

# Scattered Life

A Personal Travel Record 1996 - 2012

No Plan - No Reasons - No Direction - No Start - No Finish - No Purpose - No Life - Scattered Life!

Done...

Visited all of the 7 Continents...



... and 63 different countries.

- |                 |                    |                         |
|-----------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. U.S.A.       | 28. Jamaica        | 56. Croatia             |
| 2. Netherlands  | 29. Russia         | 57. Vietnam             |
| 3. Italy        | 30. Brazil         | 58. Cambodia            |
| 4. Vatican City | 31. Mexico         | 59. Romania             |
| 5. France       | 32. Jordan         | 60. Luxembourg          |
| 6. Morocco      | 33. Greece         | [Isle of Man]           |
| 7. Pakistan     | 34. Kenya          | 61. Uruguay             |
| 8. Philippines  | 35. Iceland        | [Falkland Islands]      |
| 9. Cuba         | 36. Denmark        | ** [Antarctica]         |
| 10. Switzerland | 37. Sweden         | 62. Argentina           |
| 11. Tunisia     | 38. Germany        | 63. Chile               |
| 12. Tanzania    | 39. South Africa   | [British Isles Cruise]  |
| 13. Venezuela   | 40. Zambia         | [Guernsey]              |
| [Gibraltar]     | 41. Zimbabwe       |                         |
| 14. Egypt       | 42. Norway         | Airport Only / Transit: |
| 15. India       | 43. Turkey         | United Arab Emirates    |
| 16. Peru        | 44. Spain          | Portugal                |
| 17. Bolivia     | 45. Japan          | Dominican Republic      |
| 18. Finland     | 46. Poland         | Bahrain                 |
| 19. Seychelles  | 47. Mauritius      | Singapore               |
| 20. Canada      | 48. Guatemala      | Thailand                |
| 21. Nepal       | 49. Panama         |                         |
| 22. China       | 50. Columbia       |                         |
| 23. Uganda      | 51. Ireland        |                         |
| 24. Austria     | 52. Czech Republic |                         |
| 25. Monaco      | 53. Hungary        |                         |
| 26. Belgium     | 54. Slovakia       |                         |
| 27. Australia   | 55. Costa Rica     |                         |

Been to see all of the Official "New 7 Wonders of the World"

1. Great Wall of China
2. Taj Mahal
3. Colosseum
4. Chichen Itza
5. Christ Redeemer
6. Petra
7. Machu Picchu



## 2000

### Philippines

We arrived at Manila Airport and it was already past midnight. Just like on our trip to Quetta, the plan was to take an early morning flight to our first destination ... the Chocolate Hills on Bohol Island. Loaded up with "Pro-Plus" we boarded the local mini-bus to head for the domestic airport.

The ticket-counter was due to open at five in the morning, so we had a few hours to kill. The only place that seemed to be open was a karaoke bar. Inside they served drinks and snacks and of course there was the singing. Which was actually really rather good!

When the bar closed we headed to the benches outside the airport. We passed the remaining time playing cards and listening to the cocks crowing in the cargo crates close by ... cock-a-doodle-doo!

At exactly 5 a.m. the airport ticket office opened and we purchased our tickets. When we were finally on board and seated on the plane, we dozed off and had a little snooze. We had now been awake for a very long time.

In Bohol, we still needed to make it to the Chocolate Hills. So first it was onto the bus. We then transferred to a mini bus to finally arrive at the foot of the hill on which the hotel we planned to stay at was located.

We could then have walked up, but there was the option to jump on the back of a couple of motorbikes. The motorbikes were more fun and it was handy that we were also then able to book a time with one of them to come back for a tour of the Chocolate Hills.

We checked into a really basic and not very clean room, with bugs everywhere. There was no other choice now and so we just rested.

Our guide on the motorbike arrived on time and so our tour began of the Hills.



Up and down and around we went, until with all the excitement the guide began to speed, causing Tabitha to fall off the back and land slap bang on her backside!

In the early hours of the morning we decided to see the sunrise over the hills. We climbed up to the recommended viewing point. There we saw the sunrise!

The next destination on our trip to the Philippines was to be the Banaue Rice Terraces.

To get there we first made our way to Cebu Island.

We walked down the hill from our hotel and then caught a mini bus to the bus station. Then we boarded a bus to the port. We then purchased tickets for the ferry, to cross over to Cebu ...Then into a Taxi to get to the Airport. From the Airport we flew back to Manila on Luzon Island. Where there was then a long bus journey until we finally arrived at Banaue. Now that was another long travelling day!

The rice terraces...



After completing our planned explorations of the region we began to scan our guidebook. I came across an entry for the "100 Islands" and an option to hire our own private island. This was something that we both thought we just could not miss.

So another long bus journey across the island to get to the 100 Islands region. Once we arrived we located the travel office and were able to arrange our reservations for the next morning. This included the reservation for our island, a boat transfer, and the overnight stay on a larger less isolated Island.

In the morning we first headed to the local market to pick up a few bits 'n' pieces for our stay. Then it was on to the boat to travel across the sea to "our" Island.

When we arrived the guide left us and said he would take our luggage to Children's Island where we would be staying for the night, and would be back at around 4 p.m. to pick us up.

For a moment it suddenly dawned on me, we were now all alone on this Island. We were putting our trust in our guide, to take care of our luggage and to actually come back at four.

This did not last, as in no time at all we were running around exploring and checking our exclusive location. We never expected on this trip to end up on a beach, so we did not have our kit. No problem though, as we really were alone ... who needed swimwear!

The time passed and as we were having such a wonderful day it was such a shame that even though we were there almost the whole day, it did not seem that long. Sure enough, just after four in the afternoon our guide arrived to transfer us to our overnight accommodation.

On Children's Island we found our cabin up on the hill, with our luggage safely inside, and set about having supper. However, this was rather basic compared to what some of the other guests had brought, with their barbecues and fully loaded picnics!

We stayed the night and then it was back to the mainland and off to the Capital Manila, where we would see the city and fly back home the following day.

## France - Paris

Tabitha and I went to Paris together: On a coach trip, picked up locally, across by ferry then on to Paris for the long weekend. We saw the sites and came back home!

## The Serengeti:



## Ngorongoro Crater:



Personally I thought these were the best game parks I have visited. The animal sightings were impressive.

We saw:

Lions - Elephants - Zebras - Giraffes - Black & White Rhinoceroses  
All Sorts of Deer Type Creatures - Crocodiles - Flamingos - Hyenas - Leopards - Cheetahs  
Wildebeest - Buffalo - Ostriches - Many Other Types of Birds - Hippopotamuses  
Many Monkey Types - Warthogs

## Finland, Lapland (No Landing)

We did want to fly and land in Northern Finland to visit Lapland for the day. However, it was foggy and icy so the plane could not land. The crew made the announcement and all the children on board seemed to simultaneously start to cry. They did offer a refund and handed out small cuddly bears to the kids on the way out - Tabitha accepted one as well!

## 2003

### China

I was in Beijing and really wanted to see the panda's in the Zoo. After buying my ticket I headed straight for the panda enclosure. It was near the front as this was the most frequently visited section, and most tour groups generally came for just this reason. The enclosure itself was all concrete and although the pandas did look as if they were well cared for, I would not have liked to live there myself!

As I walked around I noticed that the pandas were either sleeping or oblivious to me "spying" on them. However, there up on the rocks, sat one, watching me, following me with its eyes, fascinated with my every move. Then I thought I heard a sound coming from its direction.

'Psst.'

I looked around. There was no one else around. Then again, I heard a voice 'Hey, you there.' I turned around quickly and it quite clearly seemed like it was coming from the panda on the rocks. As I began staring directly at it, it spoke again!

'Hello there!' said the panda on the rocks.

'No way,' I said out loud.

'Yes, it's me, the black and white bear.'

'Wow, you spoke!'

'I knew you would accept that I could talk. I knew it the moment I saw you.'

'What's not to believe, you are right there in front of me and talking!' I replied.

'Well, thank you, my name is Jenna.'

'On this plaque here it says your name is Tao?' I enquired.

'I am in China and they gave me a Chinese name, it's not like they asked me!' Jenna responded.

'Well I'm very pleased to meet you Jenna.'

With the formalities complete she spoke again.

'I'm bored; will you come with me into the city?'

'How are we going to get past the guards without them noticing?' I asked.

'Just leave that to me and don't act suspicious,' she replied.

Jenna then jumped off the rocks, straddled her way over the pit and climbed over the fence. As soon as she was on the outside of the enclosure she stood up straight, no longer walking on all her paws, and confidently began to stride towards the Zoo exit. I kept by her side and, as instructed, tried not to look suspicious. Nothing to see here! Moments later we walked straight out of the front gate.

Curious as to why we were not stopped, I asked, 'why did we not get stopped?'

'It's simple,' Jenna replied. 'You see it's all about mind over matter, nobody really expects a bear, panda or otherwise, to walk out of the front door. I learnt long ago that basically if I did something with confidence I could make anyone believe anything,' she continued. 'Like I said, it's simple case of mind over matter.'

It worked and so that was that. If I could accept that a panda could talk, then why not believe this as well!

'So now that we are out, what do you want to do?' I then asked.

'I'm hungry, and so sick and tired of all that bamboo! Let's go and eat some proper food,' she replied.

There across the road was a Chinese restaurant. So we stepped inside, sat down and placed our order.

First came the Peking, or should I now say Beijing, duck. I took a pancake, and as I was slowly preparing mine by lining it with the sauce, Jenna, just poured the whole of the duck onto her plate, rolled it up and consumed the lot! Realising then what she had done. 'Oh dear. I'm so sorry. I don't know what got over me? What a greedy bear I am?' she then said embarrassingly.

'Oh no don't worry about it. It's obviously so much more tempting than bamboo!' I said.

'Sorry!' again Jenna replied.

Just then the second course arrived and we just continued with that!

Having filled our stomachs, with what eventually became a feast, we decided that we would take a trip to the market.

The market itself was a fresh produce market. However, what we were to discover was that this was no ordinary market. As we strolled past the various stalls we discovered all sorts of crawling creepy nasties! There were scorpions, and roaches, and bugs of every variety. Then there were snakes and every other type of slithering creature. We passed quickly through and at the very end we spotted some puppies - Really cute little puppies. Jenna questioned 'surely not?'

The man at the stall instantly replied, 'you like? Very tasty.'

'Oh no thanks,' we responded simultaneously.

'You cannot eat those puppies, they are so cute,' Jenna added.

'Of course we eat. Is good!' the stall keeper responded. 'We have saying here. If it has four legs and is not table, and not a chair, we eat!'

With that, I noticed Jenna, with the look of fear in her eyes, straighten up to act more human and even less like a panda! She took one step back and whispered in my ear, 'we have to set them free.'

'How? He will notice if we let them out,' I said.

'I have a plan! You distract him. I will open the cages and grab them all,' Jenna replied. 'I will hold them tight, and up close against my fur. Then it's all about mind over matter and he will no longer be able to see them!'

I then moved closer to the man and "accidentally" slipped and knocked the change tray off the table in front of him. Jenna was quickly freeing and grabbing the puppies. She held on to them tightly, close to her.

'I'm so sorry,' I said to the man as he began to collect all the coins.

'You go now!' he responded angrily as I started to bend over to help. 'No, no, you leave, go,' he added. So we slowly walked away with him completely unaware that attached to Jenna were all the puppies.

Moments later he noticed his cages open. He began to scream 'Come back. Where my dogs?'

Rather than risk being caught we ran. Running so fast that as we ducked into a side alley he did not realise where we had disappeared, and he just gave up.

When we were sure we had lost him completely we finally sat down to rest. The puppies then quickly jumped off Jenna's fur and began to run away. We were at this point far too tired to run after them. 'Oh well we tried' Jenna then commented. 'We did set them free and I suppose they have a chance now to get away,' she added.

'As long as they don't run into some hungry passer by,' I joked.

We both then laughed and hoped for the best.



The following day as we both sat down for a breakfast of freshly cooked noodles. The first thing Jenna said was, 'I would like to visit the Great China Wall. I've never been there and I have always wanted to go.' So we made plans to go there.

Several bus journeys later we arrived at one of the popular tourist sections of the Wall. For the next hour or so we just walked slowly up and down the section of the Wall taking it all in and glad to be there.

Then Jenna said 'I don't think I'm going to go back to the Zoo.'

'What do you want to do?' I asked.

'I know of a forest near here, and I want to return to the wild. I want to be a panda living free where I belong.'

We both said our goodbyes and Jenna gave me a great big bear hug. She then jumped over the side of the Great Wall, and ran off into the distance. That was the last I saw of Jenna, the Panda Bear.



### Las Vegas & Death Valley (+ Horseback Riding)

For this trip to Las Vegas I booked a cheap flight via Denver. On paper there was just about enough time, with around 2 hours allowed at Denver, to clear customs and transfer to the onward flight to Las Vegas. This allocated time soon began to appear as if it was going to be nowhere near enough. To begin with the plane was delayed at Heathrow. Boarding started 30 minutes after the scheduled departure time and then consequently the take-off slot was missed and there was a further 30-minute delay.

Approaching Denver Airport we seemed to have made up some of the lost time. However, just when it all started to look good, the plane started to circle around and around the airspace above the airport. I could see the paths all drawn out on the automated map on the entertainment system. All the time that was gained on the journey was lost and added to that the plane did not actually land for another 30 minutes.

On the ground it also seemed to take ages to "find a parking space!" Finally, with about 40 minutes to spare, all the landing procedures were completed and I was finally off the plane.

Arriving at customs I seemed to be able rush through with my landing and customs form in hand and was next in line. At the desk the officer began to open my passport and I simply said, 'I'm in kind of a rush, you don't need to look through that!' To my surprise the man looked up, smiled, then

2004

African Jungle Gorilla Safari - Uganda

on a gorilla trek we will venture  
never thought it would be such an adventure

the groups gather for the team briefings  
two hours to mubare only seeing will be believing

ready now are the guides, the porters, and the tourists  
waiting for word from the trackers and hackers in the mists

onward through the villages passing the tea plantations  
down to the river we go with high expectations

the wrong direction and so back to base  
feeling so tired already, that was such waste

a new direction is now planned  
so straight into the jungle we will land

up the winding tracks we begin to climb  
happy to be amongst the trees we do not mind

hours pass and exhausted before reaching the top  
there is no option but to take a short recovery stop

the trackers find where the gorillas have nested  
however they cannot be found from where they had rested

upward again and still no word as to their location  
this no longer seems to be such a pleasant vacation

over the summit the clear paths have ended  
straight into the wild growth we now descended

struggling to walk without being tangled and trapped  
slipping on the ground that has yet to be mapped

along the narrow ridges it is getting harder  
the guide is lost and there is a snigger of laughter

another change of direction as the trackers get close  
it really cannot get any worse we all hope and suppose

down further into the overgrown jungle we now head  
as it is hacked by a machete into the unknown we are led

there is now hope as the gorillas have been found  
one more hour and we will see them all safe and sound

the final steps are still treacherous as some still fall  
soon there is a large gorilla in the bushes seen by all

then there come the rest as the silverback sits and feeds  
the youngster so playful weaving haphazardly in and out of the trees

another fine gorilla sits and poses to the masses  
as we all look on with delight as the time just passes

it is sad when we have to go and leave them alone  
before it gets dark we really need to get home

the struggles then continue especially for tabitha who was michéle  
to most the downward task was daunting, however, to her it was hell

treacherous foundations continuing to slip and slide  
for her most of the journey would be on her backside

slower and slower as she began to hold the group back  
afraid that she would fall and something would crack

the leader was anxious of the time and was getting frustrated  
until it was agreed that more help was desperately wanted

the rest all continued without her and the thunder  
who stayed and was left with exhausted thoughts to ponder

so far to the bottom when will the men with the stretcher arrive  
thunder knew somehow he would then have to keep up to survive

it wasn't so long until the rescue team were in sight  
on a stretcher she then lay with great delight

a crash course of intense walking for thunder was now due  
as somehow he managed to keep up and she didn't have a clue

there she was lying on her back looking at the tops of the trees  
the men carried her down as if she were as light as a breeze

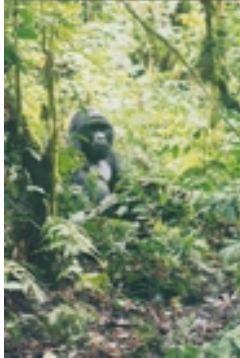
faster down the mountain passing the others on the way  
amused to see her on the stretcher all having something to say

until finally reaching the foot of the mountain at no loss  
entering the open ground and to the river ready to cross

the stepping stones or the crooked fallen bridge now awaited  
one ran across and jumped up and down to check if they could make it

finally across the bridge and up the hill  
thunder would keep going without the need for any pill

the journey on the stretcher had now ended  
into the jeep and the nine hour adventure was suspended



AACLTR7 2004

The gorillas were basically allowed to roam and live free and this is why the trek to find them lasted over 9 hours. The experienced trackers were able to follow the signs and, on most occasions are able to locate them. The time that was allowed with the gorillas was also controlled. In any one day any group could be visited just once and for a maximum of 1 hour. This further ensured that the gorillas were not over exposed.



Whilst in Uganda we did also cross the Equator. It was interesting to see the "bucket - water" demo.

Let out the water at the equator - and the water flows straight down; North of the equator it drains clockwise; and South of the equator it drains counter-clockwise. As seen on Michael Palin's "Pole to Pole".

And just as he danced clockwise in the North and counter-clockwise in the South so did I - Hilarious! You had to be there - Anyway Tabitha found it amusing!

Europe - Holland, (Belgium), Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Italy, France, and Monaco

On this grand tour of Europe we started by crossing the channel to France and then continued on to Amsterdam.

This coach tour included many stops. However, the highlights are listed below: