

SHOESTRING

Exploring the world - on a budget

Issue #3 | Free
January / February 2011

Kind Strangers

Breaking down in rural Australia

Camino de Santiago

A modern pilgrimage on St James' Way

Trains in the clouds

The best in South American train travel

Scandinavia on a budget

Norway to Finland on 'Allemansrätten'

Maoris and mud pools

Travelling around NZ's North Island

Plus:

Buying a Car ★ Ischia ★ Indian hospitality ★ Nairobi



G' Day!

A new year, and a new issue of Shoestring travel magazine!

For the third time, backpackers and Gap Year travellers have decided to share their experiences and advice with Shoestring readers, helping like-minded globetrotters plan their explorations.

One of the purest and earliest forms of travelling is a pilgrimage and Lara Thiele walked all the way to Santiago de Compostela. Erik Jelinek fell in love with the principle of every man's right while exploring some of Scandinavia's remotest spots. And everybody who is toying with the idea of buying a car to make the getting around a little easier should consult Gareth Connerty's handy checklist before signing on the dotted line.

Planning your travels can be a daunting task. So many different experiences are out there to be had and it can be hard to decide where to go. Whether you are trying to fill a whole Gap Year or a two week break, I hope you will find Shoestring to be a one-stop kind of magazine that inspires your future journeys.

Happy Travels!

Cornelia

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ISSUE #3

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COVER PHOTO: Roadtrip through the Flinders Range, Australia by Cornelia Kaufmann

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TRAVEL NEWS & DEALS



Colourful houses along the Promenade of Napier, New Zealand

New Zealand Cycleway

A new project is about to start in New Zealand, which will eventually see 2000km of new cycleway. 18 new Great Rides will be added to the map, and the first route should be open in September 2011.

Forget Spain, head for China!

A new study by the UN World Tourism Organisation shows that China has replaced Spain as the third most visited country in the world with 55.98 million international visitors last year. The top visited countries are the United States (60.88 million visitors) and France (78.95 million visitors).



Harbour building at Cape Town's V&A Waterfront

Babylon to open to visitors
The Iraqi government is encouraging visitors back into the country by restoring the ancient ruins of biblical Babylon with the World Monument Trust. 165 travellers from 16 countries have visited the site, although the Foreign Office warns against travels to the country.

Japanese volcano erupts

Mount Shinmoe, the volcano in which Bond villain Blofeld had his lair in 'You only live twice' has erupted, propelling hot ash and rocks 6500 feet into the air. Major disruption is expected in the Miyazaki prefecture in southern Japan.

CHECK OUT WHAT FESTIVALS THE UK HAS TO OFFER IN 2011 AT www.thefestivalcalender.co.uk

Not sure where to go this year?
Dozens of travel companies and tourism offices from all over the world will be at this year's Destinations Travel Shows in London and Birmingham to give you ideas of where to travel to next.

London Earls Court: 3 - 6 February

Birmingham NEC 4 - 6 March

www.destinationsshow.com

Santa Lucia Festival, Cuba
For the 18th time, this popular 'Taste of Cuba' festival will take place on Santa Lucia beach, Camaguey province between 13 - 17 February.



Going on safari in South Africa's Kruger National Park.

Do you have a story to tell?

Have you had the experience of a lifetime somewhere off the beaten track? Discovered something new to do? Or taken a spectacular photo that's just too good to be hidden away? Then get published in **SHOESTRING**.

Send your stories and pictures to editor@shoestring-magazine.com



Pelican sitting on top of a fibra, Galápagos Islands

GIRLS WANNA HAVE FUN WHEN TRAVELLING ALONE

Being a solitary traveller can be daunting the first time round. Maybe even more so, when you are a young female. The adventure begins once you leave your comfort zone.



Top: A typical dorm room; above: Colette enjoying the swings at the Bloomsbury festival. Bottom: On the flight back to Seattle. Photos: CoMa

Like always, I reserved myself a window seat. I've become skilled at sleeping soundly against airplane walls. My neatly packed purse held the usual travel essentials: an inflatable neck pillow, earplugs, magazines, and enough sugary snacks to give everyone on the plane diabetes.

The fear of travelling alone proved to be a difficult struggle for me. I'd lived in our little farmhouse outside Seattle for twenty-two years and was raised in a family that never ventured far. Foreign could have been a synonym for dangerous, which meant leaving home with little else but travel books to guide me was an endeavor I wasn't sure I could undertake.

I began looking at options of where I could go and I decided England might be an easy place to start. It took three nights of staring at the computer screen to commit to booking anything, and despite my modicum of bravery, I didn't sleep well and I cried a little. Looking back, that's okay.

Before leaving Seattle I researched ways to get from the airport to my hostel. I studied a city map, read about neighborhoods and culture, and learned about public transportation as I had never taken a bus in my life.

I made sure to book my first three nights in a well-reviewed hostel. I've found reading online reviews to be of utmost importance, and many times I've thought a place sounded nice only to read the comments

and wonder how it was still in business.

London's subway took me from Heathrow to inner London with ease. Immediately upon leaving the station I encountered my first challenge: finding my way to the hostel. As I stood at a busy five-way intersection, trying to figure out how to hold my map in the right direction, I noticed a lack of street signs. I had to quickly develop a constant awareness of where I was to find my way.

.....>
'Ice-breakers should encourage conversations'
.....>

Internet will almost inevitably help with directions, where to sleep, museum hours, foreign words, and so on. I'd suggest that single women travelling abroad consider carrying a phone with internet browsing capabilities.

Quite contradictory to everything I've just written, I admit it feels better if you can find your way with the help of another human being instead of a computer screen. A group of rather rough-looking but jovial construction workers having a smoke on the sidewalk were the first locals to give me a laugh and a smile as I asked for directions.

I'd booked a female dorm at my first hostel. Sharing a sleeping space with people from different cultures meant I might not know what to expect at times. Staying with women also gave me a chance to make female friends. The best ice-breakers seem to be those that encourage others to speak about their own lives.

It may feel like we're bugging the other person to death with random chatter, but the truth is other travellers really appreciate the attention.

Despite making friends, I still took safety precautions. I bought a lock for my valuables but kept most of my important items in a cross-body purse, which became something of a conjoined twin. At night I slept with it by my side, and during the day I wore it constantly.

Carrying a cross-body style bag can also reduce the likelihood of theft because the bag is secure around the body. Whenever I wandered any highly touristy areas, which are known for theft, I made sure to carry my bag in this manner.

Despite taking precautions, something can always go wrong. During my trip I began to feel a bit of a sore throat, and maybe it is because I worried about it so much that it became a full blown cold with all the fixings. As a solo traveller I didn't have anyone to attend to me, nor was there always a store nearby where I could quickly purchase medicine. I suggest keeping basic meds with you at all times, just in case. I was glad to have flu medicine standing by when, at my second hostel, I developed a moderate fever.

.....>
'The feeling of personal growth is invaluable'
.....>

I survived my semi-serious illness to enjoy my trip and tell the tale. Perhaps the tale itself is something to save for a later date, but I hope with a little caution and a lot of courage that more women find themselves able to set off on their own experiences. The freedom to move about where and when I wanted was incredible. The feeling of personal growth and achievement is invaluable, and this particular kind can only be found when we are able to step outside of our comfort zones.

Writer Profile



Name: Colette Mauzeralle
Age: 24

I travel because I believe it makes us better people and is something we may always look back on without regret.

SOAK IN ISCHIA'S HOT SPRINGS ON A COLD DAY

Italy's thermal wonderland not only offers great natural, open-air jacuzzis, but also perfect spots for slow-cooked picnics straight out of a boiling pool. Ideal, even for a winter day.

It was one of those bitterly cold December days in southern Italy, when the chill wraps itself around your bones and draws you towards winter, and I was freezing to the seat of my newly-rented scooter.

The frosted palms and agave plants blurred at my sides as I tore down the mountain, enduring the icy gales for the tropical target that lay ahead: one of Italy's wildest and most unique thermal spas.

My girlfriend and I had arrived on Ischia, the largest and the greenest island in the bay of Naples, only that morning.

After securing our transport, we set off to explore the volcanic island and soon discovered that, though it may not be as famous as the nearby celebrity resort of Capri, the almost entirely mountainous Ischia - with its rugged landscape, secluded beaches and glistening fig and lemon trees - certainly rivals it for natural beauty.

Then there are the hot springs. Ischia is home to the largest concentration of natural spas in Europe, which have been soothing joints and curing ailments since Roman times.

Nowadays the island is inevitably dominated by a plethora of all-inclusive spa resorts, but we'd vowed to avoid these tourist traps before leaving the mainland. We knew there were still many wild and untapped natural springs on the island that could be enjoyed

completamente gratuito, so we went in search of one of them - one of the most unique and secluded of all. Il Sorgeto.

The bracing wind swept around the cliff top, so we pulled our jackets tight around us and began our slow descent to the golden bay below.

We could feel the heat before we could see the springs. Small freshwater streams dribbled over the sand into the salty sea and vast plumes of steam gushed into the cyan winter sky. We had found it: a free, wild and boundless salty bathtub to warm our cockles.

Quite literally, in fact... because this natural

.....
'Blistering hot springs and chilled sea tide combine'
.....

phenomenon was more than just a Jacuzzi to us.

We had stopped in the food market en route to Il Sorgeto and, upon arrival, began shifting stones on the beach to form a primitive cooking pot - directly above a natural spring.

As we waited on our food to cook in the just-below-boiling freshwater, we enjoyed a nice long soak in one of Europe's finest sea spas; where the blisteringly hot springs and the chilled sea tide combine in perfect quantities for the ideal bathing temperature. No elbow gauge necessary.

Before we knew it, dinner was served. We laid a picnic blanket down on our private beach, complete with under floor heating and en-suite spa, and enjoyed a gourmet meal of lemon mullet and mixed seafood with potatoes, courgettes and squash - served with a bottle of fine Italian red, naturally - as we watched the sun slowly set over the shimmering Mediterranean.

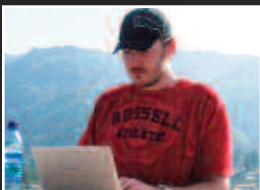
Not a bad way to spend a bitterly cold winter day.



Above: Joe prepares a slow-cooked dinner in a natural hot spring. Below: The beach and springs at Il Sorgeto. JoRe



Writer Profile



Name: Joseph Reaney

Age: 25

A scriptwriter and journalist who caught the travel bug at the age of sixteen and has yet to discover an antidote.

RIDING LATIN AMERICA'S FIVE GREATEST RAILWAYS

Whether you want to traverse the entire continent, ride the Old Patagonian Express or travel on the most dangerous railway of the world on its way through Ecuador, **Neil Bennion** has the low-down on South America's best train journeys.

No-one talks about great coach journeys of the world.

Whether it's due to the technical feats involved, the fact you can get up and wander around or simply the sight of beautiful scenery jerking rhythmically about, train travel has something uniquely special about it.

Perhaps it's just the inherent fun of accidentally scalding your loved one when you return to your seat with hot drinks - train travel is romantic, too.

Whilst many of Latin America's railways have gone the way of Butch Cassidy and the Sundance kid, the region can still proudly call itself home to some of the world's greatest train journeys.

Here are five excellent opportunities to see tortuous mountain passes, wide open plains and the various creatures that inhabit these places all jerking about rhythmically for your entertainment.

FERROCARRIL CHIHUAHUA AL PACIFICO

Chihuahua - Pacific Railway, Mexico

Also referred to as the Copper Canyon railway, this treasure of northern Mexico links the country's mountainous spine with its coast.

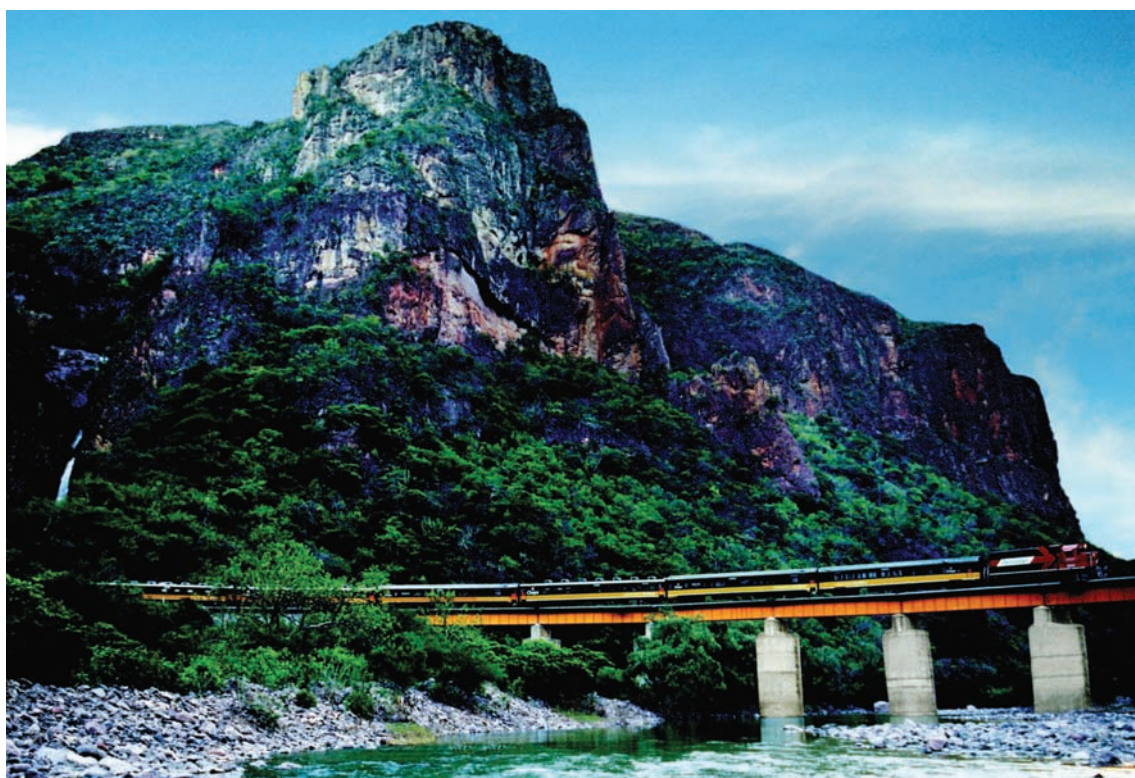
Writer Profile



Name: Neil Bennion

Age: 36

I travel because the open road is the purest expression of freedom I know.



Above: The Ferrocarril Chihuahua al Pacifico on its way to the coast, crossing one of the 36 bridges in its path (FCPC). Below: The Tren a las Nubes on route to the Andean high plain (TALN).

In tracing a path through the rugged folds of green and copper, the track enlists the help of 86 tunnels and 36 bridges, and takes at least 16 hours.

A real highlight is the station at Divisidero from where you can see three awe-inspiring canyons converge with each other. You can also see succulent ears of corn caramelising on grills, for sale by enterprising locals. Which sight you find more breath-taking probably says a lot about you.

The area is inhabited by the Tarahumara, a people famed for their long-distance running ability, though they probably just take the train like everybody else when there are no anthropologists around.

www.chepe.com.mx

TREN A LAS NUBES

Train to the Clouds, Argentina

Do people accuse you of having your head in the clouds? Well here's your chance to prove them right. Strictly speaking, you'll prove you've got your train in the clouds, but that doesn't matter.

This is a high-altitude romp through the gorges, dried-up riverbeds and bunchgrasses of northwest Argentina. The train starts high and goes higher, gaining over 3,000 metres in altitude in its ascent to the Andean altiplano (high plain), ending at a breathless 4,200



metres above sea-level near to the Chilean border.

As with other routes in Latin America, the train has to trick its way across difficult terrain using sleight-of-hand like switchbacks, viaducts and even 360 degree spirals. There are no loop-the-loops, but you can't have everything.

www.trenalasnubes.com.ar

RIOBAMBA-SIBAMBE-ALAUŚ

Riobamba Railway, Ecuador

When this train isn't clinging to Andean mountainsides or rattling through orchards, it's hustling its way down the streets of pastel-shaded settlements as though it has jumped the tracks. Which it's also prone to doing for real occasionally.

The most famous section traverses the monstrous rocky obstacle known as the Devil's Nose „El Nariz del Diablo“ - it wouldn't be Latin America without a casual reference to the devil's anatomy.

Said appendage is dealt with by doings lots of advancing and reversing, which would just look indecisive if there weren't also sets of points and zig-zags of track - 'switchbacks' - involved.

Thankfully there's no Devil's Adam's apple to negotiate: if the technical issues don't sound bad enough, just imagine the theological ones.

www.efe.gov.ec



Above: Enjoying the scenery from the observation carriage of the Panama Railway (PCRC). Right: Riding on the roof of the Riobamba Railway, the most dangerous railway in the world (EFE). Below: La Trochita's steam engine, immortalised in Theroux's Old Patagonia Express (ATLT)

LA TROCHITA

The Little Narrow Gauge, Argentina

Immortalised in Paul Theroux's 1978 book The Old Patagonian Express, this railway is not just a journey through the wild treeless scrub of Patagonia: it's a trip back in time. Fortunately, it's only back to the era of steam travel, rather than that of armed railway banditry.

Enjoy the view from your tiny carriage as the train rattles past dotted masses of sheep and the occasional guanaco. Ostrich-like rheas are even known to run alongside the train at times, although

they're not usually packing guns.

The diminutive trains are made up of rolling stock from the 1920s with a wood-fired stove in each carriage for warmth. These are passenger-fed, so the temperature depends entirely on the whim of those sat near the stove. Thankfully, the driving of this vintage train isn't done by the same system.

www.latrochita.org.ar

«.....»
'This train ride spans the entire continent'
 «.....»

PANAMA RAILWAY

If you're not satisfied unless your train journey was founded on a legacy of death and misery, then the Panama Railway is the one for you.

Construction of the original route claimed thousands of lives, many of which were to diseases such as malaria and yellow fever at a time when mosquitoes had yet to be identified as the cause.

The railway, completed 60 years before the canal, suddenly transformed crossing the Americas into a feasible proposition, it being quicker than sailing round Cape Horn and safer than hydrogen-filled trousers.

Though the journey takes less than an hour it effectively spans the entire continent, giving great views of the canal as well as the jungle and swamps that made the project so horrendous. For added realism, pretend to swat things on your skin whilst affecting liver pains.

www.panarail.com



WEBSITE

For more information about Neil and his travels, visit his website

www.neilbennion.co.uk



WALKING ST JAMES' WAY TO SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA

A pilgrimage route for centuries, the Camino enjoys greater popularity every year. From all over the world, people walk, ride and cycle to the northern-Spanish city for physical activity and religious enlightenment.



Thousands of pilgrims set off every year to make their way to Santiago de Compostela in Northern Spain.

Whether it's for religious reasons or just for fun, the "Camino" has something to offer for everyone.

Known as "El Camino de Santiago de Compostela" - or "St James' Way" to English-speaking travellers - this network of pilgrimage paths stretches across France, Spain and Portugal. Although all these caminos start in different cities, they all end at the cathedral of Santiago.

German comedian Hape Kerkeling wrote a book about his travels on St James' Way entitled "I'm off then." And although the book was an inspiration for me, I got even more motivation from watching the French-language film "Saint Jacques".

That's when I told myself that I would be walking on the Camino one day. And with 2010 having been the Holy Year, I, too was on my way.

My journey started in October, and my preparation was nothing out of the ordinary. I have always liked sports and walking through nature, but I didn't increase workouts. I just let it come to me.

Firstly, you have to decide where you want to start your pilgrimage and how you want to get there. I chose to fly to my starting point, but you can obviously drive, cycle, ride or walk there as well.

And to be a proper pilgrim on the Camino, you will need your Pilgrim's Passport, in which you collect stamps from stations along the way. The passports are available from the St James Confraternity - of which you have to become a member in order to be recognised as a pilgrim and get the certificate to prove it - and cost € 5.00.

You will need to collect at least two stamps per day to be allowed to use the albergues, cheap hostels exclusively for

pilgrims. The stamps are available from restaurants, tourism offices and cafés, and you can use them even if you don't eat or stop there.

To gain the Compostela, a certificate in Latin which acknowledges the completion of the pilgrimage, you will need to walk at least the last 100 km of the Camino. If you cycle or ride your horse on the path, you will need to cover at least 200 km.

All horse-loving pilgrims should plan the route carefully though, as not all albergues have stables. My starting point was Sarria, where a lot of people start, because its location is just 112 km outside of Santiago and therefore qualifies you to gain the Compostela upon arrival at Santiago cathedral.

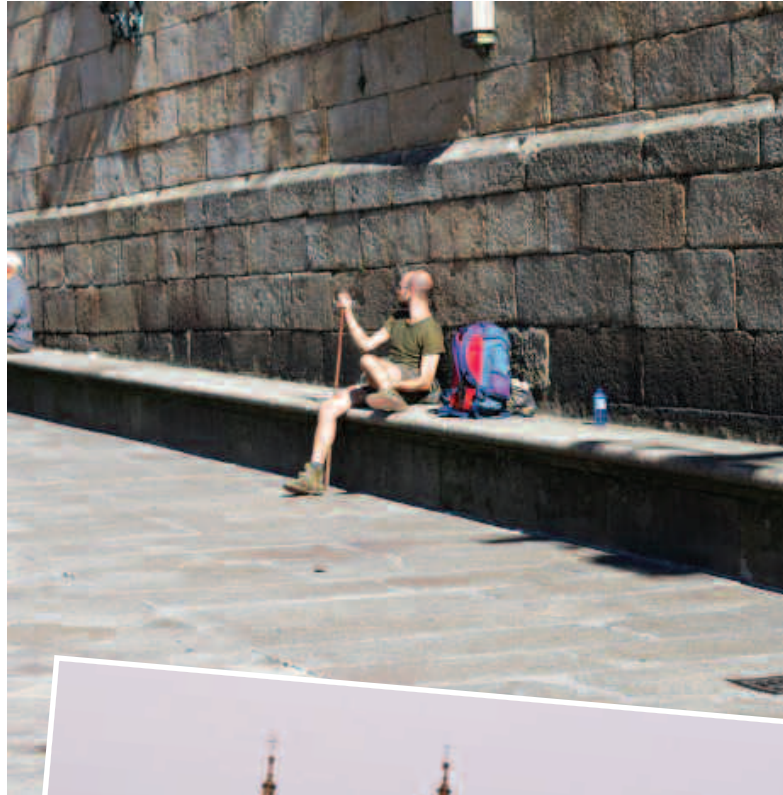
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'I heard my first „Bien Camino“ after only two steps'
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On my first day, it rained. If you are thinking about walking on the Camino through Galicia, prepare yourself for a lot of rain! That sounds like it's not a lot of fun and yes, every day I had a phase where I just thought "I can't and I don't want any more", but on the other side, the Spanish people make you feel very welcome. I got to know so many people from all over the world and heard my first "Bien Camino" after what felt like my first two steps.

Just outside of Sarria, you walk up a hill and get your first challenge. But continue, and a few blisters and about 11 km later, you'll see the 100 km stone. From there on, it's getting serious!

There are a lot of little cafés and drinks dispensers along the way to give your feet a rest. In one of those cafés, I met Mario. He is a Spanish chef who speaks decent English. Sometimes it can be a real adventure to make conversations or order in a restaurant if you have no grasp of Spanish.

Mario told me that he has already been to Tokyo and London to cook there - which explains his good English - and that he is looking for a job now and hoping that he will find work in Santiago. So we walked a bit together and split off after a few kilometers.



Opposite: The Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela lit up by night. Above: A pilgrim takes a rest outside the cathedral after finally arriving in Santiago. The cathedral as seen from Parque da Alameda. Below: Pilgrims with the typical scallop shell - St James' emblem - on the backpack and the rather untypical mobile phone in hand. Photos: LaTh



Writer Profile



Name: Lara Thiele

Age: 25

A Geo Sciences student who loves to travel without limiting her choice of destinations



The blue route shows the Camino Frances, the French pilgrimage route which is the most popular one. It starts in either St. Jean-Pied-de-Port or near Urdos and leads through Pamplona, Burgos and León. The green route shows the Northern Camino along the coast, starting in Bayonne and leading via Santander and Oviedo. The pink coloured routes are other pilgrimage routes leading to Santiago de Compostela, many joining or linking the more established routes.

After about 23 km you get to the Rio Mino, just continue over the bridge and you are in the first city along the way: Portomarin!

When you walk straight through the city you'll come to the Municipal Albergue, which like most Municipal Albergues costs € 5.00.

There are also private Albergues for € 10.00 and of course hostals and hotels costing around € 20.00. I was an Albergue user thanks to my Pilgrim's passport. That evening I just ran under the shower, couldn't believe that I walked 23 km, called my mum and went to sleep. The sleep was better than I thought in a room with about 25 people.

The next morning I started early at about 7 am, off to Palas de Rei. The day started rainy, but it got better and better. After seeing all the "usual" guys like Mario and another Spanish guy called Rodrigo, who likes Italian football, I met and made new friends: Akiko and Inaki.

Akiko is a Japanese girl, who needs to do the trip as a requirement for university because she has to do a presentation on St James. She did the whole Spanish Camino. Inaki is a Spanish guy, who is working in the wintertime in the Pyrenees as a snowboard teacher and in the summertime in the south as a kite surfing teacher - what a life!

That night, we all stayed at the municipal albergue in Palas de Rei. We found that the tourist office provides free

internet to keep in touch with family while on St James' Way.

My feet really burned that evening and I had already used all my plasters. So I was quite afraid of the next day. And my fears were confirmed, when I started walking the next day.

The first few kilometers were alright, but then it started to really hurt. I just limped for a long time. Shortly before Melide I started thinking that I would just push on to Melide even if I wanted to go further. But then it started to rain and Melide was quite narrow, wet and packed with travellers, because everyone wanted to make a break there.

'The last 5km were nothing compared to the rest of the trips'

I decided not to stop there and I found a place just outside Melide. My feet were aching and I had no plasters. I couldn't take one more step forwards and I couldn't go back. I had to find a solution.

I remembered a hint from a Brazilian guy. He told me that I'd have to prick the blisters open. Disgusting, but it's so unbelievable true! I wouldn't need plasters at all. So I tried my best and it worked so well and the more I walked the better it got. And then just behind me I saw Rodrigo!

He had made a break in Melide and now tried to catch up to his father, who he was

travelling with. So we had great conversations and - I can't believe till today - we still walked a further 15 km that day to Arzúa. That night I slept in a cheap hotel and ate pulpo with Rodrigo.

The next leg of the trip was to Monte de Gozo, it was my longest leg of the Camino with nearly 40 km! Monte de Gozo is just about 5 km from Santiago and has space for about 500 pilgrims.

The last 5 km were nothing compared to the rest of the journey, but Santiago City was something! I never seen a packed city liked this! Maybe it was because I arrived on October 10, 2010 or because it was a Sunday in the holy year.

In this packed city it was quite an adventure to find a cheap place to sleep. My tip is the Albergue Final del Camino. It's a little hidden away, but it is located about 15 minutes from the city centre. The mass for the pilgrims is every day at 12 o'clock, but there are more during the day.

Walking along the Camino de Santiago de Compostela is a great journey and I met a lot of great people. If you like less busy parts of the Camino, you should walk more than me, more than the last 100 km.

There are a lot of pilgrims on the last leg to Santiago and you'll find people to walk and talk with and you are never really alone.

My recommendation: walk the entire Camino, if you can! You will need about four weeks to complete it.

SAINT JAMES

Known as James the Greater, he was one of the Twelve Apostles and the brother of John the Apostle.

He was preaching the gospel in Iberia, when the Virgin Mary appeared to him on a pillar in Zaragoza. He returned to Judea, where he was beheaded by King Herod Agrippa I in 44 AD.

James' remains were buried in Santiago de Compostela and the shrine became a popular pilgrimage site, making it the third most holy site in Roman Catholicism after Jerusalem and Rome.

The pilgrimage to his grave became increasingly popular from the early Middle Ages onwards.

CAMINO - WEBSITES

Camino de Santiago
www.caminodesantiago.me.uk

Confraternity of St James
www.csj.org.uk

Spanish Steps
www.spanishsteps.eu

World Walks
www.worldwalks.com

The Way of St James
www.thewayof-stjames.com

Info - Way of Saint James
www.way-of-saint-james.info

Compostela Pilgrimage
www.compostelapilgrimage.com

Camino Pictures
www.santiago-compostela.net

TRAVELLING ON THE CHEAP IN THE ARCTIC CIRCLE

After quitting his job, globetrotter **Erik Jelinek** set out to travel the world on as little money as possible. Over the coming issues, he will guide **SHOESTRING** readers through the regions he visited and share his experience and advice.

A year ago I was working in a rather hum-drum office job in London.

My feet were getting itchy and the lure of a career didn't seem that appetising and so I quit with the intention of travelling round for a few years to discover more about our fascinating world.

I had saved up some money but my salary was nothing special, so I knew I would have to travel on a shoestring budget if I was to stay out for as long as I hoped.

Nine months in and things are going well. I'm well under my initial budget (of around £18 a day) despite travelling through some of the most expensive countries in the world.

Different regions have different quirks and traits and ways of saving the pennies, however there are some general tricks to budget travelling that are universal and so I will mention them here at the start.

First and foremost is accommodation. This is the biggest drain on finances during any travel abroad and there are a couple of ways to dampen its effects.

The most useful is via some hosting network, such as Hospitality Club or Couchsurfing. As this has been

covered in the issue #1 of Shoestring magazine, I will not go into any great details, except to say that you should not look upon these networks as free accommodation. Doing so will not get you far at all.

Instead they are far more than that. They are a way of getting in touch with aspects of a country, its culture, its people and its traditions that one would never get just staying in hostels. The hosts are invaluable contacts and are usually worth the trip alone.

A great deal of trust is required from both parties and you will need to be flexible with timing and travel to fit into your host's schedule. Be prepared for the unexpected and let yourself go with the flow.

Some of the most amazing things happen unexpectedly (my best couchsurfing experience occurred when I just met up for a few drinks with a contact in a sleepy town in Western Sahara - before I knew what was happening I was in the middle of a traditional Sahrawi wedding!).

Being hosted is not an automatic right and sometimes it will not work out for various reasons. In such cases it is necessary to have a back-up plan. My favourite is my tent.

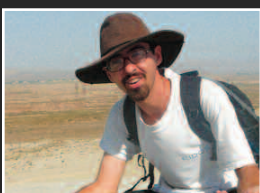
Free camping adds a frisson of excitement to your travels as it may not be totally legal in some countries, but the flexibility it gives you is very liberating and it allows you to truly go off the beaten track.

Beware though; you will be carrying round a few extra kilos which you will feel.

Transport is also a big budget item. To reduce its effects to the max I recommend hitchhiking whenever possible.



Writer Profile



Name: Erik Jelinek

Age: 30

The world is a far more interesting and weird place than you could ever imagine



Above: Hiking along Knivskjelodden, looking south on the Nordkapp cliffs in Norway, the northernmost point in continental Europe; One of Finland's 50,000 lakes you might come across. Below: Wild camping on the Lofoten islands - the tricky part is to find flat ground that is not marsh. Photos: ErJe





Above: A musk ox is one of the many species of wildlife you could come across on the side of the road. Below: Some of the amazing camping facilities offered in Finland
Photos: ErJe



'Allemansrätten basically allows

Of course it is necessary to add the disclaimer that it is not 100% safe and it isn't always reliable, but there are ways to reduce the risks.

Firstly try and hitch in pairs if you can, especially if you are a girl. Secondly, if you are uncertain about a potential ride then politely refuse - you are not obliged to get into every car that stops.

And thirdly keep people informed. A great resource for potential hitchers are websites such as hitchwiki.org which not only have a large database of prime hitching locations around the world, but also give hints and tips on how to hitch efficiently and safely.

If hitching is too extreme then a more organised, and safer, way is to use ridesharing networks, such as mitfahrzentrale.de (Germany), freewheelers.co.uk (UK) and kyydit.net (Finland).

If you can at all procure one I would also strongly recommend getting a student ID of some kind. An International Student Identity Card (ISIC) is the best option. In some countries where many people can't read English (such as China), any official looking card with your photo on it is worth a try to bag a discount.

And finally a mobile phone with Wi-Fi capability. A mobile is very handy for emergencies, and if you are couchsurfing then it is essential for contacting hosts and keeping in touch with them.

If you have one with Wi-Fi capability then you can use the increasing number of free Wi-Fi hotspots to check e-mails,

write messages and even make free phone calls using Skype.

But enough of the generalisations and let's move to some specifics. Towards the start of my trip I spent almost two and a half months in Scandinavia and Finland. These countries are amongst the most expensive in the world and are definitely not considered budget destinations.

However, with care and ingenuity it is possible to have a great time exploring these beautiful countries which have a lot to offer, for a very reasonable amount. My average spend was just under £14 (not including insurance), which was significantly less than when I visited West Africa, one of the poorest places in the world, only 18 months before.

How is that possible? Well the most important thing to remember is that Scandinavia and Finland, although doted with some interesting historical sights, are not world cultural hotspots.

.....>
'These countries are home to some of the most unspoilt nature'
.....>

You don't go there for the museums, galleries or nightlife - just see how far your budget stretches after a couple of beers in Norway! Instead these countries are home to some of the most majestic and unspoilt nature in Europe.

And the great thing about nature is that it's free. There are a multitude of stunning national parks with well-maintained hiking trails and

cheap camping options that will slake the thirst of every outdoors enthusiast.

Norway is the king of jaw-dropping landscapes, with the spectacular fjords running up much of the west coast. Among the standout places to visit are the Preikestolen and Trolltunga rock formations that give you vertigo-inducing views of the fjord walls that drop hundreds of metres below you.

Another superlative place to visit is the Lofoten archipelago which lies to the north of the Arctic Circle and is like something straight out of Middle Earth.

Many people also visit Norway to bag one of Europe's "extremities". The northernmost point on continental Europe is a bragging right for dedicated travellers, and many make the pilgrimage up to Nordkapp.

Unfortunately to enter the visitor centre and get to the cliffs "at the edge of Europe" is prohibitively expensive. Furthermore, if you do get there and look to your left you will notice a piece of headland jutting further north than you.

Yes, Nordkapp is one of the world's great marketing hoaxes. As a discerning budget traveller get off the road a few kilometres before Nordkapp and start walking 9km

Many food items are thrown out even if they are still edible. All these items were found by Erik and his host while dumpster diving one night.



you access to uncultivated land'

northwest to the real northernmost point of continental Europe at Knivskjellodden, sign your name in the guestbook, laugh at the muppets on the cliff at Nordkapp and pocket the 20 pounds you have saved.

However Norway doesn't have the monopoly on nature and scenery. In Finland you can walk the legendary Karhunkierros (Bear Ring) hike through some pristine Arctic forest and earn kudos points from any Finn you meet thereafter (the cabins along the route are also the best I have ever stayed in and are completely free), or paddle around some of Finland's 55,000 lakes.

In Sweden the archipelago just south of Stockholm is begging to be explored by kayak (or you could visit the archipelago off the Finnish coast by Turku), or you can explore the vast tracts of wilderness in the many national parks in the empty area of Swedish Lapland where the reindeer outnumber the humans by 20 to 1 and you have a good chance of spotting bear, lynx, elk and golden eagles. These are just a few examples of the places you can visit, but there are many more.

Travelling on a budget in these countries is very doable, but you have to work at it a

little harder than in most other places. Accommodation is potentially the biggest worry, but also the easiest to solve.

Along with hosting networks, most Scandinavian countries have the concept of allemansrätten (everyman's right) firmly enshrined in law. Basically this allows you unhindered access to all uncultivated land everywhere, the right to pick berries and mushrooms everywhere, and the right to pitch your tent anywhere, as long as it is more than 100m or so from the nearest house.

◀.....▶
'Food is thrown out even if it is still perfectly good'
◀.....▶

Food can also come very cheap if you are prepared to get a little dirty and do a little dumpster diving. Scandinavians are particularly food conscious so a lot of food is thrown out from supermarkets once it is past its sell-by date, even if it is perfectly good.

Also don't forget about the berries if you are there in season, which are delicious and far better than anything you will find in the shops. Hitchhiking, however, can be

problematic in Scandinavia as people are a little paranoid about the risks of picking up strangers.

Here you will have to be very patient or bite the bullet and pay for transport every now and again for longer distances (a student card is invaluable for Norwegian buses, but discounts are only available to local students in Finland).

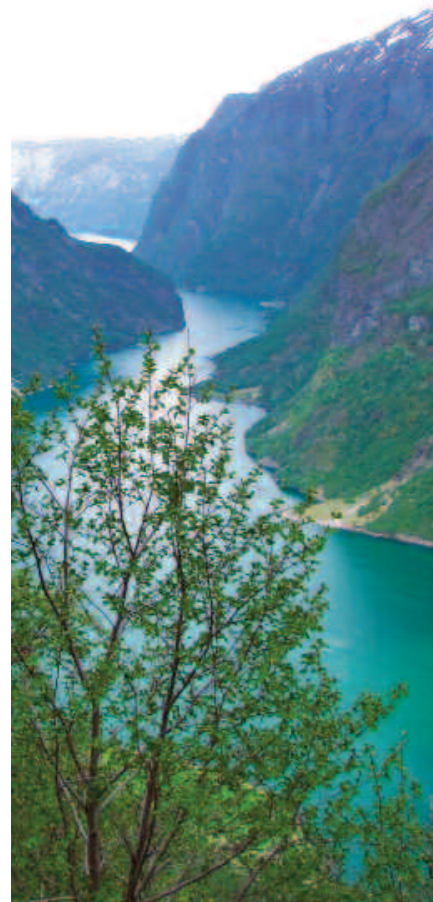
Another plus of travelling in these countries, and one that certainly shouldn't be ignored, is that most people speak English to a very high standard, and so you will always not only be able to make yourself understood, but also have some in-depth conversations with the locals and learn more about how people live, what they think and about their customs and traditions (other than Abba and depressing films).

So the next time you are thinking about a cheap destination where you can spend some time in the great outdoors, do some phenomenal hikes in some of the world's most gorgeous scenery then you really ought to think about Scandinavia.

.....
If you would like to learn more about Erik's travels then you can visit his blog where he recounts his adventures and day - to - day struggles in more detail.

<http://tchecossais.blogspot.com>
.....

Above: Norway's UNESCO-listed Nærøyfjord offers great hiking opportunities as well as a passenger ferry to appreciate the cliffs. Below left: A harbour on the Lofoten archipelago north of the Arctic Circle. Below right: View from Erik's tent after accidentally pitching at the end of a military runway. Photos: ErJe



KINDNESS OF STRANGERS BREAKDOWN IN AUSTRALIA

One thing that a country as vast and varied as Australia lends itself to, has to be roadtrips. But while most head towards the Outback, **SHOESTRING** editor **Conny Kaufmann** took her car through rural New South Wales and Queensland, experiencing some Australian hospitality on the way.

The starting point of Conny and Chris' roadtrip: Country music capital Tamworth. Below: Conny and her Ford Falcon 'Marty' on the day of purchase. Photos: CoKa



I had been in and around New South Wales country music capital Tamworth for three weeks, working on various farms in the district and taking in the annual Country Music Festival.

But I wanted to see more of the land Down Under. I had pretty much all I needed: a small first aid kit, detailed road maps and I even found myself a travel buddy - a girl named Chris who I'd worked with previously. All that was missing was a form of transport.

My plan was to eventually make my way to Brisbane in Queensland, where I would meet up with a school friend of mine. I had been on buses and trains before and for once I wanted to be able to stop along the way to have a coffee and appreciate the view whenever it took my fancy.

So I did what a lot of backpackers in Australia eventually succumb to: I bought a car. I had hoped to buy a car off a fellow backpacker but there weren't any cars advertised in the papers or on notice boards.

So I had a look around several used car dealers in Tamworth before finding some cars within my budget. I had never bought a car by myself,

but I knew what I had to check and do before signing anything.

I checked underneath the cars to make sure there weren't any leaks - this simple measure eliminated two cars from my list immediately.

Next, I had a look under the bonnet of the remaining cars. The engines all looked fine as far as I could tell, so I checked the oil and water levels. On two cars the levels were too low, which made me think that they hadn't been looked after properly and might need expensive repairs if anything had overheated or burst. The last two cars on my list passed, and I made sure they didn't have too many visible rusty spots.

I drove both cars around town for a test drive. Both cars were automatics, roughly the same age and they both felt alright. They sounded good and also passed my emergency brake test on a quiet street.

Now all I had to do was decide between a pickup and a Ford Falcon. In the end, I opted for the Ford. It was cheaper, had more space - so much in fact, that I could have slept in it - and it also meant that I wouldn't have to leave all my belongings on the open back of a pickup truck.

Writer Profile



Name: Cornelia Kaufmann
Age: 23

This globetrotter caught the travel bug in 2003 and has no intention of ever getting rid of it again



The actual buying part took only a few minutes. I was told I had to register as the new owner within two weeks and all would be good. With that, I got the keys to my new ride. A Bordeaux-coloured 1992 Ford Falcon which somebody had nicknamed “Marty” according to the key ring.

I was allowed to register the car using the hostel’s address and did that straight away. One last night in Tamworth with Aussie BBQ and kangaroo steaks and then we had to pack our things. The next morning, Chris and I grabbed our backpacks, bought an esky which we filled with cans of soda and then bid Tamworth a fond farewell, heading east.

◀.....▶ ‘The car’s engine clonked out going around the corner’ ◀.....▶

Enjoying the new-found freedom of going wherever we wanted, we followed the New England Highway to Armidale, where we had a coffee before we turned south to follow Grafton Road / Waterfall Way.

The plan had been to get to the coast for a change of scenery, but we had misjudged the distance. We decided to push on to the next town with a youth hostel which would be Bellingen. The coast could wait a day or two.

Bellingen is a quirky, little hippie town, and we located the YHA in no time at all. Luckily, they still had two beds in a dorm left as we hadn’t called ahead. Housed in a Victorian-style building with extensions, a massive porch and balcony and a labyrinth of stairwells, this hostel was backpacker heaven.

After dinner at the hostel and a stroll around town we immediately decided to explore Bellingen properly and stay another night, especially after we saw the flying foxes fill the night sky.

Leaving Bellingen, we continued to Coffs Harbour and wanted to push on to Ballina following the Pacific Highway. Everything was going smoothly and we were doing well for time.

We had just pulled out of Grafton, when I noticed the

temperature gauge shooting up to hot and smoke coming from the bonnet. As I was on the highway, there was no hard shoulder or lay-by I could have pulled up in.

So I pushed on and pulled into the first street I came across. The engine actually clonked out just as I was going turning off the highway, so we had to push the car around the corner and onto the side street.

We had pulled up in a town called Ulmarra, roughly 13 km north of Grafton, New South Wales. It was the first time either of us had broken down due to anything engine-related.

While I popped the bonnet and let the smoke out, Chris grabbed our esky and pulled out a cold drink. The car had come to a stop right outside a petrol station, so I went inside and asked for help, but nobody there was a mechanic.

They pointed me to another petrol station, about a kilometer down the road, so I walked there just to find their mechanic on his lunch break. Back at the car, Chris had found a park bench and pulled out the sandwiches we had prepared that morning.

A few people stopped and commented, and one lady even sent her husband round to help us, but he did not look like he knew anything about cars.

While we were sitting there, trying to get hold of the recovery firm, a guy parked his pickup behind us and walked past. He looked at us, looked at the smoking car, and said “Wait here, I’ll just go to the barber shop, I’ll be back in 30 minutes and take a look at it.”

Since we couldn’t go anywhere even if we had wanted to, we waited. And he really did come back. By then, the engine had cooled down sufficiently, and he didn’t lose any time between introducing himself as Bryan and getting underneath the car and having a look.

After a while, Bryan came to the conclusion that a pipe had burst but would be pretty easy to repair. He could fix it himself, if one of us drove into town with him to get the new pipe and pay for it. As it was my car, I reluctantly agreed.

Before I got into his car though, I told Chris to take a couple of pictures of him and myself, jot down his pickup’s



Above: View from the Moonbi Lookout outside of Tamworth.

Below: Stopping at one of the waterfalls along Waterfall Way to stretch our legs. Photos: CoKa





Top: Conny's travel buddy Chris fooling around. Above: Conny at the wheel of her Australian car, on a blast through the countryside. Below: Locals pour in to help after 'Marty' broke down in Ulmarra. Photos: CoKa

'We went from being str

registration and call the cops if I wasn't back in two hours. After all, we were two girls travelling alone, and I was about to drive into Grafton with a complete stranger. You can't be too careful.

On the way into town, Bryan told me that he used to drive trucks and had his fair share of breakdowns. Every time he broke down, he was grateful when somebody stopped to help, which is why he now makes it a point to stop and help others that are stranded at the roadside. Within minutes of arriving in Grafton, we had located a pipe that would fit my Ford.

The good thing about having bought an elderly Ford is that spare parts are quite easy to come by and that nearly everyone - mechanic or not - knows how to fix them. Back at the car, Chris and I helped Bryan remove the old pipe and fit in the new, as our fingers were slimmer than his and could reach the pipe better.

Although the car sputtered back into life, we could only get it onto Bryan's driveway around the corner before breaking down again. By then, the light was fading; we had nowhere to stay and no means of getting anywhere.

Bryan offered that we could stay the night at his place and he'd have another, proper look at the car in the morning. We accepted the offer and set up camp in his guestroom.

Because Bryan burned the dinner he was preparing for us,

he took us out and gave us a great tip on the way: If you're on the road, look for the roadhouses that have trucks and pickups out front. This means that the coffee is good and the food is filling and cheap.

Chris and I decided to order the cheapest thing on the menu, because Bryan insisted on buying dinner for us. So we ordered a bowl of chips each, not knowing that behind our backs, Bryan got the waitress to throw a steak on the plate as well, which we were really grateful for.

.....>
'The Ford's head gasket was only siliconed together'
.....>

The next morning, we helped push the car into the yard and had a look under the bonnet now that the smoke had stopped. Bryan was certain he could fix it - and said that he only wanted me to pay for the material costs, not the time he'd have to put in.

We figured it would take a while to fix when we started taking the engine apart. In the afternoon, we asked whether Bryan could drop us in Grafton so we could take a hotel there - after all we didn't want to overstay our welcome.

We booked ourselves into Grafton's Crown hotel / motel at the end of the main street, right by the river. Bryan kept us



strangers to good friends'

updated on the car, and came around to pick us up when he needed our help and we were happy to oblige.

In the end, we found out that the Ford's head gasket had blown, due to having been siliconed together, which was not visible just looking at the engine. It took about a week to get the car fixed and back on the road and Bryan called me to say he was driving the car back into Grafton for me, if I could give him a lift back to his house.

On one of our visits to his house, I had checked what kind of beer he kept in his fridge. After all, most favours between friends can be paid with a slab of brew in Australia. Once I had the car back, I went and bought 24 bottles of VB.

After all, he had done all the work on the car, let us stay with him and didn't want any money for his time. A generous amount of beer was only fair. But on the way out of Grafton, disaster struck again. At the petrol station, I noticed that I was now leaking oil which was a new development. I managed to come up with a temporary fix for it myself, which would get us back to Bryan's.

While Chris was giving him a hand with the oil leak, I took the beers inside. Luckily the leak was easy to fix and it was soon time to say goodbye to Bryan for the last time. While Chris and I took the opportunity of a bathroom break before hitting the road, Bryan secretly put eight bottles of the beer I

had just bought him back into my esky. He even threw in some bread and cheese for us to make sandwiches with!

I couldn't believe that after all the car trouble and my payback attempt, he would still give it away so that we'd be looked after. In the space of only a week, we went from strangers to really good friends.

When we finally pulled out of his drive, he even gave us a number to call should we get lost in Brisbane. Sticking to his suggestions, we only drove in the morning and afternoon in an attempt to stay out of the midday heat and keep the engine from boiling up again.

To be on the safe side, we stopped overnight in Lennox Head and resumed our drive to Brisbane the next morning. In Brisbane, all I wanted to do was park the car and never come back to it after all the trouble it had caused.

But because that was impossible, I advertised it on several backpacker notice boards. In the end, I sold it to a used car dealer - luckily the car was behaving itself on the test drive. Although I made a loss on the car, I was glad to have it off my hands. But then again, I wouldn't have experienced true Australian hospitality, if it hadn't bought that Ford in the first place.

For tips on how to buy a second hand car, check out SHOESTRING page 28



Top: Enjoying a cold beer with Bryan after a day of car repairing. Above: View of Grafton and the river from the hotel. Below: Bryan, Chris and Conny with fully-repaired Ford Falcon 'Marty'. Photos: CoKa



GIVING HEALTH EDUCATION IN MAASAI COUNTRY

Finding out what levels of human rights awareness and health care exist in rural Kenya has been a learning curve for **SHOESTRING** contributor **Riva Jalipa**.



While working for an organisation in Kenya, I was given the chance to travel to Loita and get insight into the local health care system.

Loita is about two hours from Narok, and Narok is about two hours from Nairobi. We ride with Manfred who also had some business there, and who was described to me as being too much of a gentleman to allow us to mat it.

The drive to Narok is smooth-going and we only stop briefly at 'The World Trade Centre' and other shops to take pictures of the Great Rift Valley and to haggle with the sheep skin vendors about buying some. I love sheep skin and used to swim in it as a child, but they are too expensive so we leave without.

When we got to Narok, we were met by Dr. Maria at a green petrol station. We snack on samosas and tea at a nearby restaurant and then split ourselves up between Manfred's and Dr Maria's cars.

The second leg of the journey is very bushy and for the most part, devoid of roads

and so I wonder how Dr. Maria navigates her way around; turning left at this rock over here and right at that hill over there.

.....
'The things they say are interesting and unexpected'
.....

We finally arrive in Entasekera near the Tanzanian border where Dr. Maria has her house and hospital. And you realise all of a sudden, how close you are to nature as there are no services around and no reception unless you climb the next hill, hold your phone high enough and strategically enough to catch one of the Tanzanian networks.

The water for the hospital and staff houses comes from the stream uphill and the electricity is generated from solar panels which Manfred's company provides.

The solar power, however, is not enough for a refrigerator or a television. So we have to consume any fresh foods we

have brought with us within the next few days. We had bought canned foods and dried goods but Dr. Maria's pantry is already stocked full with them.

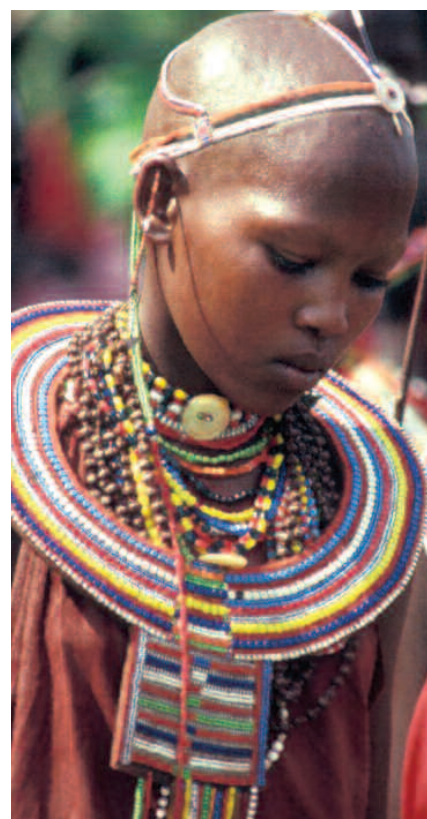
We settle ourselves in and Dr. Maria goes to the hospital. Manfred offers to drive us to the real Maasai market for some vegetable shopping and the sight on arrival is a profuse of red: its almost surreal! Most of the shop vendors are Somali. And I wonder where all the lessos and shukas come from that they can sell them at Ksh 150 here and for Ksh 400 in Nairobi.

We begin our work the next day, asking women a series of questions that will give us a picture of their state and awareness of their human and legal rights. It is interesting, the things that they say, the non-educated ones especially - as they don't give us answers they think we want.

Most of them tend to cattle, waking up at six in the morning, milking the cows and cleaning the homesteads. Only a few work as teachers or in any kind of formal employment. The highest



Maasai women tending to their children. Opposite page top: Looking out over the Loita hills. Photos: MaMa



position they aspire to is councillor. But perhaps this is only because it is the highest rank within their reach. Most of them are married. And all of them went through the horror of female circumcision.

We take exceedingly sweet milk tea during our breaks and it has this burnt taste in it perhaps from being boiled in a sufuria for so long. We watch the women interact with one another, carrying their babies and sipping the same sugar milk tea. The organisation had arranged to conduct human and legal rights workshops and medical training about the dangers of circumcision and so these carry on while we continue our questionnaires.

◀.....▶ 'They talk about the conflict of tradition and modernity' ◀.....▶

We interview a few men and they are decidedly more arrogant in comparison. But their testimonies are of equal note; they talk about the conflict between modernity and tradition; the question of land registration and one man is even so blunt as to confess that he prefers uncircumcised women. I decide I want to write a story about it.

We stay a total of three days doing the questionnaires. And every night Dr. Maria tells us the saddest stories of events at the hospital. A thirteen year old, leaves her baby to die of neglect because she is both depressed and ill-prepared to take care of it. Pregnant women die because their husbands won't take them to hospital sooner. That the clitorises of circumcised women heas to feel like leather and that they rip every time a woman gives birth.

It breaks our hearts. And we can only imagine how often Dr. Maria has her heart broken. This is not helped by the fact that she lives alone and in so remote a place. She says she keeps herself sane by writing journals. And that perhaps one day she'll publish her stories.

We stay a day extra in Loita because the rains threaten the viability of the roads. We are only too happy however to

keep Dr. Maria company.

We meet the Chief and the District Commissioner in the hope that their influence will promote the rights of women. But both seem rather removed or indifferent about it.

One of the men in our workshop, trained in health care and a key staff member will (a few months after our visit) impregnate a fifteen year old and run away from both the girl and our work. That's the benefit of hindsight, I suppose, it puts things into perspective, allows him to be both a sinner and a saint. Perhaps, being trained by Dr. Maria was merely an opportunity out of Loita for him.

We are sad to say goodbye to the women and leave Loita. They shower us with hugs and beaded jewellery. And I am emotional myself; emotional about their situation, emotional that we allowed them to open up, to talk if even just among themselves, about what women mean in their society.

When we returned to Nairobi, we wrote the Needs Assessment in the form of a report. It will be used for a grant proposal that will allow Dr. Maria to continue her work and for the organisation to continue its human and legal rights workshops in the heart of Maasai country.



CAN YOU TRAVEL ACROSS BRITAIN IN ONLY 24 HOURS?

Land's End to John 'O'Groats by train

Just how reliable is Britain's rail network? **David Simister** attempts to find out in just 24 hours, using the country's most revered route as a backdrop.

Sunrise over the Cairngorms works as a wonderful cure for cramp.

The Caledonian Sleeper, when it winds its way through this ineffably beautiful stretch of Scotland at around seven in the morning, seems a stunning and yet utterly surreal surrounding in which to awaken. Yet from yesterday's experience, I now know it's somehow magical.

This was hardcore train travel, an almost non-stop dash across the entire length of Britain in an attempt to emulate the revered Land's End to John 'o' Groats route. Almost every variation of the walk has already been tried, but this trip was never about novelty.

My quest was simple. Can train travel cover an entire country in just 24 hours? Idle research on the internet seemed to suggest so. All I needed to do now was head down to Penzance to find out...

CORNISH FASTIE

The answer to a question few people have ever asked began over a pint at Land's End, the westernmost point of Cornwall and starting point of countless end - to - end escapades.

Gareth Connerty - my photographer - and I had travelled down from Liverpool the previous day to this glorious end of the West Country, and had so far been greeted with warm sunshine and stunning views from the Land's End Hotel, with a velvety blue ocean just a stone's throw

away from the tip of my Guinness.

We didn't stay long. At 12:15pm, we boarded the aptly-named number one bus for the quick trip to Penzance, taking in gorgeous Cornish countryside as we went.

There was just enough time to grab lunch in the idyllic seaside port before boarding a commuter train to Plymouth, a journey which took in some of the West Country's best views along the plentiful curves of the Great Western Railway.

Despite possibly the tightest changeover in history (four minutes!) we somehow managed to make Plymouth on time, jumping straight onto the high speed service for London Paddington.

First Great Western run the service with ageing 125 trains of Intercity fame, but it does at least mean being able to stick your head out of the window to catch some breathtaking spots across the Devon coast.

Obviously our need for speed meant we couldn't get off at stops like Dawlish, but it's a place I'll definitely visit. Never has a stretch of railway seemed so impossibly beautiful. Devon and Somerset rushed by, and as we left the West Country, so the 125 picked up speed. Now we were really flying. Capital, here we come!

LONDON CALLING

The internet had suggested changing tack at Plymouth and heading north, but instead I decided to travel to London, and catch the sleeper train there. Perhaps doing as I was told might have been quicker, but somehow the comfort of the Caledonian seemed more appealing than the time saved travelling north on Virgin Voyagers.

London's also blessed with changeovers that are exciting rather than stressful. Maybe Londoners won't agree, but to a Northerner, the instantaneous and permanently busy Underground seemed like another world.

After we'd arrived at

Paddington Station, it was minutes before we were brushing alongside businessmen somewhere below the capital's streets. With time ticking away, the buzz was as electric as the tube itself.

The Circle Line doesn't actually call at Euston, so we had to walk from Euston Square. At 300 yards, going by foot through Camden wasn't exactly taxing, but in hindsight, I should have savoured every step.

The Caledonian Sleeper was waiting for us at platform 15, and its reclining seats were a world of comfort compared to most of the buses and trains we'd sampled today. Yet with our next stop being Inverness, my feet would only travel as far as the buffet car over 500 miles and twelve hours.

NIGHT RIDER

Not that I really minded, because - even though we were in the cheapest seated coach - First Scotrail had done their homework.

We could afford to stretch out across two seats each because so few were travelling alongside us, and complimentary Scotrail -

branded masks were provided to cover our now weary eyes. In the end, Gareth and I decided to stay up and order some reasonably-priced beers, even though the oddly moody man responsible for the buffet car refused to let us sit in it.

I had been expecting the Caledonian to be a test of endurance, a napping nightmare replete with swaying carriages and constant clackety-clack from the tracks, but I was wrong.

Somewhere past Carlisle, I donned the mask, stretched out across the seats, and drifted off to sleep. I think I might have stirred as they shunted the carriages around in Edinburgh, but the next scenery I'd see would be that of the sun rising over the Cairngorms.

I got up to take some pictures, stretch my legs, and stick my head out of the window to breathe a few breaths of crisp Scotch air. My limbs - free from being bent for hours at contorted angles across the seats - seemed to ache endlessly, but my mind was at peace, awed by the sun-kissed peaks rushing past the window. Surreal, but stirring stuff.



Writer Profile



Name: David Simister

Age: 24

A journalist who loves to explore the British Isles by all means available in search of great beergardens

Opposite: At Land's End. This page: Waking up to a Cairngorms sunrise. Photo: DaSi



Top: The iconic signpost at Land's End, 874 miles from John 'o' Groats. Below: Gareth and David enjoy a pre-journey pint before boarding the first train to the north of Britain. Bottom: David arrives in John 'o' Groats, the northernmost place on the British mainland. Photos: DaSi

HIGHLAND FLING

After what seemed like a lifetime, we finally stepped out of the sleeper after it slumbered into Inverness. The morning was brightened by the same blue skies we'd seen grace Cornwall, but the air was colder, the winds stronger.

It'd be something I'd get used to, because it was eight o' clock and our next train, to Thurso, wasn't leaving until gone half past ten. It became obvious that Land's End to John 'o' Groats within the magical 24 hours wasn't going to happen. We'd manage the rail network's most southerly tip to its most northerly in that timeframe, and somehow, with all our trains running on time. Yet Penzance to Thurso just isn't quite so impressive.

The rest of our trek became similarly disappointing. Inverness to Thurso takes an epic four hours to cover just 120 miles, with moorland scenery which seems impressive at first but seems to stay exactly the same and tires you out on a train that averages just 30mph. Thurso - being the most northerly station in Britain - is an achievement in its own right, but I staggered onto the platform in relief rather than excitement.

Yet even that didn't prepare

for the overwhelming disappointment of John 'o' Groats. The famous final destination was blessed with fine (but windy) weather, but with its disused hotel and scant facilities, Scotland's tip looked to have seen better days.

Thousands of journeymen complete Britain's most famous trip here every year, so why not give them something memorable to finish on? Certainly better public transport would help, because a lack of it combined with an unhelpful taxi firm resulted in us having to head back - at massively expensive taxi prices - via nearby Wick.

JOURNEY'S END

We somehow made it back to Inverness, ready for a comfy night at the youth hostel, relieved we'd left the far north. As much as I hate to offend the people of Caithness, John 'o' Groats was a massive disappointment.

At least I'd answered the pointless question; you can't go end-to-end in 24 hours using just trains and buses. Taking the Liverpool flight the next morning, I pondered whether it's possible to do the same sort of thing and visit all five nations in the British Isles within that same timeframe.

But that's another story...



EXPERIENCING THE LAND OF SMILES THROUGH FOOD

India is a country well known for its hospitality. No wonder then, that locals invite travellers into their homes to share meals, stories, cultures and laughs. **Niamh Keoghan** was lucky enough to make new friends and enjoy the local cuisine.

India is the land of hospitality. I was told this before my visit. It wasn't however until I stepped foot on the soil of this magical land, that I realized the truth behind this statement.

And I'm now a true believer that there's nowhere else in the world to experience a mentality where natives will give beyond belief, whether they have a little or a lot; they will aim to offer you their world.

For 6 months I ventured through south India. The people I wanted to touch base with, weren't the tourists or travellers. I wanted to focus as much as possible on meeting and befriending the locals.

And so, this is what I did. An amazing experience, is definitely what I had. The locals I met through the jobs I was doing - as I was teaching English in various schools - would treat me like royalty.

Colleagues would arrange special evenings for me, they would take me for chai, show me the sights, arrange my transport, provide me with expenses and do what they love to do most in the world, which was expressing their love, kindness and culture through the Indian cuisine.

Writer Profile



Name: Niamh Keoghan

Age: 27

Travel is my source of inspiration and creativity and it's a method of expressing parts of myself

Opening up to their generosity and letting myself be embraced by their giving nature, brought me to learn a few valuable lessons. When it came to the cuisine and the importance of engaging in this aspect of their culture, I realized that people are offended when you say “no” to food, regardless of the reason behind your rejection of what they consider to be an expression of love.

Because in India, love is shown through food, from preparing to consuming; hours of chopping vegetables, grinding spices, cutting herbs, mixing batters and adding gallons of love, brings together the sum-total of how best to acquaint yourself with India and the people. The preparation is timeless, their love is timeless and their food-intake is timeless.

‘The food really can be out of this world!’

To avoid disappointing these loving people and to not come across as being the “ungrateful traveller who doesn’t appreciate Indian cuisine, and therefore is neglecting the Indian culture”, more often than not, I just ate whenever, whatever, and as much as they wanted me to, whilst being in their homes. The food really can be “out of this world”.

But, even so, on several occasions I became physically sick by the amount of food they gave me (no matter how delicious it was). I reluctantly ate, because I felt I couldn't say "no". And on other occasions the physical sickness

was brought on by eating particular foods my stomach simply couldn't handle. I was well aware of this fact, but I was taking their pride into account and therefore I wasn't going to let my weak stomach reject their love, their kindness and their culture.

I was eating just to please them and harming myself in the process. Not the wisest thing to do but a learning curve if ever there was one!

It took a few incidents before I actually realized that I don't have to suffer in order to keep a smile on the beautiful faces of the friendliest hostesses in the world. I don't have to feel obliged to take from their giving hearts and homes, if I don't feel comfortable doing so. This shouldn't be the approach when it comes to accepting their hospitality.

And hospitality concerns not only the cuisine they offer, but also the daytrips, expenses, accommodation and gifts. Stating your needs clearly and not saying “yes” just to please others, can be a way to set yourself free in your receipt of generosity.



**Top: Niamh hitching a ride.
Below: Taking in the culture.
Photos: NiKe**



Otherwise the simplicity in taking and not being allowed to give them your thanks in return, can start to take an effect.

I reached a point in my travels, where the hospitality became overwhelming. The first encounters of being treated like the King or Queen of the house, were a novelty. It was new and special, and whilst travelling, it's definitely something not to miss out on. But when the attention starts to feel too much and almost every person "wants a piece of you", you start to ask yourself: why me?

Why shower me, personally, with this generosity, when you don't even know me? Is it only because I'm not Indian? Is it only because the status the local family holds within the neighbourhood, will be raised while a foreigner is visiting? You even start to wonder if you weren't white, would they still embrace you like this! Many questions as to "why such giving hearts" started roaming through my mind, but I never was able to find the answers.

I tried but it only left me feeling frustrated and

suddenly the real enjoyment in these precious experiences was fading and becoming a thing of the past.

I started to feel like I was taking too much, and they were asking for nothing in return. They were insulted when I offered gifts, or when I tried to repay them in some way or another. They didn't want to hear me say "thank-you". This they even considered to be another insult.

.....>
**'They'll remember
you, talk about you
and take you in'**
.....>

To avoid walking away with feelings of having taken too much and not having given enough and to stop these thoughts from weighing heavy in your backpack, it's important to unburden yourself. You can do this by truly feeling that your visit was treasured to such an extent, that the local family was willing to give you their all, and more, if they had the chance. The happiness and enjoyment

they experience is often beyond our comprehension.

When you truly feel this, then you know there's a balance. They give without their homes and you give in your uniqueness. They give you an experience, just as much as you give them an experience. The impact it's made on your travels is just as big as the impact you've made on their lives forever.

Because when you leave and venture onwards, they will be feeling full and rich in their knowledge that a foreigner related to them so closely, even if it was only for a very brief few days and it cost them a weekly wage. They will always and forever remember you, talk about you and take you in, if you so happen to land upon their doorstep without any prior warning. A phone-call when you're in need of help and they will do anything for you.

It's one hell of an inspiration you've been to this family, by simply choosing to say "yes" to their homely invitation and their generosity when they so eagerly wanted to embrace you. It's what both sides

wanted: you - the foreigner - and the locals. You both wanted to learn from each other and relate to each others cultures, families, lifestyles and, most importantly, cuisine!

My experiences with the openhearted locals, makes my Indian adventure extra special and there's simply nowhere else on earth where people give without expecting anything in return. For some reason they see the magic in you just as much as you see the magic in their land and so, also in them.

So when you get the chance, and you travel that amazing country, my advice to you is to definitely take opportunities to experience their hospitality, but find a balance between what they give you and what they are willing to take. And never forget, that you are a free traveller, and when it gets too overwhelming, simply walk away, count your blessings and continue your journey for you!

But never forget to thank the magic of travel for the lessons it teaches us, no matter where we may roam.



KAPA HAKA AND THERMAL WONDERLANDS

New Zealand's North Island is home to the country's fascinating geothermal activity, ranging from mudpools to active volcanoes. It is also the centre of Maori culture, a combination **SHOESTRING** editor **Cornelia Kaufmann** felt compelled to check out.



'Te Wairoa became New Zealand's Pompeii'

The smell of sulphur is overwhelming at first. It is absolutely everywhere, but I find that my nose gets used to it within a few breaths.

Steam comes out of the bubbling, boiling mud pool in the center of Rotorua.

The city in the heart of New Zealand's thermal wonderland is known for its geysers, mud pools and natural spas. But it is also home to one of the biggest Maori cultural institutions in the country and worth every minute you will spend there. And if breathing those sulphuric fumes is the price to pay, then I am happy to pay it - after all there is a lot to distract you.

Rotorua and the surrounding towns have been known for centuries thanks to the healing qualities of the thermal water. The Old Bath - now the Rotorua Museum - located in the

Government Gardens was the number one location for thermal therapeutic treatments in 1908.

But unfortunately the thermal powers around Rotorua did not always do good. The village of Te Wairoa, on the shore of Lake Tarawera, became New Zealand's Pompeii after Mount Tarawera erupted in 1886 and buried the Maori settlement which had been frequented by travellers for its proximity to the Pink and White Terraces.

The terraces were hailed as natural wonders of their time. Along with the village, they were buried by the eruption and have never been found again. Te Wairoa was partially excavated and is now an open-air museum giving insight into village life of the 1880s as well as access to the lake.

The thermal activity is

evident all throughout Rotorua. Public parks contain sulphur and mud pools but the city's most famous geothermal hotspot is located deep inside another attraction. Te Puia - formerly known as Whakarewarewa Maori Arts and Culture Institute - is the most important Maori learning institute in the country, and houses Puhuto geyser, famed for its display of smoke and steam, in its geothermal park.

.....>
'If your intentions
are good don't react
to the challenge'
.....>

Visitors to the Te Puia Marae, a traditional Maori meeting house, will be met by a warrior. The challenge he poses to his visitors looks

intimidating but the principle behind the shouting, spear-weaving and eye rolling is simple: If your intentions are bad, you fight back or flee to get back up. If your intentions are good, you stay calm.

Once you have passed this challenge, you will be invited into the marae for a ceremony. Maraes are holy places, each unique to the tribe it belongs to. The wooden carvings represent the tribe's ancestors and creation story. Out of respect, visitors have to leave their shoes at the marae's door.

Inside, the ceremony starts with the well-known Kapa Haka "Ka Mate", which many know as rugby team All Black's war chant. Wahines, Maori women, sing love songs and tell the legend of Lake Rotorua's creation. Skills are displayed during Poi dances and more kapa hakas. The ceremony is very energetic and rhythmic and everybody has a great time.

Once outside again, I take a stroll through a traditional village and the thermal wonderland that stretches behind it. I pass Puhuto geyser and am lucky enough to catch one of its eruptions. By now, I only register the sulphur smell when I walk straight through a fresh cloud.

On the other side of the thermal park is a village, called Whakarewarewa. Unlike the Maori Arts and Culture Institute, this is a real, lived-in village. Kids take baths in the hot pools, and next to traditional buildings like maraes there are also general

Previous page: Puhuto Geyser. Top left: Maori wahine at Te Puia. Top right: Whakarewarewa village. Below: Tiki wood carving. Photos: CoKa





stores, restaurants and modern houses. I learn how to dance with a poi, a small, soft ball on a string and it does look a lot easier than it actually is.

While I am in Whakarewarewa, I also try their speciality corn - fresh out of the boiling water. It tastes surprisingly nice and normal considering that it had been dipped into a sulphuric pool. Unfortunately, I don't have the chance to also enjoy a hangi, an earth-oven dinner.

Heading south out of Rotorua towards Taupo, I pass several more Maori villages known for boiling pools and geysers. A quirky, non-thermal attraction just outside of Taupo is Huka Falls. It does not have a Maori connection, and it's not hot water, but the fact that it is proclaimed as "World-famous in New Zealand" makes me laugh, stop and have a free look around. With the water gushing by I finally notice that I can't smell sulphur anymore.

Taupo, on the shore of Lake Taupo, offers a stunning view of the Central Plateau, three volcanoes that make up the backbone of Tongariro National Park. But it is once you pass Lake Taupo and get onto State Highway 1, that you fully appreciate how differently geothermal activity can shape landscapes. While the scenery around Rotorua is lush and green, State Highway 1 gets a very descriptive nickname in Tongariro National Park.

The Desert Road runs past Mount Tongariro, Mount Ngauruhoe and New Zealand's most active volcano Mount Ruapehu, which last erupted in 2007. The ground is dry and stony but the Tongariro

Crossing is one of the best hikes in the country. Mount Ruapehu is also accessible, and has two major ski fields as well as the North Island's only glaciers.

◀.....▶ **'The North Island of New Zealand really has it all'**▶

Heading east instead of south out of Taupo, New Zealand's thermal wonderland continues. The stretch of highway between Taupo and Art Deco city Napier is known as Thermal Highway, leads past countless waterfalls and more geysers. Napier, right on the shore of the Pacific Ocean, was rebuilt in 1931 in Art Deco style, because the whole town was destroyed by one of the worst earthquakes the region has ever seen.

New Zealand's North Island

has it all. From therapeutic mud pools, to Art Deco architecture, excellent hiking trails over volcanic territory and a massive dose of Maori culture. You could lose yourself in it. It's everywhere, maybe more than even locals sometimes realise. Places have traditional names, and many of these even tell a Maori legend.

The language Te Reo Maori can be heard everywhere, and some words have made it into everyday English. New Zealand's own Maori name - Aotearoa - means "Land of the long white cloud." You might get asked whether you're a Pakeha. The literal translation is "rotten flesh", but it is used as a common term for Europeans and is not meant as an insult.

However, the only word you will really have to remember is "Kia Ora." It means welcome or hello, and is typically served with a smile.

.....▶ **WEBSITES**▶

An overview of Maori culture
www.maori.com

New Zealand's official website
www.newzealand.com

Rotorua city and attractions
www.rotoruanz.com

Te Wairoa Buried Village
www.buriedvillage.co.nz

Tongariro Crossing
www.tongarirocrossing.org.nz

In and around Taupo
www.greatlaketaupo.com

Maori Language tips
www.maorilanguage.net

World famous Huka Falls
www.hukafalls.com

Art Deco city Napier
www.napier.nz.com



Top left: Mt Tongariro on the Desert Road. Top right: New Zealand Silver Fern. Below: Maori challenge at Te Puia. Photos: CoKa

CHECKLIST FOR BUYING A SECOND-HAND CAR

Getting hold of an old car to travel around with is often quite high up on the backpacker must-do list. Mechanic **Gareth Connerty** knows a lot about owning older cars and recommends that you check the following before signing on the dotted line.

Whether you buy a car from a used car dealer or off a fellow backpacker who is heading home, don't just take their word for it when they tell you that it is 'running fine.'

Your dad might have given you the well-meant advice to check 'under the bonnet' when you said you were planning to buy a car. But what if you're not sure what to look for? And there are more parts to check, than just the bonnet.

INTERIOR CHECKS:

Switch on the ignition. Pay attention whether all the warning lights illuminate and go out again when you start the car.

Check that all electrical items work. Make sure the dashboard lights come on when you turn the lights on.

ROAD TEST:

Ideally start the vehicle from cold. Get the car up to temperature, making sure the vehicle doesn't overheat on the move (or stationary for that matter).

Operate the heater to make sure it blows both hot and cold air.

With all cars, perform an emergency brake test on a quiet street somewhere. Step on the brakes while you're travelling at speed and check for stopping power, whether the steering pulls to either side, and whether you can feel a vibration through the pedal.

Check the tracking: the steering wheel should not pull to the left or right while you move in a straight line.

Suspension: Listen for squeaks and rattles which may be caused by worn components.

Take a torch: check the tyre condition. If they are bald, you will have to invest in new ones.

Look for signs of corrosion which usually starts on the lower sections of the vehicle, for example sills, wheel arches.

For manual cars: Make sure the gear selection is smooth and the clutch bite is low. Go through all the gears and check for clutch slip while you're on the road test.

Automatic cars: Make sure all the settings work, and that the car moves through the gears.

Make sure 'kick down' works.



Backpacker cars in New Zealand. Above: A Daihatsu Sirion, perfect for all day drives with enough boot space for a few backpacks. But if you really want to save money, get something like the Toyota on the left because you can even sleep in it! A van might also be a good idea if you're travelling in a group. Photos: CoKa

SERVICE HISTORY:

Check that the vehicle identification matches the log book.

If it has a current MOT /WOF: check if there were any advisories and whether any of them have been fixed. If they have not been fixed they could be costly repairs.

If the vehicle is not taxed, it should be on SORN.

ENGINE BAY CHECKS

Once you open the bonnet, check for any obvious signs of fluid loss and leaks. Also check underneath the vehicle for any leaks of water or oil.

Remove the oil filter cap and check for signs of a residue of mayonnaise - like substance. This is a sign of headgasket failure due to oil and water mixing together.

Remove the dip stick to check the oil level and condition. If the oil is black, the car would

benefit from an oil change. If the oil is clear, it has recently been serviced.

Check for any evidence of previous accident damage - look down the chasis sections and check for bumper, wings and bonnet alignments. If any of the panel gaps are large, then it's a sign of previous body work.

Check the coolant level as well as all under bonnet fluid levels and check for oil in the water.

Start the engine and pay attention to any engine rattles on cold starts which may disappear when the engine gets warmer.

Check for excessive exhaust smoke

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

If you are still in doubt, you can always take the car to a garage to get it checked out, but it will obviously be more expensive than checking the car yourself.

Make sure you test drive several cars before deciding. It sounds clichéd but you shouldn't go for the first thing you see.

If you buy from a private seller, ask whether he knows of any problems, such as the fuel gauge being not completely accurate. If it's something minor, it might still be worth going for it.

It might be worth utilising an HPI service provider. This gives you an overview of outstanding finances on the vehicle; whether it had any accidents or whether it has been reported stolen. Some of these services can even be provided by text messages.

If the HPI report shows the car as being category A, it is considered a write-off and can't go back on the road. Category C is roadworthy, but should come with a certificate.

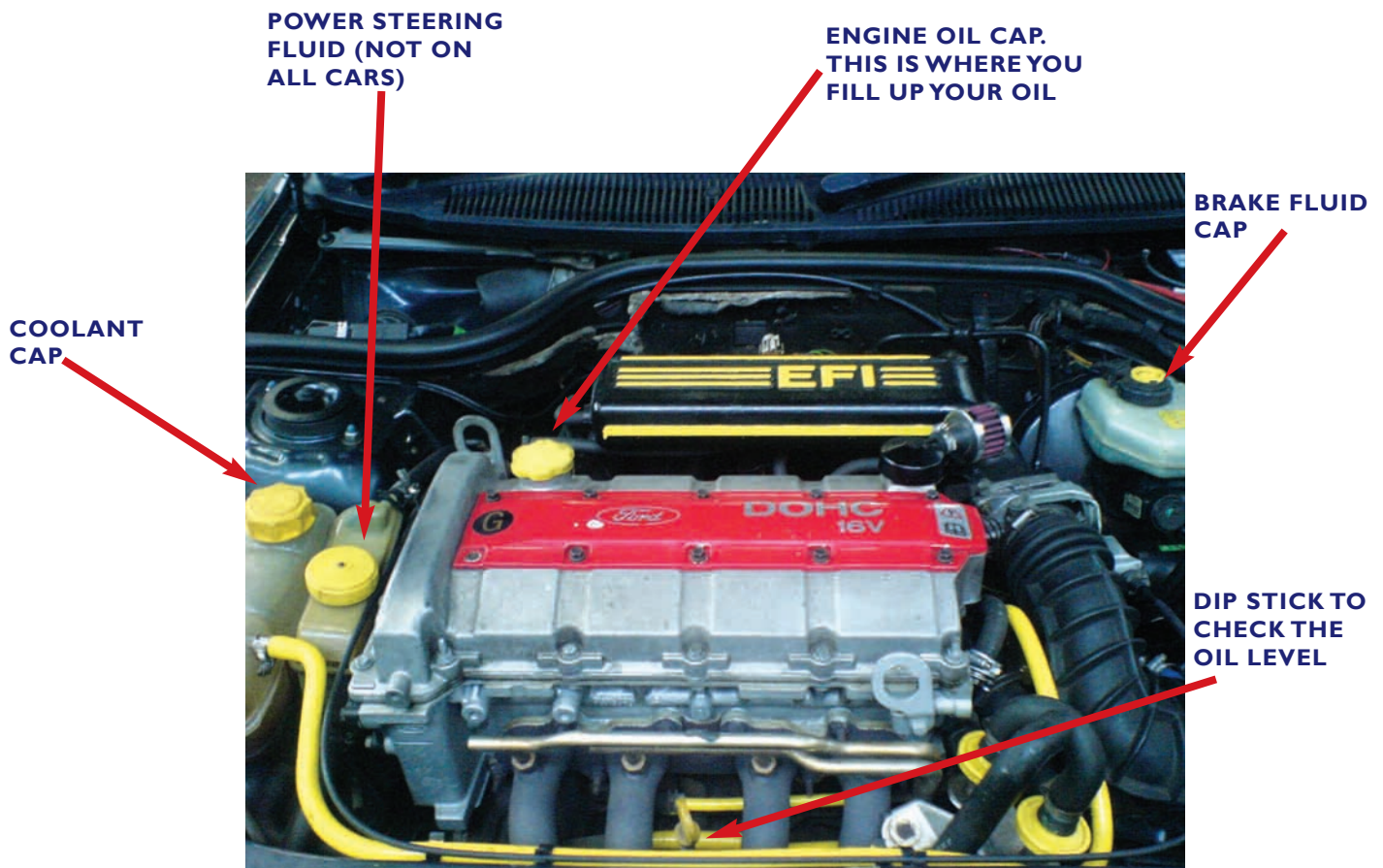
And always make sure you register the car and have proper insurance!



Enjoying the new-found freedom a car can give.
Photo: TiHa

What's under the bonnet?

(FOR ALL OF YOU WHO HAVE NEVER TAKEN A REALLY CLOSE LOOK)



USEFUL TRAVEL WEBSITES

Currency Converter with current rates

www.xe.com

World Clock

www.timeanddate.com

Couchsurfing Network

www.couchsurfing.org

Country Calling Codes

www.countrycallingcodes.com

Embassies of the world

www.embassyworld.com

Language Translations

www.travlang.com/languages

Round the World flights

www.roundtheworldflights.com

Gap Year advice

www.gapyear.com

Festival - Time

YUKON QUEST

1.000 mile Sled Dog Race

05th February 2011, Yukon / Canada

LOSAR

Buddhist New Year

05th March 2011, Tibet and Nepal

KARNEVAL / ROSENMONTAGSZUG

Fancy dress street parades

07th March 2011, Cologne / Germany

MOOMBA FESTIVAL

City-wide community festival

11th - 14th March, Melbourne / Australia

HANAMI

Japanese Cherry Blossom festival

March, Japan

Language lesson in... German

Hallo, ich heiße...

Hello, my name is...

Ich komme aus...

I'm from...

Wo ist die Jugendherberge?

Where is the youth hostel?

Entschuldigung, können Sie mir helfen?

Excuse me, could you help me?

Wie komme ich zum Bahnhof von hier?

How do I get to the train station from here?

Wie weit ist ... von hier entfernt?

How far is ... away from here?

Ich habe ein Zimmer für heute Nacht gebucht.

I booked a room for tonight.

Fährt dieser Bus in die Stadtmitte?

Does this bus go to the city centre?

Wieviel kostet das?

How much does that cost?

Kann ich bitte einen Kaffee haben?

Could I have a coffee please?

Wo bekomme ich ... her?

Where can I get ... from?

Bitte / Danke

Please / Thank you

Check out the website www.shoestring-magazine.com for a German pronunciation podcast!

Our kind of town: Nairobi

By Crazy About Kenya

Kenya is best known for the Mara and the annual migration, but don't miss out on Nairobi, as this capital is an up and coming haven for culture vultures. Take one look at the colourful matatus that zip through the urban landscape and you'll have some idea of the creative undercurrent that keeps this vibrant city buzzing.

There's nothing like a bit of local flavour, and **Acacia Africa's Crazy about Kenya** partners certainly know where it's at. A talented collective that joined forces with the tour operator after 2008's political turmoil, this group of Nairobi based musicians, artists and poets, continue to come together to put a positive vibe back into the wildlife capital.

My Favourite Hangout

Want that feeling of being in the bush whilst still being in the midst of the big city? Nairobi's National Park is only 7-kms from the heart of the capital and tops the list as the only protected area in the world lying a stone's throw from a modern day metropolis. Hang out with the lion, leopard and cheetah, and sample the walking trails at hippo pools - **Kenya Travel Ideas**

Watering Holes

You should definitely head for Havana - a great place for some pre drinks. Then swing by Black Diamond in Westlands for a little bit of everything else. Why? Take the diversity of a young African nightlife culture, mix it with a little bit of the West, and you have an unbeatable experience - **Amateurs In Africa**

Not To Miss While In Town

The Kenya National Theatre is the place to be if you're looking to get your fix of traditional beats and contemporary drama. A combination of sensational musical talent and the dramatic visual arts, the venue also hosts a free live show every Saturday featuring acrobats and magicians - **Grandmaster Masese**

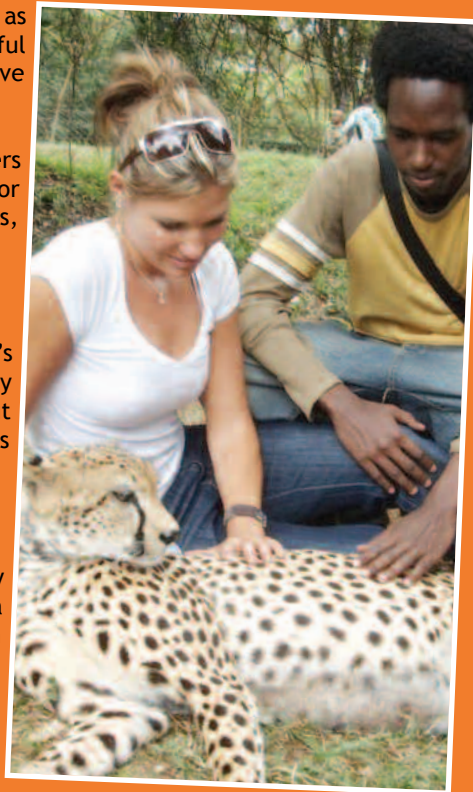
Great Food To Tuck Into, and more...

Daas Restaurant is right in the heart of Westlands, Nairobi's party capital suburb. Full of energy and faiya, you can expect amazing Ethiopian cuisine, all you can eat and drink, plus a smattering of urban talent. This is an exotic food haunt that does more than please your palette, as Daas also serves up Slam Africa - a head to head battle of the poets. An eclectic offering, enjoy a heavy dose of hip-hop, dub poetry, a little non-rhyming narrative, and if you're really lucky, beat boxers and tap dancers who choreograph their written word - DJ Wave & Pepe Haze. Perhaps more well known, but still worth a mention is the Carnivore restaurant. Ideal for first time visitors, this oldie but goodie is a brilliant place, with good food, good service, reasonable prices, lots of atmosphere and a disco (2-3 times a week) - **Acacia Africa**

Can't Sit Still

Fusion band, Sauti Sol, perform live at various venues in and around Nairobi, their tracks inspired by the choices, consequences and challenges today's Kenyan youth face. The four-member collective has already been voted best music group in the Kenya CHAT AWARDS 2010, their uplifting African sounds featuring an urban vibe. Get the party going in the capital at Alliance Francaise on 25th February as the band will be launching their new album, or log onto www.penyafrika.com for news on forthcoming live events - **Sauti Sol**

www.crazyaboutkenya.com



Top: At Nairobi National Park.
Below: Daas Restaurant
featuring Slam Africa. Left:
Pepe Haze & the Paramedikz
enjoying the vibe at Nairobi's
monthly WAPI event. Photos:
PeHa

EASY CAMPING RECIPES

Being out camping or backpacking usually is accompanied with one problem: What do we eat? You may not be able to just drop by a grocery store every day, so you need to keep some sort of stock. We found potatoes, rice and onions to be the cheapest and longest lasting „fresh“ food.

Luise Görlitz put together some easy and very basic recipes that mostly share the same main ingredients. All of these can be cooked on a camping stove. And Luise actually lived on these for a few months while backpacking through New Zealand. The recipes serve two people.

‘THE JACKET POTATO’

1 can of baked beans in tomato sauce
3 - 5 potatoes

This is a very cheap meal as potatoes usually come in quite big bags, beans usually are cheap and both make you full very quickly. Add anything you like, from cheese to coleslaw to the mix to make it more diverse.

‘THE GERMAN BREAKFAST’

5 potatoes
1 onion
2 eggs

Yes, let's make „Bratkartoffeln“ (roast potatoes)! Also cheap and filling you up very quickly roast potatoes are a typical German meal. Just put sliced potatoes and onion into a pan and later add the egg. Stir. Done! For a more hearty meal, add some bacon.

‘THE OH NO, NOT POTATOES AGAIN!’

5 potatoes
5 hot dogs

We're making hot dogs with mashed potatoes. First boil the potatoes and start mashing them - this works great by squishing them with a cup. Add some milk if you have any. Then put the hot dogs in the pan and let them heat up.

‘RISI-PISI’

Rice
Any vegetable you like (beans, peas, onions, carrots...)

Boil the rice. Add some water to the rice. Heat on full flame until it starts to boil. Put a lid on and reduce to half flame. Heat like this for 10 minutes, then turn the flame off but keep the lid on the pot. Let it stand for 15 more minute and you'll have perfect rice! Add the veggies and maybe meat. You can also add an egg or two.

‘THE VERY EXCOTIC!’

5 potatoes... no just kidding.
We found out that in all of Europe, America and Down Under you can buy „typical“ Mexican and American food. So, if you need a lift up - or a break from potatoes - you can make Fajitas or Cheeseburgers. Just look in the international sections of your supermarket. Especially Fajitas are great to make with the camping stove. Just cook ground beef, add some Mexican sauce and throw this on a tortilla together with some cheese and any vegetable you could find and chop up.