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Adventure & Exploration - Volume 1

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Dawn is a travel and exploration publication, bringing the corners of the globe together through the passionate stories and experiences of the adverterous. We cover everything, from whole countries and cities, to small islands and specific aspects of these places. Dawn will be the first of its kind, bringing the basic features of a magazine, and braille printing together for the first time. Here at Dawn we want to inform and inspire our readers to try something new, explore the world and gain new experiences.

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The North Face

Published Bi-monthly

Printed By PWP FS Print & Design

D A W N

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C o n t e n t s

Issue One of Dawn Magazine brings you 120 pages of wonderful, descriptive and adventoursous content. Be one of many to enjoy the first of a long line of adventure and exploration magazines.

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The Great Pyramids of Giza

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Story By: Alfia Ahmed

There are times we simply cannot believe what our eyes are seeing. Sitting at the Sphinx and gazing at the Great Pyramids in Giza is definitely one of those times...

Egypt, home of the Pharaohs, the pyramids and the great Nile Delta, sits at the top of Africa.

There are few attractions on Earth that can be found on every single travellers bucket list, and visiting the Great Pyramids has to be one of them. Who doesn't remember learning about the River Nile and King Tut in secondary school, and who doesn't fantasize about wandering through the desert and coming across these mythical buildings? For me, visiting the pyramids was my number one trip on Earth and I was amazed to see a first glimpse of these amazing structures. So sit back, prepare to get excited, whip out that credit card and book a trip to amazing Egypt, you'll never regret it.

One of the biggest draws in all of Egypt is without a doubt the Great Pyramid at Giza. This spectacular monument that overlooks Cairo is one of the most famous destinations on the entire planet, and the only one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World that is still standing. As someone who has visited the site of the Great Pyramid, I can assure you that the pyramids are anything but disappointing. The mere site of these three massive structures is enough to install a sense of awe that few other manmade destinations can compare to. Undeniably a real masterpiece considering the fact that it was built with skills and precision without using any of today's technology.

The pyramids of Giza rest in the desert just outside Cairo and both the pyramids and the nearby city enjoy a warm climate most of the year. The most comfortable time to visit the pyramids here is in the winter months, when

temperatures are typically between 50 and 70 degrees F.

The sheer size and audacity of the pyramids is enough to make them worthy of "wonder" status. After all, it is estimated that the Great Pyramid alone is made up of more than 2.5 million individual stones. These stones were individually crafted to fit into the overall structure, and help make it one of the most impressive construction projects ever undertaken. When it was completed in 2560 BC, the Great Pyramid was easily the tallest building on the planet, and it remained so until the construction of the Eiffel Tower in Paris in 1895. That means for nearly 4500 years, it reigned supreme.

Giza's pyramids are very attention grabbing where you can witness first-hand one of the most iconic sights in the world. But nothing beats getting up close and personal with these ancient monuments. Egypt's most famed and feted structures, these ancient tombs of kings, guarded by the serene Sphinx, have wowed spectators for centuries.

Uncover the history of the Pharaohs and Ancient Egyptians with a visit to the archaeological remains of Memphis and Sakkara. You can observe the remains of the statues, sarcophagi and sphinxes that provide clues to this once magnificent city. Also, you can marvel at the engineering prowess which was necessary to build such a structure, which stood as the tallest in the world until relatively recently. The nearby step pyramid and cemetery of Sakkara provide further evidence of life in the ruling classes of the Ancient Egyptians. Here, you can see the wealth of ancient relics and monuments that lend Luxor its reputation as the



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“world’s greatest open-air museum” during this full day tour of discovery.

Having crossed to the East Bank, refresh yourself over lunch in modern Luxor. Afterwards, admire the sight of its majestic temples. The vast complex at Karnak – the largest ancient religious site in the world – is particularly impressive, and the necropolis.

The Sphinx, also known in Arabic as Abu al-Hol (Father of Terror) is a sculpture of a man with the resemblance of a lion and was dubbed this by the Ancient Greeks as it resembled their mythical winged monster who killed anyone that was unable to answer them. The mystery surrounding its long-forgotten purpose is almost as intriguing as its appearing because seeing it for the first time, he is smaller than I ever imagined.

Today, the Pyramids at Giza and the Sphinx still continue to work their magic on all who visit. No trip to Egypt is complete without a visit here. Towering incongruously over the edge of Cairo’s suburban sprawl, these iconic monuments are a tribute to the might, power and ambition of Egypt’s Pharaonic rulers.

Walking across the sands that surround the three pyramids, one can’t help but marvel at the massive undertaking put fourth by the Egyptian people to complete the project there. A must see that makes us experience the oldest times in history, a land filled with religion, architecture, and visual and spiritual richness, here, I discovered the true and ancient Egypt.





Samoan Islands

Story By: Alicia Streijffert

It was past midnight when I first set foot on the Samoan Islands. After a 4-hour flight from Auckland to the middle of the Pacific Ocean, the small island atmosphere hit me straight away: I could almost feel the humid air between my fingers and it was still warm. The terminal building was very small and had a rustic feel. I hadn't even gotten out of the airport yet that I could notice how friendly the people were - from immigrations officers to airport staff, all had a seemingly relaxed attitude towards life. That promised a number of warm and friendly encounters.

It was March, the wet season. It rained everyday but I still got to see beautiful blue skies with huge white cumulonimbus scattered around. The weather would be rapidly changing from rainy to clear and sunny and back to rainy. The islands offered an impressive visual show as colours were beautiful. It was orchestrated in very green landscapes - especially inland in the mountains - in pink, orange, red and purple sunsets, in clear turquoise water and in darker moments with nearly black skies right before the storms hit the islands.

The typical Samoan accommodations which I stayed in most of my trip are called Fale: they are similar to beach bungalows. The main structure is made out of wood with side blinds made from huge leaves which you could lift up in order to open up the Fale and let the breeze in when the weather was too hot to stand.

Although I do enjoy lying on the beach stocking up on Vitamin D, my main interest during this trip was to discover things about the island itself. On one of my first days, the man whose house I was couchsurfing at took me on a traditional Samoan canoe trip in the harbour of Apia, the capital. It was a great first encounter with the island.

One day, I decided to climb up a dormant volcano to see its crater. The walk was long and I needed many breaks along the way to the top and back down. However, at some point, a group of locals who were driving up the mountain took me in with them and dropped me off at Craterman's house. Craterman is the nickname the island locals have given to the old man who guards the main trail up to the crater. Much to my surprise, he offered me lunch in his hut as it was ready when I got there. Samoan food is all you would expect from tropical island delicacies: I would always have papaya with fresh lime juice for breakfast, there was no shortage of bananas - I would pick some from trees

on the side of the roads - and people ate a lot of coconut milk, ceviches, and so on. The main ingredients were seafood and taro: a very popular root vegetable that grows on the island. Craterman had cooked a stew with pork, taro and a lot of other unidentified ingredients... which I did not worry much about as the taste was perfectly comforting after a somewhat tiring first hike. Having helped me regain my strength, I was ready for the rest of the trek up. Once I reached the top, I stayed for a bit more than an hour, contemplating and taking in the views. I was lucky to have chosen a very sunny day for this activity - or maybe not so lucky as the climb up was exhausting and I was boiling and sweating until all my body's water had practically drained out. Once I recovered from the efforts, I headed back down. It was late afternoon.

The next day I went to visit a cave called Paia Dwarfs Cave. It was a very unique and interesting experience. We were a small group with two guides. Two 10 to 12 year old guides. I was a bit taken aback by their young age, but it was apparent that they knew what they were doing. They walked us very far into the cave, passing by pools of water, some of which we had to swim across in order to go further. While swimming, the kids were struggling to carry the only torch they had out of the water with one hand. They had no back-up plan to light up the cave in case it stopped working, so they had to be very careful. At some point we got to a place where we stopped and jumped into one of the pools from a rock higher up - it was frightening yet very exciting.

If the Samoan Islands remain one of my dearest trip memories - and as a flight attendant I have been to many places around the world - it is without a doubt thanks to the hospitality and abundant good mood circulating around the islands. Where else would anyone offer you dinner as you are wandering along a lost road in search for a food shop?



Sleeping with the Amazonian Animals

Story By: Amy Latham

Imagine a trip so tantalizing to the senses you can just close your eyes and the world comes to life around you. With air so fresh it fills your lungs and the muddiness of the water lingers on your taste buds. Welcome to the Amazon Rainforest, in the North of Brazil, where the traditional beats of ‘Baile Funk’ get your hips swinging in motion. You embark on a riverboat, rich with Brazilian culture, 100 locals clinched together on the open deck. You feel the warmth of the sun on your skin and the humidity sticks to your chest and arms. The trees are alive with the chirps of tropical birds and the chatter and babble of monkeys hanging from the branches. As the sun sets and the air cools, both sides of the boat are completely exposed with hammocks tightened around the metal bars, poised and waiting for nightfall.





In the midst of the night, the forest awakens and the sounds of the animals are noisier than ever before. The croak of the crickets is the most distinguished of sounds, with insects humming and buzzing in every corner of the forest. The sheer velocity of insects flying through the boat to cross from one side of the river to the other is alarming. It has even been known for cockroaches the size of your hand to land in your sleeping bag, startling you as you are getting to sleep, or at least trying to. You hope you will get used to it after a couple of nights.

One of the most incredible sights of the whole journey has to be the sighting of pink dolphins. As soft in colour as they are to the touch of their wet, silky backs, these creatures blissfully meander through the ripples of the water. These are magnificently intelligent creatures, unique to the Amazon, also known as the Boto or pink river dolphin. These water babies are curious in nature and tend to approach the boats as they are an extremely friendly and social species. Unfortunately, they are among the most endangered species due to the increase of traffic in their natural habitat, which can cause them to get injured.

You will meet people from all walks of life on this journey. Take an old man, for example, travelling the length of the Amazon to return to his family in a small village in the middle of the jungle. In his native tongue of Portuguese, you will be able to ask him about his travels and hear all the interesting tales he has to tell and the wisdom he has to share with you.

It is an interesting encounter to mingle with the locals. The people who find this river trip to be quite common – not as out of the ordinary or as bewildering as it is to you or me. To the natives of Brazil, the natives of the rainforest, it is a means of transportation from one side of Brazil to another. To you, it is a whole new world; an exploration of the senses and the mind. It is a way of life and you are pleased to experience it in all its excitement, but you are equally as happy to reach the riverbank and step foot on land again where you are most comfortable.





The Victoria Falls

Story By: Courtney Ngobe

The ground swallows my toes as I stand in awe of the the Big Tree, what is known to be the most famous Baobab tree in the world. Next to it I feel like an ant, the guide says its estimated to be over 2000 years old and as I stand near it the sun catches my eyes before they reach the top of the tree. I can hear the Victoria Falls like I am right at the edge, but we are nowhere near. The trees get taller and wider and nature seems to get richer as we approach the falls. And I begin to feel smaller and smaller as we get nearer to one of the seven natural wonders of the world.

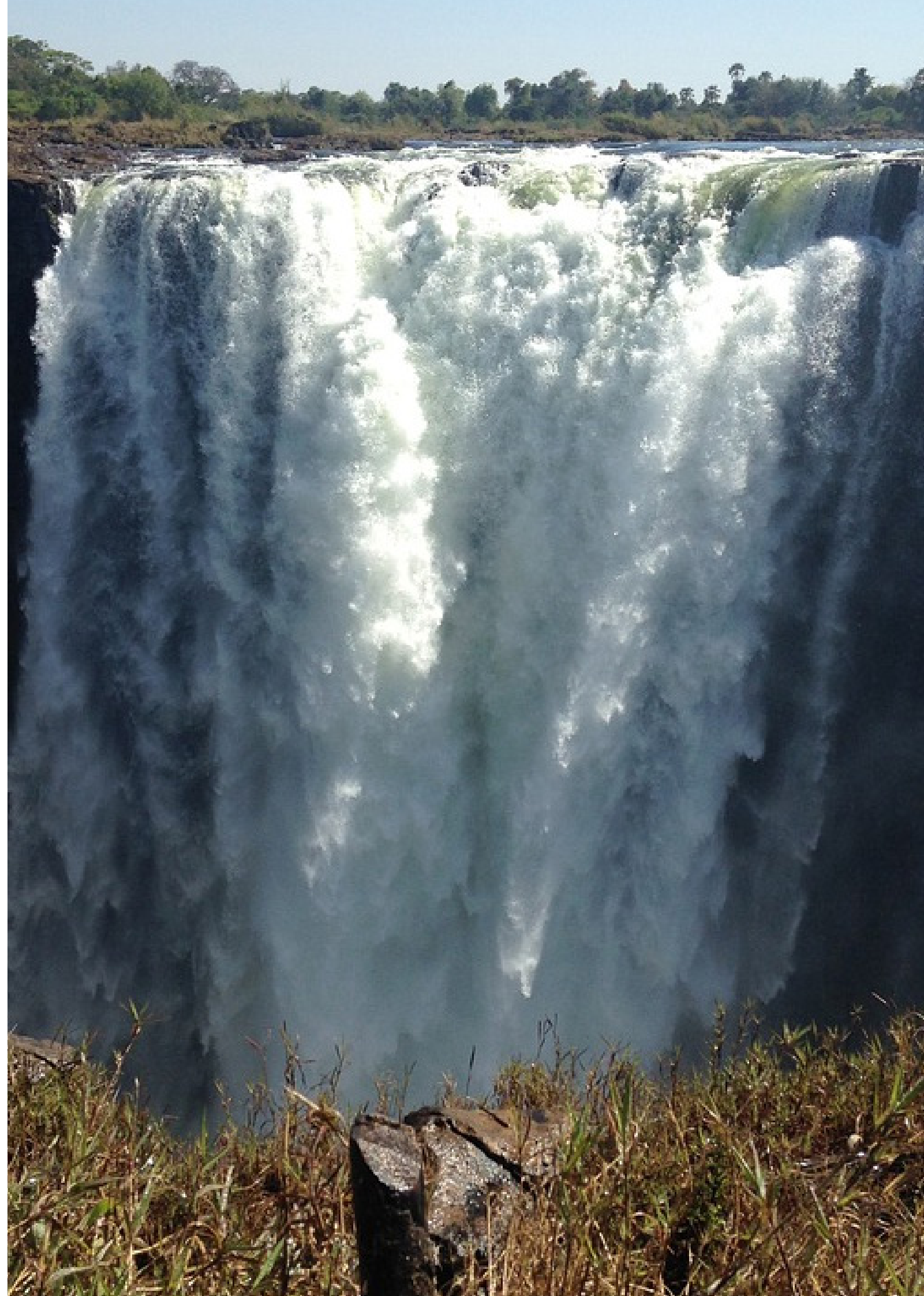
Staying dry becomes almost impossible as the spray from the falls becomes heavier. It's no wonder the Zambezi River Rain Forest is so rich and grand, it's the only rain forest in the world that gets constant rainfall from the waterfall 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. I can smell the trees and hear the leaves dancing with the water, and I almost become a part of the forest.

The trees are the deepest shade of green and the ground is almost warm from the moisture and the sun, the journey itself is a wonder, I can barely contain my excitement to see the falls and the silence around me is deafening. No one has the words to describe the peace that the forest gives you. The insects are occupied and have no interest in us humans, and the guide is strict about us wandering off incase we encounter far more dangerous animals on the forest path.

The closer I get to the waterfall, the louder it becomes. It's that sound I'm so used to hearing when I've gone too far looking for channels on the TV. The sound of emptiness, almost like the waterfall is asking me to empty my mind before I get there. The force of the mist and spray is becoming more and more like a wet fog and no photograph can ever capture the beauty of the journey to the Victoria Falls, a journey which each person experiences differently. Each time I blink I'm taking a moving picture for my memory hoping never to forget all the sounds and colors I'm seeing. The taste

of the spray is like stale rainwater, and my clothes are almost completely drenched long before I've reached the Waterfall. Each of my senses is awakened but that of sight, I can touch and feel the spray and fog that's so thick yet light its like floating rain, I can hear the grand falls doing what they have done for thousands of years so gracefully, I can hear the estimated 600 million cubic liters of water hitting the ground every minute. The smell of the falls is like the constant smell of a dewy cold morning, and the air that tasted musky before gets cleaner the closer I get to the falls, the water starts to taste fresh, as if the mist and fog is so constant and thick from the falls that it seems to have cleaned all the pollution from the air.

Approaching the falls from the side, we can see the brave tourists that have opted to have a dip in the Devil's Swimming Pool. The shallow pool got its name from allowing visitors and tourists of the Victoria Falls to almost cheat death by swimming at the edge of the Victoria Falls during the low water level months between September and December. I can almost feel their excitement and fear approaching the edge, as if they are willing to take any risk necessary to experience the beauty of the waterfall and how I envy them, to see the waterfall from the edge would be an experience I could never forget and I begin to almost convince myself that I can do it too.







The closer I approach the falls, the more I feel like I'm seeing the edge of the world, in all its glory the waterfall looks, smells and tastes like the beginning and the end of all the beauty in the world. In his diary, the first European to see the beauty and grandeur of the Victoria Falls described the scene as almost liberating. Livingstone also describes the waterfall as 'so lovely it must be gazed upon by angels in their flight'.

Mohr, who visited in the Falls in 1870, wrote of his first far off sight of them, "On the evening on the 28th of June I noticed on the north-north-west, far above a vast green and apparently endless forest, some white cloud masses, which ascended continuously in the form of four or five columns from the same spot without any change in appearance, in spite of the dead calm which prevailed every now and then. This phenomenon was the more striking, as the vast blue firmament, like a huge glass cupola, was unbroken by even the tiniest cloud as far as the eye could reach. When I pointed this singular appearance out to Masupasila [his guide], he said it was the Sipôma (waterfall), and never as long as my pulses beat shall I forget that moment."

Now close enough to the falls to behold their beauty, the air feels thin and damp, its so awe inspiring I find myself in that moment hoping no one asks me 'how it was', simply because maybe my vocabulary can't do the Victoria Falls enough justice. Not enough words can paint a picture colorful enough or wet enough, not even the most talented painters and artists could turn this moment into a picture. What I begin to realize is that the Victoria Falls is more than just a tourist destination or wonder that's to simply be looked at, but to fully experience the waterfall, the person has to feel the mist and fog dancing on their skin and hair, and hear the water crashing down from over a mile away while approaching. The Victoria Falls is an experience that has to be heard, felt, and tasted.

It is during the dry season that the power of Victoria Falls can be truly appreciated. Clear of the shroud of too much spray, I can marvel at the solid rock walls of the gorge, worn smooth by the abrasive power of the water, and watch the

tumbling waters fall into their depths. Near the eastern end of the Victoria Falls, about three quarters of the way along its length, the river escapes through a narrow opening, only 60 meters wide. It then flows into a deep pool called the Boiling Pot, about 150 meters across, before turning and racing on its 100 kilometer journey through the zigzagging Batoka Gorge. Compressed from such a wide open channel into the narrow twisting gorge, the river changes from placid and peaceful to tortuous and treacherous.

Above the Victoria Falls the river margins look to be what can simply be described as a tropical paradise. But below the waterfall, the landscape is dry and desolate, some of the wildest, most rugged, dry and remote terrain in Zimbabwe. It looks to me as if nature has released all of its powers in creating the spectacular waterfall, and now the river continues on after the spectacle it created completely exhausted from its work. However, those who know the river here know only too well that it is far from spent. The huge volume of water bubbles and boils with constrained energy, rushing through a series of over 60 gigantic rapids.

The Victoria Falls are one of the few natural wonders on earth which are a constant spectacle for whoever visits them at any time. Every season is different and the waterfall can be experienced in so many ways all year round. My experience was one of many ways to see Victoria Falls, walking up as close as possible and seeing the nature and wonder on foot. Although many other options are available to tourists such as taking micro flights over the waterfall or rowing up in a boat from the river. The natural wonder can be witnessed at ease and is accessible to anyone willing to make the journey, seeing natural wonder is an experience that can't be forgotten and many make the journey to the waterfall more than once in their life because going there once although unforgettable is definitely not enough to take in the beauty and magnificence of the waterfall.

The borders in Zimbabwe and Zambia are open to tourists all year round, maybe you are next.



Meztada Fortress

Story By: Iman El Kafrawi

Masada — Metzadá “fortress”, is on top of an isolated rock on the edge of the Judean Desert and the Dead Sea valley, between Sdom and Ein Gedi. Its height is 440 above the Dead Sea (50 m above sea level), and it is isolated from its surroundings by deep gorges on all sides. This position forms a natural fortification, and the place is natural to build a fortress. The Judaen Desert, This incredible vast expanse of land stretches from the northeastern Negev to the east of Beit El, ending in a steep cliff dropping to the Dead Sea and the Jordan Valley. The ancient Jewish fortress on a whiplike rock perched high about the Dead Sea. Masada was the refuge for a group of first-century Jewish rebels and their families who had fled jerusalem when it fell to the romans. What gives the Judean Desert its special character is that it is so intimately tied to history.

I started in Jerusalem, located in a plateau in the Judean mountains between the mediterranean and the dead sea. I went in mid January, and I wanted to explore Masada for what it’s known for – serenity. The day I was going to leave the city, to Masada, I missed the last bus, there was only 2 buses a day to and from Jerusalem and Masada, so I had to hitch hike my way there, which meant I had to stop twice, in order to reach Masada. The drive to Masada from Jerusalem took about 1 hour and 40 minutes, I remember that it was a Tuesday sometime in January, so it was extremely cold, the cold air against my face felt raw. When I arrived in Masada, I felt the difference in the air, from Jerusalem, one of the biggest cities in what we now call the state of Israel to a sense of serenity in Masada. When I breathed in the air, I felt refreshed, I was in a natural, open space, in a way, exposed. Masada, metzadá “fortress”, is isolated, so in a way this open space and isolation, creates a feeling of freedom. There was no sound – just silence. The silence, in a way, created me to take notice in particular movements and sounds that surrounded me. The movement of the wind, the way the air felt on my face, the sound of my feet embedding into the rocks, being able to feel the coarseness of the rocks. I was emerged into a moment of tranquility. In a way,

this silence creates you to create silence in your mind, and reflect... it was almost refreshing to hear nothing.

I arrived there late at night, and I had this strange feeling...I realised I was open, I was in this space, connected to nature – a sense of purity. I was going to walk up towards the fortress of Masada, and hike into the sunrise. I arrived there at around midnight, and I woke up at around 4 AM. As I went up, I couldn’t see anything, the darkness created a feeling of uncertainty, I kept hitting into rocks which were coarse, and sharp, I felt the cold air against my face and I was breathing in this purified air, as I took a breathe in and a breathe out my body was being revived. It took me an hour, or an hour and a half to get up there. As I walked up, the air changed, I felt the air becoming warmer, and radiating off my face, as the sun was rising in front of me. The sun was just starting to rise by the time I got to the top, but it was behind the mountain, which was in front of me, and the mountain was right behind the dead sea. “The Sea of Death”, is a salt lake bordering Jordan, Israel and the West Bank. The dead sea is known for being the Earth’s lowest election on land, being 1,388 ft below sea level. When I reached the top, the air was no longer cold, it was hot – but





in some ways still refreshing and clear. When I reached up top, I took a moment, to digest what I could see. When I looked up at the sky, I felt this openness. The clouds laying low above me. There were dark clouds, orange, pink and yellow clouds from the sunset which I could see at eye level from where I was standing. The sun's reflection on the dead sea created a sense of stillness.

You're encapsulated by rocks and desert – you're within a cliff encased desert, this feels enclosing, but the vast waters create a sense of I felt sleepy, but being in this open space, surrounded by nature, I was able to think about the treasures in life, it made me think about the struggle of everyday life, we've heard the stories of Israel/Palestine, but being in this environment creates you to think deeply about the issues present here. What gives the Judean Desert it's character is that it's so intimately tied to history... Masada is a rugged natural fortress, of majestic beauty, in the Judean Desert overlooking the Dead Sea. It is a symbol of the

ancient kingdom of Israel, its violent destruction and the last stand of Jewish patriots in the face of the Roman army, in 73 A.D. It was built as a palace complex, in the classic style of the early Roman Empire, by Herod the Great, King of Judaea, (reigned 37 – 4 B.C.). The camps, fortifications and attack ramp that encircle the monument constitute the most complete Roman siege works surviving to the present day. Masada's ties to history created me to reflect. The silence made me think clearly, and I was able to reflect. That's what was going on in my head in Masada. It was a place of reflection. There was silence, you don't hear anything. When you arrive down at the fortress before going up the mountain, there's one road. There's stillness in Masada – a stillness which connects you to your thoughts. As the sun comes up you feel the heat reflect off your face and your body, but you still feel refreshed. When I touched the rocks, I felt somewhat renewed, this radiating energy from expelling from the sun touching the rocks. You feel and can see the heat on the rocks, radiating. The sun's reflection

on the rocks, created the rocks to reflect In Masada there is one road, and one hostel, at the bottom of the mountain, so there's this isolation you feel. You want to enjoy the silence. It's the air you breathe and the place, was so inspiring. Even when you touch things, you feel great. You feel like you're in communion with yourself, and you don't want to break this. I wanted to feel connected to the nature, so I just went my own way. They build the houses and the fortress are built with rock from the mountains. it's a dry place. it has this immense space, but it's silence. If you were to scream, no one would hear you.



Salt Deserts of Bolivia

Story By: Solen Le Net

Little did I know of the wonders that were enclosed behind the Bolivian Andes. We had travelled 7 hours by bus from La Paz to the city of Potosí, at 4090 metres altitude, making it one of the highest cities in the world. Also otherwise known as the beholder of Spanish wealth due to its rich mines; the intense geologic activity beneath the Altiplano has endowed Bolivia with extraordinary mineral riches that has provided many Bolivians with a lucrative business.

I had been living in South America for a year and a half and had grown familiar with the towering glaciers that had frozen over the southern tips of Argentina. I had trekked through the mountain ranges of Fitz-Roy and had ridden horse back through the forest of our planet's oldest standing trees. I was aware that South America guarded some of the planet's most exquisite gems to date, but word of mouth had suggested that Bolivia stood at the pinnacle of beauty.

We started off at Potosi, a small town charmed by the presence of a few warmly lit cafés and travel agencies. We sat at a small bar and ordered media-lunas, the Latino version of the croissant. The coffee warmed our faces with it's vapour and the bread was still warm enough to melt butter on it, topped with raspberry jam to help us with our sugar levels. Hot chocolate was served as a bowl of warm milk and a side dish of chocolate bars to melt in it.

I found the silence in the town to be eerily calming, like something straight out of a Western movie; it was as if there was a sense of anticipation lurking in the air. All the narrow streets ran parallel to each other, gushes of wind licking the side curbs, creating a ghostly whistle as the cold breeze stroked the back of our necks. Having enjoyed breakfast the guide awaits us in the Range Rover outside. We rush to the vehicle excitedly, throwing in all our baggage before ourselves, and leave behind the small village in all its deserted tranquillity.

The surrounding mountains Kusina, Kusku and Tunupe surround the 10 billion tones of salt that stretches over a surface area of 10,582 sq. km. We begin our voyage from the south-western edge of the Uyuni, entering the territory through the salty fringed edges of the plains, where an abandoned train rests on its rusting tracks, available to be explored by the curious. Our driver briefs us on the history of the salt plains: "There's a myth that suggests the three mountains Kusina, Kusku and Tunupe were once giants. Tunupe was married to Kusku. But Kusku ran away from her with Kusina. Tunupe who had recently given birth was so upset, she cried rivers of tears, that mixed with the milk she was feeding her son and filled the Uyuni."

We drove through miles and miles of boundless landscape in our Land Cruiser before I notice the tyres, creeping over the crispy crackled surface of salt, start to sound different. I peer out of the window to find that we are now driving over a thin layer of water that merely covers the crystallised ground, by just a couple of millimetres. "You're lucky," our guide tells us in Spanish. "It hasn't rained this much in years". My brothers and I glance at each other, confused as to how that could possibly be an asset to our voyage. Through the back window I notice that the couple of millimetres are now centimetres. The front tyres of the car are no longer caressing the water's surface, but are gliding right through the thick brine like dorsal fins streamlining through the ocean's surface.









Soon enough my eyes behold an ethereal image where heaven meets earth. The sky was mirrored on the reflection of the water, the reflection so flawless it had abolished all signs of a horizon, eliminating all sense of gravity with it. It was as if we were floating. I'm struggling to grasp the beauty that unravels before me; I am standing on the world's largest mirror. The magnificent aqua blue of the sky was patterned with tiger-like stripes of clouds.

Our driver points into the distance- "notice the wooden crosses over there". 50 metres away from us 5 wooden crosses surface from the water in perfect alignment. "A few years ago a car transporting a family of five Bolivians broke down right there. They were left with no choice but to walk to the nearest village." He informs us. "The crosses mark where

they started their journey by foot?" I ask. "No" he replies. "The crosses mark where each of their bodies was found, having frozen to death, the youngest only three years of age." I look around in disbelief; the horizon draws an immaculate 360-degree perimeter around us, clearly confirming that the plains unfold into infinity. The destructive power of nature makes it's presence felt.

Our driver stops on an island of cactuses. Giant green hostile totem poles provide shelter momentarily whilst we enjoy a picnic lunch. A few groups of trekkers slide over the salt plains like small ant like figures beneath us. The dwarfed tracks draw lines resembling those that mark the surface of an ice skating rink.

The temperature dropped to sub zero as dusk

approached, leaving us with a few lingering moments to enjoy blushing skies drooping over the plains. The crisp air carried weightless specks of salt that would land on our skin to form a crystallised layer over the epidermis.

We spend the night in a hotel built entirely of salt bricks; a ground-level circular edifice held together by clay made from salt. The guide's family run this hotel. We are led to our room, the size of a cargo container. In the right-hand corner of the room, a three meter-long block of solid white salt sits on the ground, on it a thick stack of blankets makes up for a mattress. The log fire at the heart of the hotel spreads its heat throughout the handful of rooms. After warming up we are called to sit down at the communal eating table where the food is now our main source of warmth and contentment. The table

is yet another block of salt, this time 15 metres in length, large enough to accommodate all the guests at once. We feast on warm lentil soup and share our views on the overwhelming experience we have all just witnessed. Friendly smiles soften the harsh weathered faces of our hosts as they sip on their third glass of Pisco.

As dawn surfaces we travel further afield before reaching la Laguna Colorada; a shallow salt lake turned oxblood red due to the abundance of the minerals seeping through the ancient rock strata's. The bloody waters are streaked with fluorescent pink. Its not until we get closer that we can properly make out the shape of the flamingos. The flock of hundreds seek refuge from the soaring temperatures and wallow in this blood bath, preening their bubblegum pink plumage under the scorching Bolivian sun.



Cape Town

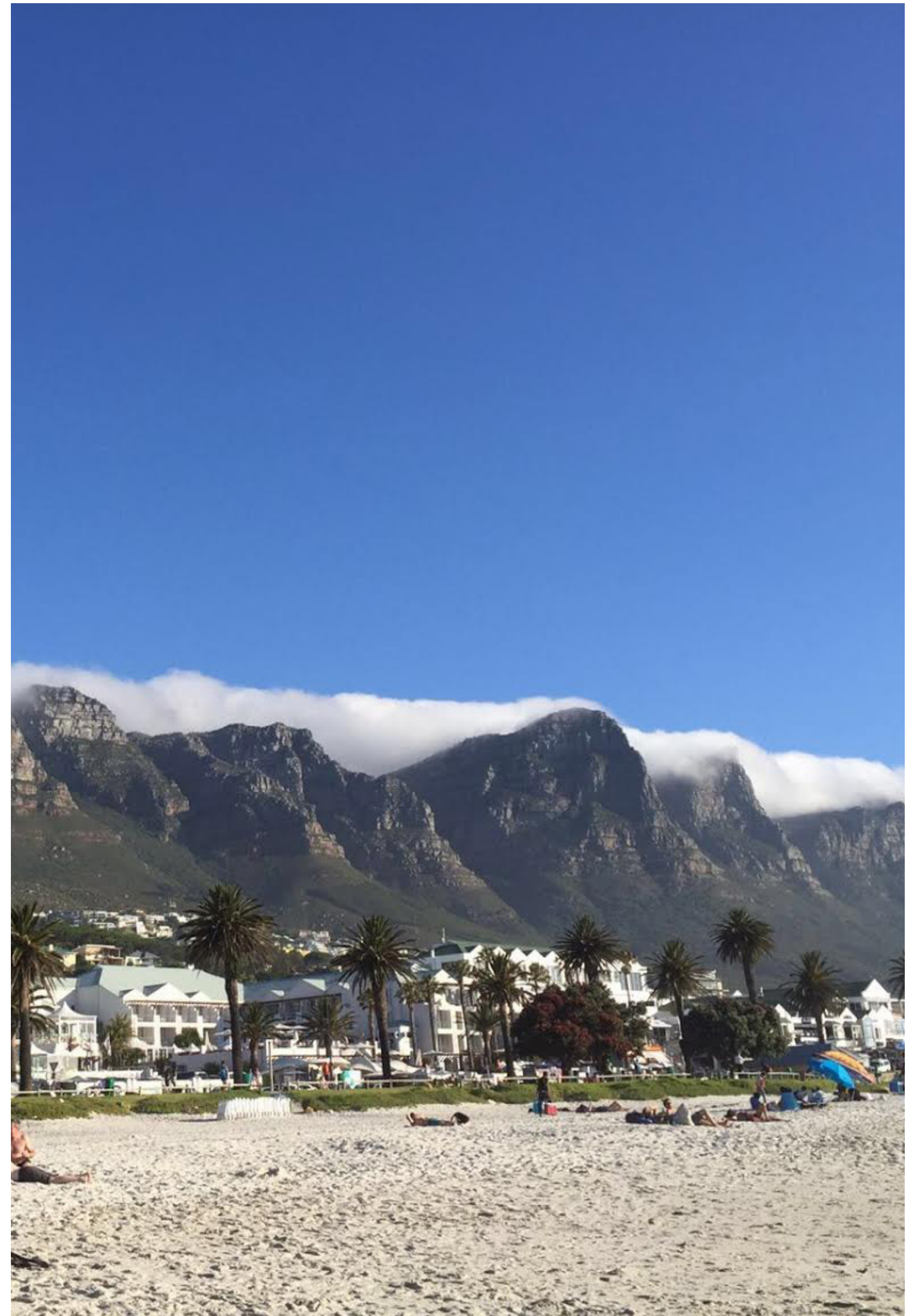
Story By: Tino Maposa

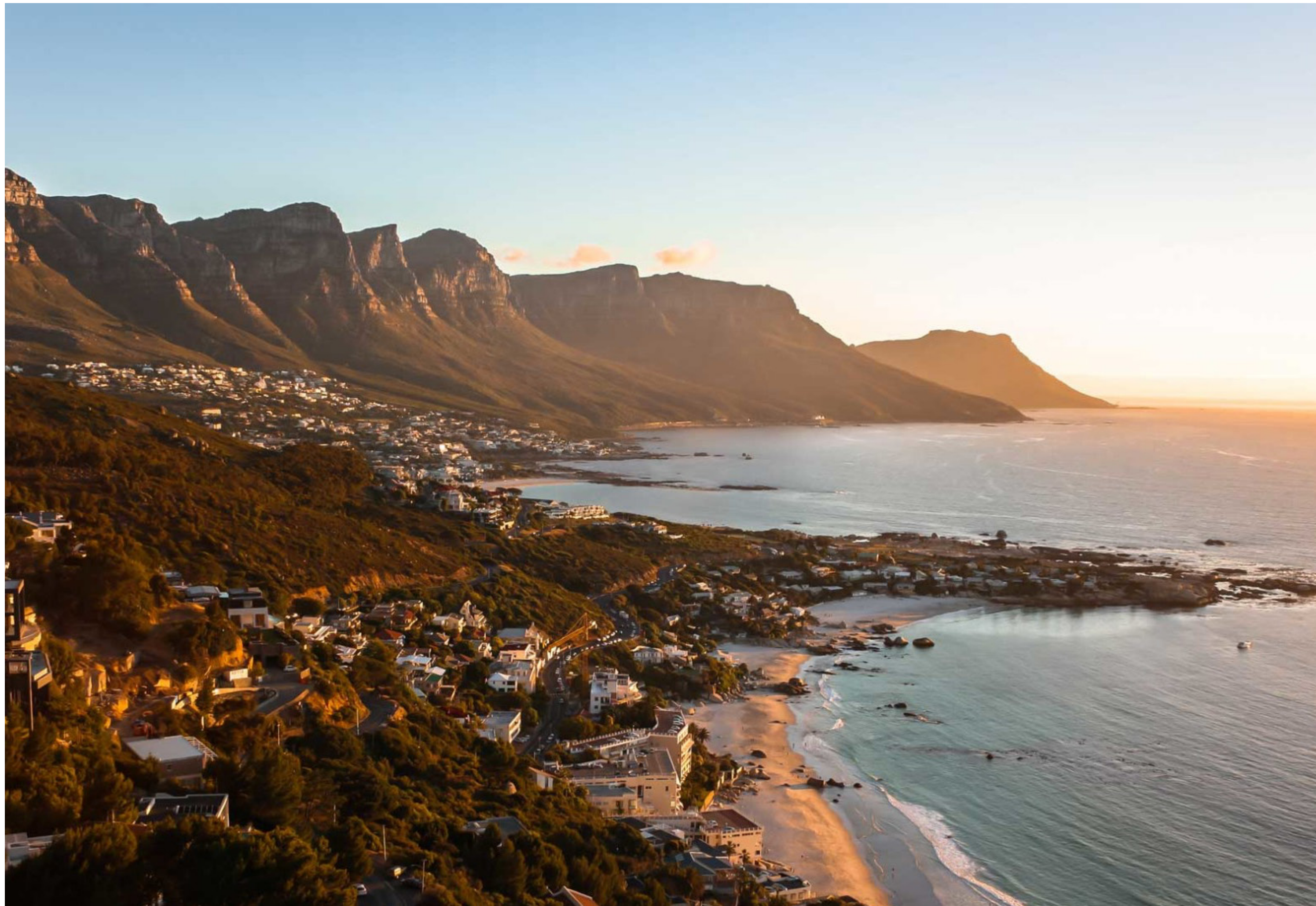
With Africa being home to fifty four countries that offer incredible and astounding beauty, its no alarming surprise the decision to pick which country to visit within the continent comes extremely difficult. However, the choice I personally/finally made definitely lived up to my expectations and more. Leading the title of the worlds best place to visit in "New York Times" and "The Telegraph", Cape Town captured my interest from the initial start. It triggered my curiosity to find out what exactly made it the most popular destination in Africa as mentioned by many websites, articles and reviews I had done my research on.



I started in Jerusalem, located in a plateau in the Judean mountains between the mediterranean and the dead sea. I went in mid January, and I wanted to explore Masada for what it's known for – serenity. The day I was going to leave the city, to Masada, I missed the last bus, there was only 2 buses a day to and from Jerusalem and Masada, so I had to hitch hike my way there, which meant I had to stop twice, in order to reach Masada. The drive to Masada from Jerusalem took about 1 hour and 40 minutes, I remember that it was a Tuesday sometime in January, so it was extremely cold, the cold air against my face felt raw. When I arrived in Masada, I felt the difference in the air, from Jerusalem, one of the biggest cities in what we now call the state of Israel to a sense of serenity in Masada. When I breathed in the air, I felt refreshed, I was in a natural, open space, in a way, exposed. Masada, metzadá “fortress”, is isolated, so in a way this open space and isolation, creates a feeling of freedom. There was no sound – just silence. The silence, in a way, created me to take notice in particular movements and sounds that surrounded me. The movement of the wind, the way the air felt on my face, the sound of my feet embedding into the rocks, being able to feel the coarseness of the rocks. I was emerged into a moment of tranquility. In a way, this silence creates you to create silence in your mind, and reflect... it was almost refreshing to hear nothing.

I arrived there late at night, and I had this strange feeling...I realised I was open, I was in this space, connected to nature – a sense of purity. I was going to walk up towards the fortress of Masada, and hike into the sunrise. I arrived there at around midnight, and I woke up at around 4 AM. As I went up, I couldn't see anything, the darkness created a feeling of uncertainty, I kept hitting into rocks which were coarse, and sharp, I felt the cold air against my face and I was breathing in this purified air, as I took a breathe in and a breathe out my body was being revived. It took me an hour, or an hour and a half to get up there. As I walked up, the air changed, I felt the air becoming warmer, and radiating off my face, as the sun was rising in front of me. The sun was just starting to rise by the time I got to the top, but it was behind the mountain, which was in front of me, and the mountain was right behind the dead sea. “The Sea of Death”, is a salt lake bordering Jordan, Israel and the West Bank. The dead sea is known for being the Earth's lowest election on land, being 1,388 ft below sea level. When I reached the top, the air was no longer cold, it







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Adventure & Exploration - Volume 2

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