

The South Island of New Zealand, 67 years back - in 1950. A small hall in a small town is packed with farmers and shopkeepers and tradesmen, some with their families. A local builder is showing his 'slides' of a driving tour across America. So rare is it in those days for anyone from New Zealand to travel overseas, that hundreds have come to look at his pictures, listen to his stories, and experience the adventure second hand.

In the centre of the front row is a small boy. He is nine years old, his knees are scratched, his socks hang around his ankles, his shoes are muddy; he has been playing rugby on the local park.

Now, in this hall, he can hardly believe what he is hearing and seeing.

Overseas ! This man has actually been overseas - to America - other places too.

The boy has always dreamed of travelling, and has devoted hours to poring over pictures in his encyclopaedia, pictures of famous creations of either men or nature ...places all over the world he's told himself that one day he will travel to see, but it's an improbable dream; hardly anyone from the town has even been to the North Island, let alone another country.

Now, as he hangs on every word and gazes in wonder at every picture, he is consumed by one thought:

It is possible !

It really IS possible !

And as he walks home he promises himself: 'one day I will do that...

...one day I will see the world.'

(From 'Memoirs of a Minor Public Figure, Des Wilson 2011)

*'Whatever our limitations, in travel we can
have our day of glory,
when all our
dreams come true,
when we can do anything we like...
...and, when we are tired of it,
we can pull up stakes and move on.*

*Travel - the solitude of the mountains,
the silence of the desert,
the delicacy of the minaret...
eternal change...
limitless contrast...
unending variety.'*

'One day I will see the world...'



FACES AND PLACES

A life in pictures

DES WILSON



INTRODUCTION

A FOOTPRINT IN THE SAND

'Take only memories - leave only footprints.'

(Chief Seattle)

I once wandered alone in a desert when it was so dark that all I could see were the stars and, far away, the flickering lanterns of the camp I had left behind.

I have never elsewhere known such complete silence or felt so alone.

I wondered, was it possible that in all history I was the first human being to stand there... the first on that small patch of land so far off the beaten track.

It had rained and the surface was wet so, before walking back towards the lanterns I pressed a shoe deep into the sand to leave a clear footprint. My memory of that moment still travels with me; I like to think that the when I die *I will have left my footprint in the sand and, thus, on the planet*, leaving behind for all eternity the message that once I was there.

This collection of pictures traces my footsteps in only about a third of 68 countries I have been to, but it is more than just a picture book - it is also an ode to travel. Of the experiences life can offer, I believe travel beats them all - an adventure that always excites and inspires, surprises and sometimes even shocks, yet above all, teaches. I think it was St Augustine who said *'the world is a book and those who do not travel read only one page.'*

As a child in a small town in New Zealand I had a book full of pictures of man-made miracles, spectacular natural landscapes, and colourful people who did not look like New Zealanders - Arabs bartering in bazaars, skinny African kids minding cattle in the desert, Chinese peasants in cone-shaped hats working in rice fields. It unveiled to me the world and its wonders. I read and re-read it and, as a result, to travel and see the world became an ambition that over-rode all others.

I complete this book in my 77th year , probably entering the last lap of what, as you become older, increasingly seems a very brief journey from cradle to grave. That being the case, this book of pictures could be said to be my last word. It is a limited edition of only 60 copies. If you have one, you matter to me.

As I worked on it I realised how crucial my travels have been in enabling me to look back on my life with satisfaction. Of course there have been some opportunities carelessly missed, potential unrealised, mistakes made or sins committed; you cannot live a life as full as mine without blemish. But I can claim some achievements too. All of these and some of the failures I'm ready to admit to are recorded in my autobiography '*Memoirs of a Minor Public Figure*' (2011).

Why has travel meant so much ? For a start I believe one way to measure the success of one's life is by whether childhood dreams are fulfilled. These pictures show that the small boy who dreamed '*One day I will see the world*' has done just that, and done it from scratch, with no advice, no plan, no money, and beginning at a time when virtually no-one went anywhere. Because seeing the world was a special dream, so it is for me a special achievement.

I HAVE seen nearly all the world's wonders, wandered around every continent , have paid for every kind of food with every kind of currency, have endured excruciating cold and debilitating heat, have experienced both shatteringly noisy urban hubbub and the awesome silence of isolated country and desert. It's the sheer volume of experiences that - as well as having the best of family and friends, and a rewarding career - enable me now to complete that final lap philosophically relaxed, and without a need to remain competitive or called upon to make up for lost time.

In my memoirs I reflected on some of the conclusions I have reached about, or from travel: one is that, if you want to, you can have the world's wonders entirely to yourself. The answer is to be there first...at dawn... when you can usually enjoy them alone for at a precious half hour or so. I was first into the museum in Cairo and had the fabulous Tutankhamun exhibition to myself; in Xian in China, I stood alone in front of row after

row of silent Terracotta warriors until I had the spine-tingling feeling that they were alive and awaiting my orders; a stunning experience. There is a cafe about fifty yards from the Sphinx where you can sit alone as the sun rises and have a coffee and a completely undisturbed view of the Pyramids as they must have looked for thousands of years. The Grand Canyon is at its most awe-inspiring if you walk around the brink as dawn breaks and before the crowd comes to disturb its peace and diminish its grandeur. There is no better time to lean on the rails of boats and look at life on the banks of the Nile or the Mekong than when the sun is coming up and communities begin to awake and come down to wash and gather water for their families and cattle. I have shared hundreds of miles of Jordanian desert with one distant Arab on a camel, and meandered across Red Square, the Grand Place, and Piazza San Marco with only birds for company. I have clambered over the Acropolis, Angkor Wat and the Great Wall as if it were I who was discovering them for the first time. I have stood at the foot of Mount Cook and on top of Table Mountain, walked in the meadows and woods of Yellowstone and Yosemite, marvelled at the rainbows and waterfalls of Iceland, meditated in the temples of Japan and Thailand, revelled in the spectacle of wildlife in the Masai Mara or polar bears in the Arctic...always either alone or with a few other world-wise adventurers with an alarm clock.

Second, I have found that by travelling at out-of-the-ordinary times and keeping off the beaten track, you do not just cross boundaries, countries and continents, but travel back in time. When not surrounded by 21st century tourists, these places look much as they must always have looked. You don't have to imagine what life was like a thousand years back on the steppes of Mongolia, in Bedouin settlements in Jordan, in the wooden huts and rice fields of China, on the banks of the Nile, in the mountain markets of the Andes, and in the floating villages of the Mekong Delta; even today you can experience it just as it always was.

I have learned, too, that travel is crucial to understanding people. As you travel widely you see that the overwhelming majority of us are born, live and die in the same small place - whether it be a small town in the back country of Texas or a collection of mud huts in the Kenyan bush. Most people have never left their country, many have never

left their district. The overwhelming majority of human beings share the same objective: to survive ... to eat, drink, keep warm and sheltered and live free of disease and violence. They want to provide and care for their families. They want laughter and love. And for all the horrors, or memorials to horrors, that I have seen, my journeys leave me convinced that the overwhelming majority are also good people; in all those countries, often in places where few Westerners dare go, I have never once felt afraid of ordinary people. If you come in peace, if you look cheerful and friendly, you will find the locals the same.

Reach out a hand for help, someone will usually take it. The more isolated or poverty-stricken the place, the bigger the smile, the warmer the welcome. As someone wrote: *The everyday kindness of the back roads more than makes up for the greed of the headlines.*

I would like to say travel allows me to explain why people do what they do to each other, but it hasn't really. I saw Dachau concentration camp and the killing fields of Cambodia and many other reminders of man's inhumanity to man and I don't pretend to know what turns good people into monsters. Communities don't suddenly decide to turn on themselves with hate and violence as the Russians did under Stalin, the Germans under Hitler, the Chinese under Mao, the Cambodians under Pol Pot and as is happening in the Middle East today. Mostly people are corralled into countries, races or religions and 'led' to do it. Our leaders and institutions, countries and religions, are far too often the problem, not the solution. That is because we give too few people too much power and too much incentive to do whatever is necessary to maintain it. In fact as I write this in 2017 it has never been more so. You cannot travel and meet so many likeable human beings without being baffled as to why so many end up at war...it can only be because they've been 'educated' and influenced by those who are supposed to be the best of us - political and religious leaders - but are in fact the worst.

Travel does not only open your eyes to the reality of other cultures but it puts your own country into perspective. Travelling in the developing world you quickly come to appreciate the quality of life, the comfort and remarkable technology we enjoy at home,

but at the same time you see how so-called 'progress' has deprived us, especially our children, of the community and family loyalty and resourcefulness and capacity for innocent enjoyment you find in the most unexpected places. Of course there is far too much of this world where there is extreme human suffering, as a result of desperate poverty, famine or war; if I were to pretend otherwise you would rightly throw this book away. But I have also found heart-warming and inspiring villages - in India for instance, or Vietnam or Laos - where people live at subsistence level and yet there is a greater sense of community and family life and more children with happy faces than I have ever seen at home. Would I want to live there ? Probably not. But would they be happier living where and how we do ? Not necessarily. I know I am over-simplifying here, but the fact is that whenever I have left a subsistence village in Asia or Africa I have done so with a warm feeling and a smile on my face; I can't say the same for many places in more 'civilised' countries.

One of the ironies of travelling in, and photographing developing countries is that the best, most colourful pictures tend to be of the poorest people and places. The danger of becoming a kind of 'hardship voyeur' are real, so much more picturesque a family cooking dinner outside their the straw hut , or returning from the fields, crowded on a cart pulled by a camel. Yet to photograph only the richer quarters and the country's treasures would be just as unbalanced. All you can do is show what you have seen and try to reflect what you have felt and take solace in the way so many of these children and even adults clamour to have their picture taken. I recall strolling around an isolated Indian village with a growing and excited crowd following me until I was finally able to take a picture of the whole smiling village. Or a father and son who had won the 'best oxen' prize at a cattle fair and who begged me to take a picture of them with their rosette. (I sent it to the address they gave me and hope it arrived.)

I want to assert that I have been a *traveller*, not a tourist. As Chesterton wrote: '*the traveller sees what he sees; the tourist sees what he came to see.*' True, the traveller and tourist often find themselves in the same place, but their journeys differ greatly. In many cases the famous spectacle is the only thing the tourist sees before he or she is whisked away to another such place, whereas for the traveller this is but one part of a wider ad-

venture. The traveller takes risks; the tourist's journey is safe. The tourist is dictated to by a timetable; the traveller keeps his options open. The tourist sticks to the highways; the traveller seeks the by-ways. Of course, for one of a number of reasons, some have no choice but to become a 'tourist'. At least, to their credit, they too want to 'see the world'. But travel and tourism are discredited by the far too many who briefly take over and spoil beautiful and historic places by descending on them in vast numbers on 'holiday', their real destination the nearest bar, and whose behaviour would have them locked up at home. These are not travellers; not even tourists. They are not what this book is about.

Most of my travel has been alone. While my wife Jane has been with me on some of these journeys, and always enjoyed them once on the road, she is more content to stay at home in her studio and paint in peace. I am sorry about this because there have been many times when I have wished she was there to see what I was seeing, but there have been other days when I know she would have found it hard going and that would have made it harder for me. Perhaps the true traveller has to be a bit selfish.

Freya Stark wrote: *"To awaken alone in a strange town is one of the pleasantest sensations in the world."* Henry Thoreau puts it less romantically: *'The man who goes alone can start today; he who travels with another must wait till the other is ready.'*

I empathise with both of them.

When you are travelling alone where no-one, or few, speak your language and you can be hopelessly lost in a teeming city or coping with some problem in the middle of nowhere, you can surprise yourself with how resourceful, even brave, you can be...and you absorb what you're seeing and feeling in a way that is less likely if you are sharing your thoughts with a companion. Above all, the most memorable moments come from a combination of the solitude of place with one's own solitude, so that no matter where you are you feel part of it.

It will not escape your notice that India occupies more than its fair share of this book.

This is simply because it is the most colourful, at times awe-inspiring, at times sobering, but always the most stimulating place I have been. Yet I only made it to India towards the end of my travelling days. For a variety of reasons I had avoided it. This I now know was a mistake.

In no other place can you move from one compelling experience to another as you can in India - one day at a bustling, chaotic fair where hundreds of men have walked for days to sell camels, oxen or horses, the next wandering around a beautiful and peaceful temple or palace . There is a surprise round every corner, and always people and more people - two billion of them, living side by side with cows and camels sharing the countryside and city streets. On the whole, I found Indians exceptionally friendly and generous.

To dwell upon India so fully, I've had to be ruthless in excluding more than two thirds of the countries I've been to. Even my 'home countries' of New Zealand and the UK have not made the cut; I discuss this more in the Appendices. I suppose if there's a rationale to my choice it is colour.

When you travel, especially to out of the way places, to complex and difficult countries, you come to understand so much - you no longer see the world in black and white, rather you see it in all its colours. Every day is an experience, sometimes bad, but usually eye-opening and exciting and life-enhancing.

So - to conclude - **I did it.**

I saw the world - or a lot of it.

If I had the words, and an infallible memory, what stories I could tell. Alas, I fall short. I hope, however, these pictures will meet the challenge and thus enable me to share many unforgettable moments and encounters in a fortunate life.

Des Wilson 2017

PART ONE

GREAT DAYS...
AND
SPECIAL PLACES

THE TRAVELLER'S REWARD

There are times when you're travelling when you have a special experience and as dusk descends and you come to rest (ideally with a cool drink), you find yourself thinking...

'I will remember this day for the rest of my life.'

In this section I recall six such days.

The first are three of mankind's monumental achievements that have survived centuries because they were not only built for their time, but for eternity.

They are:

- *The Taj Mahal and the Golden Temple*
- *The Great Wall of China*
- *The Sphinx and the Pyramids...*

These choices may seem a bit obvious, even unimaginative, but they're world-famous for a reason...they are truly awe-inspiring. If I had never travelled anywhere else, reaching them would have gone a long way to satisfying my ambition to 'see the world.'

Of course the Taj Mahal and the Golden Temple are separate places but they remain in my memory as one experience.

The Taj Mahal is exquisitely beautiful, serene, a love story written in marble. It stands on the banks of a river and in the early morning you can stand on the opposite bank and see it slowly and majestically emerge from the mist; in the early evening you can walk in its spacious gardens and see its colour change as the sun sets; at that moment you accept without question that you are looking at the most beautiful building in the world.

The Golden Temple is a more dramatic, emotive, and powerful experience.

The real difference between the The Golden Temple and the Taj Mahal is this: no matter how many are at the Taj Mahal on the day you're there, you're not really aware of them - you simply cannot take your eyes off the building. The Golden Temple is also breathtaking, but you're equally moved by the reverence of the Sikh pilgrims who travel from all over India to fall to their knees to pray, to throw themselves into its lake, to queue to enter the temple, or to sit in rows and enjoy the free meal served to nearly a million people every week. The Taj Mahal fills you with exultation; the The Golden Temple makes you feel humble.

For me to walk on the Great Wall of China was to realise a boyhood dream. The place I chose was far away from the nearest city, enabling me to climb it alone. I had waited over 50 years for this...it moved me to tears.

As you sip coffee at dawn, alone in an open-air cafe within a few yards of the Sphinx, with the three Pyramids rising from the desert behind it, you feel yourself being absorbed into history.

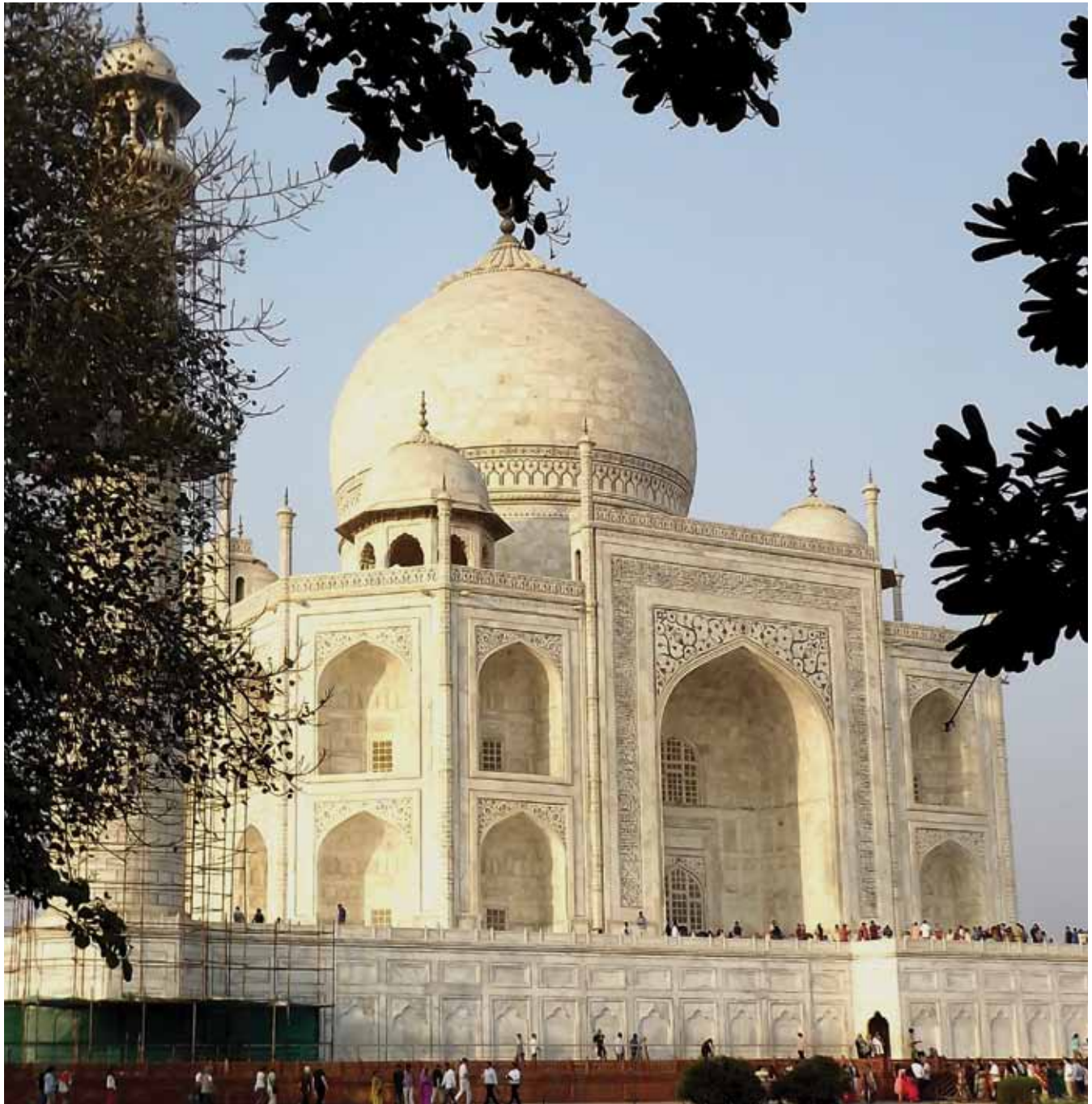
Like millions before me, these places I specifically went to see, but they share a place in this opening section with completely unexpected days of the kind that wanderers especially treasure, in my case:

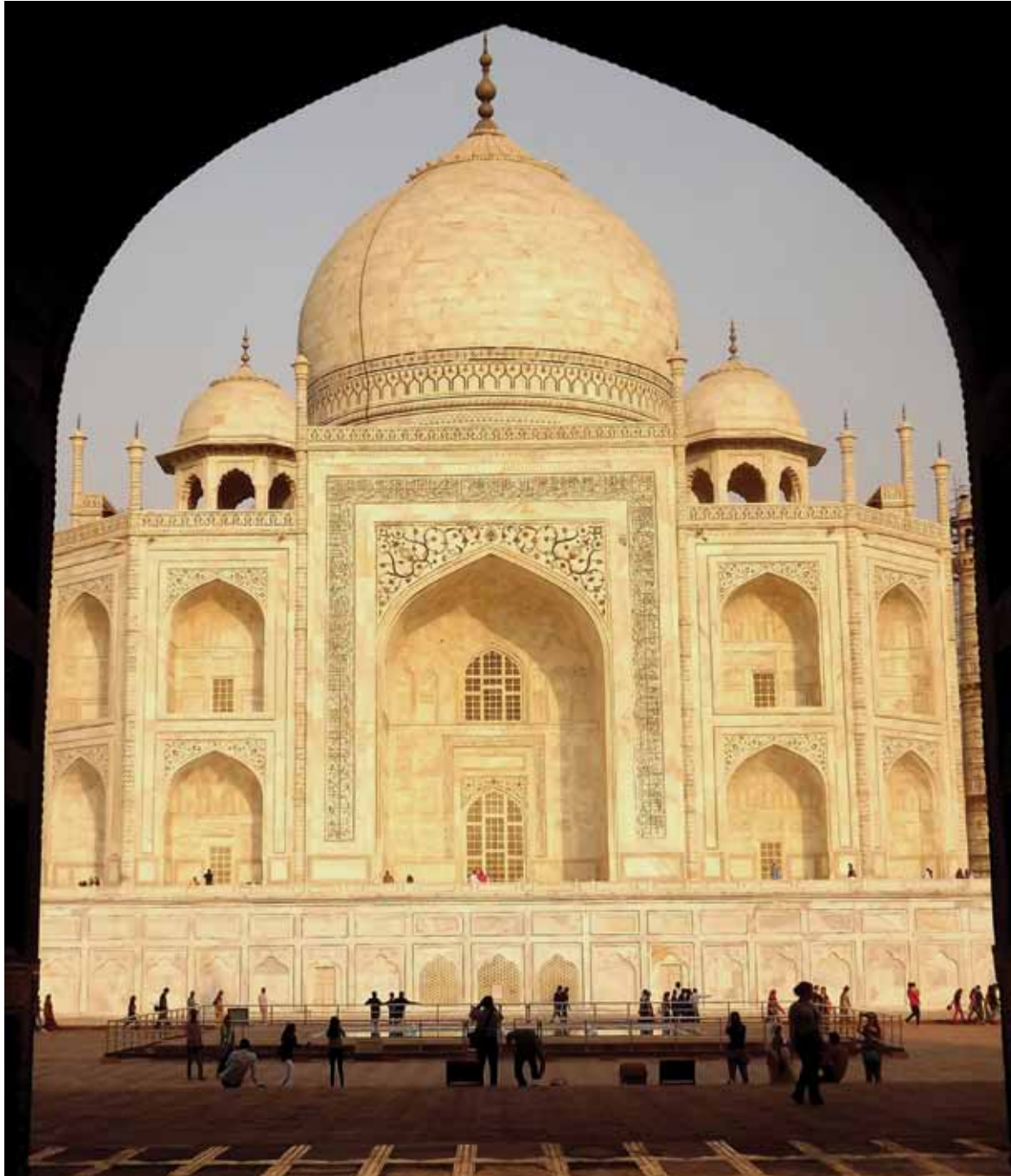
- *a relaxed day on a river in China,*
- *an awe-inspiring day in a mysterious 'hidden' town in India, and*
- *a journey back 125 years to the Gunfight at the OK Corral this last being an unexpected climax to a trip to the historic and spectacular American West.*

Someone once wrote:

'Our happiest moments as travellers always seem to come when we stumble upon things while in pursuit of something else.'

Great Days and special places - these are the traveller's reward.





*'Life and youth,
wealth and glory,
they all drift away
in the current of
time...but this one
teardrop, the Taj
Mahal, will glisten
spotlessly bright
on the face of
time forever and
ever'*

Tagore



*"When the Golden Temple reflected the evening
sun or shone in the
moon, the reflection in the water made it appear to
be mysteriously floating ...
as if made of materials like wind and water and
flame that are
commonly in motion."*

Yukio Mishima









*'The Sphinx...In its desert land it sleeps, always
dreaming dreams that have no end'*

Charles Baudelaire



" I sat 900 metres from the ground and looked with wonder at the Wall as it meandered over peaks, down into valleys and then reappearing on another peak, until it was beyond my ability to see.

It was a special moment. As a traveller, it was my best moment.

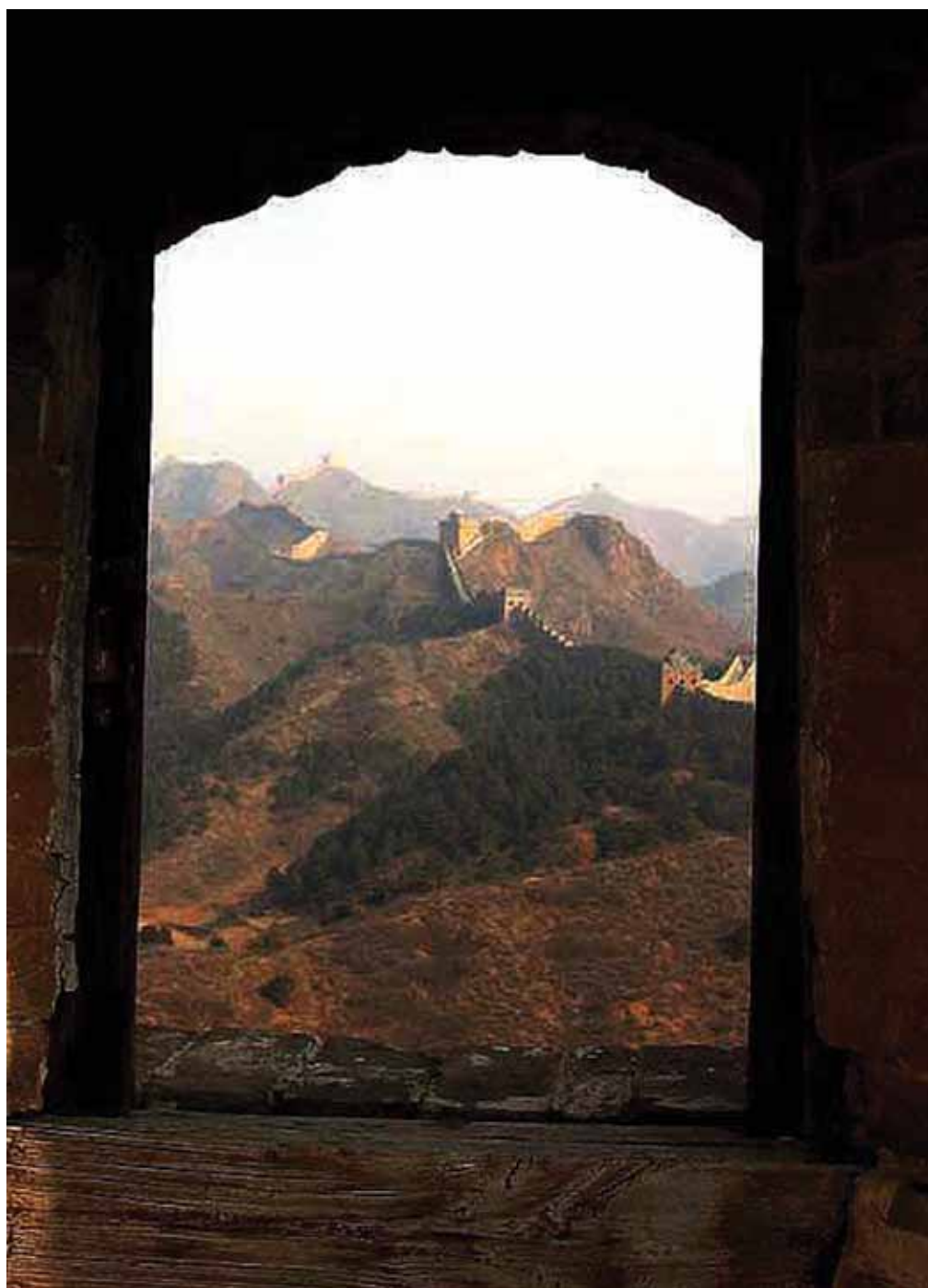
I felt moved and proud that I had realised my boyhood dream.

The Great Wall of China!

This was it.

I WAS THERE. "

DW memoirs 1971



A RIVER IN CHINA

Blue sky, a beautiful sunny day, and I'm drifting on a bamboo raft down a river in the south of China.

The river threads its way between rows of extraordinary 'karst' hills that have made the area and its main 'highway' - the River Li - famous. These hills make for spectacular scenery and at night hover over tiny villages like shadowy ghosts.

I am not actually on the River Li, but a kind of 'side road' of a river called the Yulong. From time to time we pass women washing their clothes from the river banks, farmers working in paddy fields, or bossing their water buffalo, or fishing from makeshift boats - all leading lives that can't have changed for centuries. I am from time to time able to climb onto the bank and wander about the countryside and tiny villages, attracting only the occasional curious glance or more often a friendly smile.

At one point the young local man who has suggested this journey takes me to his house for lunch. I watch, amazed and a little horrified, as he chases a hysterical chicken around the yard until he traps it...within minutes it is in the pot and being cooked before my eyes. It is delicious.

Then we are back on the river. It is calm. The scenery is spectacular. The only sound is the swish of the pole my man uses to propel the raft forward.

No-one knows where I am. I don't know exactly where I am.

Time stands still. But I am in no hurry.

I don't want this day to end. And - in my memory - it never will.















GUNFIGHT AT THE OK CORRAL...AND OTHER DAYS IN THE WEST.

I am travelling the old West from Death Valley to the Grand Canyon, reliving the cowboy films I saw as a boy, but my journey contains a real surprise. My final destination is to be Tombstone and by chance I hit on the 125th anniversary of the Gunfight at the OK Corral. Western-lovers have come from all over America to dress in the costumes of the time and celebrate and re-enact the historic event.

As I wrote in my book 'Ghosts at the Table':

'The streets are full of Wyatt Earps and Doc Hollidays, Big Nose Kates and the Clantons...the effect is astonishing. I walk into the saloon and I'm the only one dressed for the 21st century. It's like being transported back in a time machine, so realistic that I felt a shiver down my spine. Groups of cowboys, guns in holsters, spurs on boots, hang around street corners...the gunfight is repeated virtually every hour...and the climax of the weekend is an atmospheric and moving funeral procession for those who were killed, with 300 mourners walking slowly and silently behind the actual hearse that took Frank Mc Laury to Boot Hill.

'After dusk they show old Tombstone films on the side of a truck in the main street. The sound of cinematic gunshots competes with the sizzling of steaks and the tinkling of the piano from the saloon.

'As I leave town I pass Boot Hill and find the graves of the men who died in the gunfight. There, too, I find a marker that says:

*Here lies Leslie Moore
Four slugs from a 44
No Les, no more.'*





The pictures on the top of the opposite page and on the following two pages are of the re-enacted funeral procession for the men allegedly 'murdered' by Wyatt Earp and Doc Holliday at the OK Corral. Over 300 'mourners' followed the original 1881 hearse and walked all the way to the graves on Boot Hill.











DEATH VALLEY





DODGE CITY





THE GRAND CANYON







ORCHA - INDIA'S HIDDEN TOWN

'How often I found where I should be going only by setting out for somewhere else.'
R. Buckminster Fuller

Experienced travellers know that the really special moments come as a complete surprise.

For me, Orcha is one. In fact the name Orcha means 'hidden'.

I have diverted from the main highway and more-or-less accidentally stumbled upon this medieval Indian town on the banks of a river in Madhya Pradesh.

I cannot believe what I have found - and I end up spending three days here.

Orcha is a hidden treasure of 16th century abandoned forts, palaces, temples, and cenotaphs, huge, peaceful, exceptionally well-preserved, intricate, endlessly fascinating, all based on an otherwise peaceful little country town.

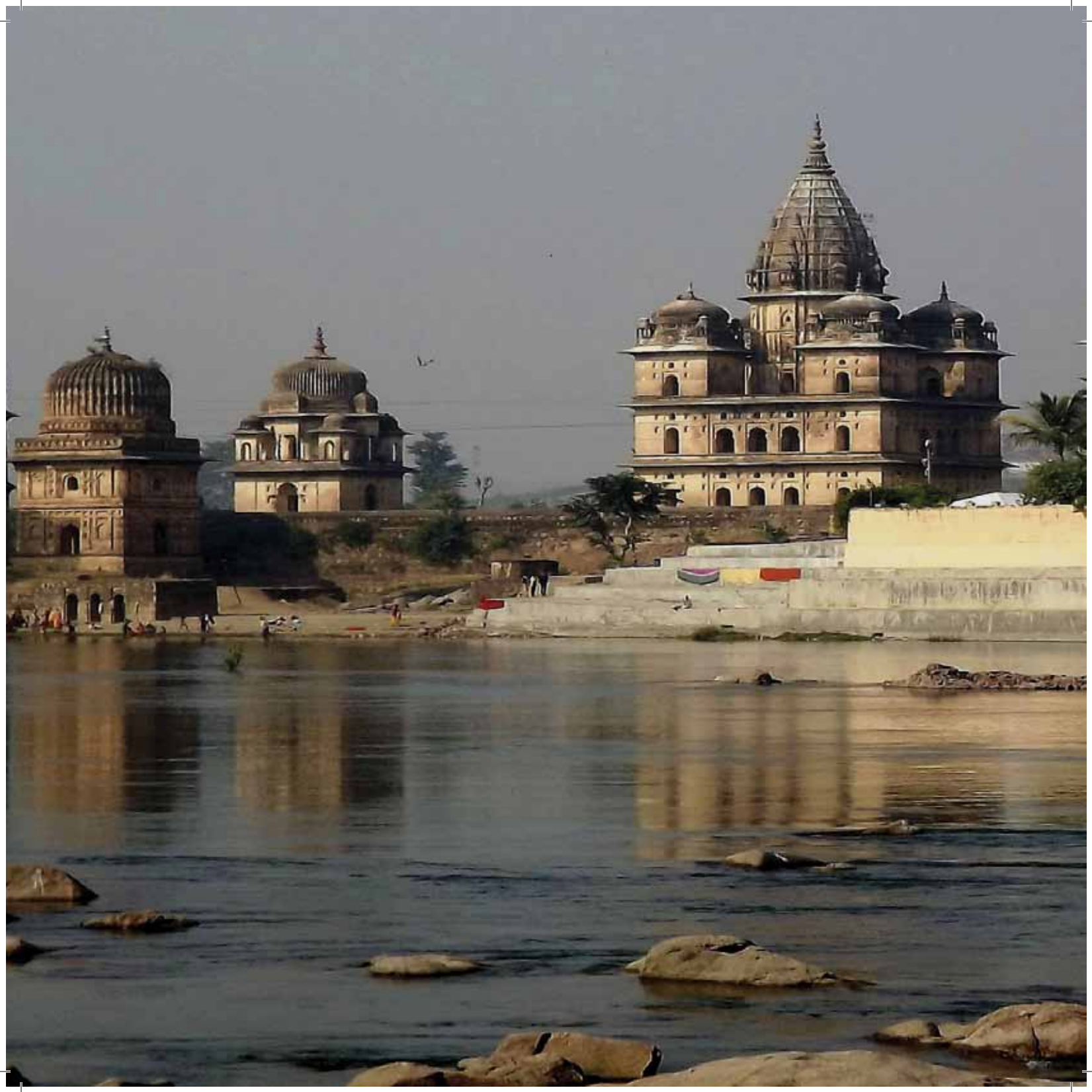
Wrote a local: 'It is a hidden archeological legacy of medieval India. It is a hidden throb of romance, a hidden treasure of spiritual tranquility, a hidden poetry written on stones.'

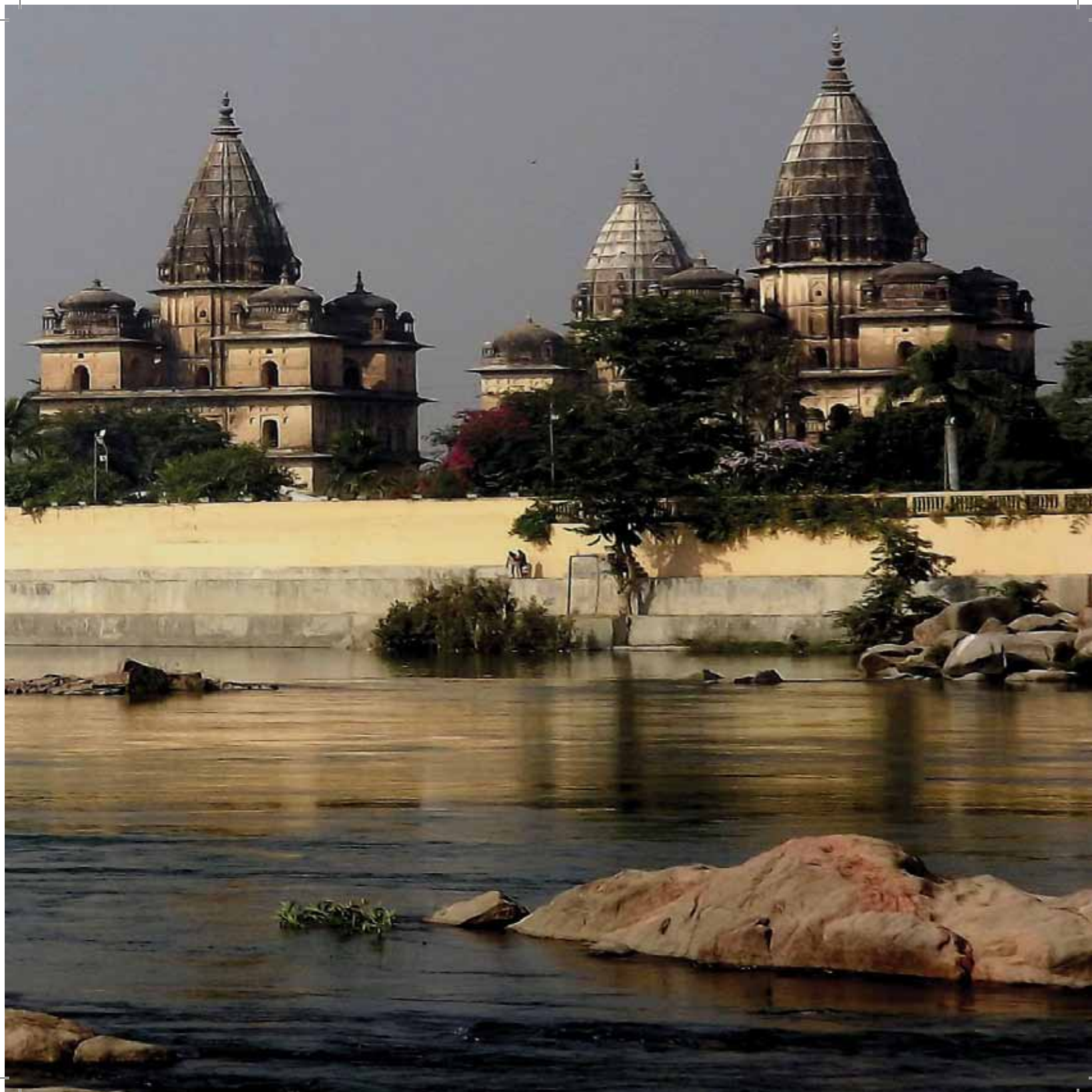
Yet the villagers, having been born in their shadow, take the towering presence of these dramatic architectural wonders for granted; instead their Indian rural lives are more centred on the fast-moving, rocky river where they wash themselves and their clothes or in the courtyard of the town's busy temple that serves as a meeting and marketplace and is both physically and communally the heart of the town.

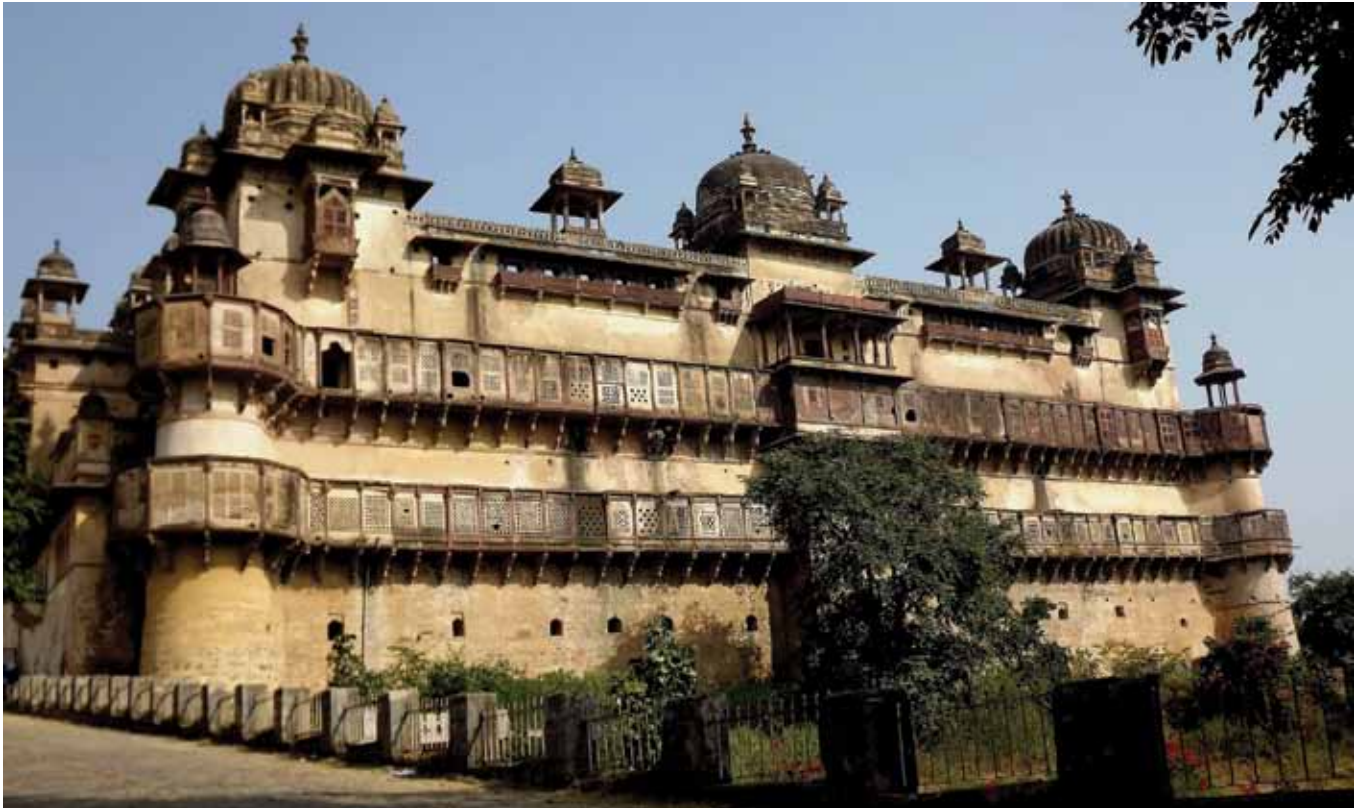
At dusk I walk across a narrow, stone bridge, trying to avoid being knocked into the river by trucks, and look back across the water at the sun setting over these extraordinary buildings on the opposite bank. It looks like a magnificent film set.

It is another place I never want to leave, another day I wish would never end.









This 17th century Palace was built to host an Emperor who was planning to come to Orcha. Some locals say he never came and the palace remained forever empty. But you don't really know what to believe about Orcha. It's that kind of place.





Life in the village is centred on the temple. The entrance (above) opens onto a bustling and colourful space - market stalls, resting travellers, wedding parties etc. Everybody in the village appears either oblivious or totally unimpressed by the uniqueness of the amazing buildings that surround it.







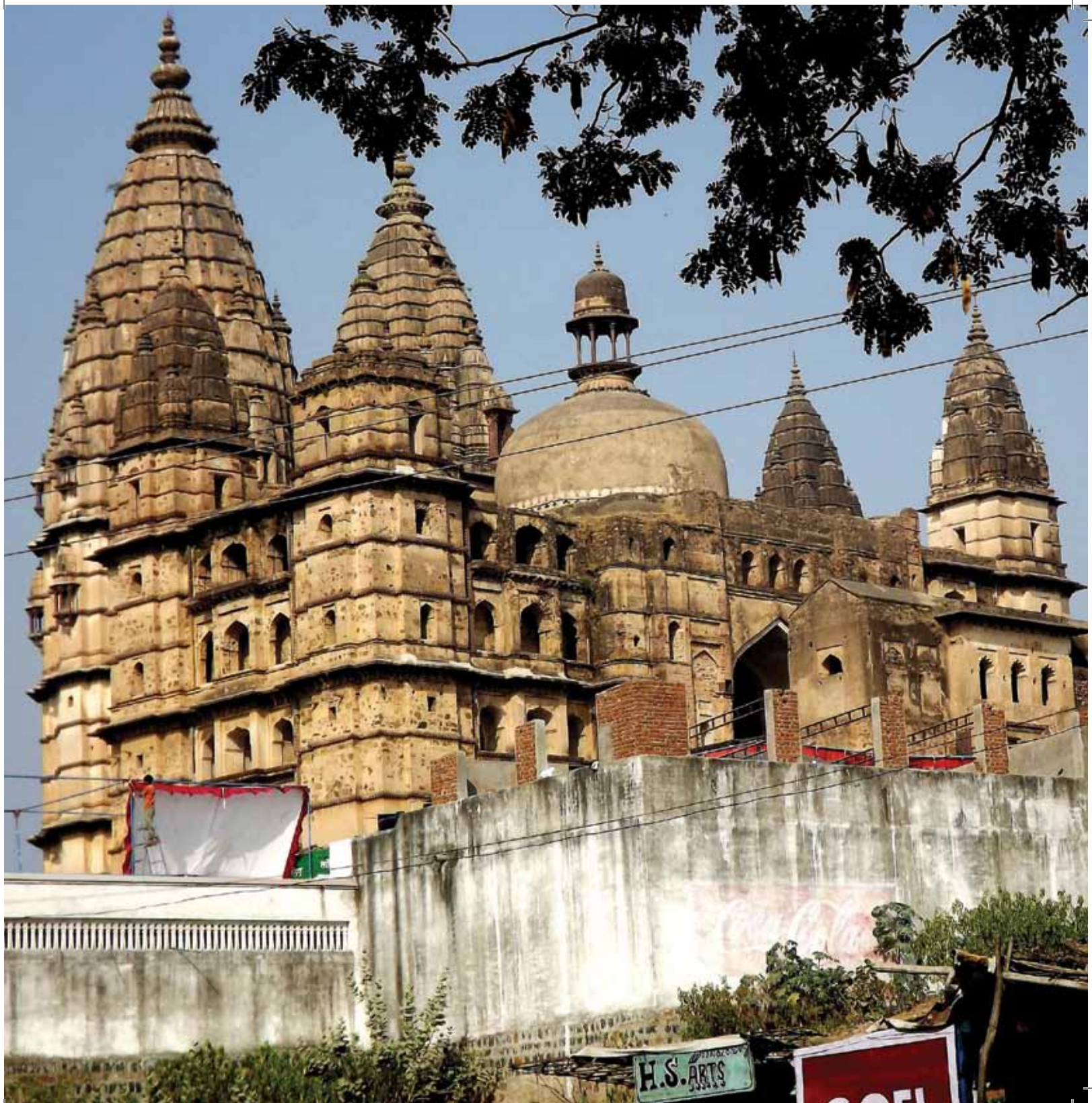


This is one of a number of beautifully preserved wall paintings of the Bundela School of Painting. It is to be found in the temple below, one that is a short distance from the centre and so rarely visited that I was the only one there and had to find a local boy who had the key.

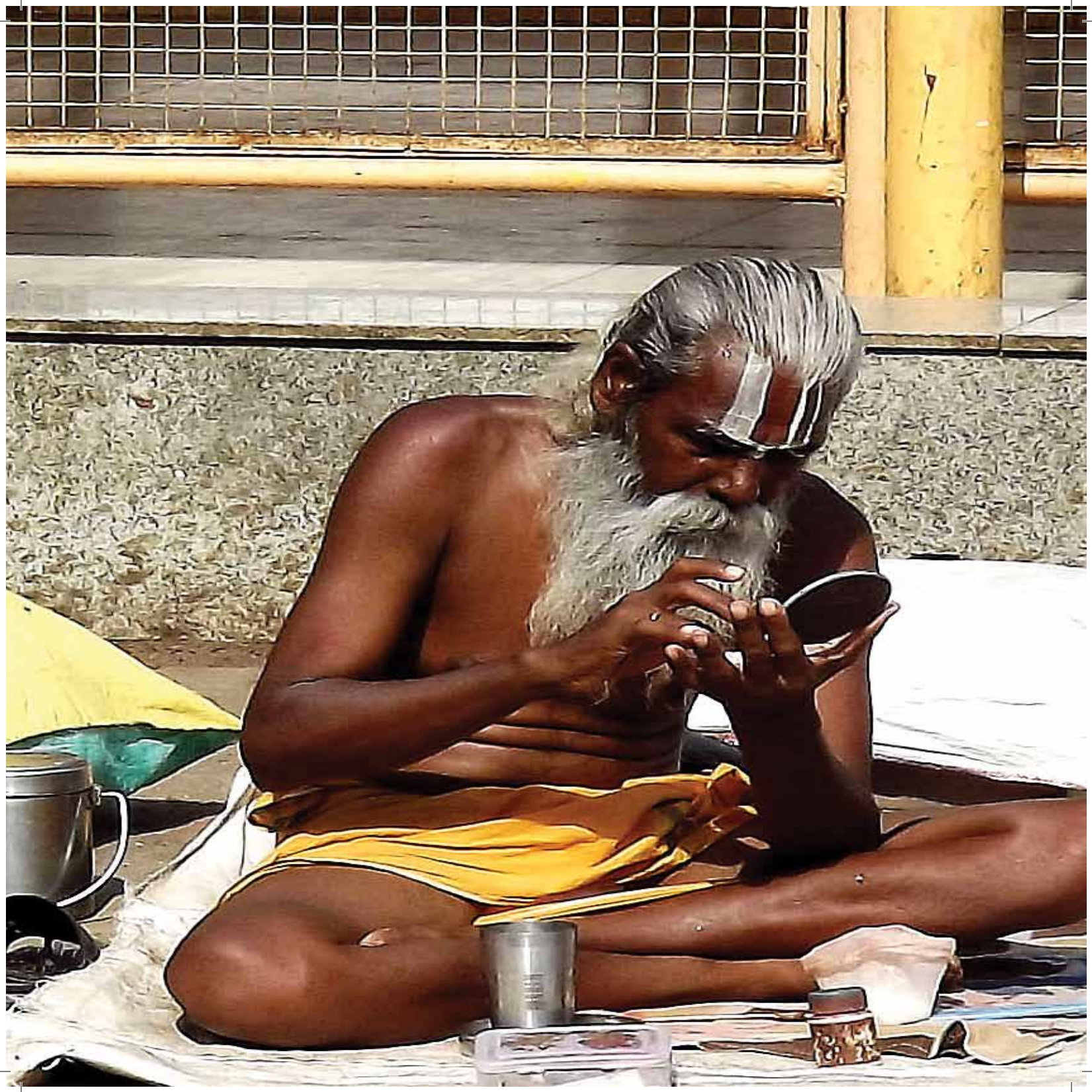












INDIA - NEEDS "COURAGE AND HEART "

"There are some parts of the world that, once visited, get into your heart and won't go. For me, India is such a place... It was as if all my life I had been seeing the world in black and white and, when brought face-to-face with India, experienced everything re-rendered in brilliant technicolour."

Editor in Chief, National Geographic Magazine

The above words speak for me too, yet despite them one has to admit there are discomfoting aspects to Indian culture and much hardship reflecting an enormous imbalance between rich and poor. Elsewhere I quote the painter David Gentleman who in 1994 published a beautiful book of paintings from India. He also writes:*

' Looking at India is an intense experience: there is so much to see that is beautiful, strange and touching. But it is also troubling and even shocking... life there can be puzzling, incomprehensible, dangerous and spectacularly unfair ... India is not a comfortable place. - it is too strange and too many-sided for that.'

Nevertheless, he concludes:

'But it is an intriguing and thought-provoking place. Going there entails surprises, delights and shocks - more so that in any other country I've been to. Its natural landscapes are beautiful, its monuments and artistic treasures magnificent, its people fascinating.'

These words, both positive and negative, also speak for me.

Challenging and often uncomfortable it may be, but If you want to see humanity in all its contradictions, its creations at their most magnificent, and our planet at both its most inhospitable and its most spectacular, you have to have the courage (yes, courage) and heart to go to India.

** David Gentleman's India 1994*

PART TWO

INDIA



INDIA (1)
FACES



















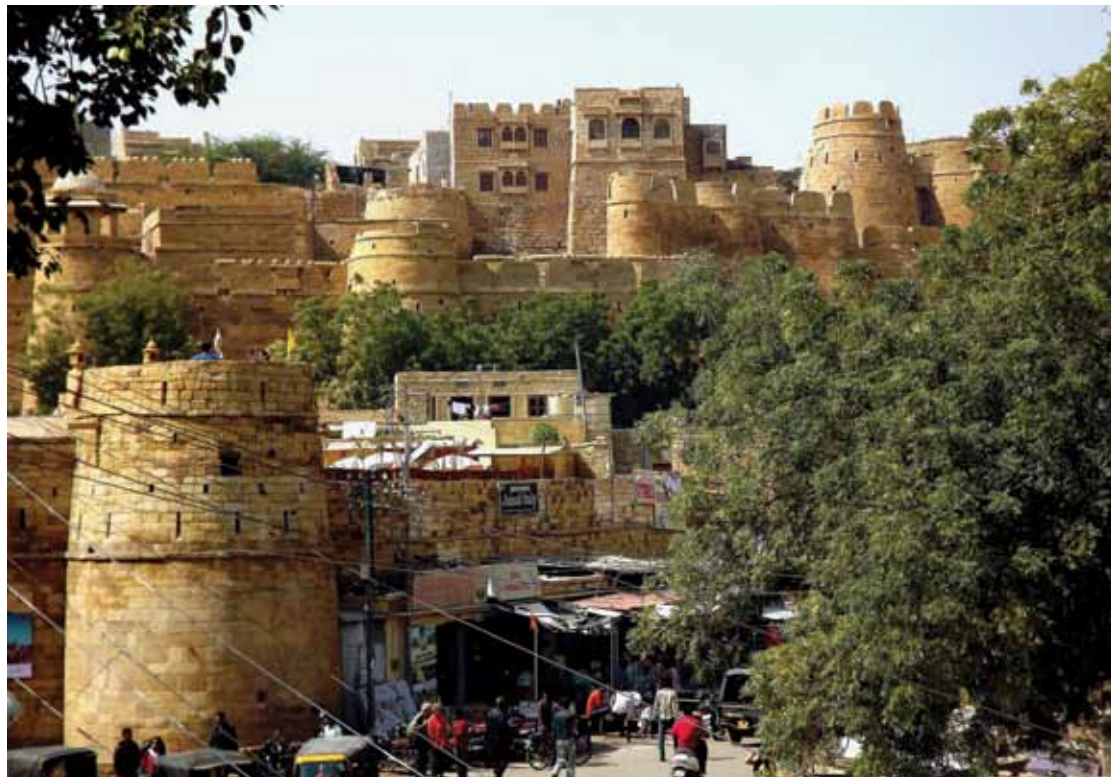
INDIA (2) FORTS



The above fort at Jodphur (pictured also on the following two pages) is the most commanding of a series of magnificent forts in the Indian state of Rajasthan. On one journey in 2016, I went to ten such forts, discovering these towering hill-top citadels were much more than just former military fortresses; most contained impressive palaces and temples and some, especially the one at Jaisalmer with its labyrinth of narrow streets are “living forts” where families dwell and businesses are run.







Jaisalmer Fort



Gwalior Fort



Amber (Jaipur) Fort



*These two pages are of
Kumbhalgarh Fort*

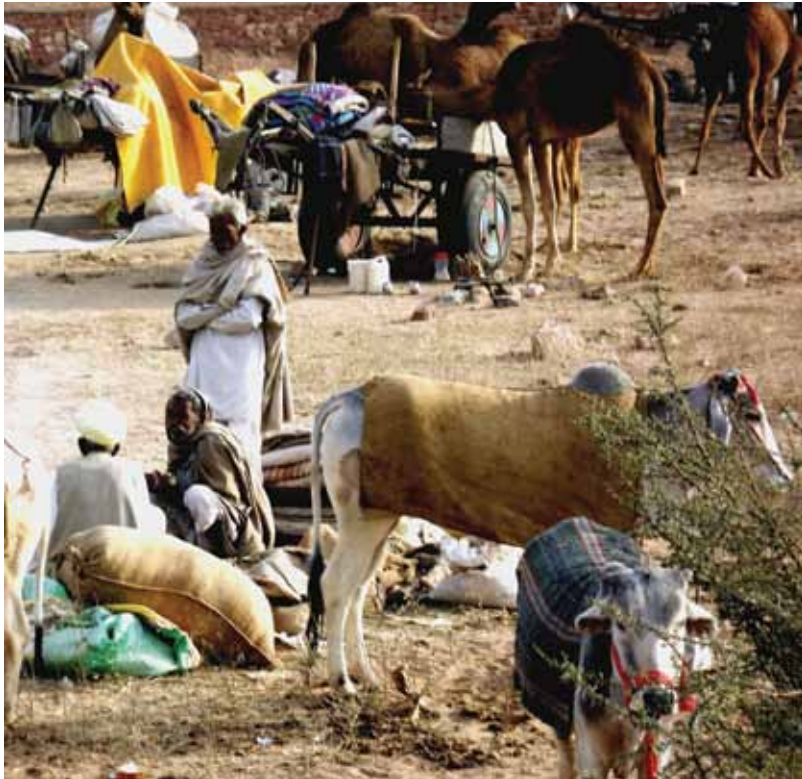
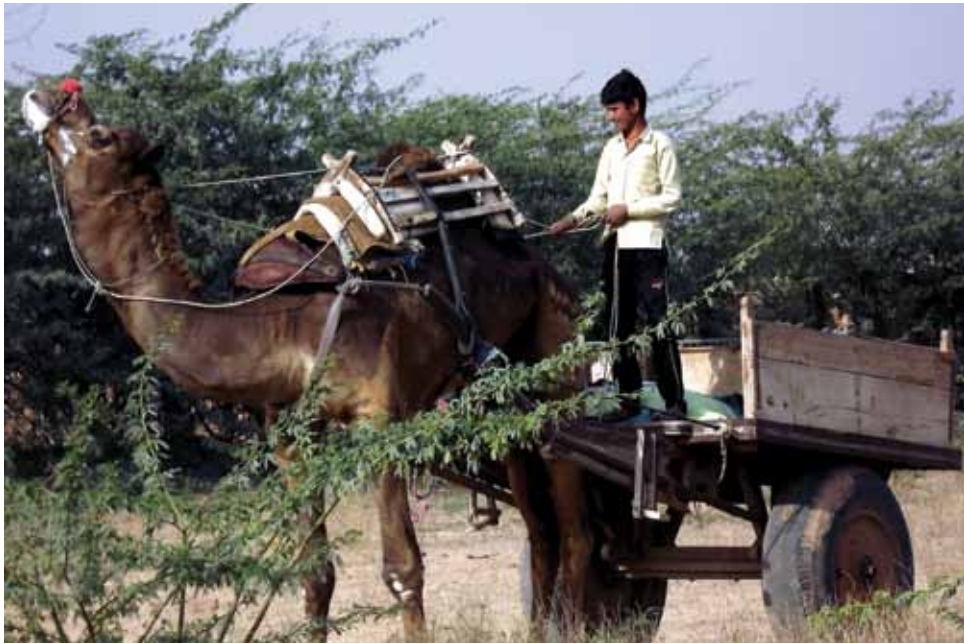


INDIA (3) THE CATTLE FAIR



Every January or February herders from all over Rajasthan make their way to the small town of Nagaur to the cattle fair; they camp amid 70,000 animals they are buying and selling, camels, bullocks, cows, oxen and horses. They cook their food on fires made of camel dung, race their camels and horses on makeshift tracks to demonstrate their speed, bargain and cajole, and share gossip and news with friends they only meet at this otherwise lonely place once a year. It all adds up to a remarkable spectacle. These pictures are from the 2016 fair.













On the sidelines of the camel fair is the camel dancing contest. While I was there it all came down to a choice between two camels. When the judges named the winner, there was a riot, with supporters of the runner-up occupying the ring. The judges hastily reversed their decision. There was then another riot by supporters of the demoted camel. The now-terrified judges then decided it was a tie. Now both sets of supporters rioted. Only when a policeman fired a gun in the air did it calm down and life went on as if it all had never happened. It was great fun.









INDIA (4) CITIES



Delhi... Safdarjang's Tomb



above: Delhi - Humayun's Tomb



left: Delhi - Bara Gumbad Tomb





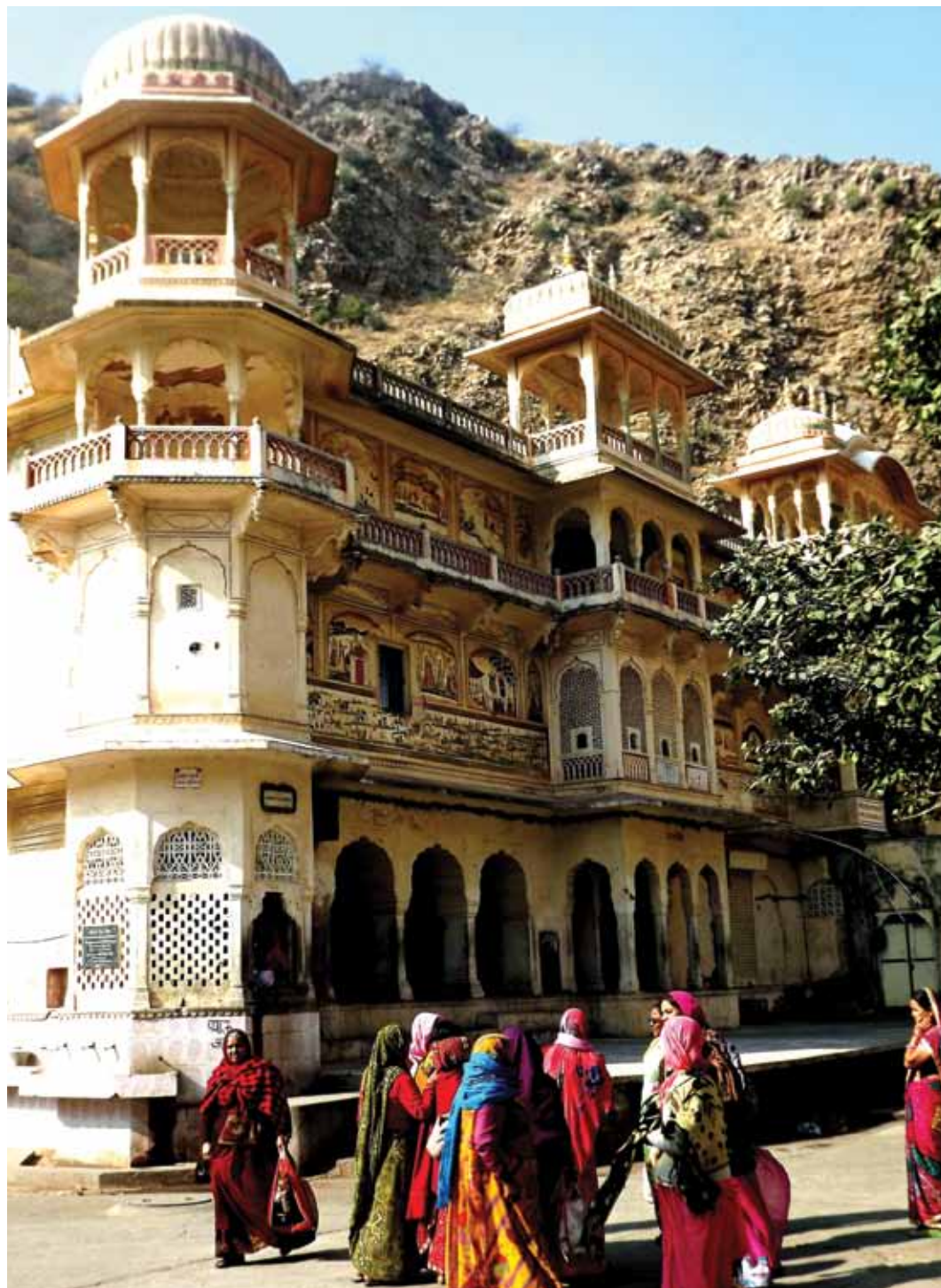
Old Delhi is dominated by the mosque Jama Masjid, the Red Fort, and the teeming market streets of the Chandi Chowk area, New Delhi by the impressive Humayan's Tomb (see previous page) and the imposing India Gate, but my abiding memory of Delhi is of thousands of 'tuk tuks', the little three-wheeled taxis that insanely weave their way in and out of the traffic while their passengers (including me) cling on in terror and say a silent farewell to their loved ones. To be fair, I never witnessed a crash, but they could account for the considerable number of tombs in the city !

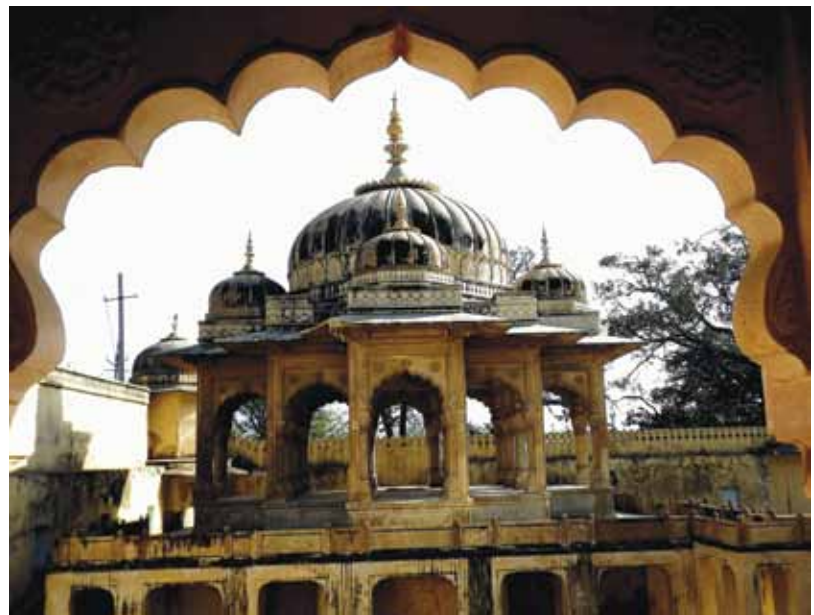






The Hawa Mahal (above), positioned in the main street of the 'pink city' of Jaipur, was built to enable the women of the Royal household to observe city life and festivals without themselves being seen. But the more fascinating attractions of Jaipur are to be found outside the city, including not only the Amber Fort but the Galti Ji temple (opposite and next pages). Tucked into a steep-sided valley, it consists of a number of temples surrounding a sacred freshwater pool where women (in particular) come to bathe. Like so many fascinating and atmospheric places in India, it is largely by-passed by outsiders heading for the more famous attractions. On this day I was one of only two Westerners there.







Above, a funeral procession makes its way down a busy Jaipur street.

Right, pictured in Jodhpur, an Indian 'step well', a way of preserving water and enabling easy access in dry periods when water levels are low. To some they are sacred; in some places they have been a centre of social life.





A peaceful monastery-temple complex near Jaismailer, a desert town in the far north-west dominated by it's majestic 'living' fort.





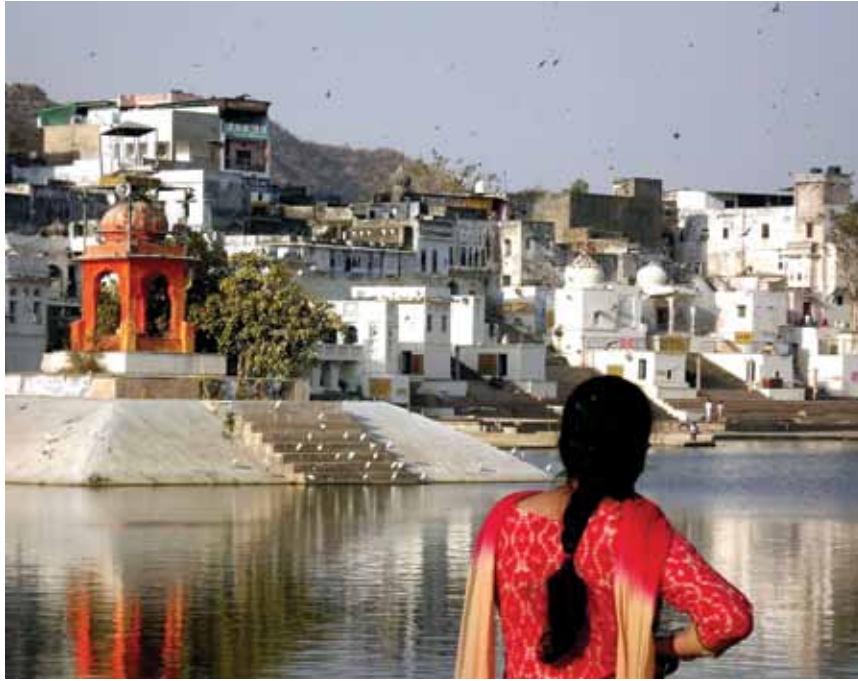
Left, a sacred lake and below Bada Bagh, an abandoned temple. both near Jaisalmer.



Scenes from the Jaisalmer country fair... the two men pictured were taking part in the highly-competitive 'best moustache' contest.









Hindus try at least once in their lifetime to make a pilgrimage to this holy lake at Pushkar surrounded by more than 50 ghats and 400 small temples. In the evening you can (as I did) have dinner at the Sunset Cafe on one of its banks and chat with other travellers while watching the last of the day's worshippers bathing in the lake. Magic.



RANAKPUR



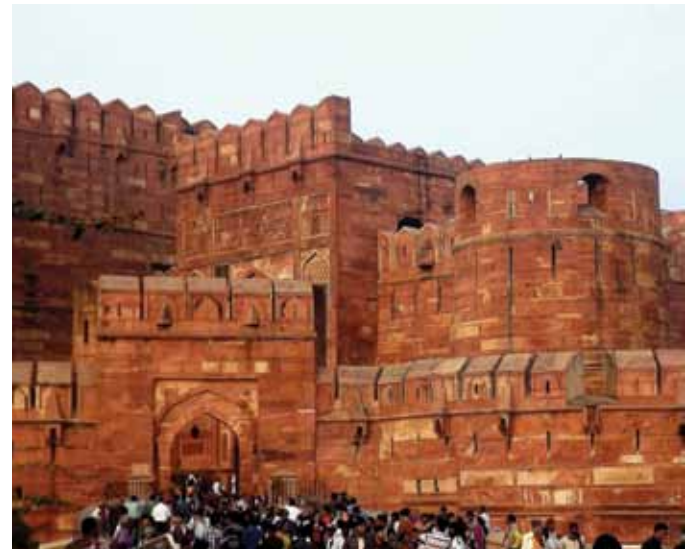
Hidden away in a wooded valley 10 miles from the huge Kumbhalgarh Fort in Rajasthan is this superb 15th century Jain temple, described by one authority as 'an incredible feat of Jain devotion'.



AGRA:

*Left, the all-marble
Itimad-ud-Daulah, so
beautiful it's known as
the 'baby Taj'*

*Below, Agra: the bazaar
and the Fort*





KHAJURAHO

The small village of Khajuraho is famous for its many intricately carved medieval Hindu and Jain temples. Built 1000 years ago by the Chandellas, they are spread across the countryside, the main ones in beautifully-maintained green parks.



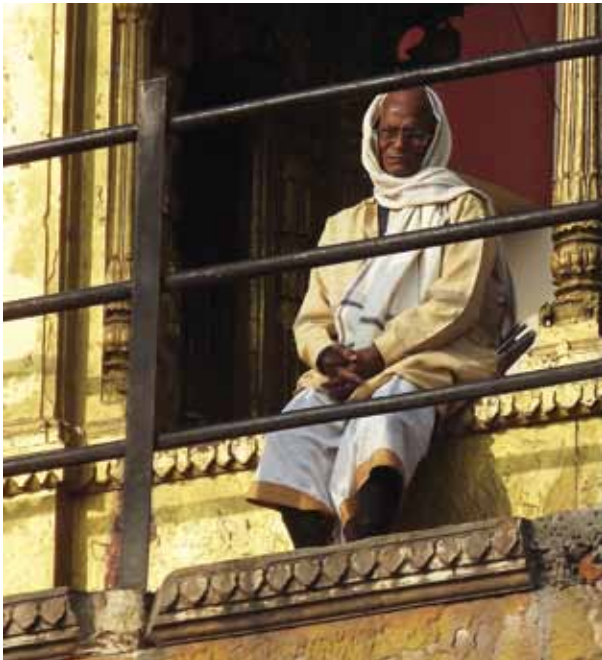


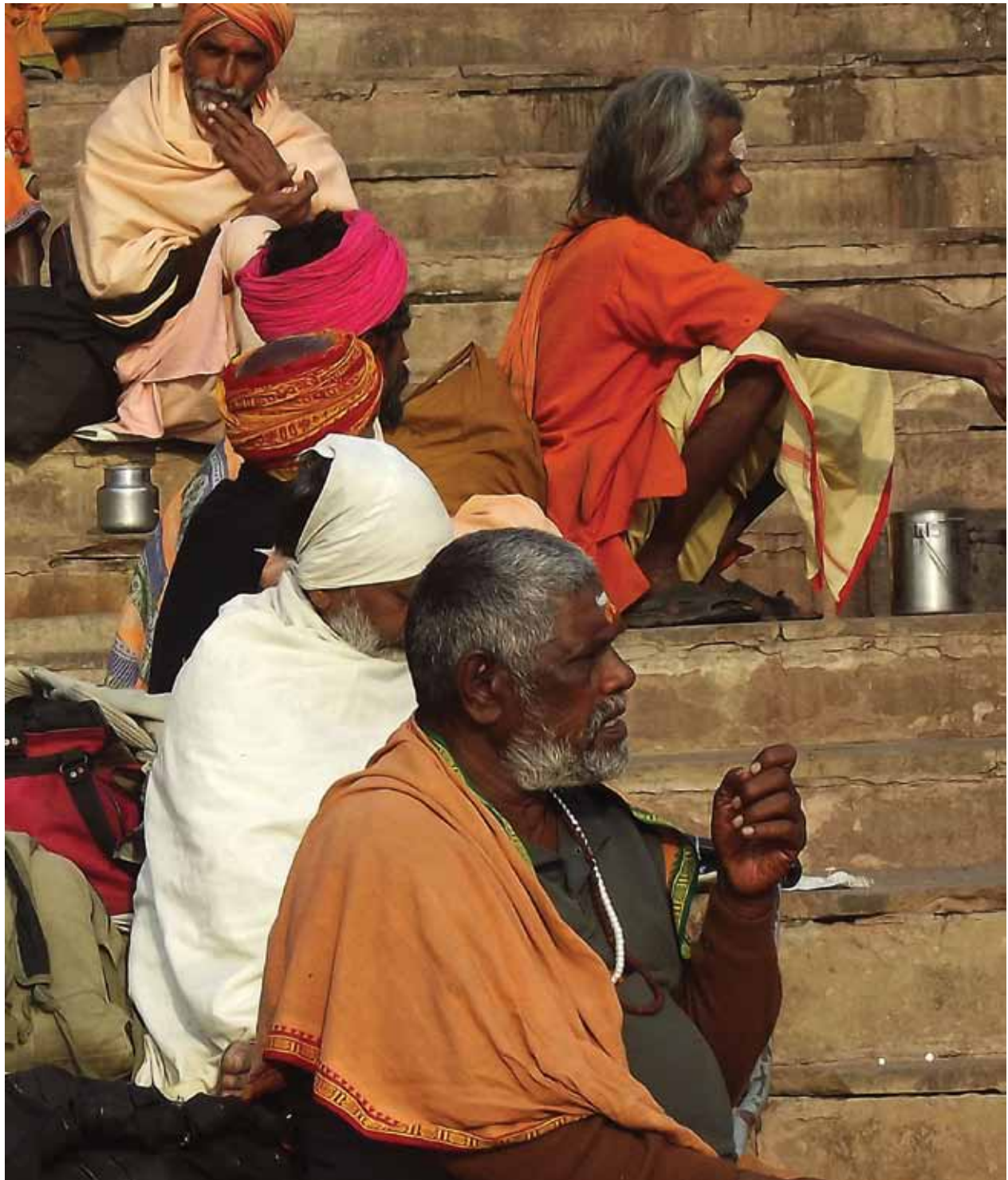


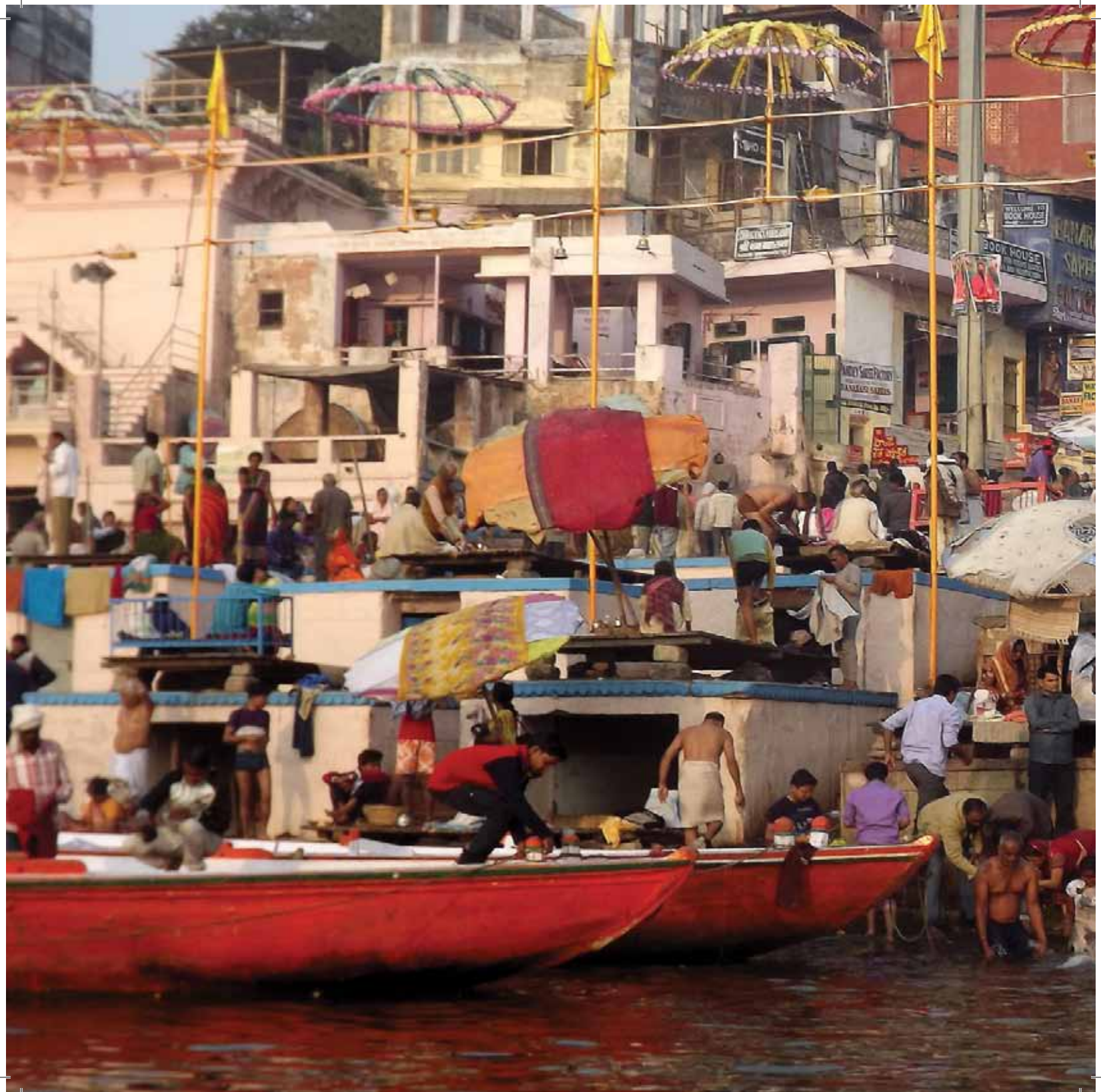
VARANSI

'From the river the town of Varansi (or Banaras) is compactly walled from sight by this crammed perspective of platforms, soaring stairways, sculptured temples, majestic palaces, softening away into the distances; and there is movement, motion, human life everywhere, and brilliantly costumed, streaming in rainbows up and down the lofty stairways, and massed in metaphorical gardens in the miles of great platforms at the river's edge.'

The above is how Mark Twain described the impact of Varansi, an ancient town on the banks of the Ganges likened to Jerusalem or Mecca as a place of pilgrimage. Every day thousands come to bathe and pray, believing that the sacred river can cleanse the soul of the sins of generations. To Hindus, to die beside 'the river of life' is to die with the promise of salvation, so many old people come to spend their last days in the town and the ghats are packed with funeral pyres. Firewood is sold from the steps. The water is sprinkled with flowers. Holy men wait for people to worship at their feet. And at night monks perform a spectacular musical ceremony by lighted torches that you can watch from a boat on the river. It is chaotic, colourful, dramatic, both heart-warming and shocking. There really is no place in the world like Varansi, one of the oldest and most tumultuous living cities in the world.



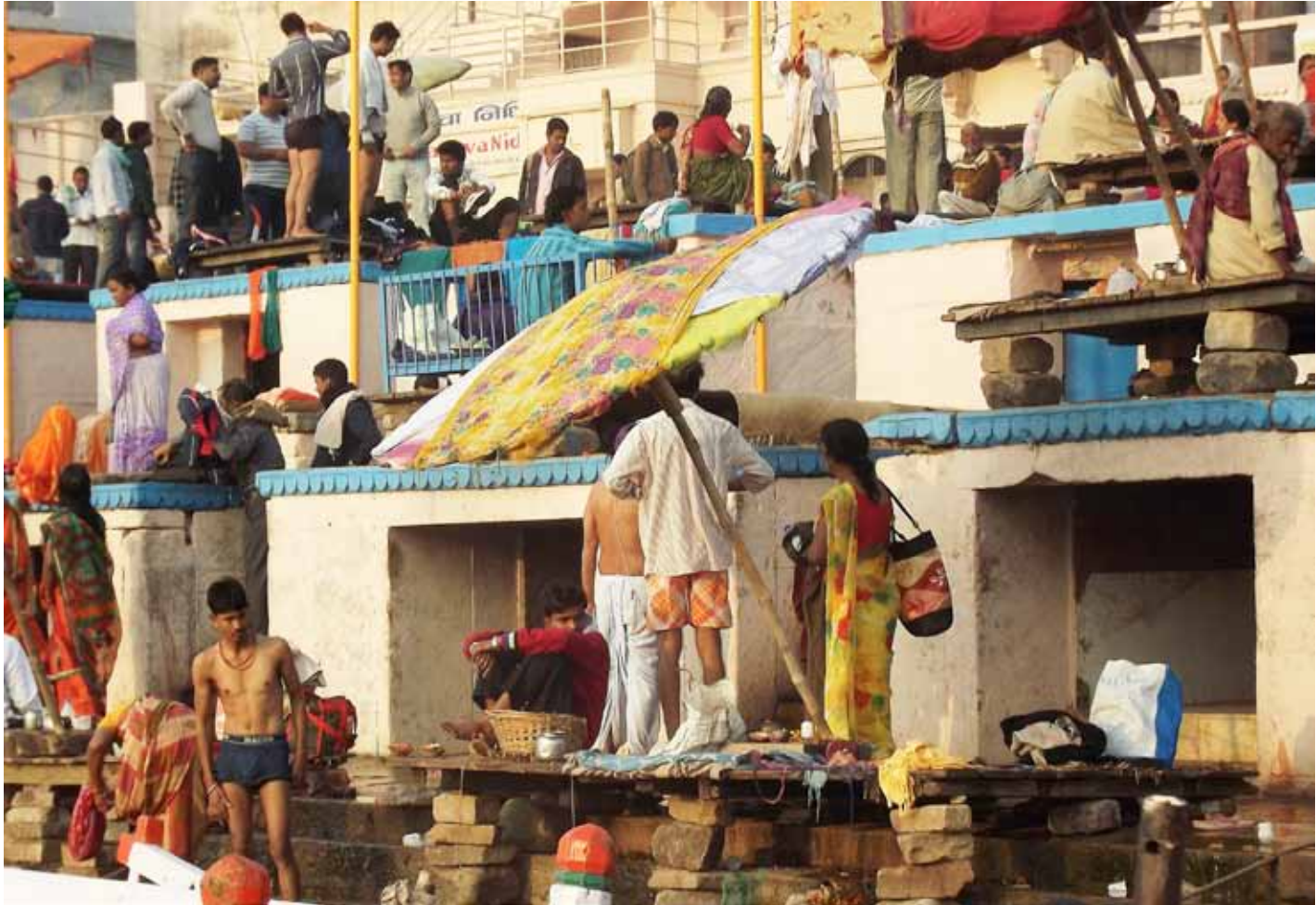














This unusual monument near Varansi marks the place of Bhudda's first-ever speech



Within the forts, palaces and temples spread across Rajasthan, where the majority of my Indian pictures were taken, are a vast number of beautiful and often intricate murals, ceiling and wall paintings, frescos and friezes that deserve a book of their own. Alas space allows only this glimpse.



INDIA (5) Villages



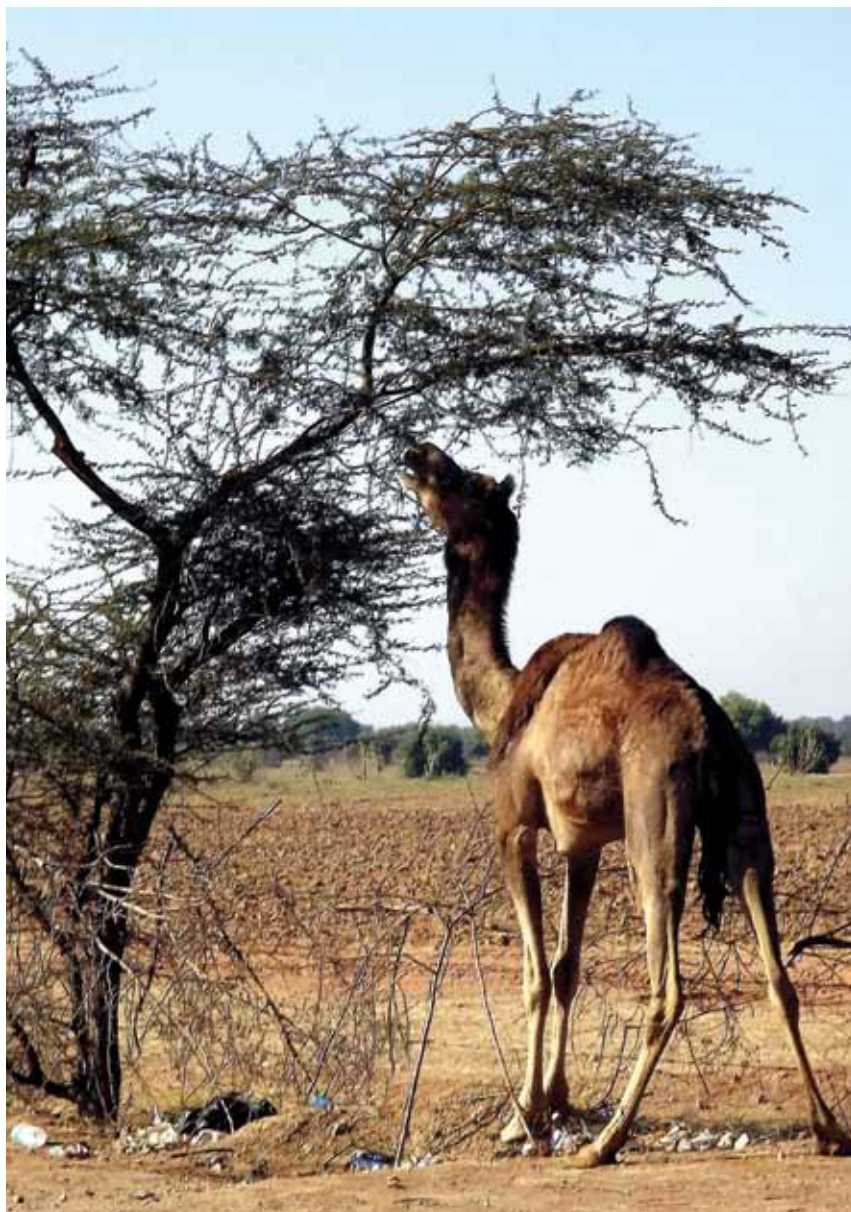
'Here are the creaking bullock carts, the camels and the elephants, the teams of oxen panting and snorting as they plough: the brown mud huts, dwellings which seem hardly more substantial than stacks of crops; the thin, wiry peasant women carrying backbreaking bundles of firewood or water pots or heaps of fodder on their heads. Here are the paddy fields with water gleaming among the shoots of rice, and white egrets wading in them, and the rich fields of familiar wheat and barley or unfamiliar cotton, sugarcane or millet; here are the wells and dried up rivers, craggy hills topped by fierce-looking fortresses, roads shaded by tunnels of great banyans with creepers hanging from them. The work in the fields is timeless, traditional, biblical, labour-intensive; especially beautiful at harvest time when the cut fields are full of hand-tied sheaves. The chaff is winnowed by hand from the grain at the edge of the harvest field; bullocks are gently washed down in the stream; tired peasants in white or coloured cotton clothes return to their villages at the end of the day.' (David Gentleman)



















PART THREE

‘ I WILL SEE
THE WORLD...’

THE ARCTIC









Russia



*Old wooden architecture:
The Church of Transfiguration at Kizhi*





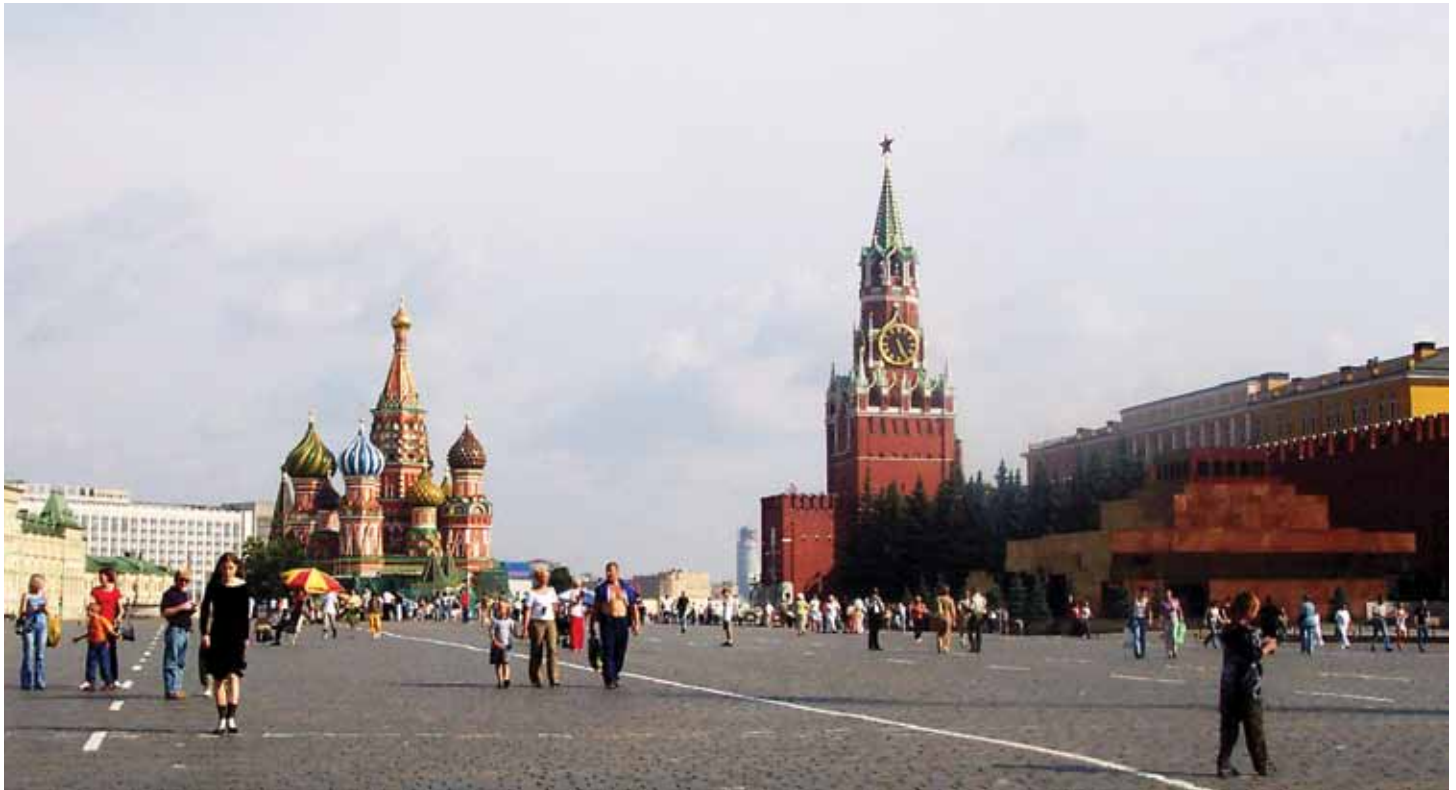
Glimpses of Siberia



Left, St Petersburg - The Winter Palace







Opposite page, The Kremlin

Above, Red Square

Right, Moscow underground station



Iceland



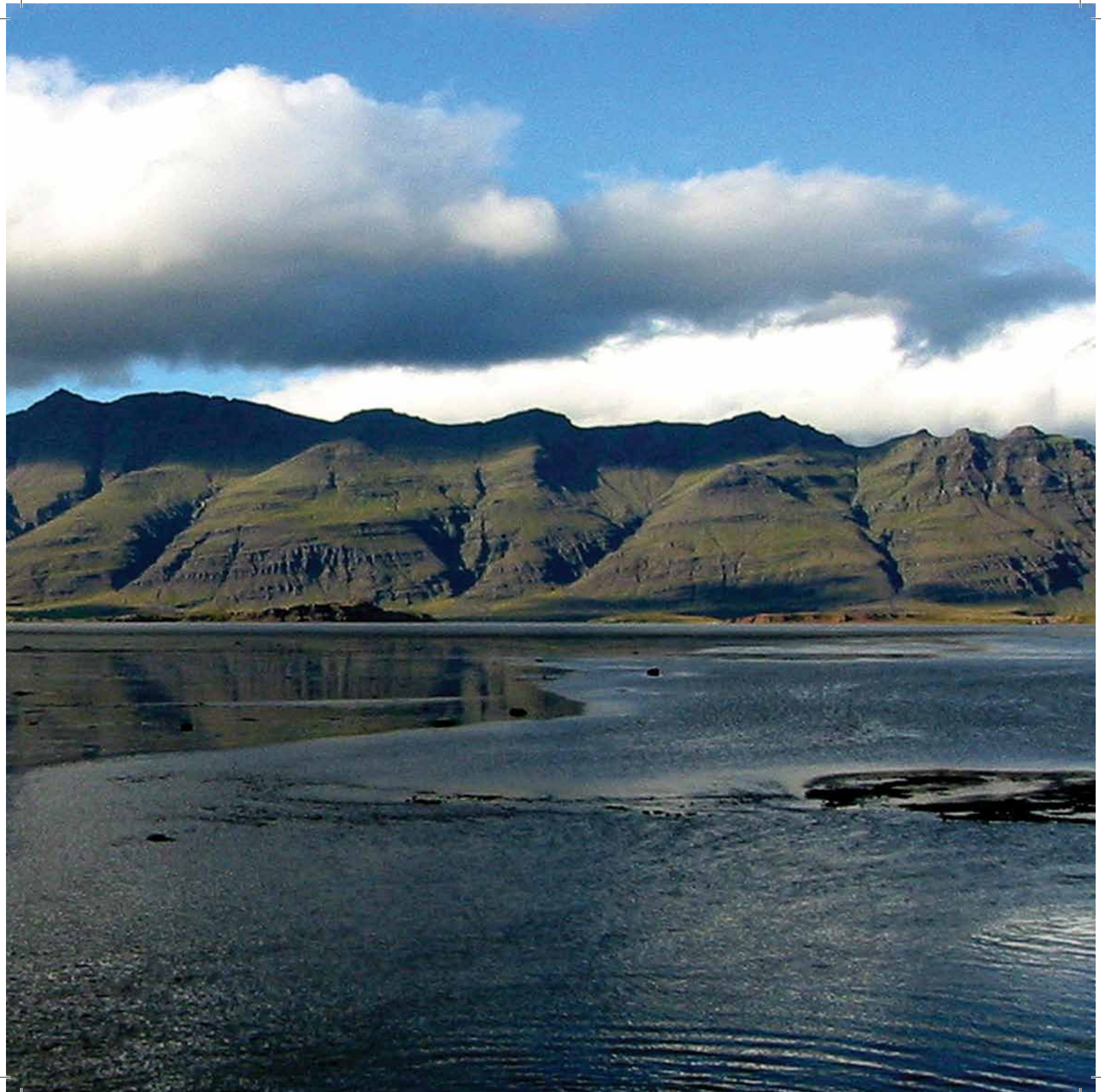
Stephen Markley wrote in a book about Iceland:

"The problem with driving around it is that you're basically confronted by a new soul-enriching, breath-taking, life-affirming natural sight every five goddamn minutes. It's totally exhausting."

Rainbows, waterfalls, little isolated churches, lonely farms, landscape marked by volcanoes, glaciers, rugged horses... and being the only traveller staying in the guest house. That's Iceland.











South Africa

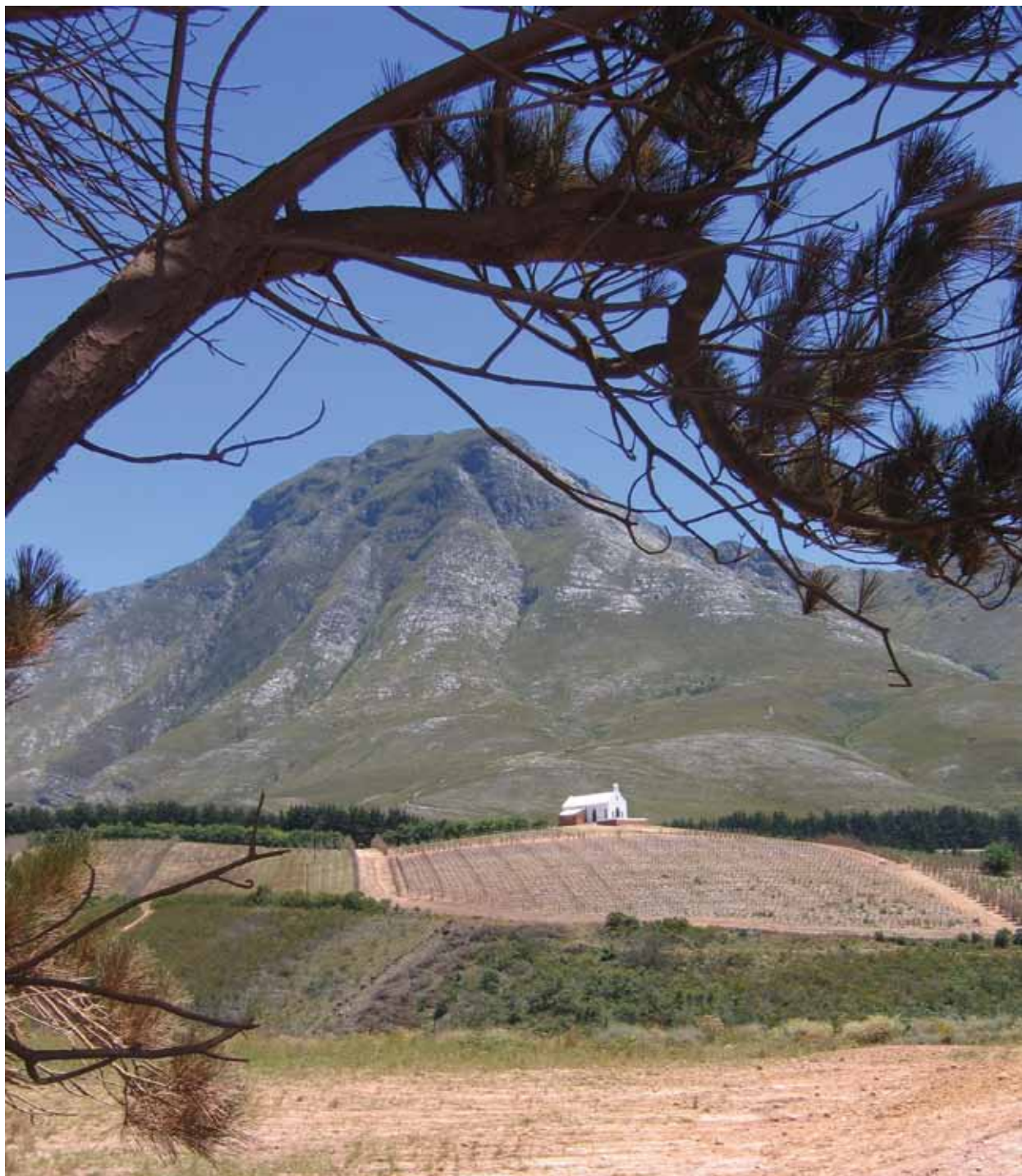














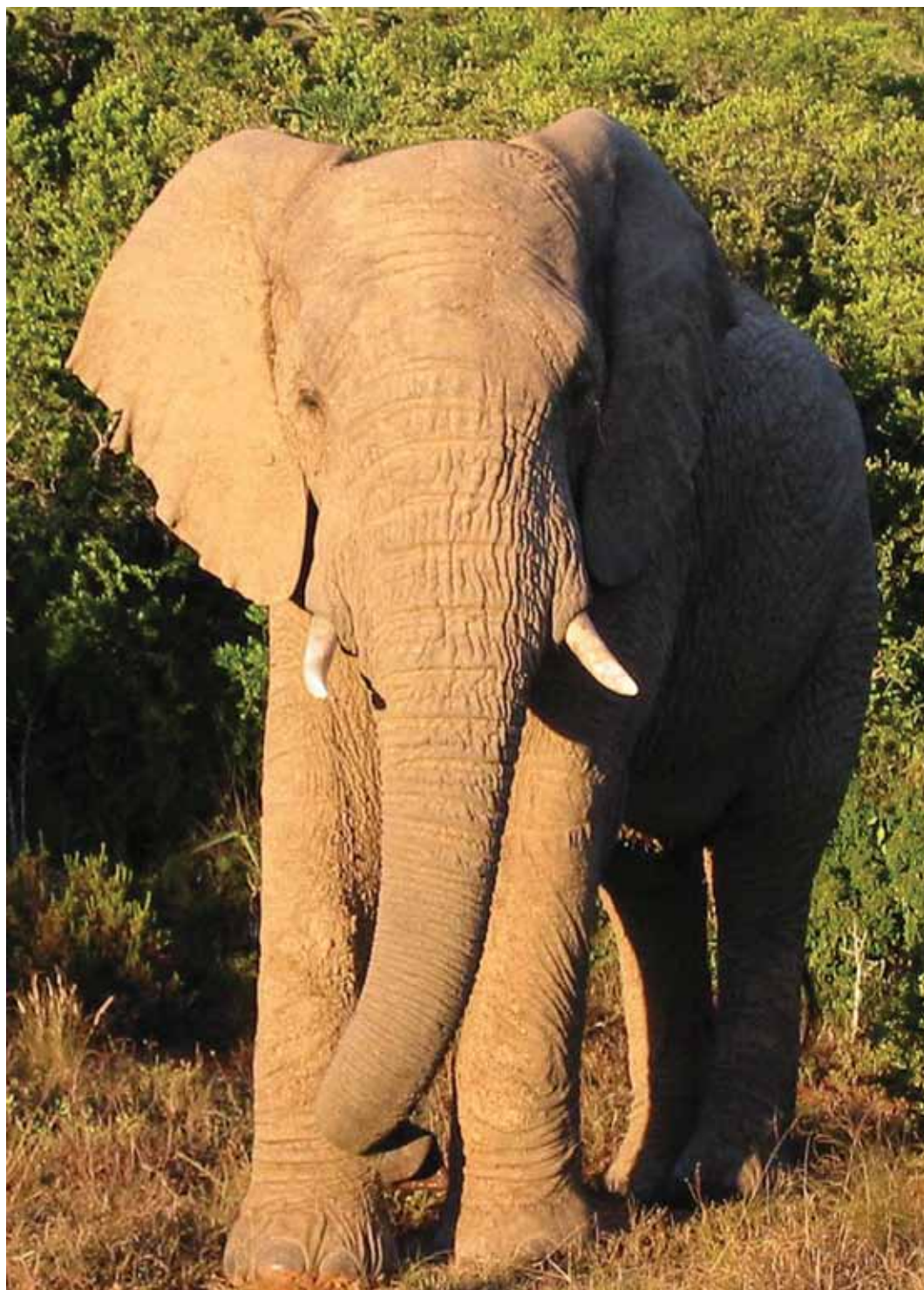


The Cederberg mountains contain in caves or in the shade of cliffs well over 100 rock art sites dating back some 10,000 years, an extraordinary record of the lives of the bushmen of old.



















Cape shanty town

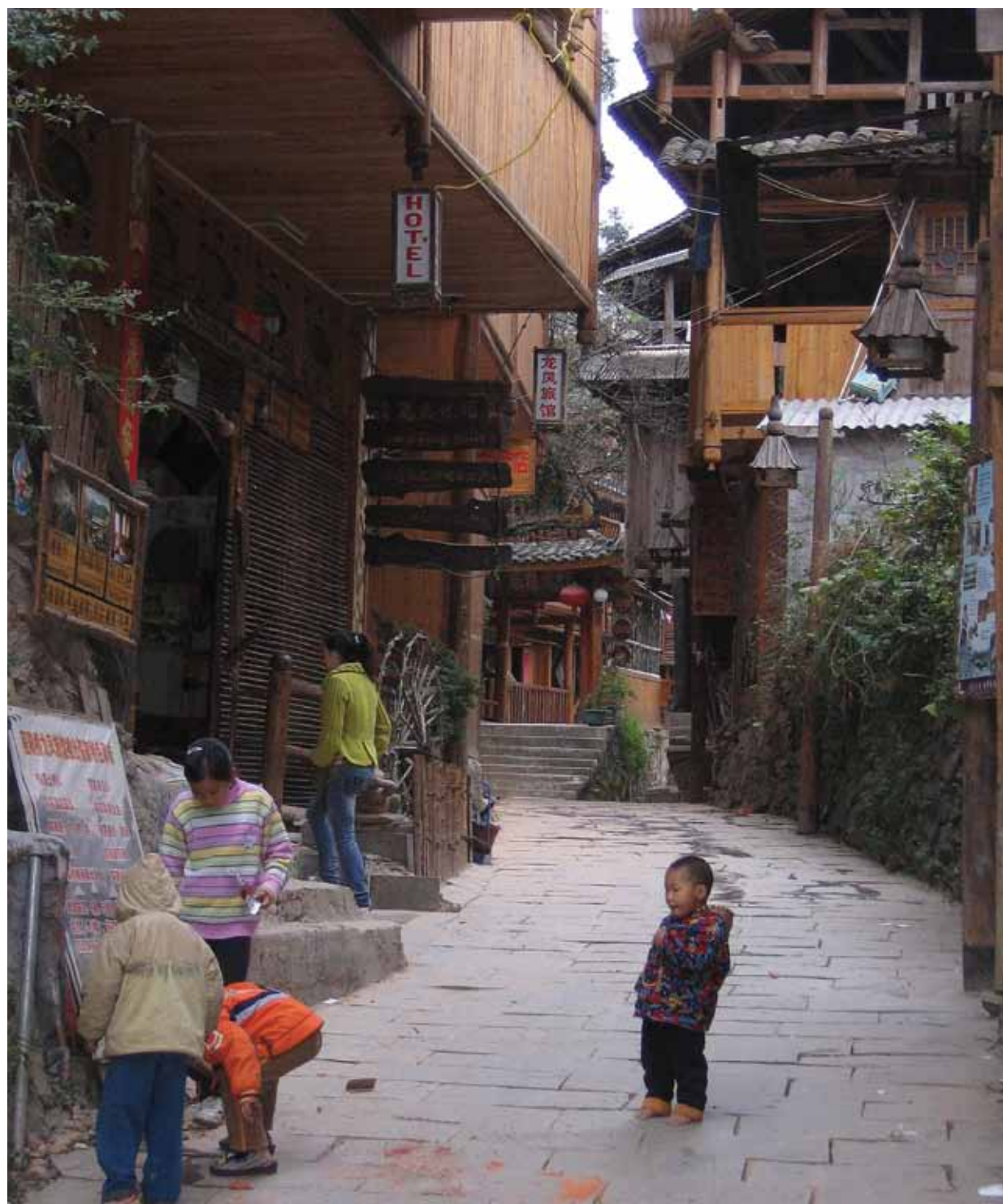
CHINA





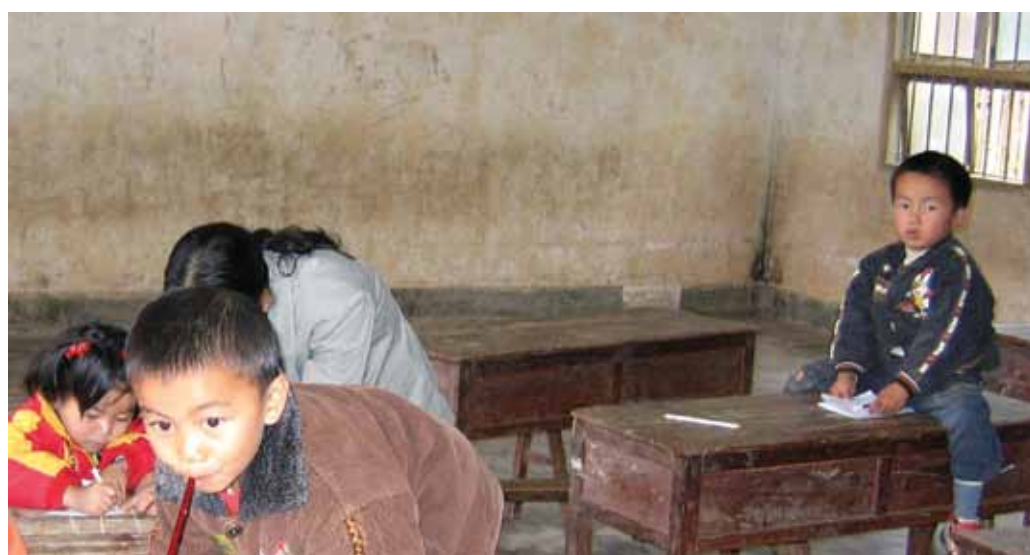


Above, the 'wind and rain bridge' built by the 'Dongs' who are renowned for their wooden houses, drum towers and bridges. This one leads to a small village called Chengyang (see next page)













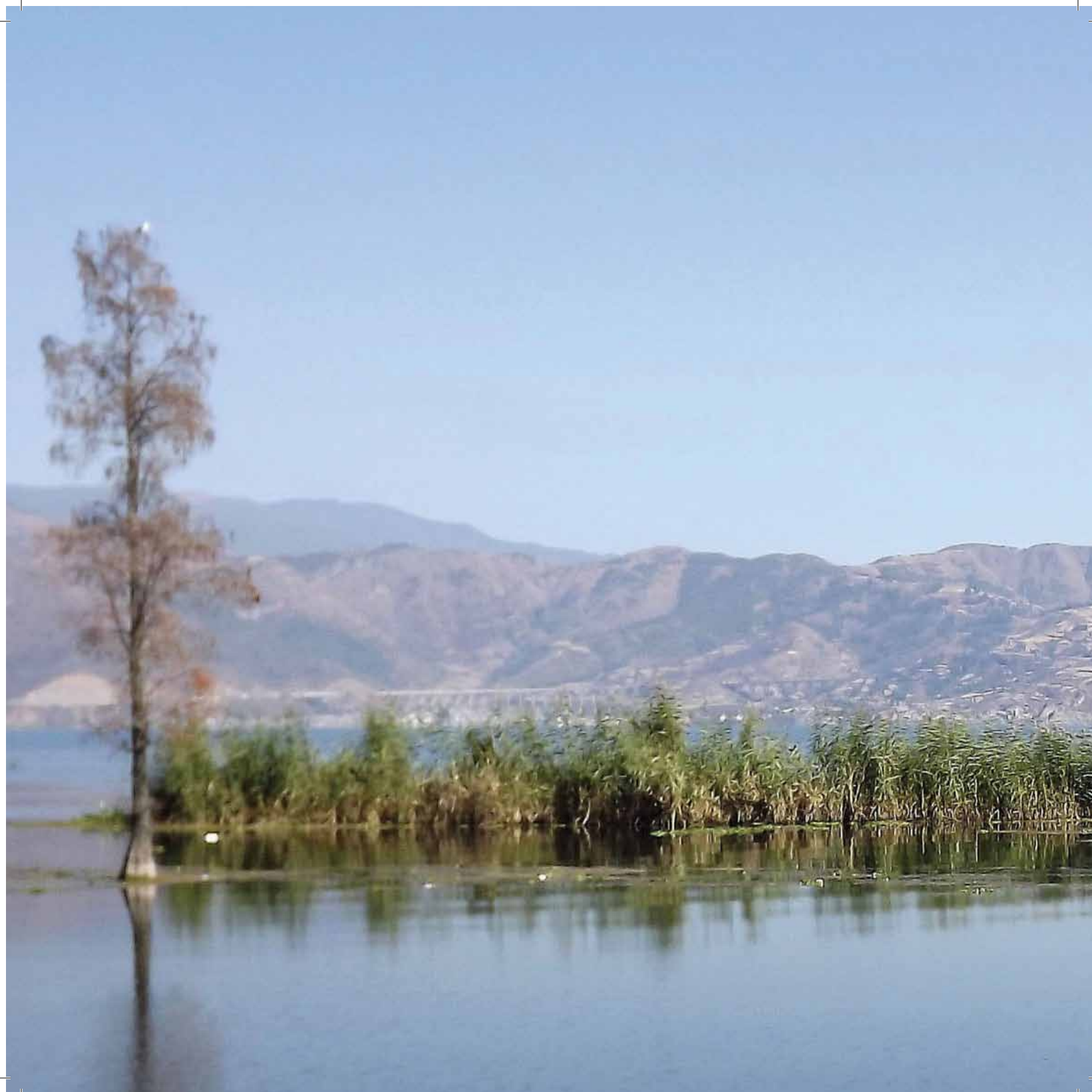


Many Chinese temples are dominated by big and even frightening statues.

However, the figures below are real people - a theatrical group performing a play in a Guilin street on a Saturday night.



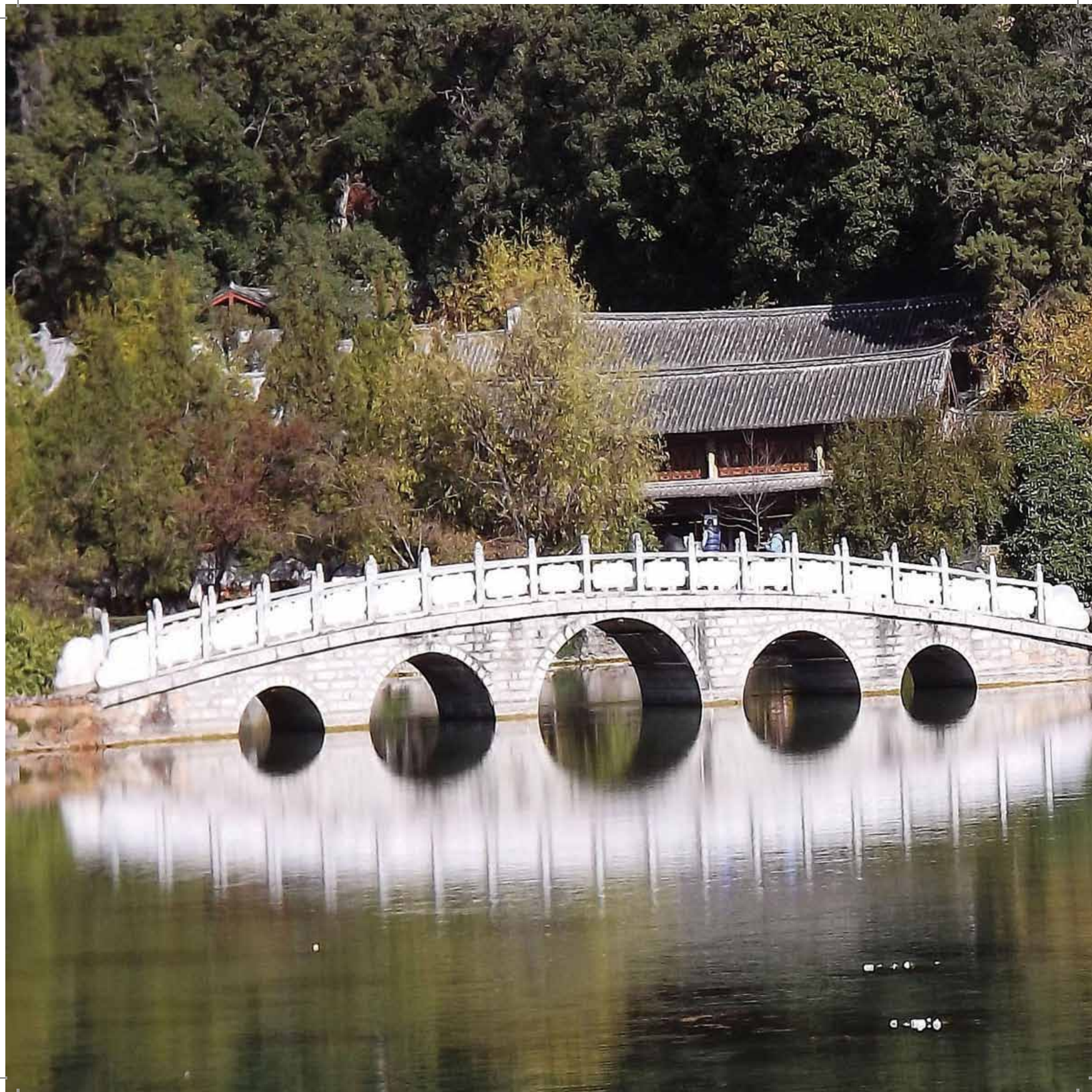


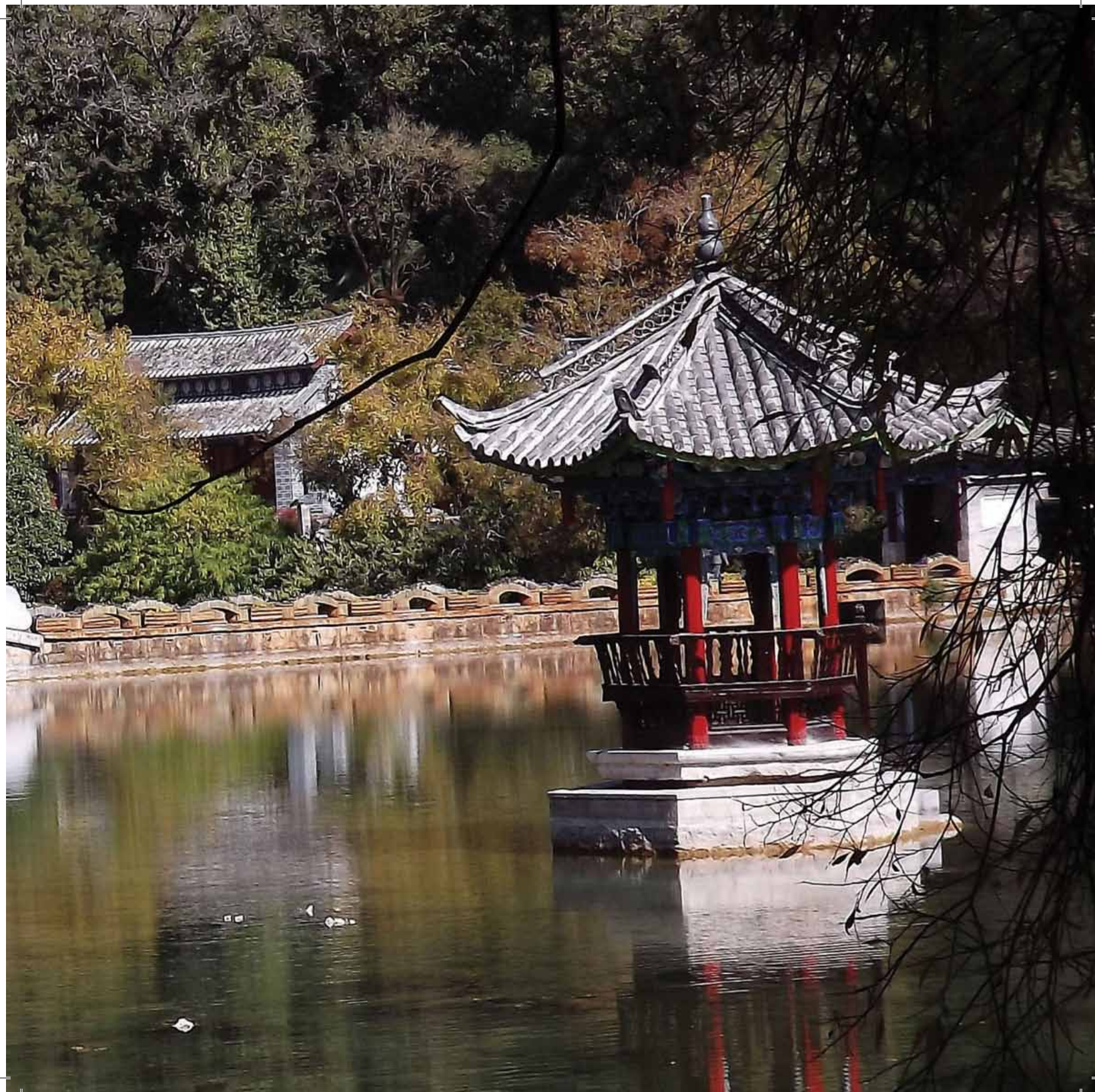














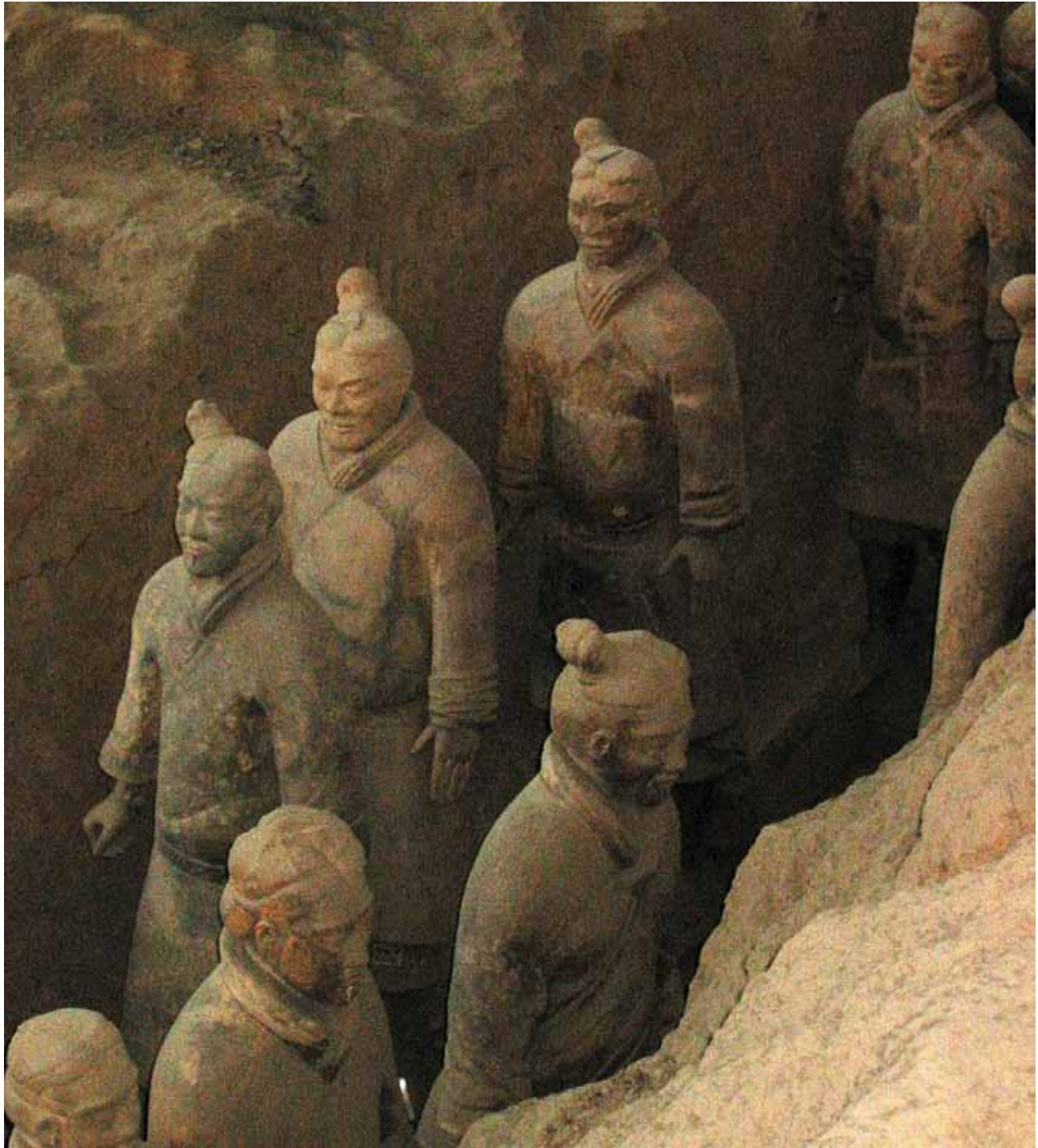








The 2000- years-old Terracotta Warriors are often described as 'the eighth wonder of the world', they were only discovered in March 1974 by villagers sinking a well. There are thousands of them, accompanied by horses and weapons. Every warrior is unique. Beautifully assembled and displayed in an imaginatively-designed museum, they are to be found on the outskirts of the city of Xian.



JOURNEY DOWN THE MEKONG

(CAMBODIA, LAOS, VIETNAM)



The Mekong winds its way from Cambodia to Saigon and beyond. It is more than a 'highway' between the two countries, it is also home to communities. Some families live on tiny 'islands' of land in the middle of the river.









Angkor Wat in Cambodia is not only larger than any other temple in the world and a classic of Khmer architecture but is also the centrepiece of a 400 acres complex of other temples built about the 12th century.























The Phnom Penh park on the left appears a peaceful place to rest until you reach the tower in the middle and see it encases hundreds of human skulls. These are some of the killing fields - as sobering evidence of man's capacity for inhumanity as you could expect to see anywhere. That is until you go to the former school nearby that was used by the Kymer Rouge as a prison and torture house for their prisoners...the walls are lined with their pictures. More than a million people were killed by the regime.





LAOS: the town of Luang Prabang is a gem. Situated on a peninsula linking the Mekong with the Nham Khan river, it is full of Buddhist monasteries and temples, the home of hundreds of monks, set within lush green tree-covered mountains.

ARAB LANDS



I have always loved travelling in what I call the 'Arab lands'. I love the hustle and bustle and sometime the bedlam of the bazaars and Kasbahs, the air of mystery surrounding the ancient parts of cities with their narrow alleys and old coffee houses where men, dressed as they have for centuries, gather to smoke hookahs and play games or gossip. Above all I love the sense that (as suggested above), one is being 'embraced by history.' Alas, one by one, these fascinating places have become, or are becoming unsafe. A human tragedy.



CAIRO...

*left, from the Cairo museum
right, from a Coptic church*





JORDAN

*Above, The ancient theater in Amman
Left, The crusader castle at Karak*







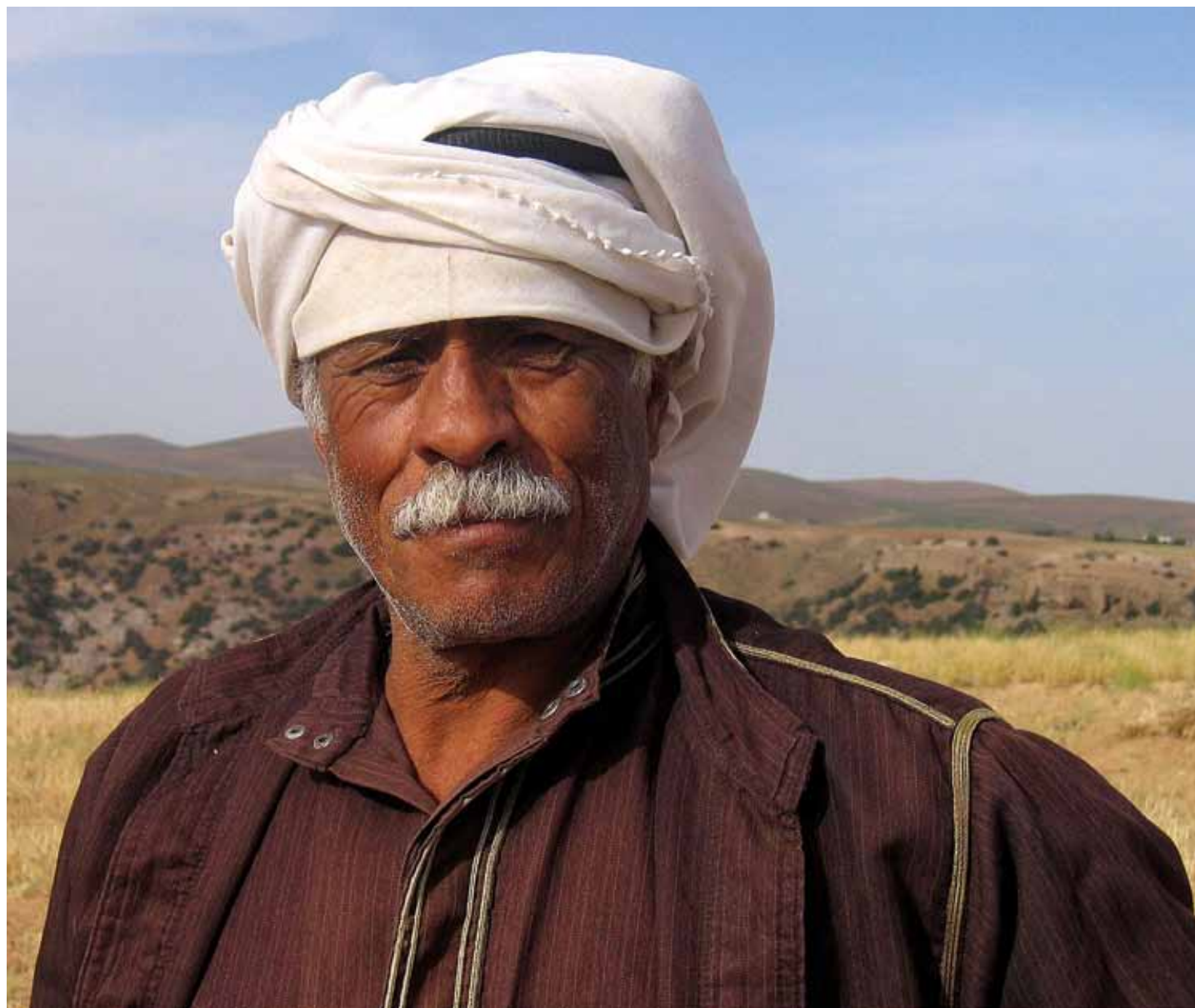


Mt Nebo where Moses was said to have his only view of the Holy Land.

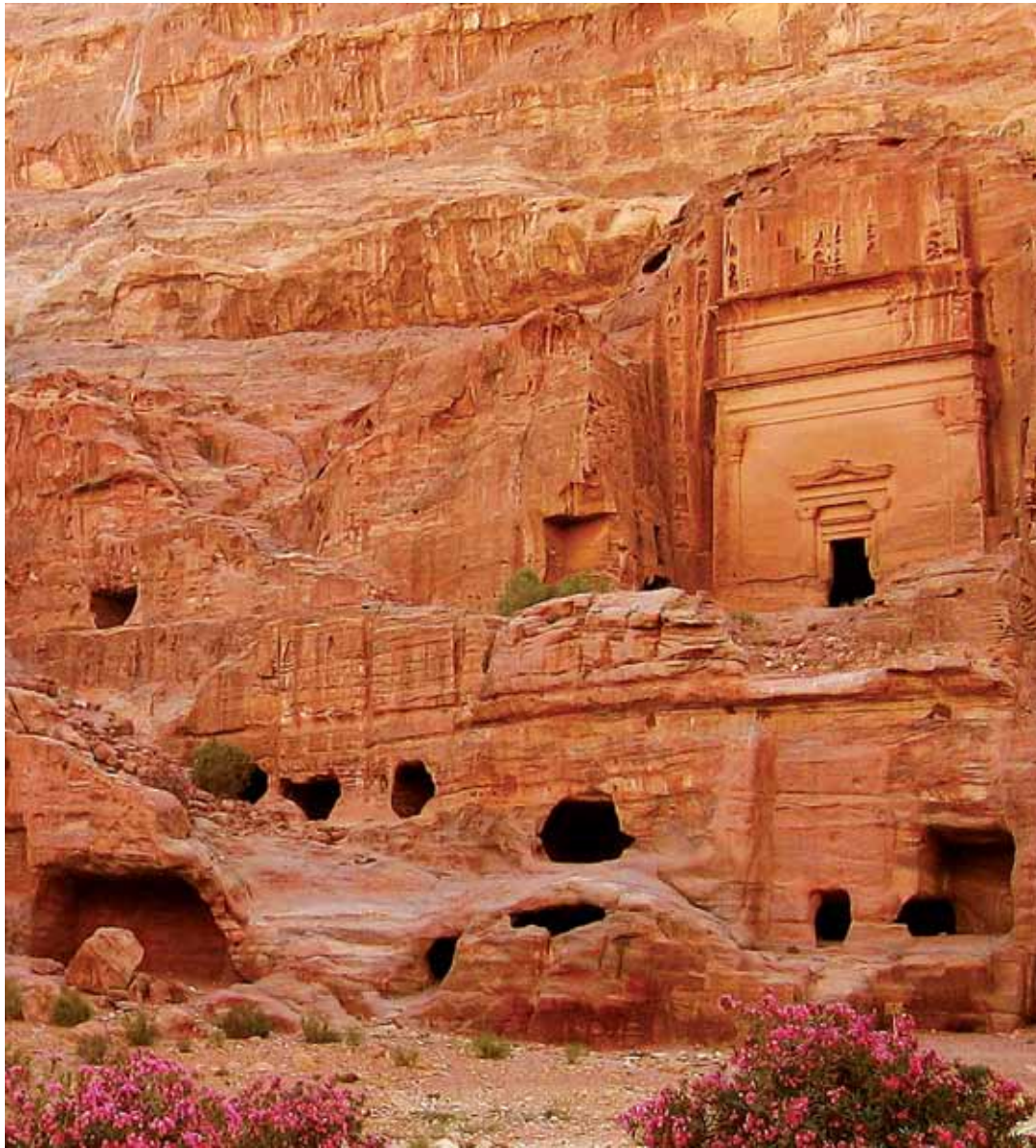




*The Wadi Rum desert, site of many
of the 'adventures' of T.E. Lawrence*



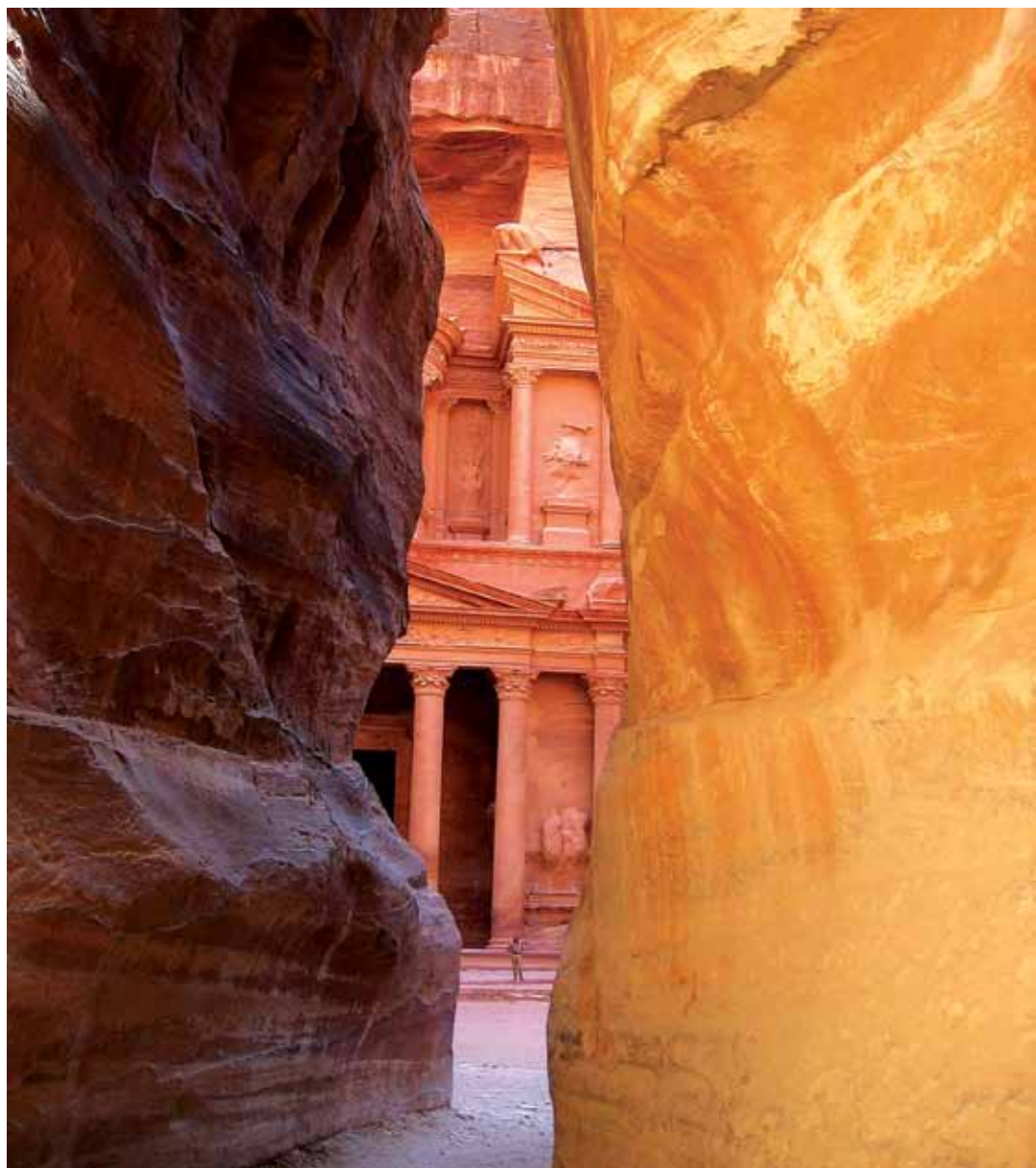


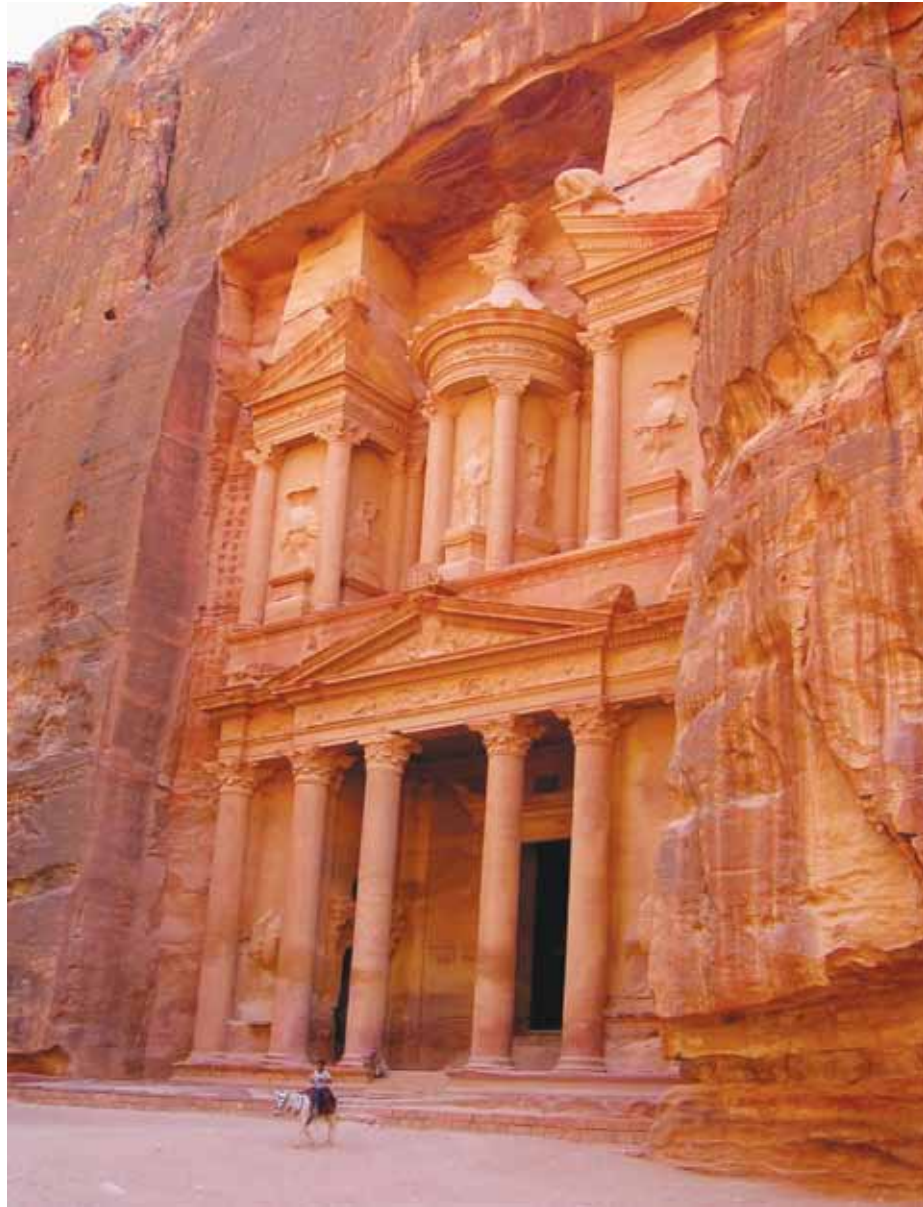


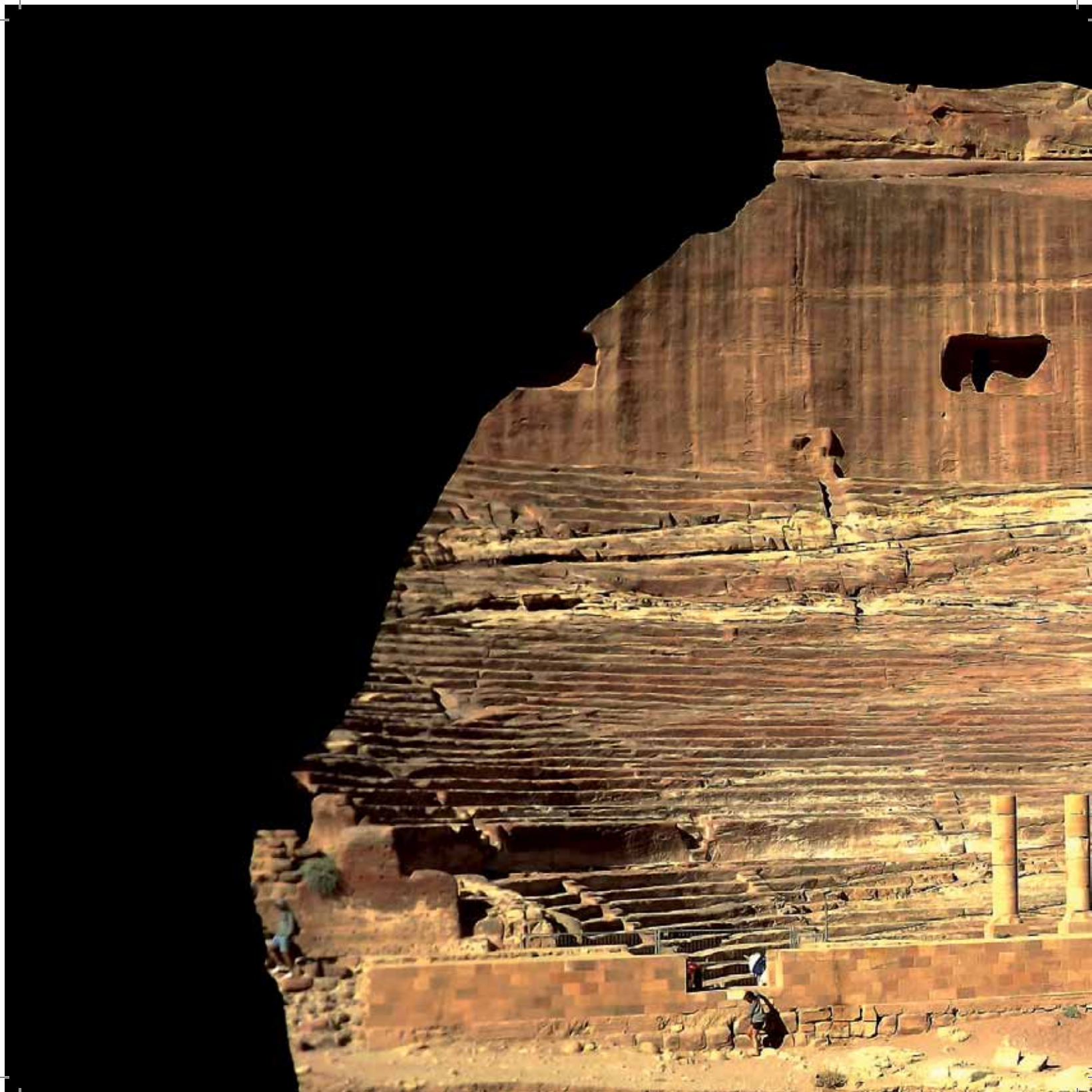
PETRA

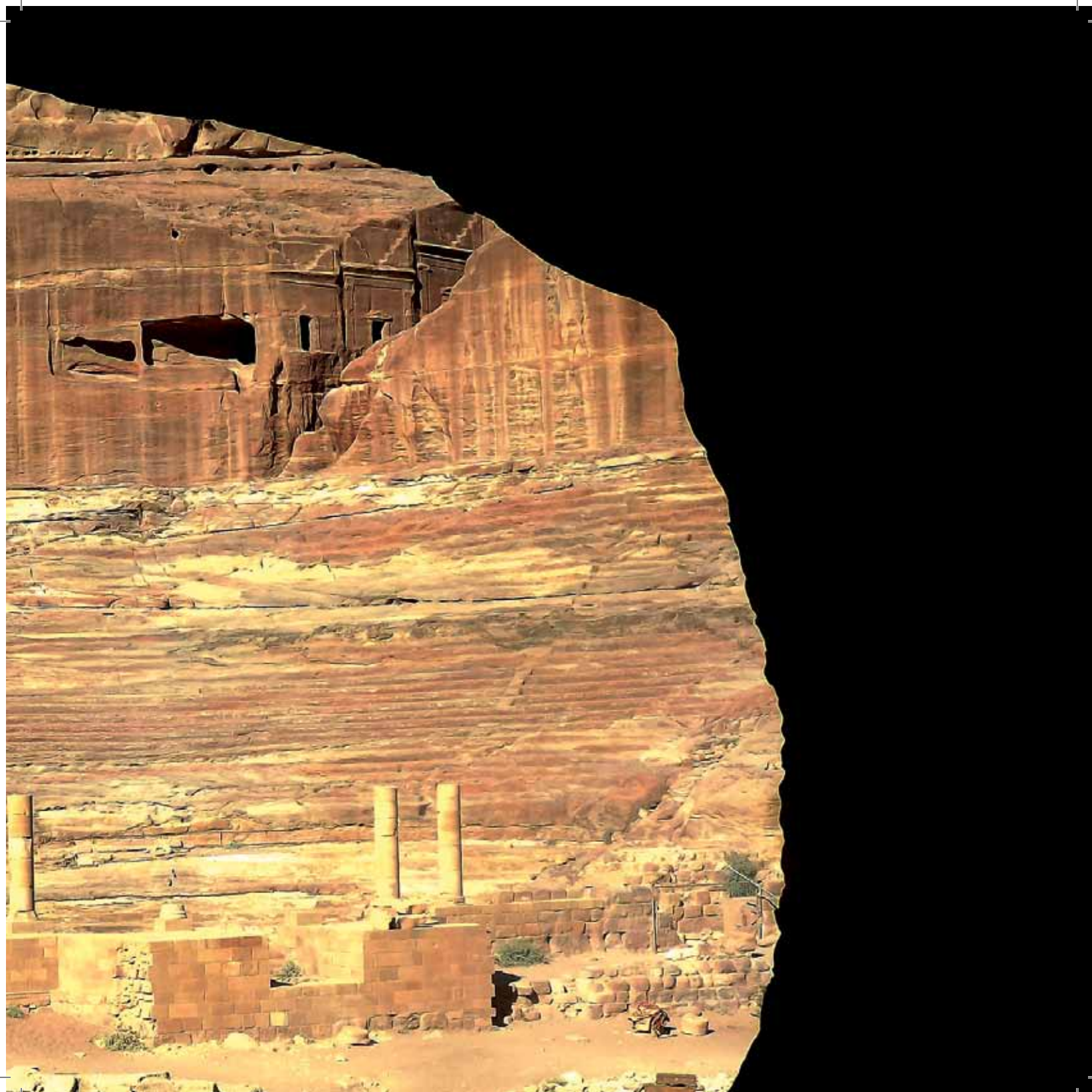
On these and the following pages, the awe-inspiring 2000-years-old city of Petra, the extraordinary creation of an ancient tribe made wealthy by dominating the Arabian trade routes. Sometime about the 14th century it was abandoned and became lost to the world, remaining hidden for over 400 years until a Swiss traveller slipped between this narrow gap in a rock wall and wandered 1200 metres down a narrow canyon (the As-Siq) and discovered this unique place.

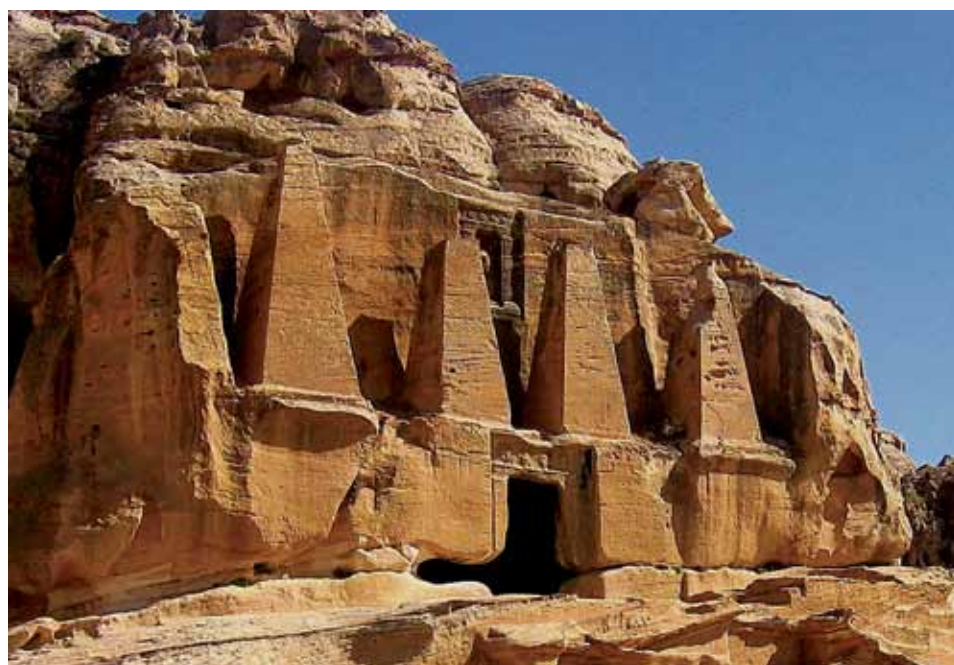
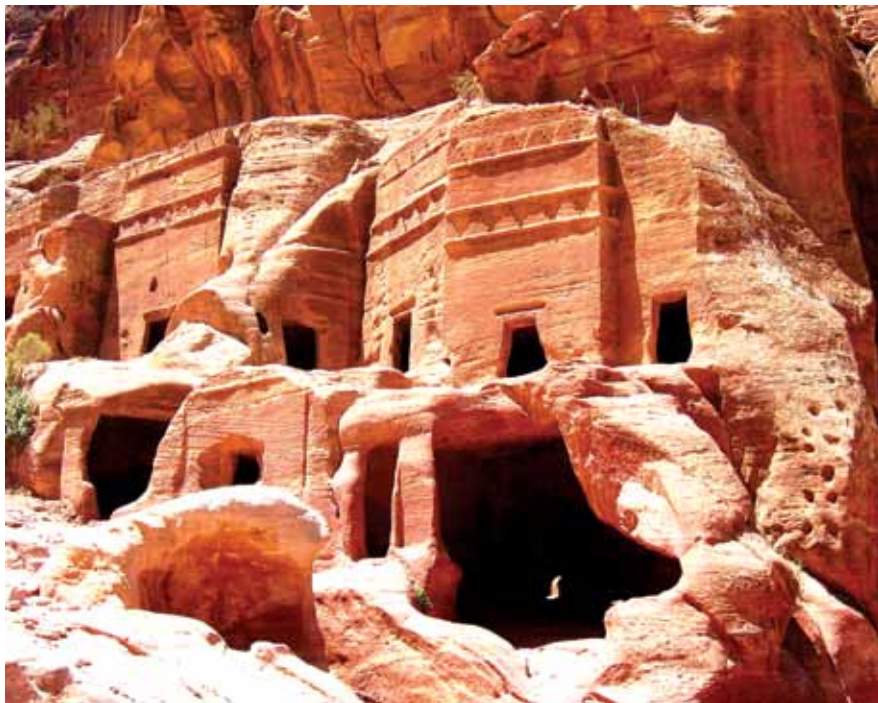












TURKEY (ISTANBUL)





The Hagia Sophia, featured on these two pages, appears in many lists of the man-made wonders of the world. Built in the 537 AD, it is the epitome of Byzantine architecture; not as imposing from the outside as some of Istanbul's mosques, but a truly magnificent building. When you enter its doors; you never want to leave. My favourite place in one of my favourite cities.







MOROCCO

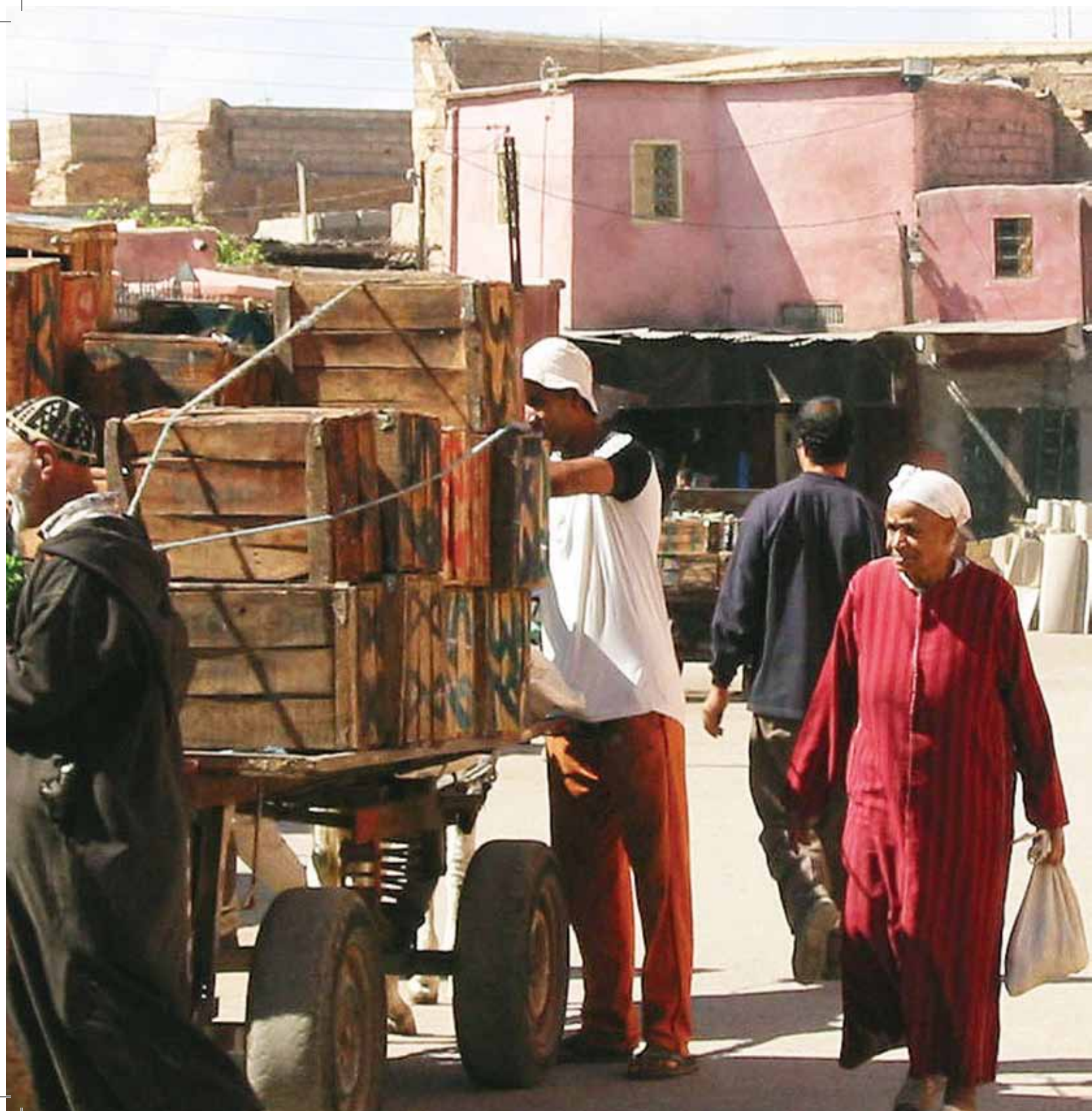








The famous Jamaa el-fnaa square and marketplace at the heart of Marrakech... at night packed with food stalls and snake charmers













Essaouira





MOVING ON FROM THE ARAB LANDS ...

beginning with ...

MAJORCA





SICILY









EASTER IN ANDALUCIA

'The travel writer Jan Morris described Andalucia as sol y sombre - 'sun on one side of the street, shadow on the other.'

It is the most dramatic part of Spain, its colourful and violent history carved out of a rugged landscape. This is the kind of place where you can shut your eyes, then open them, and believe you are in the 16th or 17th century. Widows, short, bent, broad-bummed, still wear only black. Donkeys still carry goods across the plains, following trails into ravines and valleys alive with sunflowers, wild herbs, and cork and cypress trees. It's white towns, many perilously built like forts on the top of hills and mountains, were key stop-over points on the old smuggling trails, and in the moonlight you can still imagine the shadowy figures of mule and man making their laborious way up during the night to disappear into the narrow streets to shelter behind the white walls, often positioned like forts on the top of a hill.

'But Andalucia combines the solitude of lonely farm houses out in the sierra with arresting spectacle, especially the Semana Santa processions that at Easter make their way from every local church into the centre of the city. I first encountered it by surprise in Seville ... there are few more awe-inspiring spectacles than the processions as they enter and emerge from the Cathedral in Seville...its a time when that city becomes at night a glittering open-air theatre...and this scene is re-enacted in every small village and city across the land.

'Andalucia, with its dramatic music and dance, its secretive hill-top towns, its stunning Mosque of Cordoba and Cathedral in Seville, its joyous local fiestas, stubbornly refuses to allow time to steal its history or replace its culture and traditions. It is impossible for anyone with an appetite for life and with imagination not to love Andalucia.'







*The Mosque and other
scenes in Cordoba*





Granada





Above, The Alhambra

Following pages, The Samanta Santa in Cordoba and Seville



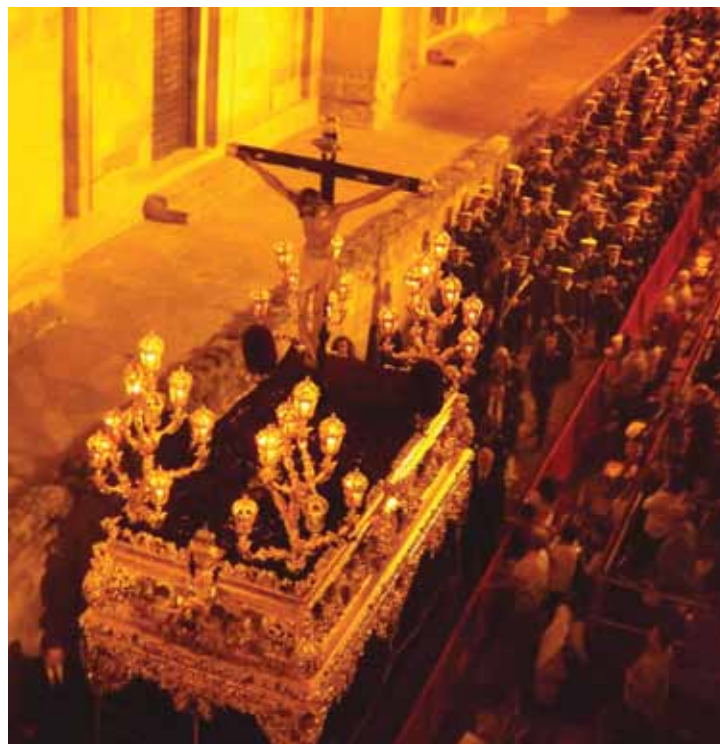






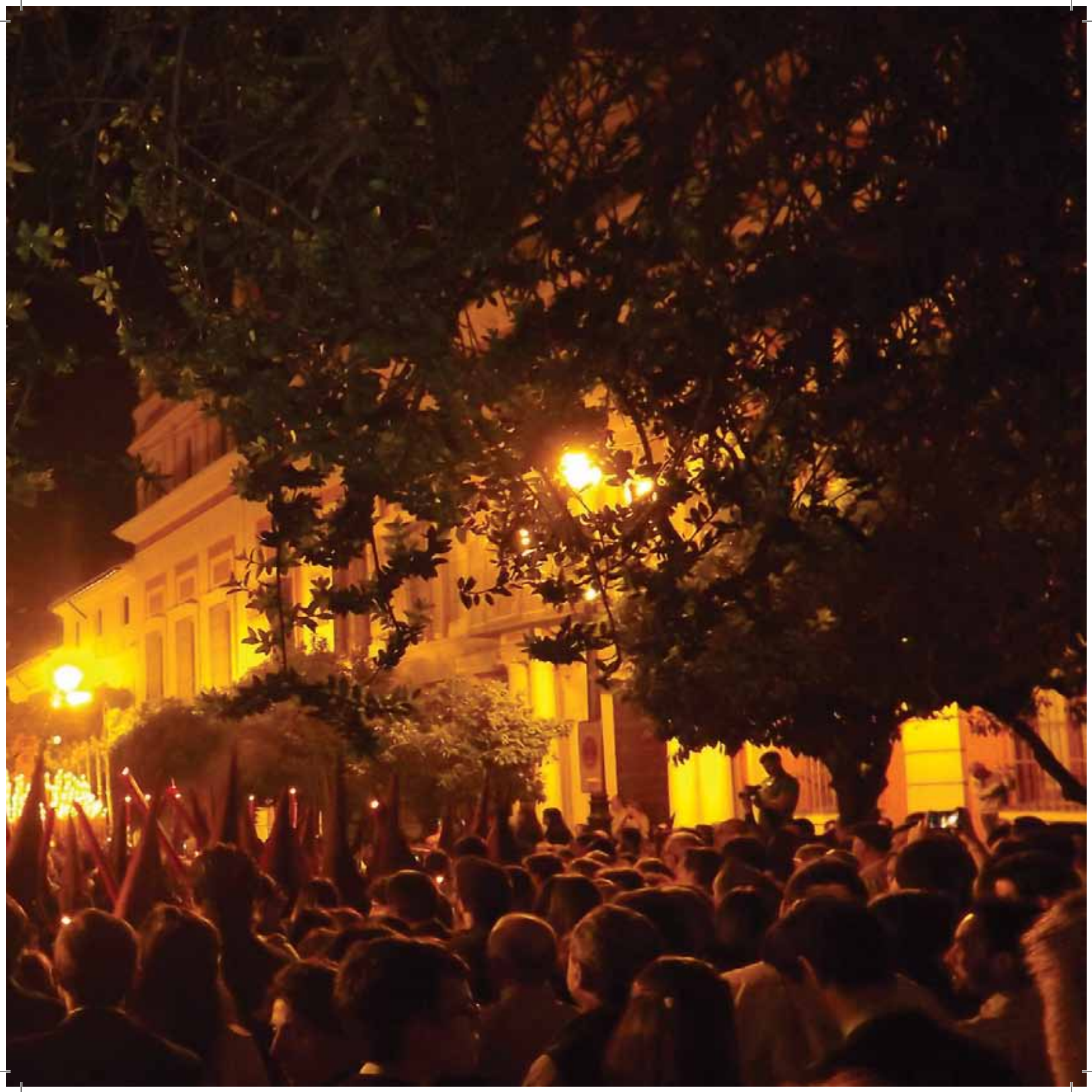
*Upon a barren mount,
 A calvary.
 Clear water
 And century old olive trees.
 In the narrow streets,
 Men hidden under cloaks;
 And on the towers,
 Weather vanes spinning.
 Eternally
 Spinning.
 Oh, lost village
 In the Andalucia of tears.*

Federico Garcia Lorca









CYPRUS





MONGOLIA



Of all the countries I have been to, none engendered the same sense of adventure and discovery as the vast land of Mongolia. While the younger generation are increasingly moving to the city, it is still a land of horses and nomadic herdsmen, of mountains, lakes, desert and steppes or grasslands - one of the last great largely undisturbed wildernesses on earth, dotted with the round, collapsible tents called 'gers'. The big week of the year is the colourful Naadam festival in July, with the emphasis on horse-riding, wrestling, and archery, the skills that produced the warrior nation of Ghengis Khan. While conventional tourists usually only see the huge festival in Ulanbator, I chose to be the only Westerner at a local one out in the desert where I witnessed the memorable spectacle of families coming from all directions on horseback, dressed in their finery, to see old friends, feast, compete and show off their skills, and generally experience a couple of days they can talk about for the rest of the year.







A feature of the Naadam Festival is the wrestling, a form of the sport unique to Mongolia and that concludes with the wrestlers engaging in a bizarre dance. The older men (above) are the judges.



Horse racing is another feature of the Naadam Festival. The Mongols, once the world's greatest riders and cavalrymen, prioritise stamina so the races can be 15 to 30m kilometres. The jockeys tend to be six to 10 year olds because they're lighter.











MAINE (USA)













CITIES

"Like people, cities reveal their varying personalities to the traveller. Depending on the city and on the traveller, there might begin a mutual love, or dislike, friendship, or enmity. Where one city will lift one individual to glory, it will destroy another who is not suited to its personality. Only through travel can we know where we belong or not, where we are loved and where we are rejected."

Roman Payne

Space being the enemy, you will catch in this book only a few glimpses of many of the world's great cities.

What follows, however, is a bow of respect to four:

Washington DC because, when there, I always walk the Mall to marvel at the splendour of the white monuments and museums, and the courts, libraries and offices of State.

If only the nation's politics lived up to the splendour of the nation's capital !

New York because, no matter how many competitive skyscrapers are erected, the icons - the Empire State, the Chrysler - continue to stubbornly stand tall, dominate the city's skyline, and proclaim to the world, 'THIS IS NEW YORK.'

Paris because few other cities reflect the unique nature of their citizens the way Paris reflects the French

and **London** because of the way the exuberance of contemporary architecture and culture uniquely merges on the banks of the Thames with centuries-old reminders of the city's history... where else would you find, facing each other across a river, buildings as contrasting as the 11th century Tower of London and the gleaming 21st century, 95-storey skyscraper that is the Shard ? As Dr Johnson said: 'A man who tires of London tires of life.'

WASHINGTON DC - THE MALL









NEW YORK ICONS



Opposite: The Empire State Building

Left: The Chrysler Building

Below: The Flatiron Building



GLIMPSES OF PARIS









LONDON - 24 HOURS ON THE THAMES

I first saw the Thames within days of coming to London in 1960 and in the intervening 57 years have seen it change dramatically. In those early days it was lined with docks and cranes... now they've been replaced by new homes and by commercial skyscrapers stretching from the old 'City' for miles to the east.

But the Thames is still a highway, and from it you can still glimpse the historic City - in one ride you can see the Palace of Westminster, the Tower of London, Tower Bridge, Wren's masterpiece St Pauls, the Monument to the Great Fire, and stubbornly refusing to concede to the 21st century, the first pub I ever entered, back in 1960, the Prospect of Whitby, built in Wapping in 1520 to serve fishermen, sail makers, boat builders, as well as thieves, smugglers and pirates and still there nearly 600 years on.

After dark it sparkles as its banks come alive, especially with the young, packing its new bars and restaurants, admiring the views from its bridges, and hopefully even in their revels being touched by its calm, silent and majestic never-ending passage from past centuries to this very day.

In May 2017 I spent a day on The Thames and on its banks, seeking with the following pictures to capture the combination of historic old buildings and bright and shining new ones.. You could say the traveller had come home.

If it could talk, what tales the Thames could tell. As Rudyard Kipling wrote in 'The River's Fate:

*Twenty bridges from Tower to Kew
(Twenty bridges or twenty-two)
Wanted to know what the River knew,
For they were young, and the Thames was old
And this is the tale that the River told ...*



Dawn in the City

















APPENDICES

AFTER-THOUGHTS
A FEW JOTTINGS
AND
SOME PICTURES

THE MISSING PIECES

This book is a companion to my memoirs, but whereas omissions from the memoirs were nearly all by choice (I was reasonably honest about failures and weaknesses, but decided some were no-one's business but my own), omissions from this book were a matter of necessity. I am referring to my limitations as a photographer. In this area I have no technical skills. What I like to think I do have is an eye for a picture. For that reason, I always describe myself as a 'picture-taker' rather than a photographer. Further, my travels cover nearly 60 years and many early pictures were taken with a camera that is now a museum piece; most of the pictures simply don't meet the challenges of today's technology.

I will, however, in this Appendix touch on some of the missing pieces, places that deserve at the very least a passing mention.

Let me start with what you may find the most striking omission: my country of birth, where I lived until I was 19 - New Zealand. I used to scoff at the proposition that the place where you spent your formative years - the actual country, the land - would remain forever in your bones (and soul), but when I went back after more than 20 years I was surprised to find myself as emotionally attached to the land itself as I was to family and friends, some of whom I had not seen for two decades or more. I was born on the South Island close to some of the country's most compelling scenery - places like Queenstown and Mt Cook, its highest mountain. My home town of Oamaru was built with a unique white stone found only in the surrounding area and, as a result, looks like no other town in the country. It also has a historic 'old town'. So, to my surprise, that little town has become a major tourist attraction. New Zealand is a beautiful and hospitable country that no committed traveller should miss; I'm only sorry it does not have a place at the heart of this book.

Moving on to the country where I have lived for well over 50 years, the UK, I won't pretend to love the place. I know the political and social flaws too well. But there are a hell

of a lot of worse places to live, and, on the whole, it has been kind to me. London has become a better and better place since I arrived just in time for the 'Swinging Sixties' and is probably now the world's greatest city. I should also be fair to two areas of the country where I have lived, namely Hastings and Cornwall.

There are plenty of other pleasant seaside towns, but Hastings, where I now live and will spend my last years, really is a special place, not least for the endless artistic and musical activity and the antique shops that make 'the Old Town' a fascinating living museum.

And I will always value the 15 years we lived amid the daffodils and the beautiful beaches of Cornwall.

There are some pictures from the United States in the main part of the book, but not as many as the country deserves. I have very mixed feelings about America. America had a considerable influence on the New Zealand of my childhood, mainly because of Hollywood in its golden years. Going to the old West, and cities like New York and San Francisco, was, in later years, like going home. America has, of course, some of the most magnificent scenery in the world but it is peopled by an extraordinary mix of some of the brightest and best-educated, friendly and likeable people on earth (a handful of whom are close friends) and also some of the most stupid and reactionary. There is no other way of putting it. These people *re-elected* Bush and elected Trump as their President.

I wrote of the US in my memoirs, as follows:

'I have travelled across nearly every American state, pounding the pavements of cities like New York, Boston, Seattle, San Francisco, New Orleans, and Chicago, holidaying on the eastern seaboard, with its grey clapboard houses, its lighthouses, and summer season repertory theatres, not to mention its lobster rolls; driving the coastal road in northern California with the Pacific crashing onto its white beaches, admiring its forests of giant redwoods and its spectacular mountain-parks, St Helen and Rainier; reviving memories of all those childhood cowboy films in journeys to Monument Valley, Death

Valley, and the ghost towns of Arizona and Nevada. But I first went to the US in 1972; and to travel there now, is a more sobering experience: because when I first went there I was attracted by the sense of power throbbing in the streets of the cities, and the beauty and calm of the country; now what strikes me forcibly is not its power and wealth but a sense of dereliction, with whole areas of cities now near-ruins and rural areas, especially as I have travelled west, that are rundown, farms with collapsing barns and rusty machinery, deserted roads dotted with abandoned gas stations and roadside cafes.'

There is a direct relationship between the treasure the US has wasted in wars abroad and the deterioration described above.

Yet, as I also wrote in my memoirs:

'When you talk to many ordinary Americans you cannot but be dismayed at how little they know about the rest of the world, making them vulnerable to manipulation and misinformation. This is partly why they have allowed their leaders to send their sons to die in country after country they have never even heard of...

...The Americans have been let down by the corruption of the political system, corporate power and media, all of them inter-related, and all of them deeply manipulative of the innocence of a basically decent people. They are educated to a world of black and white, good and evil, and to people as stereotypes, instead of the wonderful place it is.'

If ever there was a case for travel as educator, it is the US and its people.

Moving to the other side of the world I have with reluctance omitted from the main part of this book Hong Kong where old junks still mingle with 21st century ships in the famous old harbour. I fell in love with Hong Kong when as a teenager I was captivated by the old film the Story of Susie Wong; the Star Ferry on which she rode across the harbour is still there, but, alas, Hong Kong is much more a collection of skyscrapers now and has lost much of its special atmosphere.

I believe that to we Europeans, South America remains an 'undiscovered' continent. When we travel west, we tend to head for the US, Canada, or the Caribbean. Also South America has never become a politically 'coordinated' continent and thus has so far not become a world power. Alas, I travelled across South America with a prehistoric camera and have few pictures worth sharing. Perhaps my most memorable and terrifying day was in the Andes in Peru. As I subsequently wrote:

'I was in Ayacucho, a market town thousands of feet up in the Andes. From there I travelled 120 miles across mountains, valleys and streams, on a journey that took 12 hours. I was on an open-topped truck packed with peasants and their babies, chickens, dogs, fruit, vegetables and other belongings. Everyone stood all the way. Occasionally the road disappeared under water or mud from a landslide; often the truck hung over ledges with a steep drop of 5000 feet or more. I was cold and soaked. In more comfortable circumstances I would have been entranced by the contrasts between the bareness of the mountains and the richness of the valleys; by the donkeys and llamas; by the Indian descendants of the Incas, beautiful people in colourful costumes that hadn't altered in centuries. But I was too tired and too scared...I just stood and hung on for dear life and wished I had not come.'

I'm only too aware that the more desperate areas of the developing world are also absent from this book. It's just that - and I'm sorry to be a bore about this - I don't have the pictures, apart from one or two rather poor ones that come later. I can only hope that to anyone who believes this traveller seeks only beauty and glamour, my 1970s report for The Observer contains the answer:

'We only encounter the Third World on our TV screens when there is a major disaster. I now learned that most people in the poorest countries live with disaster day-by-day - for them gruelling, life-sapping hardship and loss of life are not occasional newspaper or TV News stories but the reality of everyday lives that consist of a series of little unpublicised disasters with the occasional major catastrophe thrown in. The former never hit the headlines, for whoever heard of a British headline: 'West African farmer loses crop in rainstorm.'

I shared one special moving memory of West Africa:

'I was sitting at a street bar in Dakar in Senegal. Into cities like Dakar every day come hundreds of thousands of people, fleeing the poverty of the countryside, although the best they will find in the cities are teeming slums, themselves full of disease and despair. One such woman, probably in her late twenties, with two small children in rags, came walking wearily and slowly down the street and sank into the doorway opposite. As I sat and looked at her, I saw a large tear begin to run down her cheek. For some reason that affected me more deeply than all that I had seen before and it took me several days to realise why. It was because nobody had ever told me that they cried. They were not supposed to cry!

Like so many others, I had protected myself from the reality of the third world by unconsciously believing that they were different, that their lives may well be hell but that they had a particular immunity...that they did not suffer in the way we suffer...that they did not feel in the way we feel...that they did not cry. Well, they do.'

Finally, a traveller's tale:

I was really looking forward to a journey on the famous Trans Siberian Railway. You can spend over a week on this big, clunking train, travelling from the centre of China all the way to Moscow. It is the world's longest rail journey. In fact, I joined it at Ulanbator for four days and nights, plus a two-day break to see Lake Baikal, the world's largest fresh-water lake.

That train journey across Siberia was as memorable for life on the train as for the views from the window of the country itself. I had a small cabin with a bed that became a couch in the day time. I had a tin of coffee with me and could fill my cup with boiling water from one of the machines positioned at the end of each carriage. Food could be purchased from elderly women who waited at the stations where the train stopped, selling fresh bread, hard-boiled eggs, cheese and sausage. There was also a restaurant

car on the train but I was the only one who went there. Of the 70 items on the menu, only one was available. Lamb chops. Charred. It soon became clear why I was the only one there. But occasionally the one waitress came down the train with a tray of hot buns. They were delicious. You chatted to other travellers in the narrow corridors and swapped books, but also had the opportunity to meet Russians because this is a working train service.... there were soldiers, salesmen, students, and even whole families. Each carriage was sternly presided over by a no-nonsense Russian woman in a uniform. When you stopped at stations with unpronounceable names and had the chance of a walk on the platform you had to be very careful to watch the train, because it would suddenly depart without warning. More than once I had to race to the nearest steps and jump aboard as it was accelerating away.

One night at about 2 am we stopped at a lonely station in the middle of Siberia. It was pitch dark and so cold there were not even any women selling food. There was not a soul to be seen. It was snowing. It felt like the loneliest place on earth. It probably just about was. Everyone on the train was sleeping and I was the only one who ventured out. As I stomped up and down to keep warm, staying close to my carriage so as not to miss the train when it moved, I saw a young man and woman approaching. One of them said:

'Mr Wilson ?'

Now, think about this:

I would have sworn that no-one in the world knew where I was that night.

Who could be looking for me on a lonely railway station in the middle of of Siberia ?

At two in the morning ?

And in a snow storm ?

I knew the Russian security services were supposed to be the best, but this was beyond belief.

I said I was, indeed, Mr Wilson, whereupon they handed me a note. It said: *'You left your passport at Lake Baikal. But do not worry. It is on its way to Moscow by plane and will be given to you at the station when you arrive.'*

This was incredible. Someone had contacted the Trans Siberian Railway, tracked down my reservation, found out not only what train I was on but what carriage I was in, worked out what time I would be at this station with an unpronounceable name, and then found a couple of locals willing to leave the warmth of their bed (or beds) to come and find me at two in the morning.

But the story didn't end there: as the train was pulling into Moscow station a man suddenly appeared, running frantically beside my cabin window, waving my passport, and, once it had stopped and we made contact, he insisted on driving me from the station to the airport, stopping on the way so that I could walk in Red Square.

Don't ever let anyone tell you the Russians are inefficient. Or, for that matter, inhospitable.

This - and lots, lots more - you learn when you travel.

So the memories flow...of countries, of peoples, of activities and events.

As I wrote earlier: unforgettable moments in a fortunate life.



South Island, NZ



Mt Cook, NZ



Cornwall





Hastings





1



4



5



3



6



2



7



8

1 - 3: West Africa 4 - 6: The Andes 7 - 8: Hong Kong

LAST WORD

I once circled the world on one plane journey. From the air, our planet appears colossal. Well, I suppose it is colossal. But, when you think of it as a home for 7.5 billion people, as you look down on endless, empty deserts, vast areas of unapproachable, barren mountains and even vaster stretches of ice and water, and realise how little of it can actually sustain life, it seems a lot smaller.

And, of course, by what we call 'advances' we've made it even smaller - phenomenal communications mechanisms enable us to be heard and seen all over the world in real time. Whereas it was once a fantasy to travel the world in 80 days, now it takes less than 80 hours. Traders who once bartered in their bazaar now trade in a world-wide marketplace. Men who once fired arrows at one another, could now send missiles across oceans to strike an enemy half a planet away in a matter of minutes...and all the time the population grows and grows so that it will be nearer a virtually unsustainable 11 billion by the end of this century.

This is why, back on the ground and seeing the world at closer quarters, I have to admit I find myself confused.

On one hand, while we continue to make the most amazing 'advances' in science and technology, when it comes to human behaviour - to human nature - we have hardly advanced at all. It's as if the appetites and forces that drive human beings are inherent so that we are, as a life form, more-or-less incapable of improvement. As a result, despite some pluses such as those in medical science our scientific and technical genius has, rather than being helpful, made the world a much more dangerous, unequal and selfish place than when I was a child.

Hence the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the increased danger of their use. Hence the spread of heartless, insane terrorism. Hence the cyber attacks that threaten to undermine our 21st century way of life and the abuse, and even evil, facilitated by what is misleadingly called the 'social media'. Hence the way our greed today ensures the climate will be more hostile to generations to come.

On the other hand, in my 76 years and more than 150 journeys to 68 countries, I've never ceased to marvel at how extraordinary, how miraculous and miracle-making, both nature and the human race are. As I look back at the pictures in this book my memories are almost entirely positive. I have seen many special places and many special people.

So do we live in Louis Armstrong's '*Wonderful World*' or not ? Here's my confusion: I think we do - and we don't. The key is acceptance of the inevitability of imperfection. We live and will always live in an imperfect world and all we can do is look for, nurture, and make the best of it.

The more you travel, the more you view the world with both despair and hope.

Despair because of the increasing number of places where you dare not travel because others could kill you. Despair of other places you can't visit because famine and disease are wiping out whole populations and could take you with them. Despair because you see before your own eyes the hardship and injustice caused by the unequal distribution of wealth.

And yet, travel also creates hope.

Hope in the incredible diversity of humans and their habitats and the incredible ingenuity of people, their creativity - art, music, and the magnificence of much

architecture you discover in the poorest places...and the stunningly beautiful places that balance less welcoming deserts and barren mountains

Hope in the fact that no matter how much bad there is in the world, no matter what cynicism, incompetence and sheer stupidity our so-called leaders display or what some madmen do, people still rise in the morning and love each other, work with each other, survive and even thrive, stubbornly refusing to allow the worst extremes of either human behaviour or nature to diminish their essential courage, determination and goodness.

Hope in the good humour, patience, generosity, and indomitable spirit of families and communities in the most unlikely places. If there is one over-riding lesson I have learned it is that the best of our species is often to be found in the worst of circumstances. The problem is not individual hearts and minds but, rather, the cumulative destructive power of those who manipulate fear, need or greed in the names of business, politics and religion.

Human beings are seen at their best when individuals have power only over their own lives and at their worst when they're given power over others. I suppose this could be because the qualities needed to befriend or serve one's neighbours are the opposite of the qualities needed to pursue and exercise power over them.

When I see petty acts of meanness that from time to time make the lives of our fellow citizens a misery and then I think of a Mongolian family sharing its tent with any traveller who comes by, or an Indian family that will not touch its food until its unexpected visitor has eaten his fill...when I think of these contradictions I thank God for the travels that enable me to maintain a balanced, and ultimately an optimistic view of the world.

So, I return from my travels confused - with bad news and good.

I do, however, think we sometimes need to remind ourselves that we should be thankful we exist at all ? How rarely do we think about that ? Is this really the only planet capable of sustaining life (even scientists say that would be a trillion to one fluke.)

And if it is the only one, how blessed are we to be chosen by fate to live on it ?

And how crazy are we to abuse and waste that luck as in so many ways we do ?

As I say - confusion.

That said, I can only report on what I have seen and heard in my fortunate life. Accepting that the world is imperfect and always will be, I still believe that on balance, for now at least, many, if not all of us, do live in a 'wonderful world.'

But whether you believe that or not, the challenge that my generation has not met, and will therefore pass to the next, is to find a way to live peacefully together and to enhance and share the bounty of this unique planet so that its human inhabitants deserve and preserve its wonders.

Des Wilson 2017

WHAT THEY SAID...

'I haven't been everywhere, but it's on my list.'

Susan Sontag

'There ain't no journey that don't change you some...'

David Mitchell, Cloud Atlas

'Did you ever notice that the first piece of luggage on the carousel never belongs to anyone.'

Erma Bombeck

'Streets flooded. Please advise.'

Robert Benchley



THE SUN SETS ON PLANET EARTH

DES WILSON

Des Wilson was born in Oamaru, New Zealand, March 5, 1941, one of six children of Mr and Mrs A.H. Wilson. He left school at 15 as a newspaper reporter in New Zealand and Australia and travelled to the UK in 1960 and has lived there ever since. In a career of more than 50 years, he combined journalism with becoming a campaigner on environmental, liberal and social causes, a politician, and public affairs advisor. He 'pioneered' the concept of the campaigning charity as first director of Shelter, and led a number of campaigns including those for lead-free petrol and freedom of information. After becoming President of the old Liberal Party (1986-87), he helped found the Liberal Democrats, and in 1992 ran their first General Election campaign. As journalist and writer he was for nearly a decade a columnist on publications such as the Guardian, the Observer, and the New Statesman, was deputy editor of The Illustrated London News, and wrote for almost every national newspaper as well as writing or editing 15 books. He also appeared frequently on radio and television. In business he was in the 1990s director of corporate and public affairs for BAA plc. while filling a number of roles in the public and sports sphere including on the British Tourist Authority, deputy chairman of Sport England, and chairman of the Sports Lottery Panel. In later years he wrote two books on professional poker (as well as playing in the World Series), and wrote his autobiography 'Memoirs of a minor public figure', and a follow-up entitled 'Growing Old - the last campaign.' For more than 30 years he has been married to Jane and they now live in Hastings.

OTHER BOOKS BY DES WILSON

- 1969 *I know it was the place's fault (on Shelter and the homeless)*
1973 *Des Wilson's Minority Report (Observer columns)*
1979 *So you want to be Prime Minister (an introduction to British politics)*
1983 *The Lead Scandal (the case for lead-free petrol)*
1984 *The Secrets File - editor (the case for freedom of information)*
1984 *Pressure - the A to Z of campaigning*
1985 *The Environmental Crisis - editor*
1987 *Battle for Power (on the 1987 Alliance election campaign)*
1989 *The Citizen Action Handbook (with Leighton Andrews)*
1990 *Costa del Sol (novel)*
1992 *Campaign (novel)*
1993 *Campaigning - the A to Z of public advocacy*
2002 *Private Business, Public Battleground - with Sir John Egan (the case for corporate social responsibility)*
2006 *Swimming with the Devilfish (under the surface of professional poker)*
2007 *Ghosts at the Table (history of poker, the world's most popular game)*
2011 *Memoirs of a Minor Public Figure (autobiography)*
2014 *Growing Old - the last campaign*

TRAVEL (68 countries)

England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales
Australia, New Zealand, Cook Islands
Cambodia, Vietnam, Japan, Singapore,
Malaysia, India, Thailand, Laos
Mongolia, China

Russia, Norway, Sweden, Iceland
Germany, France, Belgium, Spain, Monaco
Austria, Switzerland, Italy, Luxemburg,

Yugoslavia, Greece, Cyprus, Turkey, Hungary,
The Netherlands, Andorra
USA, Canada, Panama, Surinam, Paraguay,
Nicaragua, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Peru
St Vincent, Antigua, Barbados, Jamaica
South Africa, Kenya, Senegal, Upper Volta,
Mauritius, the Gambia
Morocco, Egypt, Libya, Dubai,
Djibouti, Jordan, Lebanon
Channel Islands, Gambia, Gibraltar



THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED
TO JANE
AND
FAMILY AND FRIENDS