min Hogg) guide us to their favourite Greek islands; and I discovered that Newfoundland was exactly as written on the tin—a new land found to be the perfect digital detox if you kick back at the Fogo Island Inn.

I also rediscovered Venice. It's part of our DNA, but it takes a dramatic new hotel like the Aman Canal Grande to reignite the fire with a shot of contemporary and an insanely fabulous boat. India is an ongoing love affair, and I was thrilled to be in Coorg, an unsung Indian frontier made accessible

by the new Vivanta By Taj in the Western Ghats, an architectural marvel of eco-sensitivity, imagination and real adventure. There you can walk, hike and bike in unexplored territory imbued with the history of the Raj—in a good way—piqued with the exciting whisper of 15-foot cobras. I also went to the first Jodhpur One World Retreat (inspiration for Hot Dates, page 16), held by His Highness Maharaja Gaj Singh II of Jodhpur in aid of the Indian Head Injuries Foundation, and saw the wonderful Yuvraj Shivraj Singh Trauma Rehabilitation Centre at Jodhpur's Rajadisa Hospital. It's a marvel, funded by the Maharaja's phenomenal determination since his son's polo accident. India has the most head injuries in the world; please support His Highness by giving to the indianheadinjuryfoundation.org.

Two momentous anniversaries this year: that of the First World War (I will be going to the battlefields with my godson, Lt-Col Alexander Turner DSO, author of three books on the battles, to find the grave of my grandfather, Lt Norman Mather, who died at the Somme), and the heroic Antarctic journey of Sir Ernest Shackleton, the most admirable British failure.

We will remember them.

—VICTORIA MATHER

VANITY FAIR ON TRAVEL

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HOT DATES

Once upon a time the official social season consisted of the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition and Royal Ascot—essentially anything with a royal and cucumber sandwiches. It achieved the oxymoronic feat of being at once worldly-aristocratic and parochial. Yet now the season has truly gone global: plutocratic society flies at the drop of an email to Art Basel in Miami, Bayreuth Festival in Bavaria, English polo in Los Angeles, the Shuttlecock

Dinner in St Moritz, the biannual Cartier Concours d'Elégance in India... At one end of the spectrum is the new Jodhpur One World Retreat (spirituality in the sunshine), at the other, the Davos Economic Forum (temporal in the snow); one is about how to give money away, the other about how to make it; at Jodhpur the entertainment is a concert given by Sting, at Davos it's seeing George Osborne demolish a slice of pizza. Shoulder-rubbing with the great and good has never been so exotic. —VICTORIA MATHER

POLO

SPIRITUAL

Thimphu Festival, Bhutan, September 29-October 6; Jodhpur One World Retreat, March 2015

Frieze Art Fair, New York, May 9-12; Art Basel, Miami, June 19-22; The European Fine Art Fair, Maastricht, March 14-23

ART

MUSIC

Verona Opera Festival, June 20-September 7; Salzburg Festival, July 18-August 31; Bayreuth Festival, July 25-August 28; Burning Man Festival, Nevada, August 25-September 1; Wexford Festival Opera, October 22-November 2; Holders Season, Barbados, March 22-April 5

RACING

Dubai World Cup, March 29; Qatar Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe, Paris, October 4-5; Melbourne Cup, November 4

BRITISH POLO DAY, LOS ANGELES, MAY 31

CARTIER INTERNATIONAL DUBAI POLO CHALLENGE, FEBRUARY 17-21; SNOW ST MORITZ, JANUARY 30-FEBRUARY 2

WORLD EQUESTRIAN GAMES, DEAUVILLE, SEPT 6

ARGENTINE POLO, BUENOS AIRES, NOVEMBER 15-DECEMBER 6

MIAMI BEACH POLO WORLD CUP, APRIL 23-27

WHAT'S GOING ON?

FOOD

Margaret River Gourmet Escape, Western Australia, November 21-23; South Beach Food and Wine Festival, Miami, February 20-23

SHUTTLECOCK DINNER, ST MORITZ TOBOGGANING CLUB, FEBRUARY 20

VENICE CARNIVAL, FEBRUARY 15-MARCH 4

VANITY FAIR OSCARS PARTY, LOS ANGELES, MARCH 2

GALA DINNER FOR THE 250TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE HERMITAGE MUSEUM, SPENCER HOUSE, LONDON, MAY 1

THE COSTUME INSTITUTE GALA AT THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, NEW YORK, MAY 5

RIO CARNIVAL, FEBRUARY 28-MARCH 4

VINTAGE

RÉTOMOBILE, PARIS, FEBRUARY 5-9

GOODWOOD FESTIVAL OF SPEED, WEST SUSSEX, JUNE 26-29

TOP GEAR FESTIVAL, BARBADOS, MAY 17-18

SNOW

Winter Olympics, Sochi, February 7-23; Engadin Ski Marathon, Switzerland, March 9; Davos Economic Forum, January 28-31, 2015

CONTACT SPORT

Rugby Sevens, Hong Kong, March 28-30

PARTY-PARTY

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