

From the white nights of St Petersburg to a remote island off the Kenyan coast, nine writers share their travellers' tales

INCREDIBLE JOURNEYS



LIZA CAMPBELL'S TOP FIVE PLACES

A near-death experience in Chamonix and living like Robinson Crusoe on Kiwayu

TAJ MAHAL

When I travelled to India in my early twenties, the Indian Tourist Board was running a poster campaign showing stunning views of lesser-known marvels with the strap line: 'There's More To India Than The Taj Mahal.' A keen obscurist, I intended to see every last temple inside six weeks. The itinerary I created could have been designed by a bluebottle.

Two weeks in, things were not going well. No tiny ruin or city view could transform my mood of self-induced stress. And then there was the Taj Mahal; the most effortlessly beautiful building I have ever seen. All I wanted to do was press myself against the warm white marble. Those posters were wrong; there is not more to India than the Taj Mahal.

KIWAYU

There was a Robinson Crusoe period in my life when my husband and I lived on an island called Kiwayu, off the Kenyan coast. With a population constrained by the

output of two brackish wells, it was the last inhabited island in the Lamu archipelago before Somalia. We fished, cooked on charcoal, washed from a bucket shower. The surrounding area of coral cliffs, mangrove swamps and low-tide sand flats was a national marine park, but one which no one visited. It felt like our own private Eden, shared only with crabs, pelicans and monkeys.

Our main form of transport was our dhow, on which we would do a fortnightly 'commute' to restock in the closest shops, 30 miles away by sea. Whenever we arrived in Lamu town the urban bustle felt oppressively hectic. Every

time we chugged back across the final bay before Kiwayu, my heart would lift.

L'AIGUILLE DU MIDI

I have a dread of heights, but while visiting a ski-fanatic boyfriend in France, I ended up agreeing to ski L'Aiguille du Midi glacier above Chamonix. Disgorging into an ice tunnel, we soon funnelled on to the steepest of paths down the lip of what was an abyss. 'Only this and the arête, then we can put on our skis,' called Jim.

An arête is a narrow natural bridge. In a trance of horror, I fell to my knees and crawled. Schoolchildren clambered over me. When I reached the far side, I opened my eyes to a great stillness of glinting snow, tinged peach-pink from the sun, and peak after peak spreading in every direction.

MOMA DESIGN

Covering only two floors on New York's 53rd Street, all MoMA Design's exhibitions are a digestible size. My favourite show was called *Radical Lace and Subversive*

Knitting, which turned those mumsy arts on their blue-rinsed heads.

Among many glories was a circular tablecloth fringed with 3D crocheted skulls, a teddy bear knitted from lead 'wool' that stood 6in high but weighed two stone, and a car with its doors oxyacetylene-torched to resemble a doily. The whole show was curiously life affirming.

CARREG CENNEN

Wales' Carreg Cennen is what all castles should look like: majestic, brooding – a place one can automatically believe was occupied by Bluebeard, Rapunzel and Sir Gawain, probably all at the same time.

The impact of setting eyes upon it for the first time is increased by a conspiracy of deep lanes and thick hedgerows that keep it hidden from view. Then its enormous silhouette appears high above you on a rugged crag. Go to see for yourself; it's enough to make you buy armour. *Title Deeds* by Liza Campbell (Black Swan, £6.99)

Picturescolourlibrary, Britain On View/David Sellman

Liza with her daughter Storm and husband Willie on Kiwayu

