

Weekend Argus Travel Q&A

How widely have you travelled?

In SA, Limpopo is the only province I have not been to yet. But I hear it is beautiful. I was born on a Thursday as the childhood rhyme goes, "Thursday's child has far to go". I have always a good traveller, a bit of an extrovert, I am fueled by other people, cultures. I am visually stimulated, so a change of scenery ever so now and again tops up my spirit and ia a reminder of all I have yet to do. I've been to UK, EUROPE (Netherlands, France, Belgium, Turkey), AFRICA (Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Nigeria) ASIA (Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia)

Where was your favourite holiday or time spent abroad?

Easy! Thailand, land of the smiles...I have been there and back at least 4 times. Have made lifetime friends there. The combination of tropical weather, exotic food, and cheerful faces, exiting destinations. Nothing as interesting as sitting in a roomful of people and nobody speaks your language. You just have to find other ways of communication. Thailand taught me how to listen.

Your worst experience on a holiday?

Some guy in a restaurant along the Champs Elysees spinning a sob story. And when we refused to give him money and asked him to leave our tableyes, he had pulled up a chair and made himself comfortable, (hello, we are from South Africa, land of the sob story , could spot that one a mile away) he suddenly took umbrage and started yelling and screaming, threatening to kill us outside...obviously he didn't know we were South African...I yelled and screamed back...much louder, of course and he backed off. It still made us very wary and the Arc de Triomphe lost its magic.

Your funniest experience?

9:30am Heineken Brewery Tour in Amsterdam, we didn't have breakfast because it was such an early start. We really didn't mean to get quite so tipsy and couldn't find our way back to our Lodge...the roads were all in a horseshoe shape in that area...we learned afterwards...some kind soul eventually took pity on us and lead us to an area we recognized. A 12 noon hangover is not a pleasant experience!

What do you avoid during a holiday?

Long queues, getting sick (take your vitamins and any necessary vaccinations). Going where there are throngs of touristy people. I prefer being off the beaten track.

Best meal abroad?

A simple one, actually, a home cooked meal at the Espace Gérard Philippe Theatre, St André, about 2 hours outside Paris, France, marinated chicken (I don't even like chicken!), so soft it fell off the bone, with string beans, and cheese and Champagne from the region. A close second, in Thailand, Pad si eiuw, (stir fried, broad flat rice noodle, with egg and a spinach – like leaf.) Yummy!

Your favourite place to drink a glass of wine or to have sundowners on your travels?

Near water or a fire, the surroundings have varied, but these two elements have remained constant. They both draw people.

What have you learnt from your travels?

Patience and perspective. That, angels are everywhere. There is nothing like travelling. I feel more proudly South African abroad than at home. How small your problems are compared to other countries. That some people have no idea where Cape Town is and I find myself describing the Mother City as " a tiny, seasonal, touristy, fishing village near the southern tip of Africa". That some people have no clue as to who Nelson Mandela is, or where SA is.

Ideal travelling companion?

Someone who is “game”, has no problem sleeping anywhere, can read maps, and take turns leading for the day. Someone who can spot a good deal, who can read when to speak and when to remain silent.

Culture culture or adrenalin junkie?

Both. First the adrenalin junkie, to get rid of the excess energy of that’s suspended in time feeling, and then focus in on the culture. There are times when the exercise includes both.

Greatest travel luxury?

Clean water. Comfy, funky, cool walking shoes. Dental floss.

Holiday reading?

A trashy gossip magazine for in flight, something you can discard when done. Info about your destination. A notebook. Time is precious. I prefer being in the moment, taking in my surroundings, having a conversation with the locals around me. The notebook for ideas, inspiration, drawing. I read when home. I very seldom watch T.V.

Favourite drive?

CT – Namibia. I have done the drive often as a child, those memories are ingrained. Recently on a Rondsokrik tour, I got to experience Namibia again. Fascinating place. I forgot how much raw beauty exists there. I love the space and time interconnection, the dry heat, the deafening stillness and the wild scent of possibilities.

Dream trip?

South America. Amazon Delta has always been on my list. And only about 2 years ago, felt the need to visit more of Africa, but with the Ebola outbreak, that will have to go on hold for a while.

As a seasoned traveller and flyer can you share some tips?

1. Don’t forget to roam on/off or find that button on your ph...& pack your charger, most hotels have adapters if you don’t have an international one, or pack your cable to charge off a pc.
2. Pack light..you will add to your wardrobe. Pack basic colours and transform with scarves, jewelry. have at least one outfit you feel drop dead gorgeous. Don’t buy anything new for the trip, wear what you feel comfy in. If you have not worn it in 2 years, you will never wear it on your trip. Pack your swimming costume no matter where you go.
3. neck pillow, eyepatches and earplugs are an essential for me in flight, a mini spritzer bottle to cool you down/wake you up. A sports water bottle, just be sure to drink up the water before going on through customs or boarding. Refill at the water fountains.
4. Zip lock bags are essential for toiletries. Guards against leaky containers. Take your own medicine along. Something to tide you over till you get help : pain/fever/nausea/antiseptic cream/rehydration powers. Whatever your medication.
5. Plan your trip but only book the first leg and the last leg, keep a few days in the middle for “whatever” or “that’s a good idea” days. Don’t resist the flow. Go with it.
6. Make a pact with yourself to see the positive in every situation.

Where next?

In SA... Eden’s Touch, Knysna, beginning of DEC.

Abroad, was actually starting to plan another Asian trip, during the 2nd half of 2015. There is something so familiar about it. My grandmother always maintained she was from Indonesian heritage, her family brought here during the slave trade era. And every time I visited Asia, she made sense to me, her belief systems, her manner and her eccentricity.