

# Venture<sup>®</sup>

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## EXPERIENCING HISTORY

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- UK THE BEST WAY TO SEE STONEHENGE
- Germany MAYAN HISTORY BY OX-CART
- Indonesia HUNGRY FOR SPAIN
- Cambodia CAMBODIA BY BUS
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While in the Madikwe game reserve in **South Africa**, the body language of a solitary crow tells photographer Sanjay F. Gupta there's a lion nearby



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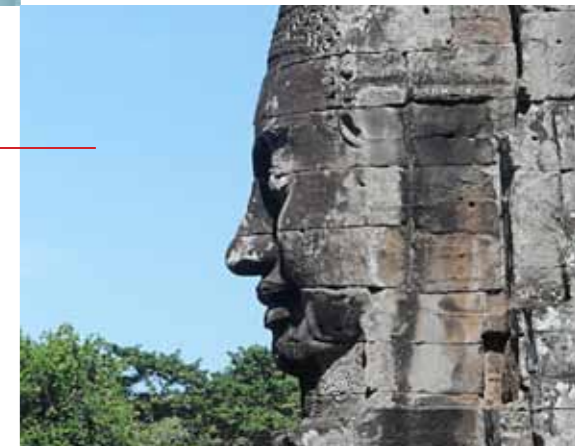
Even as **Berlin**, Germany rewrites itself as one of Europe's hippest cities, Sylvania Hamdani finds in it a great reverence for the past



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## HOPSCOTCH THROUGH CAMBODIAN HISTORY

On a tour of Southeast Asia, Zulu Irminger encounters chili-fried tarantulas, the majesty of Angkor, and the horrors of the Killing Fields in **Cambodia**



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With an eye on the eels and an ear for the daily banter, Melanie Whitmarsh explores Victory Market in Glodok, the Chinatown of **Jakarta**, Indonesia

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Currently based in Christchurch, **New Zealand**, Emanuele Del Bufalo uses working holiday visas to fund his extended travels



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## READER'S LETTER

Travel experiences from our readers: Santi Nurfatmawati takes a bird's-eye view of **Bali**, Indonesia



Always travel with a good book

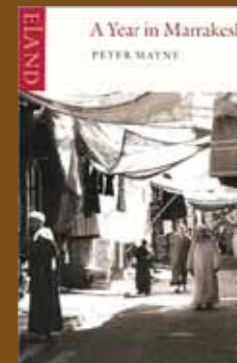


**SANJAY F GUPTA's** pursuit of conserving nature in remote India through photography started as early as age twelve. Nature photography led to art and glamour photography and today Sanjay ("Crimson Skies, Red Sands," page 32) works as a motion picture director and director of photography in Mumbai. [www.greypartridgefilms.com](http://www.greypartridgefilms.com)

Based in Jakarta, Indonesia, **SYLVIANA HAMDANI** ("The Berlin Palimpsest," page 58) is the senior features reporter for a national English-language newspaper. In her spare time, she loves to stroll along beach fronts and write poetry. And it's in a cozy hut on the beach that she dreams of writing a book one day.



Avid traveler, photography enthusiast, movie buff, and music fan, **CHARLIE THET TUN OO** ("An Appetite for Spain," page 40) enjoys sharing his travel experiences through his passion for photography and writing. A son of Myanmar, Charlie currently resides in Bali, Indonesia. His photography can be seen on his Facebook page Charlieism Photography and on [www.charlieism.blogspot.com](http://www.charlieism.blogspot.com)



Tim recommends *A Year in Marrakesh* by Peter Mayne, set in 1950s Morocco. "Brilliantly written, uproariously funny, occasionally remarkably risqué, and suffused with a strange melancholy."

Shweta hails *Red Dust: A Path Through China* by Ma Jian a "must-read for all aspiring travelers and travel writers."



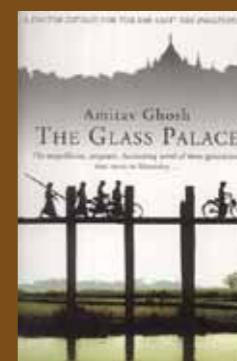
Born in the UK, **TIM HANNIGAN** ("Through the Atlas Mountains," page 16) started work as a chef, trading summers of kitchen work for winters wandering Asia and the Middle East. He eventually shipped out to Java to work as a teacher, and then as a freelance writer and photographer. Now he divides his time between Cornwall and Indonesia. Tim's book *Raffles and the British Invasion of Java* was published in 2012. [www.tahannigan.blogspot.com](http://www.tahannigan.blogspot.com)



Both originally from the UK, poet **MICHAEL PAUL HOGAN** and photographer **DAN JONES** ("A Trip through Dalian: a Dalian Triptych," page 52) currently live in Dalian, China. Dan particularly loves street photography and portraiture, and his work can be seen on [www.snappingchina.com](http://www.snappingchina.com). *American Voodoo* is Mike's first collection of published poetry.



**KATHERINE WOOD** lives on a dairy farm in southwest England. After ten years of managing a photographic shop, Katherine ("On Foot to Stonehenge," page 26) has decided to stop selling cameras in favor of actually using them, and is working hard to step away from the phrase, "All the gear, no idea."



Charlie recommends *The Glass Palace* by Amitav Ghosh, set in Myanmar, India, and Malaysia.

"Word for word, the most beautiful novel in the English language," writes Mike of Rudyard Kipling's novel *Kim*, set in India (now Pakistan).



**ZULU IRMINGER** ("Hopscotch through Cambodian History," page 66) is a software engineer based in the UK. He loves to travel and, at the age of 22, has visited nearly 40 countries. He is soon off to the USA, Canada, Central America, and Australia for two years. In his spare time, Zulu plays the violin, clarinet, and piano in a professional orchestra. Follow his adventures on Twitter @ZuluTravels and his blog [www.zuluirminger.wordpress.com](http://www.zuluirminger.wordpress.com)

**SHWETA GANESH KUMAR** is the bestselling author of *Coming Up On The Show* and *Between The Headlines*, two novels on the Indian broadcast news industry. Her travel columns have been featured in The New Indian Express, One Philippines, and Geo. Shweta ("Trundling Along a Mayan Trail," page 46) currently lives in El Salvador with her husband and one-year-old daughter. [www.shwetaganeshkumar.com](http://www.shwetaganeshkumar.com)



Peter Allison's *Whatever You Do, Don't Run* gets Sanjay's vote. Tales from the African savannah by a safari guide.

# Crimson Skies, Red Sands

BY SANJAY F. GUPTA  
PHOTOGRAPHS BY SANJAY F. GUPTA

“Lions,” Stephanie said, hanging up the radio. It was a warm late September afternoon in the Madikwe game reserve in South Africa. The wind lifted sand into the atmosphere, creating a mystical haze across the semi-arid landscape. With a glint in her eye, Stephanie accelerated.





In the local indigenous languages, 'madikwe' translates as *place of blood, crocodile, and wealth*.



**THE MADIKWE GAME** reserve, close to the Botswana border, covers 75,000 hectares of plains and riverine grazing pastures. It's home to lions, leopards, cheetah, wild dogs, elephants, black and white rhinoceroses, African buffalo, and over 300 resident and migrant bird species. The antelope population includes impala, springbok, kudu, blue and red wildebeest, eland, nyala, bushbuck, gemsbok, and waterbuck. But this time I wasn't here to check off species. As a naturalist and photographer, I was here to observe and photograph.

**TO THE WATERHOLE**

The daylight was still harsh for photography, so we drove unhurriedly through the thorny scrub and savannah towards the lion sighting, passing oryx in the open grassland. Suddenly, around a corner, a dozen wild black and tan dogs bounded playfully from the bushes, stretching and nudging each other as if recently woken. They crossed the road, vanishing into the tall pale grass.

We stopped at a lake with a slushy shore. Barren trees were streaked with white stork droppings. A pied kingfisher scanned the surface while dainty-legged

springbok lapped from the lake. The sun shimmered on the water and, save for the drone of a collared dove, it was chillingly quiet. Borne by a fan of ash grey feathers, a drongo swooped down and through my binoculars I tracked the bright blue flash of a lilac-breasted roller – the national bird of Botswana. Elephants mud-bathed. The wind began to cool and the sky deepened to orange.

**THE ZEBRA CARCASS**

Stephanie Kulak, my ranger for three days, drove on to an area of vast open grassland, acacia trees, and a zebra carcass. Lions had been spotted here a few hours earlier, but the lead had now gone cold. We were alone. Nature was unpredictable.

We followed the orange dirt road as it curved towards a mountain. Then Stephanie noticed lion tracks heading in the direction we had just driven from. A new lead. Alert, we returned to the zebra carcass. The dry grass swayed in the evening breeze. The scene was different now: tense, a herd of dark, horned wildebeest huddled together – staple food for lions. A jackal, tawny with a black-tipped tail, trotted stealthily to

the bloodied, bony carcass. We waited, scanning the horizon in the slanting, golden light; mistaking anthills for lion heads.

In the last of the daylight we drove away, absorbing the magic of the African bush. Above us, over in less than a minute, the mating dance of the black-winged kite.

A big moon rose in the cool evening. In the dry acacia bush, we saw a herd of over 20 elephants and rhinoceroses, sharing their space in peaceful proximity. I switched to an ISO of 3200, using the last of the light reflecting from the purple sky. The mature elephants foraged among the leaves and tree bark while the juveniles played and tussled trunk to trunk. Watching these giants humbled me, filling my heart with gratitude for all those – and in particular the Madikwe Safari Lodge team – who contribute towards the conservation and revival of African wildlife.

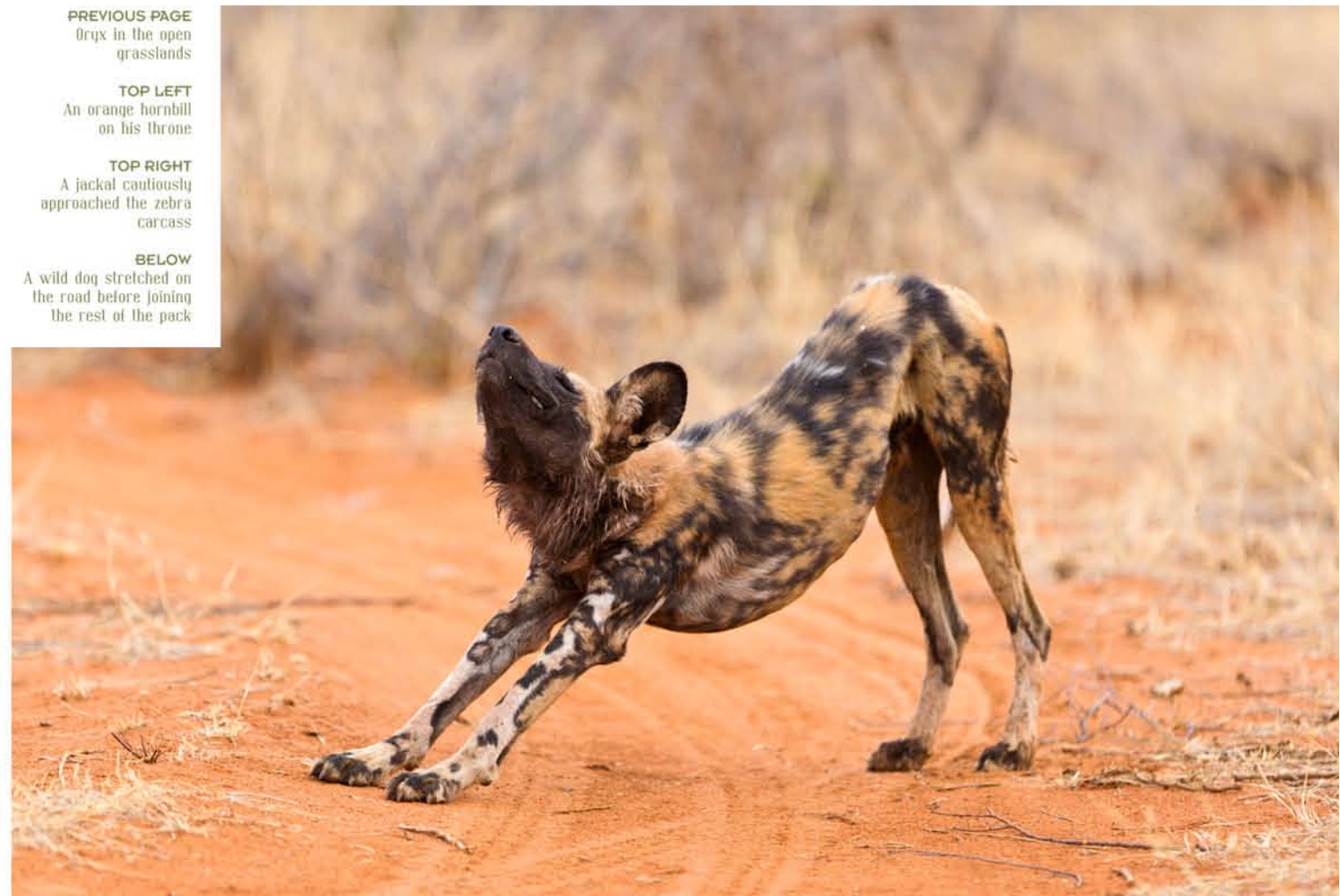
I never draw the curtains to my room or tent when in the wild. It's a pity to close oneself in and miss out on nature at night. From my bed that quiet night, I watched an elephant eating tree leaves – the leaves and its tusks shining silver in

**PREVIOUS PAGE**  
Oryx in the open grasslands

**TOP LEFT**  
An orange hornbill on his throne

**TOP RIGHT**  
A jackal cautiously approached the zebra carcass

**BELOW**  
A wild dog stretched on the road before joining the rest of the pack





the moonlight. Drifting into sleep, I wondered how such a huge animal could walk so quietly. A lion roared in the distance. Was it the same one that had eluded me today?

#### WHAT THE CROW SAW

It was cold out in the bush the following morning. A herd of grazing zebra blocked the road, constantly sniffing the air for predators. While waiting for them to pass, Stephanie radioed the other rangers to see if any lions had been spotted. But there was no new information.

Radio communications between rangers working at the various lodges in the Madikwe area is the key to a non-stop wildlife tracking and surveillance operation, keeping poaching at a minimum.

We headed out on a track no other ranger had been down that morning: a dusty road through savannah. The dry grass was a saturated yellow under the rising sun and was long enough to hide crouching lions. In a hoodie to keep the chill away, I sat in the open safari jeep with my camera in my lap. We drove slowly. It was silent.

Rocky mountains formed a backdrop to the sparse grass, soft sand, tall anthills, and scattered acacia. In a tree perched a single crow. "What's he looking at?", Stephanie mumbled to herself, slowing the jeep. She maneuvered to give us a view of the base of the tree. And there it was: a big male lion with a bloodied muzzle, feeding on a large buffalo. I was already shooting.

The buffalo had been killed the day before and had already been more than half-consumed. There had to be more lions around who had fed on it during the night. Stephanie gently tapped my shoulder. "Behind you, another one," she whispered.

A second, younger male lion was approaching the kill. He walked briskly, but cautiously, keeping eye contact with the feeding lion, stopping just once to glance at our vehicle. Rarely

threatened by hunters, lions and hyenas tolerate their kills being observed from close quarters.

The younger lion reached the carcass. Both lions snarled at each other, but within minutes the second lion was on his haunches, head to one side, tugging at the tough flesh. The buffalo would last the two lions three days. A bald-headed vulture kept a keen eye on the diminishing feast.

Stephanie radioed the other rangers; it was our time to share the kill. ■



**LEFT**  
A male lion and the buffalo kill

**BELOW LEFT**  
The lower light of the late afternoon was ideal for photographing this elephant

**BELOW RIGHT**  
Elegant springbok at the waterhole

Nestled in the middle of the Madikwe game reserve is the Madikwe Safari Lodge: a spacious lodge comprising 20 luxury suites built into the wooded foothills that overlook the wildlife-rich areas below. The lodge is a two-and-a-half hour drive from Sun City in northern South Africa. [www.madikwesafarilodge.co.za](http://www.madikwesafarilodge.co.za)

