

For many years I have been a well known and respected travel writer. Using the pseudonym Globetrotter, I am celebrated as someone who has been everywhere and seen everything. Among travelers and would be travelers I am considered an expert on all aspects of travelling from cruising the Caribbean, ballooning in Botswana, vaccinations for Venezuela, and anything and everything in between. In actual fact, and in strictest confidence, I now confess that I have never been more than 100 kilometers from home. My experience of the sea is limited to the occasional ferry trip to Manly, and I have never been up in a plane, let alone a balloon. The fact that I have developed a successful career writing as I do about my experiences travelling to exotic destinations I have never visited, never fails to surprise and amuse me.

It all began many years ago after a particularly uncomfortable train journey to a destination which did not remotely resemble the delightful descriptions on the brochure. I came to the conclusion then, that the best part of travelling is exploring the various possibilities before leaving, and entertaining friends with stories of one's exploits upon return. Having reached this conclusion I saw no reason why I shouldn't enjoy the benefits of travelling without having to go to the trouble and expense of actually going anywhere.

I find the planning, implementation and coordination of travel arrangements fascinating. I'm good at it, and my advice on such matters has been appreciated and followed by a great many people. To me the intricacies of timetables and the dovetailing of schedules are infinitely more challenging and absorbing than the actual experience and when 'travelling' myself, I enjoy deliberately introducing, then overcoming the occasional hazard, particularly if it adds elements of drama or amusement for later retelling.

When I decide to embark upon a 'journey', my main criteria is that no one I know has ever heard of the place, or been there. While I have not the remotest intention of going there myself, I prefer to plan my schedule without unsolicited advice, however well intentioned, so on the whole, I avoid large cities and popular tourist destinations. There's no challenge there and I don't suffer from the limitations imposed upon other travelers. It is of no consequence to me how difficult it is to get to some obscure part of the world and of course cost is not an issue. Danger and hardship are merely creations of my imagination and all I risk is my reputation.

Before planning one of my trips there is a lot of preparation to be done - twice as much in fact as if I were actually going. Not only must I acquire information about every aspect of the journey and the

destinations involved, but, since I do not intend to leave my home during the entire duration of the trip, I have to ensure that all my needs will be catered for during the period that I am 'away'.

I like to eat local food when I travel. While a brief reconnoitering trip to David Jones Food Hall usually provides the basic necessities, I always make a point of visiting areas of Sydney where authentic ingredients are obtainable so that while I am 'away', I can enjoy the various regional dishes. Over the years I have developed an impressive repertoire of recipes from around the world and invitations to my dinner parties after one of my trips are keenly sought by friends and associates.

They say travel broadens the mind and of this I have no doubt. As a result of my travels I am extremely well informed about practically anywhere in the world. I am fluent in several languages and I am regularly invited to be guest speaker at functions where I can hold an audience entranced by descriptions of some of my more exciting adventures.

Generally speaking, I find that people prefer to hear about disasters. The more horrific the journey, uncomfortable the accommodation, eccentric the plumbing and unreliable the cuisine, the more people enjoy hearing about it. It is extremely satisfying for those who cannot afford to travel or who choose to remain at home, to hear about the downside of travelling. It justifies their decision to stay at home and allows them to feel superior to those who don't.

I have no doubt that I have found the ideal way to travel and I am sure a great deal of disappointment and stress could be avoided if more people followed my example. I firmly believe that once the excitement of the departure is over, the actual business of travelling, whether by air, sea, rail or road is tedious and uncomfortable, and it is rare indeed that the eventual destination measures up to expectations.

Travelling without leaving home, as I do, involves few inconveniences beyond the obvious possibility of being unmasked as a fraud, and I have on more than one occasion come perilously close to being exposed. Surprisingly I find the experience of being on the razor's edge, as it were, extremely stimulating, so much so that I occasionally tempt providence by introducing small inaccuracies and errors when telling of my experiences. While I usually manage to extricate myself from such situations without too much difficulty, I find as I approach retirement I am increasingly tempted to reveal all. I've always liked living dangerously, even if most of the time it is in my imagination, and what a laugh it would be to finally come clean, and show my public and my friends how easily I

made fools of them all. A practical joke which has lasted a lifetime and one last laugh before hanging up my boots!

They say that 'he who laughs last laughs alone' but I can live with that. I am accustomed to solitude and perhaps in future I will take advantage of modern technology and become a virtual reality traveler. I think that would be appropriate!