VOL 47 · NO 3 · 2017

TRAVELLER

£8.95

TRAVELLER

Traveller is Britain's original magazine for intelligent travel. Since 1970 it has reported on the real experience of travelling the world, and many of today's leading explorers and adventurers are on the Editorial Board.

TRAVELLER is produced by **FIFTH FLOOR PUBLISHING** for:
Wexas Travel, Dorset House,
Stamford Street, London, SE1 9NT, UK
WEB traveller.org.uk

EDITORIAL ENQUIRIES can be emailed to:
traveller@fifthfloorpublishing.com
TEL 020 7838 5998

Fifth Floor PUBLISHING

WEXAS TRAVEL EST. 1970

WEXAS ENQUIRIES
TEL 020 7838 5958 **EMAIL** mail@wexas.com
WEB wexas.com

WEXAS BLUE MEMBERSHIP £85 per annum (£105 overseas)
WEXAS GOLD MEMBERSHIP £165 per annum (£172 overseas)
Membership includes other publications and benefits
TRAVELLER SUBSCRIPTION £20.85 per annum (£30 overseas)
ADVERTISING Dave Warne
TEL 020 7838 5818 **EMAIL** david.warne@wexas.com
PRINTING Linney Group

Publisher and Chairman
Dr Ian M Wilson

Editor
Amy Sohanpaul

Contributing Editors
Jonathan Lorie
Mark Reynolds

Design
Kelly Al-Saleh

HONORARY EDITORIAL BOARD

Every issue we seek out today's most distinguished and interesting travellers to contribute to the magazine

THE PEOPLE BEHIND OUR STORIES

BRUCE PARRY
makes environmental and tribal documentaries. His next film is *Tawai, A Voice from the Forest*, shot in Borneo and the Amazon.
SEE PAGE 14

KATIE HICKMAN
is a bestselling novelist and travel writer, noted for her adventures with a Mexican circus. Her latest romance is *The House at Bishopsgate*.
SEE PAGE 96

VALERIA NECCHIO
is an Italian photographer, author and blogger based in London and Venice. Her debut cookbook last summer was *Veneto*.
SEE PAGE 72

NOE ALONZO
is a Texan photographer now based in South Korea. He says, 'My shooting is most active during the crepuscular hours.'
SEE PAGE 50

JONATHAN LORIE
is a travel journalist and director of the Travellers' Tales training agency. Previously he was Editor of *Traveller* magazine.
SEE PAGE 56

FRANCESCO LASTRUCCI
is a freelance Italian photographer, born in Florence and working worldwide for major magazines.
SEE PAGE 22

CLYDE MACFARLANE
is a travel writer and music critic. His book of haiku poems on a travel theme, *Across New Zealand in 140 Hitches*, comes out in October.
SEE PAGE 62

SELINA SIAK CHIN YOKE
is a Singaporean writer whose new novel, *When the Future Comes Too Soon*, is based on her grandmother's experiences in Malaya.
SEE PAGE 28

JONATHAN SCOTT
is a wildlife photographer based in Kenya. His latest book, *Sacred Nature*, won the Independent Publishers Book Award for photography.
SEE PAGE 46

SIMON URWIN
is a TV executive turned travel and portrait photographer. He has shot in over 75 countries, from Antarctica to Afghanistan.
SEE PAGE 30

SUNNY SINGH
is a novelist, academic and founder of the Jhalak Prize. Her latest book is on Bollywood superstar Amitabh Bachchan.
SEE PAGE 16

FRED CROWE
is our youngest contributor, aged 18 and studying Aeronautics and Astronautics at the University of Southampton.
SEE PAGE 66

The key *to the* Marae

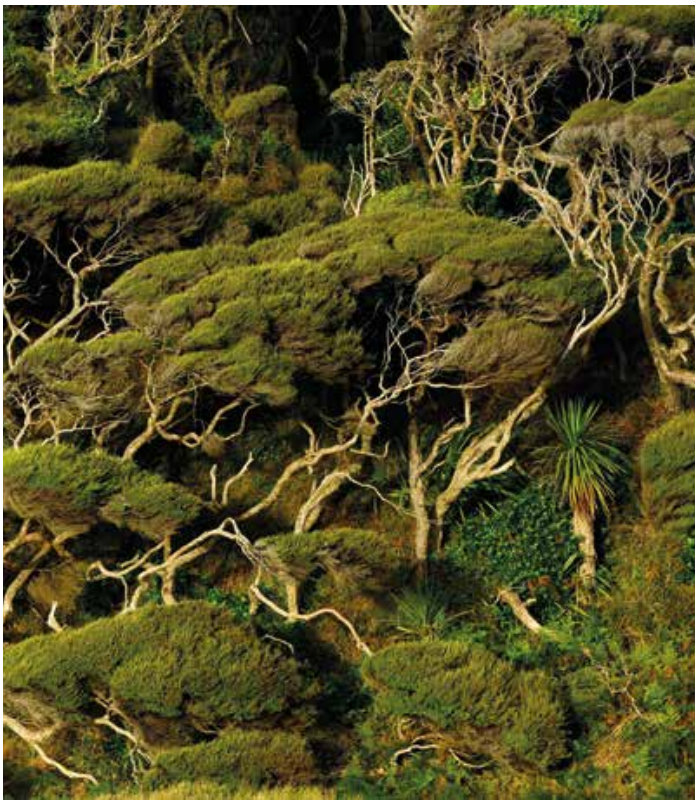
words
Clyde Macfarlane

Harry looks into his coffee and listens to the house-owner speak. Another man who rose to shake my hand observes with a lazy silence. A scruffy mullet falls over his big shoulders. It's as if he walked out of a barbershop mid-way through a haircut. The house-owner talks in a soft voice: he, like everyone else I meet, is concerned about how wet the summer has been. The plants grow out of control in this constant tropical mist. This morning was bright, but the puddles on the road reflected the sun like a hangover.

The East Cape peninsula of New Zealand's North Island is an intricate network of ocean bays and empty roads. Nowhere in the country is Polynesian culture more apparent. It's not uncommon to hear Maori spoken, and the long-trusted dietary staples of *kumara* and pig are ever present in the honesty boxes and chicken-wired yards of the houses, trailers and tin shacks that dot these hills.

At the coast, the flowers of pohutukawa trees are a brilliant red against a seemingly permanent bank of white cloud. The clouds and the Pacific Ocean are frozen like a landscape painting. The waves are short in height but long and noisy; a constant roar makes the crash and sigh of their shallow breaks indistinguishable.

Public transport out here is awful, so New Zealand's laidback lifestyle makes hitchhiking an ideal way to travel and meet people. Not knowing exactly where you'll end up is something to be embraced, thanks to an excellent Freedom Camping scheme,



which keeps a network of free campsites clean and equipped with hot showers. A highway cuts from Wairoa to Opotiki, but the best sites follow the smaller roads around the coast. Surfers meet on good-weather evenings, their black shapes rising and falling with the sunset-orange waves. As a lone traveller, you'd be hard pushed to walk past a roadside barbeque group – beers in hand, wetsuits unzipped at the hips – without being asked to join.

I tell the boys about Whahariki beach, a sand spit at the far north of the South Island. You can camp at the back of caves that half-fill with water as the tide comes in. All day tiny birds dart a few feet from your head. At dusk they go nuts, screeching and dive-bombing out of the cave in the minutes after the sun has set over the sea but before its light has faded. At night bats appear, beating wind across your face as they change course around your echo-located outline. In the morning, you realise your tent is covered in dung.

The house-owner asks if there is any good fishing at Whahariki, nodding to his rods propped up behind the fridge. On cue the boys get out their phones, both a few swipes away from their favourite fishing-trophy snaps.

Harry talks in a clipped Kiwi bounce, more clipped and bouncing when I am out of the conversation: the schooling of his son, the good health of the house owner, the weight of a cousin's newborn baby. "Ten stone!" the cousin chips in from the living room to raucous laughter. When she enters the kitchen, I cannot believe she's old enough to be a mother. Her baby looks down on us with dark, serious eyes. "Pounds I could believe," says the house-owner with a wise grin.

Wise is an attribute I gave him before I entered the house, for he is the man who holds the key to the Marae. He is a traceable relative to Harry, but they seem to bond more through friendship than family.

We finish our coffee and drive to the Marae. There are two houses. The first is a meeting house, with a triangular roof that drops almost to the ground. The air inside is heavy with the smell of cooked meat. There is no floor, only a carpet of straw-like grass that becomes the outdoors where it meets the dropped roof. An ashy hole in the centre holds the memory of a recent cook-up. Carved wooden figures sit on each other's shoulders up the walls. The house-owner strokes the rich wood of the figures, the curls of the necks, the cheekbones and the angry eyebrows. Harry does the same, as does Scruffy Mullet – not through ritual, just a common curiosity.

We remove our shoes before entering the second building. Damp mattresses are propped up to air. I notice the red hooped rugby socks of the house-owner. In his youth, perhaps. Now he is too old and peaceful to play rugby. Instead, the bunched woolly socks make him look like a big toddler. Harry, rugby socks and rugby shorts, has the solid neck of a prop. His shark-like features are surprisingly intact. Harry and Scruffy Mullet study a series of portrait photos with a concentration that could lead one to assume that they, like me, are first-time visitors to the Marae.

"Have you seen Joseph's girl lately?" Harry asks, rubbing his jaw with the V of his hand. "Looks the same."

There is a picture of a frizzy-haired woman who looks like she knew how to have fun. A gold necklace weighs heavy on her chest. Her ears have matching teardrop jewellery, connected to her ears, it seems, by ribbons. The house-owner nods in agreement. Even in the presence of such a crowd, there is no hiding a distant family connection. No one is alone. I imagine the mattresses covering the floor, a full house at the Marae halfway between Tokomaru Bay and Rangitukia.

Preceding page: Beach at Waitangi, North island, where a historic peace treaty was signed in 1840 defining the rights of the Maori peoples.

Opposite page (clockwise from top left): Traditional statue inside the national Marae at the Waitangi Treaty Grounds. Manuka trees on the way to Whahariki beach. Carved head in a Marae at Rotorua. Blossoms of the pohutukawa tree.