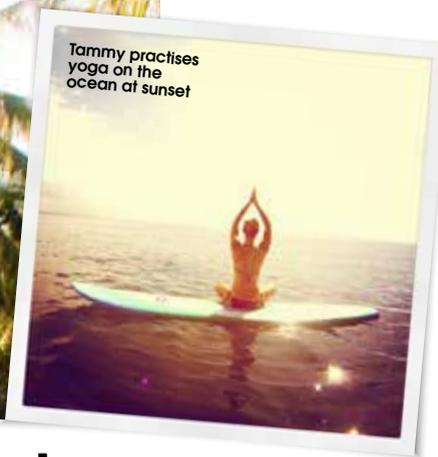


“The holiday that changed my life”

A CHANGE, THE SAYING GOES, IS AS GOOD AS A HOLIDAY, BUT SOMETIMES A HOLIDAY CAN INITIATE UNEXPECTED CHANGE. FOUR ADVENTUROUS SOULS SHARE THEIR STORIES OF THE ONE TRIP THAT TRANSFORMED THEIR LIVES FOR THE BETTER



Tammy practises yoga on the ocean at sunset

“I’ve become more mindful”

Tammy Lewis, 32, freelance marketer and yoga teacher, Umhlanga

THE TRIP Yoga teacher training in Bali
TRIP DURATION One month

In 2012, I found myself at a crossroads: for eight years I’d been inspired by my advertising job, but it was starting to feel empty. Then tragedy struck my family. To help me work through that difficult time, I began digging deeper into myself and my beliefs.

On the career front, I realised I wanted to make a difference in the lives of others. The health and wellness industry had always been close to my heart, and I’d contemplated becoming a yoga teacher for some time. Thanks to a new-found “life is short” attitude and a series of serendipitous events, I resigned and registered for a yoga teacher training course with Shades of Yoga in Bali.

Over that month in Bali, I learnt so much more than how to teach yoga. I slowed down. I stopped eating meat. I became more aware of and amazed by the human form. For the first time, I truly understood the “healthy mind, healthy body” theory, and I realised how big a role stress, exercise and diet play in overall wellbeing.

Two years later, my trip to Bali still influences my life for the better. I now teach yoga; I’ve taken courses in nutrition; I am a little wiser and more empathetic after the grieving process; and my heart’s ready and excited for the new adventure that’s around the corner: motherhood. I have become more mindful, and I try to remember the yogic concept of making your work an offering, so that even seemingly mundane tasks become satisfying as you do them to the best of your ability.

Rice terraces near Ubud, Bali, Indonesia

The nighttime buzz of Times Square, New York City

“I sold everything I own”

*Hasmita Bhana, 28,
senior treasury analyst, Jo'burg*

THE TRIP New York City

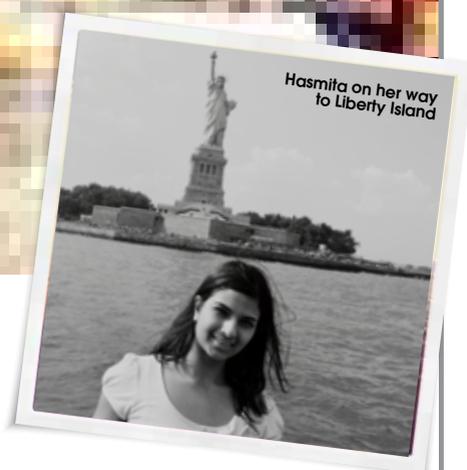
TRIP DURATION Nine days

I'd fantasised about visiting New York for about a decade before I actually made it happen in 2012. It wasn't at all the way I imagined (I thought there'd be celebrities on every street corner), but I loved it. What inspired me was walking through the city at night and seeing how alive it was. I loved how everyone was on a mission, and how everyone was accepted, whether they wore underwear as pants or had purple hair.

When I returned home I felt stifled, like there was a whole world out there for me to explore, and that being content wasn't good enough. I spent hours on recruiting websites, trying to find a job in New York – but that's tricky with a South African passport. Then, after a holiday to Europe last year, I decided to do something that would allow me to experience life in another country.

I've never been a risk taker, but New York made me realise how exciting life could be. I knew that in order for things to change, I'd have to take a daring step. So I sold everything – my flat, car, furniture – and cashed in my investments. I resigned from my job and applied to an international school to study an MBA. I'm equally passionate about travel and finance, and ultimately I'd love to combine the two. The MBA will allow me a career change, as well as afford me the opportunity to live and work overseas. In August this year, I leave for Singapore, where I'll live and study for four months, and then my course takes me to France for six months.

I'm now starting from scratch, financially, which is a bit scary, but that trip to New York inspired me to be the best version of myself – and this is a step in that direction.



Hasmita on her way to Liberty Island



Helen and a young Zambian child she befriended

“I gained so much by choosing to change”

Helen White, 40, head of communications at Orbis Africa, Cape Town

THE TRIP 3 000km road trip from Cape Town to Mongu, Zambia
TRIP DURATION Three weeks

In 2003, my boyfriend (now husband) and I drove to Zambia to visit friends. At the time I was the chief operating officer for a leading publicity agency and needed to a break from deadlines and clients... boy, did I get more than I bargained for!

One afternoon, while standing on a sand dune above the small port in Mongu, it suddenly dawned on me: for the first time in more than six years, I felt calm and free. I realised that stress had become my norm – the more stressed-out I was, the more valuable I felt.

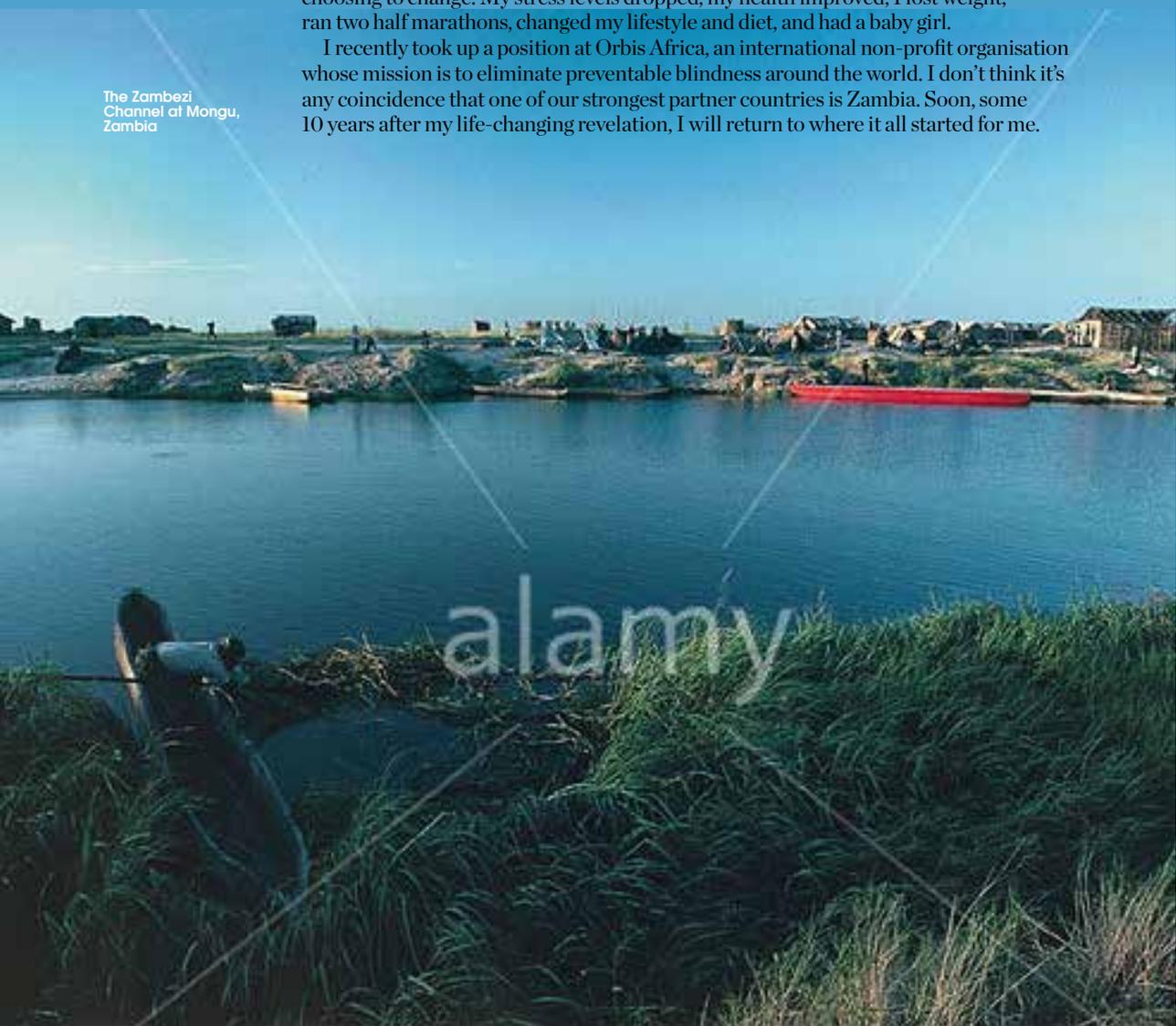
I saw right there and then that I could in fact leave my job. I had everything I'd dreamed of – profit share, a red sports car – but I also knew that what I really wanted was peace, fulfilment, self-worth and a meaningful purpose in life.

Two weeks later, with much soul-searching under my belt, I resigned. I wanted to use my skills and experience to make a difference in a charitable organisation, and was soon appointed communications manager at the Children's Hospital Trust, fundraiser for the Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital in Cape Town.

Everyone thought I had given up the dream job – but in fact, I gained so much by choosing to change. My stress levels dropped, my health improved, I lost weight, ran two half marathons, changed my lifestyle and diet, and had a baby girl.

I recently took up a position at Orbis Africa, an international non-profit organisation whose mission is to eliminate preventable blindness around the world. I don't think it's any coincidence that one of our strongest partner countries is Zambia. Soon, some 10 years after my life-changing revelation, I will return to where it all started for me.

The Zambezi Channel at Mongu, Zambia



alamy



Mike and Linda on their 4x4 that doubled as their home

“I learnt to trust my instincts”

Mike Markovina, 33, fisheries scientist and director at Moving Sushi, Betty's Bay

THE TRIP 120 000km overland journey through 42 countries from SA to Japan
TRIP DURATION Two years

I used to work in Gabon, where some amazing people showed me how to handle very challenging situations within marine conservation. I learnt that one individual can spark a change among many just by having the right attitude, so in 2008 my wife and I decided to travel around the world to find and film other people just like them.

On our trip, we faced dehydration, malaria and heatstroke – we became very good at understanding what our bodies did or didn't need. Our diet changed drastically, as we ate very little processed food. This is something we still do now. I learnt to trust my instincts. I also learnt to trust myself and my partner, and to work as a team despite ridiculous mental and physical challenges. I got invaluable lessons in problem-solving, learning to make a plan and getting on with the task at hand. Failure is not necessarily a bad thing, and if you can depend on yourself and surround yourself with a team you trust, then any challenge can be conquered. Learning this has completely changed the way I now live and work.

Our journey reinforced my commitment to working towards establishing a sustainable marine environment. In marine conservation, people are the problem. But our trip taught us that people are also most definitely the solution. ☺



The roads Mike and Linda faced on their travels through Africa

AS TOLD TO: NARINA EXELBY PHOTOGRAPHS SUPPLIED; GETTY IMAGES; ISTOCK ALAMY



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