

ALEXANDER ZHDANOV



World,
I love you

The traveller's path · **193** countries

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Alexander Zhdanov

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Part 1. Determine what you wish for

Chapter 1. Why did I visit all the countries around the world?

1.1 Alexander Zhdanov. The youngest Russian bloke who has visited all countries around the world

Hi! Let's get to know each other. My name is Alexander Zhdanov. And what you holding is not just a book, but the look from inside with emotions, life hacks, priceless tips, and clear instructions from a person who has visited all countries around the world. I saw all these places, talked with the locals, tried traditional food, and learned about flora and fauna. Each trip was planned and done by myself. No travel agencies or extra expenses. Want to know how? I am pretty sure that this book will awaken your desire and help you to realize your dreams about travelling!

More than fifteen years of my life I've spent travelling, setting a record at the end of being the youngest Russian bloke who visited all countries around the world.

Foreseeing your questions and doubts, I should say that stopovers in airport transit zones are not counted. In each country, I've spent at least two or three days, and some of them were visited several times. But spending at the places more than one week was always my strive. It's hard to believe, but I did go to remote and dangerous areas of our planet. For example, Syria, Libya, Yemen, Afghanistan, North Korea, Somalia, Turkmenistan, Iran, South Sudan, and so on. The path was hard but incredibly

exciting. And now together, step by step, we will go through it with this book.

But before you start, if you want to read about posh holidays, private jets, expensive hotels, or thousands of dollars, then close the book. Because my life is not about luxury travels, and making things up is not about me.

I am a simple bloke from the neighborhood. My parents were never rich and I have no sponsors or benefactors. But I was lucky one day to find a job that makes me happy and suits my talents. I managed to realize myself as a journalist, photographer, and successful anchorman. Finding myself in a profession was only a preparatory phase to meeting my Dream and Success. The most important part was waiting for me ahead.

The greatest gift from the Universe, God, Fortune, and all higher forces is the opportunity to explore our planet. I was lucky to visit a lot of places on Earth, and I loved what I saw with my own eyes. Appearing unexpectedly, this dream turned into the compass for my life. Even now, when I have already reached it, it continues to live in me as a philosophy and the idea of the traveller's way. My way.

Over these years, I have written seven books. The first five of them were about the great world of show business. The other two are dedicated to my beloved hometown St. Petersburg, and the ability to remember and control your dreams.

The book you are holding in your hands now, my eighth book, is not only about travel. It's about motivation and dreams. I want you to understand and start to believe that the lodestar is not as far away as you think. Its radiance not only shines coldly, but it can warm you and embrace you, it can make you the happiest

person in your world. Trust yourself and accept that everything is possible and achievable! All you need is your desire, persistence and a little luck. Never say that you are luckless. Fortune loves everyone who believes in it and goes forward no matter what.

By the way, from the very beginning, I never thought about my dream as a goal. It was the passion of a traveller, I was excited to see new places. But looking back, I realized that it was already a hundred countries behind me. It was the time to sit down and think. I spoke to my best mate Mikhail Zarubin and got the insight that this is what I want! I want to see them all. Yes, I knew that I would have to work hard, focus on the task, constantly visit the capital, and, at the same time, improve in my career. I could see that all my earnings will not be directed to familiar to the average person things like property or car, but to the realization of my dreams. And time, the most valuable and irreplaceable resource... I will have to use it to explore our planet. I was mentally ready to give up clubs and parties to fulfil my dream, and I didn't want to postpone it anymore.

There are many travellers in the world, but only about a hundred and ninety of them have visited all the countries around the world. They have their own idea of why and where to go. Some prefer beaches and luxury hotels, while others rave about museums, history and architecture. People go to the mountains, fly on helicopters, or overcome their fears in extreme sports... We are all different! But we are travellers and we are united by the irresistible thirst for exploring and emotions. Each trip gives us a reason to smile at the world and the motivation to wake up in the morning.

This book is not a boasting, please don't get it wrong. It's not about bragging, I am not saying "Look what I can do". And it's definitely not a competition with other travellers to see who's cooler. I just want to share my little story, make you smile, and help you realize that with a strong desire, nothing can stop you. Neither your daily routine nor the exhausting work will be an obstacle on the path to your dreams. "If you're walking the path of the dreamer, everything is possible" – Jared Leto.

If it happens that you dream about travelling and reading guidebooks, but yet didn't make up your mind to go somewhere, then I am your lucky token and the key to the travellers club. I believe in you, and my trust in you is stronger with each new word written here. When time is hard, you will hear it from me more than once. If with every page you read, you get rid of the stereotype that travelling is hard, if I can encourage you to buy tickets to a country that you have been postponing for a long time, then my goal is achieved.

Travelling is about opportunities for your realization. But you have to be honest with yourself and answer the question of why you need it.

There are plenty of travelling ways, and even one person may have many goals and ideas. Visiting different countries, maybe you are striving to help people who have gone through an earthquake or suffer from thirst and hunger. Perhaps you want to bring knowledge to the masses and decided to stay as a teacher in Africa for some time. Or maybe you love animals, and dream of helping them and spending more time in reserves or national parks. You may dream about the main squares of big cities and beautiful photos of the sights. Or who knows, maybe your path is

gastro tourism or shooting movies. Or maybe it's a dating agency for people from all parts of the world! Or you are looking for antiquity. Or maybe you dreaming about a mysterious Pearl that gives immortality to its owner (*this story is in **Mikhail Zarubin's** book). See how large is the number of prospects and possibilities! Any path that you choose will be interesting in its own way.

Discover my way to make it easier for you to find and understand yours. Together, side by side, we will take the first steps into the universe of travel. I will tell you where the pace was smooth, and where I stumbled. Through my eyes, you will see the most beautiful corners of our planet. We will experience the horror and daze from places where I would never want to go back. And for sure, I will introduce you to the wonderful people who helped me to get to this cherished dream.

I probably confused you at the beginning, but I am honest. Here we start. I hope you got me right that I cannot keep this life experience unspoken and hide it from the world. We have to share our knowledge, and I would love to spread mine among new researchers. Perhaps, one day, one of you will break my record. Safe travels!

No matter how this book came to your hands, there is a reason. Get your favourite brew, make yourself comfortable, and let's spend a few quiet hours together!

1.2 Life is a string of different events

Life is a string of different events, a combination of circumstances and our decisions. I am sure you agree with me that whatever we have in our lives is the result of our actions and thoughts. Every day and even every hour we are making

decisions of varying complexity, and each of them affects our lives later. Talking about my value system, I don't think of my choices as right or wrong. If I make a decision, there is a reason for it. Ethics, consciousness, and dignity are the moral compasses in my life, and they set the main direction for the whole string of my daily choices.

My parents used to try to avoid my contact with some people, showing them as a bad example. To help me not to become such a person, my mom taught me to behave in a way that I would never be ashamed of my own decisions later.

Since childhood, I have been facing very different situations, and all of them led me to the route I am following now. And I would want to share my path with you. When I was young, I participated in the TV program "Rainbow Dog". Among the other children, they chose me because I loved poetry. Not without the huge affords of my mother, who helped me to develop my memory and artistic reading. So, when I came to the casting, they accepted me for my talking talent with no doubts. Later, the TV studio was teaching us the basics of acting as well.

The scariest point, in general, is the first step. The main secret is simple: get your butt off the chair and do at least something. This little act will start the momentum of the offers that will be opening for you. And it will be up to you if you agree or reject them, but you will start moving towards your desires and dreams or further away from them. All of us, at least once, were struggling with choice, and in my case, one big goal helped me make decisions. Each of the job offers, I was considering from the position of approaching my dream – visiting all countries around the world. Of course, I was not born with such perceptivity. When

I was sixteen, I was taking everything that fate presented me. But maturing, the goal took its shape and form. With each new step, I learned myself better. I agree, it is impossible and, perhaps, not interesting to devote your life to a single goal. But having the nearest one in front of your eyes is very useful.

I also believe that our decisions help us catch our dreams by the tail. Working on TV, I realized my aspiration for travel and fame. Seeing all these people in the spotlight and feeling the scale of the projects I took part in, helped me to understand that I want my mom, brother, teachers at school, and all my friends to be proud of me.

Making decisions in our lives, we are all guided by our own rules, characteristics, intelligence, ethics, and manners. Especially valuable in understanding personality is the behaviour and choice of a person in difficult situations. I strongly believe that the more mature and deep a person is, the less they worry about their financial situation and living conditions, and the more they care whether they act in accordance with their conscience.

Sometimes, the decisions we make are very hard. Because we all think about the consequences that our choice will entail, and we may be concerned if the decision is right. And Hamlet's eternal question "To be or not to be?" is well-known to all of us. Act accordingly to the conscience or go down the thumb, not worrying about justice? And the most difficult part is how not to repeat the mistakes that have been already made.

My way is very simple and is always on the side of conscience because I believe that some of our actions are irreversible. And I am now not about life choices regarding our profession or

universities. I am talking about relationships with workmates and classmates, about how to keep friendly ties. Because they give us force, energy, and confidence in our future. Living with a sense of responsibility and acting in tune with your conscience and ethics is a string of daily decisions. I want to believe that we all want to become the best version of ourselves and not the opposite.

The race for wealth and conscience are two sides of one coin. I know that each one of you faced a choice between money and breast at least once. Travelling helps you choose the right side. Seeing people's lives in different countries and corners of the earth, meeting rich people and those who are terribly in need, people in trouble and those who create trouble for others, made it easier for me to act according to my conscience, and sacrifice material assets if they reach me in contrary to my beliefs.

I wish you to understand and accept that just material prosperity cannot and should not be the main target. A good job with stable financial conditions will allow you to travel more and study our planet and the people who live on it. And it is in your hands to help many of them become happier, even if just a little.

Often, everything starts with simple steps. Ditch school or go to class, start smoking with everyone or not succumb to herd instinct, bribe or follow the law... It doesn't seem to be something shady, but over time, the number of such decisions accumulates, the overall picture becomes clearer, and the awareness of where the choice leads you becomes distinct. This simple rule in my life allows me to sleep peacefully. I know for sure that there is nothing that I would twit myself with.

This thought is followed by a very good conclusion. If some of the vital decisions seem absolutely wrong, and your conscience screams that it's time to fix the situation, you can always change it next time. Unfortunately, almost every choice that we have made is irreversible, but tomorrow is a new day and it will come with new issues that will also require our participation. And let's be honest, none of us is perfect. But we can keep trying to get better with each new decision. I know it's hard, but it's worth it.

1.3 We have forgotten how to dream

We have forgotten how to dream and it is very upsetting. We had so many expectations and hopes when we were children. We dreamed about Santa Claus bringing presents through the chimney on Christmas Eve, about holidays with ice skating and walking in the park holding mom's hand. We believed that ahead, there was a real, bright and shiny life waiting for us. We were filled with these thoughts. They were inspiring us and gave the enormous motivation to get up every morning with a smile and a desire to do something worthy and important. But here we are... As we get older, we have more issues to solve and less time for our desires.

Now think, who was that first person who piqued your dreams? I bet that, same as with me, it was your parents! They used to read us bedtime stories that introduced kindness, diligence, willpower, and courage. Every child in the world knows the story of the lazy boy who became a cow. Or the story about brave Rikki Tikki Tavi who bravely saved a family. We thought it would be great to follow Alice's adventures in Wonderland. Go for Exploit and find love. This is what we expected the world to be.

We were sure that one day, it would be the time that we should not miss to show our dignity and be the hero.

Then, we were confident that if we became doctors, we would be the best ones, who would save lives and help people. We believed that our family and friends would be proud of us. And we knew for sure that there was nothing impossible.

Time passed, and those who read us fairy tales or other adults began to say: "Put your feet on the ground", "It's the hard one", and "Not a chance to strike here". And it seems that reasonable ideas were smashed into words about lack of money, complexity, or impossibility of implementation. And here you are enrolling into the university that was safely picked up by your family. You forgot about Wonderland because home is good enough. Your world turns into a daily routine and a set of issues. While your dreams are like fluffy clouds floating away from you, leaving quiet thoughts in your head: "Dude? Never mind, it's just your fantasy." Your previous "I dream of" grows up into "I want to". No more place for magic or adventures.

Dreams are mostly associated with a big and bright goal, while desires are about the material world. We don't dream of a new gadget, we just want it. And when we feel that we want to travel, it doesn't turn into an adventure, challenges in jungles, or breakfasts with animals. Sadly, it's about selfies to show off in front of your pals and workmates.

You would think that for most of us, the moment has been gone long ago... We want everything but dream of nothing. But it's never too late to grab the old you, and start protecting your cherished desires from the clutches of the evil and material world, bringing up both light and aspiration to yourself. I think

it's valuable. I never dreamed of visiting all the countries around the world when I was a child. I thought that adventures were more important! So, I was that person who wanted to find magic beans, because I knew how to sneak the system and get more dreams to come true. The fairy tale followed me literally everywhere, it seemed that if I turned right at the corner, I would get into the marvellous land of Oz somewhere in Australia or meet Snow White. And, of course, my mom, my brother, and even I will be immortal and healthy, and I probably won't even have to grow up. Simple childhood dreams that had all the chances to be destroyed miraculously persisted in my heart and turned into a big idea about travelling. As well as sacred faith that if you really dream about something and are ready to spend days, months, and even years fulfilling it, then it will definitely bring up something big and beautiful to you. It worked for me! That is why it is so important for me to hand this idea to you.

Our life routine is so filled with limits that makes it no space for dreams and faith. Not very often do you see some of your workmates approaching you to say that you are doing great. Instead, we may hear doubts about our capabilities and qualifications. People are scared of complexity and, of course, no one wants to take the hard part. Exploits and dreams are always about difficult tasks that require effort and persistence. From my observation, many people willingly kick their lives into this blind-alley pool... But we are not like that, right? Even if you don't have that loyal friend next to you right now who will help you to cope with negative beliefs, don't lose hope. Find strength in yourself to improve your life. Become that workmate or friend

who will support others, and eventually, they will follow your vision.

Let's try to get rid of negative beliefs together. To do this, alongside the rejection of the oppressive routine, you need to start thinking about your dreams. I used to love to talk about them with my friends when I was a child. And it makes me sad that we share our soul aspirations with our loved ones so rarely now. We often say: I wish your dreams come true... But did you ever wonder if the person has them?

It is in our hands or feet to kick this negative to hell and start to believe in ourselves a little more. No need to twist the switch to the fullest straight away, start step by step, gradually. It won't be easy to overcome self-doubt, but you will.

Well, I'm, actually, not the best example, as at the start, I couldn't believe that visiting all the countries around the world is an absolutely achievable goal for me. But I do remember that happy moment when my friend Konstantin arrived in Valencia specially to bring me a certificate from the National Register of Records. With information that together with Mikhail Zarubin, we visited all countries around the world at the same time. And my name also figured in the category of Country's Records as the youngest person who visited all countries around the world. I'm not going to lie to you, at some points, this headway was against my beliefs that there are so many countries and it is hard. But now, it's all over, the goal has been achieved and the dream has come true.

If today, you start doing at least something that will bring you closer to your dream, you will have more faith in it and yourself. This is the main key to success towards your cherished desires. At

the same time, you may attract the negative effect: if you think that you are surrounded by freaks and bogans, it will be your reality, you will meet them everywhere; if you believe that you will not find a job of your dream, then that is what you get. Your brain will subconsciously help you make decisions that correspond to these thoughts, accordingly, you will spend your whole life doing something you don't like.

Your negative beliefs will be influenced not only by your personal views and the people around you but also by the media. Just for the sake of interest, compare your perception and watch the news on TV not as a citizen of the country, but as an observer. You will see that a lot of negativity comes out of the screen. Fifteen minutes of TV will make you think that you are hopeless and old and that there is almost nothing to get from life and everything has been plotted. Exclude these negative elements from your life and do not return to them. Think about what you are missing right now. Someone needs money, someone needs health, and someone suffers from being unloved. If your brain comes up with such thoughts, turn them over and tell yourself that from now on you will get your health, you will keep and love what you have, you will figure out how to earn more money, and you are just about to meet the love of your life. And if even the smallest worm of disbelief inches along in your head, toss this bastard away. He will annoyingly interfere with you, erode your dreams, and push you back to the usual sad story. No need to nurture worms, get rid of them and throw them out of your wonderful life. I am with you, and I believe that you will make it.

After I declared war on my negative beliefs, I visited the city of Spain, Valencia with the very romantic locals. Some time ago, residents decided to create a huge park on the site of a river flowing through the city. Would they fulfil their dream if they would listen to their negative thoughts only? I think not. This world belongs to dreamers who instead of difficulties and obstacles, see opportunities. I am sure that the world belongs to us, to you who read this book and every day does something, perhaps, incredible but real.

I have a mate who has been in the grip of negative thoughts for a long time. He was sure that he would die at a young age because all his relatives left this world early. It was poisoning his life. One day, we were having a deep conversation, and, as an experiment, I recommended he change his point of view. Yes, his family members were not long-livers, but he will be the one who will break this destructive circle and live a long, happy, and healthy life! He will grow a new branch of the family tree, a story of longevity. Replacing one thought with another, you will not lose anything: neither money, nor strength, nor health. But with a high probability, you will gain something. After this moment when he significantly changed his thoughts, my mate began to take care of his health, diet, and body. He became much stronger than before, and even the trace of the fear of early death disappeared.

Changing our beliefs is good for our mental health because we always think that we are surrounded by negative factors. Half of the citizens of the globe say that they cannot find nice work, the climate is bad, and that life is short. What if I say that they are

wrong? What if I say that what they receive is the result of inaction and unwillingness to think and live differently?

Being in harmony and honest with yourself is to enjoy your life anywhere in our world. It's about being happy under any circumstances and conditions, about dreaming and seeing how your cherished desires come true. Allow yourself to dream to become happy. I offer you to go towards your dreams and adventures.

1.4 To travel is to live

"To travel is to live", said Hans Christian Andersen, and it's rare I meet anyone who would disagree. But no need to travel just for a tick to show off in front of people. We all need to travel to feel happy and peaceful. I know many people who, same as me, think of travelling not only as part of holidays but as a whole lifestyle. I agree, travelling as a lifestyle is not the easiest choice, as most of you want to grow roots with your friends and family, stability and routine. But I know that if you are reading this book, you are ready to travel at least to the closest destinations as the first steps.

Travelling possibilities are endless and often help us to understand ourselves. And many of my friends are the great example. By buying tickets to Asia, they were quitting their usual lives and were stepping towards fate with just a backpack. Some managed to pass through this way in a week, some in a couple of months, while some are still looking for their path. But what I can insure you with, is this act made all travellers better – one learns new life and world, the other gets health and peace. If you trust and believe in prospects that open up, travels may change everything in your life.

I always get the question if my craving for travel is an attempt to run away from myself. But when travelling, you are facing your inner self, which means that you cannot run away, quite the opposite – you run towards yourself and your destiny. But sometimes, we need to get away from sad memories or bleak cities to explore something completely new. So, please, no need to try to escape yourself, it's pointless. Go for travel, go meet yourself to see your value and your mission.

Why do I travel? I am exploring. I am exploring our planet, the culture and peculiarities of other nations of the world, their traditions and preferences. I want to learn something new from the world around us, and then pass this knowledge on to my mates and family. I want to cross oceans, climb mountains, and go to the deepest jungles. I want to look at the world as it is. Fascinating or frightening. And after seeing all the countries on the planet with my mate Mikhail Zarubin, we want to create a Traveller's Museum in Australia.

In Uganda, I did an eight-hour walking tour to see the only remaining humanoid monkeys on the planet. Huge and wild, they were only a couple of meters away from me! I looked into their eyes and realized that such moments were the reason for me travelling. Every time, over and over again, with my own eyes, I see that our world is beautiful. I have to explore the planet to prove this simple theory, which doesn't really need any proof.

Realization of your goals is the basis for the fullest life of any person. No matter if you are travelling or not. And by my experience, getting around the world is a very handy tool for specifying your goals. Just imagine how many prospects will open up for you on your trips. You can go on a research

expedition as part of a team of ethnographers, archaeologists, or anthropologists. You can volunteer and go help people in need in Africa to work there as a teacher. Find the strength in yourself to visit these countries to look at the extremely hard life there with your own eyes. I believe that with travel, we grant ourselves meaning and reason in life. They are the engine of our life.

1.5 How to optimize the cost of travel

It's all about balance. Of course, I do like comfort in trips, but I will not pay unnecessarily extra. Just imagine where you can spend the money that you have saved! You can buy something important or pay for the next trip.

There are so many tricks on how you can reduce the cost by almost fifty percent! And this chapter will be dedicated to them. Let's move through them together:

PLANNING

Here is the first trick – an early booking. If you can book your holiday flights and accommodation eight months in advance – do it! At this point, you can get your tickets almost at half price. And early birds get hotel rooms at a great price too. Even if you buy a tour from a travel agency, still better if you book it in advance.

If you have no chance to plan everything long before, give yourself a couple of months when you will monitor prices every day. By the way, with some promotions and discounts, prices may change in an hour, so, you may be lucky to catch them. Turn notifications for travel Apps and websites.

When planning, read everything about the seasons. Believe me, in some destinations, a low season does not mean a bad holiday. You may need to bring your raincoat or warm windproof

clothes with you, but at the same time, places will be less crowded, very authentic, and much cheaper.

Play with the duration of your trip. Sometimes seven nights are significantly cheaper than nine, but to your surprise, often ten and twelve nights cost the same! Especially if we talk about beach holidays. Search different options, move the dates by two or five days, and see the better price, the difference can be quite reasonable.

FLIGHT

After all the dates are saved, move to flights. Here are some tips to spend less:

- Try to plan your departure from the capital. It's always cheaper than in smaller cities.
- Don't get fooled by the initial price of low-cost airlines. Read all the conditions carefully, and calculate how much extra you will have to pay (luggage, insurance, refund, etc.).
- By my observations, Tuesdays are some sort of discount day when flights are cheaper. Look for the tickets daily, and catch the frequency of price changes.
- Use miles, bonuses, and cashback services.
- And, of course, the same old, Skyscanner

ACCOMMODATION

For hotels, there are many well-known travel websites such as Expedia or Booking.com. These are search engines where you will find offers, compare rates and book a hotel through an online portal. Very convenient places where you can find the rarest or the cheapest accommodations. I would also recommend following a few steps as well:

- When booking accommodation through any of the search systems, use different devices and accounts, especially when you are looking for a specific hotel or destination. As soon as websites see your heightened interest in a particular hotel or city, the price of living space increases. Because it starts to be calculated specifically for your proxy address and account. Be smart!
- The cost for two people or for one is often the same. So, it's time to share! Because sharing is caring ;)
- Think about hostels. You can always find fairly decent options in any country at a very attractive price.
- Instead of large chain hotels, choose guest houses and apartments.
- Get a membership in the CouchSurfing hospitality network, and don't pay for accommodation at all!
- If you travel as a pilgrim, you can find shelter from local religious institutions for free.

TRANSFER AND TRANSPORT

All the countries are different, and details about your movements should be well-searched before you go. Many places are safe and comfortable with taxis, in others public transport will be cheaper to use. But there are some countries where you don't have many options. I am talking about very dangerous places, where in addition to the guide, you will need a private car with security during the whole trip.

Here are some general guidelines:

- Look for available transfers from your airport in advance. In many cities, there are comfortable buses that

go to different areas at a reasonable price.

- If possible, get a taxi app on arrival, instead of using a street taxi.
- Get yourself a local transport card and map, it's cheaper than buying single tickets all the time.
- Look for some small companies or individuals in the destination country who can meet you at the airport for a fee or bartering.

FOOD

Keep the balance and avoid even the slightest risk of food poisoning! Here you better pay more but in a tried-and-tested place.

But I still have some suggestions on how to cut the expense:

- In the cultural hearts, food costs double or triple the price, especially in restaurants with panoramic views. But it doesn't mean that you have to go to the other end of the city to eat cheaper. Try to turn onto a quiet and empty street. In places popular among locals, food often costs less and is much more flavourful.
- Instead of booking breakfast in the hotel, try to find accommodation with a little kitchen. You can always find cereals and milk, bread and sliced ham with cheese at the local supermarkets. Also, cooking eggs never takes much time or skill. But definitely saves some coins.
- Learn about service tipping in the country.
- Don't forget about "the more inviting the place, the more expensive the bill" in large tourist areas.

- If you are a tea totaller but want to experience “all-inclusive”, have a look at the “full board” option. No need to pay for booze!
- In many hotels, better to take only breakfast instead of all-inclusive. Lunch and dinner in local cafes, restaurants, or taverns are sometimes way more worthy. For example, in Greece, Cyprus, Thailand, and Spain the difference was especially tangible.

HEALTH

This is where I suggest you never be greedy. Otherwise, you may end up paying a lot, and not only financially.

- Make sure you’ve got medical insurance. I know we never expect something bad during the holidays but read all the terms and conditions carefully.
- Prepare your first aid kit to avoid a marathon to local pharmacies later. Sometimes, the staff don’t speak English. And most of the time, meds are cheaper and easier to get in your home country, especially those that require a prescription.
- Don’t forget to pack your sunscreen if you are not ready to be overcharged.
- Read about endemic diseases of the area where you are going and get yourself ready in advance. Get all the necessary shots! Not only the required one but the recommended one as well. And as a precaution, bring the medicine with you.

SHOPPING

Some cities and countries are popular for shopping and not just for souvenirs. Here are some simple rules:

- Don't even think about spending a penny in places where you were taken by a guide. Don't trust a "free city tour with a stop at the diamond factory". There's no such thing as a free lunch! Avoid the promising deals for unique local products that can't be bought anywhere else.
- Never buy anything in instalments in an alien country.
- Do not buy clothes in tourist areas, go to the local markets.
- Buy souvenirs on quiet streets.
- If you are offered local wine, search on the internet if there are any vineyards in this country. There is always a chance of getting poor-quality alcohol, mostly surrogates.
- Make sure to learn about outlawed exports from the country to avoid huge fines at the border.

ENTERTAINMENT

We have come to the most exciting point. Here I want to reassure you that in the most popular countries, you can have a great time and see the sights even without a guide. Independent walk, historical centre, meeting locals, it's all about wonderful moments that cost nothing. Search for not crowded areas of the country you need, and you will have a non-trivial and unforgettable holiday.

Remember the following ideas:

- Hotel guides are always more expensive. In many countries, guides tell scary and not always fair information

about tours outside the hotel. Don't get fooled! Usually it's just a browbeating, so, you can find a tour with the same conditions, but twice cheaper.

- If you want something different and unusual, find a company for yourself, and get an individual guide from locals who speak your language. It will be the most comfortable, and if you are three or four people, it won't be expensive.
- If you have a driver's license, rent a car. Some countries are perfect for exploring by driving around.
- Download the app with an audio guide in advance. This will save you some money on the spot, as well as from leaving a deposit anywhere.
- Read reviews and look at photos and videos of each attraction you want to visit. Are they really worth of entrance fee? It happens sometimes when fascinating architectural structures make you regret the time you've spent in the queue to get inside.

It was fun sharing with you all the tricks and tips about more affordable holidays. I hope you will remember them, so they can be handy on your next trip!

Chapter 2. Solo or with a companion?

2.1 Ups and downs of solo travelling

We all need to learn to be on our own, rely only on our strengths and knowledge, never depend on what others think, and become a self-sufficient person. I should tell you about the good and less funny sides of solo travelling. And let's be honest, many people are afraid to be left alone, not to mention travelling this way. They always try to go on holiday in the company of someone close. With friends or family. Well, I can understand why. Because we got used to making most of our decisions under the pressure of the environment. It defines us. Where will we go, what will we eat, and what do we want to see. But what is waiting for you if you dare to travel alone?

When we were little, our parents devoted a lot of time and effort to teaching us to be independent, trying to help us to be responsible for our decisions and fate. But the trick is, growing up and being limited by the set of rules, we often lose this ability. A year, two, or five will pass, and here you are: flying to the all-inclusive hotel in the most crowded area of the country where you don't really want to see anything apart from food and a swimming pool. And even the city tour where you agreed to go was not chosen by you but by the travel agent. Because it doesn't matter what you will see, how you will get there, and where it is, as long as you don't have to make decisions.

Solo travel brings you back to mindful choice and independence. Only you are to decide what you will eat for breakfast or dinner, what time you will go to bed, or where you will go for a walk. Just imagine how amazing it is to step on a journey that is valuable for you only. Where you don't have to negotiate with anyone and make compromises.

I am sure you all have been in such situations when one of you wanted to sit by the ocean for hours while others came by just for a quick swim and wanted to do some activities. For some, even the whole week is not enough to walk around all the sights, while someone will run around the whole city and its surroundings in half a day. We all have very different passions, and it's not bad or good; we have them from the very beginning. No matter what type of person you are, just be selfish on this trip, satisfy your desires, and receive tremendous satisfaction.

I agree with one worldly wisdom "Travelling is a true test of friendship". From my experience, I can say that the more people going on the same trip, the more disputes arise because it's harder to come to a deal. Even different views on relaxation and activities may bring you to a bicker. Therefore, to avoid unnecessary disappointments during the trip, sometimes, it's better to travel alone.

Solo travellers often attract new people, which may lead to an unexpected friendship. When you are with a company, most often, all your attention is focused on them. You are in your tight group, contacting mainly with each other, wandering around the city together and, probably, doing the same things. And if you travel on your own, you get a higher chance to get closer to the locals. Because when people see you being alone, they are often

open to supporting you, telling you about themselves and their experiences, and even sharing valuable advice. I have a couple of stories in my memory when a solo trip led someone to their destiny.

When you have no one near you, you can fully feel the unity with yourself, hear your thoughts and understand your feelings. Face your inner world.

Of course, such trips have downsides as well. And the most noticeable is the cost of renting accommodation, as you don't share the payment with anyone. On the other hand, it's easier to get yourself a bed in a hostel. Or search the CouchSurfing network and stay somewhere on a farm with kind owners who will happily welcome you. I agree it's always sad if your trip price increases, but this is what you pay for your independence in choices and movements.

Anyhow, when travelling with friends, I would recommend you talk about money at the start. A few times, I came across situations when trips with my friends ended up being a lot more expensive than travelling alone. I realised that my needs are well below the basic minimum of my travel-mates, and I often spend more on a trip with a company. Because someone needs a hotel with more stars, someone doesn't accept food in a regular cafe, and he wants to eat in a posh restaurant. While my shot of morning happiness involves the nearest corner and smells like a cup of strong coffee and vegemite toast. This breakfast will restock me with pleasure more than any piled with food plate in a hotel buffet.

Are you one of the tourists who run around the city to get all possible photos? I often see how this photo hunt reaches a frenzy

when people wait in a queue to take a picture with the Eiffel Tower, cathedral, tram, or sunset. They try to get all the artefacts of the trip, not missing a single one. But if you have no companion, you will learn how to communicate with other tourists and locals around. Because you will have no choice and will ask someone to take a picture of you. Of course, you can always stay content with a selfie, but we all know that nothing is better than the full view. Therefore, you will have to talk with strangers and ask for a photo.

When you travel alone, you will get time and opportunity to find new perspectives. In the last few years, I have been standing with my back in my photos. It is a smart trick to not draw full attention to me but to show people the general view in the photo. I want the person looking at the photo to feel the atmosphere and admire the ocean, sand, or sunset.

Solo travel is access to creativity. Deciding to step into such a journey, you may discover some talents that were sleeping inside while you live by usual patterns. I can imagine how hard it would be for extroverts, but you can recoup the lack of communication by writing travel posts on social media. Each of us has many hidden talents that are hard to reveal in normal life. I believe that you will succeed, especially if you take a break and go on a journey alone.

When we talk about travelling alone, I always remember the question: "Are you going somewhere or are you just going?" With a company, we usually come to a specific place for a planned holiday. And when you are alone, you don't have to think about what to do in advance. It can be a trip where you go to one place

today and go to another tomorrow. You can visit the cities that only you want, and look at the sights that your soul asks for.

I have already said that travelling with a company is the time when you have to be ready for many compromises. If you want to fight with your friend, go on a joint trip! It will be a serious test of your friendship. You are twenty-four hours a day together and, of course, can get tired of each other, which may lead to misunderstanding. So, prepare your high communication skills or be ready for disputes. And my advice would be to travel only with the most trusted friends and mates, preferably with people with whom you have already travelled at least once. And sometimes, to avoid any friendship lost or ruined holiday, it's easier to go on a journey alone.

I would like to share someone's thoughts with you: in any hard situation, go on a trip. I like it because no matter what happens to you, the best way out of a seething and bubbling place is to get away from it. You may not find the answer to your question, but you will find many other solutions. And the emotions that you will experience during the trip will be doubled or even tripled because they all will be yours only. Believe me, you will receive many bright and happy emotions, which you will want to share with your family and workmates. Those travel memories will cover you, and at least for a while, they will push all the difficulties and negatives away.

I would say that when you travel alone, you are not actually alone, you are travelling with yourself. I take it as almost two because your soul and your heart are with you. Which is already enough, no? Your heart will tell you where to find the right path, it will lay a route that will help you get out of the downturn and

find out your potential. We should all go on solo travel, and not only once or twice. Make it a tradition.

Travelling, you learn how to count on risks. For example, when you think about trying some new dishes. Will it be too spicy or too weird for your stomach? Or about how to get to some destinations, like proper calculation of the departure time of the bus, train, or plane. There are a huge number of decisions of various scales that you have to make yourself, and that makes you put yourself together. You will have to listen to your inner desires and better understand your needs. Such trips teach you to be responsible for your actions.

But remember, independence has a downside. A single person is a more vulnerable target than a company. So, you have to be more careful about your own safety. You can only rely on yourself, on your stress resistance and courage. It is important to know it for a good and happy trip.

Well, the main significant disadvantage of solo travelling is that no one will rub your back with cream :) And, of course, food choices. Whenever I go to a restaurant, I want to try a lot of different dishes, and if you have a mate or a whole company next to you, you can really enjoy the full list of the menu. But alone, I can't eat it all, so, it's always hard for me to decide what to get and not overorder.

These were the possibilities of solo travelling. And even though at first, you may think that going to an unfamiliar country alone is a wild idea, try it. Once you start this exciting and perhaps difficult adventure, you will no longer be able to resist it. The path of a lonely traveller will drag you further.

2.2 Ups and downs of travelling with company

As I said earlier, if you have a trip with company looming on the horizon, make sure you are going with time-tested mates. When this step is completed, and you are travelling with your sidekick, it's time to think about the advantages of travelling with someone other than yourself.

First of all, you will never be bored, as you will have a trusted friend, a conversation with whom, you always enjoy. And if you accidentally forget something, I bet your mate will have it. For example, a pair of headphones! You can always talk about something, ask a question, or play some board games. Travelling with good friends is an entire world! Because each of us is a complete universe, all of us are a fountain of information, knowledge, optimism, and the music of the soul. Therefore, when two, three, or even four different universes join for one trip, you create a space adventure. Your company will receive a lot of impressions because you will be sharing the most interesting things with each other.

Trips with mates, same as the friendship itself, teach us not only to share but also to give. I believe that the ability not only to talk but listen attentively is an extremely useful skill. To develop it, firstly, you have to learn to ask questions, direct the dialogue, and show its depth and completeness. Usually, after quiet conversations, you discover the most secret parts of your close people. And if a person trusts you with their world and their universe, you have to take it with deep gratitude. Say kind words and compliments to your loved ones more often, not only during your travel. But on the road, they sound especially pleasant and will unite you with each other even more.

Believe me, joint trips often test friendships. Here start the dogs and quicksand. It may be a tiny argument about who will get the better sun lounge or a bigger argument about the day plan, one may want to lay on the beach, while the other wants to go on a city tour early in the morning. You might be lucky enough to find a friend with a bee in a hat that would perfectly match yours. When your tastes and views coincide, everything will go like clockwork. But, unfortunately, things don't go this way all the time. The good news is that when you travel with someone, you quickly click with each other and acquire similar bees. Or at least start to understand and respect each other's choices, and learn to negotiate. But anyway, one thing I know for sure is that it is a real quiz. And you either go through it and your friendship becomes even stronger, or it splits like two ships passing in the night.

Now let's talk about the downsides of travelling in a company. Even if you hope that travelling with a person with whom you are great workmates, or maybe you are enjoying yoga classes together, or just chatting for hours on the phone will be easy and simple, your hopes may break. On holidays or in a non-standard situation, people often change. Some become shiftless, while the other person whom you used to meet by the coffee machine with a sleepy look every morning, becomes unbearably active. A quiet workmate may turn into a frantic hothead, who gets up at five in the morning and climbs the highest mountain without any equipment. And it's perfect if your beats match, but mostly they don't. And don't forget that people can be completely different in everyday life. Someone will turn out to be messy. Someone will want to make an organised plan. And someone will want to catch

the vibe of a holiday and smoothly swing on the waves of adventure. It is important to understand that these changes do not characterise the person with whom you are connecting within the usual life. On holidays, everyone wants to enjoy the way they are comfortable at that moment. Therefore, when going on a trip, be ready to accept your mates the way they are, even if it's not the most lovely part of them.

I don't think you will intentionally go on a trip with a person with whom you have absolutely nothing in common. Surely you already feel comfortable together. And the more interesting people will be around you, the more exciting will be the journey, life, and communication.

Talking about the upsides, it is always cheaper. Hotel rooms for two people will cost you less than for one. Even flights or bus tickets can be cheaper if you are not travelling alone.

On the other hand, your holiday will not be as flexible as you might want. You will depend on the choices and preferences of other people because whoever is more focused and sometimes just shouts louder, decides where everyone will go. Well, the situation will work out for you if that loud person is you. But if language or power of persuasion is not your strength, this will be an excellent practice for raising your inner Caesar. Tactic, strategy, and elocution are essential life skills.

I've learned, that when travelling, people don't think about adventures from the "I would like to see this because it is interesting" point of view. Everyone goes in the direction that was offered excitedly by friends. If you invite people to follow you, planting the idea of conquering location, then it's in the bag! The knowledge of making decisions not only for yourself, but for

the whole company is, of course, a big responsibility, but very pleasant at the same time. Start by believing in yourself! And when you believe in your desires and intentions, people will trust you and follow you.

What if I tell you that you can avoid rough edges if you plan your trip together from the very beginning? Get all the information about the place where you are going, and discuss the sights you want to visit straight away. What kind of style of travel do you prefer, what is important to you, and what can be ignored? Sit down at the bargaining table before you start your trip to minimise nasty surprises.

Share the trip preparation responsibilities, it is incredibly important. If one of you can easily book flight tickets, then another should find guides and tours and look for interesting food places with good feedback.

I would also recommend you to not get upset with your friends. And not just when you travelling, but in everyday life as well. Resentments rob our youth! But don't you want to stay young and healthy for a little bit longer? You do not need negative emotions on a trip, they will not bring fun to you or your friends. Even if your mate did not choose the best hotel or restaurant during the trip, this is not a reason to get upset. It's just a hotel and just a restaurant. It is impossible to know all the best places even though we live in the era of the Internet and technology. Even if you dig through all the booklets and reviews on the websites, there is still a chance of ending up in a tent instead of a five-star hotel. No need to spend your energy on getting angry at such things, they are not so noteworthy, honestly.

Hair dryer or steam and go? When you travel in a company, you can take more useful things. You don't have to shove all the necessary gear into your suitcase, but at the same time, you don't have to give up something. With your mates, you can take everything you need without paying for extra luggage.

Travelling with others is not about constant compromises. If your friends want to go to the beach, but you want to go to the museum, fine! There is nothing wrong with it. Sometimes you spend time together, but sometimes you can choose different directions. Listen to your mood. If you feel that you want to share the joy of adventure with your mates, go to the beach and play volleyball. But if you are not ready to be in the sun and dive into the ocean, you should give yourself time for a separate moment. Then, by the evening when you meet, you can discuss all the exciting events that happened to you. Shared positive emotions will make your trip more enjoyable.

On the other hand, compromise is a great opportunity to see and maybe learn more. Even if initially you didn't want to go to the beach, when you get to the place, just enjoy the beautiful blue water and white sand. And later, when your friends go to the museum with you, they will feel the magnificence of sculptures and art.

Another important recognition is that our financial capabilities do not always match. It happens that what is cheap for one is expensive for another. So, right at the moment when you start planning your trip, agree on spending. Tell your mates about the amount you are willing to spend on accommodation, daily expenses, and tours. It's not embarrassing or shameful! It's

the right thing to do. I am sure, at this point, you will understand how comfortable it will be for all of you to travel with each other.

In my travel history, there was a situation when we didn't discuss money that we were ready to spend in advance, which led the whole company to some icky issues. On that trip, one person repeatedly took us to expensive restaurants. Not because he wanted to show off, but because he really wanted everyone to enjoy. But at some point during the holiday, when everyone was tired of overspending on lunches and dinners, we ended up in an awkward situation. If we agreed on spending in advance, we would not come to that matter. Later, we all went to the nearest bistro and had a much warmer and more open talk. Therefore, no need to be afraid to say everything that is important to you, make arrangements in advance, and talk about ups and downs. This is how you spend a really good time travelling with a company.

No complaints during the trip! Of course, you will be in various situations, but you go on a journey with a big company because this is what you want. You came here to enjoy your time together, which means that you have to respect personal positions and be positive. If you walk around moaning about your sore legs or arms, nitpicking about the weather or dirty streets, it will ruin everyone's holiday. Are you sure you want to take on this burden? I would not recommend doing it. Therefore, don't interrupt others' impressions and be a comfortable fellow for your friends.

I'll be honest with you, the whole point of travelling with a company is how much fun you will have together. If you want to experience the complete joy of visiting different places, you have

to learn how to be an interesting partner. Technically, we all have different goals, but they all boil down to the fact that we want to be loved and adored, we want people to tell us how successful and talented we are. But it is impossible to give such emotions without real actions. Therefore, to stay an interesting and better person, you need to develop yourself and change the world around you.

However, in addition to the best sides of our personalities, we all have inner demons somewhere deep inside. For example, short temper or intolerance. Don't get me wrong, with all the previous lines, I wasn't saying that you have to be a good boy or girl. You have to be kind and honest and follow emotional intelligence. I would recommend you agree about the time that you will spend separately to not accidentally get too much of each other. Being stuck together on a trip is not the best idea. You should learn to spend time both together and apart. Allocate time for yourself, no matter what you do: walk alone in the city or just lie in bed. It will be your time for inner peace and harmony. And you will see that after a couple of hours when you return to your friends, you will be full of energy and tuned in for fun. Your mental health needs it to stay in a company mood.

Believe me, all the travel options are wonderful. Do not deny yourself the pleasure of spending time with yourself, as well as don't refuse the opportunity to spend more time with your close friends. Say "Yes" to possibilities and your world will be bright and full of impressions.

2.3 It's all about people

It seems that meeting people from all over the world is something impossible. Did you have that one friend in your

childhood, who was in some kind of adventure all the time? Either he was going to visit his grandparents in another city, then he went camping or hiking, or even to another country for a holiday with his parents. I had. I used to think: so, this is what full life looks like! Not like mine - not the brightest and most boring. But that was the time when I revealed a significant secret to myself: all my thoughts about my bland life are the frames in my head that I set. You are probably an adult now and a completely independent person, I call you to kick these stupid sets from childhood and adolescence out. Travelling can help you with this. Because you will meet new people, who can turn your worldview and your universe upside down. Following this flow, you may receive something more important than the goals that you've been building for years, because sometimes, one person or a single act can change everything.

Our life is shaped by communication. Usually, we see a fairly limited circle, unless your work is about meeting new people. And if you think about the number of people with whom you have close contacts, how many friends do you have?

Going to another country and knowing that you have friends who are waiting for you there is an incomparable feeling. Each person on this planet has a lot of knowledge that can open up a new, many-sided, and interesting world for you.

People who were growing up on the territory of the post-Soviet Union, often have a personality trait of seeing the negative in everything new, including people. They think that unfamiliar traditions and habits have no logical explanation or common sense, and, of course, they will not lead to anything good. A new person may not even say a word yet, but they

already think that he is probably a messy bogan or a nasty weirdo. And in most cases, that person will not even have a chance to show the opposite or win the trust. It is some kind of form of protection that has developed according to an old well-established habit. They try to defend themselves even against those who were never planning to attack. Let's never repeat their mistake!

We should always give a chance to a person in front of us. We should learn how to find and see the good sides of an unknown person. And as soon as we open our hearts, we will meet a lot of nice people.

In Buddhism, it is believed that who we meet is caused by our previous lives and the karma of our souls. I am not telling you to believe in this, but there is an incredibly wise sense in this concept. Have you ever thought that when we meet new people on our life path, it means that someone needs us, and maybe we can give them our love and attention? It can be some present from our trips, help in difficult moments, or we can celebrate their happiness. I believe in these non-accidental and karmic friendships around the world. A person who lives on the other side of the world will expand your vision and definitely change the boundaries of your consciousness.

If you have mates in another city or even country, you can always come to visit them. It's not about materialistic benefits. I am sure, your mate will not make you pay for accommodation, so, think about bringing some gifts and you can also go to a local store and buy groceries. Arrange a country-themed dinner, for example, and make traditional dishes of your country. This is how we share our culture and learn about others. For you, it will

be an opportunity to go to a new state where you've never been before, and for your friends, it will be a chance to see new traditions.

You probably wonder, how to make friends on trips. And I have an interesting story about this. When I was on Easter Island, every morning in the lobby of the hotel, I used to bump into a group of tourists, while I was exploring the island alone. There was a very nice and kind elderly lady among them, who saw me at the hotel at least twice a day. At some point, she could not hold herself and approached me. I remember her name, Sheila. We became very good friends with this wonderful lady from Belfast and even had the same flight to Chile later. She invited me to visit her in Ireland, which to be honest, made me confused at first. I had so many doubts and questions in my head: what would she think of me if I go? Isn't it weird to go to a different country to a person who you sort of just met? What will we talk about?...

But as I was travelling everywhere with my best mate Mikhail, we decided to take a trip to Ireland. Oh, it was an amazing time! Sheila quickly tuned to our fast and hectic pace of exploring Belfast. Driving around the city, she told us important milestones and showed us the sights, and even not knowing us very well, she insisted on being guests at her house. Incredibly friendly and welcoming lady! She cooked delicious local food, and I will never forget her steaks. Sheila made our trip special. I love travelling because of the people I meet along the way.

People are the main part of this world, which can make your life truly happy. Be brave, talk to people and make new friendships. No one will refuse a conversation with a good and

interesting person, it will make both of you better. If someone invites you on a trip or to visit them – accept it! Because even if it seems that you are very different, perhaps, at the opposite ends of the world, you both look at the same stars and think about the same thing.

We are not getting any younger, most of our school and university mates moved to different parts of the world. But why not try to find your sidekick from school and ask how is his life going? When I go to different cities and countries, I often get in touch with those people and friends who moved to these places several years ago. After relocating to another country, especially if they live there for a long time, your friends gain new experiences, learn a new culture, and surely can tell you about it more interestingly and easily than you read on Google or see on video. And, of course, it is always extremely exciting to find out how people with whom a few years ago you used to walk in a park, live in a different environment. Haven't you ever wondered about their life? I am sure, there will be plenty to talk about.

It's always nice to have a chance to meet your fellows and look back at your childhood, talk about it, and learn important life lessons. It is incredibly important to overcome the distance between you and people who remember you when you were different and younger, especially if we talking about your close mate. To remember how you were waiting for Easter Bunny together, how you took dance classes, skipped school, or even bought your first pint of beer. Every person has a different experience, and learning it will be very enjoyable and useful.

Be a good friend to these people. I have a simple rule: if life brings me to someone I haven't seen for a long time, I will be

incredibly happy to see them. And I will be glad to tell them about my life, listen to their stories, and support and help as much as I can.

This is the great value of travelling: no matter where you go, whether you are on a trip alone or rushing to the other side of the planet with a big company, you will never be bored. I know, travelling will open up many new mindsets and amazing people for you.

2.4 My friends are travellers

Do you know what matters when you travel? No, it's not about if you are alone on a road or with someone. What matters is how comfortable you are. I am a lucky bloke, and my trips are always nice and funny because I found a person with whom it is especially great to explore our world. I am talking about **my best mate - Mikhail Zarubin**. He is the best teammate! We visited many countries around the world together, the most dangerous and terrible parts of it, including all of Africa. In December 2019, we received our certificates from the Book of Records, confirming that we were the only travellers in the world who, together and at the same time, visited absolutely all countries of the world.

I already mentioned that this was not an easy task at all. And now that our big goal has been achieved, I want to share what is a true friendship for me.

Defining dictionaries that I often used while studying journalism, interpret friendship as a relationship between people based on mutual trust and common interests. But different people have different thoughts, and everyone who lives on our planet understands friendship in their own way. For some,

friendship is about a win-win connection, some get it as help, and some say that friendship should be absolutely selfless.

Many times, I came across people who were building relationships with me, demanding help from me, my whole attention, and even presents from me. They never asked me if I wanted to listen or help, they thought I had to. And if suddenly I was not able to support, call, or send a gift, they took it as I was not a good friend.

I also have an experience with people for whom friendship was about telling all the most secrets and demanding the same from others. But in my mind, we all have the right to keep our mouths shut and not share secrets with other people. I am sure that each of you has come across such relationships at least once. For me, even rare contact is hard with such people, and I definitely would not be happy to travel with them in the same company.

Remember your childhood, who do you used to come to if something was going wrong? For most of us, it used to be our mothers, they were solving all our problems and supported us in every step. Of course, it is very important to have a trusting relationship, and I am very close with my mom and brother. But we also need friends with whom we can share the most sacred, and who will celebrate our success and cheer us up when we are in difficult situations.

To be honest, I can't say that I have many friends, because, for me, friendship is about responsibilities. I want to share some observations and stories about true friendship from my personal experience since I was lucky to have travelling friends.

First of all, friendship and competition should never stand on the same line. Friends never compete with each other and never argue about who is cooler. How can you enjoy someone's success if you internally consider this person a competitor? Therefore, the most important point for me in friendship is to support each other in any situation. For better or for worse.

When I met Mikhail, I immediately realised that we would become friends. In our travels, we always have something to talk about, something to discuss. We might disagree on something tiny because we have completely different visions of certain countries of the world, but it always turns into a good old joke, and it never stops us from coming up with new crazy travel routes. Our friendship is especially valuable in difficult moments. For example, when we were in Afghanistan, Syria, or Iraq, we were not afraid because we had each other; we are mates and always ready to lend a hand. We explored the planet together and are moving towards our big goals and dreams. This is what I call friendship. Sometimes, I think it was our destiny to meet on the plane and start this most interesting route together.

If you decide that solo travelling is not for you, then I wish you to find the same soul mate with whom you can travel together, look in the same direction, and have the same values.

Our friends are our reflections. I often see how people, who communicate with each other, are either very similar or entirely opposite. When you speak with someone, digging a little deeper, you might suddenly realise that this person is your real soul mate.

Just because of my mate Mikhail Zarubin, I visited many parts of the world where I would not dare to go alone. But his support

and faith that we will succeed, pushed me forward. When we were happy or sad, when we were short in money for travelling, and when we wanted to go back home and just give up because of the constant climate and time zone change, at such moments he was backing me more than ever. These are my words of gratitude to Mikhail.

After everything we have been through together and after all the trips, **we both came up with a dream and a goal: the Museum of Travellers in Australia.** We want to preserve this fantastic period of our lives and show different parts of our planet to as many people as possible. We want to motivate the younger generation to travel, believe in themselves, and go only forward.

I would also recommend you to read a fascinating novel in two books that were written by Mikhail. **"Beyond the Horizon" and "Beyond the Horizon: The Mystery of the Crown"** are based on real events about a long journey to the cherished goal of visiting every country in the world. Adventures on distant islands and in exotic countries, stories about states under war, about incredible people, their traditions, rituals, and everyday life that is so different from ours.

The plot revolves around the Pearl, which, according to legend, gives its owner all answers to the secrets of the world, immortality, and absolute happiness. What could happen to a bloke who was on his way from a holiday in sunny Cyprus? But one accidental meeting will turn the character's life upside down. Wondering what's next? Search for it on kniga.zarubin.com

Look around to see who's around you. Who is your best friend to support you and push you forward with coaxing or even with a

swift kick? Who will visit you with drugs when you are ill or with crisps and ice cream when you are broken? Who you can chat in Messenger with all night? Friendship is a rough diamond, and it is great luck finding it. But without the hard work of cutting and polishing, it will not become a gemstone.

If such a person appears in your life, catch this chance! Go on a trip together, you will discover new facets of your friendship. Over the years of travelling, I have trusted Mikhail in everything, including our food options. He quickly reads and understands the menu, remembers all the ingredients, and orders the most delicious dishes. I don't even have to think about it. Oh, Mikhail also has the superpower of charming the ladies at the reception and getting room upgrades. He is just a great bloke! On his Instagram, Mikhail writes interesting posts about travelling every day and replies to all his followers. I guess that is why he has about 1.6 million of them there and is approaching 2 million on TikTok.

He is fluent in a few languages, including Spanish. And in moments when I am devastated and just want to listen to my favourite music on trips, Mikhail often takes over all the complexity of communication with the locals. I really appreciate everything he does.

A true friendship is also about knowing all the weak sides of each other. It's not about shaming your close friend for some flaws or mistakes. It's about understanding the value and supporting each other.

I am an incredibly happy person as my interests coincide with the interests of my friends. We are always excited to go somewhere together, explore the planet, and move towards our

big dreams. We take a lot of pictures on the way to look at them later and remember the best time of our lives.

Friendship is not only about celebrating happy moments but about support in sad stories too. And I wish everyone who reads this book to find their soul mates. True ones.

You cannot become a real traveller without faithful friends who will be on your side. Never lose the opportunity to meet people with similar interests. With these contacts, I have many acquaintances around the world. And they would happily find time to see me and talk with me over a cup of coffee if I came to their country or city. Therefore, meeting new people on your trips is very important and useful. This is why I love travelling, and I am grateful for the good people I meet. Every person is wonderful, and I believe that each of them entered my life not accidentally.

From the pages of my book, I want to thank my especially close Australian friend Nathan Cook, who always protects and supports me, rushing into the maelstrom of my problems and depression because sometimes it's hard to pull myself out of them. Cheers, mate! One day I will learn how to make an awesome Veggimite toast just like you))

Chapter 3. Motivate yourself to travel

3.1 Recall your childhood dreams

There are seven and a half billion people on the planet or even more. It doesn't matter what your skin colour, religion, sexual preferences, gender, or age... Our hearts are united by one important ability – we all dream. Of course, the most inspiring time of our imaginations is childhood, the time when we are free from thinking about everyday life and worries and how to get money. This beautiful time of our lives is filled with endless ideas and belief that we will achieve everything.

When I was little, my dreams were not related to the profession, I did not think about a career. Reading Herbert George Wells and repeatedly watching *Back to the Future*, I wanted to be a time traveller to see the past and the future. Twenty-five or even thirty years later, I now realise that I achieved my dream. I see the future, perhaps not that distant, but no less interesting. And I will tell you all about it in my next book.

We also often dream about superpowers. Who doesn't want to be like a hero in movies or comics? We want a perfect peaceful job with high cash, we want good health and external beauty, or sometimes, it would be just great to fully recharge after a couple of hours of snooze.

Many of our dreams are hidden in our childhood games. Try to remember them to refresh your innocent sacred fantasies. For

example, when I was little, I was trying hard to fly. The living room was my world, I envisioned flowing lava between the chair and the sofa, so, I had to take a good run and fly through this space not falling into the boiling substance. I never thought that I would actually go to Turkmenistan, and will see its famous places with eternally burning lava. I couldn't think that I would travel at speeds that would transport me to the other side of the world in a matter of hours. It seemed inconceivable, but I never stopped dreaming. And so do you! Recall your preadolescence dreams and games, love and protect them, and later, you will see how they become your reality.

With the great love of my mom, I had an unforgettable childhood, it was filled with pleasant anticipations and real adventures. I attended many classes, including dancing, successfully graduated from a music academy, went to the TV and Acting academy and participated in TV shows since I was a little boy. Of course, these efforts helped me when I was a teenager to realise that I wanted to develop further in the entertainment industry and get into TV. At that moment, fortune smiled at me, and my mother saw an ad in the newspaper that a children's program looking for young participants. I had no idea that this chance would become my dream and passion. I also couldn't know how important my mother's offer would be for my future life and career.

I spent the whole day at a casting in a TV studio, reciting poems by heart, standing in the spotlight, and working with the camera. Oh, I was ready for any task. I had a well-delivered speech, so, camera shooting did not bother me at all. I am the son of my mother, who, as an educator, spent a lot of time

teaching me reading and writing, and the ability to formulate my thoughts clearly and speak beautifully. I think these important skills were very useful with my fidget nature. I was a hothead with very good manners, and I was never shy in front of the public.

I didn't come to the casting alone, I had my friend Alina Korolyeva with me. And we were chosen immediately as hosts and voiceover broadcasters. I remember how happy we were reading the text and how dedicated and zeal we were to work at the animation studio. I will never forget these days and as a reminder of them, I have a few airs stored in family files. Reading texts about the Disney studio, I didn't even think that one day, I would say that I had been to all the Disney parks in the world. In that distant childhood, I couldn't even dream that someday, my face, me, would be leading a TV program about travelling, and I would come as a guest on the Useful Morning TV show. Over the past three years, I have had more than four hundred live shows in my piggy bank, and I am proud to write about it in my book.

That casting gave me my first real dream. Of course, over time, it was transforming and took on different shapes. Initially, I didn't think about working on TV, I just wanted to visit the studio, watch the ongoing processes, and become part of this world.

It is great to be open to new hobbies and knowledge that the world can offer us. I loved to swim and dance, and generally spent a lot of time thinking about what attracted me and what is not. At the age of fourteen, I tried photojournalism, and photo hunting of arriving celebrities at the airport or other public places became my passion, and later, my profession. Over time, I

realised that I didn't want to be just a photographer, I wanted to be a famous photographer to be among these people. And the central point was that people would recognise me. After several years of hard sweat, I became the personal photographer of big stars such as Sergey Lazarev, Philip Kirkorov, and Dima Bilan who participated in the Eurovision twice and won it in 2008. With him, I've been on each Eurovision since 2006 and was engaged with the Got Talent show on Central TV. My childhood dream came true: I was famous and had fine cash on hand. I loved that feeling when you understand that people do not look through you, they look at you. All the artists were working with me, smiling at my camera. I was achieving my youth dream much earlier than I got my honoured diploma of journalist and even before I finished high school.

Our dreams are a bridge between the past and the future. In addition to recognition, I always wanted to be wealthy to be able to buy whatever I wanted in a store, not thinking if I could afford it or not. And, of course, I came to that point. But what to do if all the dreams gradually come true? What is next? The answer is simple: look for new passions. I am absolutely against a dreamless life: when you stop dreaming, you start to be weak and age. Now I strive towards sunrises and sunsets. Now I wish to peek at our planet closer. I want to see animals like duckbill and echidna that I have not seen yet, touch the rocks that I have not yet reached, walk along the pristine ocean coasts, and meet all the people that I have not met yet.

Love and cherish your dreams, bask in them and don't miss them. Perhaps, you are dreaming about travelling right now. I believe in you and wish you to achieve it. Covid will end

someday, and we will all start travelling again. We can do it, you can do it! You will see.

Think about where you would like to go and what you would like to see. Imagine yourself in the atmosphere where you want to be. What you are looking for? Write it all down as if you are already there. Dream about it! Nourish your imagination with these ideas, and some of them will come true.

I think we all have been dreaming of growing up as soon as possible to be a self-reliant person who knows how to live a better life! But once we came to this free life, we were all confused about why were we in such a hurry. If you take me back there with the knowledge I have now, I would be happy to walk to the kindergarten, holding my mom's hand, I would eat all the meals they give me, and have an afternoon nap without fight. I would be so dedicated to what I do, and no other four-year-old would compare with me. How fun would it be to play hide and seek or catch me if you can all day long! It would be a wonderful time! I miss it a lot, and really appreciate what my mom did, giving me the most magical childhood.

Unfortunately, not many of us can work in the places where we were dreaming about. Some didn't even think that it would be interesting. But it doesn't mean that we should stop dreaming. Another good news is that even if your work does not bring you any pleasure right now, you can still fill it with meaning and joy. But if you feel that nothing but a big change can help you, then don't be afraid. Throughout my life, I have changed my activities several times and never regretted it. I take it as a new adventure and a journey to new shores.

Believe me, we should keep dreaming and never forget about our preadolescence aspirations. They lead us to where we are now, even if we do not realise it. Look back and see where you are now, try to trace how you got here. It is a great idea for those who want to become happy again. No need to abandon your immature dreams as soon as you become an adult. I am sure that in the end, we will all be lucky to do what we want to do. But why waste your time on false or other people's desires? One of my young friends wanted to work with horses and develop in this occupation, but her parents never listened to her. They enrolled her on a serious and stable direction for earning money. Years later, she was not happy with her profession, which didn't lead to stability. A lot of time passed before the girl returned to her dream and began to work with horses. Now she is happy.

Do you remember what you were ready for to get to your cherished desire? On each of my birthdays, blowing out the candles on my cake, all my wishes were: "I wish all my dreams come true!". I often imagined how I find a real wish flower and each of its flying away parts would fulfil my wish. Such dreams seem so silly now, but let's look at it from the other angle. My dreams from my distant childhood are about the willingness to move the needle, and I was looking for opportunities to achieve the most hidden desires.

I think, when we grow up, we simply stop making efforts to make this dream come true, and if the opportunities open in front of our eyes, we look at them with a fair amount of scepticism. Sadly, many of us do not take any steps and refuse the chance. For the past thirteen years, I have been fascinated by the wonderful idea of visiting every country in the world. But,

please, don't think it's as romantic in practice as it reads from the pages of a book. This plan took absolutely all my free time, all my earnings and strength, sometimes my mental health, and partly my health itself. Step by step, week by week, I was booking flights to remote parts of the planet. I was obtaining visas no matter how hard it was. I was going through the turbulences. But nothing could stop me, all the forces were accumulated again and again to fly to the next point, getting closer to my goal.

Usually, when your idea is big and real, people ask you to tell the whole story about what it's like to go towards your dream. I'll be honest with you, sometimes it is very challenging. Without the constant support and help of my mate Mikhail, I would never cope with it.

You may look like a brave high-flying bloke, but in fact, ambitious people can be very scared. I was very uncomfortable, deciding to go on a solo trip, I was scared out of my briefs, going to Syria and Afghanistan, and I was very worried sick before exploring West Africa. A true dream often requires us to step out of our comfort zone and abandon the boundaries and usual limits in our heads. I know it's hard to leave your warm apartment and stable work, but big goals demand cognition and gameness to move toward your dream even if you are tired or scared.

Sometimes, the ideas that we decide to bring to life do not match the comfort zone of our friends or family. Perhaps you dream of moving to India and having ten children there. Or, for example, you want to become a traveller, but your parents expect you to become a wealthy lawyer or businessman. Their point of your future view differs from your desires, and sometimes they

unwittingly take the wind out of your sails. No need to blame them. We are all quite selfish when it comes to a juncture when we are afraid that we will lose our friends if they move to another country, and that our children will never have time to visit us or to take care of us. Therefore, be ready to be alone on your way to fulfilling your dream, take it as a personal challenge. Unfortunately, we often become hostages of the comfort and illusions of our family and friends, and sometimes, our dreams remain just dreams.

However, if your intentions are serious and the desire is strong, then close people will find a way to be with you, support you, and stay in touch. New roads and prospects will start opening up for you. You will find a remote income, you will meet people who will invite you to the other side of the world, and you will learn new things that at first may seem scary and outlandish. The fulfilment of a dream is always about self-confidence. And one day, finding yourself in the place you dreamed of, you will understand that absolutely everything has a reason.

You will always bump into circumstances that may seem to be more significant than your desires. You will always find a thousand excuses, saying that you don't have enough strength, money, or time for it. But do not postpone your dream for later, and if you follow your path, your life will change fundamentally. Once I decided that my goal was to visit all the countries around the world, and I did it.

If you remember yourself as a child who used to spend hours looking at an atlas, eagerly read books about other cities and countries, dreamed of working on the other side of the world or about one that would allow you to see the whole world, then now

is the time to implement it. Because you will not have another life. Try it! You will achieve your goal. I am with you.

3.2 Overcome your fears

It is very important to overcome your fears, and I would recommend dealing with all your anxieties before the trip. Worries during the travel are not the best thing that could happen to you, you will spend a lot of energy on it, and won't be able to enjoy your holiday. Therefore, the best way is to go through all the phobias in your head before packing your suitcase. Imagine all the bizarre outcomes and think about how you will act in that case.

Well, unforeseen situations are also possible during the trip. At such moments, I find salvation in the mantra. Create one for yourself and keep it with you all the time. In my case, I have it in my phone, and if I am scared, angry, or exhausted, I can turn it on and after a while, I let the situation go and easily come to my senses. It can be a full mantra, a recorded track, or a simple phrase that you can repeat at such moments, something like: "All good, I can handle it". The main thing is to prepare your brain to respond to this phrase correctly and train it so that you will become peaceful after this phrase. I don't believe in hopeless situations, it's our anxiety that may interfere with the search for a solution to an unpredictable situation.

If you are afraid of something specific, like sharp objects or heights, then I would recommend you avoid triggers that can cause anxiety. No need to climb cliffs, fly a hang glider or, worse, jump with a parachute if you are hell-scared of heights. Your body is already in new circumstances, so leave it alone. If you are afraid of large crowds, avoid busy streets and big-city events. The

carnival somewhere in Latin America will not bring joy to your holiday, only horror and nightmare. If you are going to an exotic country and are afraid of getting poisoned by something that your body is not used to, then just don't buy any street food from locals. Think about your triggers in advance and agree with yourself about what you will not even dare to do.

And again, you can dispel half of your fears if you get ready properly. If you are worried about organisational issues of the transfer or hotel check-in, just think over a couple of options of what you can do instead. You will feel better even knowing that such situations are very rare. We'll talk more about planning further in this book, but it is important to take some steps now.

Just as avoiding fear triggers, take with you something that makes you feel comfortable. Think about it in advance. Create a playlist that gives you good vibes or like a superhero set-list, take a couple of happy photos of your family and friends. Or go ahead and bring something that will calm you and remind you of your home. I usually take a few of my favourite toys.

Irrational fear is the most difficult challenge on your way. How often did you stop yourself from travelling to some special countries just because you don't know the local language? I often meet people who don't know any other languages, and therefore, avoid travelling to countries where English is not that popular. Many people refuse to go on a trip without a good knowledge of the language because they think it might be dangerous.

On my first trips, I generally spoke only with gestures. And nothing bad has ever happened to me because I cannot explain my needs, thoughts, and feelings. In many countries of the world, locals will help and support you, regardless of whether

you know their native language or not. Well, I admit, it will be more like playing a crocodile game, but gesturing is available to everyone. Do not refuse a trip just because you think that you won't be able to explain yourself there. Fear is the most formidable destroyer of your desire to travel.

What can increase and worsen the effect of irrational fear? News! They constantly show deceived tourists, hostages, and falling planes. You don't even need to delve into this flow of information, it is enough just to hear the discussion of the new catastrophe with one ear. And when it's your holiday time, you don't even want to think about boarding a plane or looking at any new countries. You are panicking, and your brain draws the most terrible pictures from the scene with you as the main character. So, your journey ends before it even begins.

Modern realities are to blame for all the desperation. The highest life pace, frantic routine in which we don't have enough time, the cycle of events, gallons of coffee, and tons of information. And usually, we do not have a specific fear. We are just afraid that we will end up far from home, outside the boundaries of our usual life, eating different food and looking at different sunrises and sunsets. Meet only deceivers and mobsters who will steal our money... The more you allow fear to take possession of you, the farther you are from the trip.

I was not the boldest traveller at the beginning of my journey, and, to be honest with you, I am still afraid. Here are some stories about my fears. I belong to the type of people who are worried about being misunderstood. For example, what will I do when they drop me at the hotel? The solution was invented a long time ago. I found salvation in a tiny book, where I kept all

common and important phrases for all occasions for a traveller. This story, by the way, has a wonderful ending! This fear motivated me to learn more languages, and I started to devote more time to that.

Many fears and concerns of travellers are often related to the journey itself. I am sure you often hear how someone says “I hate flying” or stories about how poor people get drunk just to fall asleep and not think about anything on the plane. And here I am, a person who was also afraid of flying. To cope with this fear create activities along the way. I was writing travel notes, studying the functions of the camera, for which I never had time, or at least playing puzzles or colouring books. Anything that would distract and keep me busy during the flight. I believe that with our thoughts, we attract the events that occur in reality. Hang on, it does not mean that if you imagine how your bus falls into the abyss, then it will happen, no. But this thought will ruin your journey. Just stop the flow of negativity, and think positively.

Turning your damaging thoughts into positive ones is probably the most useful skill that a traveller can learn. Try to imagine something nice. As soon as I board the plane, I start thinking about how great I will feel when I arrive: I go through guidebooks and think about what I want to do and where I will go first. Use such affirmations, and you will not want to return to the negative.

Another important point is to know that everyone is afraid. Feeling fear from time to time is normal. Of course, if you don't fly very often, you find yourself in a slightly more unusual situation. Fear has no gender. As a man, I admit that sometimes

we are scared same as women, and sometimes even more. Well, we cry less often or at least not showing it because we don't want anyone to doubt that we are not that strong blokes. And if you see a man with a poker face sitting next to you, blushing and drinking a third glass of whiskey, try to talk to him. That might help to distract both of you from silly thoughts.

One simple thing that helps me cope with travel stress is lists. I highly recommend you create them for all travel situations: clothes, documents and their copies separately from each other, insurance company's numbers, and a list of medicines for the first aid kit. Well, I hope you will never need most of them, but keep the lists with you, just in case. These are additional points to deal with all possible concerns.

Let's get back to the iron sheep. Stop being scared of this type of transport. Aeroplanes are the most reliable type of movement. Read statistics and talk to your fear using numbers and logic. Your brain will like it, and you will have more chances to enjoy the flight.

What about turbulence? Well, none of the flights has immunity to turbulence, and sometimes, it scares me too. But I have very good advice for you that always works. If we face turbulence, I take a pen and paper and start writing my name or other facts about myself. This distracts my brain from the ongoing, and I gradually calm down.

Do not be afraid of any type of transport, follow my simple advice, and go towards your dream.

We often worry about getting lost in an alien city. Going for a walk after arriving at the accommodation, take business cards of

the hotel, shops, or maybe bakeries nearby. You can always show them to locals or taxi drivers, so, they can take you back.

Such simple steps and thorough preparation will drive away all fears, you will be ready for your journey, and maybe you can even help someone cope with their phobias.

3.3 Where take the money (if you weren't born rich)

The most popular question I get asked about travelling is always about money. Many people believe that millions just fell on my head like a little snowflake from the sky, and I began to travel around the world for the sake of simple fun. In return, I will never get tired of explaining that you don't need a big pile of money for this. You just need to learn how to travel at a lower cost by booking flights and hotels in advance to not depend on travel agencies. In addition to the obvious savings, it is also very exciting.

I should dispel the myth about my wealth straight away. I grew up in a simple family with my mom and dear older brother, who gave me main support throughout my life. I never had a father. My mom worked all her life as a caregiver in kindergarten, and I am incredibly proud of her. She raised many of our neighbours and their children, she is known and very respected by the whole district. She tried to develop me in different directions and was very enthusiastic about my hobbies. As you can probably guess, a family with only one adult who works in the kindergarten did not have much income.

I always wanted to achieve a higher position, get out of our usual life, and achieve success no matter how hard it will be. It's not about money, I dreamed that my mom would be proud of me. Not because I had something to prove but because I believed it

was right and worked hard for it. Over the years, my values didn't change, moreover, I think that those circumstances led me to where I am now. Sometimes I feel that people who initially have everything, who have always been under the protection of a bank account of rich parents, often have no real goal and are rather unhappy.

I saw people who had no goals because everything seemed humble to them. They had money that did not have to be invested in something bigger, they had alcohol and drugs, and they had courtships that had nothing to do with real feelings and love. Unfortunately, money can both fundamentally change a person and set the wrong course of personal development. Perhaps, parents in such a situation have to make more efforts to teach their children responsibilities, honesty, and kindness.

Many people think that only millionaires can travel. Believe me - this is the dumbest myth, nevertheless easy to explain. This is such a protective reaction of the brain to not plan anything or set goals... It seems easier to forbid yourself something in such a sly way. Believe me, I know several people who can be called millionaires, and they are just shaking over their existing assets and constantly monitoring ways of increasing them. As a rule, they do not spend extra money, because they simply do not have cash as it's in use. Rich people are often under the pressure of stress that someone will come along and take all their money from them. They have to keep on a poker face and stick to a wealthy status.

But a dream of new countries and lands is much more valuable than all these millions! Because it gives you contentment, not burdening you at the same time. And you don't

need much for this, just a little luck, a little more faith in your potencies, and a lot of persistence.

Therefore, if you are not a child of a family with a business corporation, believe me, it's only for the best. You have all the chances to achieve more, just don't forget to esteem yourself. For example, to enter the faculty of journalism at the university, I worked very hard all eleven years of school. All summer I was cramming the information, preparing myself to write an essay for exams. Not even a single evening I spent in a nightclub or bar, I didn't buy anything unnecessary because sometimes I didn't have money. I knew that I had only one chance to start education here and now, and I had to grab it because I had been pursuing this dream for a long time. I had to enter this faculty because it would give me a good income, and soon, I would become the support of my family. And, of course, all my efforts were not in vain, I made it.

I was a lucky guy who was the only man among thirty-nine girls. Many of them came from small cities, and for a long time, I was trying to figure out how that happened that among so many girls in a big university, only a few were from the capital. A little later, talking with them, I realised the reason: girls from smaller cities had just one chance to succeed, the only chance to win. Entering the university was the only way to escape small towns, achieve heights, and gain access to great prospects. And of course, the zeal of my groupmates paid off. Enrolment was just the beginning, and by the end of the fifth year, all of us were working. I was incredibly happy to be a part of such motivated people, who were truly passionate about their profession and had

an enormous desire to make major strides. Our faculty could be proud of us, we were proud of us.

A rich family is not a silver bullet, it's more like golden cuffs. Your parents are to decide whether you go to Bali or Germany, Japan or the UK. They are to organise what you are going to do in this country. They have the main tool of liberty – money. And it turns out that you have access to everything, but choice. This is not what you achieved and you not really striving for it. I find it boring.

Independence! What could sound better? My mom used to tell me: Work hard, dream big! It turned out to be a very wise suggestion. I wanted to reach for something bigger and move towards it.

But let's get back to the question about money. Many think that the reason for the lack of travel in their lives is the lack of spare cash. They think that if they receive a million, they will go all over the world! But let me open up the truth for you: you still need to learn how to manage big money properly. If you receive this magical number, what are you going to do? Will you rush to luxury escapes or will you make it work for you to get regular passive income? Money begets money! And travelling here is a matter of your personal priorities. No matter if you have money or not, it's all about the time that you want to spend on it.

Often people look around and think that the grass is greener on the other side, and their neighbours have more money and live better, therefore, they fly around the world for no reason. I travelled a lot and I can assure you that the grass is the same green everywhere. Every country has troubled areas and slums,

and everywhere you can meet people who are in a worse situation than you and me.

Again, travelling is not about spare cash, it's about your life preferences. If you can find the money for a cup of morning coffee, later you will certainly find several hundred for a flight. When I realised that travelling was what I wanted, I sometimes didn't sleep, working the night shifts on TV, and running around with a camera for an incredible amount of time. In fairness, it took me some time to recover from panic attacks and fatigue after that, so, I would not recommend you go through my difficult path. But I was ready to sacrifice everything to go on another adventure when it was the right time.

It is incredibly interesting to achieve success in the field that you have chosen yourself. It is your path and a string of your decisions. Just as a business first, pleasure afterwards, an easy flow prepared for you by someone will not bring true satisfaction. Entering the desired university, getting my chosen profession, achieving the first and honestly deserved fees and spending them on travelling were invaluable for me. And I hope it will become something big and meaningful for you.

If a bloke who started working with a small film camera and an old computer managed to get a profession and achieve big travel goals, then believe me, you can do it too. You do not need bonuses or benefits, you have the most valuable resource – your life and your body, you can do absolutely everything.

3.4 Traveller or tourist

So, I hope you are already motivated to travel. In this part, we need to figure out one important question, you need to decide who you want to be: a traveller or a tourist? Tourists do not

explore the country, they admire the atmosphere around and most often, they get a package tour to an all-inclusive hotel to enjoy the lazy beach holiday with maybe several city tours. Tourists are happy with what is offered to everyone. They got to the place and it was already enough, if they manage to take a few landmark photos, then they have what to show to their family and friends. While travellers rarely know what to expect around the corner. Sometimes they just swerve from the outlined routes and rarely follow the beaten paths. They are not interested in life inside the hotel, they want to meet people of a new country, finding inspiration in spontaneity and adventure.

This is the main difference between travellers and tourists.

But anyway, both of these types of people are united by their love of travel, even if they have completely different travel philosophies and styles of bliss.

Of course, most of the people are tourists. Ordinary people, who work hard for a year and go on holidays probably twice over the same year to lie on the beach, have some booze and change their usual surroundings. The main reason for such a journey is a break, the desire to do nothing or do as little as possible. Coming somewhere once, in six months, the tourist will go to a similar place. Perhaps, to another hotel or maybe to another country, but the main thing is to have all the attributes of the holiday that will help to forget about work and relax.

Travellers never spend all their time in the same place. They love our planet and strive to study it. Like Vasco de Gama or Christopher Columbus, they are explorers, who approach new adventures with eagerness. They constantly search for undiscovered territories of the earth. They want to know

everything: how plants are cultivated in this part of the planet, what people eat for breakfast, how they live, what is their daily routine, how they sleep, how they raise children, what they do, what they trade. It is almost unbearable for travellers to sit in a hotel, they just need to escape into the local space, get to know the city, get lost and find a way out by communicating with people. They want to know everything, their heads are full of questions: what, why, where, and how... And, of course, they find all the answers.

Both types are curious about our planet, it's just they do it differently. I should be honest with you – the way of the traveller is closer to me. I physically cannot lie on a sun lounge for more than an hour! I have to come out early in the morning to the city with a charged camera and wander around until it's dark, studying everything and solving the mysteries of our world. All I need for a happy holiday is sunglasses, a hat, sunscreen, comfortable boots, and insect repellent.

Both styles of travelling are important and useful. But ask yourself which would be the best for you. Which way of planet exploration suits your lifestyle and your goals?

And I will do my best to help you ask yourself the right questions by uncovering these two sorts of travelling.

You must admit that when you come to a travel agency, you deprive yourself of spontaneity and impersonalize your trip, making it standard. This way, of course, has its advantage – you don't have to worry about dates, hotels, food, or entertainment. Everything is already planned for you. But it has nothing really to do with romanticism or adventures.

Improvisation makes travelling incredibly interesting. You can't even imagine how many times I ended up in a new city, having no idea where I was going to sleep! While with a tour, everything is scheduled by the day and hour, and there is no way to step to the left or the right. And guess how many times on a trip with a travel company, I've been in a situation where the whole bus was waiting for a couple of lost tourists on a city tour or even at the airport. At such moments you sort of feel stuck and dependent on the irresponsibility of others.

The guide will take you to a landmark that is open to visitors only for a certain time because there are many other groups. He will also tell you a thousand times about the best places, and the bus will take you to the most expensive souvenir shop. No flexibility in activity or decisions. It doesn't seem that exciting anymore, and as for me, it's too dull.

You, in fact, pay for the travel agency's contacts and established connections. But what if you become your own travel agency? What if self-made bookings and plans will give you contacts from all over the world that would be useful? Independence will give you freedom of action and movement, and each time, it will be easier and quicker for you to go somewhere.

A good example is a trip to Paris. When you're on a Europe tour with a travel agency, you probably will look at the Eiffel Tower once, between 3 and 5 p.m., during a walking tour no matter what weather you will catch. But what if you want to get on it outside the plan later in the evening? Following the traveller's path, I reached my own unique Eiffel Tower. I booked a table at the restaurant there and got an incredibly delicious

dinner at a table that was chosen by me. Enjoying the food that I ordered, I was sitting on the tower, which is one of the most famous for everyone on the planet.

Well, independent travelling is not very predictable, but you can get exactly what you want. You can go on late cycling or set yourself on a ship for a sea adventure to meet the sunrise. You can spend the whole day at the zoo or leave the place you don't like when you want. For example, in Valencia, they have a zoo with no enclosures. Animals there live in a free environment, and you can practically reach them with your hand. As a tourist with a package trip, you will spend there only an hour. While I can stay in the biopark for the whole day. A strong argument, isn't it?

Many times spontaneous decisions led me to amazing places and discoveries! I saw incredible meadows and fantastic sunsets, I met locals and saw their lives. Travel agencies have one simple task – to keep you safe. And when you have a group of people with a common goal, there is no place for misadventure. You will always have food on time and your room will be cleaned, but you will miss a lot of knowledge about the life of residents. Choosing a tourist path, you will never get lost in a new city, meet people outside your hotel, or end up on a tiny street with an antique shop and the most valuable vintage jewellery. Tourists choose a safe path without possible troubles; travellers consciously take risks because they strive for something more. Are you still on the tourist's side?

Tourists always know what they will do tomorrow, everything is planned by the hour. They have no problem understanding what time is the breakfast, when is the city tour, and how much time they will spend by the pool with an animator. Travellers

know nothing, except for the fact that they are independent in their decisions even about breakfast. This is what distinguishes one type of travelling from another. One day, while travelling across the ocean, I peered into the distance and at some point, I realised that it was a perfect time to learn to paint. I didn't know anything about painting or its techniques, but it didn't stop me. I am a traveller, and I am free to do whatever I want.

A package tour is almost impossible to personalise. You will get a reasonably good hotel, according to the average tourist, but it is unlikely that the agency will make sure to get you a room far from the lift. Package tours mostly have an established system, and if you go to an all-inclusive hotel, they will not give you any discount if you, for example, don't drink alcohol. Of course, with a package tour, you will visit such essential sights as Buckingham Palace, the White House, and the Eiffel Tower, but that probably will be the limit. City tours are usually just around the main attractions. But unfortunately, these are crowded places, and you will hardly enjoy a quick stop by them.

But if you are a traveller, you can always stop any person on the street and ask about their favourite places and areas in the town. Believe me, this list will not coincide with the top ten and even twenty given by your guide.

I would say that the spirit of a true traveller is in my blood. I used to live in St. Petersburg, a touristy heart of Russia. For its northern climate and gorgeous landmarks, it attracts many tourists and travellers all year round. I like to talk about this city and its hidden routes. I would want people to look at St. Petersburg in the way I saw it. That is why my recommendations will never match hundreds and thousands of tourist guides about

the place. I am sure that residents of big tourist cities will understand me. I also get a lot of good and unexpected advice from them.

A package trip will be ideal for a family with a small child. Safe and comfortable courses will allow everyone to feel safe without worrying about small things because you probably have no time to think about them when you travelling with children. But if you are alone or in a company, full of energy, sense, and adventurism, I recommend you to take a traveller way.

Returning to my path, I remember Bolivia and a place called “Artist's Canvas”. It's a highland with sand of different colours. I asked my driver to stop on the side of the road and stood breathlessly, looking at the beauty of our globe and realising how much there is still to explore. If it was a package tour, I don't think I would have more than five minutes to spend looking at rocks. Because guided tours stop only in special places with toilets, giving people time to have a short break from the bus. While I spent almost an hour in this stunning location.

The traveller usually cannot really plan the budget, it's rather spontaneous. Because you may not spend a penny today but will break your piggybank tomorrow. And on the tour, you pay in advance and already know when you will go to a souvenir shop to spend extra cents. This is about different philosophies on spending. For travellers, it is energy, while for tourists, it is an indispensable resource.

The main difference between the two approaches that I am describing is that the tourist is on holiday and the traveller is living his life. Think about which option is closest to you at the moment and accept it as the basis of your travelling philosophy.

The conscious approach will allow you to get what you really want from travelling.

My main idea in this book is to identify you a little more as a traveller than as a tourist. It all applies not only to trips to distant countries but to life in general. Finding new routes to work, exploring your favourite city, and being open to new places and people. Think about who you are and which philosophy you want to follow, and move towards your goal.

At the end of this part, I have to tell you that all the taboos that you have in your life are hidden only in your head. There are no poor people who cannot afford to travel. There are unfortunate choices, unwanted jobs, or boring companies. Change what you don't need and protect what is valuable to you. You are the one to choose whether you will live every day with great astonishment and a smile or gloomily eke out your existence from one hotel every six months to another.

Part 2. Preparing for the trip

Chapter 1. Planning your first trip

1.1 “All inclusive” or world tour?

The title of this chapter sort of divides people into two polarities. World tours and “all-inclusive” are absolutely opposing points. Usually, people who don’t have any experience of big journeys or they just haven’t been on a city break for a long time, want to go on an all-prepared holiday. Bali, Thailand, and Turkey are always ready to welcome you, and you don’t have to do anything there. Just sunbathing, swimming, and eating at restaurants all day long. I should say right away that I understand why such tours are in demand. Most people have a pretty tough time during work, so they just don’t have enough energy to walk around and explore new territories. Sometimes we want to plan nothing, think about nothing, and just relax.

But there is another type of tourist who, on the contrary, cannot stay still. They are not excited about food and animators by the pool, they need an endless extreme. Such people get up at dawn, rush around all the sights, and then furthermore, get themselves on a few more excursions. And I belong to this type. It is unbearably challenging for me to spend more than two days in a hotel. Often, instead of big chain hotels, I stay at small family business houses. By the way, you often pay extra for the interior of the hotel. A cup of coffee and a fresh bun, a local favour breakfast, and entertainment by wandering around instead of animators can significantly lower the cost of your trip.

But don't forget that we have already agreed that both the first and the second options for tourism are extremely opposing points. Try to find your middle ground, the line between being a couch potato and a researcher for activities. For example, in Thailand, you can combine many options. My middle point includes a few sessions of good massages at an attractive price and daily mouthwatering exotic fruits, vegetables, and seafood. This will be cheap, and, at the same time, does not deprive you of contact with the culture of the country. And you, of course, will have plenty of time to lie on the beach as well. Holidays should always include a new and interesting activity, such as windsurfing, sailing, surfing, or even a hot air balloon trip.

By the way, flying on a balloon was one of the most vivid memories in my piggy bank. I arrived at a place in Burma at 4 in the morning, where a team of pilots from England were raising balloons to watch the sunrise over the pagodas and valleys. Flying up high, you once again understand the magnificence of our planet. You might feel scared because it's a step out of your comfort zone, but this experience will change you and fill your journey with special memories. After such an adrenaline rush, you can indulge in bed for longer and enjoy your relaxing holiday.

Choosing between self-supported and "all-inclusive" trips in favour of the latter, you have to understand that most often, they are organised by a travel agency who includes their wages and commission in the cost of your holiday. So, why not to try book your flights and hotels by yourself? Even visa and invitation processes are fairly simple. I agree that it's not as easy as just giving money and waiting for the date. You will have to send

emails, make phone calls, ask for discounts and so on. You sort of start your trip at the stage of preparation. You will think about it, and its image will emerge in detail. Do not limit yourself to the route that is offered to you by the tour operator. Be the most responsible agent for yourself and focus on what is important to you. Do not force yourself to travel with a crowd of other slow tourists who stop for a long in places that are insignificant to you. Be independent.

It's quite simple to understand which way you will enjoy the most. If you are honest with yourself, then in the first place, you should answer the question of why you travel. My inner dialogue went pretty well, and I realised that I don't travel to show it on my social media or to make a tick in my personal diary. Whenever I travel, I fall in love with our planet more and more, I study its amazing diversity: dangerous and unpredictable, quiet and peaceful. Unfortunately, we do not live long enough to see the whole globe, but we can try to see as much as possible. Many places in the world are difficult to reach even with new technologies. For example, the Mundari tribe in Sudan. When I went there, many people around me couldn't understand why would I want to go somewhere to watch locals washing their faces with a stream of cow urine. Not to mention the fact that these places are infamous for the most dangerous fly in the world, roads are always washed away with rain, there are no tourist pathways, and you can rarely find an agency that brings tourists to these territories.

I would like to share this unforgettable experience with you. The hardest part of travelling to the Mundari is getting to the tribe itself. To get to some of them, it takes up to several days of

driving on the roads. Well, I would rather call them broken paths with holes. I don't think they ever heard or saw asphalt there. Travelling around Africa, I already got used to the shaking party of the body and guts, and even called it African massage. But I was surprised to see trucks overloaded with groceries and humanitarian aid driving through such impassability. They just stop for a while, waiting for the weather to get better to not roll over.

Guess when did I go to meet the tribe? Yes, it was raining season. It was pouring down in sheets, only occasionally stopping for a few moments. We could still walk around and take pictures, but the roads were just flashed out, so, it was problematic to drive. I have a video where we are literally crossing entire rivers, and at some point, it was clear that if the water comes a bit higher, we won't be able to make it. We almost got stuck on our way back.

The Mundari tribe was on my list, I had to meet them. All they do is cattle breeding. I don't remember seeing pastures like in South Sudan anywhere else! Men protect the herds and take care of them throughout their lives. Cows there are different, a rare type with beautiful horns. I saw the same in Uganda because it's a popular breed in these areas. Of course, there are a lot of flies around them, and the more time you spend near animals, the more you are bitten. I felt like they were going to eat me to the bones!

Despite the long road, expense, and insects, the trip to the tribe was worth it. Their kids breezily run around the cows naked. But adults are fairly stern because they don't see tourists very often, and to spend some time with the tribe and take pictures,

you need to pay with money or food. We brought rice, flour, and sugar as payment. Locals will also be pleased to receive medications and bandages. I will never forget their happy faces when we said that these goodies were for them. A sincere joy.

Among the tribe, they have a legend that if a man wash his face with a stream of cow's urine, he will improve his virility. It also helps to repel mosquitoes and other insects with which they live side by side. After such morning treatment, their hair colour becomes gingerish. Sounds wild, isn't it? But this is how they live, and their life routine is completely different.

We had to move around the tribe very carefully, as there was a lot of excrement everywhere. Locals try to maintain cleanliness, but it's difficult when your cows are just tied to little pegs, can walk wherever they want, and even butt you accidentally. At some point, getting used to the locals, smells, flavour, and cows, you sort of adapt to the area and sometimes, even ready to hug these animals, because here, they are sacred, loved and therefore, not angry.

You also have to get used to nudity here, because not only kids are naked, but the younger population is as well. Adults there wear beautiful capes. People in the tribe are muscular, but at the same time, their legs, arms, and fingers look graceful. All Mundari are very tall and pretty well-shaped, so, any fitness model would be envious.

The tribe's relocation depends on weather and drought. When it starts, they migrate to create new pastures. So, as you can imagine, their life is a constant movement.

Cows here are the most useful currency that is also used as a dowry. The whole herd is in very good condition. Animals do not

starve and are well-groomed. Only men milk them and even massage them.

These cows are incredibly gorgeous! And it's not about their horns or rare breed, it's about the atmosphere of this place. It is iconic. At the time of the trip to the Mundari, I already visited South Georgia, reached Tristan da Cunha, and went to Libya, Iraq, Iran, and Syria. But the Mundari tribe and their cows were something special to me. Many dream to get to their living place, and you have to be very brave to make such a path. I am proud of myself for meeting them and seeing their routine from the inside. Uncommon, wild, and weird. It is different. It is a real Africa.

Real mediums and diviners live in the tribes. With a strict hierarchy, they have leaders. They also kept scarring rituals, and the scars mean a transition to adulthood, so, they are proud of them. And I should admit, scars look good on Mundari.

Their ladies are very beautiful and nimble. When it comes to marriage, the groom's family pays a huge dowry in the main currency, which is cows. Becoming a wife, they give birth to ten to thirteen children. And as the number of boys is significantly larger than girls, families are happier for daughters.

This trip was among the last ones on my path of visiting all the countries around the world. It left an indelible impression on me and hopefully, inspired you for adventure too. I know, that if I would chose to visit exclusively tourist countries, I would never become the person I am now. Someone will think that I'm nuts, but for me, seeing such unique animals with amazing horns is a miracle. Meeting far away tribes and seeing their life and existence only with the breeding of cows, or visiting Papua New

Guinea, where people were moving from one island to another for ten years – this is my path. Picking unusual routes and hard-to-reach places, I realised that I wanted to visit all the countries.

I don't divide our world into cities and countries, because every place on the planet is worth attention and research. Our planet is a single unit that is separated by borders. And people are so ambivalent in their desire to split everything into yours and mine, that over time, most borderlines are being constantly shifted. Did you know that ten, hundred, and thousand years ago, people like us used to live with different sets of countries and borders? And after you and me, in just 10-15 years, humanity will live in a completely new digital world. For me, during my lifetime, our planet is a single globe, and any of its partitions are not critical for anyone except customs services and politicians.

With a strong desire for exploration, walking on the streets and visiting museums, listening to or seeing local traditions and customs, you will learn a lot. Maybe you will find an answer to the question of why people in some African countries spit on the bride's head, why they kidnap the groom in India, why teenagers in Africa are going through scarring, why women wear numerous rings around their necks, why brides in China cry when they receive presents on their wedding... Do they already sound exciting? Oh, this is just the beginning. Sadly, we don't have enough time to study them all, but it's up to you to decide how much of this knowledge you will take from the planet to fill up your soul.

Just to watch beautiful sunrises and sunsets, it's worth visiting various countries. For example, the city of Perth in Australia has them differently every day. Or the spectacular

Milky Way in the desert of Namibia, to watch which you don't need any light. To see the connecting line between desert sand and the endless ocean, cook steaks in Latin America, and visit masterpieces of architecture. To see how the forgotten tribes of Africa live now and maybe encounter animal migration. It doesn't matter if at the moment I am in a quiet and peaceful Portugal, sitting near the most powerful lighthouse the light of which breaks the path of sixty-four kilometres, or horrified in dangerous Afghanistan – it's all our planet. And each country deserves memoirs about it.

I should've not said this out loud, but I am not much into museums unless it is modern art. My story in the country begins with its geography, architecture, people, food, and traditions. My way is to go out with a backpack onto unknown streets and get lost in a new city. Try it, otherwise, you will never know what type of travelling suits you.

Any trip begins with early preparation. When my friends start to think about the Christmas season getaway in November, I already know that they will not end up successful. It will be a jigsaw puzzle by booking flights and accommodations with not the best available options. You need to plan very well in advance if we are talking about significant dates for the whole world.

We live in a time with developed booking services, miles, and very fast internet, so, good deals sold like hotcakes. My recommendation is to plan your trip seven or eight months before your holidays. Especially if you flying to Europe. Read all the information about trains and buses. Find a way to get to another city. For example, if you are going to Spain or Portugal, the best transportation there is by bus. I would plan your first

trips in more detail. And when you gain travel courage, just getting return tickets will be enough. When you will understand that travelling is not terrifying, you will allow yourself spontaneity. Sometimes, arriving in the country, you see that you don't want to spend more than a few days in one city, but in love with another.

A little but important tip for you if you want to spend a lot of time travelling. Think about your earnings. You can find a remote job, and some of them will bring you income during your trips. A new level of immersion, absolute freedom of movement.

Seasonal travelling is very popular now. When during the cold season, people move to a region with a softer climate. I had such an experience and was preparing for the trip like a crazy monkey.

When I think about seasonal travelling, the first memory that comes to mind is my expedition to Greenland for three weeks. A constant swirl of strange questions, such as what to eat there, what would be my transport, how locals eat fur seals, and how to force myself to try hakarl, which is a fermented shark. But when you arrive at the place, you understand that people are friendly everywhere and local cuisine can be fairly delicious.

One thing I can say for sure: no matter if it is seasoning or another long-term stay somewhere, it should be comfortable. Therefore, do not limit yourself to options and book the whole trip in advance.

It is only up to you, what type of travelling you will choose. The bottom line is that you should not chase other people's dreams, stereotypes, or images. Do only what is valuable for you.

1.2 Where to start? Buying tickets and booking accommodation

I always recommend approaching the preparation for a trip consciously. Think about why you want to go to this particular place and make sure your desire is not imposed by the meddling ideas of your families and friends. For example, my Egypt is not about “all-inclusive”, but all about the plundered and fascinating museums of Cairo. Or someone highly recommends Thailand for its sex tourism and massage, while I like it for its wonderful sea, delicious fruits and vegetables. Therefore, first of all, look at the country and your desires meticulously.

Once you understand that you are really interested in visiting the selected country, look for information about it from different angles. And here is the Internet to help you. For example, YouTube has many channels about tourism in different countries, including videos about the life of locals and their traditions. Well-researched information will allow you to immerse into the country you have selected to travel to and understand what will you do there.

Start with giving yourself a couple of days for doing nothing. You might need this time in case of heavy acclimatisation and jetlag. Leave some time for tourist activities, such as sightseeing, visiting museums, and maybe city and suburban tours. It also would be perfect to have another couple of spare days in case of unforeseen events – for example, you couldn't enter one of the most attractive for you landmarks, so, you will still have time to do it before you leave. Or if you loved the country a lot and decide to visit its other city.

You can call planning effective when everything goes smoothly. Therefore, when planning your trip, ask yourself honestly, how much you are ready to spend. I am for common

sense, therefore, I will never tell you to get flight tickets only and ditch everything else relying on luck. This is the path of wrong tourism. A good traveller knows all the dates and times of departure, has hotel reservations at each stop, keeps in mind three or four places near the hotel where to eat, and is never cheap to rent a sun lounge on the beach. Calculate all your expenses in advance so as not to worry about them during your trip. So, another quick conclusion from my adventures – the path of a good traveller will help you to lower the cost of your trip because with advanced hotel and transport booking you can save half of the budget than if you would organise it at the last moment.

Here I have to say about travel agencies: we need them. Sometimes, for some reason, you cannot plan your holiday properly. So, it is easier for you to turn to professionals and just enjoy. But even if you decide to plan everything by yourself, travel agencies have a lot of useful information for you. No one can stop you from going to the operators for a talk. With their help, you might come up with an idea where your perfect holiday is waiting for you. They will also offer you a set of transfers, hotels, and tours. Such a sneaky peak at the trip from the unknown side. And most likely, you will roughly understand how much this holiday will cost you with the agent's commission. If you are bold, you will become your own agent and make a remarkable journey.

Talking about functional leads, I will be fairly predictable. Again, buying early – spending less. When booking flights, you better get a free exchange option. Very often, ticket prices drop several times a day or two before departure. So, make sure to

check the website for the cost, you might be able to save some cash. But still, booking flights in advance is a more proven way.

Night flights are always cheaper than afternoon flights. But sometimes, this method does not work, because you will have to add expenses for airport taxi, hotel transfer, and probably an early check-in or an additional day at the hotel. So, this way can end up being even more expensive. Usually, it is low-costers, who offer night flights at a time that is not the most convenient for you. But it makes your travelling much lighter for your bank account.

Try to extend the season. Any country has its period when crowds of people desperately rush to get into the cherished touristic destination. Of course, during this time, flights are the most expensive, budget hostels hit the price of boutique hotels, and it's hard to break into the iconic sights of the country because most people choose such terms for travelling. But did you learn enough about your destination? Usually, the weather does not change much for one or two weeks after the season, but at the same time, the place is not busy with tourists anymore. Don't follow the path of least resistance, don't be like everyone, be different, find opportunities. For example, don't go to Europe in July or August. It is a traditional holiday season there, so, the cost of flights at this time rolls over. Wait till September or even October. In early autumn, you will get cheaper hotels, empty cafes with delicious food, quiet streets, and a wonderful atmosphere.

When looking for a flight, don't get overexcited with a small price. Low-cost airlines attract you with cheap deals, but after clicking on them, you understand that you have to pay for the

luggage separately. Well, if you don't need it and all your belongings will fit into a backpack, great for you. But if you have a suitcase, then be careful! Most of the time, the cost of the baggage space seriously competes with the price of the ticket itself. Cheaper travelling is often about your mobility, how fast you can hit the road with your backpack and wallet only.

All is fair when looking for a perfect ticket. Start with different search services. Aggregator websites (Read Part-1, 1.5) allow you to set different search filters. Play with time, date of departure, flight destination and its stops over. This is how you get information about all possible travelling options. Try various Google services. For example, with Airport service, you can see all available airports within the country you want to visit. Some cities have several arrival points, and one of them might be not as popular and will cost you much less. And even if it's farther from the city, there will be public transport or taxis. These days, we have so many services such as Tripadvisor, Skyscanner, and many more, so, it is simply impossible to sit still. Just start looking for the best options for your trip, and you will find them. Trust me!

A few more words about aggregator websites. All the platforms have groups in messengers and social media, they also have email newsletters. If you want to catch interesting and hot offers, subscribe to the most convenient social media and channels for you. Browse them regularly, and at some point, you will see an offer that suits you by dates, time, and cost. And here you are, walking in Amsterdam or drinking beer in Bavaria. To make this scheme more successful, try to make a list of nearby places that you would like to visit.

Are you at the point of buying tickets? All you need is a bank card, email, and a stable internet connection, which shows you a huge number of services for booking tickets, hotels, and insurance. Try to do it yourself, no need to be afraid. By the way, about banks. Search for information if you can receive cashback or miles. Because many banks offer packages for active travellers, so, your insurance, tickets, and even hotel reservations may bring you a couple of hundred miles or some cash back. Isn't it great!? Files with purchased tickets and reservations will come to your email, so you better have one good working email account. Download your email service to your phone.

Let's take a look at booking systems. Many hotels want as many tourists as possible. Therefore, a significant part of them is registered on special websites with descriptions, photos, and honest reviews from their guests. So, I suggest you look for accommodation there. You would think that opening a hotel website directly to pick up a suitable offer is better, but not always. Often, rooms there can cost more, while booking systems give you a discount on them because this business direction is actively developing.

If you have just stepped on the path of an independent tourist, my advice would be to start searching for the best aggregator service for you. I understand that at first, it seems that you will mess something up when booking and something will go wrong. But as soon as you do it at least once, you will be unstoppable.

When you book a hotel, make sure you add the correct dates, and look for check-in and check-out timing. In most places, you have to check out around 11 a.m., while check-in time starts at 2

p.m. Remember that if you arrive early, your room may not be available, and if you occupy your room for longer, you may be charged for a later check-out. Look for a Property Policies section in booking services to clarify all the information, including the timeline of reception or spa facilities. Of course, large hotels have a 24-hour registration desk, but if you are travelling to a little town or staying in a small boutique hotel, chances are that the front desk does not work all day long. And one more important detail when booking hotels: some rooms require prepayment, while for others, you pay at the property. Check the conditions in the picked hotel.

Make sure to read the cancellation policy attentively. See if it's free or not, and the conditions of money return in case your plans will change. This information also varies from hotel to hotel and, to avoid negative situations, it is better to find out everything in advance.

I also highly recommend you look more attentively at the bed option in the description of the room. Because most of the super deals have pitfalls, and you may end up with an uncomfortable or small bed upon arrival. But if you specify your preferences when you start searching, you minimise the risk of sleeping on the floor or sofa.

Always print out your hotel reservation, this will be your hedge against unexpected twists at the reception when you check in. I had it a few times when hotels couldn't find my booking information in their systems, or I was asked for it at the airport. So, a printed copy with you will be quite handy.

The main idea is not to be afraid to step out of your comfort zone. I understand that it seems easier to give up and go to a

travel agency, pay them, and just go to offered places along the well-established routes. But let's try something different! Give yourself a chance to be autonomous. Use every search system. If you don't know where you want to go or how to plan a trip, just Google "where to go for a holiday". People's experiences have already been described on the global web, and the answers to hundreds and thousands of questions have long been formulated. The time you spend searching or reading this book will give you knowledge and experience. I was also afraid to get my first booking, but now I can do it in my sleep. If I can do it, you can do it!

1.3 Where is better to start for a beginner?

Let's talk about where is better to go if you are a beginner. First of all, if you are reading this book, you are not a layman anymore! You have more information and tips than others, you want to travel, and I am sure that you have already been at least somewhere. There are many different routes. And if you don't speak any other languages, maybe you should start from the neighbouring countries, where people definitely talk in English. For example, New Zealand. I think for Aussies, it's like visiting your grandparents. You will not need a navigator, people will always tell you the right way, and in the case of a difficult way, most likely, they will guide you.

If you are thinking about where to go on your holiday, and you feel like a beginner, choose countries where you will be understood and maybe with similar weather.

Think about the Czech Republic as the start of your travelling path. Prague, The City of a Hundred Spires with Old Town Square. It was one of my very first trips abroad. Believe me, after

two or three pints of local beer and a huge crispy pork knuckle, which is simply impossible to finish, you will fall in love with this country. The locals there are very friendly and most of them speak English.

You can easily travel inside the country by bus or rent a car. I would recommend starting your Czech Republic journey from Prague, where you will discover an interesting history of the Charles Bridge, find witch's meeting points, see the place of Walpurgis Night with your own eyes, and visit the local Jewish cemetery. The Czech Republic is a country of delicious food, and I would start travelling from here to kick out all the fears and doubts.

There is another country with an all-year-round summer, incredibly delicious local cuisine, and a fairly cheap life. I think you understand that I am talking about Thailand. This is an absolute paradise for a couch potato or freelancer. Affordable massage on every corner, coasts as from the old Bounty commercial, mountains of fruits for a penny price. Doesn't it sound like heaven on earth? And Thais are extremely kind people. They will happily open a store for you, not to dupe an unlucky tourist, but to find and give you what you need. Meanwhile, they will share foodie tips about the most delicious soups and curry and will tell you which local dishes, you as an inexperienced tourist, should stay away from.

Remember that your first trip should be as exciting as possible but safe at the same time. You must be comfortable in your journey.

Another city from my first trips was Stockholm, the capital of Sweden. With Prague, it is my country and city, because the

people there are so warm. I wanted to walk there all night long, breathing different air. The first steps of traveller helped me to realise that by opening new countries for myself, I am discovering a new world. They give me new information, new friends, new values and priorities.

For example, the main decoration of the Charles Bridge in Prague is thirty sculptures of legendary figures and saints. And according to ancient beliefs, three of them grant wishes. According to legend, the saint John of Nepomuk was thrown into the Vltava River in the middle of the bridge, and on my first trip there, I approached his sculpture. I can swear, my hunch told me what to do! The text of the wish just popped into my mind and later, by the way, came true.

Walking through the mysterious Prague at night on the very bright Nerudova Street, I saw several shadows, but it didn't worry me at all. I was fascinated by the city. This city has become the dearest, I fell in love with it forever.

I should let you know that if you decide to go to Norway or Morocco, not all residents will be able to make even small talk in English. So, I would recommend you to be brave and remember that the language of simple gestures and smiles works absolutely everywhere, in every corner of the planet. Sometimes, even knowing the language perfectly, you may bump into a hopeless situation, therefore, try any way of communication. It's a great skill that you learn when travelling.

But if you are really scared of a country with a different language, learn a few words and phrases in the local language and dialect. This will give you a little more confidence and you will be able to communicate with the residents in their language.

Believe me, people like it when you try and everyone will be happy to help you. Simple words such as thank you, please and other greetings in the local dialect will open many doors! Also, download one of the offline translation apps. I agree, that it will not translate long complex sentences correctly, but it will be able to translate something simple about subway or off-licence directions. To be honest with you, I do not know many languages, but it never stopped me from travelling. Smiling, gestures, and simple life hacks help me to find a common language with people everywhere.

Thinking about the first trip, many people assume that it is very expensive. And I want to show you that it is not. The biggest expenses in a trip are accommodation and flights, but you will know them at the start, so you can plan. Already at the place, try to be reasonable about shopping, city tours, and food. Believe me, not many locals in different countries can afford expensive restaurants for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. You can find completely different ways of travelling everywhere. You can always find more affordable and popular among locals entertainment and cafes, where often food is much better than recommended by Google Places. Listen to yourself and spend wisely.

At the same time, if you have an opportunity, take twenty percent more money with you than you planned. It will be very useful if you end up in an unexpected situation or if you decide to spend some extra money, for example, on unusual souvenirs and gifts for your family and friends. By the way, don't keep all your money in one place. Maybe you can carry a secret wallet or

use a special pocket for it, books are also good places to hide notes. But extra money will be handy.

Don't forget, if anyone you know has already visited this country, ask them for advice. This will give you more confidence, and you will easily cope with all your fears before the trip.

1.4 Enliven the traveller inside you

How to motivate yourself to travel? Some can do it easily, while for others it is complicated. Do you remember yourself when you were a child? You didn't need extra motivation, you just wanted to be an astronaut, doctor, teacher, president or a great Australian electrician. Some of our dreams were not about our achievements but we wanted our parents and sisters to be proud of us.

That child is still sitting quietly in each of us, waiting for the fulfilment of our young desires. And it's still possible to find something new, good, and enjoyable for that child. I understand, you are an adult now, and you don't really have time to listen to your inner child, because you have things to do. You have a job, some obligations, and bills to pay... You don't hear that little child very often because your head is busy with big decisions to get to stability. So, it gets quieter and quieter. Well, this is what most people do. We taking a safe path to succeed and stay out of trouble. But with this, we losing a very important part of our lives. Growing up, we less often feel happy, and more missing the situations when our soul trembles and the heart stops. But this is what everybody needs! You must love and respect your inner child. Allow yourself to rock out sometimes.

A small talk with yourself is much more global for you than just an external motivation to travel. Be honest and ask yourself

what you want. Trust me, the answers will surprise you. If what you want is travelling, then you do not need an additional push. You will find hundreds and thousands of reasons to go to different parts of the world, you will remember all your long-forgotten capabilities and will finally meet your real self. The main thing is to understand your desires correctly, or at least find their direction.

Most likely, your soul is already striving to new places. You are reading a book about travelling. Each of us has this little craving for something mysterious and unknown. But if your adult has long been at the wheel and you have no idea what you want, then you need to learn to dream again. Your fantasies push you forward, they make you stronger and greater, they fill your life and expand your horizons. Well, this is going to be a long path, because it is impossible to rebuild your consciousness and accept your childhood dreams in one day. Although sometimes, such fundamental rethinking happens. For example, in Christmas Carol of Dickens, Christmas Eve completely changes Scrooge's consciousness and he never gets back to the path of an exceptional rationalist. Also remember that in matters of work with the soul and consciousness, appetite comes with eating, whereas travelling therapy is a medical fact.

Let's say that you are following your plan precisely and have already bought flights to some attractive country. If you still didn't get excited when you were searching for tickets and buying them, then it's time to read books and watch movies about this country. It doesn't have to be documentaries or traveller's notes. Each country has an incredible history and

cultural heritage. Through the sources of culture and art, you can easily be imbued with the spirit of the country you want to visit.

Trust your guts. Your inner voice knows what you need better. Listen to yourself. If you feel that, for some reason, you want to climb mountains or take a path through the forest, don't take this pleasure away from you. Or, for example, your favourite character used to visit a pub on the other side of the planet, and you want to see this essential place for you. These desires are exactly why we should travel. Try to immerse into the atmosphere of the upcoming journey for the sake of you and your soul, because like no one else, you are the one, who knows what you need. Although sometimes, you don't feel so.

Travelling, you will reach the state where you will accept and love yourself. A desire to go on a trip is pretty selfish, therefore, is very exciting to our inner child. We do it purely for ourselves, and it makes us feel important.

Well, sometimes we set not clear premises, such as "I want to go to the happiest place on the planet". If this phrase echoes with you now, I have to tell you that such a place on earth exists! Once, the Kingdom of Bhutan saved me. I was depressed, sad and bored... Many wrong thoughts kept popping up in my head, and I couldn't follow the purpose of my life. I realised that I needed to feel happiness, here and now. So, my premise sounded exactly like that. No specifics about nice food or beautiful places, new people or animals to share my breakfast with. Nothing. For a long time, I couldn't understand what I wanted, but I never stopped looking for an answer to my needs and feelings. Then, I just opened Google and searched for the place where people are

happy. And the very first line of the search system led me to a description of the Kingdom of Bhutan.

Adventures start there right from the landing. This country of mountains has a very complex location, and only seven pilots in the world can land a plane there. Bhutanese buy meat from neighbouring countries, because they don't slaughter animals. Travelling through this country, I saw the procession of the Queen Mother, and she didn't have any guards with her. People there love their young king and his wife. You can hike to the Tiger's nest. According to legend, a mystical tigress landed on the steep cliff where later a monastery was built. Approaching this temple, you realise that you should not burden your life with useless problems and hassle. You see that your life is beautiful, and you are truly happy. For these feelings, you need to hear your heart and go in the direction it guides you.

Let me remind you that people who return from trips are brimming with energy and happiness, like the rays of the sun or a bright sunflower. Just imagine yourself in this sunny state, think about how you will share your light with people around you and how happy they will be to be near you and receive your warmth and smile. Just imagine how wonderful it will be to be you!

No need to think about how to motivate yourself to travel, it is unnecessary. And if you are still at the beginning of your path and are worried that your friend has already travelled half the world, while your most distant journey was visiting your grandma and grandpa, remember that each journey has its own time and price. Stop looking at others, look inside you and comprehend your desires.

It's only your life and your adventures. Go where your soul strives. Maybe you want to visit the Louvre to see the Mona Lisa. Maybe you want to take a boat tour on the Seine in Paris or go for a wine-tasting trip to Bordeaux. Maybe you are determined to find the most delicious pizza and pasta in Italy. Maybe you want to try real Norwegian salmon or see this salmon spawning in Canada. Go towards your adventure!

I will help you to listen to yourself and taste the travelling spirit. Follow me through the pages of this book, and who knows what horizons it will open up for you.

Chapter 2. Pack the suitcase and print route sheets

2.1 The best improvisation is the better-planned one

Coming up with your first trip and enjoying it is our main goal. In my experience, some unpredictable events cannot be avoided, but it is still better to think about the plan that you will use as a guide at the place.

When everything is packed and you are ready for the journey, first of all, set yourself to positive vibes at full capacity. This is the starting point of a great time. Think about a vivid holiday that you will never forget because your thoughts are the basis of the trip. Remember, if you constantly wait for some obstacles during your travelling, for example, spider bite or snake poisoning, long queues or horrible travel companions, the possibility of these imaginary troubles increases. Trust your inner spirit, smile and keep your mind clear and positive even when you are in the first stages of the preparation for the new country. This is how you make your adventure fun and interesting.

Your travelling plan begins with the flight booking. After you print out all your travel vouchers, make sure that you have scanned copies of all important documents on your phone, especially your passport. Most often, I leave the original document in a locker in the hotel room and have all the necessary copies with me just in case. Receiving your visa,

carefully check all documents for mistakes. You can never tell what could go wrong these days, so, it's better to hedge their bets to avoid additional explanations at the passport control.

Usually, when all the formalities are settled, I sit down and think about what I will do in the country where I go. And I would recommend you not to postpone this matter for later. If you can find an escorting guide before you leave your home, do it. You will need it for a more comfortable holiday. Now, many of you may argue that it's easy enough to find one at the place, but I would not be so sure about it. And besides, you never know who you will find there, while with the Internet, modern technologies, and reviews, you can pick the best one who will speak good English. Don't stop after texting one company! Contact ten different agencies, listen to their offers, and look at their service. Also, after they introduce you to the tour options, you will be able to set up the puzzle in your head and take the most attractive path for you. Consider different ways. In some places it is easier to travel with a group, in others, it may be better and cheaper to take a private tour.

Use all the possibilities of the Internet to plan your route. People willingly share their experiences on social media. Start with the simplest search "What to see in the country". In addition to advice, you will also find real reviews of people who have already been there. For example, if you are deciding between Phuket and Koh Samui in Thailand, just ask "Where to go in Thailand". Other tourists have already written their suggestions, recommendations, and feedback about any part of the world.

Plan your transfer from the airport to the hotel. If you are at the beginning of your travelling story, then the easiest and safest way for you is with a group accompanied by a guide who will meet you. But if you are a bold one, be self-reliant at the starting point. Negotiate with your guide in advance and arrange an airport meeting. Don't be afraid and take the adventure in your hands. Just imagine that you don't have to wait for the luggage of the whole group and the guide will meet you personally at the exit, holding the sign with your name. Believe me, you will enjoy it! If you pick this way, the travel agency will provide you with a guide and driver, who will take you along the agreed route. Request these services from the hotel and several travel companies, and take the best offer for you.

Don't forget to find a hotel. This is what you need in advance. There are many ways to spend less on your accommodation, look at the websites with couchurfing or short-term homestays. But if you are looking for a hotel, there are also plenty of online apps and websites. Of course, Booking.com is one of the most popular ones, and it provides people's ratings of real places. Read all the comments of tourists and look at both the positive and the negative. To be honest, I am more curious about what people didn't like about the hotel. It helps me to find the best option and prevent myself from unpleasant situations. For example, I read if the hotel is too noisy or the room has any living creatures, I also would not want to go to a boring hotel. Go through the information and set the necessary filters. For example, I am not very critical about food in a hotel because I always try to eat outside, but for someone, it is very important. After selecting accommodation, write down its name in English and the local

language as well. It is especially important to do if you are travelling to distant and exotic countries. There is a slight chance that the person who meets you at the airport is not a guide but just a driver, so, he may not know where to take you. Even if you are not very strong in foreign languages, I am sure you can show a map with the name. It will make it easier for a person to understand you and drop you to your destination.

There have been several times when the hotel front desk couldn't find my reservation. That is why I recommend you print out your booking. This will prove that you have booked the room, and you will definitely win the argument with the hostess and the manager.

Plan a few places where you can eat. I usually open Google Maps and just look at cafes and restaurants near the hotel. I am very spontaneous about my breakfasts, and I love to explore the country through its cuisine! Don't ask for advice about foodie places from hotel employees – they often recommend their lobby restaurant or don't know much because not everyone has the time and money to go for a meal out. The most valuable source of information is the tourists whom you will meet. Gather all your kindness, put a smile on your face, and ask for recommendations from other guests or any people who you will chat with. For example, you might find someone who arrived in this country a week earlier than you. They will be very happy to share their experience and will probably tell you where you can have a nice coffee and delicious local cuisine.

But if you are a brave tourist like me, put your most comfortable footwear on, and go for a walk. Good places will find you. Just be ready for fresh discoveries and trust your emotions.

2.2 Prepare the proper backpack – different lands, different needs

When I was a child, I had my favourite yellow atlas book with a boy and a girl in it. I used to like going through its pages. Then, I couldn't even imagine that one day, I would not just travel a lot, but would visit all the countries around the world. To have a comfortable journey, you need to pack your backpack properly. Of course, such skill comes with experience, because it's hard to guess what you will need and pack a perfect set from the first time. You just need to keep trying, no matter how many mistakes are made. But this book can give you some simple directions to make this process easier for you.

The worst thing to do is to leave it for the last moment. Give it some time. Start packing your backpack or suitcase a few days or maybe a week before the journey. It will give you time, for example, to replace the broken battery charger or think over the list and buy all the necessities.

What do you feel when you look at your suitcase? I usually start thinking about an upcoming trip. Some sort of festive mood, the same as when you getting ready for Christmas Eve. If you get your suitcase out of the wardrobe, your brain will understand that soon you will dive into the holiday adventure, and this will bring you some joy and happy emotions.

During my travelling time, I always miss my beloved mom Tatyana (I love this name), my older brother Anton, and my wonderful friend, mistress of dragons, Lana. Of course, I am incredibly excited about the upcoming journey, but I still miss all of them. And I can't wait for the moment when I can see you all again.

So, it's time to pack your suitcase. Here, my advice is to stick to minimalism. A large and fiddly suitcase will, of course, fit the giant amount of clothes, but will you wear them all during your one-week holiday? Keep it simple, travel unburdened, and think about handles on your suitcase and airport loaders. However, follow the packing guideline of heavy belongings down, lighter – up. I know this feeling when you are looking at your wardrobe and wishing to squeeze everything into your luggage. But remember that the more you take, the heavier it is. We don't want to pay extra for luggage, right?

Another important note – separate hand luggage and a suitcase that will go to the baggage. All the essentials such as valuables, documents, and skin care should always be with you during the flight and must go in the hand luggage. I usually add a few pairs of socks and underwear to this list. It is very handy if your luggage is lost, which happens quite often. So, when you get to the hotel, you can still refresh yourself, and the situation will not be that upsetting.

But what if you are trying to be smart, using advice, but it is still hard to understand what is important to take with you for the trip and what is not? I have a trick for that! Take a pile of clothes you've packed and lay them all out, for example, on a sofa. Leave it for a while. Believe me, when you will look at it later with a fresh view, you will easily give up most of it.

It's been a long time since the amount of my necessary stuff can easily fit in a travel backpack: T-shirts, underwear and socks, a hoodie and raincoat, sunglasses, toothbrushes, and gadgets. All other things are already on me during the flight. This set allows me to feel comfortable anywhere for up to two weeks.

An important point of how to pack. For ages, people have been divided into those who fold clothes in piles, and those who twist rolls. Logic and common sense tell me that rolls are the most comfortable way to pack my clothes, but sometimes I cannot make them properly. Therefore, most of the time, I travel with piles in my suitcase.

For hand luggage, you better choose a backpack. Make sure you adjust the straps for comfortable wearing. Recently, models with a zipper on the inside are gaining popularity. And this is a very convenient and practical solution. Such a backpack will be extremely useful when you will walk around the cities of Europe, as street scammers won't be able to open it.

Put all your gadgets in your hand luggage, as for security reasons, some of the chargers are not allowed in checked-in baggage. And make sure to charge them all before departure. Because on the screening, they might ask you to turn your laptop on, and it will be very sad if it's not charged.

There are also some tips regarding a suitcase in an alien country. Four wheels are always better than two. They are more maneuverable and easier to use. What to put inside? The first rule of the efficient packing baggage club is: "Your suitcase, your rules". Don't listen to anyone who tells you to take something just in case or tells you that you are taking too much or not enough. Remember that you are the only person who decides what is necessary for you for a comfortable journey.

First of all, I suggest you create sets. No need to take clothes that require specific footwear. For example, a T-shirt is an all-purpose piece. Most often, you can wear this element of your wardrobe with anything. A little tip – go over your plan and think

about what would be your most comfortable outfit. For example, I think that on the first day, I will go to the beach to spend some time swimming and lying on the sand, after which, I will have dinner in a fine jazz restaurant. Sounds great! But what will I wear?

Jeans or trousers, trainers or loafers. This plan will help you to make sets for every day. This technique will also stop you from grabbing extra stuff just in case, which may never happen.

Choose clothes that do not require laundry. During holidays we are limited in time, and I feel sorry if I have to spend these precious hours on ironing and washing, especially, as we don't always have such opportunity.

Another important rule is to remember about space and weight. If you have two favourite hoodies, pack the one that weighs less. When we take everything we like, our luggage becomes heavy and harder to carry around.

You might change your mind about what to take with you if you look at the weather forecast before you fly. My time-tested life hack is if the weather report is not really clear, get ready for the worst. If it shows you from minus 5 to minus 10, then you better be ready for the lowest. I am sure none of you want to get cold or even worse, get sick, especially if you were warned.

Let's also focus on the place where you are going to visit. If you are planning a trip to the countryside, ask if they provide rubber boots. Most often, if you see unusual destinations on your tour, you can find relevant information about the list of things you have to bring or what they can provide. Check it in advance to avoid unpleasant surprises.

If you are going to a forest or swampy area, in addition to rubber boots, you will need all sorts of insect repellents. Camping involves sunglasses and if you plan to be in the sun for a long time, bring high-protection sunscreen with you. You also have to be ready for the opposite weather, so, a raincoat would be very handy. Entering the woods, wear long sleeves and trousers, and nothing can bite or sting you.

Another major topic is shoes. I usually bring two pairs because you never know what kind of accidents can happen with you there. One may get wet or dirty, or even break. So, you better have a spare one. But, of course, they should be comfortable. Don't you even dare to take the shoes that you just bought. Don't trust your first impressions of them in the shop! Perfectly fitting new shoes or boots can badly rub your feet on the very first day. Footwear is your faithful companion on any journey, so, make sure you bring a time-tested pair. Another great life hack! Pack your socks inside the spare pair. And, in general, keep looking for various ways of optimising your luggage space, you are going to love this exciting game.

Belts, laces and other small items can always be placed in additional pockets of your suitcase and squeezed into the empty spaces. Open all the possible zips and buttons!

Travel to any part of the world that comes to your mind. But doesn't matter if it's long or short distances, in addition to insurance that is offered and required for some regions, think about the first aid kit that you should take with you. You may think that all you need is paracetamol and maybe patches. I strongly disagree with this! At some point in my travelling life, I became very wise about the medications that I take with me.

I had many bad experiences with catching cold and flu, having sore ears or food poisoning. Therefore, I would recommend you not to repeat my mistakes, and make a list of what you may need as your personal helpers. You probably already know your body and your health state, and you know which headache pills help you quickly and what you need to relieve stomach aches. It is worth bringing several types of antibiotics with you because they are often not available without a prescription. But please, stay sensible. If you try to smuggle two kilograms of various drugs through the X-ray, the security officers at your destination may have questions. For example, in Arab countries, they are very picky about sedatives. Don't think about troubles, as bad thoughts bear bad fruits, but make sure you can cope if something goes wrong. Just go through the list of obvious illnesses – headache, poisoning, flu.

Do not take drugs from your home medical kit. We rarely look at its content and sometimes the expiration date of some pills has long passed. If you are constantly taking any serious medications, make sure to check what documents you need to enter the country of destination with them.

Of course, we all need personal care products. In the 21st century, it is absolutely illogical to carry a lot of tubes in your suitcase to wash your hands, hair, and body. Imagine how easier it would be to buy everything on arrival. Well, if you need to use a particular brand, get yourself tiny bottles. My favourite shop for them is Muji. And if you don't need these products on board, put them into your suitcase, as well as a manicure set. Different airlines have different requirements for the hand luggage content, but sharp objects will for sure stay at the security point

if they are not in your checked-in luggage. Don't forget to take antibacterial wipes or antiseptic. This is your precaution against bacteria and viruses that accumulate in crowded places. They are easy to get out to wipe your hands or face if you have come into contact with something unpleasant.

Take a portable charger or power supply with you, they are necessary on long journeys. If you don't have one, buy it.

It would be great to take a lucky charm with you. I have little bears, one for the luggage and one for the backpack. With them, my trips are filled with fun. As if I believe in fairy tales and dreams. It may help you think about your journey as an adventure – happy, magical, and bright.

When you are almost done with packing, look at the content of your hand luggage and suitcase critically, and see if there is anything you can leave. We need to be minimalistic!

Did you do it? Wonderful! Call a taxi, it's time for you to go to the airport.

2.3 On the road: useful tips if you have reached a starting point

First of all, at this point, I would like to say a few words about the stereotype that travelling is very expensive. But all you need is to be smart. Use trains and buses instead of flights, it will make the cost of your travel two or even three times cheaper. I had a few adventures in my life when I was buying tickets for 15 euros for the next bus, not even knowing the place of my destination. For those who have already seen everything in the city and want to go somewhere else, this is just a great idea.

Of course, this is the level of an advanced tourist, but it is a good start for an exciting adventure. The only thing is you should

look at where you are going carefully because there is a chance that you will get on the wrong train and go in the opposite direction. And sometimes trains do not stop for two or even three hours.

It is always better to arrive at the airport two to three hours before registration. Don't risk your trip and start your adventure a little earlier. And you know how bad can be the road with its endless red traffic lights or a sudden flat tire. If you arrive at the airport and do not understand what to do next, go to the information desk. These people are here to help you. Don't be afraid to ask and clarify details. And once you get to the airport, you can always connect to the local wi-fi.

A couple of important words about your family – keep texting or calling them, saying where you are and if everything is fine. Because if they don't get any information from you for a long time, they will worry and come up with terrible thoughts. Don't forget about your loved ones.

It is actually quite interesting and fun when you come to the airport early. You can go to local duty-free shops, maybe you can find interesting perfume for yourself and test some nice products before your flight. I like to drink coffee at airports around the world, take pictures of the window view, and tune in for an adventure.

If you are travelling by plane, keep your skin hydrated. Buy eye patches, a good moisturizing face mask and hand cream. Even during a short flight, the air on board can make your skin dry. I would recommend taking care of your eyes as well by using eye drops to relieve tension and moisturize the mucous membrane. You can also do some eye gymnastics. And if you

wear lenses, you better change them for glasses during the flight, as contact lenses dry out eyes.

If you are on a long flight, stand up and walk the aisle from time to time. Massage your arms and legs and do a little warm-up to avoid blood stasis, cramps, and swelling. It is not a shame if you take care of your health – if your body requires a walk or stretch, do it. Look at cats, they live long, happy, and healthy lives because they start their day by stretching their body. It gives you energy and keeps you young. Be beautiful, young, and graceful like cats. My friend Melisse Cook is a living example of it. She spends three days a week in a gym and looks outstanding and sexy. She loves and enjoys sports.

In general, sport helps to improve the blood supply to the muscles and the regulation of the activity of the nervous system. Not only will your body become more attractive and toned, but your nerves will also become much stronger! Regular exercise releases endorphins and improves immunity and health. Therefore, every time I see Melisse, I want to go to the gym. She is the best motivation for me.

Not a single person who also cares about their body will dare to look at you with judgment. By the way, if you do walk to the tail of the plane, you will find out that flight attendants often willingly talk to passengers. In addition, they are excellent travellers, so, you can find out about interesting places even before arriving at your final destination.

Think about your neighbours on board. If you want to watch something on your laptop or iPad, try not to disturb people next to you. Sometimes, if there are children around, the entire plane is forced to listen to thirty-five episodes of Peppa Pig instead of

sleeping or reading. Consider the privacy of those around you, and if you love listening to music or watching movies on the way, take soundproofing headphones.

By the way, about books. You might like to spend time during the flight reading. But for me, I noticed that it affects my health, as my eyes get terribly tired.

Be smart when preparing your flight outfit. Set it aside at the same time as you pack your suitcase. A comfortable hoodie that will hide you from the outside world at any time if you want to sleep and jeans are my standard choice for the road.

Be very wise about your hand luggage. Remember that the total volume of liquid should not exceed one litre, and each bottle or jar should not be more than one hundred millilitres. Put them all in a small plastic bag. And make sure to check if you accidentally added any prohibited items or liquids to your backpack.

Travel light! Pack only items from the list I made for you in the previous chapter and go! Believe me, you don't need much for a good trip.

So, your journey began, and one of the obligatory stages here is the luggage inspection. Here is something nice you can do. Make people smile even here. Take a small souvenir from your city, for example, a magnet, and present it to security people. They will be pleased with such a gesture, and a person who was stern and gloomy five minutes ago will melt from kind attention.

If going on a trip, you realise that sooner or later, you will want to talk about it, I would recommend you start bringing something with you. Think about what you can get from your travelling to your own museum.

For example, I was bringing magnets from each of my trips, and at some point, I couldn't fit them all on my fridge. So, I hang them around the house. Once I put this collection together to see how much it weighs. It was seventy-two kilograms! Later, I had a wall full of magnets in the lounge of my balcony, as a reminder of all my adventures. But, of course, you don't have to collect magnets or plates, for example. Find something that you like, something that reflects your personality.

Sometimes, people start to queue even before the boarding starts. As if they enjoy waiting for all the participants of the flight inside the plane or creating obstacles for others to put hand luggage into the overhead compartment. Do you know how annoying it can be even for yourself? Try to slow down and board the plane at the end. Usually, passengers enter in groups, and often, you can find the last unoccupied seats somewhere in the middle. So, by being the last person you increase your chance to get an empty row for the entire flight. Do not check with the flight attendants for additional information, just sit down and enjoy your trip in a personal triple seat with outstretched legs.

You can buy postcards at the airport, write your impressions and thoughts in cute little texts, and send them later to your loved ones by post. This will keep you busy for a while during the flight and receivers will love it.

Another great way to entertain yourself while you are stuck inside the aeroplane is to learn something new. For example, I often take jigsaw puzzles or pencils and colouring books with mandalas. This is a kind of meditation that keeps you occupied and peaceful. Such activities also help you to get distracted if you are afraid to fly.

One day I decided to try breathing exercises to cope with stress better and faster. There are many different techniques. I usually place one hand on my stomach and the other on my chest and breathe deeply in four counts. After a certain number of breath circles, you should breathe only with your chest or only your stomach, which is not as easy as it sounds. This exercise will saturate your body with oxygen and calm you down. And, of course, the practice itself will keep you busy for some time. This is a simple but very useful action, and one of the activities during a long flight.

Use your time without calls and messages to sort out your phone storage. First of all, go through a thousand photos and delete those where you yawn or blink, we don't need them. From among the rest of them, you can choose those that you plan to post and get them ready. By the way, while you still remember all the details of your vivid adventure, it's worth making some notes about it at the same time as preparing photos. I highly recommend you write down all your observations during your trip. The experience, which may seem unremarkable and not interesting, can be pretty useful and valuable to another person. Sorting photos and writing notes about the place I just visited – this is what I do during most of my flights.

Take this time for yourself. Well, if the people next to you are not loud. Remove your makeup, apply cream, mask, and patches on your face and hands. Enjoy.

It is also a perfect time to think about where you are going, what you have achieved, and what is your goal now. Of course, we better think about it more often, but at home, we usually have no time for this.

If you don't want to dive into yourself, surely one of the passengers around you will be open for a nice chat. But make sure you do not disturb others. Often, if you are travelling via a tour agency with a charter flight, you can end up in the same hotel. A good conversation with a random person on an aeroplane has the same healing effect as on trains. Sharing your story with someone whom you see for the first and perhaps the last time in your life, you may get pretty honest advice. And of course, you can be useful to each other by exchanging your experiences and recommendations. By socialising you help yourself to make your route more interesting and unique. And, who knows, maybe this conversation in the sky is the beginning of a strong friendship.

If you are a person who starts panicking in the turbulence zone, then I strongly do not recommend you to sit at the tale of the plane. This is the most shaking part.

An important topic is food on board. Select offered meals very carefully, and try not to drink alcohol to avoid unnecessary stress for your health. At altitude, you may get drunk from a much smaller amount than you are used to. In addition, alcohol dehydrates your body. I also don't drink tea and coffee on the plane, choosing bottled water instead. Just take a closer look at the teapots, and you will understand what I mean. Always keep antiseptic or antibacterial wipes close to you to wipe everything that you touch – table, armrests, toilet door handle. An aeroplane is a place with a large number of people coming in and out, therefore, all kinds of microbes are accumulated there. I am not saying that it's not being cleaned up, but imagine how many people boarded it over the past 24 hours.

Flight is a great solution for long distances. But, when it comes to domestic travel, I think it is better to take overland transport, especially if you want to see and understand the country. But only if it is safe! If you arrived, for example, in West Africa with its bad roads and underdeveloped infrastructure, then flying from one part to another would be the right choice. Travelling, you should feel comfortable and safe.

But if the atmosphere in the country is conducive to travelling by train, bus or car, then you should try it. You will have a great chance to explore the roads and nature and see the local houses and the life of the residents. This is what I call a true adventure.

I often think about Spain. How easy and cheap was it there to move within the whole country by bus. And if we talk about distances between European cities, public transportation there is very comfortable, and even has a Wi-Fi connection.

If you think it is not safe, let me ask you a question. Why are you not afraid to travel by bus in your own country? What can happen to you if you decide to go to a nearby city? The correct answer is nothing. There are people around you, and wherever you go, everyone has the same needs and dreams. Therefore, no need to be afraid of new things, just enjoy this affordable and very interesting way of travelling. If something goes wrong, there will be people to help and support you. But I am pretty sure that everything will go well and smoothly.

So, your transport has delivered you to the final destination. You have landed or arrived at your holiday place. As a skilled tourist, my advice would be to enjoy the moment. You are on holiday, and your time starts right now!

2.4 Be ready to act in emergency situations

I hope that you will never need this information in your journeys. But we must be ready for anything. I had many different situations that happened to me during my travelling, and I think that this experience will be interesting and useful for both an experienced traveller and an absolute beginner.

The most unpredictable moment in emergencies is that it is impossible to predict this situation.

Once, when I was walking along the beach in Colombia, two teenagers approached me with a knife. As you may have guessed, it was an attempted robbery. Acting instinctively, I started yelling and swearing at these guys. A strong emotional speech frightened young Colombians who were not used to such a reaction, and my life was saved. It was an intimidation effect.

Of course, the probability of getting into such a situation is much lower in potentially less dangerous areas, but... Therefore, I advise you to take some time and look at the information about the country in advance. Make sure to study the specifics of the legislation of this region. Take it really seriously.

A prime example is the Arab countries and Africa. In many of them, you are not allowed to take photos of the buildings. Unawareness of the law is not an excuse, and at some point, taking a harmless selfie in front of a bizarre building, you can end up paying a hefty fine and, in some cases, in jail. You better avoid filming roads, airports, and municipal buildings. Selfies and photo shootings will easily attract the attention of law enforcement agencies, and you will have to answer some uncomfortable questions. You don't need this stress, right?

Follow the laws of the country where you have decided to go to. Among the legal prohibitions that are not obvious to us, I

have to mention alcohol. In some countries, you are not allowed to bring alcohol. It's not worth the risk, play it safe and do not deliberately involve yourself in a bad for your reputation occasions. It is important to respect the traditions and laws of the country where you are going.

Avoiding pictures against the backdrop of prohibited places and not drinking alcohol in places not intended for it, is not only about the law but about respect. I am pretty sure that none of you is happy when somebody comes to your home and does not follow your rules and life routine. Be respectful. If you won't look for troubles, they, most likely, won't find you.

Let's say you decided to go to not the safest region, for example, Afghanistan. Here you will need to be very careful. Discuss this issue with the meeting party in advance, whether you will have an escorting security and a car. This is the most important part of your safety. You also better book accommodation in the city centre, after thorough research for reviews on different websites. But if you are just starting your travelling path, maybe it is better to postpone your trip to dangerous regions.

Remember that it will be an alien culture for you, so, respect their religious holidays and customs. Accept the rules of the game. All sacred festivals, same as any giant events, may end up not as planned. There may be different groups of people, including those who dislike the participants of the event or foreigners. It may sound weird, but you better look like locals. No need to wear provocative outfits, especially if it is against the moral standards of the country.

Look at the lists of travel advice issued by the governments of Great Britain, Canada, and the USA. There, you will always find up-to-date information about the stability of the region. I would also tell you to read recommendations on visiting cultural monuments or religious sites, for example, the rules of behaviour in the mosque.

Whenever you come to the safety issue, it is about your common sense. You would think that in comparison to unstable regions, Europe is harmless. Quiet and peaceful, nothing will distract you from the cultural delights. But I would not say that walking in Europe along quiet back streets is safe for tourists, especially at night. But what to do if you find yourself in such a situation? First of all, don't panic. Follow the advice of Arthur Dent from *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, stop your hysteria, and don't be daft.

Find a safe place. In many countries and cities, you can find a church. And if the situation is hopeless and dangerous for your life and health, you can always go there. They will help you. You can find shelter there and food, regardless of your religion. Check for the address in the city you are going to in advance.

If something bad happens to you in a foreign country, of course, go to your consulate or embassy. You should find all the necessary information about the address and working hours before you leave your country. Or download an app that contains contact information about consulates and representative offices of various countries in the regions. If you get into trouble, do not hesitate to contact the representative offices of your country directly.

Important information about money: try to take blue American dollars with you, issued no earlier than 2013. Especially if you are going to Africa, they do not accept others. I also recommend you to break large notes for five, ten, and twenty dollars in advance for change, tips, and tiny purchases. You may have some problems when exchanging big money.

When planning a visit to a particular region, you better study information about its critical seasons. For example, Asia and Oceania have a so-called wet season with flooding and hurricanes. On the other hand, Algeria, Chad, and Sudan are infamous for their dry season.

Another burning question is “roaming or local SIM card?”. I always get local communication services. They are usually not only much cheaper than roaming but are also the best for phone calls and the Internet.

Taking precautions and listening to your common sense, respecting people, their traditions and the customs of the region, you will rarely meet aggression towards you. Be friendly to the place you go, and it will smile at you in return.

Part 3. Here you are on a trip

Chapter 1. Your first trip

1.1 How to enjoy travelling

In this part, I will describe all my tips for an enjoyable holiday.

Learning to enjoy travelling is a whole science. And, in fairness, it is hard to understand what will work well and how to use tips in a good way straight away. Let's consider the main points step by step.

The very first step is to learn how to combine solo travelling with travel in a company. As I have already said earlier if you are on a trip with someone, most of the time you spend with this person. Therefore, if you don't want to get tired of constant interaction, you need to take a couple of hours a day to be on your own. It doesn't matter what you do, maybe you want to go to SPA or read a book, but we all need to take a break from people. Have meals together, go to museums or concerts together. Keeping a balance between time for yourself and company, you can enrich your holiday with nice moments and double the pleasure.

Think about the Internet and mobile communication. Most of the time, roaming can hardly be called affordable or fair, so, I always buy a local sim card. This will give you easy access to the global network, you become a lucky owner of Google Maps and Google Search, which makes it easier to get any information that you may need. You are always online, and in case of unforeseen circumstances, you will be able to make a phone call or enter

your social media. These days, it is very important for all of us. You will feel more comfortable walking around a new city or country because most of the information will be at a distance of one click.

Always choose the best accommodation you can afford, even if it is a hostel. The place where you go after a long busy day is very important for the right impressions of the trip. I understand that it all depends on the situation, but I would not recommend staying in the cheapest hostel. You may end up with not pleasant roommates there, which will make you worry about your belongings. Believe me, in such conditions, you will hardly enjoy your stay. Therefore, always choose the best option that is available.

Walk around and explore the area you are visiting.

Usually, when I arrive in a city for the first time, before going to specific places, I just wander around, giving a chance to my feet and intuition. It is some sort of exercise after a long flight and an important ritual that allows you to feel the atmosphere of the city and its heartbeat, you can better understand the life of locals there. Walking without a map, you may find something incredibly interesting, and the city streets may lead you to some secret routes. These are unforgettable and bright emotions. A real treasure.

If you have an opportunity to start your trip in the middle of the week, go for it! Because during the weekends, you will end up in a full plane and everywhere you go will be crowded with other tourists. And in addition, flights from Tuesday to Thursday are significantly cheaper, so, you can save a little on travel costs. Just imagine yourself visiting attractions when most of the locals are

at work and tourists will arrive only by Saturday. This is the way to see the real life of the city.

You will not enjoy your travelling if you are in a rush to do everything or getting annoyed over little things. A million times, I saw people quarrelling and crying because they couldn't get into some museum or didn't have enough time for a couple of more sights. Don't make a list of hundreds of places! Believe me, none of the crazy tourists managed to visit them all. Don't stress yourself. You are already in the city, relax and accept the atmosphere. Even if you didn't have time to visit the Louvre on this visit, it will be a great reason to come to Paris again. Do not burden yourself with rules and commitments during your trip, enjoy the spontaneity and the absence of any obligations. This is one of the happiest stages of your life when you can do whatever you want. So, why would you want to fall into the trap of endless lists and rigid plans again? Let go of the situation and finally become a happier person.

Do not deny yourself buying souvenirs. Buy what you really like. After the holiday, this little thing will remind you of the adventure that you had and will help you to return your thoughts to that place again and again. It is also always nice to bring something to your family and friends. Your story will become brighter and more detailed if you bring some local food or sweets, or maybe some interesting little thing. This is a part of the travelling ritual, and you will enjoy sharing your emotions with your loved ones.

It might sound strange at first, but I would not worry about your look on holiday too much. Relax. People who you will meet on the streets will most likely see you for the first and last time.

So why worry about your style and the impression made on them? You don't have to prove to anyone that you are into fashion or a glamorous person who follows trends. Simple clothes and basic sets will be more convenient. There is no point in trying to win a stranger's attention, there is only you and your comfort. And in fairness, people do not pay as much attention to us as we think. So, don't worry about your appearance, take what you feel confident in and just enjoy what's happening without extra luggage.

When travelling, it is important to trust not only your approximate plan but also your intuition. If you fancy sitting on a bench in a park to get the sun, do not deny yourself this pleasure. Eat a delicious bun, the aroma of which you have heard while wandering through the old city streets. Often, these spontaneous and fleeting moments can make our lives truly happy and bring great pleasure to travelling. Sometimes, one cup of coffee on the terrace of a quiet coffee shop can give you more positive emotions than doing an entire week-long leap around the city with a strict plan. Be in the moment and feel the moment! This is what gives you a real pleasure from travelling.

Make your inner child happy! You are far from your daily routine and from people who may give you a sidelong glance, and you are especially away from those whose opinion is important to you. People often ask me what I would recommend doing during a trip, and my answer is as simple as doing what you don't do in your everyday life but always wanted. Surf or jump in puddles, hike or raft along the river. Do something that is unusual for you but makes you happier.

Socialize. By meeting new people, you receive an endless source of knowledge. Because at home, people around you often perceive you through the prism of accumulated experience. While new people don't know anything about you, and you don't know anything about them. Isn't it exciting? New acquaintances have an approximately equal chance of developing into a really strong friendship or never seeing each other again after exchanging a couple of nice words. You will not lose anything if you get into a conversation with a stranger, moreover, you probably will find some new information for you. So, try to communicate with people around you.

Before the holiday, tune yourself in for a great time. My positive vibes were always saving me even on the most dangerous routes that could leave completely different memories. No matter where I went or what kind of negative thoughts haunted me before the trip, I always assured myself that everything would go well.

Don't get upset if any part of your trip like the hotel, landmark, or food does not match your expectations. There is always something exciting and disappointing. But it's up to you to decide what to focus on. Even if something does not look the way you expected, you can always find other interesting places in the city that can truly surprise you. The main thing is to learn to see them.

We have already talked enough about planning, but I will once again emphasize that the more thoroughly you prepare, the more risks you will avoid. Do not take offers you are not prepared to face. For example, do not go on a trip with people whose company you do not enjoy or with whom you often conflict. It

will be an unjustified risk because everything that usually happens in normal life can happen during the trip as well.

Respect the traditions of the country you visiting. Locals will appreciate your behaviour and will tell you more about their culture and traditions. From them, you will learn much more than from guides or YouTube channels.

Do not follow the classic tourist routes. Outside the beaten paths, you will find abandoned quiet streets, the oldest cathedrals, the most delicious food, and the most extraordinary people. Cities are ready to welcome new travellers and explorers of this world. But are you ready? Do you feel this anticipation? I hope, yes.

1.2 Spontaneity

Of course, it is a good story when you thoroughly prepare for your trip, find all the routes in Google Maps, understand where you will go, and even imagine what you will eat for breakfast. And now, when you reach this level of preparation, I am ready to reveal a little secret to you: spontaneity will help you to make your adventures more interesting.

Many times, I have been in situations, when I was on the other side of the world, and my connecting flight was delayed by eighty hours! But instead of sitting in a dusty chair and endlessly surfing the Internet, I always take off to the nearest city. For example, in France, when my flight was delayed at Charles de Gaulle Airport, I rushed to Paris. It was an unexpected and spontaneous fun.

Moreover, in some cities, you can even find night tours. Remember that spontaneity, and your readiness for it, is your indemnity against travel disappointments. So many things often

don't go according to plan! And if you are in a moaning mood and are not ready for the fact that the plan may fall apart, that is what exactly will happen. Be ready for some occasions that won't go strictly and according to your roadmap, follow the adventure.

If you are prepared for such unexpected and difficult situations, you will be practically invulnerable. And if you planned all your steps but something went wrong, don't get stressed about it. Stress is bad for your health.

Keep an upbeat vibe and do not think about fails. Murphy's law says that anything that can go wrong will go wrong. And if you are travelling, it will go at the worst possible time. So, if you are travelling by car and thinking that there will be no parking space, this is what you get. Or if you think that your flight will be delayed, this is what you get. But why waste your excellent mood and nerve cells on this? You better pump the power of positive thoughts. Imagine how you arrive earlier, how close your transit gates are to each other, and think of your luggage to be first on the baggage line. Trust the circumstances around your trip. It is better to find out about an impending thunderstorm when you are still at the airport than high up in the sky. Calm down, accept all circumstances and adapt to the situation during your journey. There is always room for a little spontaneity.

Let's talk about polite behaviour with the people around us. A person who pushes others on the way to the gate is a bogan. A person who kindly asks to get in front of the registration desk because he is late for the flight is a well-mannered one. Guess who will get help from people?

In general, don't be afraid to ask for help. But it is important to understand the line between a polite request and a hysterical

demand. Believe me, absolutely everyone has been in a situation where they were late for a train or plane, hurrying to an unfortunate connection. Ask everyone who can help, other passengers or airport staff. They can help you get to the point you need faster or manage some situations that will not let you miss the flight.

And if something goes wrong upon arrival at the place, remember that this adventure is just a small period of your life. Your trip depends on the way you perceive changes. If you are stressed and make others feel the same, then your bad expectations are what you will receive. And exactly the same if you are looking for positivity, you will get great memories. Always remember that perhaps, something will not go according to the plan that you imagined in your beautiful dreams, but it is important to accept changes and move on. Stay open.

There is something I have to warn you about. Impulsive purchases in souvenir shops. I should explain. I love souvenirs and often vote to allocate some of your travelling budget for them and bring something to your loved ones. Moreover, as soon as I see an interesting shop, I don't understand how I could live without these little items. I am literally ready to buy everything. At such moments, I start planning the Travelling Museum, which will be visited by thousands of people a month and, of course, by my friends. The main and the hardest idea is to say "stop" to yourself in time, leave all the gifts, magnets and sweets, and buy only essentials.

After years of training, I know that you should not buy a very expensive handmade plate in the first store you come across. In some countries, you should bargain to break the price. By the

way, the ability to bargain is undoubtedly a talent, because you have to explain to the seller why you deserve an exclusive discount, why you need this item, and how it will help you at home. Many shops are ready to lower the price, but often, this is a part of an old tradition and they just take it as a nice conversation. If you doubt the need for this purchase, then most likely, you don't need it at all. Trust yourself, walk a little bit around with no rush. If the item is stuck in your mind, you can always go back for it.

In spontaneity, you need to find a middle ground. Just like anywhere else, it is important to listen to yourself and separate intuition from a momentary whim. Sometimes, you just need to break away overnight to see new beautiful horizons. But emptying your wallet on duty-free alcohol, then drinking it during the flight and ending up with a strong strain on the heart is dubious spontaneity.

Follow your desires by listening to yourself more often.

Once, while walking on glaciers in Argentina, I lagged behind the group, and I still can't understand how it happened that at some point I found myself alone. Good, Lord, I've got scared at first. I had to walk all alone for about eight hours. Well, I was sure that they would not leave me in these glaciers for the whole night, and one of the buses would take me back. So, when the fear was gone, I just walked along the incredible ice plateau and took pictures. And in the end, it was one of the most interesting tours of my life. So, sometimes, it's not bad if you have to change your plan, you just need to follow common sense and be prepared for unplanned circumstances.

How to make your trip a real adventure? I add a pinch of randomness to my trips, leaving a little room for leeway and intuition. They are extremely valuable because your trust in yourself leads to unforgettable memories. I am never afraid to get soaked in the rain, I won't be stressed if the battery on my phone gets low, and I won't be worried if I do not know where to spend the night. All these are coincidences. I follow them and they follow me. And we coexist quite comfortably with each other.

1.3 Follow locals

On each trip, I try to meet and talk to the locals, because better than any guides, they know the most interesting places in their city and its best coffee shops. When locals tell you about the city, which is their home, it is a story of life. Talking with locals, I realized that you don't have to follow tourist routes if you want to understand the character of the city where you arrived. You need to visit other places, inaccessible to tourists corners. When my friends used to visit me in Saint Petersburg, I never took them to the most popular places among tourists like Nevsky Prospekt, the Main Admiralty, or Peter and Paul Fortress. We went to the old part of the Petrogradsky and looked at the houses on Moskovsky Prospekt. I always wanted people to love Vasilyevsky Island as I do. When I lived there, I knew every corner, each secret roof, all the beautiful streets, and coffee shops with the most delicious coffee and cakes.

Therefore, literally on every trip, I relentlessly follow the locals. Talk to people and ask for directions and advice. No one will refuse to give you recommendations. Most often, they will be happy to tell you about where it is better to go and what to see.

Practice your ability to communicate, say that this is your first time in this place and you want to understand their culture. Do not avoid eye contact, be polite and open to conversations. Perhaps, they will even lead you to the hidden gems that you would never find in guidebooks or shown by guides. Don't be an introvert)

In Cambodia, my driver took me to the lake and said that I could swim in it, and it didn't take me long to jump into the water. It was a nice surprise to find out that this lake was full of tiny fish that swam up closer to pinch me. When I got out of the water, the driver thanked me for the visit. He was very impressed by my interest and sincere strive to learn more about the culture, traditions, and nature of his country, so, he decided to show me this lake as a gratitude for my desire to get to know the locals better and follow them. It turned out that according to the beliefs, this lake is a house for water spirits, who help a person to get rid of all the burden of negative energy and bad old emotions. They sort of renew your karma, and you enter a new day with a new smile. It took some time for my driver to look at me and decide if I was worthy to swim in this lake.

In Barbados, a local asked me if I knew a way of an unusual walk on the ocean. Of course, my first thought was that it was impossible or probably an illusion. For some reason, I thought about Jim Carrey in The Truman Show. But his idea seemed incredibly interesting and strange to me, so, I decided to try it. He got a wooden boat with no engine and took me into the distance. Half an hour later, I was even creeped out being so far in the ocean. But despite my fears, not even for a second have I expected anything bad from my guide. And my trust and love for

the world proved it as always. We sailed to a small island with frigatebirds who were depicted on the coins of the state. Admiring them, I realized that I was sitting in the open ocean, looking at a whole colony of these extraordinary creatures that live here, eat fish and fly ashore from here. Would I be able to find this extraordinarily beautiful place without my guide, I would say, my new friend, who was sitting next to me? In such moments, I understand that we need to trust our instincts and the people we meet on our way. The main point is to be open to the beauty and give the locals the chance to show you a little more than you could discover on your own.

It is very important to learn how to endear yourself to people and negotiate. Not everything has a price. Sometimes, no matter how much you are ready to pay. If locals don't see you as a person who deserves to see something truly exceptional and wonderful. Human relationships are important, not money. Many of my friends who I met during travelling, showed me special places just because I was open and friendly.

1.4 Shut all time-killers down and live offline

The Internet is an integral part of our daily routine. We cannot imagine our life without it, but it also steals a huge part of life, making it more complicated. Day after day, we immerse in this virtual reality, sending hundreds of messages to our friends and googling everything possible. All the photos and videos are now sent online, and most of the communication happens via the Internet.

It's been a long time since we cannot focus on something properly because our smartphones, watches, and computers bleeping with notifications of a new letter. Someone goes live on

Facebook or hundreds of messages come from our workmates in a group chat... And even when you are on a solo trip, with a smartphone, you seem to have never left anywhere. But if you want to feel the spirit of the place where you arrived, you have to turn off all your time-killers at least for a while and live a real life.

I looked at my feelings during my travelling and realized that if I want to fully immerse myself in the country I visit, then I need to take some measures. For example, I have separated my personal and work emails and never opened the latter when travelling. I even try to check the personal one only for necessary travel needs, for example, for flights and bookings. Because as soon as I open my work email, my holiday will be over. I will dig into a million tasks, I will have to answer a couple of emails and make at least three phone calls. There will be no time for sunrises or sunsets, I won't be able to enjoy the ocean. Only work and negotiations.

I also have an important rule regarding others. I never call or send an email if it is not working hours. If it is the end of the working day or holiday, you should not load this person with unnecessary tasks. We all have to have a personal time. Maybe your workmate went for a holiday to the other side of the world, you never know if your phone will wake him up. Respect for personal time is the golden rule of healthy working relationships. Look at our oldies, they had work time and free time. They never had phones, and therefore, no one would call them in the middle of the night to find out if a report or presentation was ready. Work culture! In pursuit of deadlines and the fulfilment of plans, we forget about it.

Technology is not to blame. It's only our fault that we spend most of our free time online. Many of us don't know how to manage our spare time. Phones, computers, and iPads were created to make our lives easier, they were designed to shorten the distance between people and save us time. We just need to learn how to use them correctly and try to focus on their only practical benefit. We have to understand that our time on this planet has its end, so, we should not waste a significant part of it on something stupid. Give yourself a break from the constant social media scrolling and stop typing huge sheets of text. Speak to people in person, and give your eyes and ears a chance to rest from the bright screen and loud sound.

Turn your gadget off, turn your heart on, and look around not through your smartphone screen. Another photo of an exotic flower for Instagram is not really that important for your image. You are a self-sufficient and strong person even without all these photos and smart texts under them. Get your eyes up and walk, for example, around Ayia Napa in Cyprus, enjoy the views, come closer to the lighthouse and read the inscriptions on it. You can even find my signature there, which I left during one of my first trips abroad. Since then, I have been to Cyprus eight times and never skipped a visit to this wonderful point. Usually, this is the place where I go without my phone. I think about my younger self, who was admiring this place, realizing how gorgeous our planet is.

Of course, there are such periods in our lives when we have to look at work processes no matter if we are on a date or holiday. And, to be honest with you, it took me some time to understand the simple rule of working hours for work, and holiday is for

holiday. When I had to take my work with me on holidays, I tried to clarify my working time – an hour and a half in the morning and the same in the evening. At the beginning of the day, your brain is fresh and receives information better, but at the same time, after an active day, it is easy enough to switch your head to some work for an hour or so. But you have to learn how to emerge from this state. If you know that you can't take a break from work, ask someone to remind you that it's time to rest.

There is nothing more disrespectful and annoying than your friend or family member, who in conversation with you, is constantly distracted by poking his phone for social media, messages, or phone calls. It is especially hard for our older relatives. After growing up, we all leave our parent's houses and spend less time with them. And when we come to visit them, they need our full attention and involvement in the conversation. It is a good reason to turn off all gadgets and listen to an interesting story from a loved one!

Don't be afraid to face your thoughts. I often travel by car and not always as a driver. I know that many of you have this habit when your hand automatically reaches for the phone and starts scrolling. But try to listen to yourself at this moment, your ideas, and your dreams about something crazy. Or maybe, the road trip is a perfect time to think about results? What good have you done for yourself and the world today, this week, or this month? Where will the next step lead you? Will it be the place where you want to be? Is it the right path? You will forget these hundreds of stories on Instagram in an hour. While the conversation with yourself will remain in your head for a long time.

Travelling is like a long taxi ride. When you change the environment, you get insights, but gadgets suppress them. Don't be afraid of the real world, you should go there at least for your own sake.

Good sleep is our most important helper and saviour. It gives you energy and a clear mind, beauty and even eternal youth. Turn off your alarm clock, block any ringing reminders on your phone, and just get as much sleep as your body needs. I have a friend in Australia, whose body gives him a sign to switch off, so, he can snooze even in the afternoon.

Remember, working during travelling and spending hours on the Internet, you stealing your own time from yourself. You could spend it to explore the world or yourself. You can call yourself wise and happy if you know how to manage your time between all important areas of life. And travelling is one of them. Why do we commit ourselves to our blog or work, sacrificing our holiday? I think it is unfair. You deserved all of your trips, you planned the route for so long, looked for the flight offers, and booked the hotel you were looking for. So, why not say "Let the whole world wait" and go on an adventure when you finally get to your desired destination?

Chapter 2. Non-trivial routes and non-tourist countries

2.1 Must do. Everyone should see these hidden gems of the world

There are places on the planet that are deeply embedded in my memory. And some people don't even know about the existence of most of them. In this part of the book, I want to tell you about locations, looking at which, people say "Excuse me?"

Imagine mountain gorillas in a cloud forest. Does it sound exciting?

This was my 100th country. So, I decided that the commemorative trip should be somewhere unusual. Same as when I went on a special journey to the Tiger Nest in the Kingdom of Bhutan, this time Uganda and a trip to the gorillas in the forests of Bwindi was my choice as a special country and place. And even if you have to go through an impenetrable forest with washed out by a rain road, you have to fulfil your dreams.

The way to the gorillas was hard and expensive. That adventure cost me six hundred dollars, but believe me, it was worth it.

In the morning, all tourists, including me, were brought to the gorillas' welfare centre, where we passed a quick briefing. We were told not to look into the animals' eyes or come close to them, no smoking and no littering, no eating there or feeding gorillas. Children under the age of fifteen are not allowed in such

hiking, and you better be not ill, because coughing or sneezing near them is not allowed. After that, they divided us into groups. I was pretty lucky to be in a group of eight young men and two girls. It is very important here to have reliable companions. The forest is dense and you have to climb up and down endlessly. No transport or horses go there, you pass this whole path on your feet. But I have to say that especially lazy people have the opportunity to give their backpack to a special person who will carry it for them. But for me, it sounds like cheating!

Such tracks to the gorillas may take up to six hours. This is not an open zoo kind. This is a real wild world with wild human-like monkeys whose DNA coincide with ours by ninety-eight percent. I know, we were instructed not to look at gorilla's eyes for long, but when I looked, their gaze was amazing. It penetrates the soul. I will never forget it. To be honest, I'm not a big fan of gorillas, but these are gorgeous. They are so different, huge, fast and lazy at the same time. Our group was lucky to see a male with a white back, a female with cubs, and some ordinary gorillas. At some point, one of the girls in our group made a mistake and came too close to the male, so, he began to yell at her. You can't imagine how loud all of them can shout at the same time.

The path of gorillas is very difficult, therefore, you need to prepare yourself for it. Take gloves, as you will have to grab onto branches, leaves and roots all the time. Your shoes must be proper for the jungle to make it easier to climb up and down, and in case of rain, you need a raincoat. Sun cream, sunglasses and plenty of water. But no need to refuse this route because of its complexity, all the difficulties are nothing compared to what you

will feel when you look into the eyes of our possible ancestors. They are the rulers of these misty forests. While we are just guests on their land, temporary visitors who were given a chance to witness their life for a whole hour.

We were greeted by gorillas in a very specific way. Right in front of our eyes, one of them marked their territory, not even getting off the branch, thereby showing us who was in charge. Despite their stern nature, I did not want to leave. And if I would get permission to stay longer, I would stand and admire them for much longer. For me, it was like going back to my childhood, in the days when I used to read books about Tarzan. Uganda showed me its nature from a magical side. It is a place of incredible people and quite serious walking tracks.

There are so many places I want to tell you about in this chapter because, for the last fifteen years, I have been looking for the spots on our planet that could give me strength, where I could explore nature and find new friends.

The next breathtaking route like no other is the Falkland Islands. This fascinating region took my heart away from the very first sight. The only way to get there is by ship, where the landing takes place by inflatable boats. Absolute hardcore because sometimes, a ship needs several hours to get to the leeward side. Little boats are heaved on swelling waves, so, by the time you get to the shore, you find yourself half drenched. The weather here is fickle with the sun changed by the rain or vice versa. But the trickiest part here is the wind, it blows all the time from every side with the speed reaching seventy km/h. At some points, when you climb, it feels like you are about to fly.

I was surprised to find out that birds are not afraid of people, I guess because people are rare guests here. Moreover, to protect their offspring, they attack tourists, trying to drive them away. But for me, it seemed that they just wanted to romp and play. The whole land is covered by the local berries. I am not sure if it was lingonberries or stone berries, but I never saw such huge red fields in my life. There, far from noisy cities, I couldn't stop thinking that nature takes its toll and flourishes without humans. And, of course, the main part of why tourists strive to Falklands... King and Magellanic penguins. These beautiful creatures are everywhere here. In addition to pristine nature, due to the unique transparency of the atmosphere, New Island is considered one of the best places in the world to observe the starry sky. Isn't it great? The trip to South Georgia was unusual and filled with unforgettable memories, to which I always return when I am drinking hot tea, wrapped in a warm blanket at home.

I am a person who loves people, companies, and long conversations, and for a long time, I couldn't understand why people want to be left alone. But Falklands stormed into my world at the time when I needed this deserted place. Grytviken is a settlement in the northeast of the island of South Georgia. It is the southernmost administrative centre on earth that territorially belongs to Britain.

Little naughty fur seals that scattered in the grass purr, puff, and yap. I think they wanted to play by trying to attack you and running away. So, we had to do our best to use an obstacle-avoidance skill. I would say that we managed to see more fur seals than penguins, and sadly, not a single elephant seal was found by us. But we were still lucky with the weather that made

the landing possible. We even met local activists from the museum who told us about the struggle against rats. Which is a huge problem, since these rodents should not be here at all. It turned out that they were somehow brought from the mainland and now it's hard to get rid of them. These pests destroy the grass, which adversely affects the food chain in this area. So, all the guests are asked to donate some money for rodent control. The climate is harsh here, and it's only about twenty people live in Grytviken. And even they don't stay here for more than ten months. There are no permanent residents, and the authorities are located in the Falkland Islands.

Surprisingly, there are a lot of souvenirs at the post office, including rare silver coins for collectors. It is all open, you can look, choose, and pay at the end. Fjords, nature, amazing views, clear ocean air... When the ship left Grytviken, there were beautiful icebergs on our way, and the captain sailed next to them to give us a chance to see them closer.

Years ago, Grytviken used to be a whaling station, which was closed in December 1966 when dwindling whale stocks made it uneconomical. It has become empty since then and turned into a museum. Two sunken whaling ships were raised from the bottom of the bay, and they also became a part of the museum. I was reading about a crashed helicopter there, but I didn't reach it. In the museum, you can find tiny rooms with the belongings of Norwegian sailors, who mined baleen and whale blubber, and you can see that their life here was challenging. If you get to the local cemetery, you can pay homage to the famous polar explorer, Sir Ernest Shackleton. Our captain, by the way, raised a toast for him along with the guests.

Even in this abandoned corner of the planet, they have a parish. A Norwegian church was built in 1913, and it has a good library and a small instrument. The first child that was born in Antarctica, was born in Grytviken.

I swear, South Georgia is the journey of a lifetime. Any trip can turn our fate upside down, and this adventure changed my life completely. Animals of this region, I will never forget them. Seeing a huge leopard seal swimming under my boat and playing nearby is a miracle because it is an incredibly rare creature here. Our group was first to land at six in the morning. And as soon as you see the shore and life on it, you forget that you didn't sleep and will happily stay awake as long as needed.

Penguins and fur seals like pets who wait for your return home and are happy to see you. They try to get your attention to play with them. People here are rare guests, so they are not afraid of two-legged at all. They probably think of us as bizarre animals.

Outstanding King penguins walk in flocks and watch you. They come closer and sometimes, make a gurgling sound. Well, likely not a rallying call. They sniff and study you, smiling with their eyes. They probably look at people and think: Who are these weirdly walking penguins with clothes? To get a closer look at them, you have to sit down, freeze, and wait. Their curiosity will bring them to you. They will pass by and say something.

As I already said about little naughty fur seals who want to play, they will try to pinch someone at least once. But if you bark at them in return, they will run away. Some of them are lazy, so, they will just stare at you as if allowing you to wander around without disturbing them.

It was hard to get to the penguin's colony, but still possible. You will find hundreds and thousands of them in this pristine nature. You can also take a selfie with a penguin if you have enough patience to wait for them to approach you and not scare these magical creatures away. I have a life hack for a great photo! Rub your boots with anchovies and the penguins will come to you much faster because they obviously love fish.

This beautiful place will warm your heart inside, but the temperature is only about three degrees, so, you better have three pairs of pants and a warm hat. Even with the harsh weather, I still didn't want to leave. But I have a good reason to go back there because, during the entire journey, I couldn't understand how to identify if it was a male or female. Maybe by colour or behaviour? Until the day I can go back, I have beautiful memories of sitting on the shore with penguins wandering towards me.

One of the most unusual adventures I had was a trip to Tristan da Cunha. It is a group of volcanic islands in the South Atlantic Ocean and is part of the British Overseas Territory of Saint Helena. Along with Easter Island, Pitcairn, and Bouvet Islands, it is one of the most remote from the mainland places that is inhabited. On the way, I was very worried that it would be impossible to land due to weather conditions. Only three or four ships a year approach this territory, and the possibility of landing is fifty-fifty.

I was just about to start dancing in the port, although it didn't look like a port. The weather was nice, and it seemed that locals were looking forward to welcoming us, trying to show their lives as much as possible.

By that day, only 264 people lived on the island. A small community that is completely enclosed from the outside world. But at the expense of the UK budget, teenagers can study in London for two years, but usually they come back. Village lifestyle with geese and cows, a small cemetery, and a post office with souvenirs, stamps, and postcards with penguins. I can say that life on Tristan is going pretty well. On this trip, I managed to climb the volcano to enjoy the view, as the route along the lava was not very difficult. I cannot explain what you feel, walking in this most remote territory in the ocean! An archipelago of four islands. It's like standing at the end of the world. Beautiful nature, colourful rocks, rockhopper penguins with funny spiky feathers on their heads, small fur seals, and the ocean. The ocean is everywhere.

Most of the cliffs in the Tristan da Cunha archipelago are sheer and are inhabited by greenery and many bird nests. The birds soar up and, it seems that they are going to crash into the rock at full speed. But no, it's all good. Day and night, you can hear the roar of seals from everywhere. They talk to each other, giving some signals, and at some points, it sounds like they are singing. At night, when it's dark, the sounds of wildlife come from the depths of the ocean, and you can get this combination only here. I was lucky to be there during a full moon with no clouds. Nature gave me a chance to admire the clear and bright starry sky.

I saw very beautiful albatrosses there. Did you know that the length of the wingspan of them reaches four meters? When these huge Tristan birds dive right at you, it seems that you are in Jurassic Park with pterodactyls flying above you.

If it were possible, I would catch some fresh air into a jar to open it on some hard day to breathe it in. Through the clear water, you can see plenty of algae. We all know that it is very popular in spa procedures. And there, they are absolutely everywhere. You breathe with their air, inhaling iodine, and getting a little dizzy with freshness.

Fur seals are not afraid of people at all, which made me wish for all the animals on the planet to be the same way. Little purring seals happily jump, swim, and play on waves. While bigger ones growl and shout at each other. By the way, seals with a cream breast are very rare species, and they live only here.

Another island of the archipelago, Nightingale with some sort of holiday houses of residents of the capital Tristan da Cunha is also beautiful. Locals come here to relax from the hustle and bustle of the city. Small triangular houses are built right into the rocks with low fences to avoid visitors like seals and penguins. Who never dreamed about a house on an almost sheer cliff, in the middle of the ocean?

Looking at these spectacular rocks, you get a feeling that you are inside the painting of an artist who mixed green, red, grey, and gold colours and splashed them all onto the canvas of nature. When your rubber boat approaches this place, you can endlessly admire and touch it. Rising five hundred meters above the ocean, these rocks fall two kilometres down to the very bottom.

I was told that sunny and bright weather with not many waves near Tristan da Cunha is a very rare occurrence. Maybe about twenty days a year. And I've got all five days of such sun and

peace when I was there. Many members of our group returned to the ship with sunburn but with a happy smile and sparkling eyes.

Four kilometres from the town, where you can walk in about forty minutes, you will find potato fields lined with volcanic stones.

I also remember the cows in Edinburgh of the Seven Seas. Locals probably took very good care of them as they were very well-groomed. I would say this place is a paradise with a valley of lush grass for cows. I even saw one of them high on a hill. And I can only guess that she climbed there to admire the view of the ocean.

Visiting such a place is a dream, and it's a bit sad that I have already reached it. But I will try to go back to Tristan da Cunha. To walk around its capital, climb the volcano, explore the fields and admire the cows. To look at the gorgeous albatrosses and naughty seals and sail through the natural arches of the rocks, where the ocean creates an unforgettable pattern by splashing waves. Some of the rocks have deep caves, and it seems that they house the water dragons who guard their treasures from prying eyes.

This harsh region is one of the most unusual experiences in my life. But a story about unforgettable places would be incomplete if I didn't tell you about South Africa. Where Zambia opened up as controversial and beautiful for me.

Getting out of the plane, you find yourself on the airfield, as if in a sauna. Heatwave of thirty-five degrees with not a single cloud in the sky.

The country in South Africa with Victoria Waterfall on the Zambezi River. With a width of 1800 metres and a height of 120

metres, this fall is located on the border of Zambia and Zimbabwe. It is not the widest or tallest one in the world but is classified as the largest in terms of width-to-height ratio. Scottish traveller-explorer David Livingstone, who visited the fall in 1855, named it after Queen Victoria.

Some say that the missionary named it not in honour of the Queen, but his wife. I can say that it is not true, since the name of the Scottish physician's wife was Mary. This woman had six children with an irrepressible researcher and died eleven years before her husband, which was seven years after 1855.

The local name of the waterfall sounds like Mosi-oa-Tunia, which translates as thundering smoke. In 2013, the government officially announced the assignment of the historical name to it. So, UNESCO had to declare both names as official. Therefore, you can call it Victoria Falls or if you respect locals, call it Thundering Smoke. It doesn't matter. My version of Favorite Little Fall is not recognized by UNESCO, but I like it that way. A strong stream of falling water forms a high cloud of water mist, which can be seen from a distance of twenty kilometres if the day is clear.

In Zambia and Zimbabwe, this waterfall is the main tourist centre and source of income. These countries are in hunger, cold, and poverty, but they earn money from tourists, so, treat them with kid gloves, as this is the most important money flow into the state coffers. I went there at the end of the rainy season, which is the best time to visit such places, and rushed to the park with waterfalls on the first day. Surprisingly, I did not bump into the crowds of tourists.

There were many waterfalls along my travelling way. My favourites are Iguazu and Niagara, but now, these have been added to the top 3. From the Zambian side, you can only see twenty-five percent of the falls. The rest and the largest part is visible from Zimbabwe. To look at the waterfalls from both sides, you need to obtain a Kaza visa.

Leaving the airport, you drive through a small town Livingston with an ordinary African lifestyle. For hours you can just watch the everyday life of people who don't even pay attention to tourists. You will not see severe poverty there or bad smells and heaps of garbage. But at the same time, you will not find anything attractive there.

Plenty of souvenirs piled right next to the entrance to the park with waterfalls. Arrogant salesmen ask for a hundred and fifty dollars for a picture because they know you will buy it anyway. But after a lot of arguing and bargaining, the price drops to twenty, and you receive the painting from a man with an unhappy face. And yet, it is not surprising, because tourists are practically the only source of income in the country.

“Secondary rainbows occur from the the double reflection of sunlight in raindrops” boringly mumbles Wikipedia. But I know that a double rainbow is just a squared beauty. I was lucky to catch this miracle of nature at the waterfalls, and it made me curious why the colours on the second bow were less bright and went in reverse order. Will you believe me if I say that by Victoria Falls in Zambia, I also saw a rarest glory circle rainbow? In fact, each of them is not an arch as we usually see, but a circle. You just need to look at it from the right angle. Rainbow is the reflection of sunlight from water droplets, and the way we see it

depends on the point of view. Under the right conditions, you can see the full ring. It is believed that such rainbows are special, this is a good sign that brings good luck.

Walking along the paths near the roaring waterfall, you are completely wet and soaked with water. You can even walk to a dangerous point and slippery suspended bridge, but very careful, because of the strong wind and water flow.

I love waterfalls. I feel something different near them. Even though it is believed that Sagittarius or Ophiuchus, according to the day and month when I was born, is a fire sign, I always feel good and comfortable only in or near water. When I walk along the river or near waterfalls, when my feet are in the sea or ocean, and even when I splash in the bath, I always feel the special energy of water, and I like it. I feel how it renews my karma, washes all fatigue away, restores and heals me, and even talks to me. While geologists consider waterfalls the most destructive and powerful forces of nature.

“If there is magic on this planet, it is contained in water,” said Loren Eiseley. And if you look at least one of these amazing waterfalls, you will feel the truth of his words. Therefore, no matter how strange it may sound, if you feel sick or you have been struggling for a long time, take a trip to the waterfall. When like a child, you will run from one viewpoint to another, fully wet but happy, you will realize how beautiful our world is. And the Victoria Falls are just outstanding.

Another important point on the map of my non-trivial routes is Ushuaia, a small resort town in Argentina, located on the Tierra del Fuego archipelago. This is the southernmost part of South America, called the edge of the world. The windswept town

is perched on a steep hill and surrounded by Martial mountains. From here, you can take a cruise to Antarctica or the nearby nature reserve known as Penguin Island. Where you can find colonies of these birds.

On the one hand, this place has a very interesting nature, like a peaceful paradise. On the other hand, if you are an extrovert, this silence and calmness will be like a prison for you.

The city consists of two tourist streets with beautifully painted houses and many shops. In most of them, they sell equipment for expeditions. A place with the southernmost post office, church, casino, and even parking lot. Get a stamp in your passport that you are in Tierra del Fuego and don't forget to send a postcard to your friends.

The food here is also special. Argentina is popular for its delicious meat, and Ushuaia is not an exception. Imagine yourself eating it with a wonderful view of nature after which all you want to do is to wander around this beauty, breathe in fresh air, and run after wild ducks that walk near you. You can start your city tour from the port with a lot of huge cruise liners. I realized how popular Antarctica is, more and more tourists are seeking to get to these lands.

Many tourists say that in winter, Ushuaia reminds alpine towns with its amazing views of the picturesque snowy peaks. Summer with sport fishing, exciting horse riding and cycling, as well as tours on sailboats or catamarans is also very welcoming. This place is a quiet southern paradise.

Nauru turned out to be a non-trivial and very interesting place. It was the last country in Oceania on my list where I couldn't go in the previous fourteen years. There is something

special about Oceania countries. Most of them are poor, but people are friendly. They are never in a hurry to go somewhere, and you start feeling it already at the airport. Citizens of most countries need to obtain visas, but residents of, for example, Israel, Emirates, and some others can fly in without one. But I should inform you that on arrival, you still have to give your passport for at least a day. You will get it back either the next day or upon departure. I know, handing over your document sounds a little bit tricky, but seeing the friendliness of the locals, you trust them completely.

Accommodation looks more like a condo, where people rent an apartment for a long time. Well, if you have a proper toilet, air conditioner, and hot water, this is already an excellent condition for living. There is a hotel on the island, which has been operating for more than fifty years. But it never went through the renovation.

I would say that I was lucky to get a nice accommodation with a comfortable bed, but there was no toilet paper but plenty of bedbugs. Well, this is all about unusual trips. As the territory of the whole state is twenty-one kilometres around the island, I managed to see half of it on the way to the apartment.

On my way, I saw huge stone heaps in the water. Rising above the water, they looked impressive, like the twelve apostles in Australia. The driver explained that swimming is possible only in one place where the territory is fenced and huge stones are removed. On the rest of the island, you cannot enter the ocean because of them. By the way, this country has no capital. Well, I guess, if your state is tiny, you don't really need one.

It is never cold there, I would even say it is hot. It was thirty degrees when I arrived, but with the ocean and wind, this heat did not feel so bad. Residents here never heard of cold winters and low temperatures.

The first place where the driver took me was the Japanese casemates. At first, his invitation to climb into the dense thickets seemed strange, but inside, he showed me dilapidated dungeons and constructions. They look impressive, as if from the Lara Croft or Indiana Jones movies.

Have you ever seen a post office that has no stamps? Welcome to Nauru. This was very upsetting, because on the way there on the plane, I read that there would be a handicraft at the post office. But nothing. Just an empty hall. No souvenirs or stamps. Only water in plastic bottles for sale.

The only souvenir I managed to find was a wooden boat for 300 US dollars. But the saleswoman never appeared while I was waiting for my departure for two hours. She probably had better things to do than making money in her store.

In the eighties last century, Nauru was incredibly wealthy with the mining of phosphorites. But all good things must come to an end, and so did the phosphorites, which led to the end of money flow. During the mining process, about ninety percent of the forests on Nauru were destroyed, and eighty percent of the entire area of the island turned into a lifeless desert.

The most upsetting was the abandoned mine. Initially, when the driver said that he would take me to the mining place, I thought that he was going to bring me to the office of one of the modern mining corporations that were based there to ensure the functioning of cryptocurrency platforms and avoid high taxes.

But as it turned out, he meant a real extraction of minerals from underground. From mines that once were bringing a lot of money to the country. These days, everything is in a shaky and almost abandoned state.

The Republic of Nauru is the smallest island state in the world and the smallest country outside of Europe. You can travel across the whole country in a couple of hours.

I also managed to visit Saudi Arabia. It was not the easiest experience, which I consider to be a great success, therefore, I want to share it with you. Saudi Arabia has long been completely fenced and isolated from all other countries. The only chance to get there was with a business invitation that cost around \$600-\$800 (and the official visa fee of \$740 on top) and your company had to do business with Saudi Arabia. In addition, you had to be a very good actor who at the passport control, had to sincerely explain the huge interest in opening a business in this country. That is, it was possible to get there, but you would have to do your best and spend a lot. Because of that, I had to postpone this country until one day, I found out that Saudi Arabia decided to hold a race, similar to Formula 1. This was a perfect opportunity to fly there because everyone who bought a ticket for the race received an electronic visa to email.

Arriving, I was pleasantly surprised to see a red carpet that was welcoming tourists who arrived for the race. Saudi Arabia is the largest country in the Middle East, surrounded by the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. Eve was expelled from Eden there, and the Prophet Muhammad was born and died in this country, his tomb is located in the Al Masjid an Nabawi mosque. The government of the kingdom officially banned non-Muslims from visiting

Mecca and Medina, the houses of sacred Islamic relics that are worshipped by pilgrims from all over the world. This means I am not allowed to go there yet, although I would want to see everything from the inside. Muslims pray five times during the day, and all establishments are closed during this time. Another religion is not officially prohibited there, but at the same time, there are no temples and wearing religious symbols is also unwelcome.

Regarding females, the state keeps strict Sharia laws, which limits their freedom of action. Most of the time, they don't even decide on who to marry. Women cannot go outside without a man or talk to a man, if he is not a mahram (family member), they cannot work or show themselves to people without a covered head and abaya – a wide black robe. Sharia laws are protected by religious police that belong to the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice. The country has various punishments for crime execution, for example, stone-throwing, beating with a stick, or amputation.

They have a new change in the law that was adopted not long ago. Women now are allowed to drive cars. My driver told me about it about twenty times, trying to show me how progressive the country is.

A man can have up to four wives. But in addition to the dowry, he must support financially all of his wives and families. His wife must greet him after work, not distract him with a conversation, but prepare food and listen to her men if he decides to entertain himself with a conversation.

No theatres, cinemas, or casinos in the country. So, one of the most popular entertainments among local men is riding on two

side wheels of a car. By the way, nobody follows the rules on the roads. When my driver took me to the Edge of the World, he was drifting through the sand like insane with a speed of at least 120 km/h. Well, I enjoyed it, but I think it scared a couple of other passengers.

Good friends and close relatives give three cheek kisses to each other when they meet. Others are greeted with the right hand only, as the left one is considered dirty here because it is used to wash intimate parts. Remember it if you decide to go there! Of course, they eat with the right hand also, and if you receive something from somebody, take it with the right hand.

The three main Arabic words are inshallah, bukra and maalesh. Inshallah means the will of Allah, bukra is tomorrow, and maalesh is never mind. You can hear inshallah everywhere and all the time. As well as see that at any opportunity, the Saudis began to pray.

An unwritten law of the desert is if you see a car on the side of the road in a deserted place, stop and ask if they need any help. Arabs are very generous. Several times, seeing that someone's car was parked on the road, my driver was stopping, offering his help.

I will not forget Arabic coffee. It is different there. Firstly, the beverage has a yellow-brownish colour. Secondly, they add so many different spices to it: cardamom, carnation, cinnamon, and even anise sometimes. That makes it smell amazing! Thirdly, it is served in the tiniest bowls. Fourthly, it is a very energizing beverage, you can't drink much. And you will receive a glass of cold water with it.

These were non-trivial but wonderful routes! Not every tourist gets to these places, and there are good reasons for it. Just follow your heart and listen to your guts.

For me, Uganda and Bhutan were the most unusual. They will forever stay in my memory as the most amazing, vivid, and kind. There are many extraordinary places on our planet, and like icing on the cake, they are worth going there to search for real delight. Climb to the Tiger Nest in Bhutan, visit the Stork Valley and admire the incredibly clear rivers. Take the big track in Uganda for three or even eight hours to look into the eyes of human-like gorillas. In one of these places, you may realize the meaning of your whole life.

2.2 Thermo-nuclear. Chernobyl, Fukushima

Places of global accidents and disasters are very important points on the maps. Standing on a land that remembers human grief is not as easy as it seems. Reading the information on the Internet only, some may say that there are millions of documentaries about Pripyat and Fukushima were made, it happened so long ago, and there is nothing terrifying in these countries and cities. I strongly disagree. All the places in the world that have gone through disasters are part of our history. We should never forget these accidents to never repeat them. In addition to victims, they have stories of heroes. Stories of people who saved others, and sometimes, at the cost of their own lives, people who saved hundreds and thousands, risking themselves. Such places are a monument to people's dark sides. To negligence and sometimes, horrifying animal cruelty. I do not want to forget this pain, I mourn with those who lost their loved ones in all human tragedies. I would want you to feel the spirit of

these places with me. To remember the sad past, appreciate and love what we have now, and do everything to preserve the cultural heritage in the future.

Of course, my travelling along dangerous routes began with Chernobyl. This tragedy affected almost every family from the CIS countries, and the entire post-Soviet area had one terrible wound. I remember that trip as it was just yesterday. The road to the exclusion zone takes about two hours, but I think we reached it even faster. Some enterprising companies have already learned how to make money from this global tragedy, and the closer you get to the area, the more persistent the advertising to get you to the zone becomes. For example, you can find a tour to Chernobyl or a private excursion with a local environmentalist who will show you everything possible. I had a private tour with a guide. From ten in the morning until late in the evening he was driving us around, showing the kindergarten, cars, swimming pool, abandoned houses, a pier, a house of culture, a hotel, cellars, and even a reactor.

That trip was tearing my heart apart. The Chernobyl tragedy took place in 1986, which is a long time ago. And without constant reminders, people begin to forget, and such accidents are erased from memories. But the place remembers everything, all the pain, despair, and fear. It remembers running around children. About fifty thousand people were walking on this land. It was a lovely city with a steadily working city-forming enterprise that existed until one fateful day. This place will never be the same anymore.

These days, with technologies, it is possible to eliminate the consequences of an industrial disaster, and the reactor in Pripyat

is covered with an impenetrable dome because of the radiation. It was of the second generation, while now, they created and use the third generation reactors with concrete pits under them and specifically sheathed walls. If something goes wrong, it will be lowered immediately, which will make it possible to eliminate the consequences faster with no harm to people and the environment.

Now Chernobyl is a cleared and accessible zone. But at some places, the Geiger counter begins to crackle, notifying that there is still radiation. So, you better not leave the tarmac and follow your guide step by step.

When we came to a kindergarten and swimming pool and saw all the abandoned toys and broken beds, my blood ran cold. Bear in mind, I didn't go to Chernobyl to tickle my nerves. I wanted to see and understand the scale of human mistakes and tragedies. To realize how horrifying it was and to never forget.

The red forest has changed its colour because of the radiation cloud above the track around it. We passed it at a speed by car. Ripe apples on trees, rivers full of fish... But you cannot eat or drink anything there. Gradually, alien and abandoned by humans nature takes its toll, giving a living space for foxes and deer in the forests.

Have you ever played a zombie game? When we walked around the town and the abandoned buildings and facilities, I couldn't get rid of the idea that it was a part of the movie about a post-apocalypse. A feeling of insecurity everywhere. And a cold sweat every time you hear breaking branches in the distance or frightening rustles.

The whole situation with deserted roads and dilapidated houses is some sort of crushing you, and you feel scared and lonely. As if nature recaptures the land from humans and slowly wins back its territories. I cannot even imagine staying there overnight.

Every car is stopped at the checkpoint and passengers are asked for documents both on the way there and back. A lot of crooks try to come here, but likely, they are not allowed to pass. And I truly do not understand who in their right mind would want to take something out of here! When you leave, they check everyone on the radiation scanner. And even cars go through check-ups twice to see if everything is pure.

The reactor impresses with its size. It's like a flying saucer or a weird gizmo that sends signals into space. As it was an object of strategic purpose, the entrance was disguised as a kindergarten. And all the checkpoints, the military, and the installation itself were inside.

I cried when I saw the cemetery map that stretched into the distance, with the names of villages and people who were gone. I was surprised to see a semi-closed church and houses there with self-settlers. Around a hundred and fifty people who were born there do not want to leave this place. They decided to die there. And, of course, no one would kick them out because this is their home and their choice.

The Chernobyl zone is a kind of open-air museum of the Soviet era, where time stopped in 1986. But did you know that the Chernobyl nuclear power plant continued its operation for almost fifteen years after the accident? The last power unit was shut down on December 15, 2000, and time stopped completely.

Coming here, you have to follow several rules. You are not allowed to eat or drink, smoke in the open air, touch any structures, trees, or plants, and pick and eat mushrooms, berries, fruits, or nuts in forests and gardens of abandoned settlements. You should not sit on the ground. And no matter how strange it may sound to you, you should not put any of your belongings such as photo and video equipment, bags, or backpacks on the ground as well. Because the soil is still radiated.

You should also prepare yourself properly for the trip. Clothes with long sleeves only, for example, a coat or shirt, trousers, comfortable shoes that cover your feet fully, and a hat according to the weather.

After Chernobyl, I had to make an effort to get to Fukushima. I wanted to see what happened there. No, I wanted to see how it looked now. The tragedy happened on March 11, 2011. A strong earthquake of magnitude nine points caused a tsunami, which covered the nuclear power plant with its second wave. The power units were supposed to withstand a tsunami wave of 5.7 metres high, but on March 11, they reached a height of 13 metres. It led to a series of explosions because the cooling system could not operate anymore, all the devices failed, and four of the six reactors were damaged. The Japanese were not ready for this. Many mistakes in decisions and responses to the situation were made. Saving others at the cost of their lives, people were irradiating and dying. Eighteen thousand people were the victims of the earthquake and tsunami and more than two thousand are still missing. Now there is a huge exclusion zone with a radius of thirty kilometres, marked in red and forbidden to enter. 160 thousand people lost their homes.

It is almost impossible to get to this place, no tourists are allowed there. Unlike Chernobyl with a lot of tours and souvenirs, no advertising products here. People here are still trying to get through the ache of this disaster, they need more time for that. When we were watching a documentary about this tragedy, the guide was quietly crying. She just couldn't stop her tears.

As I said, no tourists are allowed in Fukushima, but I found a way to visit this place. At the time when I was searching about Fukushima, I heard about a new test project that was allowing people with sufficient justification to visit it. For example, in my group, some women were engaged in nuclear energy in Holland. After the episode of the popular Netflix video service Dark Tourist, about travelling in a local nuclear power plant the government of the Japanese prefecture of Fukushima were outraged, so they made visiting rules stricter, which made it almost impossible. During that series, the host suspects that the food at the restaurant in Namie City is contaminated with radiation, and the tour participants worry that the level of radiation in their bus is growing, although you cannot see where they were travelling exactly. The host also enters a prohibited area without permission.

Before we started our tour, we were asked not to be a dark tourist, and write only the truth about what we saw and learned. They do not want you to use fake information for the sake of reviews. I went there as a traveller-researcher who wanted to show the real situation.

The exclusion zone used to be thirty kilometres and was marked in red. But it is being gradually reduced, and when I was

writing this book, it had decreased to ten kilometres. It is not allowed to stay there for a long time, you can only look around and take pictures in some places while driving through the zone. Step by step, the authorities are narrowing this exclusion zone, turning yellow areas into green. Where the yellow zone can be visited, and the radiation background is being slowly recovered. While in the green zone, people can return to live.

The red zone is the harsh one. The buildings are still abandoned, but several times a year, people who miss their houses can return for a couple of hours, but they are still not allowed to take anything from there. The authorities made it possible to just give residents a chance to recall their lives before the tragedy. It was creepy to drive through the city. You cannot stop thinking that from the next corner, you will see happy people. But no... Only abandoned shops, untouched cars, overgrown with grass and trees gardens, soda and candy machines, and the entire infrastructure. Everything seems fine there, except the population. Nature pulls these places. No self-settlers or even dogs and cats.

Although the exclusion zone has narrowed to ten kilometres, and it is allowed to get back to the cleared territories, the Japanese are not in a rush. Sometimes, the dosimeter spikes, but in most places it is quiet and everything is within the normal range. Same as in Chernobyl, some places are still contaminated with radiation, but few people have returned and are trying to live there.

Trains do not go through the area, the railway is closed. It was planned to be restored by the 2020 Olympics (well, it never happened due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but more on that at

the end of the book). In the course of the trains, you can see ghost towns, where life seems to be returning but still not many people in them.

We have to know and see such places to understand that the life we have is beautiful. We have to learn to appreciate what we have. We have where to live and we have people we love. Such disasters take everything from people overnight. The nuclear power plant pays a thousand dollars a month to those who used to live in the red zone, and the government provided them with houses... But nothing can be compared with the place where you were born and happy.

I have many bits and pieces of memories from this trip. For example, a ruined split-in-half fish farm next to the majestic and dangerous ocean that brought the unfortunate tsunami. The guide walks slowly through these places. I could feel her pain. The radioactive soil is being collected throughout the exclusion zone. They cut the upper layer five meters deep and put it into sacks that are carried away by trucks. This is how the Japanese clear this place. But I didn't understand where they were taking those sacks.

When the explosion happened in Chernobyl, its cloud went up. But in Japan, the nuclear power plant was located on the shore, so, a part of the radiation went down and got into the ocean. The guide explained that the Japanese came up with an impressive solution to fight this problem. They designed pipes with cold gas. They are set very close to each other, and when water goes down to the ocean from the slope, it bypasses the nuclear power plant and does not carry radiation with it into the ocean.

No one knew how to act in case of such a catastrophe when almost all devices failed. But after that day, the whole world came up with huge modifications of rules in the construction of nuclear power plants. As a responsible company for the construction of reactors, Toshiba still incurs losses, and its CEO resigned in 2017. To stop the disaster from overtaking the whole Tokyo, there were heroes, who selflessly participated in the elimination of the consequences. Firefighters, engineers, doctors... Not even for a minute they thought about their own lives, resisting the disaster altogether.

And in Chernobyl, and in Fukushima, there is a hospital. You can come up to it and look inside through the window. No photos. I see uncompleted paintings, little slippers, books, and a calendar that froze on the date of that terrible 2011. My blood is cold.

2.3 Military. Syria, Libya, Afghanistan

We are coming to one of the hardest parts where I will tell you about military routes in my experience. Many of my friends, hearing that I have been to Syria, Libya, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, West Africa, and all of Africa in general, at some point ask me if I am insane. And in fairness, I can understand the reason for these questions. People wonder why would someone go to a country, where he can catch a bullet, without a special need. But I didn't go there just for a tick in my list, each country was visited for a reason.

After visiting such you realize that you don't need much to be happy. People often don't understand how much they have until it's taken away from them. A peaceful life, the ability to go outdoors at any time, stable electricity, the ability to go to the

cinema or meet up with friends for a cup of coffee. These are already a lot! Because there are plenty of places on the planet, where people have to survive and battle for their existence every day.

The whole Afghanistan trip was terribly scary. Driving along the roads, which, according to the driver, are bombed at least once a month, living in a hotel that was invaded several times, killing everyone who was in the spa zone or restaurant customers. At such moments, even armoured security around the perimeter does not guarantee your safety.

Therefore, in my opinion, such trips are not for everyone, especially if we talk about a beginner. A decision must be made only after you speak honestly to yourself. Are you confident in your strengths and in your travelling experience?

Such a trip will be a lesson for you. You will meet people whose life has completely changed after the war. Ask them what they dream about... These routes may change your values. You will never forget them.

My notes about countries in war start with Libya. An absolutely different experience that changed my attitude toward the world ultimately. I had to put all my courage together to finally make my way there. For fourteen years of my travelling, I have been postponing this place, but when the list came to the point of 189 countries, it would not be completed without Libya.

Once a very prosperous country, especially by African standards, Libya lost it all after the revolution in 2011. Even though many years have passed since then, the state that was thrown back in its development by half a century, still cannot recover from the disruption it has suffered. At the moment when

pages appear in this book, the war is still going on and is in an escalation phase.

The way to Tripoli starts in Tunisia. But except for Libyan airlines, which are pretty hard to get, you can't get anything else. Moreover, I couldn't buy tickets from Tunisia by myself. Well, at this point, it has a logic. Aeroplanes have to maneuver between the bombings, which makes it also harder for you to enter the city even if you have flight tickets and visas.

We couldn't pay for a car with security or somehow stay outside of the situation inside the country. We just had to accept it and pray for slipping and breaking through, and for the opportunity to explore and feel the country.

Getting into the old car and realizing that I was there, my eyes started to devour everything they could see along the little traffic on the way. The meeting party was very sharp in the warning that taking pictures from the car is not recommended. If locals see you doing it, they may inform the police, indicating the plate number of your car. They don't do it because they are bad, they are just cowed and exhausted by the war. They are afraid of strangers now, and I don't think they remember how tourists used to come here. Therefore, I did put my camera aside and was just looking and studying.

Landing and taking off, all you can do is implore not to be shot in the sky. You cannot even imagine that years ago, this country was completely safe. In terms of size, Libya ranks fourth in Africa and sixteenth in the world. The country is truly huge, and I wish I could visit its different parts and cities, but so far, only Tripoli is available to explore.

In 2018, when I went to Libya, it had dual power. One power holds the capital and is recognized in the world, the other part of the power belongs to the rebellious general, who controls most of the territories and is also partially recognized in the world. But who suffers in this situation? Right, ordinary people who are in between them.

Exploring the streets of the Medina, I was focused like never before. During this dangerous adventure, I saw real people and their real lives with old poor streets, small workshops, and children running around everywhere. My eyes were captured by the mosque that was sold to Israel, a school, and beautiful old buildings of the Italian and British consulates. Everything you see tells you about the hard times. The whole city is covered by dirt and garbage. But I was told that it was the same even before the war. About each building in the Medina, the guide was telling with pride and love. As if two people were looking at two different pictures. I was looking at the current situation, while the guide was looking at his city at different years. When it was not destroyed, full of life and beautiful. Walking through the city, he was back to his childhood. Smiling and outlining the corners of buildings with his hands, he was showing me the previous world. The one before the war. Where he was born and merry.

At some point, the old city wakes up and shows its hidden corners that were not destroyed by the war. Little shaded grape gardens, carved windows, and gorgeous moulding. For a short time, the city opened up to an ordinary tourist like me, and I realized that it was alive. It missed the time when it was loved and beautiful. It wants to get back to the moment when people were joyful there.

Life in Tripoli goes on, and with my trip, I wanted to show that sometimes, we need to come to such difficult and dangerous places. To see the essence of the city, its breath, and its citizens. To talk to them and give them hope. To remind them that it is always darkest just before the day dawneth. The light comes after any troubles, and the world will be filled with joy again. Someone has to be the first to take no tourist routes. To go to abandoned, forgotten, and exhausted corners. I was scared to fly to Tripoli, but the city welcomed me and gave me the possibility to explore it.

Finding yourself in the centre of an area that recently has been through a war or revolution, you look around and realize that people, cities, and even nature are tired of this difficult fate. Yemen is one of the countries, arriving to which, you see how badly political developments can affect the country.

It seems that no one there follows traffic rules, but in fairness, there is no traffic either. You will be surprised by the number of passengers in a car, but you won't be surprised by the state of the roads because the country has no money for their restoration. Cars skid or crawl along the road, giving you an unforgettable experience of Yemeni massage. And everywhere you go, you will see piles of garbage because people just toss everything on the streets.

Friendly locals just sit by the roads or fishing, while small ones play football around. I couldn't find many souvenirs there; shops mostly sell some food. Every Yemeni carries a jambiya, which is a curved dagger with a rhinoceros horn handle. I didn't see them having guns, but I do not exclude the fact that weapons might be under their clothes or in cars. Inviting you to their

shops, they don't try to scam or cheat you. With a sincere smile, they are just open for a conversation with a stranger.

Driving in the evening there is quite dangerous, because wild camels are everywhere, and they constantly cross the road. This was my first time when stroking a camel, I thought that he wanted to spit in my face or punch me.

Two towns, Al-Khouf and Jadib, that I managed to visit were very poor at that time. Despite the location by the shore, most of the houses were in very bad condition. But the brown clay walls of these houses were nicely winding with light windows.

Of course, it is impossible to see the whole country in a few days, and my first visit there was pretty short because of the war. Even technically, it was not allowed to penetrate deep into the country, but I believe that the situation will change, and people will slowly be able to explore and drive through this most interesting area. In such places, you start to understand how tremendous our nature is, where we are just wee creatures.

I should remind you once again that such routes require travelling experience. Countries with war or after military conflicts do not offer you comfortable accommodations or fun tours. Therefore, if you are still at the stage of packing your suitcase, I highly recommend you prepare yourself for trips to these places properly. But in fairness, I don't think anyone can be prepared for what they will see there.

Travelling to different countries was never about showing off for me. A couple of hours or even days are not enough for me, I need at least a week to understand the country. Unfortunately, some places are dangerous or too far, which makes it harder to schedule flights or trains and therefore, I could spend there only

a few days. But it is always a good reason to go back there and immerse into their lives.

Syria. Was I scared to go there? Oh, yes! And I am not ashamed to admit that I was not just scared but terrified. This decision was very hard to make, and I didn't even tell my relatives where I was going. However, I had to go to share my experience and recommendations with others who think to overcome their fears. You cannot predict a better or worse time to go to such places, and my trip went during the ongoing crisis in the country.

I am sure that most of you think that going to a fairly safe country in Europe or, for example, to New York in the United States is more painless. And I cannot disagree with you. But what about people in countries that were recently bombed? Those countries and cities need support. People need help when they are going through a challenging time. And sometimes, all they need is to hear that their country is still good.

Back to Syria. It is a territory with active military actions. Even though it was a little bit of a quiet time with no bombing when I was there, we still had to be very concentrated. The main condition that you better follow is that you must be with a guide all the time. Even if, same as me, you are all for travelling on your own, in Syria, it's not worth taking a risk. The guide gives you a visa permit and receives a document from the Ministry of Tourism stating that he takes responsibility for you. He vouches that you are a reliable person who will not photo or video any forbidden objects and will not get into or create any troublesome situations.

And here, my dear traveller who reads this book, I would want to ask or even beg you from the face of the whole community. Please, do not ignore the rules and agreed conditions. If taking pictures in a country or particular place is not allowed, you should not do it behind the guide's back. And get rid of the idea of wandering around the old city on your own. A country in a state of war has checkpoints literally everywhere, which means they can see almost every tourist. If you are not following the rules, you may lead your guide or an inviting side into trouble, and it will also make the conditions of the visit harder for other people.

My guide Mohammed had a client who wanted to come from China. Sending a lot of messages, emails, and phone calls, that man asked to get him a visa permit and settle all the questions. But when all the paperwork was ready, he suddenly changed his mind. After this, the guide received a warning that if such a situation repeats, the Ministry of Tourism will no longer assist him. So, please remember that your little mistake may worsen someone's life and may cost someone a job.

In Damascus, I was lucky to get into a souvenir shop that was closed for five years. With no tourists, everything was covered with dust. The owner opened it and among many different and interesting things, he found an incredibly beautiful wooden plate for me. I couldn't leave the place without a purchase and, seeing the plight of this Syrian, I didn't even bargain with him.

But when you get to the market, you have to bargain! The price there depends on your charm and ability to negotiate. But what I could see in their eyes is not the price that is important... They want to feel important to you. While bargaining, you both

share your stories with each other, where he will tell you how this war affected his life and the life of the whole country. Be ready for very sad stories. About bomb attack and hundreds of victims; about survivors and those who were helping them, falling under the second bomb attack. About people who with children on their hands had to watch their houses disappearing. The war took everything from them: clothes, documents, belongings. All they can do now is come to the ruined houses and burst into tears, remembering their former life.

In such places, you can only meet people who really love their country and city. Visiting these regions is always a risk, but for me, a trip to Syria was filled with warmth and gratitude. Seeing people who were not afraid to come means a lot for them, and literally, any person you meet on the street, in a cafe, shop, or hotel was ready to tell you wonderful stories about their home. By buying something from an abandoned souvenir shop, you will help them to survive. This is how we can let them know that their country is not forgotten, and we understand how hard their life is.

There was one person I met on that trip. Such an old legend man. His shop was near the market and by the entrance to the main mosque. Logically, that old man could sell anything and make good money. But his shop was different. There were a lot of chairs for visitors, a small kitchenette, and not so many souvenirs. Only a few paintings and postcards, a couple of olive soaps, some jewellery boxes, and one shelf full of postcards and magnets from the places that were visited by him or his friends. At the entrance, you will be greeted with an inscription: "If you need water, coffee, tea, or flatbread; if you need to leave your

belongings before going to the mosque or ask where to go... come to Hassan shop". He knew each customer and what they needed. Like an old teacher, he was slowly telling me about his life in Sweden, about his favourite opera singers and the situation in Syria. I enjoyed his company and would be glad to see him again.

But even with the hard life, Damascus was beautiful. I want to visit Syria again to see its other cities. This country has been going through difficult times, and it is we who can step by step help to repair or even rebuild it by visiting and talking about it. This place survived and is waiting for guests. No matter where you are from or what is your religion, this place misses people. There is so much we can and should do!

Civil wars and conflicts are incredibly dangerous! How many people suffer from them... They lose everything: family, house, business. And, as we can see, most often, they are left alone with their problems. I am not saying that the authorities don't care about them, but they simply have no time to support the victims. They either fight for internal power or try to solve problems with neighbours. But despite the hard conditions, people continue to live there, and they need our help. Regardless of the situation, the culture of hospitality and the generosity of citizens in Damascus and many other places with unstable situations shows that sometimes, we need to turn our superstitions off and just go there to support people.

I do not watch TV at all. Because we have to admit one simple but still sad reality: the whole world has become a hostage of media propaganda. But I do not want to see bad news about

certain regions. I want to explore each country from scratch, without imposed stereotypes.

One of the places where my intuition called me was Afghanistan. We have heard so many bad stories from there and, unfortunately, the part about the complexity of martial law is true, but it is unfair to say that everything in there is exactly as we imagine.

The first thing that struck me in this country was the incredibly beautiful views. Mountains and clear cloudless sky. It was hot, but it didn't bother me, as I was happy to reach this dangerous and hard to get to country! And, of course, I was going through check-ups at almost every step. I would compare the search at the hotel with the search at the most rigid control points at the airport. Armed security was at every corner, and I couldn't pass the entrance until the staff at the reception confirmed my booking.

You have to remember that countries and cities reflect your attitude, and often, you get what you expect. If you are waiting for some troubles, you will attract them. To avoid negativity, try to switch to a positive mindset. Imagine how wonderful and exciting your trip is going to be. For example, if you see drunk and loud bogans, do not provoke them, stay a decent person. If the country has certain rules for your appearance such as clothes, follow them and cover your head or wear a long dress. Some traditions have been formed over the years, and you don't have the right to impose your worldview if you are a tourist. You need to understand that each country with its traditions and customs that may be surprising to us is special. Tourists are just

guests at someone's house, the doors of which were opened for us. So, our task is to enter it with respect.

The more respect you show to the country and its people, the more willingly they will open their safe and interesting land to you. Be open for good and unforgettable experiences, for new friends and pleasant emotions, and you will receive them.

I remember my trip to Grozny. As a child, I used to visit my grandma and grandpa who lived there. But when the Chechen war started, it took their lives away. It was hard for me to go there and see nothing in the place of their former house. With them, disappeared all the relatives we had, and it was only me, my mum, and my older brother left. Going back to Grozny was as if I went back to my childhood, the time when my grandparents had melons, apricots, and a vineyard... When everyone cheerfully lived in a sunny city.

The war has changed people, and those who went through it have become a little harsher. Everyone is happy that it is over. The Republic is different now, and I will try to convey to you what I saw. Time gradually heals the wounds of people and it is not a risky place anymore. I was impressed by Grozny City with its modern and new quarters and houses. High-rise buildings with hotels, offices, and shops are wonderfully illuminated. You can even come up to the helipad on the twenty-ninth floor of one of the buildings. And paying about 10 dollars, you can go to the roof from where you will see the whole Grozny in full view. Just keep in mind the strong wind that tries to knock you off your feet.

The mosque named after Aimagi Kadyrova, the widow of the first president of the Chechen Republic Akhmat Kadyrov is

gorgeous. It can fit fifteen thousand people, and the building in a very soft shape is truly enormous and spectacular. Another gorgeous mosque in the centre of Grozny, one of the largest in Russia and Europe, is the Heart of Chechnya named after Akhmat Kadyrov. You can enter it and go upstairs to admire the chandeliers and walk on the carpet barefoot. Again, don't forget to listen to the rules of behaviour and respect local customs.

The centre of Grozny has been completely renovated and oldies say that this is a completely different city now.

I visited the market and walked along the central streets with a huge number of pharmacies. They just stayed there after the war, when having lots of them was very useful.

For the first time in my life, I was served black caviar for breakfast at the hotel. Impressive, huh!? And I can say that everywhere on the streets of Grozny, the food was delicious. A lot of kebabs and jerky, veggies and herbs, and no alcohol. Vast choice of fruits and vegetables on the market at very affordable prices.

The level of crime has fallen. The streets are clean and quiet. This city lives by its own customs, and you need to go there to see it with your own eyes and feel its energy.

Countries under the war or where it has recently finished taught me to love not only my home but other people's home too, to respect their lives, and help if they ask for it. Believe me, not a single person wants to live in conflict. And if there is any country where you feel that you have to see everything with your own eyes and support people, then, if you are an experienced traveller, it is worth a try.

I will never forget my tough journey to Somalia. What do we know about it? Something about pirates and martial law... But in reality, the situation is a little more complicated. The incarnation of Somaliland sovereignty started its swing as a result of an internal armed conflict in 1988. The civil war caused the collapse of the once united country into many micro-Somalia. Even the mono-ethnicity of the population with a single language and faith did not help to keep integrity.

Military actions almost razed the country to the ground, but even with this fact, the state is considered the safest to live among all other Somali territories.

Of course, after the war, the state faced problems, and the main one was the restoration of destroyed buildings. The shortage and high cost of construction materials forced people to use everything that was at hand: iron sheets, old planks, rice sacks, cardboard for packaging, plastic wrap, straightened cans, and barrels from fuel.

On the streets of the unrecognized capital Hargeisa, you can find a plane on a pedestal as a reminder about the strike by Somalia aviation and money changers, who perhaps are the most recognizable in Hargeisa. They sit right on the streets with stacks of cash in special lockable boxes or just piled right on the ground.

There, you may get this feeling that you are a famous rock star. Everyone says hello and tries to shake your hand. They will ask where you are from and wish you a nice day. It felt different to receive such attention, and I was trying to smile in return to everyone. I didn't meet anyone who strived to be my guide or wanted my money. They are just genuinely happy to see you. A

tourist for them is a rare guest and a good sign. A sign that step by step, their state appears on the mental map of the world. This gives hope that one day, it will get on the political map too.

But I would not claim Hargeisa or Somaliland as a paradise, and bring mass tourism on these grounds. Don't forget that if we are talking about an unrecognized state, we are talking about the absence of any laws in every sense of the word. You never know what can happen there. This is not a country where we all used to go for a holiday, and in fact, you may meet a minister on the street, or bump into trouble. The country may open all the roads for you now, but later, it won't let you out of the city without a bunch of certificates and permits. Even the locals say that after sunset, you better not step outside. Well, you won't even be able to do so, the first policeman will get you back inside.

It's not just dangerous to travel to countries that are at war, I also find it difficult. But after all my travelling, you can at least make one conclusion that people need people. The war seizes the opportunity to communicate with other states and knocks down the economy.

I would want to finish this chapter with a story about Dagestan. I love waterfalls, and I was lucky to have a chance to visit an underground waterfall near the village of Gunib. This is a real treasure and a miracle. You can see it only if you go down into the cave, from the heights of which crushes the water and streams the light. Not many tourists find it.

After the waterfall, we met local shepherds in their sleeveless cloaks. They even gave it to me with the dagger to complete an image for my photo. Later, all the cars including ours were stuck

on the road due to the rockfall that was cleared up by the excavator.

The road to Gunib starts from the flatland of Dagestan and rises to a height of one and a half-thousand metres above sea level. This road is already a part of an immersion in the beauty of nature and the surrounding villages.

Gunib has great historical importance. In 1859, Imam Shamil surrendered here, ending the long Caucasian war. A local history museum keeps the table of Alexander II.

The sad obelisk with white cranes striving up is dedicated to the mother and seven sons whom she lost due to the war.

I remember a wonderful dinner at a campsite Beryezka, whose owner built this teeny hotel with his own hands, and now gladly welcomes guests. I tried delicious chudu made by his lovely wife. After a hot tea, she showed me how to make these traditional pies with cottage cheese and herbs.

The table was filled with food, and all evening, we had warm conversations with the owner, his wife, and his sons. Listening to stories about Gunib, I fell in love with this place. The air here is different. It smells of freedom.

The next day, I visited Shamil's harbour, where he surrendered to the Russian army commander. The date of the Caucasian war that claimed so many lives is carved there.

Then I rushed further along Dagestan, its villages, and steep mountains.

On the way, I visited the hydroelectric power station and reached the canyon with a breathtaking view of it. Rushing through the tunnels and scaring the cows, I was enjoying the wind on my face and gorgeous nature.

If you are a brave and experienced person, sometimes it is worth going to such places to help and support people there. And I am glad that I can share my travelling experience with you.

2.4 Heartbreaking. North Korea and West Africa

This part is about regions that represent different worlds. Poverty and isolation in these countries will simply break your heart, and you will want to leave them as soon as possible. Unfortunately, I don't think anything can help there. I agree that this is not the most optimistic part of the book, but life isn't about only positivity. I want to believe that one day, people there will get to normal life with no restrictions and troubles, and they will feel happy and free.

I want to tell you the unvarnished story about my visit to North Korea. From the very beginning to the very end. Picking up my train tickets in Beijing at a crowded station, I quickly reached the border town of Dandong, where I spent a day, walking along the embankment, from where you could see my next destination.

A big difference, I can tell you, between the two banks of one river. Two bridges: one for a train that runs between countries and the second for pedestrians is half broken. The bridge itself and the area closer than five hundred metres to it are restricted for taking pictures, but it was still nice to walk around.

The next day, I left Dandong from the station that was crawling with people dragging and thoroughly checking huge trunks and boxes with clothes. Take the train only if you like long journeys by the railroad. If not, an old fleet from Beijing to Pyongyang would be your choice. As soon as the train passes the bridge, it goes along the border between China and North Korea for two hours. No pictures of stations, inscriptions there, and, of

course, military people. Don't even dare to try to do it sneakily! Because if Chinese and Koreans see it, they will for sure complain about you breaking the law. If you act according to the rules, you won't get any aggression from the customs officers, they are pretty friendly. All your belongings will be checked and the North Korean document will be taken away for a stamp. No stamps in the passport, just a complete verification.

The train has two types of compartments: for four people or six. I tried both. On the way to Pyongyang, I had very nice companions in the face of two extremely friendly Chinese with whom we were even singing together, and on the way back, I got into a compartment for six. At the border, they attach North Korean carriages to the train and remove the locks between them. Here you can already go to a restaurant, where for about ten dollars, you will receive a lot of small portions of local dishes.

Travelling to North Korea privately is impossible. Only via a travel agency and with a guide that will meet you upon arrival and will always be with you until you leave the country. I had two guides, a lady and a guy who was as quick as a speed arrow. They were both interesting and well-organized, so, I don't remember having any free or boring moments.

Right from the station, we were taken to the square, where local boy and girl scouts were preparing for the 70th anniversary of the DPRK. A huge holiday that was to take place soon, and, of course, it would be great to see it. On the square, we met the rest of our group. They arrived by plane with a delay, because the main plane of Air Koryo was given to their Marshall Kim.

Our group of twenty-five people was just perfect! Young, fast, and funny. We never had to wait for anyone anywhere and even

came up with the idea that whoever is the last to get on the bus has to sing a song or tell a funny story.

Even though the hotel where we stayed was built a long time ago, it was good. It had three very slow lifts, and if going down from the twenty-fifth floor was not a problem to use stairs, then to go up, we had to wait for a while before it was our turn.

There was a nice lobby bar with a lady playing the piano in the evenings and where you could get some drinks. But we had almost twelve to fourteen hours long tours every morning at seven or eight, so we were absolutely knacked by the end of the day.

The hotel accepts Euros, Dollars, and Chinese Yuan because it is almost impossible to get local currency. The only place where we could get the local money, which is strictly prohibited for export, was a local supermarket, to which guides took us the day before we left the country.

If you ask me, what I think about the country, I will say it is unusual, indescribable, and I would do it again. You just have to accept their rules of law, respect their leaders, and expect no smiles from locals because they are probably a little bit scared of tourists.

I wanted to come here for a long time, but, of course, was a little worried because we can hear so much different news about this state that constantly changes the border rules... But I did it. Some are afraid of it, others would never dare to come here, but someone falls in love with it once and for all. My task was to see it to form my own opinion.

From the very first day, we were warned that we were not allowed to discuss and show disrespect to the three main leaders

of the country. And think about where you put your mug or what you wrapping your souvenirs with! I hope it's not a newspaper with Kim's face on it. That would be a very bad idea. Guides will for sure take you to the main monuments with Kims. Did you know that each of the Kims has its title? One is the eternal president, the second is the eternal marshal, and the third is the eternal comrade. No need to take selfies against their background or show any signs like hearts or peace. People who brought flowers as a sign of respect approach the monuments first, then guides ask everyone to bow. And only after that you can take a picture, but it must be in full height. Compliance with these simple rules will help you avoid problems, as well as show your decency, as the guide will repeatedly remind you that it is very important not to break them.

The city is very clean, not a single piece of paper or bottle could be seen on the streets. The ground around the trees is decorated with white stones, all the flower beds are beautifully covered by flowers, and from time to time, you will see locals pulling the weeds.

We were driven only along the main streets with incredibly tidy balconies. You won't see any hanging clothes, inscriptions, or smoking people on them. We were not allowed to go for a walk around the city without guides. Even if you want to run at five in the morning, they will run with you. And there will be no chance to communicate with citizens for three reasons: you do not speak Korean, they do not speak English; you will not find many of them on the streets, only in tourist areas and only with a guide; they are afraid of you because you are a stranger.

Several times I noticed that when the locals see tourists, they lower their heads and try to pass you faster or even change their direction to not attract your attention. I am not sure if it is fear or just a different mentality, but I know for sure that everything in this country is regulated. You may find a child who will probably smile at you out of curiosity, but don't expect a handshake. You will not find the Internet in North Korea, and won't be able to send a postcard with a slightly torn stamp, because everything must be flawless.

It is hard to accept such rules, but if you are a guest there, you have to. So, did I. You may ask me what is the point of going to North Korea? Perhaps to understand and appreciate what we have. To realize how lucky we are to have our freedom in even small things. We can go to the cinema, we can travel outside the country, dress as we like, surf the Internet, and decide the profession we want. Because there, in North Korea, life is different. When teenagers reach the age of eighteen, they receive a badge with two previous leaders, which they have to wear all the time, changing it every two months for a new one. For five days, I tried very hard to find at least one person who did not wear a badge, but I couldn't. Every single person has it, except maybe acrobats in the circus, where we also managed to get.

I agree that photos and stories about the metro are not a big deal for anyone, but what if I tell you that not long ago, it was closed to foreigners? Only recently, they made it possible for tourists to come down and even ride for six stations. Well, with a guide, of course. All the stations are big and majestic I would say. Not a single advertisement on the walls, just people reading newspapers and trains with a long time gap, the departure of

which is specified by a special signal. With great patriotism, the guide informed that the metro was built only by the Korean people, without anyone's help. Our group was lucky to take some pictures with local children along the ride.

A lot of propaganda. In some places, the constant imposition of ideology and remarks that one of the leaders did everything only with the thought of his people was too much. It all made me remember a joke: A politician is a person who will lay down your life for their country.

One day we were taken to the gift museum, where on four floors, you can see some tributes to the past and present leaders of the country. It was a dead chance to take pictures there since all video, photo, and sound recording devices were confiscated at the entrance. The North Koreans played some good trick: realizing that, perhaps, some countries would not want to present anything to the DPRK, they introduced these gifts as if they were from Koreans who live abroad. Also, if one of the museums stated that one of the Kims lived very ascetically, then here, you can see a huge amount of gold and a big sign of luxury life and money. All the gifts, for example, Apple appliances, TVs, furniture, or a Kim riding a tiger are mainly from Koreans living inside or outside the country. The entire museum is beautifully illuminated and almost frozen by air conditioners, but I didn't understand the point, as tourists are very rare visitors there.

There are no religions in the country, although we saw a church with domes. It is neatly planted with trees around the perimeter which makes it almost impossible to see it, but there were no people inside and it was closed.

Juche is the religion of the party and the people, or rather the idea that everything can be achieved with hard work only. And it's not about the material wealth of one person, but the well-being of the whole country. At some point, you compare North Korea with an anthill or the ocean, where each ant or drop does not feel its own uniqueness, but thinks as a unified organism. The population works humbly and seems to pay no attention to their poverty, adversity, and the outside world, which does not exist. But they all know about enemies and imperialists. Every museum reminded us of wars and brave Koreans who fought for peace. As a tourist, you don't have to dive into their lifestyle, but locals have no choice. They live with the ideology that replaced everything.

The faces of the two previous leaders are everywhere, and the guide's voice begins to tremble as she speaks of the nation's leaders. And I am not sure if it was out of respect and love or fear.

There is no division into rich or poor in North Korea, but it is still split into districts. By the ideology, capitalists or business people should not exist, but a part of the group that arrived by plane from Beijing saw rich North Koreans with very expensive bags.

One day, we visited a demonstration school for talented children. They sing, dance, play different instruments, type on computers many times faster than any of us, and easily win adults over the tennis game. Such diligence and determination, but at the same time, it didn't look real or right... They are still children, and they should have some fun at their age. But they were there to demonstrate to foreigners the fake life of the

ordinary school. Looking at them, you can decide what is better: freedom where a child is allowed to do what they want or complete obedience, but with great results. No matter what they did there, they did it perfectly, and it is not me to judge who is happier or whose path will lead to a bright future. But what I can say is that never in my life I saw something similar.

As I already mentioned, there are no temples in the country, but a few architectural ensembles similar to Buddhist Chinese temples but with nobody inside. We drove past one at the speed of the wind, and I can swear, I saw one statue of a dragon which is very usual for such temples, but nobody explained why it was there. The open-to-the-public North Korean library also looked pretty much like a Buddhist palace, but everything related to religion was, of course, removed. Seeing all the sights, I couldn't stop thinking about people. Why there is nobody around the monumental structures, parks, and buildings? Who for all these endless benefits?

It was almost impossible to catch a local in your camera because they don't appear in tourist places. For example, when we went to a local university, which by the way was inside the former temple, we couldn't see many students there.

You will never be left hungry in North Korea. Food comes to your table constantly because their main rule is that tourists have to be full and satisfied. The hotel where we stayed was serving scrambled eggs, cabbage, fish, bread, and jam for breakfast. You would think it's a poor choice, but they did their best, running towards you with some more food as soon as you raised your hand. I was even fine with sweet 3 in 1 coffee sticks because I knew that Koreans were giving the best they had, and

with each meal, I was looking forward to new and extraordinary dishes. Cold noodles and kimchi, a lot of meat and fish that you had to grill by yourself, or pot with ingredients to make your own soup. Have fun!

Our group was taken to a supermarket only once, and that was the only place where we had a chance to exchange the money. It was primarily Chinese and local snacks to buy and a lot of ginger, which, along with the magnolia flower, is considered a national treasure. I also saw some bottles with vodka and tincture with a snake inside, but as I am not a boozier, I didn't get any. No photos were allowed and at the entrance, our bags were covered with another bag and closed to make sure that no one would steal anything.

On the way to the demilitarized zone, where the roads are not as smooth as in the capital, we stopped near the large monument in the form of two girls, symbolizing the two Koreas. And back in the city, you can see beautifully dressed in white women everywhere, and it is also not recommended to picture them on their duty.

Most of the houses are old but painted pink and green, the main idea of which is to create a joyful atmosphere. We visit the house of a farmer lady which was visited by the commander-in-chief. It was converted into a museum with neatly laid out books, labour orders and medals, a vineyard, and a bed outside. I was looking for the farmer lady, but no one was there. As if she was kicked out to create this museum.

In general, the creation of commemorative museums with things that were touched by one of the Kims is a whole ritual. A house he visited, a tablecloth with the book he read, a pen that

was used to sign something certainly important to the state, a table where he sat, a dug by him pond... The song that he wrote, the picture he painted, the office where he thought about the revolution, the tunnel where he talked to the soldiers, the tree that he took care of, and even his bathtub. Literally, everything that was touched by him is memorable.

Koreans make museums out of everything and everywhere you see commemorative signs, saying that their leader is part of them and everything he does is for the people. And it makes you think that it was not created by one person only. It is a national love and devotion, raised to the absolute.

I also had a chance to visit the American cruiser, which was captured by the brave Koreans. Taking us to each corner of it, the guides were showing us the evidence that America is bad and the Korean people are flawless. And by the exit of the ship, there was a seventy-nine-year-old man who participated in the takeover of an enemy cruiser, receiving an order for his heroic deeds. He was giving a lecture to the younger generation. I almost asked a guide if he was telling a real story or if he was an actor carrying the light of knowledge of those years to young people. But no, I decided to keep my mouth shut.

I didn't see any restaurants or cafes at all, but after the supermarket, we were taken to a place with draft beer with no tables or chairs. To our question about the equality of men and women, the guide said that women have the same rights. And if men can go for a beer after work, women drink at weddings, birthdays, or other parties. No disempowerment at all.

There is no traffic as locals move around the city mainly on foot or by bicycle. So, the tour bus was comfortable, especially

with the fact that it had an air conditioner. At the end of the tour, the guide performed a hymn, during which she asked everyone to stand up. At some point, I realized that the locals remind me of children who want to look very serious and grown up.

We were lucky to get to an amusement park and circus on the right date because the park can be visited only with a special entrance ticket on a specified date. Nothing like in our countries where you can go any time. It was not big or expensive. And the weather was good for us, nice and sunny summer days. But if you go, don't forget to bring a jacket or hoodie to wear on the bus.

A young scout girl led us to the best row in front of the stage of the children's theatre. A beautiful performance with dancing and singing children. When one of the girls stopped spinning with a pot on her head, which she did for an incredibly long time, the locals burst into applause. Like a single unit, they clap solemnly and for a long time, as if they are afraid to stop.

It was a long, exhausting but full of impressions week. I was happy that I went there and saw everything with my own eyes. Breathing in the North Korean air, I tried to understand the mysterious soul of these people. And I concluded that if you are a real traveller, you have to visit the country of the sleeping dragon and the Juche ideology. The country of hidden smiles and mixed feelings. The country that was created by people for people. The country with endless rice fields but no Internet. The country, leaving which, you will be full of thoughts and ideas. No need to judge them. Take a good cup of coffee and think about visiting North Korea.

Equatorial Guinea turned out to be the last country on the planet from the long list of recognized states by the UN. You

would think that we could choose something more attractive as the finish string, but it is what it is. Arriving in Cameroon from the Central African Republic early in the morning, I had to wait eight hours for the next twenty-five-minute flight to Equatorial Guinea at the airport. Should I mention that it was delayed by three and a half hours and there were no information desks that made the waiting time longer. At such moments, I always think about the great opportunity of the world to travel and explore its corners. In more than fifteen years of travelling, I met a lot of good people, made friendships, and found incredibly beautiful places.

My favourite places, museums, streets, cafes... Significant places, returning to which, I receive strength and energy, emotions and memories of the first day, as if I am back to the younger me to comprehend the information that I have accumulated. Each trip was about our planet. About its life, people, needs, and support.

Do you say hello to the cities? Arriving in new places, I always do it. Sometimes aloud, sometimes in my mind, but I know that they can hear me. If we like each other, the city shows me its hidden places. I try to imagine its character, its vibe, to see how it treats people who were born there and tourists. I even talk to the cities!

Believe me, it works. If you feel the city, try to ask the question you need, and it will answer you. Perhaps, in the form of the passerby, whose words you will hear as an answer to your question, a song that starts to play out of nowhere, or the plate number of a passing car. Sometimes, I can't feel the city. It sleeps. But it never stops me from admiring it and trying to find

something nice. Each city has its own zest, the main point is to find the right angle to look at it.

Quite recently, they found oil on the territory of the country, which changed the financial situation significantly. With oil money, they, unfortunately, are not interested in tourists at all, but in investing, for example, in fifty-three cottages on a vast territory for a one-day forum, which are now standing there abandoned. Or a huge empty sad-looking stadium with kids playing football outside of it.

About four hotels with exorbitant prices for the whole city. The one outside the city looked well-built but empty. The hotel I stayed in is on my personal blacklist now. I was given a room on the first floor right next to the stairs, above the bar and with the window facing the entrance. To make it even worse, the soundproofing was as bad as if I was just behind the carton. I could hear absolutely everything, including my noisy neighbours and bowls drumming at six in the morning.

When I asked reception to change my room, they shamelessly stated that there were no other rooms available, although I could see offers on the website. After a little loud complaint, they offered me to move to the room opposite, which in terms of the loud hotel life was exactly the same. So, it was one of the worst hotels I have ever stayed with horrible service and dumb breakfast with a housekeeping washing floor with bleaching water right next to your table as soon as you start eating.

But this is what you get, a bad hotel and an expensive driver if you want to obtain a visa to the country. A very limited number of attractions. One cathedral near the local headquarters,

directing cameras on which was strictly forbidden. An army and a warship in the port, which was also not allowed to photograph.

The city seems to be in a better situation than the rest of Africa, but its streets are still dirty and messy. A large flagpole on the coast and big letters about love for the city. No tourists who would want to take a photo near them, only about forty adults poking their phones because this place is popular for a free internet connection. The city looks deserted and abandoned on the shore.

On the way to the Spanish and French centres, I saw a lot of trees that are a symbol of the country, but both of the downtowns turned out to be closed on weekends.

I saw only two shops with souvenirs in the whole city, and one of them was closed. I was also very surprised to see that they didn't have much of the local souvenirs, they were mostly from Cameroon. I couldn't find any magnets, and little paintings and figurines were quite expensive, especially in the lobby of the countryside hotel.

I was very lucky to find a very nice pizza place in the city centre, where almost everyone was speaking Spanish. It was quite unusual to hear Spanish in Africa. At some point, the driver took me to the cathedral which is popular among people who want to get pregnant. And to my delight, I came at the right time to see a very colourful wedding with ladies in gorgeous and distinctive outfits.

My trip to Equatorial Guinea was at the finish line of my path to the goal, so, this gloomy atmosphere did not interfere with my mood. But whenever I think about this place, I remember dusty

and grumpy panoramas and a soul-crushing pain for what humanity is losing overcovers me.

In general, the African continent is where I received the most unforgettable travel experience. The West African country of Burkina Faso is not very popular among tourists but hides many amazing gems.

A little village Tiebele is a unique place with traditional picturesque architecture and monumental monochrome paintings of the Gurunsi people. As an excellent shelter from the scorching sun and severe weather, the houses in the village are built exclusively from natural materials – clay, wood, and straw.

Almost all surfaces in the village, no matter if it is vertical or horizontal, are blanketed with elaborate geometric patterns that have a certain sacred meaning. You will be surprised to hear that each pattern is one of a kind, and, you will never find two identical.

A very nice and friendly guy showed me everything around and told me about the long and arduous process of the paintings which can take several days or even weeks. First, out of a mixture of clay, mud, and chalk, an artist prepares a paint. After applying patterns to the surface, he has to polish it carefully, and then coat it with a special fixing varnish made out of acacia leaves. With this, dating back many hundreds of years, tradition, the village of Tiebele looks like a place from another world or dimension.

During his years of power, the local ruler Bokassa called himself an emperor, and as nobody could stop him, he spent twenty-five percent of the country's annual budget on his coronation. Perhaps, he was receiving his power of spirit from

the eaten people. Yes, he was from a not-very-educated tribe that practised cannibalism. And I should say that I was very disappointed at the authority's decision later to release him from jail and even acquit him. Does it mean that if you are a president, you can eat people? A little later, he was exonerated, saying that although he was a tyrant, he was a good one who ate only bad and wrong people. Once, during his rule, the country held a beauty contest, the winner of which was eaten by him. He also ate a very smart teacher, apparently, trying to become smarter. It is hard to understand such cruelty. But I don't think we should.

Every souvenir shop has beautiful paintings made of butterfly wings, which made me feel sorry for them, so I didn't buy this tomb of wings.

The locals are mostly lazy and don't want to do anything. Ladies wear national outfits and are gorgeous. A lot of militaries everywhere, but in fairness, it makes you feel safer.

Another interesting trip turned out to be to the city of Abidjan, the sea and air gates of the country of Côte d'Ivoire, which official capital is the city of Yamoussoukro. Abidjan is like a second capital, the economic one. Locating in the western part of Africa with a population of almost twenty-five million, it borders Liberia, Guinea, Ghana, Burkina Faso, and Mali.

Arriving at the airport of Côte d'Ivoire, you will be required to show an officially certified yellow fever vaccination document. If you don't do it (for example, you forgot it at home, lost it on the way, or can't find it in your bags), you will have to pay for the vaccination right at the airport. Well, you can also fly straight out if you don't want to be vaccinated.

Abidjan Faniko is an incredibly interesting place with laundry men in the river. In the Dyula language, “fani” means cloth or clothes, and “ko” means wash. So, the faniko is the “one who washes clothes”. Such primitive labour in grey dirty water with bars of soap and car tires, on which, these guys wash the clothes. This country is not very popular among tourists, but when someone comes here, they do visit Faniko. I asked if I could take a few photos of them, and to cheer them up gave some money. To be honest, I didn’t understand this tradition of working from dawn to dusk. Abidjan is a civilised city, so why can’t they use washing machines?

The whole process must be accompanied by the palm oil soap, and each beginner goes through some sort of education. They have three types of soap. White and yellow are for slightly dirty fabrics and black is for very messy ones. Palm oil is used as a main ingredient to make soap bars black. Every Fumiko spends at least ten pieces a day, so soap factories very conveniently appeared nearby. Do you remember earlier I said about car tires? So, to not carry them all the time around, Faniko rent them, which is not cheap, especially with the fact that they don’t get paid much for the hard work. Right next to the river, there is a primitive iron on coals, and to not mix up customers’ belongings, they tie knots on them in different places. I did my best not to think about the possible unsanitary conditions of this semi-natural laundry, but after such illustrations, you start to look at the benefits of civilization, your home, and comfort in a completely different way.

The most frequent question that people always ask me is why I go to places, where my life is not safe and why I want to see

something that breaks my heart and gets stuck into my memory. My answer is simple – to realize what I have, to be thankful for my life, and to support other people.

Chapter 3. Amazing and safe routes

3.1 Gorgeous animals

In this part of the book, I want to tell you about how you can and should fall in love with animals when you travel around the planet. I can't explain what I felt when I saw elephants for the first time, but they are forever in my heart. Majestic and huge, they look straight into your soul. When you catch their eyes, you just want to hug them, trust all your secrets, and listen to what they will tell you. I have always been against elephant riding and other amusements. These smart and beautiful creatures are not meant to entertain tourists. If you want natural contact with them, it is possible without pointless captivity and violence. So, please, avoid circuses, where animals have to stay out of their will.

Thailand is the place for contact with elephants. These days, creating eco-farms, people of this region are on the path of abandoning such savage riding. Locals take care of the animals, especially the elephants whom they can save from terrible exploitation, circuses, and hard conditions. You will not ride an elephant on such farms, but instead of this animal nightmare, they will offer you something else.

Get yourself out of bed early in the morning and go to the volunteer centre near Pattaya. For a fairly reasonable fee, you will receive a whole range of activities that would make both you and the elephants happy. The first step is breakfast with the

elephants. You will have a chance to feed them with their favourite food such as ripe bananas and juicy leaves from your hands. In return, you will receive a thankful look from these incredibly kind animals. The next important step: you walk into the forest with the grey giant to watch their water ritual. Just close your eyes and imagine a morning promenade with a gorgeous elephant somewhere in the thicket. How do you feel? Isn't it exciting? And if you think about it, goals are achieved and everyone is happy. The elephant is full and is in its natural environment where he can walk wherever he wants without stupid chains. You are just next to him and he is not angry or annoyed. He is satisfied and happy, you just had a meal together as if best mates.

I love such walks and such centres. As soon as I arrive in a region that has these places, I run for the hills to enjoy the company of my dear friends. I once visited a centre, where elephants get a spa treatment. They are generously smeared with mud and clay, after which are taken to the lake for bathing.

Just imagine this giant flopping into the water near you and, almost rumbling with pleasure, giving you his sides for washing. Tourists, volunteers, and elephants splash in the water with the cheerful sound of trumpet... Everyone is happy in this moment of unity, where both people and animals are carefree. Elephants are loved here, and you can be a part of this wonderful place. Believe me, you will enjoy the time spent there.

The care of elephants in such places costs about twenty thousand baht a month, which is around six hundred dollars. The smallest elephants are seven or eight years old, and the oldest are sixty and seventy. The great news is that absolutely anyone

can visit a volunteer centre, you just need to register in advance. You can even live there for some time to take care of the elephants, collect food for them, and clean up after them. A very nice opportunity to get in close contact with the animal, but at the same time, do not harm him.

I realized that one of the most important ideas of my trips is not just about exploring the planet and falling in love with it again and again, but also about meeting fascinating animals. I adore them, I am not afraid of them, and meeting them is very important for me. I want to know everything that the human memory keeps about the history of their life. How this species lives, how big is its population, what is it famous for... Perhaps, they are the ones who need help and support now. Many times I visited centres that support and nurse injured animals after the poachers. Especially many of them in Africa. Finding myself in such a place, I always try to tell people about it and help in every way I can.

People need love. Giving our love and warmth to a pet at home, we receive the same in return. They are our friends, our children, and even great-grandchildren. We humanize them and sometimes, even convince ourselves that pets can understand us and think like a person. If only they could speak. That is why almost every house has cats, dogs, fish Alex and Mike or a snail Nathan, a pair of parrots or even a snake. Like an air, we all need love and someone to take care of.

But sometimes, due to tragic circumstances or as a result of another misfortune, such a little fluffy pet ends up on the streets of a metropolis. Unfortunately, they are not adapted either to life in nature or in a huge noisy city. Such a global injustice: one day

you are in a warm house with your best friend who takes care of you, but the next day, you may find yourself crawling into a cold street. A terrible picture of pain, hunger, betrayal, and sadness.

Likely, the world is full of kind people. I know many public organizations that help abandoned pets. They cure them, shelter them, and sometimes, find them a new house. There are a lot of such organizations and thousands of volunteers who have chosen to help animals as their mission. They truly love them and care for the welfare of the four-legged pets.

In this part of the book, I want to talk a little about volunteers and animals around the world who amaze me with their funny character, enthusiasm, endurance, devotion, and love.

We all like different animals. Some love dolphins or birds, some like to look at predators, and the list is endless. For every tailed one, there is an admirer from the world of people. Many even compare their lifestyle with an animal and choose a mate or spirit animal in this way.

This chapter will be about everything that amazed, surprised, and impressed me about animals. And if one day, you decide to repeat my path, I wish you to go to the places I write about to enjoy these dizzying acquaintances. I hope you will like what I saw.

Did you know that in Japan, you can study the whole life of owls and get to a special place where you can wander around them? Or did you hear about a town where you can meet reindeer walking around wherever they wish to? Did you know about places where you can hold hedgehogs or play with the most popular dogs in Japan? Where in the Caribbean you can swim with stingrays, pet a kangaroo, hold a koala, or watch the

amazing platypus? Keep reading, and you will find a story about these places and perhaps, it will become your dream.

Animals never betray, lie, or deceive their owner. I love the fact that they respect and value you not for something specific, they treat you faithfully and sincerely just for you to be you. Even cats, who seem to live their own lives, not caring about the owner, really wait for you to be back home. I have a touching story from my life. Since I am a traveller and sometimes, away from home for a long time, I used to miss my cats, I had two. After a few weeks of travelling, I used to see them everywhere: in the newspaper, on signs, in passing cars... I think this was a connection between us. I used to miss them and they were sad too. So, they were sending me their thoughts that it was time to return home. I believe in a bond between humans and animals. And even if your cat does not show you its love, they still care about you. Once I heard someone saying: "For us, they are a part of our life, and for them, we are their whole life". From the first day to the last one, they are with us. No matter how much they annoyed you yesterday by rushing around the house and dropping everything on their way or maybe they scratched your sofa and woke you up at five, demanding food.... The moment, when you will feel bad or upset, they feel your pain, despair, and sadness. They will come to you, and you will feel their support. They are honest, wise, and sometimes, even more humane than people.

Unfortunately, even if sometimes people act despicable and ugly, pets will still faithfully wait for their friend. They will never stop loving and waiting. And there are many stories when pets died from longing, waiting for their owners.

In this chapter, I want to tell you about the most wonderful and devoted animals that you can meet. It is worth travelling along the routes I will tell because of them.

As a child, one of my favourite TV channels was Animal Planet. I was incredibly excited about animal life in various parts of the planet. Later, I was sincerely grateful to the main city channel “78” that believed in me and let me realize myself on television as a travel expert. I have more than four hundred programs behind my back and most of them were livestreamed. Inspired by the anchorman of National Geographics, I was talking about countries, their customs, their food, and the animals that live there.

As soon as I had the opportunity to travel, I learned that we can admire animals without disturbing them and practically not showing them our presence.

For example, it was exactly what happened with the colonies of thousands of penguins in South Georgia. You are not allowed to touch them as, of course, they don’t like humans hugging them. But the moment you get to this amazing place (if your boat manages to make a landing) with a small group of five or six people, and climb up to the hill to see these beautiful creatures, your world will change.

I would say that in South Georgia, I found about a dozen friends who, in the face of penguins, seals, and whales. It takes two full days across the swaying ocean to get there from the Falklands. One of the mornings was the catchiest. The trip began with passing icebergs, humpbacks, and darting around the ship from time-to-time little penguins. I never knew that they were so curious.

As the weather in these places changes from sun to drizzling in an instant, you will need good wellies and a warm raincoat that keeps you safe from the cold wind to land by rubber boats. But none of the difficulties of getting there or the weather swing does not bother you when you finally step into this land. Wild and pristine nature there is just wonderful because it is protected and loved.

As if wearing a tuxedo, penguins in this area are special. By the way, the southern hemisphere is the exclusive habitat for all seventeen species of penguins. Right at the shore, you can meet a lot of royal penguins, who are not afraid of people at all. They seem to be curious about big tall bipeds that came to their land.

The purpose of every tourist visiting South Georgia is to see the penguin colonies. And it is an unforgettable experience. To be honest, I was not a big fan of them, but as soon as I saw them, I changed my mind, because they are just amazing.

I think we could copy them! Walk around in small packs of three or five, be curious and shoo suspicious people away, or proudly swing our wings and snort.

We all know that all the birds are shedding, but penguins got to the highest level of it. They do not waste any time and get rid of plumage at once. Which means they cannot swim and have to stay on land until a new one grows.

Another fact about them is that they are monogamous. Well, it depends on the specific species, but most penguins pair up for life. Even the nests are usually never changed and are created at the same place where they were born. If you are a chubby penguin, you are more popular than the slim one, because they have enough fat to survive several weeks without food and

incubate the egg while the female goes to feed herself. It was extremely interesting to observe the life of these funny creatures.

But it was not only penguins who fascinated me. During the trip, I met a lot of the fur seals. It felt like being on the playground. Every minute, one of those tomboys was trying to run up to me, slightly bite and run away. Not because they were aggressive, they just wanted to play and have fun. Their mothers were probably somewhere in the ocean, so, the little ones were entertaining themselves by scaring tourists. But if they were approaching my feet slowly, I was playing with them, which made them rush away quickly.

Being united with nature is as if you are returning to your childhood when you can abstract from worries and problems. The main thing that you think about is how not to step on the seals that jump up to you and open their mouths.

If you are lucky, you can even see a very rare white fur seal in this area. At some point, I thought that it would be great to bring a couple of penguins and seals home because they are so cute. But we must respect the right to freedom.

Even if it was only a few hours on land, that picture will stay in my memory for a long time. Curious penguins that almost take selfies with you, small two-month-old fur seals, and this reserved, beautiful peace where you become a child. No wonder this place is called Fortuna Bay.

My spirit animal is an owl. Probably because most of the nights I am awake and can spin events by 180 degrees. It happens because of the journalist's habit of always looking around to grab something very intriguing with a keen eye. And the same as owls

that fly in the night, I like to stay in dark rooms and walk around the sleeping cities, where I always feel safe. I was extremely glad to see the owls closer.

Eagle owl, barn owl, pygmy owl, tawny owl, snowy or long-eared owl... These are the first to come to my mind. But can you imagine going somewhere to meet Caramel, Squirrel, Potty, Sweet Peanut, Potato, President, and Honey Bee? These are the magical names of owls in one of the Tokyo cafes. There are thirty-six of them and they are very loved.

Tokyo has six such cafes and getting there is very hard. An entrance fee is about twenty dollars and booking is required. They will ask you to come a bit earlier and not be late to not disturb their dwellers later with your sudden appearance.

Going inside a two-room cafe, you first listen to the rules: no flashlight during photos, no loud conversations, no moving too fast, and, of course, no touching or grabbing. You can only gently stroke the bridge of their nose with your finger. Imagine that you are in a china shop, and you can't be a bull. Moving between the owls carefully and very slowly, you can only admire them, receiving a new experience.

Those owls have days off, and above some of them, you can see a sign: "This owl has a day off". That means that this one cannot be touched or bothered today. You can put on a special glove, and the owl will fly up to your hand. The big one will look at you sternly, giving you a few minutes of happiness, and then fly away. But if you attract a little one, they will sit on you even without a glove. You may see it fluffing up or indifferent. Each owl has its temperament.

Not more than eight people are allowed inside at the same time. As if having a prom, the owls listen to classic music, letting restless people dash about. Of course, I know that many of you saw them in nature, but it was incredibly interesting to watch them up close and admire them at arm's length.

The Japanese are insanely attentive and treat birds and other animals with kids' gloves. They adore them and you can see that owls love the family that takes care of them. They talk to the owners and each other in an owlsh way. You can choose two owls and talk to them. I am not very good at their types, but I chose two interlocutors, one of whom was called Mr. President. And yes, his eyebrows and the whole appearance were saying that he was a president.

As a spiritual animal, owls have a very many-sided symbolism. In many cultures, they are revered as a symbol of wisdom, knowledge, hidden opportunities, and unique vision. If in nature, they live about ten years, in captivity, receiving the necessary care, these birds live up to forty years. The very short life of owls in the natural environment is due to hunger and the fact that other birds of prey, such as hawks and golden eagles hunt for them. Their hearing is four times better than a cat's, therefore, as soon as the prey makes a rustle or sound, the owl rushes at it with lightning speed. And that was one of the reasons why in the cafe, everyone almost tiptoed around. Their large eyes that see in the dark and the ability to turn their heads by 270 degrees give them huge advantages, making them excellent hunters. They are amazing creatures.

Another extraordinary inhabitant of Japan that I managed to get to know better is reindeer. More than a thousand graceful

spotted deer roam freely in the area of 500 hectares of Nara-Koen Park. The four-legged ones often run out into the streets of the city, asking for food because nobody hurts them. If you are going to Japan, you really should plan your visit to this park. And my advice would be to come earlier because the place is very popular among tourists.

Reindeer roam the streets, hang around the tents with crackers, and sleep in the shade. By the way, you can buy a pack of seven crackers for 150 yen there. And as soon as you make an opening noise, the reindeer will turn their deer periscopes towards you, and will not let you go until you feed them all.

I don't think they care about their body shape, because these guys love to eat. And crackers are their favourite treat, so they will not leave even a tiny crumb in your hand. You will be surrounded and almost robbed by the cutest gang in the world. If you try to hide food from them, they will start pulling the straps of your backpack, but as soon as you run out of food and show them empty hands, they will calm down and slowly move away. And if you bow a little, they will nod their head in return. Probably, because they are from Japan and are very polite. Reindeer will never hurt a child, therefore, you will see a lot of children stroking them.

In the place where I went, the people of Nara and tourists are to feed reindeer, and in the evening, all of them return to the corral at the horn signal. They appeared in Japan after the opening of the Kasuga Taisha Shrine Temple, dedicated to Emperor Jimmu, who descended from the mountains to Nara on a reindeer. It is believed that all local animals are descendants of that one. You can and should take a selfie with them, it's quite

exciting and completely safe, but hide the crackers at this moment.

I think the eight reindeer in Santa Claus's sled are the most restless ones. I know that the main Santa's helper is called Rudolf, and as a child, I only saw these animals in movies or zoos. The city of Nara is a worthy reason to visit Japan. Reindeer here are sacred animals, they walk freely around the city and no one touches or offends them.

But if we say that penguins and reindeer are very peaceful animals, what can we say about predators? There are some places in the world where you can safely walk with a cheetah. I didn't miss my chance to see most of the huge cats, including lions in the wild. Once, I was close enough to feed the cheetah, stroke him, take pictures, and most importantly, watch his life in Lion Safari Park in South Africa. This vast park is about forty-five minutes away from Johannesburg and was created by people who didn't think about the money but loved wildlife.

You know I don't like zoos, including petting ones. But I liked the idea that volunteers find wounded, sick, and abandoned animals. They nurse and treat them, and allow tourists to watch their life. The emotions you get here are priceless.

I always look at the guides working with animals, and most importantly, how animals react to them. When I saw a cheetah, which like a huge pet, rushed to its caregiver to get some hugs and rubbings, I realized that this man had a strong bond with the animal. These two trust each other.

By nature, cheetahs are predators, the fastest and most dangerous ones. So, you can imagine what I felt when I first met

one of them. But I reassured myself that I love cats more than dogs, and the cheetah is just a huge cat.

I had a six-year-old male, who purred all forty-five minutes of walking. He was running away and back, climbing trees and rocks, and accelerating or slowing down following my steps. I was allowed to feed and stroke him, but not his legs. I was also told that they like it when you look at their eyes because they can feel love. Or fear... No matter how scary it was to take a selfie with a cheetah, I was the first one to approach the one sitting on the tree. I love animals and apparently, they feel it. But the photo with his face near mine still harbours my fear and admiration.

One group should be of eight people or less, and I was lucky, it was only four of us, including the staff of the reserve. We all had enough time to communicate with the animals. But, in fairness, I just wanted to sit and look at this gorgeous beast.

That park also had lions. I remember the scene when tourists approached the lion cub, but he did not express a desire to contact them, so they just stepped away. But a few moments later, this small future king of beasts decided to follow me, walking and playing nearby.

I also met hyenas, panthers, and a real pride of lions. There are many animals, and they are all well-groomed and obviously not starving. Taking an excursion for one and a half or three hours and driving around the reserve, you will see giraffes chewing grass by the restaurant with tourists, and lazy lions that roll along the road near the car. The guide's favourite joke is that tourists are the favourite food of these cats.

Zimbabwe was the place where I made lion friends. In addition to the Victoria Falls, to which you should devote at least

half a day, there is another wonder of the world. Everyone who loves wild animals has the opportunity to walk with lions in nature...

The reserve is called Lion Encounter. The important information about Zimbabwe: Specialists there raise four predators – two male and two female lions. Before they reach the age of four, they are in contact with people. But then, they are slowly being released to feral wild relatives. So, they are gradually weaned from humans. Since the huge number of lions around the world have been exterminated, this is a very important and necessary project fulfilled by people who want to help predators. For example, in this way, China regained the population of pandas.

I will never go to such attractions as elephant riding. They torture animals for money, not caring about the pain in the eyes of these enslaved creatures. But here, in the reserve, caregivers live with lions. They take care of them and play, they feed and nurture them. Animals here are loved, happy, and are prepared to join the wild pride and become free. You should see how strong, healthy, and well-groomed the lions are there! I am not ashamed that I went for a walk with one of them and had an exceptional experience. I also believe that the cost of my ticket and tips to the caregivers will help to grow the number of such great, strong, healthy, and happy lions in Zimbabwe.

In conclusion of this chapter, I want to describe my tenets of routes that are associated with animals. They are our little brothers. And since humans took and appointed themselves senior in the kingdom of animals, then their most important obligation is to protect, love, and take care of the smaller

brothers. I invite you to join my philosophy and give all the animals on the planet your care and love.

3.2 Delicious food

Are you hungry yet? Beginning this chapter, I can feel how my stomach starts to rumble. Food is all about personal preferences, and if for someone one type of food is a common taste, for others it could be very exotic. I will try to describe my favourite dishes and experiences. Let's see if our tastes and preferences will coincide or maybe you will find something new for yourself to try.

I picked Thailand as a starting point for our gastro-journey. Any tourists will find a lot of choice here, but for a gastro-tourist, this is truly a paradise. An unsurpassed list of affordable vegetables and fruits that will change your ideas about the limits of the possible and acceptable with mind-blowing variations of names and flavours. One day, I went to the local market to count all types of fruits that I would see. And I have to be honest, when it came to number fifty, I gave up. Here are just a few of them: mangosteen, rambutan, lychee, longan, durian, papaya, dragonfruit, carambola, tamarind, jackfruit or breadfruit, guava, rose apple, sapodilla, salak, mango, and coconut. Impressive, isn't it? Because of the tropical climate the trees bloom and bear fruit all year round. This means that no matter when you go there, you can try them.

Durian is the king of fruits for a reason. It smells odd and many tourists don't dare to eat it, but the taste is memorable and worth crushing your internal barriers. But my heart belongs entirely to a tender, soft, and juicy Thai mango that melts in your mouth. Now add the price of about 50 cents per piece! You still

haven't booked your trip to Thailand to enjoy all possible fruits and vegetables and their vast variations?

Thailand is also famous for delightful soups. Tom ha Kai and Tom Yum stand out for the bright composition of spices. I don't think you can find the same number of additives in other cuisines of the world. A rich range of tastes and a combination of spices with vegetables cover you with an explosive wave of gastronomic bliss.

Another favourite dish for me is a Pad Thai. Rice noodles with tofu and shrimp, fried in soy sauce, fish sauce, and many other secret ingredients. I am not the only one who loves it, it is a very popular dish not only among tourists but locals of Thailand as well.

The most unusual breakfasts were waiting for me in Australia with its huge number of restaurants. Just in Sydney, there are more than three thousands of them, and they all serve fantastic food. Living in Australia, my favourite breakfast consists of whole grain toast, a ripe avocado, and an omelette that is generously seasoned with salt and pepper. But a real Australian breakfast has to be complemented with a local vegemite spread made from leftover brewer's yeast extract with various vegetables and spices. If you see someone actively eating this thick brown paste with a toast for breakfast, believe me, this person is Aussie. And the best vegemite toast is made by my mate Nathan. This sandwich is now a gastro symbol of Australia for me.

The main plan of this chapter is to put the idea in your head that if you want to try the national cuisine of different

nationalities, then you should go to those places. Because original old recipes of food rarely leave their native lands.

There are many places where you can get shepherd's pie, but the national recipe with the secrets and tricks of making mashed potatoes and lamb, of course, will be found only in England. The same as the fish and chips. At first glance, you may think that there is nothing special about it. Just ordinary breadcrumbed fish and potatoes... But simple can be delicious! I say yes to this fast, high-calorie, but amazing dish.

If you go to Turkey or Iran, you must try all the types of shawarmas. A real marbled Kobe beef is prepared only in Japan because this dish was born there. Delicious marzipan was invented in Germany, not just for making decorations on cakes, it is a real treat for any sweet tooth. Are you still not hungry!?

If you are a fan of juicy steaks, you must visit Argentina. But no need to search for an expensive restaurant for that, literally any café here knows how to prepare meat. Argentina is famous for its beef throughout the planet and the steaks here are mouthwatering.

What have you heard about the thymus gland of the calf? It is also called sweet meat and is best cooked in, of course, Argentina. Cooking such meat is like an art, and not every chef will take responsibility for it. You can't just grill it, the technology is much more complicated. But believe me, Argentina is a place whose quality in grilling cannot be doubted.

If you are craving a breaded schnitzel with homemade potatoes, it is worth going to Vienna. This famous dish can be compared with the food of the gods. And running around the city and visiting coffee shops, look at the strudel and zacher. Zacher

is a chocolate cake made for the first time by an Austrian confectioner and is considered a symbol of Vienna.

There is one place in Paris that my soul yearns for whenever I visit France. This place has the beautiful name of Leon, aka lion, that serves Belgian mussels. Even though for the most delicious mussels, you should go to Belgium, I know such a restaurant in Paris. Just imagine a pot of mussels dipped in a delicious Roquefort cheese sauce, accompanied by delicious potatoes and a bit of homemade mayonnaise. What do you say? Have you started dribbling?

I also love breakfast in Paris. Going out to the street, you catch a mouthwatering smell of fresh pastries from almost everywhere. Croissants and my favorite morning sandwiches – croque madam and croque monsieur. I will not spoil you with the differences and recipes, because I hope to provoke you to a breakfast in Paris as soon as possible to try this delicacy along with a cup of morning coffee.

Have you ever heard about the famous herring that is served in almost all cafes in the Netherlands? Soaked in cider or wine with sugar and marinated with spices and broths. Each chef has his special recipe.

What about a traditional Chinese dish, steamed meat dumplings? I have a favourite network place called Din Tai Fung, and finding myself in China, I regularly come there and just can't tear myself away from delicious dumplings. By the way, if we talk about this type of food, then my favourite is Georgian khinkali. A dish with a lot of meat and herbs. And, of course, the best place to get this wonderful experience of eating them is Georgia.

In general, I am ready to praise to Georgian cuisine, because the food they make is not just delicious, it is filled with soul. If you feel tired or lack energy, just go to the nearest Georgian restaurant, and fill yourself with lobio or chakhokhbili. I cannot skip the magical Adjarian khachapuri in the form of a boat with the mildest cheese and egg yolk on top. To fill up the cut of pleasure, get some pomegranate or Isabella wine. This wonderful food will give you strength and vitality, driving all the sadness away.

Did you know that you can eat curry sauce with a sausage? Then go to Germany for a popular Currywurst sausage. Even if usually you ignore this type of food, calling it fast food and street food, believe me, some dishes that are sold in tents can be counted as local attractions not less than surroundings and churches. This is an incredibly tasty one, and I recommend trying it in Germany.

Hungarian dish with potatoes, carrots, sweet peppers and tomato broth with pieces of meat that literally melt in your mouth. In general, Hungarian cuisine is incredibly filling, but the goulash is on the highest level of amazing smell and taste.

Do you know how to cook tandoori chicken? This amazing chicken that is cooked in a special tandoori oven is also worth special attention. Of course, the most delicious tandoori chicken is prepared in India, but if at some point, you decide that you want to get a taste of this magical country, then find a place where it is served. A little tip about India: If you order food there, make sure to specify the level of its spiciness, because India has the most vigorous and hot set of spices that I have ever encountered in my life.

Mozzarella, basil, tomatoes and crispy crust... These are part of your indelible gastronomic experience in Italy. Pizza is a national treasure of the country, and any café or house you visit will cook it just perfectly. Once you try a pizza in Naples, you will never agree to another one. If you ask me what my Italy tastes like, I will tell you all about the unusual combination of sweet melon and smoked and slightly salty parma ham. I also remember tomatoes and meat sauce, pasta and stretchy cheese with bechamel sauce. Yes, I am talking about lasagna with fresh green basil leaves on top.

Poland surprised me with a charming soup Żurek that is cooked with chopped celery, parsnips, and other fragrant vegetables and is served in a loaf of bread.

Have you ever tried ostrich meat? In South Africa, they dry and cure with spices not only beef, but ostrich or kudu as well. As simple as it is and melting in the mouth, it could be a nice snack for a beer, for example.

What do you think is the iconic dish in Spain? Close your eyes and think about olives and, of course, jamon. Don't get surprised by the price and quality range, just get not the most expensive and not the cheapest one. You won't be disappointed!

Another traditional Spanish dish originates in Valencia. Spanish paella made of rice with delicious chicken, rabbit, or maybe seafood. It should be cooked in huge braziers on firewood. You may think that Spanish chefs do not put much effort into the preparation of this dish, but I assure you, you are mistaken. They calculate everything to the gram, and it is all about the skills of the chef and the recipe worked out over the years that make it unforgettable.

Of course, I cannot ignore the United States. I bet the first dish that came to your mind is fast food, and you'd be right. Americans are big fans of burgers and can eat them everywhere. A single most common breakfast in the States can blow up your mind: eggs, french fries, cheese, toast with butter and jam, sausages and waffles flavoured with cream or maple syrup on top... Fast food can hardly be called healthy food, but it is delicious.

Rice noodles and broth – the ingredients of the famous Vietnamese pho bo soup. Light and life-saving for the stomach after the heavy US fast food fest.

Praline, the sweetness of a French kiss, and beautiful moves on pointe – these are all about the dessert with meringue, buttercream, and fresh berries. An Australian masterpiece with the Russian ballet soul Pavlova, named after the great Russian ballerina Anna Pavlova. This dessert has gained its fame not only in Australia or New Zealand but around the whole world.

Australia holds a special place in the world of wine, offering a wide range of wines of different varieties and distinctive features. Australia's wine industry thrives on a unique combination of climate, soil, tradition and innovation.

Where the saltwater air steals in amongst the jarrah and bloodwoods, where an ancient spirit still quietly rests, where the 6th generation of the Montague name now calls home... From the frozen Russian Steppes, to the coastal commune of Montaigu-Les-Bois in Normandy. From the battlefield of Hastings to the peaceful castle of Shipton-Montacute in Somerset, England. From the shores of the Motherland to the

shores of The Great South Land some eight centuries later, the Montague family have long been called to adventure.

Australian winemaking has a rich and interesting history dating back to the 19th century. At the time the first wine vines were brought to the continent, Australian winemakers faced a number of challenges, including an unfamiliar climate and limited knowledge. However, through passion and perseverance, they overcame these obstacles and created the basis for the development of winemaking in the country.

The famous region is Margaret River in Western Australia, known for its Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon wines, which are characterized by bright acidity, freshness and complex flavors. The region's climate, with its maritime influences and cool breezes, creates ideal conditions for growing high-quality grapes and producing outstanding Australian wines.

The best wine in the world for me is Australian wine and specifically from the Margaret River region of Montague Winery. Paul and Narel are my best friends, who understand wine best. Getting to know wine should only begin with them at their winery. Also if you want to know the story of our acquaintance and friendship, you should definitely come to Montague and drink a couple of bottles of the best wine and chat with Paul and Narel.

This chapter is intended to give you another key to feel countries. Sometimes, the food that people eat, characterizes them even more than we can imagine. Therefore, I am convinced that without trying local food, you will not understand the country. I like a new popular way of travelling – gastrotourism.

When your trips around different regions are followed by trying their cuisine.

I agree with the saying "Unless you try, you won't know". To understand the mysterious soul of Asia, you need to try grasshoppers and spicy food. It's hard to understand the incredible Japanese pursuit of excellence without tasting real sushi, which was made out of fresh-caught fish at the early morning market. It seems that rice and fish are the simplest ingredients, but for the Japanese, they are a whole science. For the first few years, the master learns to cook rice, and only then can he be allowed to cook, not sushi, but scrambled eggs. When you spend a few years on one thing, you become a real master of the craft.

In Denmark, they have an incredible concept of a dish that boggles the imagination and taste. Smørrebrød are sandwiches with various fillings. So similar to ordinary sandwiches, but at the same time, absolutely different. Even well-known crisps and popcorn will be different in different countries.

Guacamole and tortilla. Delicious Mexican tacos with different fillings will tell you much more about the character of the local population than a three-hour conversation with someone who would agree to talk to you.

We often add new ingredients to already familiar or unusual dishes at our table, trying to improve their taste. We all know the taste of simple rice, but add some sauce to it, and it will change completely. For example, any meal in Israel is better with a creamy paste of chickpeas, tahini, garlic, and lemon juice. The incredible combination of hummus with meat or vegetables makes it extremely popular in the East.

When you travel, you always want to treat yourself to something special. For example, in Singapore, I went to a restaurant that is famous for Singapore crab with chilli sauce. Seeing a large portion of this dish coming to my table at this restaurant shocked me, but I ate only a third of it and realized that I was not a big fan. The place has been repeatedly recognized by critics as a place that cooks the most delicious crab, but I did not like it. And there is nothing wrong with that. I tried it, I know the taste of it, and my preferences now.

Just as each of us knows that ketchup or other sauce can save almost any dish, every Canadian believes that food becomes brighter with maple syrup. The stunning amber-coloured ingredient with a maple leaf on the bottle makes any sweet dish mouthwatering. And an Aussie will add it to a vegemite and will be right.

Crispy, glazed Peking Duck spins my head whenever I am in Asia. Tasting of this dish as a whole ritual. The duck is served with a special sauce and it will be cut right in front of you. There is even a certain sequence to be observed in eating it. Everyone who goes to this part of the world must try it there.

Having a meal in Korea, you will be surprised by the national dish panchang. I wouldn't even call it a one dish, it is a whole set of appetizers with a lot of small plates that come as additives to the main course. The full colour and nature of the nation in one assortment of snacks! Flavourful and rich.

The cuisine of each country, and sometimes, even just a region, has its own character. National dishes become symbols of states, win awards, and reflect the brightest originality of nature.

And new gastronomic sensations will tell you more than any guidebook.

Sadly, I cannot hear your feedback in this book. Because I would like to know what dishes of your national cuisine blow your mind and keep your heart warm. These were just a small part of the dishes and wines that I recommend you try to form a complete picture of the world and its exploration.

3.3 Spectacular beaches

Beach... This word always intertwines with the sun, happiness, and gorgeous ocean. I wouldn't be me if this chapter were only about relaxing beach holidays! Here I will try to warn you against various dangers. Remember, no matter how well-equipped and beautiful the beach looks, it is still a massive part of wild nature. Therefore, let's start our story with reminders, then, with a clear conscience, will enjoy the good part.

Sharks, stinging jellyfish, and crocodiles. These floating dangers live near Australia. And, if at the end of this part, I will talk about my favourite Australian beach Cottesloe in Perth, now, I would want you to listen carefully about the possible risks posed by other beaches.

Never forget that many of them are almost abandoned and wild. Therefore, even if you see an incredibly picturesque place, think twice about whether you should swim there. As a Malaysian proverb says: "Do not be tricked into thinking that there are no crocodiles just because the water is still", Do not enter the ocean if you don't know who hides in it. In addition to huge sharks and crocodiles that you can actually see, another dangerous creature is jellyfish with the size of a fingernail. They

sting painfully and are incredibly poisonous, so, swimming in the open water will quickly change from heaven to hell.

There are a lot of incredibly beautiful beaches in South Africa. With white sharks! The most dangerous predators in the waters. They do not snooze and in certain periods of the year become especially aggressive. Therefore, perhaps it is better if you limit yourself by walking along the coast and just putting your feet into the water instead of swimming, especially beyond the buoys. Because you never know who is waiting for your body there.

Another important thing to remember is that even if the ocean or sea does not hide a lot of predatory and poisonous creatures, there is such a thing as an undercurrent that is not visible from the shore. And if you are not a pro swimmer, it can drag you under the water or hit you against the rocks. Therefore, do not forget about such issues.

As an experienced traveller, my advice is not to play with nature or do anything silly out of bragging. It can cost you not only your health but also your life. And stay close to your mate or someone who will not leave you in trouble and will help.

The first beach that comes to my mind is Copacabana Beach in Brazil, Rio de Janeiro. It would seem that nothing could be better than kilometres of white sand and an incredibly attractive water surface. But even if there are no harsh currents or dangerous animals, you still should be extremely careful. Among the large number of people, the gangs of juvenile pickpockets roam along the shore. On my first trip to this beach, locals recommended leaving all the most valuable clothes, jewellery, wallet, and keys in the hotel safe. Since then, I take only five dollars with me, which will not be so critical to losing.

Unfortunately, I had a bad experience of being robbed in Colombia. Deep in my thoughts, I was wandering along the beach and at some point, found myself far tourist area. It was already the territory of the locals, where two Colombians with a knife came up to me. Spoiled by the great luck in travelling, after visiting the most remote and dangerous corners of the planet, I could not even imagine that here, on this picturesque beach, my little walk would end up like this. For a moment, I thought that they just wanted to ask something, but instead, saw an approaching knife blade. But these guys did not know who they were dealing with. My survival instinct worked in milliseconds. All the possible obscenities began to jump out of my mouth and, to be honest, I never thought I knew them all. Such a behavior puzzled the robbers and they just disappeared. I truthfully strongly believe that it is better if someone thinks that I am insane than being stabbed.

Do you remember scary movies about piranhas? What if I tell you that some beach parts of São Paulo in Brazil are teeming with them? Yes, I am talking about those tiny fish that can devour absolutely anything. Therefore, if you don't want your beach holiday to end up with losing any parts of your body, be extremely careful and study all the shores in advance.

Another important note that I want to make about water and beaches is their cleanliness. For example, I adore the huge artery of St. Petersburg the Neva, the river of my childhood, but I will never swim in it. E-coli and the entire periodic table are a good reason not to get into the water. Same I would say about Hong Kong. No matter how hot and sticky it is, no matter how much you want to refresh yourself, do not plunge into the local water.

Unfortunately, often, industrial waste is dumped into local rivers, and swimming in them is extremely dangerous.

I think I finished with precautions, and now, it's time to tell you about my favourite beaches on the planet that I would recommend you visit at least once in your life.

There are thousands of beaches in the world, and it is simply impossible to choose the best one. Some people prefer white sand, while others like stones and maybe pebbles. Someone needs a quiet harbour, but the surfers always wait for a big wave.

Huge number of beaches in Florida, USA with beautiful people worth a visit.

If you are a party person, then, of course, the beach Las Salinas on Ibiza is your place. Golden youth, many DJs, and popular club music... In addition to water and sand, the party never stops here.

The most unusual beach for me is on the island of Saint Martin, which is part of the Netherlands. It is well-known for a small strip of beach that goes along the airport runway. Sitting on the beach, you can see aeroplanes right above you as if the landing iron bird is at the distance of your arm's length. Like an attraction, people are constantly blown on the sand or into the water with an airwave! Seeing this huge machine coming closer to you is something different. Indescribable! Therefore, this location has a special place on my list.

After frightening you with the sharks of Australia, I still want to tell you about Bondi Beach in Sydney. This is an iconic place for anyone who loves surfing. And almost every Aussie knows how to surf and try to escape for a weekend to the ocean to catch a couple of tides. Bondi Beach is not just clean and has an

outstanding coastline, it has special nets that protect people from sharks and jellyfish. Starting from the coast, you will find a long road that will take you to the surroundings. As Australia is a country with more than ten thousand beaches, you can imagine the atmosphere there and the lifestyle of its residents. I would call it beach culture.

The next one is Maya Bay beach on the Phi Phi island of Thailand, which was chosen for The Beach movie with Leonardo DiCaprio. Azure sea, boats, green hills, and sheer cliffs... did you imagine it already? If you watched this movie, you remember this place and probably would love to get here. Incredibly widespread and excellent location.

If you are looking for fine white sand and turquoise water, take a path to Grace Bay Beach on the Turks and Caicos Islands. For me, this place is associated with the living ocean. Every evening I was wandering around on the sand, my feet were washed by salty water, and I was talking to the ocean. Yes, at some points, I was looking at it, and I had a feeling that it could understand me and answer any question with a salty splash, foamy wave, or still surface. If you feel that your life brought you to a dead end, you don't have the strength to fight, or you can't trust your feelings to another person and get honest advice without judgment, then go to the old wise ocean.

The first thing that comes to my mind when I think about Tulum Beach in Mexico is a pyramid of the Mayan civilization that is incredibly close to the water.

If you are dreaming of the places that often appear in advertisements for the Bounty chocolate bar, then take yourself to the Dominican Republic. There are a huge number of them,

but the most beautiful ones can be reached only by tiny boats. All you need is to pay a little fee to the local fisherman, and they will take you to such a quiet and gorgeous beach.

Maybe you are a diver or have a desire to learn. Then, sooner or later, your path will cross with Indonesia... An amazing nature and colourful flora and fauna will surprise even the most sophisticated traveller.

Did you hear about Sancho Bay in Brazil? Well, now you did. An extraordinarily beautiful coral reef is here, therefore, you should be very careful when swimming. The path to this beach goes through the carved stone stairs or by the boat. A few hours won't be enough, so, plan a whole day for this place.

The next beach is a part of the reserve with white sand and clear Caribbean waters. Almost nothing prevents the animal kingdom from living here in harmony and peace. Playa Paraiso beach in Cuba is a paradise for those who love white sand and endless beach expanses.

Have you ever heard of the Cook Islands in the Pacific Ocean? A unique place where I found triangular coins. Aitutaki Island is home to only about two thousand people, therefore, its beaches are almost deserted making the area perfect for solitude, nature exploration, and diving.

Maldives and Seychelles are two of the most favourite destinations for beach tourism, granite rocks, and mind-blowing islands. And, of course, this destination cannot be budget-friendly. So, make sure to take extra money with you, you will need it. But the price will be justified as soon as you see the incredibly beautiful nature, the absence of corals and algae, and

the purest water. You will never regret your trip here and will want to come back.

The Coral Islands of Bora Bora in French Polynesia as if they came out of a fairy tale. It is also a very popular tourist route and, therefore, could be pricey. But these overwater houses and stunning views are worth every penny.

If in your dreams you run along the beach, where the sand is more like flour, then your path lies on the island of Boracay in the Philippines with a four-kilometre-long white sanded beach. It is public and anyone can visit it. But remember the rules of it: no drinking, eating, smoking, or messing there. My most mesmerizing sunset with the peaceful and tranquil water surface, warm sand, and an almost deserted shore was here.

Back to unusual places, Mexico has a beach that is located right inside the rock. And if you look at it from the side, it looks like a small heart. Think about the picture: the rays of the sun, the turquoise water, a rock that looks like a heart, the absence of people, and only small fish who accompany you.

Do you know what happens when you mix white sand, pieces of coral, and red shells? You will get a pinkish marshmallow shade. And if you go to the Bahamas, you can find yourself on a beach that looks just like that.

Or how about the picture of you in a swimwear under the scorching sun of South Africa, and penguins next to you? It is not a dream! Africa can surprise you with such a beach. This place is under protection to stop tourists from disturbing the local inhabitants. But you can stand aside and admire the incredible beach with its residents. They dive and emerge out of the ocean with the prey, make nests and, of course, watch you.

Do you love champagne? If yes, then you will also like Champagne Beach in Vanuatu. It has such a name for a reason: the volcanic rock emits a kind of gas, and it feels like you are bathing in champagne. Imagine yourself approaching the shore with huge black stones and champagne instead of water.

In my beloved Australia, there is a place with wild beaches called Kangaroo Island. You can walk there only in special goggles because sun rays, being reflected in the sand, can burn your eyes. Its sand is unique – it is used to polish silver. But for me, Cotteslow is the best beach, especially if you drink coffee at the Italian canteen Il Lido.

In England, you can find an unusual beach with a lot of fossils that look like the houses of ancient snails that left their shells here.

The Giant's Causeway in Northern Ireland comes to my mind next. When I think about this place, I have a special warm feeling, because it is associated with my visit to old lady Sheila. It seems that the Causeway Coast was created for people who prefer unusual beaches. Huge basalt columns, going straight into the sea, create an alien landscape, and therefore, the Giant's Causeway is under the protection of UNESCO.

Speaking of non-standard beaches, I cannot stay quiet about Glass Beach in California. At first, the story of its appearance seemed sad to me... For a long time, it served as a waste storage facility. But in the sixties, waste dumping became forbidden and the main garbage was taken away, leaving only glass. Time in union with the ocean has turned a bunch of splinters into small and beautiful pebbles that are now smooth and safe for humans.

Such a victory of nature and time over human mistakes. Go to the USA to see this wonderful place.

California also has another strange beach, which is covered with stones that look just like bowling balls, but larger than we are used to. I guess someone huge, who loved to play bowling, used to live in these parts.

Many beautiful arches and caves along the shores of the ocean are located in Spain and Portugal. Speaking about Spain, I would like to dedicate these lines to the waters of Valencia. Even though the infrastructure is not as developed as, for example, in Barcelona, and there are almost no people, you will want to walk around this area forever. If you love the ocean as much as I do, you admire the surf, ebbs and flows, you can enjoy the salty sea atmosphere for hours, and you trust the water with all your secrets, these places are where you need to go.

I always feel this unbreakable connection between my spiritual uplift and the proximity of the big water. Have you ever noticed that you feel calmer and fuller during the tides of the ocean? By the ocean, the creative abilities of people are revealed especially strongly, the spirit unites with the body, and water gives you harmony. I would say that our busy non-stop thinking brain switches off by the water, and we turn into the mode of saving energy and relaxation. Here, we are often overtaken by reverence for nature and its power, and at such moments, all you want is to think about the meaning of life and beauty, about the reason for humanity on this planet and what we will leave behind us.

I believe that whenever we turn to the help of computers, microwaves, iPads, or hair dryers, we lose a part of our energy.

And only big water, the ocean, can fill us up again. Try to remember what you feel when you run into the water. Isn't it some kind of wave of happiness? If we need to freshen up, we wash our face with cold water, and if we want to relax the muscles and relieve the body tension, we take a hot bath. When you feel that your vitality is depleted and you don't know what to do next, stop everything and run to the nearest seas and oceans. They will fill you with vital energy, help you find a way out of any situation, and make you happy.

Chapter 4. Travel and health

4.1 Improving health when travelling and awakening consciousness

Have you ever thought that our body is not eternal, and instead of supporting and protecting it, we are constantly wasting its resources? It sounds sad, but is true. Unfortunately, people start to think about these issues only when they get body aches and worrying symptoms more often.

I am sure, you all remember yourself at the age of eighteen, when we could walk around our beloved city or dance in clubs all night long, then go straight to the university, and perhaps, repeat it all the same evening. We seemed to be almighty with no fatigue or pain. And even if we had, for example, muscle soreness, our body had plenty of resources for a quicker recovery. But time flies, we are not getting any younger, and now, even if you go to bed half an hour later, you will feel it in the morning. One day, we all understand why our parents used to tell us to put a beanie or a coat on! They are wise people, and they already know everything about these physical changes. But we used to deny these demands, feeling completely healthy and unstoppable.

Not obvious, but a very good reason to start travelling is to improve your health. What do we have every day? A crazy city beat and bustle, the horns of passing cars, a flow of people, including us, rushing to work... Following social standards, we

take the next qualification courses a purpose of which, you will probably forget as soon as you finish it. The high pace of life is now a tag of desired success. In this race, we all strive to the old Olympic motto "Faster, Higher, Stronger"! It would be fine if not only a small but very important aspect – constant stress. We are not robots, and all the nerve cells that we spend on daily activities are gone forever. The list of diseases that appear through the nervous system is vast, but you can help your body. Travelling helps you to get rid of anxiety, fuss, and constant circle run.

We load our brains, and often, do not even notice how we receive anxiety. Walking down the streets, we absorb everything that happens around us: traffic noise, different voices, and many other sounds that keep our minds busy and stressed. Sometimes, we turn to sedatives, not thinking that most of them can be eliminated and minimized by various practices. And travelling is one of them.

We should take care of our body and help it by improving and healing it. Give your body time to relax, take it to a holiday away from the annoying irritants, and free up your mind. Change the environment, switch your phone off, and get rid of the unpleasant and unpredictable events of the routine.

Your body will physically feel the adventure and the wind of change. Well, technically, such a condition is also a stress. but scientists discovered that some of the stresses are healthy. By travelling, you allow your mind to experience something similar to euphoria. The same emotions that people receive from extreme sports, roller coasters, or horror films. No matter what you choose: a new hiking trail, an unusual way of travel, or a

beautiful landscape, you will shake up your body. And your brain will happily explore and study new environments. Everything that you will see, hear, and feel during the journey will improve your mindset. New circumstances and the escape from the daily routine will force your brain to adapt and absorb different experiences.

The non-standard situation in the journey will provoke your crucial sense to function actively. And believe me, it will not overload you. The holiday is the time when you don't have to jump out of bed at 6 a.m. or wake up at the same time from the phone call. You will have no time to check notifications about a new post from your friends or a tweet from celebrities. You don't need to rush to work, wading through the flow of people, traffic jams, and unpredictable weather conditions. Your brain will crave explorations and insights, receiving only useful information.

Being physically removed from your daily stressors gives your brain a chance to rest and develop. It starts to receive what is useful and isolates everything harmful. It will start counting steps that lead to the ocean, listen to the sound of the waves, and enjoy the water surface. You will finally have time to walk barefoot on the sand and let your brain perceive the moment fully to remember it. As if taking your body to the spa, pamper yourself with travelling.

4.2 Improving life quality with impressions

Like shifting sands, the number of daily tasks and events drag us down, and I am convinced that this comes from a lack of impressions. But have you ever thought that impressions can inspire us and awaken our taste for life?

Imagine a youngster who spends every weekend in nightclubs and doesn't have any interesting hobbies that would develop his mind and expand his horizons. Can you see where I am going with it? This lifestyle is about stable rules and habits that make every day like the previous one. I understand that such a Groundhog Day might be a safe comfort zone for someone who does not require any development. When you are still young and have no experience, it will feel like something new. But if such development is not fueled by anything, then it soon will become a routine. And the older we get, the more we succumb to this routine and the more persistently we should support a craving for adventure. I believe that the new impressions that you can get from travelling can become a powerful kick towards the development of the personality.

In addition to standard life, there is another danger... The desire to travel for emotions, which seemed so obvious twenty years ago, is becoming less distinct. Now, we can live hundreds of different lives and see millions of places, including in real-time... Yes, I am talking about the Internet. The global network as a huge source of collective memory has become our new reality. I agree, this reality has a lot of benefits, but at the same time, brings a lot of irreparable harm to our activity.

The Internet is the comfort zone, where we can watch the outside world by just pressing one button. You don't even have to get up from your sofa or look outside the window to see the colour of the leaves or if they are still on trees. If you are bored and don't want to hear about the big political agenda, you can always watch hundreds and thousands of shows about somebody who is looking for love or other funny series, where people live

their lives. And it turns out that we don't have to step out of our comfortable place anymore.

Don't get me wrong, having a good time with our loved ones and being able to stay alone with ourselves or with our favourite sitcom characters is an important part of our routine. But let's think about how many hours of your lifetime you would want to spend watching others, and how many hours you would want to live your life. Why don't you devote more time to yourself and just go see the world with your own eyes? It is important to separate your curiosity focused on love stories and the statuses of your friends on social media from the desire to experience this life for yourself.

Remember how little you needed to be happy as a child. A yummy chocolate, a walk with friends on a warm summer day... These are the emotions that travelling can give you now. Memories from trips will find their place in your heart and will change the quality of your life.

I sometimes hear people saying that for new experiences, you don't need to travel, and all you need is money, which, of course, is a useful part of travelling. But, along with the Internet and TV, they will not give you the opportunity to experience something new. In addition, the active process of earning money can deprive you of a fair amount of mental and physical health. And this is how we are getting trapped into a vicious circle: working hard, getting ill, spending money on doctors. At the end of this round, you start asking yourself about the reason for money making. Travelling is one of the ways of healing souls and bodies. One very elderly lady that visited Paris once, told me her story of healing her heart not only with medications but also with

memories. She was constantly thinking about returning there, and she did. This is what I call therapeutic emotions.

A walk through any of the cities of Europe will warm you and give you strength after many years even if it was raining at that moment. Neither weather conditions nor other circumstances can prevent you from enjoying the beauty of architecture, nature, and traditions. I would compare it to the first childhood impressions, when you used to be completely open to something new and never really had ready solutions for everything, making quick decisions.

There are plenty of other connections between our childhood and travelling. We can help our favourite fairy tales become true. For example, Disney cartoons with the glowing logo? Did you know that Cinderella's Castle was created by Walt Disney, and was recreated in all Disneyland's? Later, travelling around the planet, I found out that Walt Disney created it inspired by the Bavarian Neuschwanstein castle that he visited in Germany. We all need to believe in a miracle and understand that here and now our life is beautiful. Seeing that castle in reality felt like touching the fairy tale. And you have the power to revive this fairy tale too!

Receiving positive impressions, we receive joy. I always remember my first trip to Australia, where I could meet kangaroos everywhere. I cannot describe my emotions! There are a lot of places in the city where kangaroos move around without enclosures, and you can approach them and even try to pet them gently. Of course, you should always keep in mind that these cuties can stand up for themselves, and you may miss a right hook if you move too fast or don't make contact with them.

Choosing between a museum and breakfast with an interesting animal, I always take the second. Of course, any type of travel is great, and I certainly love museums and consider them to be the most important points on the map for anyone who wants to broaden their horizons through art. But in my personal rating of experiences, breakfast with a red panda takes a special place. It is something totally different from, for example, a magnet from the Louvre and you can't take it with you. Also, by telling people about the feeding animal, you will not prove that you were there. But it doesn't mean you missed something because these emotions will stay in your heart. We become holistic and less and less eager to prove something to someone. This is another useful and great quality that you acquire. You become a strong person who doesn't need to confirm anything.

For me, a new experience is a new me. It is a knowledge that you will not receive in school. Because if you are lucky, you will have a very good teacher who will do his best to give you the most information about his subject, but most of the knowledge, we get from books.

My favourite teacher at school helped me to fall in love with literature. With genuine interest, I used to plunge into the worlds of novels and stories of classics. But those were the experiences and lives of the people who wrote the books, not mine. Later, hoping to get my own experience, I went on my first trip.

Journeys help you to learn, grow, and change. And the most important is that you become a new person with a bigger baggage of experience, impressions, and emotions, and there is

no limit to that. You will become a more liberated, open, and interesting person to talk with or to tell stories.

During the trips, we are constantly drawn to start something new, for example, learning to paint or writing books. The holiday is the time for opportunities because you start realizing that your brain has plenty of time to think. An unusual environment allows you to receive new experiences and transform your mindset. When I started travelling, I was working in show business and, even if writing books was on my list, it was not that close. But travelling, I've got a motivation for self-development and I realized that I want to share the stories that I've heard and witnessed. I now have seven books (eight, with the one you reading now), and I can say that my trips gave me the opportunity to become a new person and change my profession and personality.

4.3 Travelling with health care

When we talk about travel as a source of health, I have to tell you about the places on the planet that have become significant for me personally. There I managed to restore my health and gain strength for new achievements. The Blue Lagoon in Iceland comes to mind first. Amazing place with outstanding nature. There, for the first time in my life, I experienced a spa treatment in springs with mineralized hot water at a temperature of forty degrees.

Imagine a large and open space around you, while your body is inside the hot water and your head can still feel the chill. You are relaxed and looking at the haze above the water. Winter cold and hot springs give you an indescribable sensation. Everything

is wonderful in this process – the way your body feels, the emotions that overtake you, and the benefits for your health.

We all know for sure that the resources of our body are finite, but the good news is that we can fill them up or at least save them for longer. The stock of energy is like a battery that has a limit, and whenever you feel like a squeezed lemon, exhausted, and sleepy, book your flights and go towards your health before you are completely discharged. Go to the places that can replenish your energy supply.

I agree that you can find ways to fool your immune system and pretend to rehabilitate your body. Even your home can surely keep you in action. But sooner or later, you will need more time to restore, and this will be the right moment to go somewhere where you can spend time with benefits for body and soul.

There are many options for wellness travelling. The most proven and obvious ones are curative mud and hot springs. Visiting such an unusual part as Blue Lagoon is a great opportunity to experience the synergy between the place, time, and you. Once you feel it, you will be unstoppable on your way to exploring our beautiful planet.

Budapest has a very interesting medical spa center. A whole resort of Budapest baths inside huge buildings is a large space with pools, bathtubs, jacuzzis, and relaxation areas. Everything is filled with mineral water.

Let's be honest. How often do you meditate in your daily life? Or how many times have you started doing this? I think we all have that experience when we plan to start meditating, running, or a diet this coming Monday or next month... But then we can't find the time, opportunity, or space for them. In addition,

meditation requires quite a lot of willpower, and most of the time, it is hard to conduct practices, even if we approach the issue with all responsibility and find an excellent teacher or centre. For example, I often feel that I need to do this, I even have time and space after the gym, but I always find plenty of reasons to not do it. The wrong atmosphere, a lot of people, and so on... The truth is that if our body gets at least some of our attention, our mind and soul have been postponed all the time. If you feel that you need such care, many places on the planet will never let you leave as the same person. Meditation is a natural way to get rid of the stream of thoughts that buzz in your head and prevent you from focusing on the most important things.

When travelling, you are often left alone with yourself. All the husks, inconveniences, and stereotypes fade into the backseat, which helps you to understand what you need. You hear your body and realize what it wants to say. You can even talk to yourself and God.

Don't shrug off other bodily practices. I think I could write a whole novel about the strength, energy, and health that massage, for example, Thai massage, can give you. And again, it's another opportunity to study a country through its cultural specifics. Do you remember the last time you had a runny nose, headache, fever, or stomach cramps? Do you also remember what you felt when you recovered? When nothing hurts you, you are healthy and filled with energy, your thoughts are clear and you become more creatively active.

Arenal is a place in Costa Rica with beautiful volcanic springs. Imagine being surrounded by an entirely green space with bizarre plants and a fresh atmosphere, and you are descending

directly to the water through a real tropical paradise. I believe that we can gain energy and discover new possibilities in ourselves from nature. Plunging into a volcanic spring, you saturate your body with strength. This place, from where you can see a city nearby and discover additional resources to improve your body, fits the description of nature in a wonderful adventure.

I am sure that many of you heard about the Japanese bathing culture that is called onsen. This type of recreation is very popular in Japan, and you can find them not only in big cities but in little villages as well. Onsen is a very hot mineralized water, entering which, you get rid of all bad thoughts, troubles, and clamps. But if you have a tattoo on your body, you are not allowed in.

Much has already been written and said about the special healing power of the Dead Sea, but it is impossible to ignore this point on the map when talking about travelling. Beautiful Israel and the healing specifics of salty water. It is worth visiting this place to see how scratches and wounds on your body heal with the power of salt. But that's just one of the bonus. The Dead Sea can rightly be considered a real miracle! Imagine going into the sea and not drowning, because salty water pushes you up. A completely different feeling than in the ocean. This is a fantastic place on earth that will improve your health and break the usual stereotypes...

When we travel to other countries to restore our health, we take care of our body and spirit. New physical sensations allow you to feel your body, and every cell in it will be very grateful for your attention. You will certainly want to discover more. Maybe

new body wraps, massages, scrubs, and practices. In addition, this is a good way to get in touch with history, a chance to feel like Duma, Pushkin, or Paterson, because many great people knew that health needed to be replenished, and they regularly went to hot springs and mineral waters, taking care of their bodies. Even in the modern world, one of the true signs of wealth and wellness is the ability to take care of your body and be physically healthy.

Travelling is an investment in yourself. Good rest, health, physical endurance, and resistance to negative stress. As a door for creative energy and freedom, permission to be healthy and conscious, and an opportunity to be an architect of your own life. I highly recommend you think about your health right now, because many people realize the value of it only after serious occasions.

Did you already realize that one of the goals of this book is self-acceptance and self-love? We often feel that we are not good enough, not smart enough, not healthy enough, or not thin enough according to the standards that are accepted in the society we live. I do not insist you give up these beliefs, but I urge you to simply start taking care of the body that already exists, and get to the idea that this body is the only body you have and it has limits. As long as you are healthy, you can overcome absolutely any external circumstances of this world. Shift your focus from external factors towards yourself, and you will enjoy the results.

4.4 Places of strength and pilgrimage

Do you know anything about the place of strength on the planet, where, according to legend, live the descendants of

Noah? I'm sure you do. That mountain is depicted on the coat of arms of the country, the marvels of which I am going to talk about now. As you probably already understood, it is Armenia. Geographically, Mount Ararat belongs to the territory of Turkey, but the most beautiful views of it open from Armenia. And I fell in love with it...

For me, places of strength are not always associated with religion, esotericism, or the common encyclopedia of miracles. My places of strength are the points on the map where I get energy and inspiration for the exploits, the most interesting projects and ideas in my brain. There, you can think of something deep. When I first saw Ararat, I wanted to bow to this mountain and its greatness. It is a very powerful place not only for those who live near the mountain, but for everyone who comes to Armenia to look at this miracle, admire this place, and even climb it.

There are many such sources of energy on the planet, and, of course, everyone has their own list of the best ones. I will only talk about those that have become sacred to me. One of these places is Easter Island with its idols, about which I already wrote in the *Crystal Cities* book. Those idols appeared out of nowhere and nobody knows who created them and when. At that supposed time, it was physically impossible to create such majestic figures that look into the distant ocean. When I visited these giants on the island in Chile, it seemed to me that they were looking right into my soul. And looking at them, I realized how phenomenally powerful this place is, and how mysterious and endless is the universe. It was very difficult to get there, and the driver, who was a guide helping me explore the island at the

same time, told me everything about the many miracles that happened there. I even witnessed a few of them! One day, he turned off the ignition and we got out onto the road, but the car continued its way. Or a stone that against the sun and the laws of physics, was very cold on one side and hot on the other.

In Prague, looking at the castle in Vysehrad, which is located above the Vltava, you may think that there is nothing special, but there is... They hide the tombs of famous Czechs. Walking through these gardens, buildings, surroundings, and the landscape of the Vltava below fills me with strength and broadens my horizons.

Many of us believe that certain places on the planet have magical powers. Think about sacraments and rituals that used to be held one hundred or five hundred years ago. Some important and regular secret events are now revealed. People shared their energy with these places for a very long time and now, they are filled with knowledge and memories of generations. Most of these locations are hard to get, and they are not always about the phenomenon of nature. Monuments, landscapes, caves... They accumulate energy over time, and if you travel to such places, you can notice that over the years some of them become more powerful, while others, on the contrary, lose their strength and gradually fall asleep.

I believe that to find places of strength, ancient people used to look at the stellar order of the planets in the solar system, and then they designated them in every possible way – labyrinths, temples, gardens, and even cities. But eras succeed each other, destroying all of the tangible, and the power of these places fades away. Now, with the fact that much has been lost, destroyed, or

fallen into decay – including communication with the world and space – the balance is disturbed and negative energy is raging. We can all see an increase in cataclysms, fires, and other natural disasters, and I think the reason for this imbalance is the loss of connection between these places and people. We should care and respect the sources that we visit to replenish our internal energy. It is important to be grateful to these places and give a piece of the beauty that we have. As a mutual process – you go there to nourish and recover a little and give some of your strength and love to these places. The universal law of exchange.

If such a place receives love and gratitude from people, it becomes not only powerful but sacred. Look at an incredibly strong holy city for all Christians Jerusalem. When a particular corner absorbs many energy messages of believers, then a whole city can become a place of strength. Another example of sacredness is the Egyptian pyramids. They have a strict shape and proportions, and, of course, there was a reason why they were installed at the places that were indicated by astrologers and ancient architects. Everyone should visit such places because if you believe in them and treat them with deep respect, you will be able to discover new opportunities and abilities of your mind and body.

Of course, before you go to such a source, you should prepare yourself. No, not in terms of physical endurance or conscious request for the place. It's about the circumstances that brought you here. For example, a pilgrimage to special places on the planet is often recommended to be accompanied by a diet or fasting, preliminary meditative preparation, and the rejection of unhealthy habits. No matter which place of strength you choose,

it will start to influence you even before you arrive there, and its energy will certainly stay with you after. For me, it seems reasonable to try to come to the most stable, calm, and filled state to get the full depth of the moment. Magic may not happen if you are hostile, irritable, and aggressive. The world belongs to those who are open to it, and the Universe hears us and reciprocates. Therefore, if you want to receive everything that the earth and universe are ready to give you in this particular place of the planet, grab this opportunity and bring your mind and soul into an open state and set yourself to receptivity.

Don't stop looking for your places of strength. It can be a little garden in your hometown or any point on the map. Just one little and obvious secret: to feel its power, to see the light, to remember the smells and colours, you have to be at this place. And when you find it, do everything you can to make energy exchange between you happen.

Sintra, a town in Portugal, gave me the greatest impression on me in terms of energy and strength. Walking around the foggy city streets, I felt like I was in the magical forest. Rising higher towards the castle, with each step, I felt how fear, resentment, negative thoughts, and heaviness were retreating, giving me peace instead.

I was not planning to write about Sintra... You can already find so much information about it, but then I remembered that I learned about it from the reviews of other travellers. Sintra is different for everyone. And here we are, I will share my Sintra with you.

Reading reviews of Sintra, I imagined a magical place. So, at first, the plan was to go there for a few days, but once I was in

Lisbon with Eurovision, I decided it was a great time and opportunity. After all, I can always go there again if I want. But I never wanted to go back. Not because I didn't like it! I just didn't want to repeat the same impressions, because the first ones were the most powerful.

From Lisbon to Sintra you can get by train from the Rossio station, which is located in the city centre. The journey takes about forty, and trains are leaving every thirty minutes. As soon as I stepped onto the platform, I felt breathtakingly fresh air, which was especially sweet in the early morning.

If you find yourself in Portugal and want to be surrounded by hills that are overgrown with dense greenery, if you want to see the ocean from the tops of the hills, and breathe-eat-drink its fresh air every day, settle in Sintra.

Historical reference. Once, these hills used to be covered with coniferous forests. But in the 19th century, the owner of the Pena Palace – King Ferdinand, competing with the English merchant magnate Cook who bought the estate of Montserrat, ordered to plant palm trees, bamboo, and araucaria on the slopes of the hills. Ferdinand was a dreamy person who loved nature. He used to paint and wanted a beautiful garden no worse than the botanical garden created by an Englishman. Due to the humid and warm climate, exotic plants have grown a lot, crowding out the local flora. This is how the slopes of the Sierra da Sintra were covered with tropical plants next to the old coniferous forest.

With its wonderful parks and estates, Sintra sunk into my soul imminently and forever. And the fog that welcomed me in the city on my first arrival, added mysticism and harmony to the riot of green colours.

From this chapter, you learned that travel is an integral source of strength and health. We need to look for our own points on the map that nourish and inspire us. But for this, you need to go beyond your comfort zone and try new things. I am sure you will find the places that will saturate and energize you. Look everywhere! Near your cities and on the other side of the world.

Part 4. Coming back home

Chapter 1. Leave to find yourself

1.1 What we take from travels

Stepping into the final part of this book, I would like to summarize the experience that travelling has given me and can give you. As you already understand, my vision of travel consists of visits to all the places that surround us. For sure, a quiet beach holiday will teach you something really important, but in my system of values, beaches are for relaxation only. First of all, travelling is about exploring our planet and ourselves, including the capabilities of our body.

On the one hand, my travelling has a rather simple goal, but on the other hand, it is a very deep philosophy. I travel to become a better person. I take it as an excellent education. The most obvious one is languages. You have probably heard a million times that if you want to improve your skills, then the best way is to go to native speakers and their environment. Years in schools or with private tutors cannot compare to three months of living in a country. Learning a language there, you will hear its pronunciation and rhythm. It will settle much more densely in your head because it will be the knowledge that you gain practically. If you set a goal to learn a language and travel to a country where it is spoken, you can easily cope with this task and get an unforgettable experience of immersion in another environment.

You will open your heart to the world. I don't think anyone would spend all the time in a hotel. You will go outside, talk to people, and study the area and customs. Looking at the lives of citizens of another country, you will change. If at the beginning, you know only one or maybe a couple of options for life development, travelling, you will see additional opportunities and other ways to live and be happy. You will love the world and gain inner freedom.

How many fears accompany us every day!? When we go on a trip, the number of them multiply by three. We do not know the language, we are not oriented in the area at all, and the locals of the country are probably not as friendly as it was written in the guidebook. And I agree that these thoughts are the strongest reasons for our rational rejection of travelling, because the brain's defense system decided that a stable state is the safest way of life, and the most important thing in this chaotic world is to remain stable. Well, travelling is a way to face your fears and laugh them in the face.

The most effective way to get rid of worries and phobias is to plunge into them and go through all the trials. To come out of them as winners, to look down on them and understand that they are not so terrifying. I always knew that hot air balloons were not my type of adventure, but at the same time, I understood that if I wanted to see the Valley of Golden Pagodas in Burma, I had to overpower my fear. And the result impressed me! It became one of the most exciting journeys in my collection.

For a long time, I was also afraid of helicopters, because, in my brain, they are small and unreliable. But, getting over myself for the first time in Chile, I realized the beauty of this event. If I

had not opened my heart to this fear, I would never have had the chance to touch the clouds and see our planet from a bird's eye view. I was also lucky to have a pilot with a fantastic sense of humour. At some point, he flew over the mountain ice cap, as if pricking the ice with the blades. Well, this fun part helped me to overcome my fear.

Somewhere, travelling will teach you to take risks. And this story is not about going to a Las Vegas casino to put all your money on one number. You must understand that any situation has a certain risk. What I am saying is that travelling will change you, and teach you how to react correctly to different events. But it will not work until you are ready for the changes.

You will learn to appreciate and love what you have at home. Sometimes, when we watch the news or movies on TV, it seems that people's life on the other side of the world is better than ours. But believe me, our home is not as bad as you may think. Once you find yourself somewhere else and look around, you will see that each country and city also has many problems, and not all residents of this state are absolutely happy. You will compare and find the positive and negative sides of both countries, yours and the other. You will gain an incredibly useful skill that will help you to love your home and find good in places, where you appear to be. You will even realize that your little sisters are not as annoying as you thought, and your parents love you all equally.

Travelling around our planet, I realized how much I love it. Our world is wonderful! I am not trying to hide and protect myself from it. I trust the world and understand that it is beautiful. Some places have delicious food, while somewhere it is

disgusting. Some countries are full of rich people, while others are drowned in poverty. Somewhere people are friendly, while in the neighborhood, they are gloomy. But let's say, I never thought that my trip to Africa would end up with the insect bite. These conclusions depend only on you, and if you are open and friendly, then the world will respond to you in return.

Another important lesson that I learned from travelling is the understanding that doesn't matter if I am alone or with a company, I am comfortable. This applies not only to the journeys but to everyday life as well. I am incredibly grateful for all my travels to be an open person who sees good in everything and everyone around me. I also realized that exploring the world is a lifestyle and a way of education.

Solo travelling has taught me to make quick decisions. Many situations can happen to you – your flight was cancelled, no one met you at the airport, your hotel reservation disappeared, you got poisoned, or you were left alone with a wild animal... And when you move alone, you realize that you can rely only on yourself. I remember the moment in a native reserve in Africa, when, protecting her baby, an elephant was moving towards a small car with me in it. At such moments you understand that you have to do something. You weigh the risks and make a decision: run out into the open space of the reserve full of wild animals, stay in the car, or find a third way. And this is exactly what you do if you are travelling alone. You never forget such stories, they stay in your head as a knowledge base, helping to react more calmly to other emergencies. My experience has been supporting me a lot, and I can quickly make decisions in various unexpected cases.

I have one special journey in my chest of stories. It was a trip to Greenland. When travelling by ship, sometimes, you have the opportunity to land by a little boat. To avoid conflict situations between annoying tourists and polar bears who do not have time to communicate with them, huntsmen move to the shore first, as they already know how to act with the local inhabitants. They check if everything is clear from the white predators for the rest of the team to land.

Me and my mate **Mikhail Zarubin** were travelling with a group of seven people and were already heading towards the coast. At some point, Mikhail called me, saying that he could see a polar bear in the distance. At first, I didn't believe him, but he insisted that the bear was sleeping there. Fine! I put a telephoto lens on my camera, and looking at the gorgeous landscape, I reached the point where my mate was saying... It was a real polar bear, and he was waking up from the noise of our group. This is what you call an emergency. You should have seen the eyes of the guide when we told him about it! It was hard for him to believe us, but then he looked at my camera... All I remember is panic and screams that everyone must get into the rubber boats immediately, and slow elderly men, turning into snow leopards, jumped into the boats faster than anyone else. That moment I just realized that I wasn't even panicking, I came to the conclusion that if the bear wanted to catch me, he would do it no matter if I ran or not. So, I just decided to move more carefully, managing to take photos on the way.

Here I must say, that not a single animal or human was injured during the landing, boating, and shooting. That day, understanding the proximity of a wild and dangerous creature, I

once again, learned to trust myself and listen to my intuition, not to panic in any non-standard situation, and catch the moments with my camera. The rest of the day on the ship, we spent looking at photos from this incredible event.

Travelling, I realized that I don't need much for comfort, which made my life easier. When you constantly hit the road, dragging your big bulky suitcase, you suddenly understand that you don't need ten T-shirts. One is enough! An expensive cruise often brings disappointment, while a trip on a small cozy ship can be more exciting. I realized that we often buy stuff not out of necessity, but because of the desire to possess them. After I started travelling, I made a habit of giving my friends or just away those things that I hadn't touched or used for a year. I now have only what I really need.

Having seen a lot of pictures of incredible European architecture or African atmosphere, you probably waiting for something amazing that will take your breath away. But sometimes, arriving at the place, you will see no animals because they hiding or the waterfall has dried up, and the cathedral you wanted to visit is closed for restoration. Sadly, no one is protected from disappointments. But even from such events, you can learn a couple of important lessons: do not expect too much and do not plan your entire holiday on one thing. Accept places and situations as they are. And believe me, if this canyon did not impress you as much as you expected, then something special is waiting for you next. Or if it took you five hours in a dusty bus on a bumpy road to get to the lake that turned out to have nothing similar to the pictures you saw on the Internet, calm down and smile. Think about flocks of storks you've seen on the way here,

an unimaginable sunset or extraordinary flowers, the existence of which you had never guessed before. Focus on the miracle that you can now see around you.

With the help of travelling, I overcame many fears and tried things that I would not even think about in my ordinary life. I took care of ill people, supported injured animals, and stopped being afraid of wild animals that I would never have approached before. My brain remembers the whole kaleidoscope of events – from night walks in New York to trips to the abandoned corners of the oceans; from sorrowful Fukushima or Chernobyl to crossing canyons by car and climbing various mountains. All these numerous adventures have undoubtedly made me a better person. Travels changed me from an ordinary teenager to a man of the world, who smiles at it and easily starts a conversation on absolutely any topic.

I have learned to adapt to almost any situation: a hurricane in Chile, severe weather, flight cancellations, visa denials, difficult journeys, poisoning, and the list is endless. A very serious skill that would be handy to any person on the planet.

I also understood why is it so important for students to have a gap year after high school. It gives youngsters a prospect to find out what they want to do with their life next. I would even add one more year and kick them out to wander Australia, Africa, and Latin America with a backpack. Over this time, a person will learn a lot, no matter alone or with a team. When thoughts are in order, it is easier to start studying and choose a life path. And travelling helps you to understand what you like the most.

Sometimes, you will be dragged far from home, and it will be a perfect time to realize who you are. And after a few trips, you will

accept other people's customs and traditions. Understanding someone else's way of life, you will save what is dear to your heart.

Should I mention that travels pump your brain and intellect? You constantly get new information, and you live and learn about people, places, and the world itself. And spiritual development and the ability to live here and now make you happier.

And, probably, the most valuable thing that I managed to learn from travelling is that it doesn't matter where you go, the most important is what you can do to create a comfortable atmosphere around you. Sometimes, to feel good, it is not necessary to travel far away. Drive outside the city on a warm summer night, walk along a small path to a large field, breathe in the air with a full chest, and feel contentment.

Our world is already comfortable and pleasant, it is all about what we see in it. You can fly anywhere, but if you are not happy with yourself, you will not see the magic, even if you are in Chile or Peru. You must find harmony to feel this overarching happiness. I would compare it to reading books. Some of them you can read overnight, while others are hard to perceive. But after a few attempts, you still take the hard one in your hands and by the end, understand that it was worth it. Everything and every place has its time. Travel not to escape, but to open your heart to the world and yourself.

Away from home, I have learned to appreciate communication with relatives and friends without being disturbed by gadgets. I have learned to listen and am very happy when they listen to me. I began to take more care of my health, negotiate with my brain, and take my body to the gym because a good physical shape

gives better perspectives when travelling. After the trip to Armenia, where I went to massage and realised that my body is like a rigid sheet of iron, I started to go to My All Yoga for pilates. You won't believe it, but this story has a great continuation. Four years later, I went to the same sauna in Armenia again. But this time, my body twisted and stretched in absolutely any direction without any discomfort. Isn't it another reason to be proud of my perseverance? Taking care of my body and head came to me precisely on trips. The tradition of taking care of my body and head started on my trips. Since then, I started to walk regularly, spend less time on the Internet, do cultural exploration in my beloved city, and visit new interesting exhibitions in galleries and art spaces.

I have learned to cook and, of course, eat delicious food. Food is like an art! I now often invite friends to parties and cook for them. And I don't need a reason for that. We are alive, healthy, and young. I want people that I love to smile more often.

Such small lessons, and sometimes even habits, are now settled in my life. They were appearing gradually, growing and developing with me. During one of my trips, I gave up drinking sweet soda and sugar. I realized how tasty tea and coffee can be without unnecessary additives. I started drinking herbal teas. At some point, I was practicing vegetarian food, and since then, don't eat fatty meat. I am not a heavy boozier. Of course, you can do it all without travelling, but believe me, in journeys, this transformation takes place smoother and faster.

Our life is a path and constant work on the soul and body. My every day is mindful, and I have learned to appreciate what I have. As a child, I looked at the nature of my beloved city as

something normal, but when I started travelling, I couldn't stop falling in love with it. All my habits from meditation and a glass of water with lemon to treating cities and oceans as living creatures evolved from my travels. These habits have made me who I am and I think they will stay with me for the rest of my life.

During my journeys, I realized how necessary it is for me to bring joy and help people. They taught me to respect other religions and teachings, it can be Confucianism or Judaism – I will want to understand it and perhaps, see the world from its point of view. If you suddenly realise that you want, for example, to be a clay master, do it! Or if you decide that you will be a great electrician, go for it! You never know how good you are in a certain area until you try.

1.2 Travel as an investment in yourself

Have you ever thought about the benefits that you received in school after kilometres of lines of essays and sleepless nights before exams and tests? Did it help you find a dream job? Did you pick the right direction and in your place now? I believe that the best education is the practical experience that we get by studying the world.

Watching local television in different countries, I often found myself thinking that my opinion was somehow formed by the efforts of other journalists. Unfortunately, their main professional quality is not always objectivity, and the presentation of the evening news, as a rule, is jumbled by the emotions of the person who reads it. And again, travelling around the world, I started to understand economic scenarios,

the social environment, and political processes to form my personal opinion.

All the countries present news from the point of view that is beneficial for their territory. I always strive to understand everything by myself, to clarify the important moments to construct my own opinion. I don't want to blindly trust TV or other news portals, same as sometimes, I don't want to get to the bottom of accusations and excuses. But I want to know what people on the streets and in hotels think about this news. I try to hear what people who are actually affected by this issue think. I do not always trust those who are carefully selected by producers and casting directors of TV corporations.

There is another funny sequence that would be better perceived while travelling than through educational films. How often have you heard stories about a person becoming a vegetarian after taking a tour to the meatpacking plant? I've heard them several times in my life. Same with environmental issues. You may not notice garbage and unreasonable consumption habits until you get to Bangladesh. Where you will see faded leaves on the trees not because of the heat, but because of the pollution in the air. Then you begin to think about how we can and should help nature.

A man becomes a man not after the first physical contact, but when he realizes responsibility for his parents and loved ones. The same happens when you travel. At some point, you get more responsibilities and you start seeing the piles of garbage floating down the rivers. That makes you use less plastic and water and you clean the places you have visited or stayed overnight somewhere on the prairies of Africa. Conscious habits acquired

while travelling make us humans, individuals, and someone who will someday raise children or, returning home, will bring something new to the lives of friends and relatives.

Meeting people in need, you will feel more compassion than empathy for any character from the book. To improve this feeling, Africa is undoubtedly the place to go, especially its western regions. People live in poverty here, they don't have normal food or the necessary amount of clean water. At such moments, you understand that you have won the biggest lottery called life, and you will want to help them. I've got myself ready to go to this region. Packed some clothes, rice, grains, cereals, and stationery for school. Although I would not call them school but a small room where kids are learning to write and read. At such moments, you understand that human life is very valuable, and I want to help and support them!

Travelling to different countries is much more effective than a map and a geography lesson in the classroom. Seeing the world with your own eyes, you will be able to tell about it more interestingly than just pointing at the countries on the map. Of course, in addition to important information, geography teaches us to navigate the place better, but again, I think travelling will make this process quicker. We all got used to our phones and it seems that our brain doesn't have to remember a large amount of information anymore. But what if your phone is dead, broken, stolen, or drowned under mysterious circumstances in the ocean? Will you be able to handle the situation and get in the right direction on the subway? This is my super skill from travelling – I feel confident in any place in any case.

Not a single educational institution in the world will reveal your potential that will help you find your calling. During my trips, I often met people, who asked me to optimize the SEO of their websites, and I realized that I'm pretty good at understanding how the internet works and can easily deal with any new feature. So, deciding that it is never too late to study, I applied for a network engineering master's degree. The Internet is the future, and I strive to learn something that will help me plunge into travel again. I can develop a community on any social media, create a personal group, and help a company or individual build their personal brand.

It doesn't matter what kind of superpower you will find in yourself: perhaps, you are fantastic at playing the ukulele or you are great at mixing and shaking fancy cocktails. Developing these skills will give you additional opportunities.

Maybe you know how to cook something amazing. You can pass on your skills to the locals. No matter what it is, travel will help you gain confidence in your abilities. Let's say someone knows how to bring anybody into its best shape in six months, someone plays various musical instruments, someone can repair anything... Each of us has such strengths and predispositions. And if you travel around the world, you will see how you can be useful to other people.

I know that every second employer mentions stress resistance in the job description, but how many students can puff that? Travelling is an activity that teaches you to control any situation. Firstly, after real stressful situations, you learn not to panic and understand that there is always a way out of the circumstances. Secondly, with this approach, you do not react to small issues as

problems at all, they simply do not reach the threshold of your anxiety. And as another bonus of educational effect, you can pass your experience to others.

None of the exact and natural sciences classes will show you a robot cashier in supermarkets. But a trip to Tokyo will allow you to see them. If you want to balance the wave of demand and interest, then travelling will help you with this. You will know all the latest innovations that are introduced in the world, and you will be able to come up with a worthy implementation of them. Since you are getting flexible and sharp in perception, you will always be creative, which, cannot be invented by any machine or adopted by any neural network. During your journeys, you will gain so many skills that not a single robot or computer can compete with you.

Moving around the planet, I realized that there is still a lot to learn. For example, my older brother is a sailor and I wanted to try sailing on a ship as a real skipper or as a sailor who is a part of a supportive team. Like a small childhood anchor, I want to see his life from the inside.

Exploring the country is not only about nature and people, it is also about food. I must be honest with you, gastronomic hedonism has always attracted me as something secret and cherished. Self-discovery through gastronomy while travelling is an additional octave in the range for your fateful symphony. A rare person on the planet will tell you that they do not enjoy eating. Think about the most delicious food that you had on your trips... Is it a real Italian carbonara or pizza? Maybe fresh salad or moussaka? Japanese bento or rolls? I think it's important to learn how to cook your favourite food by yourself.

You can start your journey by cooking at home. You ask me how? Just try to make a breakfast or dinner that is typical for the country you are dreaming about. Very often my breakfasts anticipate the cuisine of the country where I am going to go. For example, my favourite Australian breakfast is a warm toast with a crispy crust, topped with slices of avocado and ripe tomato with fresh lightly smoked salmon or an egg. Before my first trip here, this set was not typical for me, but I still wanted to learn how to cook it. Previously, the peak of my culinary skills was a well-defined recipe for apple pie and homemade potatoes. I remember these recipes and can cook them blindly. What about Sacher? No need to wait for a trip to Vienna to understand what it tastes like, bake it at home.

Cuisine of different parts of the world is not just a delicious hobby, cooking brings people together. When you arrive in another country, your culinary talent will come in handy. You can introduce the locals of another country to a meat pie. After all, food is a language, so stop thinking that you don't know how to cook. The food that has been common to you since childhood can be truly exotic for a resident of another country.

Culinary is a vast field of imagination and creativity. You can learn how to cook the most delicious recipes from different countries. For example, in the Caribbean, you will learn how to cook an unforgettable fish, while after visiting Japan, you will be able to assemble a perfect kawaii bento box.

Since I am familiar with many cuisines of the world, I perhaps can say what I like to eat the most, but it is hard to say which one is my favourite. For me, food, whether preparing or eating, is a whole philosophy, following which, I have acquired an additional

taste for life through the taste preferences of different people. Now, when I try something new, I always analyze the ingredients, for example, the sauce that was used for my salad dressing. By tasting and smelling, I try to imagine where these fruits and vegetables came from. As if going through the meditative process, you will start to hear your body for what it wants, what it likes, and what is useful for it. I learned this through my travels. And you have all the luck to start here and now while reading this book or having a cup of coffee.

In Ayurveda, food is considered the main pillar of the whole life. And for me, food is energy. But if you constantly put unnecessary food into your stomach, it will break your life. Love, fear, anger, and kindness – all of the processes of our lives are reflected in what we eat. Therefore, it is important to learn how to cope with this energy correctly, and how to consume and prepare it with our own hands with care and love. My advice is if you want to eat something that does not fit into your diet, do it. But let yourself enjoy the process.

The ability to listen to myself, including in my relationship with food, came to me when I started travelling. Some people, going through a hard time, comfort themselves with cake, ice cream, or junk food. But by comforting our minds in this way, we overstuff our body. Therefore, when you feel upset, start with eating your regular food. Perhaps, it's not crisps you want, but a warm and spicy pumpkin soup.

Why do I talk about this in the context of travel? Well, when you travel, you often can't get the food that you used to, so, you have to think about what you really want.

You probably heard the phrase: "The way to a man's heart is through his stomach". And here's a little secret for you: a man who can cook deliciously and is not afraid of the kitchen will charm any woman with this talent.

1.3 Travel to meet your destiny

No point in denying that we all want the same thing: to be happy and loved. So, why not travel increasing your chances of finding a soul mate? We need people who will be with us in sorrow and joy, who will travel with us, support and protect us. All we need is love... And travel is always about love.

In addition to love and care for our planet, sometimes, travel is what you need to find your soul mate and recognition. But to meet your destiny, it is important to be ready for it. Reading this book, think if you are open to the world and the person you will meet along the way.

Are you ready to love and be loved? I strongly believe that the true feeling comes only to those who are truly ready for it. It may sound a bit biblical, but it seems that in the bustle of endless concerns, people often forget that true love is given by God, and in addition to the obvious emotional maturity, you need to be spiritually prepared. Perhaps, observance of religious rituals, fasting or communion, moral and ethical principles, and commandments, for example, chastity, can lead someone to love. In the modern world, liking someone or finding a one-night partner is a matter of one boring evening and Tinder. But for how long these relationships can make you happy? And does this quick search help you to find what your soul wants? We all remember that our soul strives for understanding and love...

It is believed that love will find you, and it is undoubtedly true. But who prevents you from going towards it? I think people should look for someone, who has similar interests, and, of course, I suggest you look for someone who loves travelling as much as you do. Travelling is like speaking the same language – the language of love to our planet, or, for example, gastronomy.

Start travelling and expand the search area for your person from twenty-six million people to six billion. What if you are lucky to find your only one on the other side of the world? Even if you don't speak the same language.

But not always travelling to find your destiny is about a soul mate. Destiny is about your life in general. Just as we don't know who we will fall in love with, we cannot know what is destined for us and what to expect. Travelling, I faced my destiny and realized that I wanted to take the path of the traveller. A lot depends on how we feel about our lives. A couple of times, I've been told that there is nothing special about my travels, but for me, it's my whole life. My mission, my job. They make me a better person and encourage me to help others to become better. I am constantly perfecting my way and improving my skills of wandering. Like an *ikigai*, this is one of the leading tasks of my life, which gives meaning to all existence.

Over time, exploration of the world became my destiny – meeting new people and making them and myself happy, enjoying the beauties of nature, reflecting on this experience, and sharing it with others. I don't think anyone on the planet came up with the life plan on his way from the bakery. So, am I. The realization of this path came with the time. I had to make more than one flight and more than one walk through the streets

and squares of other cities before I realized that this was my path.

Looking at the way my life develops and finding what makes me happy, I discovered that at least one *moirai* weaves the thread of my fate. In my search, I also turned to the experience of other people by reading travel books and watching adventure movies and TV shows. I also had all sorts of encyclopedias in my home library.

An irresistible craving for reading and travelling merges together. Starting my journey to a new region, I used to read all the travel guides and adventure stories of others. And, of course, at the time of the global fascination with the novels of Paolo Coelho, I did read *The Alchemist* and *Zahir*. I even have a few recommendations that pop up to mind almost instantly. *Detective Thirteen Hours* helped me to get ready for the trip to Africa. The book *A Year in Botswana*, as a description of what it is like to be a teacher in South Africa, has touched my heart. The right vibe for Latin America was received from *The Taste of Coca Leaves* by Karin Müller, the bestseller about extraordinary adventures in Peru. I also liked *Don't Sleep – there are snakes!* about the life and language of the Indians in the Amazonian jungle. The novel *Three Cups of Tea* by Greg Mortenson had a great impact on my journey through Asia, and, of course, anyone who wants to get into the spirit of Asia can read *Shantaram*.

Can you count how many incredible books have been written about travelling? I always remember the funny and touching novel *Flowers for Mrs. Harris* about the journey of a wonderful Englishwoman to Paris. Or *Kati in Italy* by Astrid Lindgren, a fun and easy-to-read story for inspiration before a trip to Venice,

Rome, or Naples. And a novel by Mikhail Zarubin *Beyond the Horizon* with its story about the mystery of the pearl will take you back to your childhood, to the time of the *Children of Captain Grant*, and will fill you with the magic wind of travel to distant and wonderful shores.

The work of your life and your true love are always somewhere nearby, and fate leads you in the right direction. Your task is to recognize this fate at that the right moment and be truly ready for it. You have to be worthy of this path or this person.

This chapter has taken you from education and self-realization to your destiny. Open up to opportunities and learn new things to be interesting to yourself, only then, you will become interesting to someone else.

Chapter 2. Leave to come back

2.1 To leave or not to leave

Remember the most famous lines from Shakespearean Hamlet “To be or not to be: that is the question”? When he was thinking about the purpose of life and suicide... The same question I would apply to the moment when we think about going somewhere to see another life, or staying where we are, not leaving our comfort zone. In this chapter, I want to talk about both options.

Often, you want to go abroad to understand how people live overseas. And on this path, the traveller will meet both joy and happy discoveries, as well as the deepest disappointments. Most people think that the grass is greener, the food is tastier, the cities are richer, and the whole life is better somewhere else, but not at home. And, indeed, in some countries, it will be so. But travel can teach us to appreciate and love what we have. Going abroad, you will see that in most countries people are the same, and we all want the same things. And after some places, you will realize that your country actually gives you freedom.

Safety, stability, and financial independence are what people look for in their trips. And often, they move somewhere because they think that the country, they are going to guarantees it. Following the illusive social guarantees and ideas about how the state cares for people, someone even agrees to the downshift.

Another reason is when people disagree with the policies and decisions that the state takes in relation to citizens.

This chapter is intended to support both sides: those who stay and those who want to live somewhere else. If you dream about other shores and mountains, you want to see a different life and explore new and unknown, then go for it. On my path, I met many people from different countries, who felt tight and squeezed within the same area. If your heart flutters and rushes towards new trails at any possible opportunity, do not deny yourself this joy. I believe in what old people say: they regret that they didn't love and travelled more. But I want to say a few words to those who feel a strong bond to their home. Many of my friends, going even on a short trip, feel anxiety and sadness without their homeland. And the only understanding that the trip will finish soon and they will go back to their beloved soil keeps them positive. It is fine if you don't want to wander into the farthest corners of the world. It is fair that you just want a short break in the winter. It is great that you want to return to your most wonderful city, familiar streets, comfy apartment, and favourite coffee shop on the corner.

Emigrating to another country, we all believe that in a new home, we will be able to reveal our most hidden capabilities. And like no one else, I know that if they are destined to be revealed, it will happen regardless of where you are. If you are curious and willing to learn something new, if you are open to perceiving information and adapting to any circumstances bypassing discomfort, then success will inevitably surpass you, no matter where you live and what you do.

I remember one beautiful but sad story. A little girl Kumari – the goddess on Earth – lives in Nepal. People there idolize her, worship her, bring gifts and honour her. They do not ask anything from her, only pray. Until she is thirteen years old, she appears in front of people only once a year, spending the rest of the time locked up. This girl in the red dress is still a child, who is allowed to look at the little part of the outside world and people visiting her only through a small window. Most likely, the girl dreams of being with her parents, playing toys with her peers and simply growing up as a normal child. Kumari is considered a god on earth, but they are not allowed to set foot on this earth, being carried around on a golden stretcher. At the age of twelve or thirteen, at the beginning of puberty and a period, the girl fails to be a goddess, and the locals choose a new baby who is doomed to the same life. The ex-Kumari returns home to her family. She is not adapted to life, not knowing how to cook or clean up. Well, she receives a little pension from the state, but the girl barely has a chance of starting her own family. Because it is believed that if a man marries Kumari, he will die soon. This strange and unenviable fate does not depend on girls. Being a goddess and having a dramatic life is never their choice.

I visited the courtyard of Kumari's house and caught the eye of this little girl who was doomed to such a sad fate. I think, at that moment, she shared her sorrow with me. I wished, instead of sitting there, she could travel to the most unusual places on the planet.

If you decide to leave your country for good, think about what it feels like to return to your homeland after a long separation. You never know what is waiting for you back there after ten or

fifteen years. Are your friends and family still remember you? Is your favourite restaurant still open? One of the most important conclusions that I made from all my long travels is that we need to overcome distances and barriers between those who are dear to us. We need to do as much as possible to spend more time with them.

My home is where my family is. This is what I've learned. Some people need to experience a solo journey to begin to appreciate their favourite places in their hometown, their loved ones, and cozy evenings in front of the TV and holiday traditions with them.

It is also important for the traveller not to get stuck between two worlds. Many are chasing trips and searching and finding new emotions, impressions, and skills. And, increasing the experience of travelling or finding a favourite country, people simply find themselves being torn between the familiar world in the face of their home and new sensations. It turns out that a person is at a crossroads, which means that he is not present anywhere. It changes the personality and negatively affects life.

I've seen many people who decided to take this step and move to a new place, but for some reason, could not adapt to a new life. But it is not a shame to admit that you've made a wrong choice. It is a part of life and a creative path.

At first, it seems quite easy to abandon your usual life and move towards the unknown areas... But are you ready for it?

Are you ready to go around the world, feed animals from your hands, and have breakfast in the tropics? Are you ready to discover not only wealth and happiness, but poverty, pain, disease, and cruelty that you have never seen before?

Perhaps, this is your path, and you want to explore the world with all the splendor and poverty. Or maybe you decided to move to another country. And even if travelling is not your way... All paths are good, try and learn to see which one is yours.

2.2 New look at your home to fall in love again

I want to share a very important thought with you. Sometimes, we stop loving our home: the place where we grew up, fell in love and were supported and disappointed. Home is the place where you always return and the cycle of events dulls the feeling of love that we are supposed to feel. And it doesn't matter what your house looks like. It can be a huge mansion in a posh neighbourhood, a spacious apartment in the city centre, an old building on the outskirts, or maybe a room in a shared apartment. House is where your day starts and ends.

The craving for travel is often caused not only by the desire to see something new but also when you feel tight and bored of the routine. And you can't call anything more routine than your home, forgetting how beautiful, warm, and cozy it is. Leaving familiar walls for some time, you receive new emotions, after which you realize that your house is the most beautiful place on earth. Even if now you feel that your house is small and tight, believe me, it didn't change or get worse. It's just your perception needs fresh moments, which you will later share with your family in your kitchen over your favourite tea.

I think it's the lifestyle of the XXI century to blame. No time to care about the home comfort with a blanket on the sofa, or a magic moment with a hot chocolate near the window looking at the rain... You sometimes don't even have five minutes to cuddle your pet. Everything fades under the burden of routine.

And turning to your childhood again, think about a happy feeling when coming home from a cold street. You used to take your raincoat and wellies off and smell freshly baked meat pie, after eating which, you played all your favourite toys. How can you not love this home?

It's not the same when you are an adult. You come home and find all the utility bills... You have time for a quick dinner, then the house fuss with the laundry, ironing, and maybe little work tasks at home office begin. No chance you want to bake anything at this pace. And if, with all this whirlwind, you will get apathy and depression, your house may truly become a small prison for your head. At such moments, many can get whisked away and rush towards adventures, new apartments and houses, new curtains and wallpaper. But your house does not disappear. It patiently waits until the tortured owner gets free from the oppression of his complex routine, changes his attitude, and returns to the familiar walls that have been there for him all the time. Think about your emotions from childhood, when your close schoolmates used to come and wished to stay for longer. And, thinking about your home now, answer the question honestly: Would you be as happy as when you were a child? Wouldn't you be ashamed because of the mess and scattered rubbish? If as a child you used to tidy up your room to make a good impression, do you still do it now? Do you try to make your home cosier? Do you take care of it and the succulents on the street? How often do you do deep cleaning and wash even those corners that at first glance do not seem dirty?

Our home is the reflection of our personality. If you are taking care of your home, you are most likely, taking care, loving, and

accepting yourself. Has it ever happened to you when visiting someone, who you don't know well, in a single evening, you can make a decision about that person? This theory works very well on the example of the property of absolutely any elderly lady in the world. Getting into the house of nana, you can see her life and character right away. Whether she is lonely or has many children and grandchildren, whether she has friends or is a grumpy crone. Look at your home with the eyes of your guests, and try to understand what kind of person lives in it. Whoever is in front of you right now lives in the best of all places possible, and if that person loses the love for it, he will for sure find it again.

Look around your room and recall the especially happy moments that are associated with this place. Maybe you grew up here, and it keeps all the memories of magical times and games, parties with a lot of guests, and happy holiday celebrations. And even if fate was not as fair to you, and this place reminds you of pain, you are the one, who can break this knot of sad moments, and create new and happy memories. For me, those memories are about coming back home from travels. I used to be happy in my apartment in St. Petersburg with my animals. It used to be my impregnable fortress.

Travelling taught me that life is what we make it, and you can see it even in small things. After visiting many botanical gardens around the world, life without roses and peonies, orchids, asters and alstroemerias is simply unbearable for me. My house is full of different flowers and it's never enough. I wish I could bring one pot a day! I also believe that my apartment understands that with these flowers I compliment and care about it. When I go on

a trip, I always miss my home and think about how happy I will be to be back to the place, with which I agreed.

When I was a child, I used to make an agreement with a pillow to have beautiful dreams, then later, in high school and university, it was replaced by the wish to see that pretty girl from another class or faculty. But then we grew up. We now have no time to negotiate with the attributes of our life, and, unfortunately, along with a simple belief in magic, disappears the magic. The place becomes emptier and lifeless, you invest less in it, and therefore, it loses the soul. Someone's consciousness was dulled by fatigue, someone drowned out the pain and heaviness of everyday life with alcohol and cigarettes.

My all-time favourite movie, Mr. Magorium's Wonder Emporium with Dustin Hoffman, made me realize that the place is not the matter, it is always about us. If we feel good in the place, we fill it with comfort and meaning. As long as you believe in fairy tales and miracles, in the magic of your home, then the place you call home will give you strength and happiness, no matter where you go. You will never be left alone. You will have a place on the planet that loves you and is waiting for you to be back.

One of my friends from Estonia, Lina, brings small pebbles home from everywhere – the coast, the mountain slopes. No matter how far she travels, she always gives her apartment a piece of the landscape she visited. To my question about the meaning of this collection, with no hesitation for a second, she explained that her apartment could not go and see everything by itself, so she always brings her a piece of that place. Lina also

told me that most of the time she sees the ocean in her dreams, and she believes that they are sent by her apartment in return.

A home is a place where you always feel comfortable and safe, where you return to replenish your energy and find peace of mind, and where you hide from any adversity. And I have to say that if you have no harmony between you and your home, then not a single exploring trip can give it all. Even a new experience will not give you peace and happiness if you have a personal zero kilometre as a starting point.

Just believe that your home is alive, and it will be with you from the very beginning till the very end. Start to establish good relations with your home now, make a beautiful backyard or have fish, and coming back will be a hundred times more pleasant.

Or maybe you need to leave for good and create a new home with other customs and traditions. A lot of people made it. But still, do not forget your old shelter, love it and visit when it's possible. Even if it seems that you were not happy enough there, remember that your home did its best to protect you. Take care of it to have a place, where you can always return. Perhaps, your parents still live there and are waiting for you.

2.3 Infuse other cultures into your life

Travelling around the planet, you learn about a huge number of cultural differences of other nations. Most of the travellers not only interact with other cultures but also let them change their lives. I always strive to learn new and interesting traditions from other countries to bring them to my relatives and friends.

For example, all Americans are very patriotic, and you can see it in everything. I wish every person on the planet respects the country where they live deeply, increasing its cultural heritage.

Brazil amazed me with strong family ties, such as gathering all together at a big table. They do it for deep conversations, to listen and support each other. When you are alone, you are an easy target to be misled, and if you have a family, you feel safe and, of course, it is much more difficult to derail you from your path.

In Sweden, I learned that a man always takes a role model in the family and country itself. If suddenly the family breaks up, the man is still responsible for it. He pays alimony and supports his wife even if they are not together. I found it a good tradition. I wish we all take responsibility for our loved ones, no matter the circumstances. A woman with a child should be protected if the paths with her husband parted. And most importantly, children should never be separated from their parents or abandoned. They do need both parents in their life.

In Norway, they do not divide household duties by gender. Every member of the family does what is convenient and appropriate at the moment. They arrange their responsibilities or just do what seems to be necessary at the moment.

Locals in Finland have an incredibly cute and nice tradition of gathering with the family and reading a book aloud. Along with watching TV together, this is a great bond for the whole family. In this way, they care about younger members of their family, spend time with them, and teach them common cultural values. I had a similar tradition when I was a child – my mum used to read me good night stories, which was the most magical moment of the evening.

Traditions and customs of other countries that inspire you will make your life better, help strengthen your family ties, and

teach you to always listen and understand each other.

In Israel, great attention is paid not only to love and respect for parents but also to the religious education of children. Spiritual values, inherent in the earliest childhood, are the guiding star that will subsequently lead any person through life, keeping love and moral traditions in his heart. What I also liked in Israel, is that they would never tell a child that he or she is bad or did something wrong. Instead, they will say: “How could such a good and kind child do such a bad deed?” For me, it seemed a much softer way of education, and many countries should introduce it into their culture.

In Germany, they teach children to save money for something important, and limit their time on the Internet and watching TV. I find it very wise. In this way, they help their children to develop in the real world, because, in addition to the unconditional benefits, the Internet also harms the psyche and health of a small person. While an offline life allows them to communicate with real people, family, and peers to feel their importance. I am convinced that unsupervised Internet can harm the fragile mind and lead the child along the wrong path.

Over the years of my travelling, I found thousands of wonderful different holiday traditions. One of my most favourite is the magical Christmas time and the moments associated with it. It warms the winter season and brings the whole family together to bake gingerbread biscuits or sew socks to receive a present from Santa Claus.

I also learned to enjoy absolutely any event. Even if it is not a very significant moment, I will now take it as a reason for joy. During the trips, I realized that it's important to immerse in the

holiday vibe and celebrate everything according to the existing traditions. Only in this way, we will be able to feel the spirit of the merry event. We should not miss an extra reason to celebrate an important moment of life, otherwise, we will lose them all.

The most beautiful cultural customs appeared to me through the prism of family relations in different countries, which again led me to a conclusion that was confirmed by me long ago – we need to love and appreciate those who are near us. We need to take care of the world we love.

There is also one tradition that I saw in many different countries. When at the end of the day, the family gathers for dinner and discusses everything that happened today. And I love it. No matter where you live, just find time to have breakfast or dinner with your loved ones. This moment will strengthen any relationship.

I believe that the quality of our lives depends on the traditions that we create in everyday life. The more holidays we celebrate, the better we communicate with our relatives. One day, you will see that by making your loved ones happy, you become a better person.

Reading and dining together, spending evenings with board games, chatting and not touching our phones is the key to our wonderful life. I hope that you will make travels your good tradition, where you will find new ideas that will make your life bright and interesting.

2.4 Home is where you are happy

Crying big boy tears, I have to say that no matter where you are or how far fate drags you, you can still feel yourself at home. And here are a couple of my tips on how to organize it. First of

all, to feel yourself at home, you need to work with your mindset. When do we feel at home? In moments, when we want to create and be creative.

Feeling at home is impossible without the people that you love – your family, friends, and children. Yes, it is a serious step, and you have to be an emotionally mature person. But the secret ingredient of this feeling is not connected with any country. Regardless of whether you have lived in this city all your life or just moved yesterday, your home is always with you.

A small conclusion from all my travels. Wherever you go – Sri Lanka or Thailand, New Zealand or Japan – any of the places on the earth can be your home. You don't need your usual walls or roof, the house is the state of your soul, a reflection of your attitude to the world, the harmony and the peace of your mind. If you are carrying longing, sadness, and disappointment, I don't think that changing places would help you to get rid of them. No matter if you buy a huge bright house or rent a tiny room, you won't find the feeling that you've been desperately looking for in the old place that you left or in the new places where you arrived.

In the East, in relation to loved ones, they often say: "You are my home". Perhaps you don't need exotic countries, but your heart is just desperate for love. And once you find it, your home will be with you anywhere.

Many times I've heard people saying that without money, there is no home. But I cannot agree with it. Even if you have a nicely set space, if you don't find your path, understand your desires, and meet your person, you won't feel at home. Once you achieve these points, no matter where you are, you will open the door to your backyard and find peace in being home. It has

nothing to do with the particular country, it only depends on your mood. And it is you to choose whether you are happy or not. And if you take a happy side, you will feel so anywhere.

Of course, the space that surrounds you is important. If you know that for comfort you need something from your home, take it with you. It may be something that reminds you of your house. For example, if you enjoy growing plants, buy a flower in a pot for your new place. When I have to be away from home for a long time, I take a shower curtain with me on a trip, it gives me comfort and a feeling of being home.

People who have to travel a lot or even move from one apartment to another, know about the feeling of home more than anyone else. Belongings that you truly love will help you feel in a new place as if you are inside the usual walls. Maybe you have important dishware or pyjamas that you wear every evening, towels, or bed linen. I even know people who travel with their pillows. Find your things, and they will make the process of settling in a new place easier.

No need to worry if you haven't found your own cosy home yet. If our spot is our reflection, then the way home is the way to ourselves. I am travelling and still exploring the world and myself. One day, I will understand that I am ready to find myself... It will be the time to create my own home no matter where I will be. I will not need special walls or a particular place. Only my readiness and harmony.

I think I'm ready...

Once I came to a beautiful place, which became my second home. Since then, no matter where I went, I was missing this place. In my dreams, I used to walk on the streets of one of the

dearest and the most important cities on the planet for me. In addition to St. Petersburg where I was born, my heart now forever belongs to another wayward, exciting, and enchanting city. My soul sings when I see the flag of this country and hear the name of this city.

Let me tell you about this magical place, and perhaps, you will understand which part of the planet I am talking about. There is no chance you would not fall in love with it too. I will start with no names because I want you to feel the atmosphere. Read with your heart! Touch it with your soul. It is my most in-depth confession.

As if in a new life, this city showed me a long-livers procession, which went on for three hours under my balcony. It surprised me, but not with the long-lasting process; I was amazed by the number of people over eighty, who participated in it. And believe me, it was clear that they were strong and full of life. This country has one of the best medicines in the world with very good care of its citizens. Retirees here are the happiest part of society, who after raising their children and grandchildren, enjoy their senior age with the help of the state.

Even I learned to drink fresh juices here, and not the standard apple or orange ones, but made from greens and herbs. And if you add some ginger to it, it is not just delicious but healthy. Nowhere in the world have I seen such an intention towards living a healthy life. Thousands of restaurants in every city with the freshest fish and meat, mouthwatering fruits and veggies. You can't imagine how popular the Master Chef TV show is here! Locals love to cook, and it's great to see them doing it in their kitchens! At some point, I got so excited watching it, so, I learned

how to cut salads and bake salmon. I even became a vegetarian for two years, just because it is a natural thing here.

When you get employed, most workplaces provide you with an hour for fitness and even pay for it. No matter what you do: boxing, running or yoga. Sports are part of the culture here, and people have a cult of health and positivity. Long life is about a healthy lifestyle with proper nutrition and upbeat vibes. Love yourself, and the world will always smile you back.

Eight years ago I found out that stores with no cashiers exist. Then it seemed weird to me. And, I agree, that sometimes it's pricey here, but you can choose what you put into your basket, and no one will slip something not fresh or rotten into it. You just do your shopping, weigh everything by yourself, pay for it, and leave. It's all about trust between the population and the government. Laws here are made to help people and to solve their needs and problems.

You know what is my favourite activity here? I love walking by the ocean. I think this was the main reason for me wishing to live here. In 2007, when I arrived here for the first time, I fell in love with the warm weather, sunshine, and friendly people.

The paths by the ocean combined with a refreshing breeze stretch for kilometres. They are always well maintained with bins around, and you will never see anyone scattering garbage. Not because people are afraid of fines, but because they care about nature and love it.

I think citizens of this country are welcomed everywhere and are treated kindly no matter where they go. Almost everyone is in good shape, peaceful, tolerant, and trouble-free. You may be a tourist or an expat standing on the street at a traffic light, there

will be somebody who may just come to you with a smile to ask if you want to see sights around.

When I came here, I started watching good news. You will not believe it, but it is real when the TV doesn't talk only about wars, violence and gossip. Here, you will see a lot about the scientific achievements, culture, and about new pet delivery in the zoo. I enjoyed the news about nature.

I wanted to live in one of the local zoos. Animals are phenomenally supported and treated here. People also care about their population. You will not feel yourself as visiting a zoo, you will find yourself united with nature within touching distance.

On my New Year's Eve here, I saw the fireworks that were organized at 9 p.m. for children first, then admired them again at midnight, like everyone on the planet. And on my way home, I didn't see drunk people.

They love Thursdays here because it's a little Friday. Working till 9 pm, they usually go to a pub where they eagerly chat and, of course, drink. But not to the bitter end, these people are decent and well aware that tomorrow is Friday and they have to be at work.

In the ratings, my favourite city is listed as one of the most comfortable to live in. And the country itself has been included in the top 3 for decades. Only Canada and Scandinavia can compete with it in terms of living standards.

One day I met Katerina, who also came to this country. We became friends and went through life hand by hand for a long time until I had to leave. She will forever have space in my thoughts and my heart. I believe in friendship for life no matter

how far people are from each other. I know that you are reading these lines, Katie, and want you to know that I am proud of our friendship and I admire your ambitions. I will always believe in you and in what you do. Your sensitivity and kindness amazed me continuously. We trusted each other and used to share our dreams and visions of the future. And I am happy that we didn't lose faith, and both came to the point of what we wished for.

Travelling around the world was never my initial plan. It started as business trips and just short holidays sometimes. But when I realised that I had already been to more than eighty countries, a dream of visiting all of them on the planet was born. I decided to explore every magical corner. I had to come to the conclusion that you can't sit on the fence: or quiet life in my own paradise, or endless travels but leaving my beloved hometown. I had to take trips to reach my other dream of becoming the youngest traveller in Russia who followed his footsteps everywhere. Here, in this beloved with all my soul city, this dream was formed into a global goal that required me to move forward. And with a heavy heart, I moved, leaving the most important for me city.

What is playing in my headphones?

Maybe here, at this point

I'll decide to drop my anchor

While talking with the ocean

In the rain or being high up

I will open all the secrets...

I've always connected this song with my favourite city. Singing with Zemfira in my head, all my thoughts were dedicated to this place.

There was a park near my apartment, and I used to go there at the end of the day to feed beautiful animals that lived on trees. Giving them bread, I was taking a deep breath of oxygen, which has hundreds of shades and flavours here. The smell of freshness, ocean, freedom, smiles, happiness, and global ideas.

Rooting with show business, I was shooting 24/7 with no breaks and rest. But here I decided to step aside from my comfort zone. Why do I continue missing my life if this work does not bring me any joy? Sometimes you need to shake everything off you and start doing what your soul has been striving for. I hope you don't think that I was not afraid to quit the job with which I grew up and succeeded. But this city made me believe in myself and change my point of view and firm ground. I accepted travelling, exploring the planet, new people, food, experiences, help, and support as a new job and a new life. This city believed in me and helped me change.

I found out that walking in the night is not dangerous, no matter in which area of the city you are. It is absolutely safe and always quiet here. In three years since I have been here, I haven't seen a single fight or issue. It seems that even arguments between the residents are solved intelligently here.

I always have imprinted lines in my head: "...I wander thoughtfully again... to distant country there, that has no Jan, no Feb, or March..."

Now, breathing to the fullest, I can say: "Well, hello, my second home". The city that loomed on the horizon no matter how far away I was. In the longest, most difficult and exhausting journeys through Africa or in other parts of the world, you were always with me in my heart. For five years and eight months, I

was returning. I knew I would be back to you because I could not imagine my life somewhere else. This is the most important to my heart Emerald City, towards which I will always go along the yellow brick road... My beloved country... **(to be continued... In my next book...)**.

Epilogue

The first version of this book was written back in December, during the quiet and well-planned routes from Spain to the USA, then from my hometown St. Petersburg to Singapore, Laos, and Thailand. Almost every minute of my travel plan for 2020 was scheduled, and I could not even think that in an instant the word travelling would become something distant and almost impossible! As if a flashback from my childhood when I was embracing a yellow atlas and a big dream... In a night, the lifestyle, the main goal, and the way of thinking have changed.

Epidemic. Hang on, no... Pandemic. Coronavirus, COVID-19. I can tell you that not only ordinary people like me and you were blindsided, big people and governments around the world were also lost. This tragedy has certainly changed our current reality and made us look at ourselves and the world around us from a different angle.

To be honest, I didn't take the news and statistics seriously at first. I was a lucky lad who travelled for ten years, and I was never relying on chances, only my experience. I've been through the stricter visa and entry requirements during the raging Ebola, I've been flying during the bird and swine flu. I've been to places with a high SARS infection risk. Many of these threats I saw from the front row of different airports. My antiseptic and common sense was always ready. But I couldn't even think that going to my cherished secret place, to my second home, my beloved

Australia, I would stay there forever with such unusual prospects.

At that point, Australia was not the end stop. I had a far-moving plan, and the Cocos Islands were a part of it. There was so much to show and tell future travellers in my blog! But I arrived in the Australian city of Perth, and three days later the air traffic was shut. In the blink of an eye. Every hour, we were receiving new information about unavailable flights, the number of infected people, the symptoms of the disease, and risk groups.

In Perth, I had a few days to wander around the neighbourhood, but such words as "quarantine", "self-isolation", and "precautions" began to rule my life. The whole of Australia did an enormous and great job, wisely coping with the situation. We can go to the beach and shops, walk in the park and around without wearing a mask. The country shut its borders to tourists, and only Australians can return here by rare flights.

My world, or rather, our world is collapsing and is reviving under our eyes. We are standing at the threshold of a completely new reality. I am seized with wild horror when I think of us standing just one step away from an unfamiliar world. We all remember September 11. This day changed everyone's perception of travelling by air. It was a terrible day for the whole world, a catastrophic event that transformed the system of access control in public places.

And now we are faced with terrifying danger. It is impossible to negotiate with it or protect ourselves from it. At the moment when this book was still in process, the silent enemy had taken hundreds of thousands of lives, sparing neither young nor old in its path. It became clear that you can't hide from it and fence

yourself off with a pile of money or medical equipment. In moments of harsh life crunches, we often believe that “the grass is greener on the other side”. And now, for the first time in my whole life on the earth, we simply have nowhere to run. Peacetime was always giving hope for a balance between yellow and green grass. Now it’s withered everywhere and smells of antiseptic.

At the same time, we are more united than ever. We are all stuck at home, and there is no time for squabbles and fights, races and cruelty. For the first time in the long history of mankind, people stopped caring about gender, age, race, and religion. We have a common enemy and a huge dream of having our comfortable lives back. We don’t need much to be happy. Just walk or sit on a bench on a sunny day in the park. Lay on the grass or go for a picnic with friends. Grab our favourite coffee in the morning on the way to work or just hug someone we haven't seen in a while. I deeply believe that we all can make it, we will pass this big trouble and fulfil all our cherished desires after quarantine.

I understand that our world will never be the same again. Right now, we can only think about the effects and consequences of the pandemic in our lives. Is there any end to this quarantine? Will people learn to touch their faces and shake hands again? And what about travelling? Will we be travelling again? Will we be called travellers? That is why I feel a strong responsibility in publishing this book. I want you to read about the world before this phenomenon, and when you make your first trips, you can think of the differences in our reality. In this book, I also want to tell you that I began to write my first big artwork. From my point

of view of 2021, I will share with you how I see the future world. A new book may frighten someone or impress, but for sure, everyone will find something special in it. I am only at the start, but I believe I will make it, and we will again spend many exciting hours together. In the meantime... It's time to make changes. Let's tune in for the best.

We will never be the same. Traveller's paths will never be the same again. What will it look like? I don't know. I only know that, no matter what we going through, we should never betray our dreams. We have to find our way and keep on rolling. I know for what I came to this world. My world is a road, a traveler's path. And yours?

I am sincerely grateful to my destiny for giving me a chance to meet wonderful friends who change my life for the better every day.

Paul, Narell, Atul, Chris, Daria.

Thank you for your sensitivity, wisdom, support, and love.

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Explorer, traveler, blogger,

Photographer,

Three-time Record-breaker in Book of Records

And your friend,

Alexander Zhdanov