

TRAVELLER

ANJA MUTIC

Croatian born Anja calls herself 'a traveller who writes and a writer who travels', and travel she sure does. Apart from Antarctica, Anja has worked and travelled on all the continents with work published everywhere from Lonely Planet to National Geographic and The Wall Street Journal as well as her successful blog www.everthenomad.com

Two Ventures were lucky enough to have the chance to ask her a few questions about her experiences.



WHERE WAS YOUR FIRST TRIP ALONE? DO YOU THINK THIS CHANGED YOU OR YOUR OUTLOOK ON LIFE?

I did several short trips solo when I was a teenager in Croatia, but without actually leaving the country. The first time I travelled solo abroad was a long weekend from Barcelona (where my brother was living at the time) to Sevilla. I went all the way there and back by train, stayed at a little guest house, saw a lot of flamenco, ate heaps of delicious tapas and wrote (and later published) my first travel article about it all. That was just a start. I can't even count the number of solo trips I've done since.

WHEN YOU ARE ABLE TO TRAVEL WITH YOUR HUSBAND, WHAT DO YOU VALUE THE MOST ABOUT SHARING EXPERIENCES WITH HIM?

I do love traveling with my husband because he's probably the most flexible, open-minded and undemanding person I know. He really goes with the flow, takes the edge off for me when I get stressed out (for I am often working and on deadline), and is incredible about striking up conversations with people we come across. As a team, we meet loads of interesting characters and work really well together on the road. I also appreciate being able to share my impressions and thoughts with someone right there and then. He's often my bouncing board for story ideas, too, which is great. I'll get an idea for an article, and run it by him.

TALES

DURING YOUR EXTENSIVE TRAVELS, HAVE YOU EVER FOUND YOURSELF WISHING YOU HAD A COMPANION?

I've had moments on my solo trips where I sometimes thought it'd be nice to have a dinner companion or someone to share the experience with. But these were just brief moments, since I'm usually too busy taking notes, writing down observations, collecting data and taking it all in to allow myself time to actually wish things were otherwise.

ON YOUR WEBSITE IT SAYS YOU HAVE A PASSION FOR 'UNEARTHING THE UNUSUAL IN OFFBEAT DESTINATIONS'. WHAT IS THE STRANGEST SITUATION YOU'VE FOUND YOURSELF IN WHILST TRAVELING?

There have been so many strange situations that it's really difficult to pick out one to highlight. Every trip seems to bring some surreal moments. Like running down a thief who stole my friend's handbag in the streets of Havana and then being driven in the back of a police car around various police stations that entire afternoon to file a report. Nearly getting stuck between borders of Peru and Bolivia during road protests of coca peasants - without a proper visa to (re)enter either country. Getting lost in the Amazon - with a guide, just as lost as I was! - which was terrifying and felt like an eternity, even though it was just an hour; when we finally got to the river, I realized my sun shades have fallen off during the ramble through the jungle - I imagine some monkey wearing them to this day.

FOR YOU, WHAT IS THE BEST THING ABOUT BEING ON THE ROAD?

The best thing about being on the road is that, if you open yourself up to possibilities, you don't know what will happen next. All the certainties are stripped away, which can be horrifying and beautiful at the same time, depending on your perspective. I also love coming to a new place, parachuting there, so to speak, and having to get my bearings. It's such a challenge but once you figure out the lay of the land and make some discoveries, feels like an achievement.

HOW DOES YOUR OUTLOOK DIFFER WHEN TRAVELING FOR WORK COMPARED TO A PERSONAL TRIP?

To be honest, I haven't taken a personal trip in years! Well, to rephrase that: It's been a while since I've taken a personal trip to a place I haven't been to previously. Most of my travels these days are related to work, which is a blessing and a curse. I've actually been thinking it's time to take a holiday, go to some place new without having to write about it later. How refreshing that would be!



WE'VE SEEN YOU LOVE TO TRAVEL SOUTH AMERICA, WHERE WOULD YOU MOST RECOMMEND READERS OF TWO VENTURE (YOUNG TRAVELLERS, LIMITED FUNDS) HEAD TO?

I do love South America, it's a magical continent. For culture and an overall great vibe, no city beats Buenos Aires, in my opinion. Rio is pretty amazing, too, for other reasons. A country I dearly love and always urge people to go to when heading to South America is Bolivia. It's still relatively unspoiled, with incredibly rich and pure indigenous culture and otherworldly landscapes, all landlocked. You can still find that sense of discovery there, especially if you head off the well-beaten gringo trail.

WHAT DO YOU MOST LOVE ABOUT YOUR HOME COUNTRY CROATIA, WHAT DRAWS YOU BACK TO IT?

I love so much about Croatia! Its coast and 1000+ islands are out-of-this-world gorgeous. It never ceases to take my breath away. I also love continental parts of Croatia that not many people seem to bother going to - inland Istria, the flat farmlands of Slavonia and the hills of Zagorje, just outside the capital of Zagreb. Talking about Zagreb... The city has really changed in recent years and blossomed into a lovely pocket-size metropolis, a great weekend getaway with a cool creative edge and lots to do yet a laid-back vibe.

