



# **Vagabonds**

## **Sometimes Getting Lost is the Point**

**By Christopher Damitio**

**Copyright © 2019**  
**Published by Vagorithm Media, USA.**  
**www.vagorithm.com**

**All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.**

**PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

**First Edition**

**The characters and events in this book are not fictitious. Any similarity to real persons, living or dead, is not coincidental and is intended by the author.**



# Introduction

My name is Christopher Damitio. Lots of my friends and family know me as 'Vago' which is short for Vagabond. The nickname comes from a book I wrote in 2003 called *Rough Living: Tips and Tales of a Vagabond*.

My life has been inspired by the great travelers, writers, and wanderers of the planet. My grandmother had a full collection of National Geographic Magazines from 1913 until she passed away. As a child, I used to spend hours reading them and looking at the pictures (not just the naked ones) while my siblings and cousins rode motorcycles, snow skied, and did other normal kid things.

When I was nine-years-old, I took all the money I'd earned doing chores and went to my favorite store in our little town of Big Bear Lake, California. Village Books. I wanted to buy many books, but I settled on just one and it had a profound effect on my life. It was *The Kids' Book of Games for Cars, Trains, & Planes* by Rudi McToots and Dreadnaught. I realize you are probably laughing right now, but check out the dedication in the book:

This book is for nomads, travelers, gypsies, explorers, ramblers, hobos, hitch-hikers and freewheelers everywhere.

Looking back, I think it was this book more than any other that set me upon the journey my life has become. My love of books and words also led me to Jack London, John Steinbeck, Mark Twain, and all the other writers I have detailed here. Their stories led me further. While I spent significant time digging underground forts and building treehouses in the mountains and forests of California and Oregon, I was defined by my love of books and my thirst for travel.

The funny thing with books is that you get a lot more than what you expect from the good ones. I read Jack London and John Steinbeck for the adventure stories but was introduced to socialism. This in turn led to reading about Emma Goldman and other anarchists. The stories stayed

with me, but the philosophies defined me. Whether it was the philosophy of grit put forth by Louis L'Amour or the philosophy of existentialism from Jean Paul Sartre and Albert Camus - it was books who created the person I am.

Of course there were other influences - I grew up in the 1970s and 1980s and was generally surrounded by hippie folks.

Not all of the people in this book are heroic. Some of them are downright villains. However, I believe that each of their stories has important lessons that can be learned.

All of that is my way of saying that books and writers, stories and travel tales are important in changing the world. There are many revolutionary actions that can be taken in this life - but few of them are so revolutionary as reading a book. In Islam, there is really only one command that carries the full weight of God - it is this: READ!

It is my hope, that introducing these particular travelers to you might in some way lead you down a path that you have never expected. It is my hope, that these brief introductions might play just a little part in making the world a better place.

# Ancient Explorers, Wanderers, and Conquerors

## Herodotus: The Father of History

Herodotus is the true father of all vagabonds. It's quite a title to hold. Globally he is known as "The Father of History" which is even heavier! He was the nephew of the poet Panyasis and not only the father of history and vagabonds, but also the father of anthropology. One can equally (but not so forcefully) argue he is the father of all travel writers. Although, it should also be pointed out that because of his sometimes fanciful tales he has also been called the 'father of liars' which seems to make him the patron saint of politicians as well.

He was born in 484 BC at Halicarnassus, today known as Bodrum, Turkey. He was a rich kid and we can guess like modern rich kids in Bodrum, he spent plenty of time on his parent's yacht and enjoyed the perfect summer climate there. At 20 years of age, he left, not gap year travel, but to explore and document as much of the known and unknown world as he could. As far as we know, he was the first to undertake such a journey with such a goal. At the very least, he was the first to document his journey and have those writings survive to the present day.

He first headed towards Memphis - no, silly, not the home of the King of Rock and Roll (Memphis, Tennessee) but Memphis, Egypt. He visited the pyramids, watched the Nile overflow its banks, and wrote of Heliopolis and Thebes. It was he who was the first tourist of the world. He described the religious rituals, the daily life, the food, and the culture of Egypt and in the process, he set the foundation of anthropology.

From Egypt he set out to Libya where he was amazed by snakes, elephants, and an animal he described as "having no head but eyes on the chest" - from this we can guess he wasn't averse to trying out the local psychedelics. From there to Ethiopia before leaving Africa and heading back towards Bodrum by way of Phoenicia (Lebanon), Syria,

Palestine, and Arabia.

He described Arabs as the people who 'kept any vow they might have made' and wrote lyrically of their spices and religion in Assyria and Babylon (Iraq). Next he went to Persia (Iran) because he wanted to document as much as possible about the wars between the Persians and the Greeks. At the time, Persia wasn't a Muslim place but Herodotus notes that the Persians of that time didn't like their gods to be depicted in human form. He was enthusiastic about the Persian custom of transacting business over too much wine - something that would probably make the mullahs of Iran a bit mellower today if they adopted it.

Next, Herodotus ventured into India, the Punjab, and Afghanistan. From there he travelled into the ancient country of Media - which today is what we call 'the 'Stans' of Central Asia. From Central Asia he ventured around the Caspian and Black Seas and into the Caucasian Mountains. He explored a considerable portion of what is today European Russia including stretches of the Volga, the Don, and the Danube.

He sailed around the Black Sea and to the Bosphorus before returning back to the Aegean Sea where he explored the many Greek isles and introduced his readers (later of course) to the Amazons, Lesbians, and Cretans - three terms today which have very different meanings than in his time.

After eight long years - he returned to Halicarnassus and read the writings of his travels at the Olympic games in 456 BC. Around this time he was exiled to Samos by a dictator who was obviously threatened by what he represented (an open travelers' mind perhaps) - later, he returned in rebellion and the tyrant was overthrown - at which point he was again exiled to Samos.

Finally, he retired to Italy (like all good travelers should) and died in the year 406 BC. One can imagine that he was completely unaware of the impact he would have on the world, but as you can see - as I write this nearly 2,500 years later - he was one very kick-ass vagabond.

## Hanno the Navigator

In the annals of great explorers, there is one name that is often overlooked - that of the Carthaginian Periplus of Hanno - later known to the Greeks as Hanno the Navigator . Neither a Greek nor a Roman, but a free man of Carthage and perhaps one of the great unheralded navigators the world has ever known.

While the exact dates of his explorations are not certain, historians agree that they took place sometime around the year 500 BC It was around this time that Hanno left the city of Carthage. For those wondering, Carthage was located approximately where Tunis, Tunisia now sits on the North African coast.

Hanno left Carthage with a fleet of sixty rowing ships for the purpose of colonizing the unknown territories of Northern and Western Africa. With him were an ungodly number of people which counted in somewhere around 30,000! Hanno's job was to take all of these people and get them set up in colonies in the great unknown areas.

Passing through the Pillars of Hercules (between modern day Gibraltar and Tangiers, Morocco) the fleet set out into the Atlantic Ocean and turned south.

They founded a city called Thumiaterion at approximately modern day Safi, Morocco. From there, having left a number of settlers, he continued Southward to the isle of Cerne - a place much disputed and lost to history but given the voyage of Hanno, probably either Tenerife and the Canary Islands or less likely, Cape Verde. Even more fanciful is the idea that Hanno reached Atlantis...but who knows?

From Cerne, Hanno sailed back to the mainland and found a large river. Judging by the descriptions of the animals and landscape, we can assume that he was in modern day Senegal or perhaps The Gambia. He encountered not only elephants, reed filled lakes, crocodiles, and hippopotomai, and also hostile natives that drove he and his settlers back to Cerne.

From Cerne, Hanno went further south to find a land that was wonderful by day but lit by fires at night. He rounded the cape of Hespera Keras and encountered a people steeped in mysticism and music. His own mystics (an essential party to any Carthaginian voyage) advised leaving quickly and so they went south again. This time they reached modern day Guinea-Bissau and the Isle of Orango upon which they mistook gorillas for a race of hairy men.

In its inmost recess was an island similar to that formerly described, which contains in like manner a lake with another island, inhabited by a rude description of people. The females were much more numerous than the males, and had rough skins: our interpreters called them Gorillae. We pursued but could take none of the males; they all escaped to the top of precipices, which they mounted with ease, and threw down stones; we took three of the females, but they made such violent struggles, biting and tearing their captors, that we killed them, and stripped off the skins, which we carried to Carthage: being out of provisions we could go no further.

This is as far as Hanno reached before returning to Carthage with Atlas lions and stories of wonder. He left seven colonies behind (all in modern day Morocco) and presumably returned with much lighter ships. It is no wonder that Hanno became king of the Carthaginians. History knows him as Hanno II of Carthage.

The voyage of Hanno is still in dispute, in order to come to a greater understanding of it, I've referred to many books and online sources, none of which were more helpful than this article which details the fact, the fiction, and the speculation.

<http://phoenicia.org/phoewestafrica.html>

I too, am guilty of some speculation but in reading the accounts of Hanno the Navigator, the above description of his voyage feels the most right to me. One thing that can't be argued is that the voyage of Hanno was one of the great epic voyages of all time.

Can Hanno the Navigator even be classified as a vagabond? To my

mind, the answer is yes - in that a vagabond is anyone who sets out on a voyage of discovery where the unknown is the biggest thing that is known. But, like everything with Hanno - all is in dispute. We don't even have an idea what he looked like.

## Pytheas the Navigator

While wandering in Marseille, France, I chanced upon what looked like a Greek statue. I was surprised to see it was an ancient Greek named Pytheas. I admit, my first thought was to mistakenly question why the inventor of the Pythagorean Theorem was famous in Marseille - and then my mental stabilizer kicked in and I realized it wasn't a statue of Pythagoras, but Pytheas and that I knew nothing about him.

I was planning on going to Britain, and this was incredibly fitting. Many people don't realize that Marseille was the ancient Greek colony of Massalia - and Pytheas was a native of that town. So, that statue of a Greek - was actually a statue of a Frenchman before there was ever a France. And here's the real interesting part - Pytheas was the first sailor to record a trip to Britain, where I was heading next. We could say that he 'discovered' Britain, though like saying Columbus discovered America, that is ignoring the fact that the people living there, discovered the respective countries long before Pytheas or Columbus ever lived and breathed.

Pytheas was one of the great geographers and explorers of the ancient Earth. He left Marseille in 325 BC and set off to explore the great unknown seas and lands of Northern Europe. Along the way, he became the first documented source to describe the phenomenon of the Midnight Sun - that is where the day does not get dark in the Northern lands. As if that wasn't enough - Pytheas was the first person to discern that the moon was responsible for the tides of the ocean and the first to encounter and write about the Germanic tribes.

Sadly, the complete work of Pytheas is lost to history and his writings only survive as excerpts in the writings of later explorers. I find it astounding that work of such importance can be lost to history, but there it is. History does not discriminate in the fading of memory.

Even the title of his treatise is gone though some different authors later said it was similar to "My Trip Around the Earth" or "Of the Ocean" - but really, we just don't know. With no reason to it, I like the title "Of the Ocean and My Trip Around the Earth"

Scholars suggest that another mariner from Marseille reached Britain first, but his name is completely lost to history. In fact, it was Pytheas who named Britain and the British. Britanniae meaning all the islands later became Britain to describe the land and British to describe the people. Many scholars believe the word began with Pytheas and remained as such until the time of Julius Caesar when it changed to the present form.

Pytheas described the Britons as a people who baked bread, stored grain, and lived in thatched huts. Like hobbits. He reported "they are of simple manners and happy with plain fare.." - like hobbits. After leaving Middle Earth, Pytheas went North seeking Elves and Thunder Gods - okay, wait, let me get back to history...

From Britain, Pytheas sailed North to the land of Thule where he encountered ice sheets and the midnight sun. The great explorer, Sir Richard Francis Burton wrote a detailed study of Thule much later. We can reasonably know that Pytheas went through Scotland and the Orkneys and straight on until morning when the sun stopped setting.

All of this was done with what modern sailors and navigators would consider very primitive equipment. An astounding accomplishment which certainly has more than earned him a simple statue in his hometown of Marseille - which I'm happy to have come across.

## Nearchus the Voyager

Nearchus the Voyager is most famous for having been an Admiral of Alexander the Great but if he had not lived during the time when Alexander's shadow covered the world, he would be remembered as one of the great explorers of history.

Nearchus was born on Crete sometime around 350 BC. He became a tutor of Alexander, and then later explored and charted all of the coast of Alexander's Asia from the mouth of the Indus to the mouth of the Euphrates. The reason for the expedition was to open up communication between India and Egypt, but for Nearchus, the voyage was about traveling and obtaining knowledge of far off lands.

With two thousand men and scores of ships, Nearchus sailed down the Indus while exploring the delta and then set forth to explore uncharted seas. Before he was through he had explored unknown parts of the Arabian Coast, the Persian Gulf, and had begun charting an expedition to the Red Sea.

He was the first Greek to visit Bahrain and one of the great captains of maritime history. We know of him from the chronicles he wrote of his voyage. His book, *Indikê* is now lost, but its contents are well-known from several sources, especially the *Indikê* by Arrian of Nicomedia and the *Geography* by Strabo of Amasia.

There was a lagoon at the mouths of the river, and the depressions near the bank were inhabited by natives in stifling cabins. These seeing the convoy sailing up were astounded, and lining along the shore stood ready to repel any who should attempt a landing. They carried thick spears, about six cubits long; these had no iron tip, but the same result was obtained by hardening the point with fire. They were in number about six hundred.

Nearchus observed these evidently standing firm and drawn up in order, and ordered the ships to hold back within range, so that their missiles might reach the shore; for the natives' spears,

which looked stalwart, were good for close fighting, but had no terrors against a volley. Then Nearchus took the lightest armed troops, such as were also the best swimmers, and bade them swim off as soon as the word was given. Their orders were that, as soon as any swimmer found bottom, he should await his mate, and not attack the natives till they had their formation three deep; but then they were to raise their battle cry and charge at the double.

On the word, those detailed for this service dived from the ships into the sea, and swam smartly, and took up their formation in orderly manner, and having made a phalanx, charged, raising, for their part, their battle cry to the god of War, and those on shipboard raised the cry along with them; and arrows and missiles from the engines were hurled against the natives.

They, astounded at the flash of the armor, and the swiftness of the charge, and attacked by showers of arrows and missiles, half naked as they were, never stopped to resist but gave way. Some were killed in flight; others were captured; but some escaped into the hills.

Those captured were hairy, not only their heads but the rest of their bodies; their nails were rather like beasts' claws; they used their nails (according to report) as if they were iron tools; with these they tore asunder their fishes, and even the less solid kinds of wood; everything else they cleft with sharp stones; for iron they did not possess. For clothing they wore skins of animals, some even the thick skins of the larger fishes.

Nearchus met his end in the the battle of Ipsi (at least according to some historians) and so was not one of those who picked up the pieces of Alexander's empire once the great man had perished - although, there are alternate histories which say that he did outlive Alexander and threw his support behind Heracles, the illegitimate son of Alexander. There is no way to determine which account is true.

Oddly, Nearchus is often confused with St. Nearchus, an Armenian Christian who became a Christian saint, despite the fact that the Greek

Nearchus lived well before Christ.

## Ibn Battuta - The Greatest Adventurer

The greatest adventurer of all time was the Moroccan vagabond, Ibn Battuta. He not only traveled everywhere in his known world, but he wrote about it in ways that no one before him had. Ibn Battuta's journey lasted 29 years, so by Moroccan standards, my Moroccan wife should be understanding of the journey I'm planning.

Ibn Battuta was the only world traveler we know of who existed in the Middle Ages. He achieved fame because he visited every Muslim ruler's land of his time. He also traveled in China, Sri Lanka, Byzantium (which included huge amounts of Europe, Turkey, and Central Asia) and Russia. He traveled over 75,000 miles in his lifetime. Keep in mind that most of this was by foot, camel, or horse. There were no frequent flyer programs then. He traveled like a nomad throughout the world and in the process, he introduced (and is still introducing) the cultures of the world to one another.

Ibn Battuta was a well known traveler who lived according to the slogan 'never, if possible, cover any road a second time'. He went as far as he could through every means of land transport. He traveled to West Africa and visited Timbuktu, Niger, and Mali. He distinctly described the existing political, social and economic conditions, religious matters, and position of women in the nations and regions he visited.

Ibn Battuta was born in Morocco in a Muslim family in 1304. He studied Muslim law and in 1325, at the age of 21, Ibn Battuta started his travels. The primary reason for his journey was to go on the Hajj, the long journey to Mecca. All Muslims are required to do the same during their lives if possible. Ibn Battuta didn't stop, however. He was very interested in adventure and world travel. Traveling to Mecca through land and by sea was dangerous. He traveled on land with a donkey at first. Later he joined a caravan with other travelers.

He traveled for 29 years and covered almost 75,000 miles. He visited 44 modern countries. He faced many dangers and adventures on his way. Bandits attacked him and he nearly drowned in a sinking ship during his travels.

He was elected Chief judge of Delhi, and he spent much of his life as Qadi (chief judge) of Morocco in the city of Fes. He was there for twenty-three years, during which he wrote of his travels, which at the time included almost everything that was known about the world.

Ibn Battuta was asked to dictate the story of his travels to a scholar by the Sultan of Morocco. Today we are able to read that story in English and the story is called "Rihla" which translates as "My Travels".

# Genghis Khan

Traveling round the world doesn't usually involve conquest of foreign lands but for Genghis Khan, conquest was probably just a means of travel. Starting with nothing as an exile and prisoner means he was certainly an extraordinary vagabond.

Genghis Khan was a Mongolian nomad. His name in childhood was Temujin. When his brother poisoned his father Temujin killed his brother and in punishment he was thrown into a forest and then held in prison by his former friends. He survived and after not very many years, rose up as a powerful leader and united the tribes of the Mongol people. With this goal accomplished, he and his Mongol hordes targeted many and far lands. From the time of his unification of the Mongol tribes, the Mongols called him Genghis Khan.

Genghis Khan first attacked the Tangut tribes to the west of the Mongol homeland. His first important foreign venture was not an easy one, but he brought the tribes of Tangut to their knees by 1209, which was the beginning of his empire. Genghis targeted east and south after that. This was the land ruled by Chin Dynasty of China. Genghis Khan captured Beijing, bringing pressure to the Chin emperor and managing to dominating the northern half of the kingdom.

Kara-Khitan which is called "Xinjiang" today by the Chinese government was the next battleground of Genghis Khan. With just 20,000 soldiers, the Mongols brought the surrender of Kara-Khitan by 1218. Now Genghis Khan's empire extended from shores of China in the east to Kazakhstan in west.

This was not enough for Genghis Khan desired more. He set his eyes on his new neighbor, the Khwarezmid Empire. It stretched from Kazakhstan to the banks of Persian Gulf, surrounding most of Iran, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and half of Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan. At first Genghis Khan tried to establish a booming trade partnership with Khwarezmids, but the leader of Khwarezmid attacked his 500 man caravan. After this, he foolishly refused to pay compensation for the act. Genghis Khan sent

his group of ambassadors to the Shah of Khwarezmid in a hope to have a resolution and a political trade relationship, but the Shah refused his proposal. Genghis Khan then invaded Khwarezmid and executed the Shah. After the conquest of Khwarezmid Empire, he headed across Afghanistan and into northern India.

By the end of his life, Genghis Khan had conquered everything from Asia to Europe's doorstep. Most of modern Turkey, parts of Greece, and even portions of Bulgaria, Romania, and Russia were his domain.

As a world traveler, he spilled a lot more blood than most, but he controlled the largest contiguous empire in history and saw more of the world than most people ever will.

## Eudoxus of Cyzicus

Eudoxus of Cyzicus wasn't some hack. He was one of the greatest and though the facts are quite obvious and speak for themselves if you know them, he has largely been forgotten by history. In fact, if you start a conversation about either Eudoxus or Cyzicus - you are likely to immediately asked Who? What? or Huh?

While no portraits of Eudoxus of Cyzicus exist, he probably looked something like the Greek man who looked Turkish and sued a Swedish yogurt company for using his image and saying he looked Turkish. They should have called the yogurt - Eudoxus of Yogurtus Cyzicus.

Who was he? He was a 2nd century BC Greek navigator who tried to circumnavigate Africa about 1700 years before anyone else. He probably failed since he disappeared along with all of his ships and crew on his second attempt. But then again, maybe he found paradise and decided not to return home.

Cyzicus, the city was located near present day Bandirma, Turkey and while there isn't any evidence to say that it is where the scissors were invented - I like to think it might be true. The amphitheatre there was considered one of the seven wonders of the world and was the largest ever built - at least until a larger one was made. The monuments of this great city were carted off to build the Hagia Sophia and later Ottoman monuments. The site is now an uninhabited wet land.

The career of Eudoxus included much more than just his disappearance. He made successful voyages to India from the Red Sea for the Egyptian Pharaoh-King Ptolemy Euergetes II and loved to party with the Egyptian locals (okay, I just made that last part up, but it could be true.)

He sailed the monsoon system of the Indian Ocean 120 years before the baby Jesus let out his first wail and he was written about by Poseidenius as a hero of yore back when yore was considered to be pre-yore. The story goes that a shipwrecked Indian sailor found his way to Ptolemy's court and offered to guide a ship to his homeland in return for passage. Ptolemy thought about it for a second before saying "Get Eudoxus - that

guy can sail anything. I think he's in Cyzicus."

Much to the surprise of everyone Eudoxus not only accepted the challenge but also came home with a load of herbs, teas, spices, and precious stones. Needless to say, he was sent back. One story has it that he was in love with Ptolemy's queen and she returned the feelings -okay, that's another story I just made up because it sounds rather nice. There is no historical record of it - but if it were true, you can imagine why he kept getting sent away on dangerous missions.

While some early historians thought it was all a pack of lies (the whole voyage to India, not just the part I made up), modern scholars are pretty sure he really did make the trips. One reason is that during the 2nd century BC, Greek and Indian ships plied their trade with one another in ports like the modern Turkish city of Aden. By the year 50 BC there were plenty of Greek and Roman ships sailing the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean.

Of course, if he kept returning to have the King's queen swooning over him, it was necessary to have more dangerous missions placed before him. Ptolemy next said something like "Why don't you go West and just keep going..." So, Eudoxus, not one to really understand a hint, got in his ships and went to Spain where he built more ships and set out to go around Africa - something else that no one else had done and something that he probably had no reason to suspect was even possible - so we have to think that maybe some of the herbs from India were smokable and of the sativa variety. Or maybe not.

On the way back from his second voyage to India, a hurricane forced his ships south of the Gulf of Aden. They sailed down the coast of Africa until what is today known as East Africa. There he found the remains of a ship. To him, the ship looked Spanish and he concluded that it must have sailed down the west coast of Africa and around the horn of Africa. This inspired him to attempt a circumnavigation of Africa.

Personally, I like the story with Ptolemy's queen better, but what we know for certain is he shipwrecked somewhere South of Morocco, probably in modern Mauritania and then spent some time making repairs before once again heading back to Greece where he was told once

again to get lost.

So, he set out to circumnavigate Africa again and this time it is presumed that he was lost forever though some, such as Pliny, claim that Eudoxus went all the way around and came home. The truth is probably that he finally got the hint and went and found a queen of his own somewhere.

## Cosmas Indicopuleustes

Sorry Seinfeld fans, I'm not talking about Cosmo Kramer. Cosmas Indicopuleustes was a far more fascinating figure, although probably not as delightful at opening doors and making witty comments.

Cosmas was a writer, merchant, traveler, and monk who is most famous for his 6th century tome *Christian Topography* in which he provided some of the earliest world maps on record for the Byzantine Emperor Justinian.

Before becoming a monk and a hermit, Cosmas was a very successful voyager and trader who visited Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sri Lanka, and most famously, India. Cosmas seemingly difficult last name was easy for Byzantines and Greeks - it was Indicopuleustes and essentially means "Voyager of the Indian Ocean" - which was helpful when you were trying to remember which Cosmas to invite to your Christmas party - you wouldn't want to accidentally invite the one who explored the Aegean - Cosmas Aegeapuleustes...that guy is impossible to deal with...

Of course, you might not have wanted to invite Cosmas Indicopuleustes either since one of his most famous conventions was that the world was flat. It was he who introduced that idea to the early Christian Church. He spent considerable time in his book and in his life trying to prove that Ptolemy's view that the Earth was a sphere was laughable. He was of the much more (to him) reasonable opinion that it was flat and had a treasure chest lid on it.

He was not the person that 'cosmology' was named after, though it was one of his passions. Mostly, it was the fact that he covered some serious ground and drew maps about it, that he is remembered for.

## Erik the Red

Great adventures inspire great adventurers. Eric the Red was an ancient viking explorer. He was the first European to go to Greenland. In 982 AD he led a group of Viking colonists from Iceland across the icy waters to what is now known as Greenland.

Eric the Red was called by different names such as Erik Thorvaldson or Erik Raude. He was born in Norway. When his father was expelled for murder, his family settled in Western Iceland. Later Eric, following in his father's footsteps, murdered two men and was expelled from Iceland - but only for three years. Eric the Red traveled across and beyond his time's known world.

During his exile, Eric heard about the discovery of some islands by Gunnbjorn Olfsson. He traveled from the Snaefellsnes Peninsula with his crew and found the islands of Gunnbjorn. He landed on eastern Greenland and called the place Midjokull, the meaning of which is "middle glacier".

After that, he voyaged south and rounded the southern tip of Greenland. He beached and wintered on the island now called, Erik's Island. Over the next two years, he explored much of the surrounding area.

In 985 AD, his exile was over so he returned to Breidafjord, Iceland. He brought stories of "Greenland" with him and it is said that he deliberately gave the land a more appealing name than "Iceland" in order to lure potential settlers. He explained, "people would be attracted to go there if it had a favorable name". In addition to being the first North American colonist, he also seems to have been the first North American marketer.

There were still those who didn't want this murdering son of a murderer around and so he was in conflict with many people on Iceland. He wanted to start a new settlement in Greenland. Around 500 settlers in fourteen ships settled in Brattahlid which is now called Julianehab.

The settlements suffered abnormal cold weather and many of the

settlers returned to Iceland. The rest of them disappeared. It is almost certain that they died but there are some compelling stories that they continued on to North America.

Eric's son, Leif (Leif Ericson) is credited with being the first European to step on the mainland continent of North America.

# Marco Polo

Going around the world hasn't always been as easy as it is today. In fact, the great explorers of the past often suffered great hardships to see distant lands. One such extraordinary vagabond was Marco Polo.

Marco Polo was the famous world traveler who traveled on the Silk Road. He is remembered for his writing, observations, and his determination. Marco Polo traveled throughout Asia and the journey lasted for 24 years! Now that is some slow travel!

He reached more destinations than any of his European predecessors. He traveled further into Mongolia and into China than any European before him. Though he was not a round the world traveler, he traveled the whole of China and returned to tell the story. His book became the greatest boost for travel that had ever been written.

Marco Polo was born in 1254 in Venice, Italy. He traveled to Asia along with his father, a merchant, when he was seventeen years old. On this journey, he became the favorite companion of Kublai Khan, the Mongol Emperor.

For seventeen years, he wandered all over Mongolia and China and when he finally returned to Venice, he became a well-known story teller. People came to his home to hear his travel stories about the East.

There was a clash between Venice and Genoa in 1298, and Marco Polo was captured and imprisoned by Genoese. While he was in jail, he told his stories to a writer and later the writer published the book "The Travels of Marco Polo".

This book created interest in trade with China, and inspired the explorations of Columbus and others who were in search of a quick way to travel to China and India.

He died in his bed in 1324 at the age of either 69 or 70. A ripe old age for a ripe old traveler of that period.



# Desiderius Erasmus

Even if you've never heard of Erasmus, you've probably heard his words:

"In the kingdom of the blind, the one-eyed man is king."

Personally, I like these two better:

"When I get a little money I buy books; and if any is left I buy food and clothes."

"To know nothing is the happiest life."

Desiderius Erasmus was a scholar and humanist born around October 27 1466 in Rotterdam. The Netherlands. His birth name was Gerard Gerardson, but in that time and place, your name was going to be Latinized.

Erasmus went to school in Deventer, but when his parents died of the plague his guardians sent him to a less expensive school and eventually the guardians forced both he and his brother to enter the Augustinian monastery at Steyn, near Gouda.

Although Erasmus never felt a 'call to God', he agreed to be ordained a priest since this gave him a better chance of escaping the monastery. Around 1492, he was appointed the Latin secretary of Henry of Bergen, the bishop of Cambrai.

Four years later, he left the Bishop and enrolled at the University of Paris to complete his education. He tutored wealthy young students to earn his living and one of them, William Blount, Lord Mountjoy, invited him to England in 1499.

In England, Erasmus met Thomas More and the two became friends for life. Importantly, he also met John Colet, who introduced Erasmus to a way of reconciling his faith with humanism by replacing the study of the Scriptures with a scholastic method.

Erasmus was offered a lecturing position on Old Testament at Oxford, but needed a better understanding of Greek to take the position. He returned to Paris but an outbreak of the plague forced him to leave up. He returned to Louvain, Belgium where he studied Greek every day until 1505 when he returned to England.

Erasmus was made tutor to the sons of the physician of Henry VIII and in that position was able to visit Italy where he earned a doctorate in Theology at Turin. In Italy, he spent time in Bologna, Florence and Venice before moving to Padua, where he became tutor to the illegitimate sons of King James IV of Scotland. He went to Rome, but turned down an ecclesiastical promotion and offer to stay there.

Henry VIII inherited the throne in England and Erasmus hoped the new king, who had shown an interest in literature, would offer him a good position. On his way back to England (1509) Erasmus conceived his most famous work: *The Praise of Folly*. This satirical work, which he completed in England while staying with Thomas More, criticizes the follies of the different classes of society, but especially that of the Church.

Erasmus lived in England for five years, teaching at Cambridge and doing other academic work. He was disappointed in his hope that Henry VIII would give him a position and so he left England and returned to Brabant where he was made honorary counsellor to 16-year old archduke Charles, the future Charles V. He was also commissioned to write his *Education of a Christian Prince* (1516) and *The Complaint of Peace* (1517).

In 1517 he became a member of the faculty of theology in Louvain and took an interest in the newly founded Trilingual College, where Latin, Greek and Hebrew were taught. Erasmus believed that the education of theology had to be based on the study of languages. He expressed this in his *Ratio Vera Theologiae* (1518).

His beliefs and his newly revised edition of the *New Testament* brought him no shortage of troubles and controversy in Louvain. He had always been critical of the Church and when, around the same time, Luther

gained attention, Erasmus was blamed for inspiring Luther and supporting the Reformation. While Erasmus had never taken sides in the dispute between Luther and the Catholic Church. He agreed with Luther on several points. He wanted reforms within the Church, but he did not think a separation was required. He disputed other arguments Luther brought forward and claimed neutrality. This did not keep him from being criticized for his 'indecisiveness' and distrusted for not defending the old Church. Many of his friends, including Emperor Charles V, urged him to take up his pen against Luther.

Erasmus thought that reforms were needed and hoped that Catholics and Reformists could be reconciled. He resisted but eventually he wrote against Luther in 1524.

He died of dysentery in 1536 but his legacy lives on in the Erasmus Program which is a European student exchange which promotes study abroad and the learning of European languages. Since 1987 the program has helped millions of students study abroad.

## Hernando Cortez

Vagabonds travel the world, but sometimes they conquer it. Many, possibly most vagabonds would conquer the world if they could and Cortez did it. He conquered an entire empire. Sure, it was shitty for Montezuma and all of his people, but for Cortez? Totally different experience.

Hernando Cortez was a Spanish conqueror who caused the decline of the Aztec Empire. While murder and mayhem are to be condemned, in Cortez, we can see an amazing world traveler. He brought a major part of mainland Mexico under the rule of the King of Castile in the 16th century. Hernando Cortez was a part of the Spanish colonizer generation which started the first stage of the Spanish colonization of the Americas.

It wasn't easy for him to get there. Cortez had been injured while escaping from the bedroom of a married woman from Medellin. This incident stopped him from going to the Americas at first. He spent the next year as a nomad in the country. He spent most of his time in southern ports of Spain, Cadiz, Palos and Seville, he became a true vagabundo. During that time he listened to the stories of those who had returned from Indies (the Caribbean). They told him about the discovery, the gold, and the Indians. Cortez left for Hispaniola soon and he became a colonist there. Finally, Hernando Cortez sailed to the Americas with a family companion and a faraway relative, the new governor of Hispaniola, Nicolas de Ovando. Hispaniola is the present Haiti and the Dominican Republic. He suffered from syphilis but we don't know if he got it from the married chick, but probably.

Cortez recovered from the disease in 1511 and joined Diego Velazquez de Cuellar, in his journey to conquer Cuba. Cortez was appointed as a clerk to the treasurer at the age of 26, he was given the responsibility of making sure that the Crown received one fifth of the profits from the journey.

When Juan de Grijalva reported his discovery of Mexico in 1518, Velasquez picked Cortez to build a colony there. Velasquez soon

suspected Cortez would go beyond his orders and cancelled the expedition. Unfortunately for Velasquez, Cortez had already assembled men and equipment and set sail without permission. He rounded the peninsula at Yucatan and touched Mexico on the coast of what is now the state of Tabasco. During the battle with Indians there, he took many captives including a young Aztec princess. She became his interpreter and advisor.

Cortez continued up the coast. On April 21, 1519, he landed near the site of Veracruz. There, to prevent all thought of retreat among his men, he burned his ships. Cortez was completely insane. Leaving a small force on the coast, Cortez led the rest of his men into the interior. The Indians outnumbered the Spaniards at least 300 to 1.

On November 8, 1519, Cortez reached Tenochtitlan (now Mexico City) and was graciously received by Montezuma, the Aztec emperor. Soon after Cortez established headquarters in the capital, he learned that the Aztecs had plundered Veracruz. He seized Montezuma and forced him to surrender to the attackers. Then he had them executed.

Meanwhile Velasquez had sent 1,400 soldiers to arrest Cortez and bring him back to Cuba. Cortez defeated this army and most of the survivors joined Cortez on his crazed mission.

Cortez returned to the Aztec capital, Tenochtitlan. As Cortez and his men reached the heart of the city, they were attacked by thousands of Aztec warriors. Montezuma was brought out to pacify his people, but they stoned him, and later he died of his wounds. Cortez' army was surrounded and apparently doomed, but he and three others managed to get to the chieftain of the Aztecs and killed him. Confused by this apparent "miracle," the Aztecs retreated. With fewer than 500 of his men left alive, Cortez, in July of 1520, made his way back to his Indian allies.

Cortez attacked Tenochtitlan again by ship the following May. On August 13, 1521, Guatemoc, the new Aztec emperor, surrendered. This was the end of the great empire of the Aztecs.

Later Cortez spent his life in establishing peace between the Indians of Mexico and the Spanish crown. He worked at developing farmlands and

mines. He returned to Spain in 1528 and Charles V received him with a great honor, but he missed the experience of the New World. Cortez returned to North America as a military commander and explored Lower California. He passed away in Seville in 1547.

## Ponce de Leon

Ponce de Leon was a career soldier, but in terms of dreams and adventure, certainly he fits the bill as someone who not only traveled broadly, but was foolish enough to chase the fountain of youth.

Ponce de Leon was the first European soldier to set foot in Florida. He set up the oldest existing European settlement in Puerto Rico and he found the Gulf Stream current in the Atlantic Ocean. Ponce de Leon, was looking for a fabulous fountain of youth and a way to join the ranks of the truly wealthy people and to live forever.

Ponce de Leon was born in Santervas, Spain, he fought against the Moors as a soldier in southern Spain and he traveled on the second journey of Christopher Columbus in 1493 to the Americas. He did not return with Columbus to Spain, but instead stayed in Santo Domingo which is called the Dominican Republic today.

He was the governor of Dominican province of Higüey when he heard about gold in the neighboring island of Borinquen (Puerto Rico at present) and he conquered the island and claimed it for Spain. In the process he and his men brutally killed a huge portion of the native population - near complete genocide. Later he was appointed governor of island. He was removed from the Governorship because of his intense cruelty to the local population - it's probably good to keep in mind, the Spanish weren't known to be gentle and they thought he was cruel.

Later, Ponce de Leon was handed the right to find and take Bimini Island which is called the Bahamas today. He traveled from Puerto Rico with three ships, the Santiago, the San Cristobal and the Santa Maria along with 200 men. He stopped at Grand Turk Island and San Salvador, and reached the coasts of Florida in 1513.

He named the place "Pascua de Florida" which means feast of flowers because they first located land in 1513 which was a Palm Sunday. And one can assume that the flowers were blooming. Then Ponce de Leon claimed the land for Spain.

He headed south into the warm current Gulf Stream (thus blundering on it and losing the smallest of his ships for two days). While they searched for the ship, a fight broke out between his men and Native Americans. We have no idea how many he slaughtered, but during the same period he 'discovered' the Florida Keys.

Many people believe that Ponce de León discovered Florida while searching for the Fountain of Youth. In his *Historia General y Natural de las Indias* of 1535, Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés wrote that Ponce de León was looking for the waters of Bimini to cure his aging. Most historians hold that the search for gold and the expansion of the Spanish Empire were far more imperative than the any potential search for the fountain, but they don't understand the things that drive normal men to leave family and home in search of something to fill the void that can appear in their souls.

## Santa Claus - He's Not Who You Think He Is

If you are one of those people who says Santa Claus isn't real - you're right because he's long dead, but he was real. He was a real person, so if you are one of those people who say Santa Claus is a fictional or imaginary character - you are wrong.

Santa Claus was born in the town of Patara, Turkey on the Mediterranean Coast. If you visit today you will find (much to the surprise of many) Santa shops, Christmas shops, and everything Santa you can imagine in this mostly Muslim town. At the time he was born, Turkey wasn't yet a country and so despite being Anatolian, he was Greek. A Byzantine Christian to be precise. Istanbul was the capital of Byzantium and called Constantinople in those days.

His parents left him as a wealthy orphan and he used his inheritance to help the poor who weren't as fortunate as he. In particular, he was generous with children and traveled the known world distributing gifts and help to the needy.

In 325 AD. He became the Bishop of Myra (Demre, Turkey) and was a part of the Council of Nicea who cobbled together the *Holy Bible* from a vast assortment of documents. He died December 6, 343 AD. In fact, in many parts of Europe, December 6 is a day to give gifts and exchange presents.

After he died, he was made a saint and a tomb was built for him in Demre. The Church of St Nicholas was built over that tomb in the 6th Century. It is a ruin now, but still a very beautiful piece of Anatolian Byzantine architecture. Many of the mosaics and frescoes have survived. There is a tomb there, but the bones are in Bari.

St. Nicholas is the patron saint of Russian Orthodoxy, so it's not surprising that on peak days (around December 6th) you can find up to 60 buses per day of tourists - mostly from Russia. The government of Turkey issued a Santa Claus stamp in 1955 and have heavily promoted 'Noel Baba' as a tourist draw. It's a pretty good one if you ask me.

So, how did he become Santa Claus?

Here's a story you won't see in Christmas cartoons...one of the most famous stories of St. Nick's generosity was when he gave three orphaned girls dowries so they would be able to marry and wouldn't have to become prostitutes! It was this gift that some say led to the giving of presents on Christmas today!

In the 10th century - Myra was attacked by Italian sailors who carried away all the relics of St. Nicholas to Bari where they still sit today. He is the patron saint of archers, sailors, and children of pawnbrokers.

After his death, he was attributed with miracles aplenty. He brought boys murdered by a butcher back to life, he kept a ship from sinking with his prayers, and he levitated one sailor from the water to save his life. Hmm...I believe he can fly!

Clement C. Moore, an American professor of divinity, was the one who turned Saint Nicholas into Santa with his 1823 poem "A Visit from Saint Nicholas." The poem provided the inspiration for the first portrait of Santa Claus, drawn by newspaper cartoonist Thomas Nast in 1870.

# 19th and 20th Century Writers Explorers and Adventurers

## King David Kalakaua of Hawaii

King David Kalakaua was a champion of Hawaiian culture, the last King of Hawaii. He is celebrated as the Merrie Monarch - but he also had dreams of a Hawaiian-Japanese empire and was the first monarch to circumnavigate the globe.

He was a celebrated musician/composer as well as a dedicated archivist and writer. It was King Kalakaua who first gathered together the Myths and Legends of Hawaii. Friend of Robert Louis Stevenson and Thomas Edison, he was a technology geek, and all around cool guy - King David Kalakaua was an awesome monarch.

He had a passion for music, dancing, parties, and the finest food and drinks. During his 54 years he lived up to the title of Merrie Monarch. The king's reign, however, was also marked by tragedy, pain and dark clouds hovering over the Hawaiian kingdom.

Born on November 16, 1836 in Honolulu to High Chief Kahana Kapaakea and the High Chiefess Analea Keohokalole. Per Hawaiian custom, the infant was adopted by the chiefess Haaheo Kaniu, who took him to the court of King Kamehameha III on the island of Maui. When Kalakaua was four, he returned to Oahu to begin his education at the Royal School.

He was fluent in English and Hawaiian when he began to study law at the age of 16 and by 1856, he was a major on the staff of King Kamehameha IV. He was also a leader of a political organization known as the Young Hawaiians who used the motto "Hawaii for the Hawaiians." At the time, American business interests and missionaries had already subverted the Kingdom and begun the process of making Hawaiians second class citizens.

In December 1872, King Kamehameha V died without having designated an heir and pursuant to Hawaiian law, an election was held to determine his successor. Kalakaua made his first bid for Hawaii's throne in 1873. The Hawaiian legislature, comprised largely of native Hawaiians and

haoles qualified by wealth or landownership to be either electors or elected representatives in the legislature, was presented with two choices: Kalakaua, who ran on a campaign slogan of "Hawaii for Hawaiians," a sentiment that did not endear him to the islands' white power brokers, and William C. Lunalilo.

Lunalilo won easily, but he died a year later, leaving no successor. Another election was held to determine Hawaii's monarch. Buoyed by the support of the influential Walter Murray Gibson, Kalakaua was victorious in the 1874 election over Queen Emma, widow of Kamehameha IV - the bad feelings from this election lasted throughout the two candidates lifetimes. Supporters of the queen rioted and Kalakaua requested help from American and British warships in the harbor, and the uprising was quelled.

The triumphant Kalakaua toured the islands, stopping in every district to affirm his primary goals. "To the planters, he affirmed that his primary goal was the advance of commerce and agriculture, and that he was about to go in person to the United States to push for a reciprocity treaty. To his own people, he promised renewal of Hawaiian culture and the restoration of their franchise," wrote Ruth M. Tabrah in *Hawaii: A Bicentennial History*. In late 1874, Kalakaua sailed to the United States amid much fanfare. In Washington, he negotiated the Reciprocity Treaty of 1875, which eliminated the tariff on sugar and other Hawaiian products. As a result, Hawaii's sugar industry boomed and the kingdom enjoyed a period of economic prosperity. Ralph Kuykendall reported in *The Hawaiian Kingdom* that American minister to Hawaii Henry Pierce successfully argued that a treaty with Kalakaua's kingdom would hold the islands "with hooks of steel in the interests of the United States, and ... result finally in their annexation to the United States." Kalakaua was the first King to visit the United States.

Upon his return, Kalakaua moved into his palace with his wife, Queen Kapiolani, the granddaughter of King Kaumualii of Kauai. He decided he needed a more luxurious home, however, and had Iolani Palace built at a cost of \$350,000—an unheard of sum at the time. It was one of the first buildings in the world to have electricity, a telephone, and indoor plumbing. Kalakaua's friend Thomas Edison made the world's first movies when he visited Kalakaua on Oahu.

Many of his ministerial appointments went to native Hawaiians, a reflection of the king's consistent loyalty to his core constituency. None of this made him popular with the haole community who loathed both him and Walter Murray Gibson, Kalakaua's American premier, whom they viewed as a traitor. Kalakaua's white opposition grew increasingly frustrated with their lack of power, and their rhetoric grew increasingly bigoted in tone as their anger grew. "Attempts to build a strong political party of opposition ran into the dismal fact that Kalakaua and Gibson controlled too many votes," wrote Gavan Daws in *Shoal of Time: A History of the Hawaiian Islands*. The king though dominated the legislature.

Kalakaua was the first sovereign to circumnavigate the globe and he did it not just once (the first trip in 1881) but twice. On January 20, 1881 His Majesty David La'amea Kalakaua departed Honolulu Harbor aboard the steamship City of Sydney on a nine-month diplomatic mission around the world. The voyage was one part of a strategic plan to achieve greater recognition throughout the world for the Kingdom of Hawai'i as a legitimate and sovereign nation-state. Many of the American business interests who had backed Kalakaua in his election victory over Queen Emma were now quickly moving towards greater control of the government. The King also witnessed the loss of sovereignty by Native peoples in New Zealand, the Marquesas and elsewhere, highlighting growing imperialism in the Pacific. Kalakaua led a formal procession of state visits from the King himself, along with the signing of treaties and conventions, as powerful steps in protecting his nation's sovereignty.

As the ship carrying Kalakaua touched the landing, the Emperor of Japan had his military play Hawai'i Pono, the anthem the King himself penned seven years prior. At a luncheon at the Imperial Palace on March 14, the Japanese Emperor conferred on Kalakaua the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Chrysanthemum, the highest honor in the Japanese Empire. In a later audience with the Emperor Meiji, Kalakaua proposed an Asiatic Federation to link the two countries, along with others, in mutual support that would attempt to balance British and American dominance. The King sought to further tie the two Nations through a proposed future marriage of the Princess Ka'iulani and the Japanese Prince Komatsu. Neither of these efforts came to fruition

though he was successful in his decision to welcome increasing numbers of foreigners (especially Chinese and Japanese people) to the islands. In 1883 a government representative delivered a speech in Tokyo in which he declared that "His Majesty Kalakaua believes that the Japanese and Hawaiian spring from one cognate race and this enhances his love for you," reported Kuykendall. "Hawaii holds out her loving hand and heart to Japan and desires that your people may come and cast in their lots with ours and repeople our Island Home with a race which may blend with ours and produce a new and vigorous nation." Thousands of Japanese families accepted Kalakaua's offer, to the chagrin of white landowners and businessmen who feared further loss of influence.

The white landowners were also not very keen on Kalakaua's plan to grant universal suffrage to women and the poor. Such a move would have made the wealthy white male votes far less significant.

Although Kalakaua's visit to Japan was one of the trip's highlights, it was certainly not seen as the only success. On this first circumnavigation of the globe by any monarch, the King of Hawai'i met with leaders of nations that included China, India, Egypt, Italy, Germany, Wales, Belgium, Portugal, Spain and others.

The second trip was an incredible journey that began in 1887 and took the King to the United States of America, Japan, China, Hong Kong, Siam, Singapore, Malaya, India, Egypt, Rome, London, Belgium, Vienna, Spain, Portugal, France, and back to Hawaii through the United States again. A unique and insightful glimpse into these states and elites at the end of the nineteenth century full of fascinating events, encounters, and stories can be found in *Around the World with a King*.

The Hawaiian culture enjoyed a revival under Kalakaua, including hula and chants, surfing and indigenous handicrafts. In July 1887, however, an organization called the Hawaiian League which was made up of mostly disgruntled American planters and missionaries forcibly took control of the government and presented the king with a new constitution. Called the "Bayonet Constitution" (for obvious reasons), Kalakaua had no choice but to sign it. The new constitution severely restricted his powers and signaled the end of the monarchy. It also

destroyed his dreams of a Hawaiian-Japanese empire in the Pacific. When you consider all of these events, it causes one to severely rethink the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Hawaii, after all, was offered to the Japanese but stolen from Kalakaua's sister and successor Queen Liliuokalani by the U.S. government.

In November 1890, after sailing to California for medical treatment. He died at a hotel in San Francisco on January 20, 1891. His final words were, "Tell my people I tried."

He is remembered fondly in Hawaii with festivals such as the Merrie Monarch Hula Festival. The main street in Waikiki - which is Hawaii's busiest and most expensive street is named for King Kalakaua - a statue of him stands at the western end of the street and greets visitors as they enter Waikiki. In pop culture, Officer Kono Kalakaua on the popular series Hawaii 5-0 carries his name, though there are no direct descendants of the King living today.

## Robert Louis Stevenson

Robert Louis Stevenson was an explorer, writer, poet, essayist, and speaker. Stevenson was one of the great literary geniuses of his time. The world knows him because of his most famous works *Kidnapped* and *Treasure Island*. Of course, who can forget two of the strangest characters ever, Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, who were also created by R L Stevenson. One thing that many people don't know is that Robert Louis Stevenson was a good friend of the Hawaiian Royal Family and spent a long time in the Hawaiian Islands.

The world may never match the creative genius that Stevenson was. He was born Robert Lewis Balfour Stevenson on 13 November, 1850, in Edinburgh, Scotland. His parents were Thomas Stevenson and Margaret Isabella Balfour. His father was a lighthouse engineer, which was their traditional family profession as well.

Stevenson was the only child in the family. He was considered to be a bit odd by his friends and schoolmates because his behavior was eccentric. In his younger years he made only a few good friends. He turned to writing, publishing his first work at the age of sixteen with help from his father, who himself was fond of writing. Stevenson's writing genius was recognized right away and his work found audiences of all ages. However, rather than writing, Stevenson was more interested in traveling. He visited a cousin in England in 1873 and subsequently settled there for a while.

Stevenson met his soon-to-be wife, Fanny Sitwell while in London and she shared his enthusiasm towards the fine art of writing. Stevenson visited his parents back in Edinburgh from time to time, and meanwhile he became more and more popular in London academic circles. In 1875, Stevenson visited France to take medical treatment because of weak health. He liked the French environment very well, and visited France several more times during his life. In 1879, he went to San Francisco and he also stayed there for a couple of years, all the time writing accounts of his travels and creating new stories.

Stevenson's family suffered from a long history of weak health, and he searched for a place that would suit his weak constitution. He traveled to many places in Scotland, England and the US, but the environment didn't suit him in any of these places. He needed a warm tropical climate, and he found it in the Pacific. Not only did he go to Hawaii and Samoa but also to Tahiti and many of the smaller islands of the Pacific.

Stevenson resided in the Kingdom of Hawaii for a time and became great friends with King David Kalakaua and his sister Liliuokalani (who subsequently became the last monarch of Hawaii before she was overthrown by a consortium of U.S. businessmen and missionaries.)

There were spurious rumors of a romantic affair with the beautiful Hawaiian Princess Victoria Kaiulani but one thing for certain is that they became great friends and had a wonderful friendship. He penned this poem for her before he left.

[Written in April to Kaiulani in the April of her age; and at Waikiki, within easy walk of Kaiulani's banyan! When she comes to my land and her father's, and the rain beats upon the window (as I fear it will), let her look at this page; it will be like a weed gathered and pressed at home; and she will remember her own islands, and the shadow of the mighty tree; and she will hear the peacocks screaming in the dusk and the wind blowing in the palms; and she will think of her father sitting there alone. - R. L. S.]

FORTH from her land to mine she goes,  
The island maid, the island rose,  
Light of heart and bright of face:  
The daughter of a double race.

Her islands here, in Southern sun,  
Shall mourn their Kaiulani gone,  
And I, in her dear banyan shade,  
Look vainly for my little maid.

But our Scots islands far away  
Shall glitter with unwonted day,

And cast for once their tempests by  
To smile in Kaiulani's eye.

As the ship carrying Stevenson left Hawaii, King Kalakaua brought the Royal Hawaiian Band to play farewell to his good friend.

Stevenson finally settled on the island of Samoa, where he also breathed his last, on December 3, 1894. Though he lived just 44 years, Stevenson has become immortal through his works which have inspired travelers, vagabonds, and adventurers .

# Arthur Rimbaud

Jean Nicolas Arthur Rimbaud. Not the least of reasons why Rimbaud is worthy of knowing about is because he was a libertine poet who only lived to the age of 37. Still, he had a profound influence on world literature and you can say his name as John Rambo. Cool right?

He was born 20 October 1854 and was described by Victor Hugo as "an infant Shakespeare". This was during his teen years when the young Rimbaud was rebelling in a pure James Dean style. Rimbaud spent his time getting drunk, being rude, composing poems about shit (literally), stealing books, and allowing his hair to grow long.

He was attempting (according to letters at the time) to develop a method for attaining poetical transcendence or visionary power through a

"...long, intimidating, immense and rational derangement of all the senses. The sufferings are enormous, but one must be strong, be born a poet, and I have recognized myself as a poet."

"I'm now making myself as scummy as I can. Why? I want to be a poet, and I'm working at turning myself into a seer. You won't understand any of this, and I'm almost incapable of explaining it to you. The idea is to reach the unknown by the derangement of all the senses. It involves enormous suffering, but one must be strong and be a born poet. It's really not my fault."

Rimbaud, like a lot of great writers, artists, and travelers, was a bit queer. He had a short and powerful affair with the poet Verlaine which became notorious as the two raged through Paris and London in a haze of hashish and absinthe. Keep in mind that Rimbaud was still a young teen at this point but gained a reputation as a true terror. Verlaine during the relationship, abandoned his wife and child and the two lived in a hectic squalor before parting ways. A reunion of the two in Brussels went terribly wrong when the drunk and angry Verlaine shot the 18 year old Rimbaud in the wrist with a pistol. Verlaine went to prison and Rimbaud began to wander about Europe, Asia, and Africa - mostly on foot.

Wanting to go further afield he joined the Dutch Colonial Army and went to the island of Java where he deserted and continued his explorations. From there he traveled to Cyprus, Ethiopia, Yemen, Somalia, and then did more travel in Europe.

If you doubt the influence of poets on culture, check out this blurb from wikipedia:

Rimbaud's poetry, as well as his life, made an indelible impression on 20th century writers, musicians and artists. Pablo Picasso, Dylan Thomas, Allen Ginsberg, Vladimir Nabokov, Bob Dylan, Patti Smith, Giannina Braschi, Léo Ferré, Henry Miller, Van Morrison and Jim Morrison have been influenced by his poetry and life.

Here is Kerouac's poem - *Rimbaud*

Arthur! On t' appela pas Jean!  
Born in 1854 cursing in Charle-  
ville thus paving the way for  
the abominable murderousnesses  
of Ardennes---No wonder your father left!  
So you entered school at 8  
---Proficient little Latinist you!  
In October of 1869  
Rimbaud is writing poetry  
in Greek French—  
Takes a runaway train

to Paris without a ticket,  
the miraculous Mexican Brakeman  
throws him off the fast  
train, to Heaven, which  
he no longer travels because  
Heaven is everywhere---  
Nevertheless the old fags  
intervene---  
Rimbaud nonplussed Rimbaud

trains in the green National  
Guard, proud marching  
in the dust with his heroes---  
hoping to be buggered,  
dreaming of the ultimate Girl.  
---Cities are bombarded as  
he stares & stares & chews  
his degenerate lip & stares  
with gray eyes at  
Walled France---

Andre Gill was forerunner  
to Andre Gide---  
Long walks reading poems  
in the Genet Haystacks---  
The Voyant is born,  
the deranged seer makes his  
first Manifesto,  
gives vowels colors  
& consonants carking care,  
comes under the influence  
of old French Fairies  
who accuse him of constipation  
of the brain & diarrhea  
of the mouth---  
Verlaine summons him to Paris  
with less aplomb than he  
did banish girls to  
Abyssinis---

Merde! screams Rimbaud  
at Verlaine salons---  
Gossip in Paris---Verlaine Wife  
is jealous of a boy  
with no seats to his trousers  
---Love sends money from Brussels  
---Mother Rimbaud hates  
the importunity of Madame  
Verlaine---Degenerate Arthur is suspected

of being a poet by now---  
Screaming in the barn  
Rimbaud writes Season in Hell,  
his mother trembles  
Verlaine sends money & bullets  
into Rimbaud---  
Rimbaud goes to the police  
& presents his innocence  
like the pale innocence of  
his divine feminine Jesus  
---Poor Verlaine, 2 years  
in the can, but could have  
got a knife in the heart

---Illuminations! Stuttgart!  
Study of Languages!  
On foot Rimbaud walks  
& looks thru the Alpine  
passes into Italy, looking  
for clover bells, rabbits,  
Genie Kingdoms & ahead  
of his nothing but the old  
Canaletto death of sun  
on old Venetian buildings  
---Rimbaud studies language  
---hears of the Alleghanies,  
of Brooklyn, of last  
American Plages---  
His angel sister dies---  
Vienne! He looks at pastries  
& pets old dogs! I hope!  
This mad cat joins  
the Dutch Army  
& sails for Java  
commanding the fleet  
at midnight  
on the bow, alone,  
no one hears his Command  
but every fishy shining in

the sea---August is  
no time to stay in Java---  
Aiming at Egypt, he's again  
hungup in Italy so he goes back  
home to deep armchair  
but immediately he goes  
again, to Cyprus, to  
run a gang of quarry workers,---  
what did he look like now.this later  
Rimbaud?---Rock dust  
& black backs & hacks  
of coughers, the dream rises  
in the Frenchman's Africa mind,---  
Invalids from the tropics are always  
loved---The Red Sea  
in June, the coast clanks  
in Arabia---Havar,  
Havar, the magic trading  
post---Aden, Aden,  
South of Bedouin---  
Ogaden, Ogaden, never  
known---(Meanwhile  
Verlaine sits in Paris  
over cognacs wondering  
what Arthur looks like now,  
& how bleak their eyebrows  
because they believed  
in earlier eyebrow beauty)---  
Who cares? What kinda  
Frenchmen are these? Rimbaud, hit me  
over the head with that rock!  
Serious Rimbaud composes  
elegant & learned articles  
for National Geographic  
Societies, & after wars  
commands Harari Girl  
(Ha Ha!) back  
to Abyssinia, & she  
was young, had black

eyes, thick lips, hair  
curled, & breasts like  
polished brown with  
copper teats & ringlets  
on her arms &  
joined her hands upon her central loin &  
had shoulders as broad as  
Arthur's & little ears  
---A girl of some  
caste, in Bronzeville---

Rimbaud also knew  
thinbonehipped Polynesians  
with long tumbling hair &  
tiny tits & big feet

Finally he starts  
trading illegal guns  
in Tajoura  
riding in caravans, Mad,  
with a belt of gold  
around his waist---  
Screwed by King Menelek!  
The Shah of Shoa!  
The noises of these names  
in that noisy  
French mind!

Cairo for the summer,  
bitter lemon wind  
& kisses in the dusty park  
where girls sit  
folded at  
dusk  
thinking nothing---

Havar! Havar!  
By litter to Zeyla  
he's carried moaning

his birthday---the boat  
returns to chalk castle  
Marseilles sadder than  
time, than dream,  
sadder than water  
---Carcinoma, Rimbaud  
is eaten by the disease  
of overlife---They cut off  
his beautiful leg---  
He dies in the arms  
of Ste Isabelle  
his sister  
& before rising to Heaven  
sends his francs to Djami, Djami the Havari boy  
his dody servant  
8 years in the African  
Frenchman's Hell,  
& it all adds up  
to nothing, like  
Dostoevsky, Beethoven  
or Da Vinci---

So, poets, rest awhile  
& shut up:  
Nothing ever came  
of nothing.

Written in 1958 and published as a City Lights broadside in 1960.

Rimbaud's life has been portrayed in several films. Italian filmmaker Nelo Risi's 1970 film *Una stagione all'inferno* ("A Season in Hell") starred Terence Stamp as Rimbaud and Jean Claude Brialy as Paul Verlaine. In 1995 Polish filmmaker Agnieszka Holland directed *Total Eclipse*, which was based on a play by Christopher Hampton who also wrote the screenplay. The film starred Leonardo DiCaprio as Rimbaud and David Thewlis as Paul Verlaine.

## Sir Richard Francis Burton

Explorer Sir Richard Francis Burton lived in diverse cultures, broke boundaries, and did most of it without much in the way of resources or travel money. Quite possibly the greatest explorer and adventurer the world has ever known.

Burton was born on the 19th of March, 1821 in England and died at the age of 69 in Austria-Hungary on October 20, 1890. During his life Burton was a writer, explorer, anthropologist, ethnographer, soldier, spy, linguist, and poet.

He is said to have spoken twenty-nine languages and was the first European man to go to many places in Asia, Africa, and even in the United States where he infiltrated and exposed the bizarre beliefs and customs of the Mormons in Salt Lake City.

I think of him whenever I hear the Muslim call to prayer. Why does the call to prayer remind me of him? First, because he was the first European to make the Hajj. Disguised as an Arab he entered Mecca. Second, because Burton was in fact, a Muslim. Third, Burton was the translator of *The Thousand and One Nights* which is probably the best known collection of stories concerned with Arab and Muslim cultures ever written.

In addition to these achievements, he also translated the Kama Sutra and was the first European to see the source of the Nile River. His writings included studies of human behavior, ethnographies, travel writing, books about sexual practices, and more. He was a cofounder of the Anthropological Society of London before most people had any idea what anthropology was (although most still don't).

Burton was hated and persecuted for his honesty, his refusal to bend before the man, and the suspicion that rather than having masqueraded as a Muslim, he might have actually been one. Burton always claimed to be a Muslim, but after his death, in an attempt to save her reputation, his wife Isabel published a biography that most believe to be false in which

she claimed he was always a strong believer in Christ- like her. She also burned all of his unpublished writings so that her account was the only one which people could turn to. This went specifically against Burton's wishes, but he probably didn't care much since he was already dead.

To understand just how many books Burton wrote, how much ground he covered, and how incredible the man was you need only read his fascinating biography.

## Isabelle Eberhardt

Traveling the world used to be a game that only men played, but as in all fields, brave pioneers broke out of the Victorian conception of women as meek and mild and showed that even the hardest travel makes no distinction among the sexes. Isabelle Eberhardt was one of these extraordinary feminist vagabonds.

Isabelle Eberhardt was a Swiss writer and explorer who lived and traveled widely in North Africa. She was an extremely independent individual, who refused normal European ethics and the meek characterization of women. Instead she followed her own path, which led her to world travel. On Isabelle's first trip, she accompanied her mother to North Africa in 1897. They were trying to set up a new life there on this journey, and during that time they both converted to Islam.

Isabelle's half brother Vladimir committed suicide and another brother was married to a French woman whom Eberhardt was not in favor of. From then onwards, she spent her life in Africa, she made Northern Algeria and Morocco her home and became a true desert nomad. She was in Tunisia for some time and during all of her adventures, was frequently disguised as a man. There are many who conjecture that she not only lived as a man but loved women as a man does.

Isabelle married an Algerian soldier, Slimane Ehni in 1901. She was known to drink and fight in the hardest of ways. She died in a flash flood in Algeria in 1904. She had rented a house there which was constructed of clay. The house collapsed on Isabelle and her husband during the flood, she saved her husband but she didn't survive the disaster. She wrote about her travels in several books and the newspapers of France. Her books and articles include "*In the Hot Shadow of Islam*", "*Algerian Short Stories*" and "*The Day Laborers*". She also wrote a novel, *Vagabond* which was translated into English by Annette Kobak. The journals of Isabelle were recovered from the flash flood, they covered the final four years of her life and now these journals are also available in English.

Isabelle Eberhardt was a nomad in Africa but more importantly she

explored the limits and boundaries of gender as well as the deserts of Africa and continued her writing during that time. Most of her novels, books and journals on her travels can be found in English, Spanish, French, and German.

# Samuel Clemens aka Mark Twain

Mark Twain is one name that almost everyone who has studied English at school knows. There is at least one story by Mark Twain present in every American school curriculum by default, and the most popular choices are *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*.

Twain, born Samuel Clemens, first started writing for his brother's newspaper. Twain gained national attention after the publication of "*The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County*," a humorous story that he wrote during his brief stint as a reporter. He had a great talent in writing but was also known as a speaker, putting his wit and satire to good use.

## The Wit and Wisdom of Mark Twain

1. Total abstinence is so excellent a thing that it cannot be carried to too great an extent. In my passion for it I even carry it so far as to totally abstain from total abstinence itself.
2. There are many humorous things in the world; among them, the white man's notion that he less savage than the other savages.
3. Clothes make the man. Naked people have little or no influence in society.
4. The gentle reader will never, never know what a consummate ass he can become until he goes abroad. I speak now, of course, in the supposition that the gentle reader has not been abroad, and therefore is not already a consummate ass.
5. Of the demonstrably wise there are but two: those who commit suicide, and those who keep their reasoning faculties atrophied with drink.
6. Patriot: the person who can holler the loudest without knowing what he is hollering about.

Samuel Langhorne Clemens was born to John Marshall Clemens and Jane Lampton Clemens, on November 12, 1835, in Florida, Missouri. He was the sixth child in the family, of a total of seven. His first traveling occurred at the age of four, when his family moved to Hannibal, Missouri, which would later become the setting for Twain's main characters, Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn.

Twain's father died of pneumonia in 1847, when the boy was just eleven. Twain then became a printer's apprentice. When he was 18, he left Hannibal for New York. After a brief stint there, he moved to Philadelphia, then to St Louis and finally to Cincinnati. He educated himself by going to the public libraries at all the places he worked at, during the evenings. He finally returned to Missouri at the age 22.

Mark Twain began his travels with his elder brother Orion, who was an aspiring politician, in the early 1860s. Twain and Orion traveled across the Rocky Mountains and The Great Plains, and finally ended at Nevada, where he tried his hand at mining. Having fared unsuccessfully at mining, he dropped it and started work for a local newspaper. It was here that he first used his pen name, Mark Twain. The name was a term used by riverboats to measure the depth of the rivers. Twain had worked on the riverboats of Missouri when he was a youngster.

He moved to San Francisco in 1864, where he published "*The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County*" in the Saturday Press, a weekly. It brought him national attention, and resulted in his traveling to Europe and the Middle East, funded by a local newspaper. He wrote a collection of travel letters while on these trips.

Twain returned to the US after his trips and then settled down. He continued writing stories and speaking to the public. He died on April 21, 1910 in Redding, Connecticut. Mark Twain has become an American staple, with many of his works being taught at schools worldwide and thus making him perhaps the most famous American writer in history.

## Grandma Gatewood

Every once in a while you come across someone that inspires the hell out of you. Emma "Grandma" Gatewood is one of those people.

She was born Emma Rowena Gatewood on October 25, 1887, in Guyan Township, Ohio. She was a very able person who mastered the art of hiking and dedicated herself to world peace. Better known as Grandma Gatewood, Emma was the first woman in history to hike the Appalachian Trail solo, from Mount Oglethorpe in Georgia to Mount Katahdin in Maine. She completed the 2,168-mile hike in just one season. The best part, she did it at age 67, giving her the nickname Grandma Gatewood. Grandma Gatewood was a pioneer in ultra light backpacking, a term used to define backpacking that is done with the minimum number of things necessary to make the hike.

Grandma Gatewood's backpack during her hike on the Appalachian Trail included an army blanket, sneakers, a raincoat and a shower curtain made of plastic. Just a look at this list is enough to show what kind of woman she was. This is the main reason she is called one of the best ultra-light backpackers to have ever lived. This particular hike landed her in national attention, with mentions in *Sports Illustrated* and appearances on the Today Show. Why?

Because she was one kick ass old lady. She got her inspiration to go on the Appalachian Trail from a issue of *National Geographic Magazine* in which she saw the pictures of the trail, and assumed it would be a pleasant hike. She was later known to have told the media that it was not that pleasant after all.

And yet, Grandma Gatewood became so fond of this particular trail, she hiked it not once, but three times! The final time was at the age of 75, making her the oldest person to have hiked the Appalachian Trail. Her other hikes include a hike on the Oregon Trail, which began from Independence, Missouri and ended at Portland, Oregon, and lasted 2,000 miles. Grandma Gatewood was a person of immense energy and passion for adventure. Hiking thousands of miles is a feat some people

would never dare dream of! Never mind as a senior citizen.

Her last hike was at the age of 83, and took place at the Appalachian Outfitters, Oakton, Virginia. Grandma Gatewood was survived by eleven children at the time of her death, at the age of 85. The next generation includes 24 grandchildren, the one after that has 30 great-grandchildren, and the fifth generation had one great-great grandchild, at the time of her death.

## Harry Franck

In terms of extraordinary vagabonds, it's hard to imagine someone who fits the bill more than Harry Franck. This literary vagabond traveled the world and wrote more than thirty books about his adventures during the early 1900's. He is a personal hero and inspiration to me and I find it amazing that he is so little known to the rest of the world.

Among Franck's books are:

*A Vagabond Journey Around the World* (1910, The Century Company)  
*Four Months Afoot in Spain* (1911, Century Company)  
*Tramping Through Mexico, Guatemala, and Honduras* (1916, The Century Company)  
*Vagabonding Down the Andes* (1917, The Century Company)  
*Vagabonding Through Changing Germany* (1920, Harper)  
*Roaming Through the West Indies* (1920, The Century Company)  
*Working North from Patagonia* (1921, The Century Company)  
*Wandering in Northern China* (1923, The Century Company)  
*Marco Polo Junior* (1929, The Century Company)  
*Zone Policeman 88* (Panama Canal)  
*Glimpses of Japan and Formosa* (1924, The Century Company)  
*Roving Through Southern China* (1925, The Century Company)  
*All About Going Abroad* (1927, Brentano's Inc.)  
*East of Siam* (1926, The Century Company)  
*The Fringe of the Moslem World* (1928, The Century Company)  
*I Discover Greece* (1929, The Century Company)  
*A Scandinavian Summer* (1930, The Century Company)  
*Foot-Loose in the British Isles* (1932, The Century Company)  
*Trailing Cortez Through Mexico* (1935, Frederick A. Stokes Publishing)  
*A Vagabond in Sovietland* (1935, Frederick A. Stokes Publishing)  
*Roaming in Hawaii* (1937, Frederick A. Stokes Publishing)  
*Sky Roaming Above Two Continents* (1938, Frederick A. Stokes Publishing)  
*The Lure of Alaska* (1939, Frederick A. Stokes Publishing, later printings by JB Lippincott Co.)  
*Rediscovering South America* (1943, JB Lippincott Co.)

As you can see by his titles, this guy got around and was most certainly a pioneer of the modern vagabond spirit. What makes him special is that he was at that point when mass travel was just becoming an option for getting from place to place. Franck was a backpacker in an age when there really weren't any backpackers. Certainly he had to make his own gear and figure out things that would make most modern backpackers quiver with nervousness.

Franck's first journey was after his freshman year of college when he decided to see Europe with just \$3.18. Not a lot of money even in the 1900's. He did it. The next year, on a bet, he managed to work his way not only across the Atlantic but around the world with no money at all to start and then published *Vagabond Journey Around the World* in 1910.

Harry Franck's willingness to travel with no money, his keen eye for the details of his journey and the societies he recorded (some of which soon disappeared) make him a necessary part of any list of extraordinary vagabonds.

## William S. Burroughs

William S. Burroughs - few names ring so loudly in the annals of extraordinary literary inspiration during the 20th century. While his friend, Jack Kerouac may have found greater acclaim among stoned poets and hitch-hikers, it is Burroughs who was the true vagabond, though, admittedly, one with a trust fund to help him fund his movement and addictions.

Born February 5, 1914 in St. Louis, Missouri, Burroughs lived to the age of 83. He died August 2nd, 1997 in Lawrence, Kansas. He was a founder of the 'Beat' movement and a giant in 20th century American popular culture. Even if you've never heard of Burroughs - you've seen him or been exposed to his work. If you don't believe me - ask yourself if you've ever seen the cover of the Beatles album - *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* - Burroughs is on it.

Burroughs influence affected a range of popular culture as well as literature. His eighteen novels and novellas, six collections of short stories and four collections of essays had nothing less than a profound effect on pop culture.. Five books have been published of his interviews and correspondences. He collaborated on projects and recordings with numerous performers and musicians, and made many appearances in films.

He was born to a wealthy family and left home in 1932 to attend Harvard University where he studied English and anthropology as a postgraduate. He later attended medical school in Vienna. It was being turned down by the US Navy during World War II that led him to begin experimenting with the drugs that became such a key part of his life. He dropped out and became an addict and later befriended Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac. The three of them were the basis of the counter-cultural movement of the Beat Generation which in turn led to the age of the Hippies.

Much of Burroughs' work is semi-autobiographical, primarily drawn from his experiences as a heroin addict. He lived in Mexico City, London,

Paris, Berlin, the South American Amazon, and Tangier in Morocco. He found success with his confessional first novel, *Junkie* (1953), Burroughs is perhaps best known for his third novel *Naked Lunch* (1959), a work fraught with controversy that underwent a court case under the U.S. sodomy laws.

Jack Kerouac called Burroughs the "greatest satirical writer since Jonathan Swift," because of his "lifelong subversion" of the moral, political and economic systems of modern American society, articulated in often darkly humorous sardonicism. J. G. Ballard considered Burroughs to be "the most important writer to emerge since the Second World War," while Norman Mailer declared him "the only American writer who may be conceivably possessed by genius."

He traveled to Europe after Harvard, which proved a window into Austrian and Hungarian Weimar-era homosexuality; he picked up boys in steam baths in Vienna, and moved in a circle of exiles, homosexuals, and runaways. It was there, he met Ilse Klapper, a Jewish woman fleeing the Nazi government.

They married in Croatia, against the wishes of his parents, in order to allow her to gain a visa to the United States. She made her way to New York City, and eventually divorced Burroughs.

He deliberately severed the last joint of his left little finger at the knuckle to impress a man with whom he was infatuated. This event made its way into his early fiction as the short story "*The Finger*." Yes, Burroughs was most definitely queer.

Burroughs moved into a rundown hotel in the Latin Quarter of Paris in 1959 when *Naked Lunch* was still looking for a publisher since Tangier, Morocco with its easy access to drugs, small groups of homosexuals, growing political unrest and odd collection of criminals became increasingly unhealthy for Burroughs.

In Paris, he met with Ginsberg and talked with Olympia Press. In so doing, he left a brewing legal problem, which eventually transferred itself to Paris. Paul Lund, a former British career criminal and cigarette smuggler whom Burroughs met in Tangier, was arrested on suspicion of

importing narcotics into France. Lund implicated Burroughs as a drug smuggler (which he most certainly was). Once again, he faced criminal charges, this time in Paris for conspiracy to import opiates, when the Moroccan authorities forwarded their investigation to French officials. Yet it was under this impending threat of criminal sanction that Maurice Girodias published *Naked Lunch*. It was helpful in getting Burroughs a suspended sentence, as a literary career, according to Ted Morgan, is a respected profession in France.

The 'Beat Hotel' was a typical European-style rooming house hotel, with common toilets on every floor, and a small place for personal cooking in the room. Life there was documented by the photographer Harold Chapman, who lived in the attic room. This shabby, inexpensive hotel was populated by Gregory Corso, Ginsberg, and Peter Orlovsky for several months after *Naked Lunch* first appeared. Burroughs used the \$3,000 advance from Grove Press to buy drugs.

Burroughs left Paris for London in 1966 to take the cure again with Dr. Dent, a well-known English medical doctor who spearheaded a painless heroin withdrawal treatment using an electronic box affixed to the patient's temple. Keith Richards and Anita Pallenberg would take this same cure over a decade later from Dr. Dent's nurse, Smitty.

Burroughs worked out of London for six years, traveling back to the United States on several occasions, including one time escorting his son to Lexington Narcotics Farm and Prison after the younger Burroughs had been convicted of prescription fraud in Florida.

Burroughs took a large advance from Playboy to write an article about his trip back to St. Louis that was eventually published in *The Paris Review*, after Burroughs refused to alter the style for Playboy's publishers.

In 1968 Burroughs joined Jean Genet, John Sack, and Terry Southern in covering the 1968 Democratic National Convention for *Esquire* magazine. Southern and Burroughs, who had first become acquainted in London, would remain lifelong friends and collaborators. In 1972, Burroughs and Southern unsuccessfully attempted to adapt *Naked Lunch* for the screen in conjunction with legendary insane American

game show producer Chuck Barris.

In the 1960s Burroughs joined and left the Church of Scientology. In talking about the experience, he claimed that the techniques and philosophy of Scientology helped him and that he felt that further study into Scientology would produce great results. He was skeptical of the organization itself, and felt that it fostered an environment that did not accept critical discussion.

Burroughs fled to Mexico to escape possible detention in Louisiana's Angola state prison. Vollmer and their children followed him. Burroughs planned to stay in Mexico for at least five years, the length of his statute of limitations. Burroughs also attended classes at the Mexico City College in 1950 studying Spanish as well as "Mexican picture writing" (codices) and the Mayan language with R. H. Barlow.

In 1951, Burroughs shot and killed Vollmer in a drunken game of "William Tell" at a party above the American-owned Bounty Bar in Mexico City. He spent 13 days in jail before his brother came to Mexico City and bribed Mexican lawyers and officials to release him.

Burroughs began to write what would eventually become the short novel *Queer* while awaiting his trial. After leaving Mexico, Burroughs drifted through South America for several months, looking for a drug called yagé, which promised the user telepathy. A book, composed of letters between Burroughs and Ginsberg, *The Yage Letters*, was published in 1963 by City Lights Books.

Burroughs not only appears on the cover of The Beatles' eighth studio album, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* but has many more musical connections. Burroughs participated on numerous album releases by Giorno Poetry Systems, including *The Nova Convention* (featuring Frank Zappa, John Cage, and Philip Glass) and *You're the Guy I Want to Share My Money With* (with John Giorno and Laurie Anderson). He is featured in a spoken word piece entitled "Sharkey's Night" on Laurie Anderson's album *Mister Heartbreak*. In addition, Burroughs provided vocal samples for the soundtrack of Anderson's 1986 concert film, *Home of the Brave*, and made a cameo appearance in it. He also recites the lyrics of R.E.M.'s "Star Me Kitten" for a special

version of the song on the *Songs in the Key of X: Music from and Inspired by the X-Files* soundtrack.

In 1990, Island Records released *Dead City Radio*, a collection of readings set to a broad range of musical compositions. It was produced by Hal Willner and Nelson Lyon, with musical accompaniment from John Cale, Donald Fagen, Lenny Pickett, Chris Stein, Sonic Youth, and others. The remastered edition of Sonic Youth's album *Goo* includes a longer version of "Dr. Benway's House," which had appeared, in shorter form, on *Dead City Radio*.

In 1992 he recorded "Quick Fix" with Ministry, which appeared on their single for "Just One Fix." The single featured cover art by Burroughs and a remix of the song dubbed the "W.S.B. mix." Burroughs also made an appearance in the video for "Just One Fix." The same year he also recorded the EP *The "Priest" They Called Him*; Burroughs reads the short story of the same name, while Kurt Cobain creates layers of guitar feedback and distortion. Nirvana bassist Krist Novoselic is featured on the cover as the titular "Priest." In 1992 Burroughs worked with The Disposable Heroes of Hiphoprisy on *Spare Ass Annie and Other Tales*, with the duo providing musical background and accompaniment to Burroughs's spoken readings from several of his books.

Burroughs appears near the end of U2's music video "Last Night on Earth", pushing a shopping cart with a large spotlight positioned inside it. The video ends with a close up of his eyes.

In 2000, Spring Heel Jack released the album *Oddities*, on which appears the band's remix of Material's *Road to the Western Lands*, featuring Burroughs, which had originally appeared on the remix album *Seven Souls*.

Numerous bands have found their names in Burroughs's work. The most widely known of these is Steely Dan, a group named after a dildo in *Naked Lunch*. Also from *Naked Lunch* came the names The Mugwumps and The Insect Trust. The novel *Nova Express* inspired the names of Grant Hart's post-Hüsker Dü band Nova Mob, as well as Australian 1960s R&B band Nova Express. British band Soft Machine took its moniker from the Burroughs novel of the same name, as did protopunk

band Dead Fingers Talk, from Hull, England; their only album was titled *Storm the Reality Studios*, after a quote from *Nova Express*. Alt-country band Clem Snide is named for a Burroughs character. Thin White Rope took their name from Burroughs's euphemism for ejaculation. The American extreme metal band Success Will Write Apocalypse Across the Sky took their name from the 1989 text "*Apocalypse*", in which Burroughs describes "art and creative expression taking a literal and physical form."

Burroughs played Opium Jones in the 1966 Conrad Rooks cult film *Chappaqua*, which also featured cameo roles by Allen Ginsberg, Moondog, and others. In 1968, an abbreviated—77 minutes as opposed to the original's 104 minutes—version of Benjamin Christensen's 1922 film *Häxan* was released, subtitled *Witchcraft Through The Ages*. This version, produced by Anthony Balch, featured an eclectic jazz score by Daniel Humair and narration by Burroughs. He also appeared alongside Brion Gysin in a number of short films in the 1960s directed by Balch. Jack Sargeant's book *Naked Lens: Beat Cinema* details Burroughs' film work at length, covering his collaborations with Balch and Burroughs' theories of film.

Burroughs narrated part of the 1980 documentary *Shamans of the Blind Country* by anthropologist and filmmaker Michael Oppitz. He gave a reading on Saturday Night Live on November 7, 1981, in an episode hosted by Lauren Hutton.

Burroughs subsequently made cameo appearances in a number of other films and videos, such as David Blair's *Wax: or the Discovery of Television among the Bees*, in which he plays a beekeeper, in an elliptic story about the first Gulf War, and *Decoder* by Klaus Maeck. He played an aging junkie priest in Gus Van Sant's 1989 film *Drugstore Cowboy*. He also appears briefly at the beginning of Van Sant's, *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues* (based on the Tom Robbins novel), in which he is seen crossing a city street; as the noise of the city rises around him he pauses in the middle of the intersection and speaks the single word "ominous". Van Sant's short film "Thanksgiving Prayer" features Burroughs reading the poem "Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 28, 1986," from Tornado Alley, intercut with a collage of black and white images.

A documentary titled *Burroughs*, directed by Howard Brookner, was released in 1984. It included footage of Burroughs and many of his friends and colleagues. Near the end of his life, recordings of Burroughs reading his short stories "A Junky's Christmas" and "Ah Pook is Here" were used on the soundtracks of two highly acclaimed animated films.

Filmmakers Lars Movin and Steen Moller Rasmussen used footage of Burroughs taken during a 1983 tour of Scandinavia in the documentary *Words of Advice: William S. Burroughs on the Road*. A 2010 documentary, *William S. Burroughs: A Man Within*, was made for Independent Lens on PBS.

Burroughs was fictionalized in Jack Kerouac's autobiographical novel *On the Road* as "Old Bull Lee." He also makes an appearance in J. G. Ballard's semi-autobiographical 1991 novel *The Kindness of Women*. In the 2004 novel *Move Under Ground*, Burroughs, Kerouac, and Neal Cassady team up to defeat Cthulhu.

Burroughs appears in the first part of *The Illuminatus! Trilogy* by Robert Shea and Robert Anton Wilson during the 1968 Democratic Convention riots and is described as a person devoid of anger, passion, indignation, hope, or any other recognizable human emotion. He is presented as a polar opposite of Allen Ginsberg, as Ginsberg believed in everything and Burroughs believed in nothing. Wilson would recount in his *Cosmic Trigger II: Down to Earth* having interviewed both Burroughs and Ginsberg for *Playboy* the day the riots began as well as his experiences with Shea during the riots, providing some detail on the creation of the fictional sequence.

Can there be a more iconic vagabond of the 20th century than William Seward Burroughs?

## Tarzan of Manisa - Ahmeddin Carlak

I never expected to find out was that Tarzan was real...and that he was an Iraqi who lived in the Turkish town of Manisa. In 2010, my wife and I took jobs teaching English in Manisa. Everywhere I looked, I saw Tarzan.

I grew up reading the Edgar Rice Burroughs books of my grandfather and most of them were *Tarzan* (though a few were about *John Carter on Mars*). As such, I have a lifelong connection with the fictional Lord of the Apes.

The last thing I thought to find in Turkey were statues, restaurants, stores, and memorials to Tarzan! But to my surprise, they are there in plenty. The Manisa Football Club celebrates their goals with the Tarzan cry. Seriously, the Johnny Weissmuller jungle scream could be heard from my apartment when they made a goal.

So, what was Tarzan doing in Manisa? I did a little bit of research to find out why there are so many Tarzan businesses and why the statues of Tarzan all look like some bearded hippie.

Tarzan of Manisa was actually named Ahmeddin Carlak. He was born in Samarra, Iraq in 1899 and he fought in the Turkish War of Independence and then moved to Manisa during the Republic period. He was a different kind of guy and saw planting and growing plants as something holy. He became the assistant gardener for Manisa and spent his life keeping the city green.

Whether from shell shock or holy devotion, he never wore anything but rubber slippers and black shorts just like some Hawaiian surfer dude. In fact, the old pictures of Tarzan remind me of Duke Kahanamoku, the Hawaiian Father of Surfing.

Winters in Manisa are damn cold but he never wore more than shorts and rubbah slippahs. Every day at noon he would fire the Manisa municipal cannon. He took it as his duty to offer flowers to any young

woman visiting Manisa and it is said that he wandered the beautiful Sypil Mountain and lived in a tent there. He would spend his salary on candy to give to children and then give whatever was left to the poor of Manisa. He was treated as a prince of the city and would attend cinema for free since he never had any money as a result of giving all his salary to the poor.

He is considered the first environmentalist in Turkey and was a key figure in the reforestation of Sypil and the Manisa National Forest. Some people say that Manisa National Forest was made the first national park because of the efforts of Tarzan.

He died May 31, 1963 and since then the city has erected numerous monuments, statues, and kebob shops in his honor.

## Che Guevara

World travel was important to Che. Sure, you see his image on all kinds of clueless college kids t-shirts and hoodies and maybe later he was responsible for thousands of heartless deaths, but you gotta love that medical student who set out on his friend's motorcycle to see the world.

Che Guevara was an Argentine Marxist revolutionary. He was an author, physician, intellect, guerilla leader, and an important figure of Revolution in Cuba. He studied medicine Buenos Aires University. His interest to explore the world made him a world traveler and it led him to scatter his collegiate interests with two thoughtful journeys which would basically change his view about modern economic conditions in Latin America.

In his first journey he covered 4,500 kilometers. In 1950, he traveled alone on bicycle through rural provinces of northern Argentina. He had installed a small motor on his bicycle. Next he traveled for about 8000 kilometers on motorcycle through South America for nine months. He took a year long break from his studies to travel with his friend Albert Granado. He voluntarily stayed for weeks at the San Pablo Leper colony in Peru.

Che Guevara was very deeply bothered by the working conditions of miners in the Chuquicamata copper mine of Anaconda, Chile. He was struck by the crushing poverty of the rural areas on his way to Machu Picchu in the Andes. Peasant farmers worked on small plots of lands which were owned by landlords in this place.

On his journey, Che Guevara was given the friendship of the people living throughout South America. Che Guevara used the notes he had taken while on this trip to write an account named *The Motorcycle Diaries*. It became a best seller and was later made into an award winning movie.

Before returning home to Buenos Aires, Che Guevara traveled through Argentina, Chile, Peru, Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela, Panama, and Miami. Later in Mexico City, he met Raúl and Fidel Castro. After the

famous invasion by yacht, he rose to second-in-command of those who deposed the Batista regime.

Guevara helped to institute agrarian reform after the revolution and wrote a manual on guerrilla warfare. While trying to foment further revolution, he was captured by CIA-assisted Bolivian forces and executed.

He may have started out as a nice medical student and an idealistic revolutionary, but in time, he came to be the monster in charge of Cuban firing squads and had as much blood on his hands as those he was fighting against.

## Emma Goldman

Emma Goldman was a well known female radical. Her role in developing the anarchist philosophy in North America and parts of Europe in the early twentieth century was instrumental to the movement.

She was born on June 27, 1869 in Kaunas, Lithuania (then Kovno, Russia). Emma emigrated to the USA in 1885 and began her political career. She was always a caring and helping person (though notoriously rowdy), and she attracted attention through her articles, editorials, and other writings. She also began to speak on issues, and managed to gather large crowds wherever she went. She was especially active on issues like birth control, ill treatment of women, and getting women the vote.

Emma rebelled early in life by standing up to her father when he used to beat her. That made her father angrier, but Emma was not one to back down. Her childhood was filled with constant movement from city to city and town to town. While she was young, her family moved to Papile, a small village in the Russian Federation, where her father ran an inn. There she witnessed her first peasant whipping, and began her dislike of the violence that authority uses to control people. When she was seven, the family moved to Konigsberg, then part of Germany, where Emma had her first taste of education. The teachers there were religious and harsh, and she could not stand either.

Her schooling ended when the family moved to Saint Petersburg, Russia, where her father opened a store. The venture proved unsuccessful, which led to another store, and another. He could not succeed. The kids had to work, and Emma had many jobs, most of them menial. She educated herself in her free time. She became very interested in the revolution that was going on in Russia at the time. She was a quick study, and recognized the true order of the world.

In 1885, at 16 years of age, Emma moved to Rochester, New York with her mother, and elder sister. She worked as a seamstress. They were soon joined by her father and elder brother who were unable to survive the harsh conditions in Saint Petersburg. Emma actively took part in the

revolutions around her, and was allegedly involved in many high-profile incidents that occurred at the time. She started a magazine called *Mother Earth* that was home to radicals from all over the country. Her involvement in anarchist revolution became so obvious that she was deported from the US to Russia, where she stayed till 1921. She wrote a book titled *My Disillusionment in Russia* where she recounted her experiences during her stay there.

Emma left Russia in 1921 for Germany and then to England, where she stayed till 1927 when she moved to Canada. She tried to settle in each place but because of her political agitation she ran into problems everywhere. In 1936 she returned to the USA. She was a well-known revolutionary figure by then. She moved to France in 1938 before moving back to Canada, where on May 14, 1940, she died at just under 71 years old. She was buried in German Waldheim Cemetery (now named Forest Home Cemetery) in Forest Park, Illinois. Her burial was attended by scores of colleagues and well-wishers.

## Woody Guthrie

While not a world traveler, Woody Guthrie's songs and music have been the soundtrack to more than a few vagabond adventures. He was truly extraordinary. In fact, it's almost unthinkable to have a road trip in the USA without singing or humming "This land is your land...this land is my land...from California...to the New York Islands..."

One of the best known folk singers ever, Woody Guthrie was born Woodrow Wilson Guthrie, on July 14, 1912 in a small town called Okemah in the state of Oklahoma. His parents, Charles Edward Guthrie and Nora Belle Tanner named him after the then governor of New Jersey, and future President of the United States, Woodrow Wilson. Guthrie's love for music was kindled in his youth when he used to listen to old ballads and folk songs that were sung at festivals and traditional days.

Guthrie spent most of his childhood and teenage in Okemah but at the age of 19, Woodrow Guthrie went to Texas with his father. That's where he met Mary Jennings, his first wife, whom he married and fathered three children with.

Woody practiced singing around town, and his flair for music was evident. He stayed in Texas until the late 1930s, when he joined thousands of fellow Oklahoman people who were moving to California in search of better jobs and lives. Guthrie traveled with migrant workers from Oklahoma to California and learned traditional folk and blues songs along the way. Many of his songs are about his experiences in the Dust Bowl era of the Great Depression, earning him the nickname the "Dust Bowl Troubadour"

It was in California that Guthrie first tasted fame. He performed traditional folk music on the radio station KFVD. While working there, Guthrie began writing and composing his own songs, most of which revolved around political situations in the country and region.

Guthrie was forced to leave KFVD in the early 1940s because his politics made him unhireable. He was rumored to be a communist since his

guitar said "This machine kills fascists" and he wrote for the communist newspapers. In fact though, he never joined the Communist Party. Finding no other employment, he returned to Texas. He soon received a call from a former colleague asking him to come to New York to work on his musical career.

He moved to New York and started performing. An unlikely place for a cowboy singer, but it was in New York City that his career really took off. His musical life took him to Los Angeles, Washington, Oregon and Coney Island. He performed, composed songs and achieved fame. Perhaps his most productive time was with the Bonneville Power Association building the Grand Coulee Dam in Washington State. In one month he wrote 26 songs - many of which are known by millions of people.

"I hate a song that makes you think that you are not any good. I hate a song that makes you think that you are just born to lose. Bound to lose. No good to nobody. No good for nothing. Because you are too old or too young or too fat or too slim too ugly or too this or too that. Songs that run you down or poke fun at you on account of your bad luck or hard traveling.

I am out to fight those songs to my very last breath of air and my last drop of blood. I am out to sing songs that will prove to you that this is your world and that if it has hit you pretty hard and knocked you for a dozen loops, no matter what color, what size you are, how you are built.

I am out to sing the songs that make you take pride in yourself and in your work."

His career was at its peak when he was diagnosed with Huntington's disease which led his last breath on October 3, 1967. Though he is no more, his music has been carried through generations, mainly by the likes of Bob Dylan, Phil Ochs, Bruce Springsteen, Pete Seeger, Joe Strummer and Tom Paxton who all acknowledged Woody as one of the greatest singers and songwriters of all time.

# Jack London

For many, Jack London is a guy that wrote dog stories. In fact, he did much more than that. Jack London was born January 12, 1876 and his life reads like an adventure novel.

Jack London was a passionate socialist, sometimes a drunk and sometimes a prohibitionist, a sailor, a pirate, a gold prospector, a tramp, and of course, all of that made him a vagabond.

London started out as a poor kid doing wage slavery in San Francisco but borrowed money to buy a boat and became the 'Prince of the Oyster Pirates' before his boat sank. From there he joined the 'Fish Patrol' and then signed onto a schooner which took him to Japan.

Returning to the USA he became a wage slave but then quit to become a tramp and marched across the country with unionists before getting arrested and thrown in jail for vagrancy. To me, one of his finest books is *The Road* which details this period of his life. It's also one of the hardest of his books to find.

London returned to San Francisco and attended Berkley before splitting for the gold fields of the Yukon. One would think that he spent a long time there, but six months of suffering was enough and he returned to California where he wrote his most famous books *Call of the Wild* and *White Fang*

London was one of the original members of the Bohemian Club which met in the redwoods and included such figures as Ambrose Bierce and John Muir.

When London started making money through his writing, he bought a ranch in California which became a vagabond camp of sorts. It was during that time he became a vehement socialist and penned *John Barleycorn*.

London spent most of his life fighting against wage slavery and lived in

London amongst the poorest of the poor. His book *The Iron Heel*, details some of what he learned and saw in this period.

Later in life, he sank most of his fortune into building a ship called "The Snark" which he and his second wife sailed to Hawaii. When they tried to go further, the ship sank. This part of his life is detailed in *Martin Eden*.

On his ranch, London became an advocate of sustainable agriculture before most people ever knew what the term meant. He also began to drink more and more, which led to his sinking into awful depressions and ultimately probably to an early death.

London made many trips to Hawaii and was one of the first Californians to take up surfing. He learned the sport from the legendary Duke Kahanamoku! I once met London's grandson and great grandson on Kauai and they were typical California surfer dudes.

Unfortunately, like many of the men of his day, Jack London had some ignorant racial views that are hard to get past. He wrote some science fiction which is interesting, one novel about China taking over the world by population and a war coming as a result. It seems to be a future that is coming to exist.

London died at the forty-years-old of a morphine overdose. Some say it was suicide, but what is certain is that he was in extreme pain from illness which is why he had the morphine to begin with.

## Ernest Hemingway

When it comes to famous American writers, people forget that many respected writers had their roots as shiftless vagabonds. Ernest Hemingway is no exception. He was a man of action and an extraordinary traveler.

Ernest Hemingway was born in 1899 in Oak Park, Illinois. He began his career in a newspaper office in Kansas City. He joined a volunteer ambulance group in Italy during the first World War. He was wounded while serving at the front and spent his ample time in hospitals. He returned to the United States and became a reporter for American and Canadian newspapers. He was sent to Europe again to cover events such as the Greek Revolution.

Hemingway became a member of a group of expelled Americans in Paris. He explored some of this in his book *The Sun Also Rises*. Another important work of Hemingway from that time was *A Farewell to Arms*, a study about the depression of an American ambulance officer in the war and his performance as a deserter.

He traveled to many places for his work and like many other authors he was also considered a world traveler. For the background of his most successful novel "*The Old Man and The Sea*", he used his experiences as a reporter at the time of civil war in Spain. This is a story about the journey of an old fisherman and his struggle with a fish and more importantly, the sea.

Hemingway was a great sportsman. He liked to portray hunters, soldiers and bullfighters in his work. He became deeply involved in the culture of all the places he visited and wrote very clearly about what he saw and experienced. Hemingway's history is largely associated with the places that he traveled - they all claim him. Hemingway traveled more than many people during his time. This gave him an opportunity to portray the macho image he had created for himself. He visited Kenya and Tanganyika in 1933 and was again in Africa in 1953 with his wife Mary. Much of this time can be read about in his short story collection *The*

*Snows of Kilimanjaro.*

It is his lesser known works such as *To Have and Have Not* or *On Paris* that I find to be the best reflection of his genius.

In *On Paris*, Hemingway focuses his gaze on the people and culture of post war Paris. Writing with characteristic verve, he tackles cultural topics in chapters such as 'Living on \$1,000 a Year in Paris', 'American Bohemians in Paris', and 'Parisian Boorishness'.

"The scum of Greenwich Village, New York, has been skimmed off and deposited in large ladles on that section of Paris adjacent to the Café Rotonde. New scum, of course, has risen to take the place of the old, but the oldest scum, the thickest scum and the scummiest scum," Hemingway wryly observes, "has come across the ocean, somehow, and with its afternoon and evening levees has made the Rotonde the leading Latin Quarter showplace for tourists in search of atmosphere."

Hemingway ended his life with a shotgun in a log cabin. Some say it was alcoholism, others that he couldn't stand a life of being older and debilitated. Personally, think he saw what global tourism was going to become and decided to get out before it fully manifested itself.

## Jack Kerouac

On the road or on the seas, a vagabond must travel. It doesn't matter if you have money or not, you simply have to see the world. Jack Kerouac and his friends were extraordinary in every sense of the word..

Kerouac was an American novelist and poet born in Massachusetts in 1922. He was a literary iconoclast and a pioneer of the Beat Generation. He was deeply influenced by Neal Cassady. The two met in New York and soon became friends. Some people even say that they fell in love with each other.

Shortly after this magical meeting they both began a series of cross-county adventures which formed the basis for Kerouac's book *On The Road*. They roamed all over USA by bus, by thumb, by car, and by foot. Kerouac started writing about their travel experiences while they were happening, but he was not able to find a style suitable to the content. He put the project away in frustration. After a series of letters from Cassady, he began the project again. The letters gave him the inspiration to write *On The Road*. The book caught the voice of Cassady and inspired a generation to travel across America in search of freedom and adventure.

*The Dharma Bums* is my favorite of his books, though *On the Road* is much more famous.

Cassady married many women and he became the father of many children. His life was exposed in *On the Road*. In his final years he settled down with Carolyn Cassidy in San Jose, California.

Kerouac married Joan Haverty, but she left him while she was pregnant. Over the next several years, Kerouac spent his life traveling and writing. He took long trips all over US and Mexico and even spent time in Morocco and France. He fell into drug and alcohol abuse either because of or caused by depression. Actually, probably a bit of both. He died at the age of 47 due to an internal hemorrhage from heavy drinking.

Kerouac's life is a good inspiration for world travelers but his death isa

warning to be heeded. Moderation is not a bad thing. In fact, one of the great vagabond rules is “In all things moderation, including a little excess.”

## John Steinbeck

John Steinbeck was born in Salinas, California in 1902. He came from a poor family and worked his way through Stanford University but never graduated. As a young man he worked on farms near where his family lived in central California and this definitely influenced all of his later work. In 1925 he hoboed his way to New York, where he tried to establish himself as a freelance writer or novelist, but, like many freelancers, he failed. He returned to California and worked as a tour guide and ranger in a fish hatchery. He was a west coast kid and while he was away, he never stopped dreaming of the Pacific and California.

Steinbeck was fortunate in that after he married in 1930, his parents provided with a home and even bought paper and a typewriter for him so that he could focus on his writing instead of burning his inspiration at dead end jobs. One has to wonder how many great writers could have been born with similar treatment and how many were simply lost in the day to day struggle to survive.

Steinbeck had minor success with short stories but became widely known with *Tortilla Flat* in 1935. The book was a series of humorous stories about Monterey paisanos. The book was successful enough that Steinbeck was able to repay his parents and bought a house in Los Gatos where he was able to further devote himself to his writing. He began to explore the world further - starting with a sailing voyage around the Gulf of California.

Steinbeck's novels deal with the economic problems of rural labor, but there is also a streak of soil worship in his books which does not always agree with his matter-of-fact sociological approach. After the rough and earthy humour of *Tortilla Flat*, he moved on to more serious fiction, often aggressive in its social criticism.

In *Dubious Battle* (1936), he deals with the strikes of the migratory fruit pickers on California plantations. Steinbeck followed this with *Of Mice and Men* in 1937. The story of the imbecile giant Lennie captured the imagination of a nation struggling with the Great Depression and the second world war. This was followed by a series of admirable short

stories collected in the volume *The Long Valley* (1938). In 1939 he published what is considered by many to be his best work, *The Grapes of Wrath*, the story of Oklahoma tenant farmers who, unable to earn a living from the land, move to California where they become migratory workers.

After 11 years, his marriage failed and a month after the divorce he was married for the second time (hmmmmm...a month). With his second wife, he fathered his only kids - two boys John and Tom. He served as a war correspondent during World War II and was wounded in North Africa. He was one of the first Western writers allowed into the Soviet Union and took many trips there. His writing about the new nation in *A Russian Journal*, brought him induction into the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Among his later works should be mentioned *East of Eden* (1952), *The Winter of Our Discontent* (1961), and *Travels with Charley* (1962), a travelogue in which Steinbeck wrote his impressions during a three-month tour in a truck with his poodle Charley that led him through forty American states. He subtitled the book, 'In Search of America'. The book offers both criticism and praise for America and according to Steinbeck's son Tom, Steinbeck went on the trip because he knew he was dying and wanted to see the country one last time.

Steinbeck's last novel, *The Winter of Our Discontent* examined moral decline in America. The protagonist Ethan grows discontented with his life choices and that of those around him. The book is very different in tone from Steinbeck's amoral and ecological stance in earlier works like *Tortilla Flat* and *Cannery Row*. It was not a critical success. Many reviewers recognized the importance of the novel but were disappointed that it was not another *Grapes of Wrath*.

It was the last fiction Steinbeck published. Perhaps it was because it was unappreciated and largely caused outrage. He may well have thought "Why should I waste time on anything else for a reception like that?"

In 1967 he went to Vietnam and wrote about what he saw of the war there. The American public decried him for a hawk for describing the actions of the American soldiers there as heroic. Both of his sons served

in Vietnam. He died in New York City in 1968.

Steinbeck wrote of pirates, hobos, Mexican revolutionaries, drunkards, knights, kings, farmers and other unsavory types that have been described by the world as trash. He was accused of being a communist by the right and a 'hawk' by the left - one thing for certain, he was one hell of a writer.

## Louis L'amour

Louis L'amour was more than just a prolific writer of Western dime novels. He was a boxer, a hobo, a round the world traveler, a merchant seaman, a soldier, and a ne'er do well.

Louis Dearborn LaMoore, better known as Louis L'amour was born in Jamestown, North Dakota in 1908. He was the seventh child of Dr. Louis Charles LaMoore and Emily Dearborn LaMoore. He was of French and Irish ancestry and the son of a large-animal veterinarian, local politician and farm-equipment broker who had arrived in Dakota Territory in 1882.

The area around Jamestown was mostly farmland but cowboys and livestock often traveled through Jamestown on their way to or from ranches in Montana and the markets to the east. Like most future writers, L'amour spent plenty of his boyhood free time at the local library reading, particularly G. A. Henty, a British author of historical boys' novels during the late nineteenth century. L'Amour once said, "[Henty's works] enabled me to go into school with a great deal of knowledge that even my teachers didn't have about wars and politics." In addition to history and the natural sciences, the young Louis was captivated by the fiction of Robert Louis Stevenson, Jack London, Edgar Rice Burroughs and others ... letting them carry him away to the south seas, the gold fields of the Yukon, the Spanish Main, the center of the earth and the dying red planet of Mars.

In 1923 the family fell on hard times and over the next seven or eight years, they skinned cattle in west Texas, baled hay in the Pecos Valley of New Mexico, worked in the mines of Arizona, California and Nevada, and in the sawmills and lumber camps of the Pacific Northwest. It was in colorful places like these that Louis met a wide variety of people. He later modeled the characters in his novels on these actual Old West personalities who had survived into the nineteen-twenties and -thirties. In Oklahoma he met Bill Tilghman, once the marshal of Dodge City; Chris Madsen who had been a Deputy U.S. Marshal and a Sergeant with the 5th cavalry; and Emmett Dalton of the notorious Dalton Gang. In New

Mexico he met George Coe and Deluvina Maxwell who had both known Billy the Kid; Tom Pickett who'd had a thumb shot off in the Lincoln County War; Tom Threepersons who had been both a Northwest Mounted Policeman and a Texas Ranger; and Elfego Baca, a famous New Mexico lawyer who had once engaged over eighty of Tom Slaughter's cowboys for 33 hours in one of the west's most famous gunfights. During his years in Arizona Louis met Jeff Milton, a Texas Ranger and Border Patrolman and Jim Roberts, the last survivor of the Tonto Basin War and later Marshall of Jerome. But perhaps most importantly, during the years he was traveling around the country, young Louis met hundreds of men and women who, though unknown historically, were equally important as examples of what the people of the nineteenth century were like.

While still a teenager, he set out on a journey around the world (you can find out more about it and see plenty of photos at [www.louislamourgreatadventure.com](http://www.louislamourgreatadventure.com).) It was a ten month adventure that shaped the rest of his life. He hoped to create a series of stories that would document these times because, even as he experienced them, they were fading and he knew it. The free, wandering, days of the hobo disappeared with the financial pressure of the depression and, as the world responded to the growing tensions that led to World War Two, customs and immigration officers began cracking down on all travelers. The sense that the world was full of unknown possibilities was vanishing as telegraph and telephone, radio, fast steam ships, and aircraft shrank people's sense of the world and brought the most remote corners under the supervision of control mad governments. He circled the globe as a merchant seaman, visiting England, Japan, China, Borneo, the Dutch East Indies, Arabia, Egypt, and Panama with the rough and ready crews of various steamships on which he served.

Ultimately, Louis wrote about a world in transition, not a place where anything was possible but a place where the last things were possible, a world that was becoming the world we know now. Like the Old West that he would eventually write about, Louis was around at a time when he could experience the last days of a vanishing age and meet the people who had been a part of that age in its prime.

Back in the USA, he hoboed across the country, hopping freight trains

with men who had been riding the rails for half a century. He wrapped newspaper under his clothes to keep warm while sleeping in hobo jungles, grain bins and the gaps in piles of lumber. He spent three months "on the beach," in San Pedro, California

Many of these stories are now published in the collection "Yondering" and there are more in "Off the Mangrove Coast, ""West from Singapore," "Night over the Solomons," "Beyond the Great Snow Mountains".

He changed his name to Louis L'Amour and settled down to try to make something of himself as a writer in the 1930's. His stories about boxing got him a bit of notice but most of his other stories were ignored and rejected until finally, L'Amour placed a story, "Death Westbound," in a magazine that was very much the *Playboy Magazine* of its day.

"10 Story Book" featured quality writing alongside scantily attired, or completely naked young women but aside from that, it was hard going until 1938 when his stories began appearing in pulp magazines fairly regularly.

Surprisingly, given his later career, L'Amour wrote only one story in the western genre prior to World War Two, 1940's "The Town No Guns Could Tame". During World War II, he served in the United States Army as a transport officer with the 3622 Transport Company. After World War II, L'Amour continued to write stories for magazines; his first after being discharged in 1946 was "Law of the Desert Born" in *Dime Western Magazine* (April, 1946). L'Amour's contact with Leo Margulies led to L'Amour agreeing to write many stories for the Western pulp magazines published by Standard Magazines, a substantial portion of which appeared under the name "Jim Mayo". The suggestion of L'Amour writing Hopalong Cassidy novels also was made by Margulies who planned on launching *Hopalong Cassidy's Western Magazine* at a time when the William Boyd films and new television series were becoming popular with a new generation. L'Amour read the original Hopalong Cassidy novels, written by Clarence E. Mulford, and wrote his novels based on the original character under the name "Tex Burns". Only two issues of the *Hopalong Cassidy's Western Magazine* were published, and the novels as written by L'Amour were extensively edited to meet Doubleday's thoughts of how the character should be portrayed in print.

It wasn't until the 1950s that L'Amour began to sell novels. His first novel, published under his own name, was *Westward The Tide*, published in 1951. The short story, "The Gift of Cochise" was printed in *Colliers* (July 5, 1952) and seen by John Wayne and Robert Fellows, who purchased the screen rights from L'Amour for \$4,000. James Edward Grant was hired to write a screenplay based on this story changing the main character's name from Ches Lane to Hondo Lane. L'Amour retained the right to novelize the screenplay and did so, even though the screenplay differed substantially from the original story. This was published as *Hondo* in 1953 and released on the same day the film opened with a blurb from John Wayne stating that "Hondo was the finest Western Wayne had ever read". During the remainder of the decade L'Amour produced a great number of novels, both under his own name as well as others (e. g. Jim Mayo).

L'Amour's career flourished throughout the 1960s and he began work on a series of novels about the fictional Sackett family. Initially he wrote five books about William Tell Sackett and his close relatives, however, in later years the series spread to include other families and four centuries of North American history. It was an ambitious project and several stories intended to close the gaps in the family's time line were left untold at the time of L'Amour's death.

L'Amour branched out into historical fiction with *The Walking Drum*, set in the 11th century, a contemporary thriller, *Last of the Breed*, and science fiction with *The Haunted Mesa*.

Louis L'Amour eventually wrote 89 novels, over 250 short stories, and sold more than 320 million copies of his work. By the 1970s his writings were translated into over 20 languages. Every one of his works is still in print.

He died from lung cancer on June 10, 1988, at his home in Los Angeles, and was buried in Glendale, California. His autobiography, *Education of a Wandering Man*, was published posthumously in 1989.

# Modern Vagabonds

## Ed Bury

I believe that every traveller who isn't mindlessly going from place to place needs to be introduced to Ed Byrne. You might ask...who? Ed Bury is the godfather of vagabonding in the modern age. There are a lot of guys and gals who came before him, but his books from the 1960's and 1970's defined the modern act of vagabonding and have been well known and circulated in the nomadic underground since they were published.

When I started vagabonding in the late 1990's my bibles were Ed's *Vagabonding in Europe and North Africa* and *Vagabonding in America*. It's hard to describe the books without you seeing them, so I recommend you pick them up. They are long out of print but can still be found circulating on Ebay, Amazon, and in used bookstores and thrift shops around North America. At the moment there are two copies of the USA book and one of Europe and North Africa on Amazon. I'm always amazed that these books aren't being sold for thousands of dollars each.

What makes these books special? Ed does. His way of seeing the world, travel, and life. Ed is not dead and gone. According to the internet, he is currently 85 years old and living on top of a gold mine in Nevada City, CA. In 2008 he started a blog, but he never went very far with it.

Here is how Ed describes himself on his blog:

An explorer of diversity and philosopher of possibility, Ed Bury (that's me!) has worked as a newspaper delivery boy, aircraft radar operator, electronics technical writer, corporate manager, free-lance photographer; written several vagabonding guidebooks; and designed a major Tarot deck.

My personal mottos are: "I've you in eye-view" (as a photographer) and "Ed'd edited it" (as a writer). My books and photographs are explorations of the nature of human experience

viewed through the lens of my own. My pics and words have been published in hundreds of books, magazines, and newspapers; and I am a two-time prizewinner in the Nikon International Photo Contest. Writing and performing poetry is a main interest of mine, and I was co-producer of the Nevada City Poets Playhouse for 8 years. Currently I am a full-time, online bookseller working from my home.

I have three grown daughters by three grown mothers and consider fatherhood to be my most important creative achievement. I live quite happily on the edge of Nevada City CA on a former goldmine.

As to why Ed has influenced so many vagabonds, just check out this nugget of wisdom from *Vagabonding in Europe and North Africa*

It's up to you, that's what's great about being a vagabond. Once you decide that you can be a free agent, then that means you're really free to go anywhere you like. You're not dependent on travel agents or anybody else to make arrangements for you. You're the one who's going on the trip, so why not do it from the beginning? Plan it yourself; work it out yourself.

Or this one from *Vagabonding in the USA*

Travel is not just moving over the earth from one place to another in some kind of conveyance. It's not about where you're going or how you're getting there. It's not about getting away from it all, at all. In fact, more the opposite ... a way of getting to it all. Travel is a metaphor for life, a way of experiencing it more intensely and self-consciously. Traveling is not so much an action as an enlightened state of consciousness, opening you to fresh experience, to fresh looks at the world and yourself in it.

What's Ed doing today? Selling used books online from his 3 acres in Nevada City, California and attending the burning man festival every year. He's a dedicated Tarot lover and as such, I think it proves that this brotherhood of fools (Le Mat aka The Vagabond) comes from a long

lineage.

Here is another wise passage from *Vagabonding in the USA*

Routines and habits are the Known, protecting us from the Unknown. Habits are also called home. Habits tame the raw wilderness of existence into the civilized comforts of everyday life. Unfortunately, as we all know, habits gradually domesticate all the wildness and energy out of life. So much energy gets bound up in routines and habituated patterns, keeping them alive, that your life goes dead instead. Thus, if you want to discover again the wild side of life, you have to leave “home”; you have to break or dissolve your habits in order to release the energy locked up inside them.

Long Live the Vagabond King!

## Anthony Bourdain

Anthony Bourdain was not a bullshit artist. When he died by suicide in 2018, I wept for days. It sent me into a tailspin of depression. To put that in perspective, I'm not a person who cries at death and I rarely let the world of celebrity affect my outlook on life. Tony was different, however. Even though we never met, he was a friend. He was a fellow traveler on this ball of water and soil who actually got it. I still feel his loss as I write this, a year later.

I was introduced to him back in 2005 when a close friend handed me a book called *Kitchen Confidential* and said "Read this. You'll love this guy." The title sounded like a bullshit "Hollywood Madam" type of book so I took it with low expectations and planned to give excuses whenever she asked me if I'd read it.

Then, one day when I knew I'd be in the bathroom for a while, his book was the closest thing on hand aside from a box of Apple Jacks I'd already read - so I grabbed it. Within two paragraphs I was hooked.

I've worked in kitchens. I've made sandwiches, worked as a seafood line chef in a high-end kitchen, been the sous chef in a southern BBQ joint, and washed all kinds of dishes. I've smoked more dope and done more lines of coke with kitchen staff and pantyless waitresses than I care to admit. Check out this line:

I want to tell you about the dark recesses of the restaurant underbelly - a sub-culture whose militaristic hierarchy and ethos of 'rum, buggery, and the lash' make for a mix of unwavering order and nerve-shattering chaos -because I find it all quite comfortable like a nice warm bath.

Hunter S. Thompson was dead but Tony Bourdain was still alive and kicking. I read his book and then I went looking for more. I found it. This was a guy who could write, made me hungry for food, made my adventures look tame, and who traveled the world and made multiple kick-ass television shows where he never seemed to be pretending to be

someone else.

Anthony Bourdain was smart, funny, irreverent, and successful. He introduced a whole generation of punk-rock lost souls to the joy of food and travel. Here's a small piece of his backstory pulled from AnthonyBourdain.net

Anthony Bourdain was born in 1956 in New York City. He graduated from the Culinary Institute of America in 1978 and went on to become a professional chef. His love of food was kindled by an oyster he ate in France as a boy. It was given to him by a fisherman while his family was on a vacation there. In 1998 he became Executive Chef at Brasserie Les Halles in Manhattan.

*Kitchen Confidential* was a New York Times best seller in 2000 which led to his writing more best sellers including *The Nasty Bits* and *A Cook's Tour*. He wrote novels and even a graphic novel for DC Comics.

His four television series introduced the world to a better way. *A Cook's Tour*, *No Reservations*, *The Layover*, and finally *Parts Unknown*. Each of them would have been good shows without him, but in truth, none of them would have succeeded without his personality and outlook. With him, each episode was an experience.

I have no idea how many countries Anthony Bourdain traveled to, nor does it matter. I would guess that he didn't keep track...the important thing is that he went, he ate, he shared, he learned, and you know what?

He was not a bullshit artist. He showed respect to the food, the cultures, the places, and the people wherever he went. He didn't mind disrespecting blatant commercialism, celebrity, or even himself and called bullshit as he saw it.

## Henry Rollins

Henry Rollins is more than a punk rocker. He's an actor, DJ, spoken word artist, and cultural icon. He's a vagabond activist and a conscious world traveler.

I've been a fan of Rollins since the mid-80s when I was introduced to Black Flag.

Rollins is an outspoken human rights activist and speaks out on social justice, gay rights, and crusades against war and oppression all over the globe. On his spoken word tours he promotes equality including raising money in support of gay-marriage organizations.

During the 2003 Iraq War, he toured with the USO while remaining against the war. At a base in Kyrgyzstan he told the crowd "Your commander would never lie to you. That's the vice president's job." Rollins has toured in Kuwait, Iraq, Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan (twice), Egypt, Turkey, Qatar, Honduras, Japan, Korea and the United Arab Emirates where he has performed on US bases. He has traveled throughout the globe for performances and to learn about the world.

Rollins joined Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) in 2008 to launch a groundbreaking national public service advertisement campaign, [CommunityofVeterans.org](http://CommunityofVeterans.org), which helps veterans coming home from war reintegrate into their communities.

Rollins has summed-up his approach to activism, "This is where my anger takes me, to places like this, not into abuse but into proactive, clean movement"

His book *Occupants* digs deep into these idea:

For more than three decades, Henry Rollins has searched out the most desolate corners of the Earth—from Iraq to Afghanistan, Thailand to Mali, and beyond—articulating his observations through music and words, on radio and television, and in

magazines and books. Though he's known for the raw power of his expression, Rollins has shown that the greatest statements can be made with the simplest of acts: to just bear witness, to be present.

In *Occupants*, Rollins invites us to do the same. The book pairs Rollins's visceral full-color photographs—taken in Bangladesh, Burma, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Northern Ireland, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, and elsewhere over the last few years—with writings that not only provide context and magnify the impact of the images but also lift them to the level of political commentary. Simply put, this book is a visual testimony of anger, suffering, and resilience. *Occupants* will help anyone realize what is so easy to miss when tragedy and terror become numbing, constant forces—the quieter, stronger forces of healing, solidarity, faith, and even joy.

Today, Henry Rollins produces an online show that mixes great music, activism, and his humanist philosophy.

## Tony Wheeler

If you haven't heard of Lonely Planet, you've probably never taken a trip. Tony and Maureen Wheeler were the founders of this global travel empire which is now owned by the BBC. The story of Lonely Planet is a story which has inspired travel writers for a generation.

Born in Britain but raised in Karachi, Pakistan, the West Indies (Bahamas), and the United States, Tony studied to be a car designer but was sidetracked by a trip to India with his wife Maureen in the early 1972. The two of them were entranced by the 'hippie trail' and the next year founded Lonely Planet in Australia where they had traveled overland from Britain.

Together they drove from London to Afghanistan in a beat up minivan and eventually arrived in Sydney, Australia, with 27 cents between them.

The two wrote the book *Across Asia on the Cheap*. The book was an immediate success and even though there was no internet, they established themselves as the first budget travel bloggers (even with no blogs in the world). The next year, the couple wrote *Southeast Asia on a Shoestring* and they were off. The book is still in print and has sold more than a million copies. Enough to found an empire.

For many, that would have been enough, but the couple went on to publish the *Lonely Planet India Guide in 1981*. That book opened the door to even more.

Tony and Maureen sold Lonely Planet to the BBC a decade ago but they are both still traveling and active.

Lonely Planet sells six million books each year, 90 percent overseas. Lonely Planet has printed more than 54 million copies of its 600 guides in 17 languages and has \$85 million annual turnover.

## The Dalai Lama

Most people know who the Dalai Lama is, still, perhaps it is worth introducing him in a different light.

The Dalai Lama is the religious head of Buddhists in Tibet. However, the Dalai Lama's patronage extends to Buddhists all over the world. He is seen as a holy figure, similar to the Pope. The post of the Dalai Lama is traditionally given to the person believed to be the reincarnation of God, and this is generally decided at the time of birth. There have been 13 Dalai Lamas so far, with the 14th Dalai Lama currently in position. The first Dalai Lama was born in the year 1391, and the current Dalai Lama was born in 1935.

The 14th Dalai Lama's real name is Lhamo Dondrub, and he is religiously called Tenzin Gyatso. The Dalai Lama has received many awards, perhaps the most prestigious being the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989. Born on July 6, 1935, to a family of traditional farmers, the Dalai Lama was believed to be a reincarnation of the previous Dalai Lama at birth. As a result, he had a very religious childhood, and was given many of the previous Dalai Lama's belongings. His reign as the Dalai Lama began on 17 November, 1950, and has been a remarkable journey. The Dalai Lama has always fought for the rights of fellow Tibetans, and the people in power did not fancy this behavior much.

The Dalai Lama was forced into exile in India. From India, the Dalai Lama has traveled all across the world, speaking and giving his message of equality and freedom to all who will listen. The Dalai Lama was listed as the second most spiritual person on Earth by the Watkins Review. Films and novels have been inspired by the Dalai Lama's life and no wonder: it's a very amazing life indeed.

## Graham Hughes

Graham Hughes is an amazing traveler. This British man is the first in the world to ever visit all 201 countries without using air transport. The task took him four years and was completed in November of 2012. The Guinness Book of World Records refused to acknowledge his accomplishment until 2014 because his crossing into Russia was illegal. They don't hold with breaking the law - and yet, he did it. In 2013, he crossed into Russia legally and a year later the uptight folks at Guinness finally gave him credit.

Hughes was born in Liverpool, England in 1979. His quest began in 2008 and was covered by a program on the National Geographic Channel called "Graham's World". During the course of his "Odyssey Expeditions" he was arrested numerous times and proved himself to be a regular pain in the ass to authorities and a pretty cool guy to the rest of us. He was imprisoned in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, arrested when he snuck into Russia, and ran a blockade to get into Cuba.

The rules of his trip were: no flying, no private transport (a rule enforced by the Guinness World Records race regulations, which cannot condone a public race in private vehicles) and no travelling to far flung territories and counting them as visiting the motherland. For example he couldn't visit French Polynesia and count it as visiting France.

Hughes traveled 160,000 miles in 1,426 days - all on a budget of just \$100 a week. He kept costs low through couchsurfing and hitching rides with locals and cargo ships.

I think his best quotable was this:

I wanted to show that the world is not some big, scary place, but in fact is full of people who want to help you

This quote from his bio page might be a close runner up:

If you had to define in a sentence what drives him perhaps it's the desire that years from now schoolchildren across the land will be required to learn his date of birth.

In fact, Hughes description of his journey is worthy of quoting all by itself

It was an adventure of epic proportions. I spent four days crossing open ocean in a leaky wooden boat to reach Cape Verde, I was imprisoned for a week in Congo and was arrested whilst attempting to sneak into Russia.

I ran the blockade into Cuba, blagged my way into Eritrea, ran around Iraq with an AK-47, spent seven days in Tibet and warned schoolchildren in Afghanistan about the dangers of men with beards.

I met the Prime Minister of Tuvalu, rode on top of a 18-wheeler through the northern badlands of Kenya, hitched a ride on a cruise ship to The Dominican Republic, joined a Bwiti tribe in Gabon, screamed at the ocean in El Salvador and watched a space shuttle blast off in the USA.

I've fed the crocs in Australia, hunted the dragons of Komodo, befriended the orangutans in Borneo, played with the lemurs in Madagascar, washed the elephants in India and eaten live octopus in South Korea.

I tip-toed into North Korea, took the slow boat to Nauru, danced with the Highlanders of Papua New Guinea and was rescued from Muslim fundamentalists in The Philippines by a ladyboy called Jenn.

## Chris Guillebeau

A decade ago, a friend sent me a link to Chris Guillebeau's website. He was visiting every country in the world and building a movement at the same time.

"You should do this." That's what she wrote to me. As if it were the simplest thing in the world to visit every country of the world. And that is really the magic of Chris Guillebeau - he makes it seem that simple. I haven't met anyone else who is going about things the way he is, so I really can't say whether it was all as simple as he claimed.

One thing is for sure, Chris is amazing. The website I was referred to was his blog at <http://chrisguillebeau.com/>. If you haven't yet heard of him or his work, let me give you his cliff notes version.

I served as a volunteer executive for a medical charity in West Africa from 2002-2006. It was thrilling, challenging, and exhausting—all good qualities to have in an adventure. I gave keynote speeches to presidents, hung out with warlords, and learned far more in those four years than anything I learned in college.

After my time in West Africa came to an end in 2006, I came to Seattle for a graduate program in International Studies at the University of Washington. I enjoyed my studies, but I enjoyed travel even more – during every break between quarters, I traveled independently to countries like Burma, Uganda, Jordan, Macedonia, and 20 more.

And then...he decided to change the world.

Chris is a self-employed dude who set himself the task of visiting every country in the world and created a blog called *The Art of Non-Conformity*. In 2008 he published a manifesto called (not surprisingly) *A Brief Guide to World Domination*. I recommend that you download it free from his site right now.

In 2010 he published *The Art of Non-Conformity*. By 2013 he had visited every country in the world. Along the way, he inspired people, created new projects, and showed countless (I'm sure someone could count them, but I can't) people how to 'travel-hack' i.e. use airline systems of points and rewards to improve their travel and improve their lives. His book *The \$100 Startup* is a entrepreneurial self-help masterpiece that I recommend (even if I do tend to think that Chris and the people he profiles are far from the average folk he portrays them to be).

Here is something truly amazing about Chris - despite his intense popularity, his incredible accomplishments, and his ultra-positive 'you can do it' message - you would be hard pressed to find anyone who will say a bad word about him. Compare that with author Tim Ferris who I will profile next and you will see why that is so amazing. Chris Guillebeau is such a genuinely nice guy that even trolls can't seem to hate him.

Chris has been featured in the *New York Times*, *Psychology Today*, *Business Week*, *Budget Travel*, *The Oregonian*, *La Presse*, *Washington Times*, *MSNBC*, *Anderson Cooper's 360* and on a laundry list of great websites you should read if you don't already: Seth Godin, Slate, LifeHacker, Zen Habits, Behance, Career Renegade, Happiness Project, Rolf Potts - Vagablogging, and literally hundreds of other blogs.

He currently lives in Portland, Oregon with his wife Jolie although where he is at any given moment is incredibly difficult to say for certain. If you don't virtually or personally know Chris yet, I recommend you bring him into your life.

## Tim Ferriss

I like Tim Ferris, but there are many people who do not. Back in 2007, a college friend read my book *Rough Living: Tips and Tales of a Vagabond* and then commented "You're like Tim Ferriss, the guy who wrote *The 4-Hour Work-Week*."

"The what?" I asked. I was apparently the last one to hear about Tim. While I wish I could have said "Yeah, I'm just like Tim Ferriss" - it isn't the truth. Check out his mini-bio from The Huffington Post from 2010:

Serial entrepreneur and ultra-vagabond Timothy Ferriss has been featured in The New York Times, National Geographic Traveler, Maxim, and other media. He is a guest lecturer at Princeton University in High-tech Entrepreneurship and *The 4-Hour Workweek* (Crown/Random House) is his debut book on ideal lifestyle design. He speaks five languages, runs a multinational firm from wireless locations worldwide, and has been a world-record holder in tango, a national champion in Chinese kickboxing, and an actor on a hit television series in Hong Kong. He is 32 years old.

Let's see - world records, all those magazines, best sellers, five languages, owner of a multinational firm, actor, kickboxing champ? Yeah...none of that is me. I wish. By the way, the Huffpo bio is out of date because Tim has now written more best sellers - *The 4-Hour Body* and *The 4-Hour Chef* and more. His page at wikipedia says he speaks six languages now.

Holy shit! Yeah, I admit it. I wish I had the success record of Tim Ferriss. If you've never heard of Tim, a good place to start is by following him on Twitter. (@tferriss).

So much has been written about Ferriss that it would be silly to reinvent the wheel. The New Yorker had this to say about him:

Every generation gets the self-help guru that it deserves. In 1937,

at the height of the Depression, Napoleon Hill wrote “Think and Grow Rich,” which claimed to distill the principles that had made Andrew Carnegie so wealthy. “The Power of Positive Thinking,” by Norman Vincent Peale, which was published in 1952, advised readers that techniques such as “a mind-emptying at least twice a day” would lead to success. By the seventies, Werner Erhard and est promised material wealth through spiritual enlightenment. The eighties and nineties saw management-consultancy maxims married with New Age thinking, with books such as Stephen Covey’s “The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People.” In the past decade or so, there has been a rise in books such as “Who Moved My Cheese?,” by Spencer Johnson, which promise to help readers maximize their professional potential in an era of unpredictable workplaces.

Ferriss’s books appeal to those for whom cheese, per se, has ceased to have any allure. “This book is not about finding your ‘dream job,’ ” Ferriss writes in “The 4-Hour Workweek.” “I will take it as a given that, for most people, somewhere between six and seven billion of them, the perfect job is the one that takes the least time.” But Ferriss doesn’t recommend idleness. Rather, he prescribes a kind of hyperkinetic entrepreneurialism of the body and soul, with every man his own life coach, angel investor, Web master, personal trainer, and pharmaceutical test subject. One’s body can become one’s own laboratory: with “a few tweaks,” Ferriss suggests, its performance can be maximally enhanced—just as in the movie “Limitless,” but without the nasty withdrawal symptoms.

Where in the world did this guy come from?

Ferriss comes from the Hampton's, that part of New York where the richest of the rich spend their leisure time. He wasn't however, the son of a billionaire. His father sold real estate and his mother worked as a physical therapist - certainly he wasn't a poor kid, but according to him, he wasn't a rich one either. He attended the prestigious St. Paul's boarding school and had a year of studying abroad in Japan. After that, he went on to study at Princeton before moving to Silicon Valley and starting his own vitamin supplement company.

Along the way, he hacked his way into winning kick boxing championships, world records in Tango, and learning all those languages. The secret? He looks for the loopholes. According to Ferriss, he has been doing that his whole life. It probably helped that he found a great mentor: Jack Canfield author of the Chicken Soup for .... books.

He's not without controversy. Read his reviews on Amazon and you will come across the words huckster, liar, and con-man. He's been compared to PT Barnum and is often referred to as the world's #1 self promoter. There's not doubt about the last one and as for the rest, there are always haters when a person finds incredible success as he has done. (Unless you are Chris Guillebeau). No one can argue that Ferris has not been successful.

Tim has amassed a diverse (and certainly odd) roster of experiences:

- Princeton University guest lecturer in High-Tech Entrepreneurship and Electrical Engineering
- Finance and Entrepreneurship advisor at Singularity University at NASA Ames, co-founded by Peter Diamandis and Ray Kurzweil.
- First American in history to hold a Guinness World Record in tango
- Speaker of 5 languages
- National Chinese kickboxing champion
- Horseback archer (yabusame) in Nikko, Japan
- 2009 Henry Crown Fellow at the Aspen Institute
- Political asylum researcher
- MTV breakdancer in Taiwan
- Hurling competitor in Ireland
- Wired Magazine's "Greatest Self-Promoter of 2008?"
- Tim received his BA from Princeton University in 2000, where he studied in the Neuroscience and East Asian Studies departments. He developed his nonfiction writing with Pulitzer Prize winner John McPhee and formed his life philosophies under Nobel Prize winner Kenzaburo Oe.

Ferriss started his own E-Book Publishing company and I find it notable that the first book he published was Rolf Potts masterpiece:

*Vagabonding.*

I think back to my friend comparing me to Tim Ferriss. Nope. Not at all. Tim Ferriss is like nobody else in this world, and that, is probably about all that we do have in common.

# The Vagobond Interviews

From 2007 to 2017, I published an online travel magazine called Vagobond.com. It's not a misspelling, since everyone called me Vago, I thought it made sense to call the site Vagobond. Vagobond started with me detailing my own adventures, but over time it grew to include nearly a dozen writers, award winning photographers, and a couple of virtual assistants. During this peak of online publishing, I interviewed a wide range of travelers, bloggers, wanderers, and interesting people I met along the way.

Sadly, at the end of 2016, Vagobond and my hard drive back ups were infected with a wide variety of malware. I tried to save the site and the many files, but unfortunately, much of it was unrecoverable. In early 2017, I took the site down and lost nearly a decade of work. At the time, ad revenue had dropped significantly and the infected databases had caused Google and other search engines to delist it. Vagobond went from one of the top travel websites in the world to an abandoned domain on the dark web.

I brought Vagobond.com back to life in 2018 with new hosting and a new focus on Hawaii and my travels from here. It will never be the same and much of the old content is gone and lost forever. Thankfully, however, the following interviews were saved on my old laptop. I reproduce them here to introduce you to some of the most amazing vagabonds in our world.

## Francis Tapon

If there is a modern day heir to the great traveler/scholar Ibn Batutta - I would say that Francis Tapon is the guy. His books are masterpieces of travel and will surely be quoted and referenced for decades - especially as the Eastern Europe that he has spent so much time coming to know, slowly goes away.

*The Hidden Europe: What Eastern Europeans Can Teach Us* is more than just a travelogue- it is a cultural and historical guidebook which is both intensely personal and incredibly helpful in coming to understand the places he has visited. This is not a small book - it is a massive tome filled with economic, historical, and political data that somehow manages to come across as entertaining and at times even light reading - don't expect to read even a single chapter in one session - in fact, I would say that this book is something that you will reference again and again - especially if you have an interest in Eastern Europe or are traveling there.

Francis spent three years crisscrossing Eastern Europe, hiking, making friends and coming to understand the people and the culture. He has also walked across America four times, thru-hiked the Appalachian Trail and the Pacific Crest Trail, and in 2007, became the first to do a round-trip on the Continental Divide Trail. He is the author of *Hike Your Own Hike: 7 Lessons from Backpacking Across America*.

I recommend both of his books. I interviewed Francis for Vagobond.com back in 2011.

**Vagobond: I was introduced to you when I was doing research on the great vagabonds of the past. A librarian I met in Portland, Oregon told me - "Never mind the dead vagabonds - you should interview Francis Tapon." When I looked at your site and started reading your adventures, I was simply blown away. At that time I think you were sleeping in a tent outside of Venice....Can you share how you started traveling? Was it always in this (pardon this) completely awesome style you travel in now?**

Francis Tapon: I started traveling when I was born. Because I had a Chilean mom and a French father, my family would have to fly ten hours to see a relative. My first independent trip was right after I graduated from college. It was a standard rite of passage: 75 days in Western Europe with my best high-school friend. Although we went to Prague and Budapest (which was somewhat unusual in 1992), most of the trip was pretty typical for college grads. We stayed in hostels or cheap hotels most of the way. My travel style didn't change until after I thru-hiked the Appalachian Trail in 2001. Once I learned to camp in the wilderness for months, getting a bed/shower/roof seemed optional. And once couchsurfing.org took off, it added another dimension that helped me meet locals more easily than ever.

**Vagobond: One of the things that hits me about your writing, both on the web and in your books is the academic nature of it. I always feel like I'm there with you, but at the same time, I feel like I'm attending a lecture at the Explorers Club because of the history, culture, and texture that you bring to your travels. Do you have an academic background? Also, in terms of reading, what writers/authors influenced you the most?**

Francis Tapon: Although I went to Harvard Business School, I don't have an academic background (I have no PhD). In fact, I dislike how academia writes, which is why my style of writing is extremely casual. Michael Krasny called it "idiosyncratic" and "unorthodox." While I like to tackle intellectual subjects, I try to do it in an entertaining way. Academic writing is usually boring and long-winded. I prefer a punchy style that remains informative and profound. Whether I achieve that is for the reader to judge.

Bill Bryson has influenced me the most. I love his books. The biggest difference between us is that I tend to get more dirty than he does and I take bigger risks when I travel. His style of writing is more refined than mine too--I can be more crass and controversial than him.

**Vagobond: Did you always know you wanted to be an explorer and adventurer? Did you ever get blown off track? How did you find your way back?**

Francis Tapon: Until I hiked the Appalachian Trail (age 31), I lived a pretty standard life. That journey transformed me. I did get blown off track twice. First was after the AT, when I consulted for Hitachi for 2.5 years. Then again after my first trip to Eastern Europe (2004), when I consulted for Microsoft for 18 months. Those four years of work weren't wasted though: I've been living off the money I earned in those two jobs ever since. I always knew those would be temporary gigs, but it still takes discipline to leave a job that pays well. Income is addictive.

**Vagobond: In reading *The Hidden Europe*, I was blown away by the sections on Serbia and Russia. Russia, I kind of expected to be incredible, but with Serbia, I learned more about the country from reading your book than from traveling there myself! I had terrible experiences in Serbia, but reading *The Hidden Europe* made me want to go back and re-experience it. Can you perhaps explain why the Serbs are so completely misunderstood by the world? I ask because after reading your book, I certainly feel like I misunderstood many things.**

Francis Tapon: Whenever we fight a war, we nearly always demonize the people we are fighting. It makes it easier to justify attacking a nation when you tell yourself that rotten things are going on there. The Western media demonized Serbia during the Yugoslav Wars instead of trying to understand them or to explain their point of view.

This doesn't mean Serbia was flawless, but I sought to understand the Serbs.

At the same time, as travelers we have to be careful about drawing broad conclusions based on a few encounters (or many encounters in a small region of the country). Perhaps I was lucky and met a bunch of wonderful Serbs while you met a bunch of jerks. I lived 18 months in the ex-Yugoslav countries so I feel that my assessment is pretty accurate, but I could have been lucky.

**Vagobond: As a writer and traveler, there are a few destinations I keep to myself. I don't want the world to know about them. Sometimes, though, I let people know about a hidden gem here or there. In all your travels in Eastern Europe, did you come across**

**any of these gems you might be able to tell us about?**

Francis Tapon: I loved Kotor, Montenegro. It's a magical place for me.

**Vagobond: Narrow escapes. Anyone who has traveled a bit has had more than a few of these, or else, they probably wouldn't be travelling any longer. What about you? In your travels, can you tell us about one narrow escape?**

Francis Tapon: I went for a 16-mile day hike in Olympic National Park, but ended up getting lost for 3 days. I had no sleeping bag, no shelter, no light, no food. It snowed. I saved my partner's life twice. We both got frostbite and infections.

**Vagobond: The subtitle of *The Hidden Europe* is 'What Eastern Europeans can teach us.' - First of all- when you say 'us' who are you talking about? Secondly - while I found the entire book to be thought provoking, can you perhaps point to three of the most important lessons of it?**

Francis Tapon: "Us" is mainly "us Americans," but Western Europeans don't know much about Eastern Europe either. Even Eastern Europeans don't know much about Eastern Europe! So ultimately "us" is "everyone."

Three lessons:

1. Communism doesn't work. For over 40 years, many countries throughout the world experimented with various flavors of a tightly controlled state - none of them worked. Let's not forget that when people declare that we need a revolution that delivers us a paternalistic government.
2. A simplified tax policy. Most Eastern Europeans have flat taxes. I never met an Estonian who took more than 10 minutes to do their taxes. This helped fuel their growth in the last 20 years.
3. Celebrate depopulation. Eastern Europe is depopulating faster than any other region on Earth. Although many countries are fighting it (by giving incentives to reproduce), a few are accepting it and seeing the benefits: more resources per capita.

**Vagobond: I love that you created a section about 'Eastern**

**Germany' - today it's very easy to forget that it was just twenty years ago Germany was two different countries. There were a few moments in this section where I actually guffawed (Evil Santa and the smell chair in the disco era) - can you tell me your funniest moment in the former East Germany?**

Francis Tapon:When I asked an East German if I could interview him, he agreed to give me 5 minutes and was not pleasant at first. However, in the end, he talked with me an hour, toured me around his city, took me into a church, and dropped me off at a train station in Poland! It's funny how much he changed.

**Vagobond: Turkey - I love it. It probably comes from going to the police and being offered a cup of tea and baklava even though I was in the wrong office - but anyway, I'm curious about your thoughts on the idea that Turkey is forming a sort of 'New Ottoman Empire' and the perception that the Turks are becoming more Islamicized? Also, what's your favorite Turkish destination?**

Francis Tapon:Turkey is just doing what most countries have been doing after WWII: extending its influence through economics and diplomacy rather than brute military and political expansion. If someone wants to call such policies the "New Ottoman Empire," that's fine, but don't expect Turkey to militarily invade other countries--certainly not Europe.

However, just like Latinos have been "invading" the USA, Turks will continue to "invade" Europe through immigration. European xenophobes will continue to resist the Turks, most of whom are not Islam fundamentalists. Most Turks are continuing down the path of secularism--a journey that started nearly 100 years ago. I've only seen western Turkey, but my favorite destination is Istanbul--it's the third biggest city in the world.

**Vagobond: I had an incredible experience in Pernik, Bulgaria where I got to get drunk with a retired communist coal miner who regaled me with stories of the glory of the communist days. You've traveled much more in Bulgaria than I have, do you think there is a danger of nostalgia moving Bulgaria backwards? Also, just curious - what, in your opinion is the best thing in Bulgaria?**

Francis Tapon: Yes, there's a danger that Bulgaria (and Eastern Europe) will move backwards. However, I don't think that will happen. Change must happen to Bulgaria, but few Bulgarians think the solution is to go back to communism or heavy government control. The best thing about Bulgaria is how they shake their head from side-to-side to say "yes" and nod to mean "no."

**Vagobond: What about family? How can you travel for three years? Vagobond readers want to know things like where do you get the funds? Do you suffer from travel fatigue? Do you get lonely?**

Francis Tapon: I worked for four years at Microsoft and Hitachi, lived like a monk, and saved up enough money to travel for years. I describe my travel secrets more in my article about how to travel for years. I don't get fatigued because I take breaks whenever I get tired of traveling. For example, I parked it for 4 months in Tallinn, Estonia and several months in Slovenia and Croatia.

**Vagobond: How about three solid travel tips that people may not have heard before.**

Francis Tapon:

Tip #1: Always carry a tarp and a sleeping bag/pad. It weighs just 2 kg (4.4 pounds), and it liberates you from the pressure and worry of finding a hostel/hotel. It allows you to be spontaneous when you travel.

Tip #2: Consider discreet urban camping. Camp in a city park or in the city's outskirts right at sunset and leave no trace by sunrise.

Tip #3: Always offer cash after you hitchhike. Most drivers won't accept it, but it shows that you're not a freeloader and that you appreciate their help. It's better than a "thank you." Also, when you're a guest at someone's house, shower them with gifts and generous actions. You'll always be invited back.

**Vagobond: One last question. If you disappear, what country should I come looking for you in so we can go drink a few bottles of wine together?**

Francis Tapon: Montenegro. But here's the catch: I've never drunk any alcohol in my life. So let's get guzzle sparkling water instead. :)

## Rolf Potts

If you've thought about or done any long term travel in the age of the internet, chances are you've heard of Rolf Potts. Rolf was blogging about travel for Salon at the dawn of the 2000's, but he is best known for the publication of his book *Vagabonding: An Uncommon Guide to Long Term Travel* in December of 2002. The book struck a chord with the internet generation and became a runaway hit amongst those who had missed the glory days of the hippie trail.

*Vagabonding* is about taking serious time off from your normal life to discover and experience the world on your own terms. With sections on financing your travel time, determining your destination, adjusting to life on the road and handling travel adversity, the book addresses travel as inner development tool rather than travel as something that you simply do.

Like me, Rolf was inspired by Ed Bury's *Vagabonding in Europe and North Africa*. Potts book captured the imagination of a generation that was finding its way on the internet and wondering what the meaning of life truly was. Coming right after the dot com bust and on the eve of the financial crisis in the US and Europe, his book fit the bill for filling the gap between living to work and working to live and offered the opportunity to turn your life into your work through travel.

Since then Potts has piloted a fishing boat 900 miles down the Laotian Mekong, hitchhiked across Eastern Europe, traversed Israel on foot, bicycled across Burma, drove a Land Rover across South America, travelled around the world for six weeks with no luggage or bags of any kind, and had many more adventures.

He published a second book *Marco Polo Didn't Go There: Stories and Revelations from One Decade as a Postmodern Travel Writer* and continues to travel around the world between rest stops at his farmhouse in Kansas and teaching non-fiction writing at Yale University.

I interviewed Rolf for Vagobond.com back in 2012 when he agreed to answer a few questions about life, travel, authenticity and being Rolf

Potts.

**Vagobond: What were you doing career wise before you started blogging for Salon (before the publication of *Vagabonding*)?**

Rolf Potts: My last job before I transitioned into a full-time writing was teaching English in Korea. It was a key job for me, since in addition to earning a decent amount of money for travel, it allowed me to live in and get to know an unfamiliar culture for a couple of years. My two years in Busan wasn't always easy, but it was an essential experience that made me a better traveler down the line.

Before that teaching gig I hadn't been following a single career path -- I worked as a landscaper in Seattle for awhile, and I worked at an outdoor store, selling backpacks and fly-rods, in Kansas. This was all building up to what I really wanted to do -- writing -- and eventually that happened for me.

**Vagobond: My first book was all about living in a van and enjoying time instead of money. I understand your first travels were in a van too. What were some lessons you picked up from living in a van?**

Rolf Potts: I think traveling and living out of a van during my first vagabonding trip taught me some essential lessons about minimalism and keeping things simple. Since I was sleeping in the van most nights, I didn't have a lot of room for extra "stuff", so all I brought were some clothes and camping gear in a couple of laundry baskets. And even the gear I had in those laundry baskets wasn't always necessary -- I quickly learned that the American road provided me with most everything I needed experientially; my gear played a fairly minor role in my most interesting experiences. This was a lesson I applied while packing for my later backpacking trips across Asia, and even my no-baggage journey around the world in 2010.

**Vagobond: In *Vagabonding*, you wrote about the philosophy of long-term travel - has that changed in the decade since then? How has technology changed your philosophy?**

Rolf Potts: I don't think my philosophy of vagabonding has changed --

and in fact I wrote it in such a way that technological and other changes wouldn't ever alter its core message, which is about keeping things simple and seeking one's wealth in time and life-experiences. Those are values that would apply in the 19th century as easily at the 21st. So regardless of what new tools and gadgets arrive to make travel easier, the core principles of vagabonding won't change much.

One interesting thing about new technology -- like social media and smart phones -- is that it is making independent travel a lot easier.

More people are doing it now, I think, because it feels a lot safer and easier and more accessible than it used to. The flipside of this is that the conveniences of travel are more and more making travel an extension of home. In many ways we don't have to psychically leave "home" when we travel -- we can keep in such close contact with our friends, family, and social networks -- and this can diminish the experience of travel to an extent. So much of what is transformative about travel comes from confronting -- and working through -- being lonely and bored and lost. The less we're forced to encounter those little challenges as travelers, the more travel tends to become a consumer experience.

**Vagobond: Do you see any problems with the massive growth of independent and long-term travel? What about the huge growth of tourism?**

Rolf Potts: There will invariably be problems with the growth of any industry, and travel is no exception. There will also be benefits. Indie travelers spend a lot of money in the "mom and pop" economies of faraway places -- which is a good thing -- but the presence of so many travelers can also strain the local culture and environment.

Islands are particularly vulnerable to large influxes of tourists, since scarce resources like water get diverted to tourist needs instead of local ones. I don't think this means travel should be curtailed to these places -- its an important cultural and economic force -- but it does mean that destinations should take care in planning tourist facilities, and travelers should be cognizant of the impacts they bring. In a way I think indie travelers are better equipped than standard vacation tourists to wander in a mindful way, since a vagabonding-style traveler emphasizes going

slow and keeping informed.

**Vagobond: I realize I'm supposed to ask you about the best destination, your favorite country or something like that - but instead, what's your favorite tourist area?**

Rolf Potts: Tourist areas tend to disappoint some travelers -- at least early on in their vagabonding careers -- since the presence of so many tourists at these sites can be depressing and feel less authentic. But over time I've come to appreciate the dynamic of these places, each of which are unique to their own culture, even as they host a crush of visitors during high season. New Yorkers may complain about Times Square, but I think it has a great energy, even after having visited it dozens of times. The Champ de Mars area around the Eiffel Tower is always swarming with tourists and trinket vendors, but you'd have to be a pretty cynical soul not to enjoy a bottle of wine and a picnic there on a summer day with friends. Similarly, I found Machu Picchu in Peru to be utterly amazing, despite all the tourists there. So as much as I like getting off the beaten path when I travel, I still like to cultivate appreciation for these tourist areas.

**Vagobond: What do you miss when you are on the road?**

Rolf Potts: Ever since I got my home in Kansas, one thing I miss most frequently is the view of the prairie from my front deck. I know this might sound like a strange thing to miss, but over the years I've found that part of my enjoyment of faraway places extends from my affection for a single place that I know better than any others. When you find a way to attach yourself to a small part of the world, it can energize the way you see and appreciate other parts of the world. I have literally spent years away from my home in Kansas, but having that home gives me perspective and helps me appreciate all the other places I discover and experience in more far-flung parts of the world.

**Vagobond: Do you think 'staged authenticity' is destroying the authentic travel experience? Is the world being Disneyfied?**

Rolf Potts: Interestingly enough, I think there's something weirdly authentic and satisfying in "staged authenticity," when local cultures

"perform" a more colorful version of their own identity for visiting tourists. Even though it's this absurd fake charade, it says a lot about how Westerners long for a kind of authenticity they feel they have lost, while at the same time reminding host cultures about certain aspects of their own traditions. Staged authenticity will always exist, to some extent (I'd wager it existed in some form when the ancient Romans visited Egypt), but it transforms in different ways in different places. Some cultures, like the Embera in Panama, have managed to use staged authenticity in the face of tourists not just to empower themselves economically, but to redefine their own sense of identity and pride. It's a dynamic process, like all aspects of global culture, and no sooner do you mock a thing like "staged authenticity" than you'll begin to see it in surprising new ways.

**Vagobond: Speaking of authentic, how would you recommend that today's travelers find a more authentic experience in their travels?**

Rolf Potts: The world is chock full of authenticity; it is literally everywhere, if one would just slow down and endeavor to experience it. It's also a phenomenon that has a lot of nuance, and what at first might seem to be inauthentic -- an Ethiopian Mursi tribesmen wearing Nikes, for example -- might end up being a very authentic part of how that culture is living today. So the best advice I can give to travelers is to simply be where you are. Turn off your smartphone, stop chattering with your companions, leave your digital camera in your pack: Stop, look, wait, breathe in; don't overanalyze. It's all authentic in its own way.

## Melissa Ruttanai

The world is filled with extraordinary vagabonds and you have probably not heard of most of them. From time to time, while writing for Vagobond.com, I would meet interesting travelers and interview them. Melissa Ruttanai was one of them. After this interview she contributed articles to Vagobond.com for several years.

### **Vagobond: What's your personal travel philosophy?**

Melissa Ruttanai: After 32 years of following the prescribed norm of accelerated high school courses, dual majors in university, and all the hoops required to earn a post-baccalaureate degree in Education, I was simply tired of doing what "I was supposed to do". Get a house? Have some kids? Carry a mortgage for 30 years?

None of that interested me. So when I quit my job and sold off everything I owned, I made a promise to follow what I believed to be right, what felt good for my own spirit.

As a traveling nomad, I believe that travel is about going beyond the limits in which you were born: learn a new language, make friends across the planet, and especially to help others see the innate value of travel. Travel is a state of mind, a noun, and a verb. It's what my husband and I have built our lives around. And when we have the house, kids, and mortgage; travel will still be in our lives.

### **Vagobond: How many countries have you visited?**

Melissa Ruttanai: As of now, the US, Canada, Mexico, Costa Rica, The Dominican Republic, Aruba, Ecuador, Peru, England, Greece, Austria, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Czech Republic, Japan, S. Korea, Singapore, Australia, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam (23)

### **Vagobond: What made you start to travel?**

Melissa Ruttanai: My parents had a touch of the travel bug. When I was a kid, they'd pack our station wagon full of sleeping bags, coolers, and suitcases for crazy East Coast and cross-country road trips. We went to Hershey Park, Disney, Grand Canyon, and Niagara Falls—all on a budget. Then every 2-3 years, we'd have our big summer trips to Thailand where we'd spend a month visiting my grandparents and relatives in the old country.

My extensive backpacking trips began after university. Neil (my husband) and I taught English in Japan which was a fantastic experience that introduced us to expatriate living. With our earnings in Japanese yen, we were able to travel for 4 months afterwards.

### **Vagobond: What's your scariest travel moment?**

Melissa Ruttanai: Before my final semester at Rutgers University where I was studying for my master degree in education, Neil and I went to Mexico. While on the Yucatan Peninsula we decided to snorkel in underwater cenotes or caves. The flooded tunnels are unlit with pointed stalactites and stalagmites jabbing into the murky waters. I'm not a good snorkeler and also suffer from a touch of claustrophobia. The walls seemed to squeeze in and then the strap of my camera caught on a rock skewer. Panicking, I slammed my head into the rock ceiling. My mask flooded and water streamed into my mouthpiece. As I yanked the strap harder and harder, our guide continued further and further into the tunnel. And his small torch began to recede in the darkness. Finally, I jerked my arm so hard that the tether snapped and my camera sank 15 feet below me.

I never swam so fast in my life to catch up.

### **Vagobond: What's your funniest travel moment?**

Melissa Ruttanai: 5am, Seoul, South Korea. Neil and I were waiting for a train to take us to the airport. The station was busy with commuters headed to work, backpackers looking for trains, and all-night partiers shuffling home with walking hangovers.

Standing at the entrance to a narrow hallway that led to the bathroom, we saw two young men stumble out, both obviously had been drinking

all night. When they bumped into each other, they immediately started fighting with lazy, drunken fists.

They slammed each other against the wall and blocked anyone who wanted to get down the hall.

Then, an older gentleman emerged from the bathroom. His silk tie lay flat against his pressed shirt and suit. When he spotted the two brawling drunks, the hallway turned into a crazed scene from a Kung-Fu movie. The businessman grabbed both youngsters by the back of their heads and bashed them together. Both slumped to the ground. Picking up one by the scruff of his neck, he started pounding his fists into the kid's face, finishing him off with a slap that sent him back to the ground. At that second the other drunk managed to scramble to his feet. Turning with the smoothness of a Shaolin priest, the man backhanded him and followed with a fist to the gut. The drunk spluttered against the wall and the businessman chastised both with one wrinkled finger for making a scene in front of tourists.

Both youths on the floor and fight over, the champion calmly smoothed his suit, straightened his tie, and continued on his way to the trains with his suitcase held tight. It was the funniest fight ever.

**Vagobond: What's your greatest adventure?**

Melissa Ruttanai: I was lucky enough to see the Galapagos Islands on the M/V Evolution's 8-day cruise that zigzagged the equator. The wildlife is amazing there. I swam with hammerhead sharks, penguins, sea turtles, and sea lions. Once more I tried cave snorkeling but this time my guide held my hand and helped me.

**Vagobond: What's your dream destination/vacation/trip?**

Melissa Ruttanai: The snarky, Sci-Fi kid inside me, says: The Moon, but in all seriousness, I'd love to receive a writer's grant to Alaska or California in the summertime where I can live in a cozy cottage with Neil, a rack of Woodford Reserve Bourbon, and my Macbook.

**Vagobond: Are you a traveler or a tourist? What's the difference?**

Melissa Ruttanai: Traveler, no doubt.

For me, travel is about learning and experience. I want to really get to know a city, have coffee in local cafes, dine with locals, converse in the indigenous language (or try to), visit little-known museums, and eat authentic meals made by someone's nana. Traveling is about taking it slow and enjoying what's around you, not rushing from one sight to the next as you work through a checklist of must-see things.

Travel is both simple and profound. It's about micro-moments like when I looked up at fireworks over the Plaza de Armas at midnight on New Year's Eve, and I thought: Dang, I'm in Cusco!

### **Vagobond: What's a great travel tip most people don't know?**

Melissa Ruttanai: Neil and I have not paid for any international flights in over 3 years, in which time we have visited Japan, Thailand, Italy, Ecuador, and Peru. As of this week, we've already booked our next flights, a roundtrip ticket from Lima, Peru to New York with a lovely stopover in San Jose, California. We've saved over US\$4000 each because we travel via Star Alliance and have credit cards that feed directly (one mile per dollar spent) into our United Mileage Plus Accounts.

The Tip: Always call the airline company and make your reservations directly even if there is a fee. Most people don't know that airline tickets are structured for inclusive stopovers. So if you want to go from New York to Shanghai, you can weave in a nice 2 weeks in Hawaii along the way.

The Trick: Buy necessities with the cards and pay the balance in full at the end of each month. Even after our tickets to New York, we still have a combined 60,000 miles that are dog-eared for a trip to Europe in late July or August..

## Steve Jermanok

When you visit Steve Jermanok's website, on the front page, you find this description:

An insatiable curiosity coupled with a passion for people, places, culture, and history has compelled me to visit the far-flung corners of the globe in search of answers. Or kept me planted in my desk chair for weeks delving into the far from obvious insecurities a protagonist must overcome to reach his or her dreams. Seeking clarity in a calamitous world is the job of the writer. Thanks for checking in.

The words are fitting for the man. Understated, interesting and filled with the promise of adventure. Steve was a stock broker until the mid-1990's when he realized it was a dead end job (literally as he saw a man fall past his high rise window to his death) and then embarked upon a new career as a travel journalist. Since then he has written hundreds of articles, visited more than 60 countries, authored guidebooks, key noted tourism conventions, and lectured at universities. My interview with Steve Jermanok for Vagobond.com made me feel both humbled and refueled a lust for new adventures. I hope you enjoy it too.

**Vagobond: I love the story of how you became a travel writer. Your story of sudden realization about the life sucking nature of the corporate world and then your decision to leave it strike me as nothing short of awesome. Can you tell Vagobond readers about it? Was it the best decision of your life?**

Steve Jermanok: The late 80s was a time of excess in New York. I'd often go down to Wall Street for business lunches and we wouldn't leave the restaurant until 8 or 9 pm in the evening. When my boss started getting into coke, coming back from the bathroom with a white line on his lip, I knew that I had to get out of there or I'd probably be dead before I was 30. I booked a flight on Air New Zealand, stopping at 12 different stops on the way to Sydney and never looked back. I was fortunate to get my midlife crisis over at 25. I think they actually call it a quarter-life crisis these days.

**Vagobond: You've written a huge number of travel articles for a wide variety of publications - which articles stand out the clearest in your memory?**

Steve Jermanok: Ask me to remember the pearly white sands of a Hawaiian beach, a sunset in Santorini, or a hot-air balloon ride over the Masai Mara and I would have a hard time. It's the mishaps that you remember vividly. In the late 90s, I was asked by *Men's Journal* to hike a portion of the Desert Trail, a trail that snakes from Mexico in the south to Oregon in the north, with one of the founders of the magazine.

I chose a five-day trek through the Mojave Desert on the California/Nevada border. I had to backpack in with over 40 pounds of water, food, tent, and sleeping bag. It didn't help that I borrowed a former WWII army pack from my buddy's father that was digging into my shoulders. I had blisters on my feet by the end of day two. Day three was sweltering, well over 100 degrees Fahrenheit. I took out my trusty microcassette recorder to dictate some notes and the tape had melted. That was the last time I used a cassette recorder on a trip. By the end of the trip, I was cramping and couldn't wait to get back to Vegas, soak in a hot tub, and get on my flight back home.

Unfortunately, there was a blizzard back in Boston. I was forced to watch Siegfried and Roy types of shows in Vegas the next four nights.

**Vagobond: Are there any articles that you wish you would have written, but haven't yet? Any that you wish you hadn't of written?**

Steve Jermanok: The articles I love most have a central character, like cocktail writer Wayne Curtis leading me around the bars of New Orleans in search of pre-Prohibition era drinks. When I speak to students studying writing at the universities in Boston, I always note that travel writing has far more in common with fiction than other forms of journalism. You need great characters, sharp dialogue, colorful description of the scenery, and hopefully some humor. That said, there are a lot of great characters around the world I'd like to meet.

The one article I wish I didn't write was a travel story for The Boston

Globe on my favorite swimming holes on Cape Cod. These are coveted ponds that locals didn't appreciate me divulging. Sure, there are over 300 kettle ponds on the Cape and I was only discussing ten of those beauties, but it was disrespectful of the locals on the Cape who call it home.

**Vagobond: How has the world of the travel writer changed since you began? Can you suggest a couple of positive and a couple of negative?**

Steve Jermanok: When I started in travel writing, I would type up a pitch letter and send it with a self-addressed stamped envelope to a publisher. Then I would head to the mailbox and pick up my stack of rejection letters each day. For some masochistic reason, I still have a thick file of rejection letters and pass them around to journalism students who think they want to give freelance writing a shot. You need to develop a tough hide and not be so sensitive about rejection.

These days, I pitch my editors via email and wait for a response. What I love about travel writing currently is the ability to write about anything I want via a blog or tweet. I find it incredibly liberating, not having to wait for an editor to say yea or nay to write about a subject that interests me. I just jumped into travel consulting with my wife, an accredited travel agent. That way, if people in this new world of A.D.D. don't have the time to read my stories, I can still point them in the right direction. This stems from a trip to the Marquesas Islands in French Polynesia. I had just returned from a freighter cruise trip on the Aranui, spending two glorious weeks looking in awe at these verdant and jagged islands that rise precipitously from the ocean waters. So incredibly picturesque are these islands that Herman Melville jumped ship here and wrote his first novel and Paul Gauguin would live out his final days in Eden. Just before I left French Polynesia, I met this honeymoon couple in the citified island of Tahiti who had just spent their past week at an overpriced hotel. I felt like smacking them. Instead, I'm now helping people avoid that mistake.

**Vagobond: More than 60 countries since you left that Manhattan office - do you have any favorites? What about least favorite destinations?**

Steve Jermanok: Just like my favorite stories revolve around intriguing characters, my favorite places in the world contain locals that are incredibly welcoming (so why, you ask, do I live in Boston where people refer to the local drivers as Massholes). In Fiji, where in the days of yore they dined on my ancestors, I've had a Fijian chief cook me a feast at his hut and serve the numbing kava drink. I've returned to Kenya often, first wanting to see the animals on safari, now wanting to visit friends I've made in Nairobi. New Zealanders not only picked me up when I was hitchhiking, but then took me to their homes for dinner and a night's sleep. In Israel, I loved having hummus and fuul with taxi drivers in the old Jaffa section of Tel Aviv. In Bali, I was fortunate to be invited to a funeral and really understand the powerful spirituality that resonates on this island. In Mae Hong San, I smoked opium with a leper, who mentioned that he wasn't contagious. Those are the memories I cherish.

**Vagobond: Tourists and travellers - are they the same thing with different packaging?**

Steve Jermanok: I tell travelers that even with a limited amount of time, you can still have an authentic experience. Just leave the shyness and the cool machismo vibe back home. Jump into each culture with a vengeance, tasting the foods, learning their indigenous culture, and yes, meeting the people. Don't be afraid to travel alone. You'll meet people from around the world that will be your friends throughout life. After entering a mud hut to meet the many wives of a Maasai warrior on the Tanzania/Kenya border, he asked if I'm on Facebook. Yeah, I said I'm on Facebook. Now he's a Facebook friend making comments about my mundane life, and I love it. The world's a far smaller place than you think.

## Tom Brosnahan

I was introduced to Tom's work through his book *Turkey: Bright Sun, Strong Tea* (if you haven't read it, I recommend it - fun, informative and a great travel read) - his book led me to find his incredible website Turkey Travel Planner (which, by the way is the most important resource you will find if you plan on taking a trip to Turkey).

Tom is an old school travel writer and guide book author - the kind that went to the destination, walked all the streets, drew the map if there wasn't one, learned the language, and checked all the prices - and what is incredibly cool, is that he is also a pioneer of the new school of travel writing and online guides.

Here are some excerpts from his bio at the site :

Tom Brosnahan is a veteran guidebook author, travel writer and photographer, and consultant on travel information to companies and government agencies. He has written over 40 guidebooks for Berlitz, Frommer's and Lonely Planet covering Belize, Canada, Egypt, England, France, Guatemala, Israel, Mexico, Morocco, New England, Tunisia and Turkey, with nearly four million copies in print worldwide in more than 10 languages. He's also written a memoir about Turkey, travel, and travel writing: *Turkey: Bright Sun, Strong Tea*.

He has been a Contributing Editor to Arthur Frommer's Budget Travel magazine, and has had many articles and photographs published in leading periodicals including Travel and Leisure, The New York Times, theDaily Telegraph (London), Chicago Tribune, New York Daily News, BBC World, Journeys, Odyssey, Travel Life, and TWA Ambassador.

He is the founder of the Travel Info Exchange and Turkey Travel Planner websites, and many more travel resource sites. Tom has appeared on Good Morning America, NPR's Talk of the Nation, Anthem, The Connection, and on the Travel Channel and has lectured at the Smithsonian Institution, the Cooper-Hewitt

National Museum of Design, the American Turkish Council, and other organizations.

He is a member of the Society of American Travel Writers and a co-founder and faculty member emeritus of the SATW Institute for Travel Writing and Photography. He lives in Concord, Massachusetts, with his wife Jane A Fisher.

I interviewed Tom for Vagobond.com in 2012.

**Vagobond: You've worked with some of the biggest names in travel, in your opinion, what are some of the major pitfalls that lurk waiting for a travel writer?**

Tom Brosnahan: The biggest is not judging a project accurately. Too many travel writers end up losing money and subsidizing publishers because they aren't careful estimating the time and work in a project, and determining if it will be profitable.

**Vagobond: In *Bright Sun, Strong Tea*, I remember laughing out loud when the neighbor girl in Izmir tried to corner you for a smooch - what other dangers have you narrowly avoided in your travels?**

Tom Brosnahan: I play it safe—I'm not a war correspondent! But I've been chased by suspected terrorists in eastern Turkey, had rocks thrown at my car in Palestine, heard bombs go off in Jerusalem, been shaken down by guerillas in Chiapas, been in traffic accidents in Istanbul and Bangkok. But really, most travel is safe. Scary headlines rarely portray the situation each traveler will encounter, so I go in slow, and decide how far I can go safely.

**Vagobond: There's no arguing that travel has changed dramatically since the dawn of the information age - what are some of the biggest changes you've noticed, both for the positive and for the negative?**

Tom Brosnahan: Guidebooks have been used—and useful—since Roman times, but it can take up to a year to publish and distribute a paper guidebook, and with the internet I can publish my work

immediately, to the entire world, for next to nothing, forever! It's apotheosis for a travel writer. Travelers now have far more, and better information than ever before, and that's good for everyone. If there's a negative, it's that there's simply too much information. Finding what you want can be tedious.

**Vagobond: You and I share a love of Turkey - at the moment there are some pretty big changes going on in Turkish society - where do you think those changes will lead?**

Tom Brosnahan: Turkey's modern history is amazing: a torpid medieval empire remade into a vibrant modern free-enterprise democracy in less than a century. Turkey is now the economic powerhouse of the eastern Mediterranean, and a living example of democracy for other countries in the region. Especially in the past 20 years the change has been bewildering for many Turks. A young woman whose grandmother may have been in a harem can now pilot a jetliner. Hardscrabble life on the farm has yielded to glitzy ultra modern shopping malls. Such rapid change is difficult for people to absorb, but greater education, information and prosperity are forces for peace.

**Vagobond: Istanbul feels like my second home, but you've spent a lot more time there than I have - can you toss some hidden destinations/experiences my way that I may have missed?**

Tom Brosnahan: Visit the imperial 'kasr's, tiny palaces built for the sultan's excursions. Get yourself invited to the "sema" (religious observance) of a dervish order (and not just the Mevlevi, or whirling, dervishes). Seek out the Roman aqueducts in the forests west and north of Istanbul. Witness the opening of the Galata Bridge in the middle of the night. Climb to the top of a minaret for the view.

**Vagobond: Some of my Turkish friends have a particular form of national profiling - when they look at an American - they tend to just see the carpet they expect them to buy. What are some other 'profiles' you've encountered of both Americans on one side and Turks on the other?**

Tom Brosnahan: Some years ago, Turkish tourist guides were asked by

a major newspaper to describe each national type. It was hilarious:

Americans: friendly, interested, big tippers

Arab: three good meals daily and nothing else matters

British: scorpions in their pockets—you'll never get a tip

German: so well informed, they'll have to show you they know more than you do. And if there's no beer there, don't even stop the bus.

Israeli: always drama, dispute, tempest in a teacup

**Vagobond: You've traveled to a lot of other places than Turkey - could you share some highlights with our readers?**

Tom Brosnahan: I wrote for decades on Mexico & Central America. I'd drive from Boston and put 11,000 miles on the car. Mexico alone has the topographic, ethnic and linguistic diversity of all of Europe. Egypt: I hadn't planned to go there, then I was asked by Berlitz to write a guide, now I believe every traveler must see Egypt. Norway: beautiful, friendly, peaceful. Expensive but worth it. If the world ever needs a capital city, it had better be Paris. As for France, it's actually a whole bunch of little countries sharing a common border. Finally, I love New England. Did you know we have dozens of wineries here?

**Vagobond: What are three pieces of advice for travelers that are often overlooked?**

Tom Brosnahan:

First: Cheap or expensive? Whether it's a hotel, a meal, a guided tour, or a souvenir, the devil is in the details. Be sure you're comparing the same things. A \$100 hotel room in Istanbul includes all taxes and service charges, and a big buffet breakfast. A \$100 hotel room in New York includes none of these, and taxes can add 17% to your bill. A \$35 meal in Boston will be subject to 5.5% tax and 15% to 20% tip. A \$35 meal in Paris costs exactly that.

Second: Safe or dangerous? Look more closely, and judge accordingly. The most horrendous terrorist attacks in recent times took place not in Kabul or Beirut or Cairo, but in New York City, London and Madrid.

Third: Concentrate on transportation: it may not be what you're used to. It may be better to take a bus than a flight or rental car. It may be much farther than you think. Transport could be one of your greatest costs, overall.

**Vagobond: It seems that you've adopted the web as your primary 'publisher'. What were some of the factors that led to this? Was it a positive move? Do you think there is a future in writing for print?**

Tom Brosnahan: I did well with guidebooks for 35 years, but then the pay went down while the work and responsibility went up. It was clear those trends would continue. It was also clear the web was the information medium of the future: immediate publication, worldwide, virtually for free.

It has worked far better than I imagined. Instead of 75,000 readers in dozen countries per year I have nearly 7 million readers in 235 countries. And I'm earning far more than I ever did with print.

The paper codex ("book") has been a useful medium since Gutenberg and will continue to be useful in a smaller way. But writing for print has little future. The publishers think they need to keep all the money.

**Vagobond: What's the best way for a travel writer to figure out what their audience is looking for?**

Tom Brosnahan: Be in contact with them. Ask for comments. Set up an online forum. Talk to them on the road. Explore the statistics from your web presence. There will be surprises.

## Dave Stamboulis

Dave Stamboulis has always been a traveller. Born in Greece, raised in Berkeley and on the road. He has been taking pictures and notes for most of his life. He rode his bicycle around the world and his narrative of that trip *Odysseus Last Stand* won the Silver Medal from the Society of American Travel Writers. Dave lives in Thailand. His books, articles and photos will blow your mind when you check them out at [DaveStamboulis.com](http://DaveStamboulis.com) or at [Flickr.com/photos/davestamboulis](http://Flickr.com/photos/davestamboulis)

I interviewed Dave for [Vagobond.com](http://Vagobond.com) in 2011. We drank mint tea in the old medina of Fez, Morocco.

**Vagobond: What's your first memory of wanting to travel? What about the first time you realized you wanted to capture the world on your camera?**

Dave Stamboulis: I can't say I really have much of a first memory of wanting to travel, probably because my parents took me traveling from a young age. My mother always had a great story about me that I thought explained it all. When we crossed from Greece to the US a year after I was born, the boat we were on ran into very rough seas. All the passengers were lying inside, all prone and sick as dogs. But I was out on deck crawling around. I guess it was a sign of things to come!

**Vagobond: On your website, there is a great quote by Rudyard Kipling "There are basically two types of men in the world. Those who stay at home, and those who don't." What's the hardest part of being one of those who don't?**

Dave Stamboulis: The hardest part of being a constant traveler is missing the time and energy necessary to put into relationships at home. Close to that would be a few other things, such as people, even friends, being jealous of your lifestyle, and subsequently dealing with those feelings, and also the fact that travel, when it becomes a lifestyle and living, is no longer exactly the fantasy and pleasure cruise that it once was.

**Vagobond: Riding your bike around the world is one hell of a way to break into travel writing - what was the most difficult part of that journey?**

Dave Stamboulis: The most difficult part of riding a bicycle around the world was actually finishing at the end. I never intended to spend seven years wandering when I set out, it just happened. And in year six, riding across Central Asia as winter set in, with bursitis in my knee and endless days of frigid frozen sleet out on the road, I could find nothing enjoyable about what I was doing. In every way I wanted to stop, but I was pretty dedicated to the finish line at this point, so I put my head down and ground it out.

**Vagobond: Did you ever expect that *Odysseus Last Stand* would get the acclaim and praise that it did? How much of that was part of your vision for it?**

Dave Stamboulis: I had absolutely ZERO idea that *Odysseus* would do as well as it did, and basically launch my career as a travel writer and photographer. I basically wrote the book because when I returned home, I wanted to figure out what had happened to me and to somehow gracefully lay seven years of travel to a peaceful rest. Further on, I just wanted to share my adventures with friends and family. Then, once I had a 130,000 word manuscript that took over two years to write and edit, I figured it wasn't going to be much of an endeavor if it just sat on a shelf taking in dust. In retrospect, I did put a huge amount of time and energy into it, and I researched and followed all of the proper steps in trying to become a first time publisher, and I guess it paid off. But I never expected it to do as well as it did.

**Vagobond: Are you a goal setter? How much planning do you do to get your trips to go the way you want them to?**

Dave Stamboulis: I am a goal setter, but my goals are more like whims or dreams that aren't necessarily overly concrete. I finished a cross country US bicycle trip that changed me quite significantly, and after that I wondered what could be next. A world trip came to mind, but the only real goals or aims of the trip at the time were to get to Tibet, India, and across the Himalayas, places I'd always wanted to go to. Once I got to

Japan and started saving a lot of money working, then the planning got a bit more concrete, but most of that was based around weather patterns, monsoons, hot and cold seasons, and trying to avoid extremes wherever possible.

**Vagobond: On a related note, how do you start your day? Do you have morning rituals?**

Dave Stamboulis: I guess I have always had morning rituals. I did yoga for many years, I did Zen meditation for a spell. While traveling, starting the day at a cafe, drinking a good cup of coffee and writing my notes became something to cherish. These days, being based in Bangkok, I usually get up and watch an NBA basketball game online in the early morning while having my coffee! (Being a lifelong basketball fan and having the night games come on in the early a.m. here is a great way I find to warm up the day before I start working.)

**Vagobond: I was in Bangkok back in 2001 - it was obviously on the rise and from what I've heard, is now one of the most comfortable cities in Southeast Asia. What challenges do you face living there?**

Dave Stamboulis: Bangkok, in 2011, is probably 100 times more comfortable to live in than 10 years ago. I live 5 minutes from the Skytrain, so I virtually never deal with the infamous traffic, my nearby mega-supermarkets stock products from around the world, and I can find just about any kind of camera or computer gear that I need for work at reasonable prices. On the other hand, the Thailand that I fell in love with, the Thailand where people never honked their horns, smiled all the time, and just took it real easy, has drastically changed. It has become far more like the developed world in terms of stress, crime, greed, and focused on money rather than on anything else, and this is a very sad thing in my opinion. Also, given the decline of the dollar along with inflation, Bangkok is no longer the bargain paradise that it once was.

**Vagobond: Back to that Kipling quote - what about family life? How does a man who goes build relationships? Or does he?**

Dave Stamboulis: It is very difficult to sustain intimate relationships as a road junkie. I have had my share over the years, and have even cut

down on my trips and time away during the times I have had steady companions. But I think it is tough to share the lifestyle, and probably the only way I think it really works is if you end up with someone who is in a similar line of work or way of thinking, perhaps another writer or photographer. I saw a documentary recently about Lemmy, the zany singer of Motorhead, and he was basically saying that as a touring rock star, there was just no way a relationship with anyone other than another musician was going to work out, and I think that is somewhat true. Artists tend to be rather committed to their passions, often at the expense of partners and friends in their lives.

**Vagobond: Can you offer three travel tips that Vagobond readers may not have heard before?**

Dave Stamboulis: First, as I have gotten older and more "comfortable and convenient" I have resolved to take myself out of my comfort element at least once a year, it usually is rather life changing and reaffirming to go get on a rustbucket bus on a potholed road in the middle of nowhere with few amenities. It is humbling and reminds oneself just what real travel is all about.

Second. Try going precisely to the places that don't interest you. Years ago I didn't have any strong draw to spending time in Africa, as opposed to Asia or S. America, whereas now, for me, Africa is somewhat the last great place to adventure in.

Third: I think it is pretty important to combine some sort of project or focus with just a relaxing escape. I actually no longer really enjoy the "motion" part of travel. Too many hours on bad buses in bad hotels eating bad food without any of the comforts of home. But going on trips with the purpose of taking photos and gathering material for articles, it gives me a focus and gets me through those bad moments.

Finally, I am sure this has been said, but I can't stress the importance of it: TRUST PEOPLE. 99% of the people in the world are good, and if you open yourself up to them, you will be rewarded with amazing kindnesses and great memories.

**Vagobond: Your piece on the Kazakh Eagle Hunters was the kind of**

**travel piece that I used to eat up when I was a kid. I would dig through 80 years of my grandmother's National Geographics to find stories like that - what are some of your other awesome adventures?**

Dave Stamboulis: Probably the best adventures to me involve a bit of physical hardship. In Mongolia, it might have been the extremes of temperatures and landscape, a million miles removed from home in a harsh landscape with no amenities.

One of my most outstanding adventures was a crossing of the back side of the polar ice cap in Fitzroy National Park in Argentinian Patagonia. I was with a climbing friend and we had finished several months of trekking and climbing throughout S. America and I was really spent and ready to go to Buenos Aires to sit in cafes and read books. And my friend basically pressured me to do this final trip, which involved slogging huge amounts of gear across highly crevassed ice completely away from civilization. The trip was very hard, but the scenery, solitude, and sense of adventure was enormous.

**Vagobond: I'm not going to ask you how many countries you've been to or which one is your favorite - instead, if aliens appeared and told you that you had to spend the rest of your life in just one place (let's assume it has to be on Planet Earth) - where would you pick?**

Dave Stamboulis: Put it this way, for most of my life, I always thought of places in the world to be a bit like stations on a train journey. Some stations merited getting off and staying in, some worth more time than others, but eventually, one would have to get back on the train and enjoy the ride. Well, Thailand changed that for me. This was the first place I ever said to myself, "I will die here," meaning it as a place I felt based in and very at home. The other place in the world I have a very strong connection to is Nepal. I spent several years living there, teaching there, cycling and climbing there. I loved the people, the culture, the landscape. I went back for the first time in twelve years a few years ago, and actually had as much of an enjoyable time as the first time. The mix of friendly people along with the Himalayan landscape and culture is something I love.

### **Vagobond: What does the future hold for Dave Stamboulis?**

Dave Stamboulis: The future? Given continued decent health, I am sure I will do more of the same, getting out and seeing the world, and trying to keep an open and fresh mind. On the one hand, it is horrible to go back to places that were paradises 20 years ago and see them destroyed by tourism and development greed, yet on the other hand, travel exposes one on a daily basis to lots of wonderful human interest stories, far more hopeful than the garbage we tend to read and be spoon fed on a daily basis on the internet, newspaper, and television.

## Anil Polat

Anil Polat, aka Fox Nomad, is one of the best known of a special breed of tech-nomads who travels perpetually with tech gear. His popular blog FoxNomad.com tends to focus on not only getting more out of your travels, but also getting more out of your technology while you are on the road. If you have questions about technology (like how to bypass a YouTube ban or use proxy servers in heavily censored countries) Anil is the guy you should turn to.

In 2011, we met up in Istanbul along with Derek Baron aka Wandering Earl. The three of us had a wander through the Sultan Ahmet area and afterwards, I had the chance to interview him for Vagobond.com in 2011. While the tech mentioned in this interview is long outdated, the ideas are not.

### **Vagobond: Where are you from? What's your family background?**

Anil Polat: I'm from Turkey but spent much of my childhood moving back and forth between the US and Turkey with my journalist parents.

### **Vagobond: What got you into travel? What got you into technology? How did you come to mix the two so well?**

Anil Polat: I guess the travel comes from my parents! Aside from the physical movement, we were always talking about world events, politics, and it gave me a global perspective. Travel indulges my curiosity about humanity and what makes us ultimately human. As for technology, I've always been a nerd and playing with computers, and programming is easy to do growing up when you don't have too many friends to play with :) I was also very fortunate to have an uncle who helped guide my natural curiosity toward technology.

And finally, I can't discount my love of Star Trek as a kid and now. If I could have a dream job it would be as science officer on a star ship. Being a hacker and full-time traveler are the closest I can get for now...but I'm still holding out hope ;)

**Vagobond: Do you make your living strictly from travel? The web?**

Anil Polat: Yes and yes. I make a living by selling advertising on my websites and my ebooks primarily but don't limit myself.

**Vagobond: What's the gadget you won't travel without? What's a gadget you'd like to try out?**

Anil Polat: I travel with everything I own, which for me is a lot of gadgets :) The next major gadget I'll buy is likely the new iPad, whenever it comes out to replace the second backup laptop (Dell Mini 10v) I carry now.

**Vagobond: What's your personal travel philosophy?**

Anil Polat: Hmm, I'm not sure I have one. I suppose keep an open mind and be adaptable would be my general guidelines.

**Vagobond: How many countries have you visited? Any countries you have no desire to visit?**

Anil Polat: I've visited almost 50 countries now and want to see them all. In the past, some of the ones I've been least interested in have turned out to be the most memorable so I've learned not to make travel conclusions without testing my hypotheses.

**Vagobond: What are your top three world cities? Since you are based in the US, which city strikes you as the best there?**

Anil Polat: My favorite three begins with Istanbul, which is where I'd like to end up when this phase of my travels is over. After that I've got many favorites, it's hard to choose but some recent ones have been Granada, Spain and Cairo, Egypt. My favorite city in the US is Seattle.

**Vagobond: What's your funniest travel moment?**

Anil Polat: One that immediately comes to mind is from my trip to Iraq with Wandering Earl (<http://www.wanderingearl.com/>). While making our

way through a heavily guarded check point we came across an American soldier who was bewildered that anyone would want to travel there. His exact words were in heavy Texas accent, "Holy sh\*t man, what the hell are you doing here!?"

**Vagobond: Are you a traveler or a tourist or something else? What's the difference if there is one.**

Anil Polat: I don't see the difference. I'm just a guy who travels and writes about it for a living. Traveler sounds cooler but I'm not going to kid myself.

**Vagobond: What's a great travel tip most people don't know?**

Anil Polat: Traveling isn't that hard or expensive. Get specific on where you want to go and what you want to do - stir - then add in dash of planning, put in an oven of effort, wait a bit and you'll have yourself a trip.

## Barbara Weibel

Barbara Weibel is one of my favorite travel bloggers. On her blog *Hole in the Donut*, Barbara puts the focus on writing incredible posts with sometimes startling insights into the world of travel and culture. On top of that, she is one of the most positive people out there. Read on and Barbara will soon be one of your favorites as well.

I interviewed her for Vagobond.com back in 2012. We had both been selected for inclusion in a Lonely Planet book called *Around the World with Forty Bloggers*.

**Vagobond: Barbara - I love your blog. Everything from the symbolism of the name (full on the outside, empty in the middle in reference to your former careers - "solid on the outside, empty on the inside") to your amazing photography and insights into the people and places you travel. All of this made me wonder - did you have a background in anthropology?**

Barbara Weibel: Interesting that you should ask that. The short answer is no, however I've always thought that if I could do life over and choose another career, I'd go into a science field. I've been a rockhound ever since I was old enough to pick up stones and still comb through mine tailings whenever possible, so I consider myself an amateur geologist. I'm also fascinated by culture and could easily have been an anthropologist or archeologist. Frankly, I've got enough knowledge to be dangerous but I also have an insatiable curiosity; it's a great combination for a writer.

**Vagobond: You travel to a lot of off the beaten path places as a solo female traveler. What kind of challenges do you face in that regard?**

Barbara Weibel: To date, I really haven't faced any major challenges that specifically have to do with being female. I suspect that my age may be a factor in that regard, as these days I seem to garner more respect than I did as a young female traveler (when I was younger I had to fend off unwanted attention from men, but that's not much of a problem any

more). Of course, I haven't traveled to any of the countries where women are severely oppressed, such as not being allowed to drive or go out in public alone. It's probably a good thing I haven't; I have little patience for that kind of thing and I'd probably push the boundaries and end up in trouble. I also think that being an experienced traveler makes a big difference. With years of perpetual travel under my belt, I have certain routines that serve me well and I've learned to never ignore my gut. If I feel like I'm in danger or need to leave a place, I do so; if I feel a certain person is not trustworthy, I extract myself from the situation immediately, even if it means being rude. But having said that, I also don't travel in fear. Most people are good and will bend over backwards to help, and I've learned to trust my instincts.

**Vagobond: You stay a minimum of a month in your chosen destinations. Can you explain why?**

Barbara Weibel: When I originally fled corporate life to pursue my passions for travel, writing, and photography, I'd just recovered from a serious illness. I thought I might die without getting to do all the things I'd always dreamed about. I promised myself that, if I recovered, I'd walk away from corporate life and backpack around the world. I did eventually recover and set out on a six-month round-the-world trip, determined to see as many places on my travel wish list as possible; as a result, I crammed 16 countries into six months. Gradually, I realized that I was fascinated by culture and by the fact that, despite differences in dress, traditions, food and religion, people all over the world are all more similar than we are different. As my writing delved more deeply into cultural issues, I found myself staying longer in each place in order to immerse in the local scene. At the same time, I discovered that I enjoyed my travels much more when I formed a local connection.

**Vagobond: I remember when you wrote about holding the Dalai Lama's hand - are you a Buddhist?**

Barbara Weibel: I've been a "seeker" all my life and have read fairly extensively about most religious and spiritual traditions, but my first real contact with Buddhism came during a trip to Thailand in 2002. That trip confirmed that Buddhism was the spiritual philosophy that resonated most strongly with me. However, it took me a number of years and much

more study to choose a particular Buddhist tradition. Theravadan Buddhism, which is practiced in Thailand and most other Southeast Asian countries, is considerably different from Chinese Buddhism, Zen Buddhism practiced in Japan, and Tibetan Buddhism. During my first trip to Nepal, about two years ago, I finally had the opportunity to study Tibetan Buddhism with the Tibetan refugee community and quickly realized it was what I'd been looking for all along. The day last summer when the Dalai Lama held my hand and looked directly into my eyes was one of the most incredible experiences I've ever had and I will treasure it always.

**Vagobond: Your travels are intimately connected with the people in the places you go - can you share how you go about making these connections?**

Barbara Weibel: I don't really know how they happen, they just do. Sometimes, it's like an invisible force is making my travel plans. I cannot count the number of times I have arrived someplace on a whim, with no reservations and no idea what is happening, only to find that a major celebration of some sort is underway. Of course, my innate curiosity is partially responsible, as I will talk to absolutely anyone and am constantly asking questions. But I can't explain, for instance, why the city fathers of Alausi, Ecuador, climbed out of the bed of a pickup truck that happened to stop in front of me and subsequently invited me to be their honored guest at an Independence Day celebration of the indigenous Quichua community. Things like that happen to me repeatedly, in every corner of the world. I really think the key is being open and following my instincts.

**Vagobond: How do you feel that technology and the internet in particular have changed travel? Do you have any predictions for the future of travel?**

Barbara Weibel: I believe that technology and the Internet have had the most significant effect on travel since the days of the early explorers. We can literally learn about any corner of the earth sitting in our living rooms. The drawback is that there are very few, if any, undiscovered places left on the face of the earth, which is one of the reasons I believe cultural travel is gaining in popularity. With no new places to discover, modern

day explorers are turning to the peoples of the earth for new experiences. Frankly, I believe that only good can come from this. I am passionately committed to the idea that travel has a huge potential for effecting world peace. I have always believed that the better we know one another, the less likely we'll want to kill one another.

**Vagobond: Nepal has been on my list of future destinations for a long time. I sometimes worry that by the time I get there, it will have been eaten up by modernity...you've spent a lot of time there - is Nepal changing? Is that a good or bad thing?**

Barbara Weibel: Nepal is changing, but very, very slowly. Unfortunately, the caste system is still a very real part of the social structure. Add to this the political instability that the country has experienced in recent years and the rampant corruption, and you begin to see why the wheels of change grind so slowly. My fervent hope is that Nepal can move toward modernity without abandoning their rich cultural heritage and strong family values, as these are two of the things that I most treasure about the country that I consider my adopted second home.

**Vagobond: Can you share three travel tips that Vagobond readers may not have heard?**

Barbara Weibel:

1) Forget about Travelers Checks; they are virtually useless as they are extremely hard to cash in many places. Instead, use your ATM card once you arrive in a country. Not only will you avoid having to carry large amounts of cash but you will also avoid currency exchange fees, and your bank will give you a better exchange fee than any money changer.

2) If you travel to a country where you don't speak the language, be sure to pick up a few business cards from the hotel when you check in. Then, when you've been out sightseeing all day, you need only hand a card to a taxi driver, rather than try to find someone who speaks English. And in that same vein, use only legal taxis in foreign countries. The front desk clerk at your hotel should be able to tell you how to identify legal taxis and can call one for you; when returning to your hotel, if you are in doubt, use a taxi waiting in front of any large hotel, as they will

undoubtedly be legal operators.

3) If you are on a budget, consider hostels as an option for accommodations. Most now offer private rooms in addition to dorms, and hostels are a wonderful way to connect with other travelers who are only too happy to share tips about the best local places.

**Vagobond: We were both featured in Lonely Planet's new book *'Around the World with 40 Bloggers'* - are there other books in your future? What about other places where readers can find more of your writing? Any compilations?**

Barbara Weibel: I have been working on a memoir off and on for the past 5 years, but haven't been able to complete it because I've been consumed with perpetual travel and building my blog. However, one of my goals this year is to finish the book and, hopefully, get a publishing contract. I'm headed back to Nepal in early April for two months, and I've carved out that time to focus on the memoir. I also have plans to publish an anthology in ebook form about my favorite travel experiences, but don't have a time frame for that just yet.

**Vagobond: Do you earn your living from Hole in the Donut? What has been the most challenging part of becoming a successful travel writer/blogger?**

Barbara Weibel: Though I earn a bit from the occasional freelance article or photograph sold for publication, Hole In The Donut is my primary source of income. I earn enough from advertising to keep me on the road full time, although not in luxury digs by any means. Without a doubt, the most challenging part of becoming a successful travel blogger is the time versus money issue. In order to sell advertising, I have to be highly ranked by Google, which brings traffic to the site. Good Google ranking comes from producing high quality, original narrative writing, but also demands a concerted social media campaign, good search engine optimization techniques, and staying in touch with my peers in the travel blogging community, all of which takes time. And that doesn't even begin to address the more than 100 emails I receive and answer each day and the hours it takes to download, categorize, label, and review the 200+ photos I take each day. By the time I dig through the business end of

blogging, I sometimes find it difficult to flip into right-brain mode and write creatively.

**Vagobond: Barbara - what is a question that I should have asked you? And more importantly - what is the answer?**

Barbara Weibel: Having given up almost all material comforts in your life, after five and a half years of travel, do you have any regrets?

I absolutely love what I do and don't have a single regret. Despite the constant need to be frugal, I still wake up every morning and can't wait to talk to the next person, ferret out the next story, and snap the next incredible photo. I spent 35 years in corporate life, earning tons of money and hating every day of my life. Now I have very little in the way of material possessions but I'm happier than I've ever been. I'm living proof that it's never too late to pursue your true passions.

## Linda Kissam

Not all exceptional travelers live by the seat of their pants. Linda Kissam is a great example of someone who has approached travel from a much more professional standpoint and still has amazing adventures and stories to tell.

Linda is a professional travel, food, and wine writer based out of Southern California who specializes in easy, breezy destination stories focusing on what makes destinations special through their culinary and wine, beer and spirits scene. She is a 'soft adventurer' who loves sharing her favorite things about the places she visits.

She never knows if a story will end up being based on finding the perfect latte, ordering Pommes Frites with Parsley Butter in a small French bistro, searching for an Internet cafe in Sicily, or attending a wine seminar aboard a cruise ship. She never travels without a notebook, camera and a great pair of Brighton flats. She has an addiction to personable people, interesting wines, gourmet coffee, fabulous chocolate and spicy foods. Anyone who knows her will tell you that she loves traveling anywhere, by any means, and is somewhat obsessive about jewelry and a good taco.

Linda was a regular contributor to Vagobond.com back in 2011 and I took the opportunity to interview her after reading a couple of her features.

### **Vagobond: What's your personal travel philosophy?**

Linda Kissam: Commit to the regionality of the trip. Appreciate the moment and circumstance of what is being offered.

### **Vagobond: How many countries have you visited?**

Linda Kissam: I've been lucky to visit fifteen countries so far representing four continents

**Vagobond: What made you start to travel?**

Linda Kissam: I became a travel agent on a whim one year. I was sent to Thailand to better understand the activities and accommodations offered there. My eyes and soul opened to the universal possibilities of international travel through that gift. I was hooked from that point on.

**Vagobond: What's your scariest travel moment?**

Linda Kissam: Circling the Atlanta Airport for an hour in a thunder storm. We couldn't land until the thunder storm was over and we couldn't go to another airport because we didn't have enough fuel.

**Vagobond: What's your funniest travel moment?**

Linda Kissam: The day the shuttle driver misunderstood his instructions to pick up my writers group ASAP. The four of us were in a small golf cart on a very restricted one lane, no vehicles allowed, nature trail which incidentally included alligators on each side of the trail. The thirty something year old, 20 passenger shuttle driver breached the "Do Not Enter" warning signs and blockades. He came rumbling down the trail, lights on, pedal to the metal, until he found us, loaded us up and backed out the entire winding, twisty road, which at that point was probably 3 miles. It wasn't until then that he shared he was the lead fire truck driver for the local fire department and there were never any passengers left behind whenever he got the call!

**Vagobond: What's your greatest adventure?**

LindaKissam: That's like asking me which of my children I like best, or what wine I like best. There is no definitive answer. I believe that each trip has a message to share. I love every minute of every travel adventure.

**Vagobond: What's your dream destination/vacation/trip?**

Linda Kissam: I've yet to take a cruise around the Greek Isles, go on a safari & do some wine tasting in South Africa, or experience UK Canal boating.

**Vagobond: Are you a traveler or a tourist? What's the difference if there is one.**

Linda Kissam: I am a traveler. I enjoy the opportunity to explore other places through regional activities whether in my home state or in far away places. I am there to do more than vacation. Long ago I learned not to expect toilet paper — but carry my own with the cardboard roll removed, paper pressed flat.

**Vagobond: What's a great travel tip most people don't know?**

Linda Kissam: Pack light, in one color palate, and think & do regionally!

## Johan Beukes

Johann Beukes is from South Africa and worked as an architect for 40 years before deciding to do a lateral move into the travel business. He is a keen learner through travel experiences and is the CEO of TRAVELinform & TRAVELwithus.

I interviewed Johan back in 2012 for Vagobond.com

**Vagobond: You spent forty years as an architect - while some might say you've left that profession behind - it seems to me that you are still designing and building with TRAVELinform –**

Johann Beukes: A great architect is not made by way of a brain nearly so much as he is made by way of an enriched heart. An architect-at-heart has to have a soul, a spirit and a passion for people. Exactly the same principles apply to a traveller-at heart.

TRAVELinform is a unique platform where one can share one's passion for travel: many wonderful human true to life travel stories as well as travel photography to create the specific mood. And a growing family of equally enthusiastic members, sharing their experiences with one another on the social networking forum.

**Vagobond: What made you decide to change gears? Can you tell us a bit of the journey that took you from architecture and into travel?**

Johann Beukes: Since my childhood days I had pen friends in Japan, Germany and Canada; at a young age I started with travel- scrapbooking and became engaged with people in different places. My architecture brought me into contact with international architects around the world; thus making my early dreams a reality.

Various joint-replacement operations of most of my major joints forced me to bid my first love, practicing architecture, farewell. Fortunately I initiated a travel agency some 15 years ago; first as a hobby while

travelling as an architect to some 80 Countries, which has now turned into a full time profession: the privilege of sharing ones travel joys with other people with a similar passion for exploring the unknown.

**Vagobond: I've heard it said that travel is a series of near misses - can you share a harrowing tale from your travels?**

Johann Beukes: As student, I joined a friend from Namibia on a Namibia Desert excursion: our vehicle got stuck in the wilderness between kilometres of dunes. Luckily a helicopter search team discovered us after three days without water and food. No wonder it is also known as the Skeleton Coast of Namibia.

A few years ago I went with only the pilot on a ski-plane scenic flight of Mount Denali in Alaska; as a keen photographer I convinced the pilot to land at a high altitude on a solitary glacier. With me in my photographic spell, we slightly overstayed our time. The severe cold quickly fixed the skis to the ice. Normally the passenger would move the ski-base while the pilot is accelerating the propeller. This time however, we had to swop roles, due to my disability to assist with the physical manoeuvre. We managed to escape the ice-trap and I almost deserved my wings!

**Vagobond: How is TRAVELinform different from the many other travel sites and networks out there? What is your vision for it in the future?**

Johann Beukes: I think there is no replacement to first-hand experience; anybody browsing through the multitude of country galleries of stories and photos will soon share my passion.

We have two TRAVEL sites i.e. TRAVELinform is a free Travel Information and Social Networking site, and TRAVELwithus, the unique, dedicated consultant-connected Travel, which will be launched during April this year.

On TRAVELinform we do not sell anything; we believe that through this we will eventually build a platform where people will trust our impartiality with no strings attached. Should they be interested in packages and travel-related products, TRAVELwithus will ensure a trust-worthy

reputation.

TRAVELinform has the social networking forum, the unique travel stories and photo galleries, Travel-related links, sanction of many country's tourism boards. It has been visited by viewers, representing some 100 Countries and the average time spent on the site is 5 minutes at a time; indicating the popular interest.

**Vagobond: In terms of vision, can you make a few predictions about where travel is heading in the next 5-10 years?**

Johann Beukes: I believe that TRAVEL will become the most important industry world-wide; interaction between customer and professional consultant will move away from traditional consultancy selling air-tickets first, followed by other ancillary sales.

All basic commodities like air, car and bed will be done online by more and more, IT generation customers. If your destination knowledge, input and value as Travel Consultant are not omissible, you will soon become extinct.

The sooner the high street agency understands the many challenges online travel agencies are offering, the more secure their future will be.

**Vagobond: Travel has changed in some massive ways over our lifetimes- what are some of the positives and negatives you can see in these changes?**

Johann Beukes: Customers have become knowledgeable on their travel expectations and needs. Guessing and selling products without first-hand knowledge and expertise cannot succeed. For this reason consultants should act proactively and professionally: providing a service that will address all aspects of personalised travel.

The positive side is that a far wider choice of options of destinations exist; however, on the negative side is the fact that the exclusiveness of destinations will disappear: destinations off the beaten track will unfortunately become less and less available.

**Vagobond: Has travel become too easy?**

Johann Beukes: My honest opinion is that travel has become a hugely complex and high-risk service industry.

Only the real Travel PROFESSIONALS will survive. Through globalisation everybody becomes a traveler in some or other way. It has become very easy to travel today.

**Vagobond: What makes great travel writing?**

Johann Beukes: Experience the heart of a country through the eyes of ordinary people; original, warm and descriptive words will enhance, almost like a picture taken at a scene; though it should always be factual correct; add passion to the most simple theme and people will experience travel through your eyes.

**Vagobond: What makes a great travel writer?**

Johann Beukes: A passionate honest story teller; look for stories off the beaten track, among ordinary people.

**Vagobond: In terms of press trips with tourism boards - do you think there is a magic formula for landing them?**

Johann Beukes: Personally, I do not have a problem with press trips organised by tourism boards to promote their country. As long as the travel writers act as true travelers and not tourists: a traveler will always shows appreciation and respect the diversity of the travelled world and the different cultures of its people, whereas a tourist demands attention to their personal needs only.

**Vagobond: How do you prepare for a trip?**

Johann Beukes: My time is always limited and good planning of time spent is therefore crucial. Through my LinkedIn network, make first-hand contact with connections within the country, communicate my ideas and proposed itinerary; clearly define my objectives of experiencing the country as a traveller-at-heart and not as an insensitive tourist. Many of

my travel stories are rooted in the origins of ordinary people.

**Vagobond: Can you share three travel tips that Vagobond readers may not have heard?**

Johann Beukes: Communicate with the taxi-driver, if local, or the receptionist at the hotel and get first hand local tips of quieter times at tourist traps, eating spots supported by locals etc.

Do proper research on all to do and see well in advance, in order that you can orientate yourself easily once at the destination; time is always limited.

Rather try and stay in the original old town area and enjoy the real atmosphere once all the tourists have left.

**Vagobond: As someone who travels a lot, I realize how hard it is to answer questions about best, favorite etc. Still, having seen more than seventy-five countries - which three would you most like to go back and visit?**

Johann Beukes: Three totally different destinations:

Romania; especially Transylvania, due to the interesting culture and history;

Alaska, because of the unequalled scenic beauty of its landscape, from south to north;

Peru, truly a country with wonderful people; although poverty prevails, they assist each other and where the role of the family is very important.

**Vagobond: Do you have a bucket list of places still to visit?**

Johann Beukes: High on my list is an exclusive adventure cruise on board the VIC of the Spitsbergen Arctic zone; for its incredible photographic opportunities.

Then I would still want to travel to Tibet, especially the Shigatse and

Nyingtri mountainous areas to stay some time and really meditate within the rural regions; maybe do some new travel writing.

## The Most Extraordinary Traveler of the All - Planet Earth

I've been fortunate to travel a lot of this big blue marble and to see some wonderful things, places, cultures, and natural wonders. At the end of this collection, rather than celebrating another traveler - I would prefer to celebrate the place we all travel on and the greatest traveler we all know. The planet Earth - Terra - Mother.

In a year- Earth travels about 940 million kilometers around the sun, however, this does not include the distance the solar system has moved around the galactic center during that time. Nor does it include the distance you have traveled as the earth rotates every 24 hours. Since we are all on this wonderful spaceship - each of us is actually traveling further than anyone (and the same distance) every second of every day. We are all great space explorers. When it comes to cheap flights - planet Earth gives us some of the cheapest. Where you sit is just one of her many places that fly through space on her surface.

Whether you want to travel closer to Mercury, Venus, Jupiter, or Mars - she allows it. Whether you want to go to the far side of the sun or take a vacation to the close side. And then there is the moon...but that's another story.

The symbol of the Earth consists of a cross over a circle and here is a funny observation: humans always thought that the other planets moved, but they actually thought that Earth was standing still! It wasn't until the 1700's that some radicals started to really dig how the Earth travels.

It's not uncommon to think of Earth as a person or a deity - called Gaia by her friends and Mother by her children, she is most often thought of as a woman - and who can imagine a man with such incredible fertility? Right? Of course, a lot of the 'big' religions think this is a terrible thing but then they say to 'honor thy mother' and continue to deface and devalue the biggest mother of them all. Our mother planet where (as far as we know) all life was born.

It's funny that for most of human history - people thought of Earth as being a flat, one dimensional place. Of course, you can't flatten a good woman and Earth demonstrated a lovely spherical shape as humans began to circumnavigate and even visit outer space!

It really wasn't until seeing that big blue marble photo taken from space that anyone thought about the fact that this planet is all connected. The things you do in China (or anywhere else) actually affect what happens everywhere else. It's no coincidence that spaceflight and the modern ecological movement began at about the same time.

Earth agreed to a very short interview with me when I caught up with her.

**Vagobond: Where is your favorite destination?**

Earth: Well, all of my regions have their charm, but to be honest it is the oceans that I love the best. The constant movement, sound and beauty - the diversity of life. The oceans are really like my womb and what woman doesn't love being able to create life?

**Vagobond: Are you upset at the way humans have treated you?**

Earth: What mother wouldn't be? But you know, the dinosaurs shit all over me too and look what happened to them. Like 'the Dude' I endure - by the way, I'm a big fan of The Big Lebowski. I feel like if more people were to watch that film, the planet would be better off. I hope that in a few centuries Dudism is a major force on my surface.

**Vagobond: What's your most dangerous travel travel moment?**

Earth: Actually, it's hard to say but I think when the planet between Mars and Me got smashed by a comet, that was a close call. You have to be careful of those who travel with no plan - sometimes it can be beautiful, but often it can be cataclysmic. In this case, I was given a beautiful moon after the break up but the impact was large, I have huge craters to show for it. And, you know, we were pretty deeply involved. At the time, there was an advanced civilization that moved between both our surfaces - no traces remain of course - at least not obvious enough

traces for my arrogant human children to find -yet.

**Vagobond: Fascinating. I thought I knew something of astronomy but I'd never heard that before. Can you share any other secrets with our readers? Maybe you have some travel tips?**

Earth: Actually, I'm filled with secrets but now isn't the time to reveal them, but I'm happy to share a few travel tips that will make your life easier. They're common sense but it's surprising how many people ignore them.

1) Don't shit where you eat. Don't get me wrong, I'm not talking about feces - I'm saying that you need to take care of your home or else it becomes incredibly unpleasant. In this case, just look at my atmosphere and oceans - look at all the garbage in them - and you should get what I mean.

2) Time heals all wounds. No matter how much destruction or devastation is caused, eventually things return to a balance. Chaos is a myth. The universe is orderly and that includes the lives of humans and planets.

3) Time is the only true wealth. While I'm very old by human standards, my clock is ticking down. Eventually I will transform and become something else. It's for that reason, that I treasure each moment. Sure, it hurts to feel my resources pulled out and sent into space, but in fact - as long as I have time, I am the wealthiest planet around.

**Vagobond: I thought there would be more 'green' tips - aren't you going to suggest that we take better care of you, use less water, develop clean energy and things like that?**

Earth: Why would I do that? I don't tell a deer not to make a path in the woods. I don't tell termites not to eat trees. Humans are just another animal species and you will do what you do. You think that you are deviating from nature, but in fact - there are lessons you have to learn and as your mother, I would love to save you from the pain those lessons might cause but I know that the pain is what will actually make you learn. Okay...well, just one thing. Enough with the plastic - it's

everywhere and it doesn't go away.

**Vagobond: Thank you for the wonderful interview and the wonderful world Mother.**

Earth: You're welcome - it's nice to actually be noticed!

## About the Author: Christopher Damitio

Christopher Damitio has always been a free vagabond radical - even when he was trapped in the U.S. Marine Corps. He currently lives in Honolulu, Hawaii with his wife and daughter and does as little wage-slaving as possible. His ancestors were some of the first Americans in the Pacific Northwest and some of the first Europeans in the Americas. He imagines it was because they were trying to get away from tyranny, capitalism, and injustice.

He grew up in California and spent significant time as a child exploring old ghost towns of the West, hiking in the mountains, and camping in the great national parks of America. While his childhood did not include big trips abroad (except for an ill-fated trip to Mexico that ended up lasting months instead of weeks) he was exposed to the beauty and diversity of the world at an early age.

Both of his grandfathers worked around the world during the 30's, 40's, and 50's. Their far ranging tales and his grandmother's collection of National Geographic Magazines led him to a thirst for travel and adventures. This is a part of what led him to enlist in the Marines after graduating high school. It was a huge mistake, but after giving up eight years of his life, he escaped with an Honorable Discharge along with acute anxiety.

From 1998 to 2001 he published Anarchist zines and tracts and helped to organize some of the protests at the WTO in Seattle (1999) and the Democratic National Convention (2000) in Los Angeles. He was a radical community organizer for ACORN in 2001 before becoming disgusted with the USA and taking his first extended trip to Asia.

At the completion of this trip he settled in Hawaii where he earned a degree in anthropology and incurred amazing amounts of student debt. Upon graduating in 2008, he left the USA again - this time staying away for nearly a decade during which he visited just under fifty countries. He

returned to Honolulu in 2017 with his wife and daughter.

He is the author of books you have probably not heard of (*The Anarchist Manifesto Project*, *Rough Living: Tips and Tales of a Vagabond*, *Smooth Living*, *Slackville Road*, *Feeding the Spirit*, *Existensis*, *Not My Morocco*, *Douchebags Fags & Hags*, *Lost in Transmediality*, *The Keys to the Riad*, and *Crypto Confidential*). He is also the founder of many companies and ventures that you have probably not heard of ( Conchsense Multimedia, Gaiasopht, Vagobond Travel Media, LLC, Hawaii Tiki Goup, LLC, Iwamai, and zGUIDEz, INC.). He has always been rich in ideas, but Damitio has never had much in the way of money. He is not anti-money so long as it is not earned on the backs of someone else's labor, through exploiting people, or by destroying the planet - so, in reality, he will probably never have much money because that is how capitalism works.

That's okay. Damitio's life has been spent demonstrating what can be done without wealth. If it comes, he will use it to do good, if it does not, he will still do good.