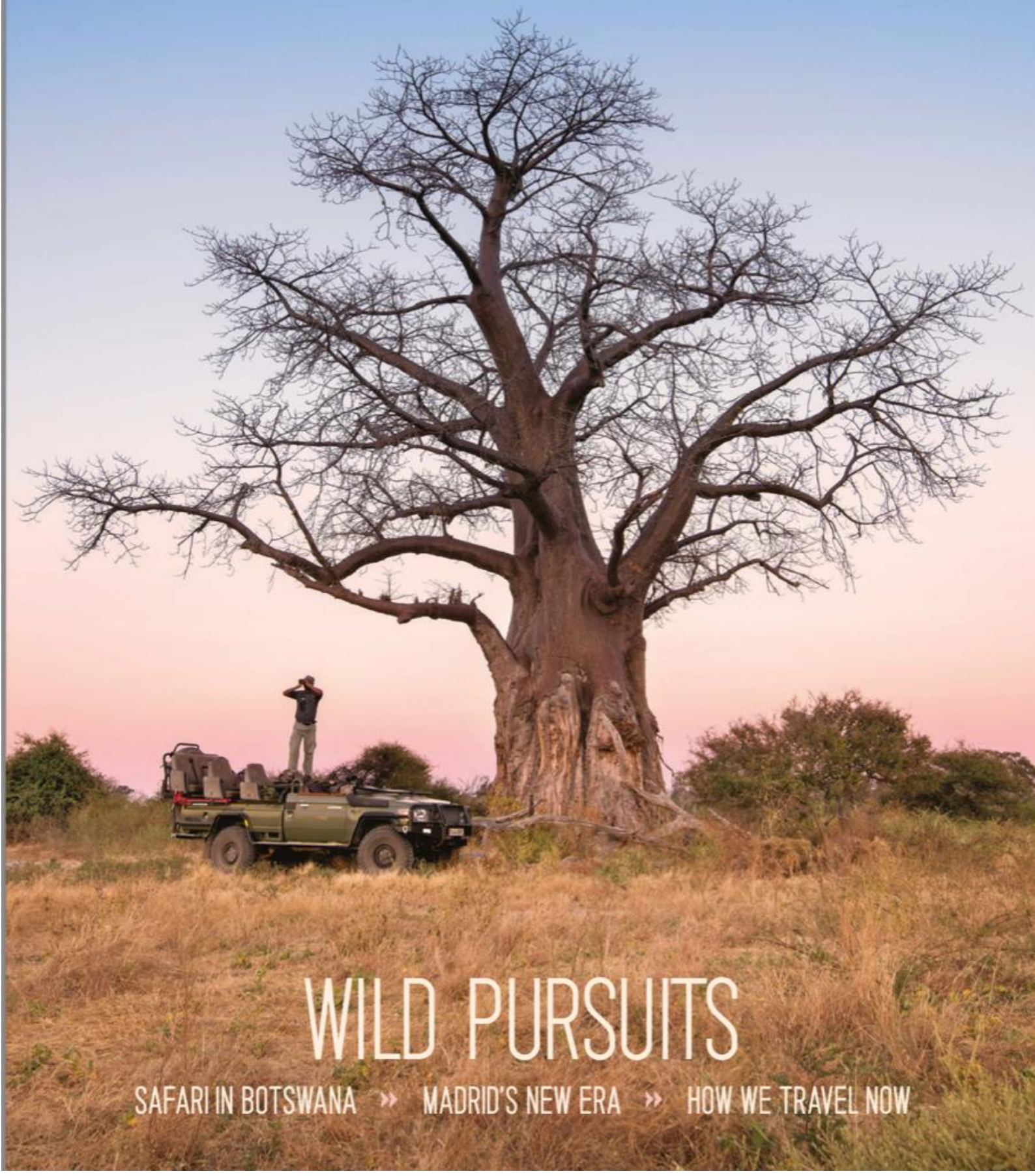


YOUR JOURNEY BEGINS WITH US

SEPTEMBER | OCTOBER 2021

# VIRTUOSO LIFE

AUSTRALIA | NEW ZEALAND



## WILD PURSUITS

SAFARI IN BOTSWANA » MADRID'S NEW ERA » HOW WE TRAVEL NOW

# Positive Returns

Travel advisors weigh in on how to travel mindfully now.  
INTERVIEWS BY JOEL CENTANO



Twelve Apostles Marine National Park in Victoria and (opposite) Aman-taka's library.

**A**S PANDEMIC RESTRICTIONS EASE IN MANY parts of the world, it's the perfect time to reexamine the impact our travels can have on the people and places we visit. And who better to share insight than travel advisors, the ultimate industry insiders? From slowing down and thinking small to tipping with abandon, here's how to make sustainability a priority on future trips.

## EMBRACE MINDFUL TRAVEL

I recently returned from my first international trip since the pandemic began. It reminded me of what travel does

best: connect us to our fellow humans and the beauty of the natural world. Never has the need for slow, intentional, sustainable travel been more urgent than after the collective trauma we've all endured. Mindful travel that benefits ecosystems, cultures, and economies offers an antidote to the pandemic's fear and isolation. Highly suggested: small-group journeys with conscientious companies, such as G Adventures, whose trips let you connect with like-minded travellers and focus on treading lightly while benefitting local communities.

— Rose O'Connor

## STICK TO ONE STOP

With restrictions lifting and the pace of life slowly returning to pre-pandemic levels, we're at a critical threshold. My hope is that we'll stop simply *thinking* sustainable travel is a good idea and truly *practice* it. One way to do this is to limit multicountry holidays and instead go for depth – longer, more immersive travels in a single destination. Another is to support responsible travel providers. Tanzania's Singita Grumeti lodges, for instance, source most of their food directly from local farming communities, and their Grumeti Fund provides technical training so farmers can grow their businesses. Aqua Expeditions supplies only reusable water bottles and has refilling stations on its ships (especially important as plastic use increased during the pandemic), and in Peru, onboard paramedics provide health and safety outreach to communities on the Amazon River during cruises.

– Hui-Juan Lim

## GO WITH THE FLOW

Tourism accounts for one in ten jobs worldwide, and in many areas, travel is the driving force of the local economy. It's critical to these destinations that travel resumes, but at the same time, we must remain patient as individual countries adjust to new health and safety protocols. Keep in mind, too, that our tourism dollars help support conservation and sustainability initiatives around the world. Case in point: At many African lodges, tourism funds wildlife management and anti-poaching efforts, along with education, employment training, and community development.

– Meg North

## TRAVEL OFF-SEASON

As we move forward, doing our part to limit mass tourism and overtourism is essential. If you want to visit an extremely popular place, such as Venice or Bali, consider travelling in the off-season or shoulder season to help keep overcrowding down. When you're visiting developing countries, I also suggest bypassing megaresorts in favour of smaller, more sustainably minded properties. In Laos, for example, both the 24-room Amantaka and 34-room Belmond La Résidence Phou Vao connect guests with surrounding communities and help sustain local culture.

– Darren Leckie



## LIGHTEN YOUR FOOTPRINT

As we plan future trips, it's essential to ask certain questions: Do we need a rental car or private driver, or can we use public transportation instead? Can we choose a nonstop flight, even if it's more expensive? Is there a train that could replace a short-haul flight? Climate change will be a real challenge for many of our favourite destinations in the not-so-distant future, so anything we can do to lessen our carbon footprint is needed. This can extend to the providers we support, as well. One to consider: Lindblad Expeditions is a carbon-neutral company that offers expedition cruises with fewer than 150 passengers, which allows travellers to explore intimate environments while minimising environmental impact.

– Erin Green

## TIP DIRECTLY

One of the best ways travellers can immediately strengthen local communities and families is to generously tip local guides, drivers, spa therapists, and hotel staff – directly and in local currency. Also, think big by thinking

small: For starters, I'm steering clients away from crowded destinations to smaller, less-visited – though equally impressive – locations they may not have considered.

– Lila Fox

## GO WHERE IT COUNTS

While every country in the world has unfortunately been affected by the pandemic, a few tourism-dependent destinations have been particularly impacted. Countries such as Fiji, Samoa, and Indonesia, where the industry is run by locals, have seen enormous cuts to livelihoods in their communities. Morocco and many African countries are also in a dire situation following the pandemic's pause in travel. In Australia, we've seen the impact of the devastating bushfires of the 2019-2020 season further exacerbated by Covid. Travellers should consider destinations like these when planning their next holiday, knowing that their money will go a long way towards rebuilding communities and helping locals get back on their feet.

– Yvonne Verstandig VI