

# Her Edit

Our issue, our voice



Issue Sixteen  
March/April 2016

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The Travel Issue

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Front cover picture  
Portrait of Alex Bruni ©AniaMroczkowska

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# Her Edit



## Welcome to Her Edit

**W**hen we settled upon the theme of travel for this issue, I don't think we anticipated the breadth of experiences it might touch on. Editing this issue has been uncomfortable at times.

This is the first time a man has featured in the pages of Her Edit, but the compelling photographs of women in conflict by Nick Danziger communicate their stories so powerfully I desperately wanted to share them. If you can possibly visit the Imperial War Museum in London to see them, then I urge you to do so.

Similarly Joanna Hall's account of her visit to earthquake victims in Nepal has a poignancy and resonance that I'm sure we can all relate to. She is continuing to raise funds to help these resilient and dignified people and please support the appeal if you can.

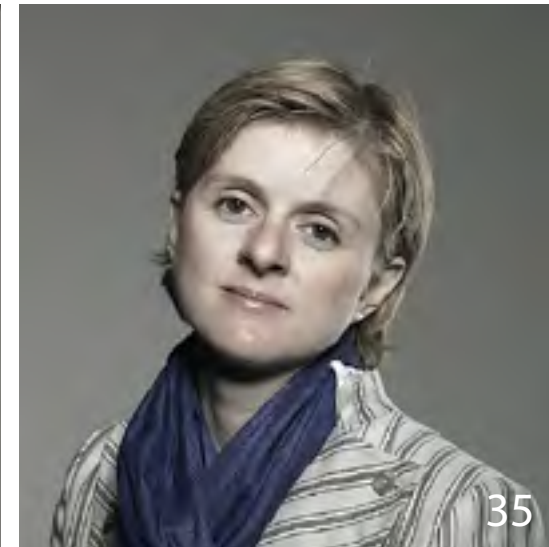
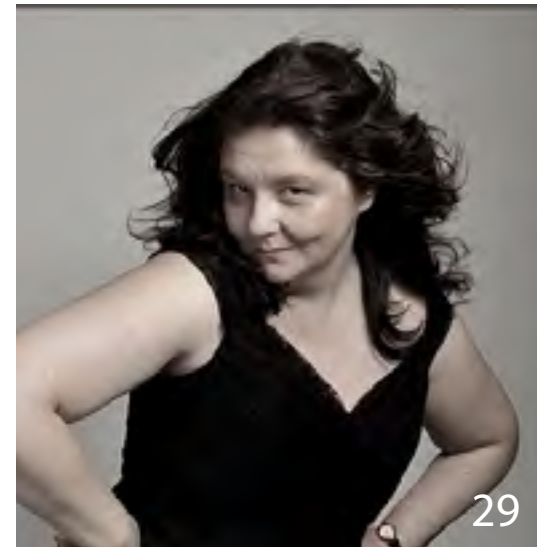
The incomparable Maureen Younger brings her sardonic wit to her narrative of her backpacking adventures and Evy Barry's sheer joy and wonder at her trip to Zambia makes you want to immediately book a plane ticket.

I'm delighted that Alex Bruni has kindly agreed to share her experience of a recent research trip to Indonesia and if you're reading this before 2 March there's an opportunity to hear more at her talk at the London College of Fashion. The beautiful images of her - indeed all the images in this issue - are testament to women's power and spirit.

I hope you enjoy the following pages and please share your thoughts and experiences on [twitter](#) or the website's [comment page](#).

# Her Issue Sixteen

- 2 The Editor
- 3 Contents
- 5 The Researcher
- 13 The Photographer
- 21 The Philanthropist
- 29 The Comedian
- 35 The Film maker



IMAGES  
 Clockwise from top: Nick Danziger, Evy Barry,  
 Maureen Younger and Alex Bruni

# on the fashion trail



# Alex Bruni

Alex Bruni (Alex B Lopez y Royo) is an academic and writer who took up modelling in her mid-forties. Here she writes about her latest research trip to Indonesia. Read more from Alex on her erudite and hugely entertaining blog <http://alex-therealdoesnoteffaceitself.blogspot.co.uk>

Follow Alex on twitter @AlexB244

IMAGES  
All courtesy Alex Bruni

Her Edit



©MichaelClement

t's barely over a year since my last article appeared in issue number 7 of Her Edit, but it really seems a lifetime away.

In November 2014 I applied to the Association of Southeast Asian Studies in the UK and the British Academy for a fellowship. I chose Jakarta in Indonesia as my base because I was already familiar with the country through earlier studies. I submitted a proposal to conduct some research on fashion in Indonesia, how it affects Indonesian women, its relationship with the media and the beauty industry and so on. It was a return to my academic roots, so to speak; I taught and did research for many years, quitting to go freelance in 2013.

In January 2015 I was awarded the fellowship and frantically began my preparations to go to Indonesia for three months, to do an ethnography of Indonesian fashion. It was very exciting and very scary too, as this area of research was very new to me. I came to it through my involvement in modelling. I asked myself why one does not hear much about fashion in Asia and its impact on Asian women, even though Asia is one of the biggest producers and consumers of fashion. It was a question that really bugged me and I wanted to investigate further.

I set the wheels in motion. I needed a local research counterpart, a research permit, a research visa and a full medical. There was a lot of paperwork going back and forth, and I continued my modelling work in London while waiting for the go ahead. It finally came in August.

Meanwhile I had joined a new agency, the Grey Model Agency, which represents models over the

age of 35 putting them forward for roles usually given to younger ones. Rebecca Valentine, owner of Grey, is a dynamic woman with a background as a photographic agent. She has spoken and written widely about Grey and what the agency stands for. It is the first of its kind and now has an international model board.

In September 2015 I was one of the models selected by Hunger Magazine for a Prada spread. Immediately afterwards I flew to Jakarta and began the whole process of getting settled, creating my research network, meeting and interviewing people involved in fashion, from designers to models to media people and ordinary women.

I started attending fashion events, beginning with Jakarta Fashion Week and became a bit of a fixture there. I saw a lot of beautiful designs, and so I began to question the industry as a whole;

how clothes are made and by whom. I realised that 'made in Indonesia' is no longer synonymous with exploitative fast fashion, but that Indonesian fashion is diverse and tries to follow a sustainable model, drawing as it does on artisanal textile traditions, with a contemporary twist.

So my research focus shifted slightly in order to be able to gather information not only about women as consumers of fashion, but also about the designers themselves, many of whom are women (not a coincidence).

I had no plans to model in Indonesia, but with my distinctive hair I am easily identifiable. I was approached to do some photo shoots and then a senior and quite unconventional designer, Tri Handoko Juwono, asked me to model in his

**“‘made in Indonesia’ is no longer synonymous with exploitative fast fashion”**





©NitaStrudwick

December show, a significant show presenting the trends for 2016.

I was immensely flattered and delighted to be involved. I even had to turn down other modelling offers as there was no time for everything. It is encouraging though that there is awareness globally of the need to represent more mature women in fashion and that mature models have work opportunities coming their way.

I returned to England on 14 December and soon after I began processing the experience. Travel always changes you, in a good way, I would say. I am now going through that phase academics know only too well in which you need to decide what you are going to do with all the material you have gathered – somehow whatever you write in your research proposal is always superseded by the results of your research! I regard it as a good thing. I have exciting plans concerning a possible exhibition of Indonesian fashion in the UK – I keep my fingers crossed.

Travel has always figured prominently in my life since my days as a research student. By that I do not mean only short holidays and weekend breaks or the two day work trips, but the long distance travel of at least two months' duration. There is nothing like going away for a purpose and having to deal with day to day life in a country that is very far away and where you need to step out the comforts of hotel life, where everything can be arranged for you.

There is also the language problem: how do you communicate with local people? English is not always an option. You need to adjust and learn to deal with people differently and take it in your stride. For example, my biggest problem in Jakarta was the

traffic which meant my days had to be planned in such a way as to concentrate visits or meetings all in one area to avoid being stuck in horrendous traffic jams. It tested my endurance powers criss-crossing from one end of the city to the other and also meant I had to learn to slow down a little...

What I most enjoy about travelling is the way it allows you to examine how you react to people and situations. Communication breakdowns can occur even if you are speaking the same language. I have enough knowledge of Indonesian to be able to conduct an everyday conversation and I do understand what is being said, but I recognise that sometimes communication was not easy because of cultural differences and different sets of expectations.

This is something I also notice when I go back to Italy where I was born and brought up. When I return to London after a few weeks, I always need to readjust and reconsider my behaviour to make it fit.

Overall it has been a very intense year. I have had the chance to experience life in a different and faraway country. I also briefly visited Vietnam, spending a whole weekend in Saigon aka Ho Chi Minh City, on a fashion research trail. I was struck by the beauty of the country. In Vietnam too there is a lively fashion scene, mingling art and fashion design aimed at urban wearers. I was very impressed by the high standards of the designs and the desire for it to be ecological.

What next? More travel I hope, I would never say no to it, and more fashion of the sustainable kind, embracing beauty standards to match the diversity of the world we live in.

**'There is nothing like going away for a purpose and having to deal with day to day life in a country...far away.'**



©NickDanziger/nbpictures



# Nick Danziger

# Her Edit

Award-winning British photographer, author and documentary filmmaker needs little introduction. Jayne Phenton shares her thoughts on his current exhibition of his work *Eleven Women Facing War* at the Imperial War Museum.

The concept of the male gaze is well established in feminist film discourse as defining the depiction of women in the context of the white heterosexual man.

I recently met the video journalist [Emma Brumpton](#) who has undertaken several commissions from the United Nations covering subjects such as female genital mutilation. She was adamant that male colleagues were prepared to film images which women camera operative would be reluctant to record.

It was with this in mind that I visited the exhibition *Eleven Women Facing War* at the [Imperial War Museum](#), a collection of photographs and film by award-winning British photographer and filmmaker Nick Danziger.

Danziger's formidable reputation is built on a long career in which he has documented the lives of the vulnerable and dispossessed in books such as *Britain and from his travels across the world*.

This current exhibition, running through to 26 April, is the result of a project he began in 2001. He photographed eleven women in major conflict zones across the world for an International Committee of the Red Cross study documenting the impact of women in war.

A decade later he returned to find the women and see what had become of them. The result is an unflinching portrayal of the women's lives in Bosnia, Kosovo, Israel, Gaza, Hebron (West Bank) Sierra Leone, Columbia and Afghanistan.

As you might expect the images make uncomfortable viewing. Mariatu in Sierra Leone has no hands. They had been forcibly amputated by guerilla soldiers when she was aged just 13 so she couldn't vote.

There is another photograph of her preparing a meal for Danziger when he caught up with her ten years later. Unicef sponsored her to emigrate to Canada where she has made a new life, publishing a book about her experiences, *The Bite of the Mango*, and training to become a social worker.

With almost unbelievable alacrity she says:

'Fortune has smiled on me. I was able to leave the amputees village and emigrate to Toronto, Canada. When Nick came to see me at my home, I prepared a meal for him.'

Nevertheless optimism is thin on the ground here. The photograph of Mah Bibi, shown here on the previous page, is one of the most confrontational and moving images I think I've ever seen.

Mah Bibi was a ten-year-old orphan when Danziger photographed her in Afghanistan in 2001. Her parents were dead and she had assumed the role of mother to her two younger brothers, begging for food.

In Danziger's photograph she seems to challenge our acquiescence in her circumstance. When he returned he was unable to find her and records suggest that she didn't survive.

The images strike me as very painterly in their composition, the use of light and shadow reminiscent of Caravaggio or Titian, and I asked Danziger how he balanced the creation of the image with the reality of the subject.

'My first passion and professional career was as a painter. I studied at art school and also taught painting at art school. On the few occasions when I am invited to talk to photography students I talk about Caravaggio who has certainly been an influence on my photography. When I am framing – none of my images are cropped – composition is part of the process, but I can't say how much weight I give to the composition as I am juggling the subject, context and framing all at the same time.'

The other image reproduced here is of Sarah who was subject to sexual abuse and used as a sex slave

in Sierra Leone. Although the war has ended, she is unable to return to her village. She has married a man who went against his family's wishes and there is a palpable joy in the photograph.

Danziger says:

'I realised that women's vulnerability in conflict is firmly linked to traditional perceptions of their roles in society. Until these perceptions are addressed, women's vulnerability to men at times of conflict will continue.'

This exhibition coincides with another at the Museum of work by war photographer Lee Miller. Taken around 60 years earlier, in common with Danziger Miller seems to strive to show women's strength, determination and spirit.

Of how his own 'gaze' shapes the images he produces, Danziger says:

'I think every individual will bring their 'own gaze' to what interests them and how they see, absorb and disseminate what is in front of them. Undoubtedly, each individual's background, experiences and gender will contribute to this.'

Danziger's 'gaze' is brave and uncompromising and does credit to the character of these extraordinary women.

## IMAGES

Previous page Mah Bibi, Afghanistan 2001

Overleaf: Sarah, Sierra Leone 2011

All copyright Nick Danziger

# Her Edit

'I hope above all that this exhibition will give voice to these women and the hundreds and hundreds of women living in conflict. All of these women should have been given medals.'



©Nick De Long / iStockphoto

# Her Edit



IMAGES  
Left to right: Nick Danziger, installation view of *Eleven Women Facing War* at the Imperial War Museum and Research Curator of Photography at the IWM, Hilary Roberts  
All images reproduced with thanks to the Imperial War Museum

# Joanna Hall

Joanna Hall is a textile and fashion designer from Kent who works with crafts people in India and beyond.

In our last issue, Joanna shared some moving photographs from a visit she made to Nepal to meet the women who knit for her. The earthquake there 11 months ago destroyed entire villages leaving thousands of people homeless and destitute.

Here Joanna writes about the people she knows there and the devastating consequences of the earthquake. You can support Joanna's campaign to help people in Nepal <https://crowdfunding.justgiving.com/BhaktapuRknittingladies>

IMAGES  
All images courtesy Joanna Hall

# Her Edit

In April 2015, I was travelling by road from Delhi to Rajasthan when the earthquake hit Nepal. I felt nothing, but by the time I arrived, the earthquake dominated the news.

Immediately I thought of the tiny cobbled streets of Bhaktapur and the women there who knit the hats and winter woollens that we sell in the UK. Over the next few days my heart sank deeper and deeper as I tried to contact my friends in Nepal. No-one answered; lines were broken and batteries dead.

Finally on the fifth day I got a call from Tsewang, who I met over 20 years ago when he was setting up his first shop with his wife. They have exported all my cargo from Nepal ever since and become good friends.

I was overwhelmingly relieved to hear his voice and that he, his family and local neighbourhood, a wealthy part of town, were fine. He said he had been to Bhaktapur, but his voice wavered when he said it had been impossible for him to enter the town. There was just rubble everywhere.

It was Tsewang who first took me to Bhaktapur. It's a medieval town with tiny alleys, cobbled streets and a magical atmosphere. I fell in love with it immediately and have visited often.

Many women from Bhaktapur boost their family's income by knitting. They are organised groups of about 15 to 20 with a central distributor who has a store room of wool, weighing scales, and designs.

Each distributor is linked to someone like Tsewang, who in turn is linked to me. I have always visited the homes of the families who make our products, so I can make sure people are getting a fair deal, working on their own terms and making the right thing!

I sat in India in despair worrying about those women and their families and desperately searched online for pictures of Bhaktapur looking for familiar faces.

A few weeks later back in the UK I received an email from Mr Toran, a knitwear dealer in Bhaktapur.

'Please help us to help all our workers...they are helpless and homeless.'

So my campaign began. We started to raise money through the business and from everyone we knew and people were generous.

In October, I flew to Katmandu with the money that had been raised. Looking out of the plane window as we landed, I felt hopeful - all the buildings were still standing.

Most of built up Katmandu - the area where I stay - is still in tact, but just a short walk away in Durbar Square, beautiful temples and other buildings have been flattened. Most of the rubble had been cleared away, but it was sobering that many familiar sights were no longer there.

With the help of Tsewang and Mr Toran I spent the next couple of days in Bhaktapur, visiting the

ladies who do our knitting. I wanted to help, but the magnitude of the situation was overwhelming and the money we had collected was definitely not enough to go round.

I divided it into two. One half to buy rice, oil and general food supplies we could hand out; I put the remainder in my bag deciding to give small amounts to people I met.

Tsewang, Mr Toran and I sat in the ruins of a home with about 14 ladies gathered around. They sat and knitted and drank chai while I wrote notes. One by one they told me about their earthquake experiences, showed me their half demolished or flattened homes, and then the tents and temporary shelters that they were, and still are, living in.

Usually we would have been happily discussing the colour of the gloves to be knitted or the design of the hats — this was uncomfortably new.

The survivors' stories were harrowing. People almost crushed by falling staircases; witnessing the death of five people in their collapsing house; the friend who got home in time to see all his family killed beneath the falling building.

More than two million people have been left homeless and no-one seems to know what to do. The government has received money from the world bank — everyone said it was £4 billion pounds — but the people have received just 15,000 Rs each, about £95.

My local friends had differing opinions as to how best to distribute the funds I had. Tsewang was happy to visit five or six families who were badly affected and help them with a part of the money. We met them all.

Mr Toran has hundreds of workers who have lost their homes. He feels a duty of care to help them all and did not want to give cash to individuals.

He said, 'If we give to two or three people and not to others then how can we handle the outcry from the others?'

He wanted to spend the money on a truck full of rice, oil and food, and then distribute that to everyone reasoning, 'At least every family can eat for a month.'

Another friend simply did not want to be involved in giving out the money. 'There is too much need and how can we decide who to give it to?'

I could only trust my gut feelings. It was humbling to pass on small handfuls of money to people. Some welled up as I gave it to them, some were relieved and some embarrassed as I tried to explain that it was not my money, but money donated from people I know.

Here I'd like to share some of their stories and some of their photos.



IMAGES  
Rameshur Gaiju in the remains of his home

# Her Edit

Rameshur Gaiju is a builder and was out working when the earthquake hit. His wife Nilkamal, who is a knitter, was visiting her father with baby Gaiju and their three other daughters. The house collapsed on top of them. They were all pulled out of the rubble, but Nilkamal's father was killed.

When she fell she was holding Gaiju; she managed to cup the baby's head in her hands, but she fell backwards and injured her spine. Nilkamal was paralysed and spent a month in a tent outside the hospital, before being moved to a spinal injury hospital for a further three months. She has made a very good recovery and is now mobile.

They showed me photos of her wheelchair bound and the hospital reports which attribute her spinal injuries to "compression by buildings".

Nilkamal and Rameshur's house completely collapsed. Nilkamal is too frightened to return to the site, but Rameshur took me to their humble pile of rubble and stood forlornly beside it. Nothing can be salvaged. It is a pitiful pile of bricks and broken wood with grass growing up through it. Neither of us could speak.

The family is living in two rented rooms - a living room/bedroom and a kitchen/bedroom - and finding it hard to make ends meet. Rameshur told me he had requested earthquake assistance so he could send his girls to school at a reduced rate, but he has not received anything.

Despite the overwhelming sadness, they brought me a big bowl of famously delicious Bhaktapur curd and we all felt lucky to be alive.



IMAGES  
Rameshur Gaiju, his wife Nilkamal and daughter Gaiju

# Her Edit



IMAGE  
Shanti in her makeshift home

Shanti is a knitter and an organiser of knitters. She distributes wool to ladies in Bhaktapur.

Although her house did not fall down in the earthquake, it is so dangerous to go in that she and five other members of her family are now living in a little brick and tin room in her friend's cornfield. She finds it hard to keep the woollen mittens that she makes dry, because there is no way of keeping the rain out.

She reluctantly took me to her old house and her nephew Ashok came to support her. She has been so traumatised by the earthquake that she had not been back to the house since the day it happened. It was absolutely heartbreaking to see her lovingly touch the door of her old house. She could hardly speak and barely look up.

She has received around £95 in aid from the government. She was very grateful for the drop of donation money I gave to her. She welled up when I handed it to her — so did I.

# Going it alone

## Her Edit

Maureen Younger is a stand up comedian and compère. She hosts the legendary sell-out MY Comedy nights in London and Birmingham, raising money for charity along with the laughs. Back on Her Edit's pages by popular demand, Maureen shares her experiences where heels and cocktail dresses are travel essentials and being British gives you a special perspective on the world. This is back-packing in style!

Read more about Maureen and upcoming shows on her [website](#)



IMAGE

All images courtesy of Maureen Younger  
Right: Maureen in San Luis Obispo in California



# Maureen Younger

## Her Edit

In the mid-1990s I decided to travel around the world by myself. Brave, you say? Possibly. Though the fact was that I couldn't find anyone daft enough to go with me. Once I'd bought the ticket, I realised it was a very scary prospect. Fortunately, my inherent stinginess overcame the idea of foregoing the trip and losing the grand I'd splashed out on the ticket. So I went. As it turned out, I had the time of my life.

Before that trip I had the advantage of having lived abroad – the then Soviet Union (yes, I'm that old), Vienna, Mallorca, Paris and various villages and small towns near Frankfurt am Main. I was used to being abroad on my tod and having to make do, but I'd never stepped out of Europe. Not only that, but I'd be on holiday for a milestone birthday (I'm refusing to say which one) as well as Christmas and New Year. I had images of spending my birthday and the festive season alone in some flea-ridden hostel, sobbing into my Pot Noodle.

Moreover, I am an inveterate culture vulture. There is nothing I like more (well that's not exactly true but you get my drift) than visiting some ancient castle or checking out the brashness of a baroque church. My knowledge of Australia was minimal – I only started reading my Rough Guide to Australia when I was actually on the plane – but even I suspected that baroque churches and ancient castles would be in short supply over there. What the hell was I going to do over there? Look at the majestic scenery? As it turned out, I did. Despite my ingrained London cynicism to the beauties of nature, I found Australia jaw-droppingly beautiful and, in those days anyway,

relatively cheap. It also had the advantage of seeming both a foreign country and yet somehow British, so you kind of felt at home.

Things didn't get off to a great start however. The day I arrived, I was on the top of Sydney Harbour Bridge when a freak gust of wind opened my handbag and my purse fell out, spilling the brashly coloured Australian money into the waters below. I resented the loss of the money of course but, as a result of this misadventure, I ended up having tea with some workers under the bridge who finally found my French ID, but none of the cash.

**'My knowledge of Australia was minimal....but even I suspected that baroque churches and ancient castles would be in short supply...'**

Despite this inauspicious start, I loved Australia; the scenery, the 95 mile beaches, the islands made of sand with their transparent, turquoise blue waters, the parks the size of the UK. I even steadfastly ignored the fact that almost every animal over there can seemingly kill

you. Even when my leg exploded thanks to a spider bite.

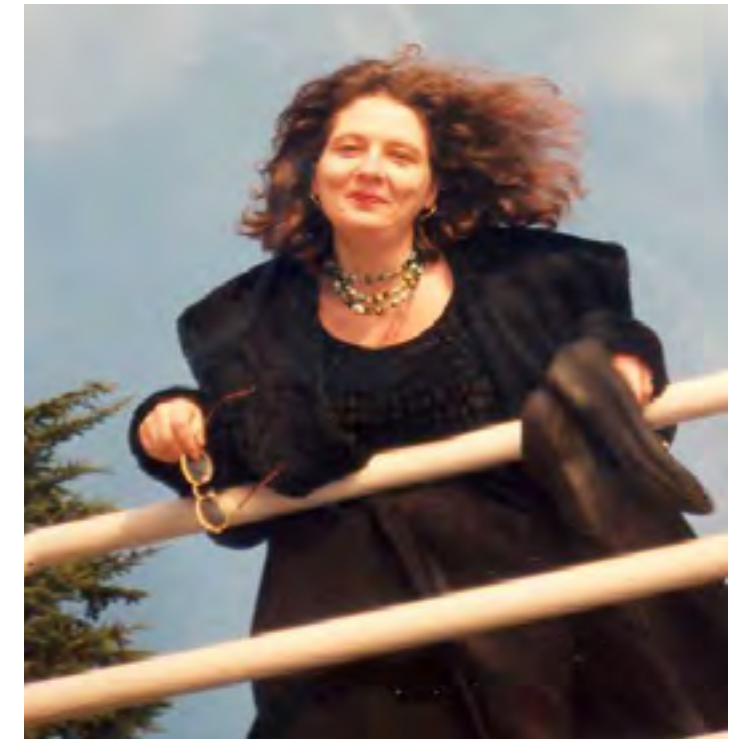
And I wasn't alone for long. The advantage of travelling by yourself is that you have to make an effort and get to know people. Admittedly I'm a gregarious person and years of being the outsider have taught me how to involve people in a conversation: the basic rule is to show an interest (real or feigned) in other people's lives. Few people can resist that ploy and it didn't take long before I found not only was I not alone, but that I couldn't get rid of people who wanted to travel with me.

On my trip I also visited New Zealand for 11 days to see the North Island, Fiji, Cook Islands, Tahiti and

Moorea, all as idyllic as they sound. An inveterate show off, in Tahiti and Moorea I practiced my French. However I soon learned, thanks to the barely hidden, local contempt towards the French colonial powers, that it was best to speak it badly so the locals didn't suspect you were a native French-speaker. It was amazing how differently you were treated once you had made that clear.

Of course one of the dangers when travelling is that you tend to have a false sense of security. I stayed in a hostel in Darwin where the door to my room didn't lock. If that had been Europe I would have insisted on moving rooms. As it was Darwin, I assumed it was perfectly safe, as if excessive heat and humidity automatically negated any form of criminal activity. As it turned out, nothing happened, but I later learned that Darwin has the highest crime rate of any city in Australia!

Later in America I stayed with a guy who I'd met for just three days in Kakadu on the grounds that he lived in California and I wanted to visit LA. After all, how big could California be? (Yes, you guessed it. I only started reading my Rough Guide to the USA on the plane to the States). No great surprise that California is actually humongous, and he lived hours away from LA. He lived with two other men in a disbanded schoolhouse in the middle of nowhere in an era long before mobile phones. If my arrival had been the pre-credit sequence to an episode of CSI, I would have been screaming at the woman for being such an idiot. Fortunately for me, he and his flatmates weren't axe murderers, but rather laid-back, charming Californian dudes. In fact, my host was one of the loveliest men I have ever met and twenty years later we are still in touch, but looking back, I really can't believe I was - in theory at least- so foolhardy.



Of course while in California I had to spend quite a bit of my time trying to explain to incredulous Californians why an adult woman such as myself had never learnt to drive. It turns out your average Californian is more likely to believe you are from Mars than that you never bothered to get your driving licence. In fact, due to my inability to drive on either side of the road, my first slice of Americana was arriving at the East LA Greyhound Terminal.

Rather unreassuringly inside the terminal the waiting area was cordoned off by guards who looked far more scarily equipped than your average British bobby. From a British point of view, it's slightly unsettling; if that's how the good guys are tooled up, heaven preserve us from the baddies! I was completely out of my depth; surrounded by bags, apparently the only white person in the building,

and no idea of what I was doing or what bus I needed. To be honest, I might as well have had 'mug me, I'm a tourist' emblazoned on my forehead. Fortunately, a Hispanic avocado farmer took pity on me and saw me safely through the ticket buying process and into the well-guarded waiting room.

I sometimes think being British and therefore often ignorant of the local situation can sometimes be an advantage. Primarily because I think locals can't really believe that anyone can be that stupid. In New York I arrived at the Port Authority after midnight, baggage still in tow, looking for a bus to get me to the youth hostel in Haarlem, where I was staying. I was approached by several shady characters who I brushed off in full British mode, sounding as if I had just stepped out of a 1950s British movie, with the phrase, 'I'm awfully sorry. I'm in a frightful hurry.' Who talks like that? I know I don't. But it worked. They left me alone, presumably under the impression they were either on Candid Camera or I was spectacularly weird with an accent to match.

The classic example of this kind happened back in LA. I was on Hollywood Boulevard and heard a loud, rumbling noise. I could see people running, but I kid you not, being the born Londoner I am, I heard the sound, and my immediate thought was, 'God, the underground system here ain't half noisy'. A minute or two later, a guy next to me said, 'That was a bad quake.' 'I wasn't here for the quake,' I reliably reassured him. 'No, the quake just now,' he replied. 'What quake just now?,' I enquired, confused. He looked at me in awe, though to be fair it could have been something else).

My scary trip round the world proved to be possibly the happiest four and a half months of my life. I did things I'd normally never do, met people I

would otherwise never have met, and visited places I normally would avoid like the plague. Clearly travelling alone as a woman has its dangers. I personally avoided any hostels that were described as lively – as I don't drink, wasn't on the pull and don't have the temperament to put up with any 'lively' people when I'm trying to get to sleep.

Obviously I suggest you are better informed than me and not take as many stupid risks as I did. Throughout my travels I had only one bad experience – quite a frightening one in fact but ironically from a licenced taxi driver in California. Yes, the one time I decide to fork out on a taxi and not use public transport. Luckily some quick thinking on my part got me out of a rather dubious situation.

**'I sometimes think being British and therefore often ignorant of the local situation can sometimes be an advantage.'**

I enjoyed travelling alone though I stuck to countries where it is relatively safe for a woman to do so. I'm not that much of a maverick; I

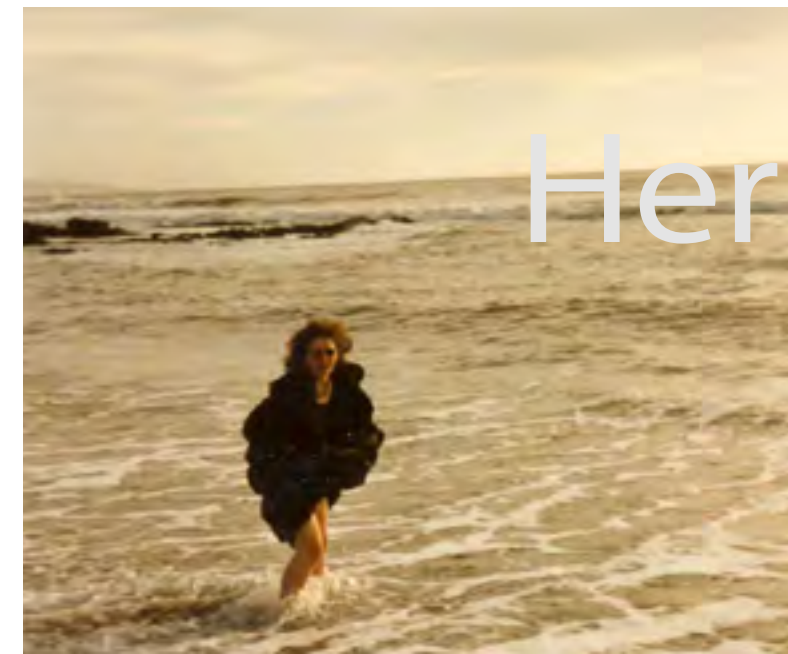
know how frightening it can be when confronted with other people's ideas of how they think a woman should act and how you're then treated accordingly.

When I was much younger, I once got hauled by my wrist over the floor of a restaurant in a top Moscow Hotel by a guy, because he assumed that my female friend and I must be prostitutes. We were of course just two hungry women who fancied lunch. So yes, keep your wits about you and bear in mind local sensibilities regarding dress and behaviour. No matter how much this might set your teeth on edge.

But the main thing I took away from my round the world trip, besides lots of lovely memories and a hell of a lot of photos, is that sometimes being scared can be a sign that you are just moving out of our comfort zone; and that if you take the plunge, you may make the fortunate discovery that your comfort zone is a lot larger than you think.

#### IMAGES

All images courtesy of Maureen Younger  
Previous page: Maureen in Pismo  
Top to bottom: Maureen at Pismo, Kakadu and Australia



# Her Edit

# Where everything starts with Z

Film maker Evy Barry has worked in broadcasting for over 10 years at BBC and ITV and making her own high quality documentaries. Here she shares her passion for travel and recalls a recent trip to Zambia and Zimbabwe.

I have always been keen to travel the world and experience as much of it as possible. A couple of years ago, I was trekking through the Jordanian desert when one of my fellow travellers told me about this fantastic trip she had made canoeing down the Zambezi and sleeping on islands in the river. It went straight on my bucket list there and then - and this year I ticked it off.

I have to say it lived up to ALL of my expectations. Incredibly, across five canoes, we (nine people) travelled with all of our luggage, tents, bedding and food/cooking paraphernalia. Even better it was one of the most unspoilt, beautiful parts of the world I've had the privilege to see.

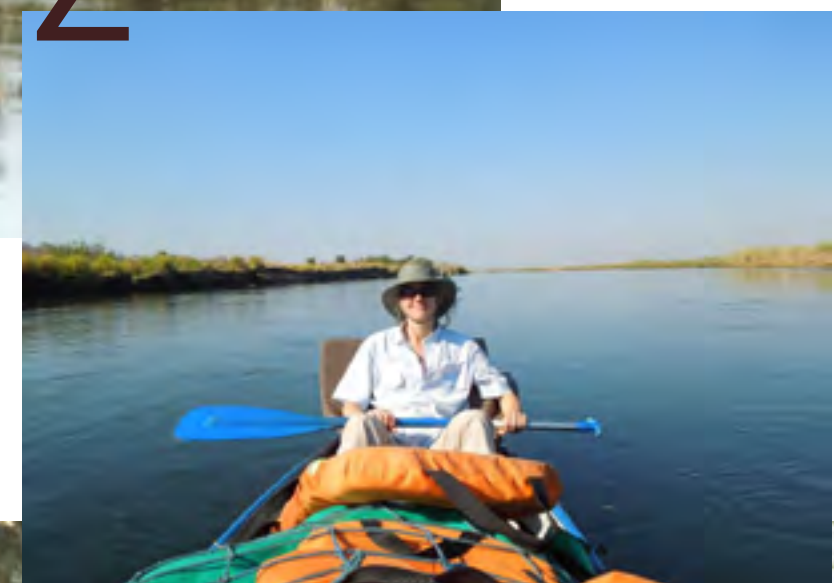
The river was home to multiple families of hippos. The guides knew them all well and we navigated around most of them without incident until one huge male called Bobby launched himself into the water. He made quite a show of himself roaring indignantly. It amused me greatly when I was told he was a ladies man who was showing off to the females in his newly acquired family.

One of the pleasures of being in Zambia/Zimbabwe was the sheer plethora of wildlife. I saw numerous elephants including an enchanting three-month old baby being guided to a watering hole protectively by its family.

There were plenty of crocodiles, wildebeest, pumba, bushbuck, and a huge variety of birds too. One night we heard a lion roaring. I'm disappointed to say that when we went tracking for it the next day, it was not to be found. And - yes I trusted the guide that much!

There is something truly humbling about being alongside animals in their own natural habitat. The elephants have used the same route to cross the river for their grazing grounds for generations and continued to do so regardless of our camp. Hearing them walking between our tents at night and the hippos grunting to the moon nearby was a thrill I'll never forget.

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