

Tire Tracks

A photograph of a vast desert landscape. The foreground is dominated by a wide, flat expanse of reddish-brown sand. Two sets of dark, parallel tire tracks run diagonally from the bottom left towards the center of the frame. In the middle ground, there are several rolling sand dunes of varying heights, their surfaces smooth and undisturbed. The background shows more distant dunes under a clear, bright blue sky. The lighting suggests a sunny day, with soft shadows cast by the dunes.

LIVING FOOTSTEPS

Step into the World



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Tire Tracks is a Living Footsteps initiative

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Tire Tracks is a Living Footsteps project. Living Footsteps is a company that aims to “make the world a smaller place” by sharing travel experiences. By setting up projects that explore regions in the world in a unique way, we develop a true understanding of the regions we cover. The combination of a unique travel experience and deep understanding of the countries we visit, allows us to not just explain countries and cultures, but do so in a vivid and relevant way. We focus our business on four forms of sharing: sharing through media, sharing through education, sharing through advice, and sharing through experience.

		Page
1	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
2	INTRODUCTION	4
3	WHAT IS TIRE TRACKS?	5
4	AFRICA MAP & ROUTE	6
5	EXPLORE, UNDERSTAND, AND EXPLAIN	7
6	TWO YEAR, OVERLAND JOURNEY	11
7	FROM CASABLANCA, TO CAPE TOWN, TO CAIRO	12
8	TIRE TRACKS EDUCATION PROGRAM	14
9	SPONSORS	17
10	ABOUT LIVING FOOTSTEPS	18
11	VISION- SHARING THROUGH MEDIA	20
	WRITING	20
	PHOTOGRAPHY	22
	OTHER MEDIA	24
12	VISION- SHARING THROUGH EDUCATION	25
13	VISION- SHARING THROUGH ADVICE	27
14	VISION- SHARING THROUGH EXPERIENCE	29
15	OUR THOUGHTS ON TRAVELING	30
16	ABOUT THE FOUNDERS	31

Executive Summary

When most Europeans and Americans think about Africa, they - more than anything else - think famine, poverty, AIDS and countries torn by civil war. News reports emerge mostly at moments of high urgency to inform us of issues that require our immediate attention. And though these 'waves of interest' increase awareness and involvement, they are short lived, therefore, wrongfully creating the impression that the problem is solved.

As a result, our views of Africa are fragmented and pigeon-holed, foregoing that Africa is much more than famine and safaris, or a continent devoid of hope. Lacking this broader understanding, it becomes increasingly difficult to support a continent that seems to be so far away and unrelated to our world.

Is there a way to fundamentally change our point of view on Africa and its place in the world?

In January 2006, the Tire Tracks team takes off on a two year, overland expedition from Casablanca to Cape Town to Cairo, to explore, understand, and explain Africa, its natural and cultural treasures, and its inhabitants.

By zooming into day-to-day life in 35 African countries, the Tire Tracks expedition team (www.tiretracks.org) gives students and adults around the world the opportunity to explore a *variety* of different aspects of the African continent on a *continuous* basis. Through our global, interactive education program, as well as our reports and adventure stories, we will help individuals develop a fresh and balanced view of Africa that ties together isolated issues, and puts them into a broader, more recognizable perspective. By doing so, people will deepen their understanding of issues affecting Africa, and be able to view Africa and its place in the world in a new light.

Education Initiatives

The Tire Tracks global, interactive, web-based education program provides students and teachers with the opportunity to explore 50,000 miles of African beauty. Co-developed by a dedicated team of over 50 teachers from seven countries, this multi-media pilot provides rich, real, relevant and up-to-date content that enables teachers to reinforce concepts taught in science, social studies (geography, citizenship), technology and reflective writing classes. By interacting with students and teachers on a frequent basis from the field, and by encouraging interaction between students and teachers of participating pilot schools in Africa, Europe and North America, the Tire Tracks team will help students improve their understanding and appreciation of African cultures, *as well as their own*, and better prepare them to make informed and balanced decisions in the 21st century.

Media Initiatives

Through our stories, reports, and photos, we will share our adventure-packed, African experiences with the global community. By reporting on situations *throughout* our journey, taking a *balanced* approach between covering the good and the bad, and adding a *human perspective* to issues we usually only hear about from a news reporting angle, the Tire Tracks team will help people better understand how African issues relate to their own world.

This unique approach to exploring, understanding and explaining Africa enables individuals around the world, especially Americans and Europeans, to relate African issues to their own world. With this new outlook, involvement with Africa and its people becomes long-lasting, and as a global community, we will be more inspired to work together to address issues before they become too big to solve.

Introduction

Starting in early 2006, we will leave our London home behind and head towards the southern tip of Spain in our expedition-ready 4WD. Our 50,000-mile African adventure starts when we enter the continent in Morocco. For weeks, desert sand will be our companion, until we hit the more populated coastal areas in Guinea, and the Ivory Coast. Dense rainforests in Central Africa and savannas in the East will eventually bring us to South Africa, where we will make a 180° turn. From then on, we will spend our second year heading up north along the African east coast, until our journey ends in Cairo.

The purpose of undertaking this expedition is not just the excitement and lasting experience of this adventure – though that in itself would be reason enough to undertake it – but more because we want to truly understand this magical continent and its inhabitants. We strongly believe that to fully understand a country, its culture and its people, you need to spend a significant amount of time in a country allowing you the flexibility to move away from the beaten track, and experience a country in its day-to-day life. By doing so, you will be able to identify and understand the different aspects that affect a country, and relate them to each other.

If you then have the opportunity to experience daily life in over 30 other African countries, you will also be able to see each country in relation and comparison to its neighbors. By doing so, not only does your understanding of each individual country grow even deeper, but it also becomes possible to put the different aspects of each country into a broader, more recognizable perspective. With this fresh and balanced outlook, you can then start to think of Africa and its place in the world in a new way.

With this unique approach to exploring, understanding and explaining Africa, we want to take people along with us on our journey, and make them part of what we go through – the good and the bad, the great and the trivial. Through our education and media initiatives, we will provide adults and students with the opportunity to share in our experiences throughout our two-year expedition.

Our global, interactive, multi-media pilot education program will provide students and teachers with expedition-driven, Africa-based content that easily integrates into current teaching curriculum, and reinforces concepts taught in science, social studies (geography, citizenship), technology and reflective writing classes. Students and teachers are encouraged to interact with the expedition team, as well as with other participating pilot schools in Ghana, India, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, UK and USA, thereby opening up another avenue for students to learn more about other cultures and deepen their understanding of concepts taught.

In addition to our education initiatives, we will share our African experiences with the global public through our adventure stories, reports and photos. With a combination of media like writing and photography, and where appropriate, sound and video clips, we will sketch a complete picture of our journey as it progresses.

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Tire Tracks Project Overview

The Tire Tracks project is a two-year long, 50,000 mile overland expedition through 35 African countries. Starting in January 2006 and continuing throughout the expedition, the Tire Tracks expedition team will conduct a large-scale experience-based research study of Africa, focused on connecting isolated issues and putting them into broader context. We report on this from a human perspective – about real people, by real people – and take a balanced approach between covering the good and the bad.

The knowledge, insight and experience gained from this large-scale experience-based research study of Africa, is shared through a combination of media and activities:

- **Sharing through media** - Writing, Photography, Other media
- **Sharing through education** - Interactive education programs and teaching aids
- **Sharing through advice** - Consulting services in the field of international market assessment, sustainable tourism development, and cultural awareness
- **Sharing through experience** - Writing up-to-date guidebooks, and providing personalized trip planning advice

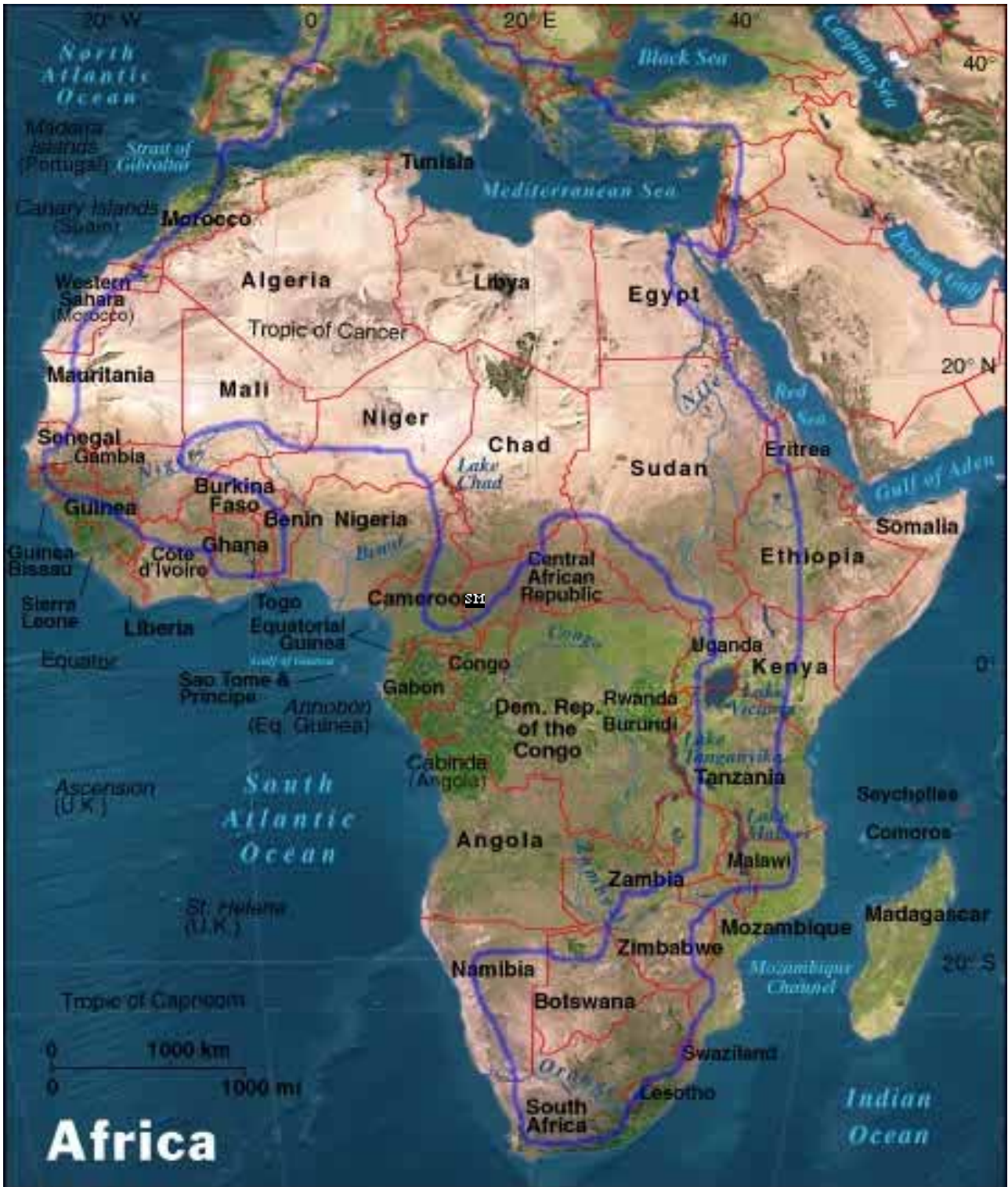
What we deliver

We raise global awareness of and involvement in the African situation by delivering:

On the Road	Upon Return
<p><i>Sharing through Education-</i> Interactive, pilot education program for ages 9-12 that relates expedition-driven, Africa-based content to subjects taught in science, social studies (geography, citizenship), technology and reflective writing classes. Delivered from the field via internet to schools around the globe.</p>	<p><i>Sharing through Education-</i> Full development of the Tire Tracks African education program. Also, co-ordination of new, annually recurring, overland expeditions through Africa to maintain interactive aspects and ensure currentness of program.</p>
<p><i>Sharing through Media-</i> Series of attention-getting, current articles, reports and photos that report on Africa and the expedition in an informative and entertaining way.</p>	<p><i>Sharing through Advice-</i> Tailored, in-depth research (depending on specific client needs) that allow organizations to make informed decisions about their presence in Africa.</p>
<p><i>Sharing through Media-</i> Extensive coverage of the expedition through dedicated expedition website.</p>	<p><i>Sharing through Experience-</i> Guidebooks and personal travel advice that help others to undertake similar expeditions.</p>
<p><i>Sharing through Media-</i> Television and radio coverage of the expedition and a selection of subjects.</p>	<p><i>Sharing through Media-</i> Specially requested interviews and news coverage.</p>

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Africa Map & Route



Map: ©1999 MAGELLAN Geographix

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Explore

Africa is the oldest continent on earth, birthplace of the human race, and home to the largest number of animals in the world. Africa is also much larger than many people think. Due to the widely used Mercator projection – in which Africa and Greenland appear to be roughly the same size – its size is often underestimated, but in reality the African continent can easily fit continental North America and Australia, and then leave room enough for Germany, France, Spain and the UK.

With this enormous landmass nicely wrapped around the equator, the variety of African landscapes is virtually endless. Barren sand dunes in the Sahara are replaced by fertile fields, as the Nile spreads out its watery arms into the Mediterranean Sea. Dense forests in the Congo basin – natural home to chimpanzees and gorillas – thin out to make place for Acacias and grasslands of the savanna.

Maybe it's because our genes originate in Africa that it is the landscape of our imagination. Tall Masai, in colorful dress, walk the land of lions. Berbers run caravans through the desert to the mysterious city of Timbuktu. The pyramids, the only remaining wonder of the world, compete with natural wonders like Victoria Falls and the Serengeti.

During our two year journey through Africa, we will explore all these 'wonders of the world', and while doing this, bring people along on this unique expedition. Starting in the busy streets of Tangiers, we will soon leave the crowds behind for the deserted sands of the Sahara. From there, we will travel through the Guinea highlands and the beaches of Côte d'Ivoire to explore the roots of Voodoo in Togo and Benin.

After stocking up on water in Burkina Faso, we will hit the deserts again, on our way to Timbuktu. After these weeks of scorching sun, we will finally give our burnt skin a rest, exploring the dark shadowy rainforests of Cameroon and the Pygmy tribes in the Central African Republic, until, after some more weeks of torturing sun in the desolate plains of Sudan, we will finally come to the promised lands of Kenya and Tanzania.

With the Serengeti and Mount Kilimanjaro fresh in our minds, we will come to see how the Victoria Falls hold up in competition with so many rivals in natural beauty. While getting our last fix of – this time, off the beaten track – game parks in Namibia, we will finally settle down for some rest & relaxation in South Africa to contemplate the second year of our African Adventure. More adventure is to come as we visit the preserved culture in the kingdom of Swaziland, dive in the coral reefs of Mozambique, and then continue driving up along the Rift Valley and take another run at the savannas of Tanzania and Kenya.

It is then time to give our 4WD one last test in the rough lands of Ethiopia, Eritrea and Sudan. And then, after almost two years of exploring, we will finally end our African journey with the Pyramids of Egypt.

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Understand

So why is it that a continent that has some of the world's oldest cultures, diverse wildlife and attractive landscapes is widely known as the 'Dark Continent'? Why is it that in spite of all its natural and mineral resources, it is, by far, the poorest continent in the world? Why is it that when Americans and Europeans think of Africa they – more than anything else – think of famine and poverty, disease and countries torn by civil war?

As contrasting as those perceptions may be, they seem to fit the continent, as Africa itself is also very much characterized by contrast – rich and poor, black and white, Christian and Muslim, to name but a few. The continent is also in shrill contrast with the rest of the world, and for that reason, is very often misunderstood.

Most of the time, people who report on Africa focus on one aspect of the continent. Sometimes the good things, like its amazing nature and wildlife, sometimes the bad ones like famine and civil wars. And, though focusing on a single subject enables you to cover the subject in-depth, it has become the norm of western news reporting to address these isolated issues, only at times of high urgency. Because of this, we are conditioned to mainly think of Africa in terms of a news item on famine or AIDS, or a great article we read in National Geographic, but we, all together, miss out on the bigger picture. For this reason, the view the western world has on Africa continues to remain very fragmented and pigeon-holed.

With this narrow perspective, it becomes increasingly difficult to understand or support a continent that seems to be so far away and unrelated to our world. Is there anything we can do to *understand* more about Africa and its place in the world?

We believe that if you really want to understand Africa, you need to understand many different aspects that are affecting it, and relate them to each other. You need to know and understand its history, since it strongly affects the culture (in the sense of a set of a common beliefs and values). You need to understand its place in the world (how insular or global a country is and how it relates to neighboring countries). You need to understand its religion, since to a large extent, this determines the current value system. You need to understand the stage of development of a country – after all, a country that by western standards lives in the 'late middle-ages' will have different societal and political standards than a country that is 'further' evolved. By painting a picture that ties these aspects together, we increase our understanding of Africa as a whole as well as our understanding of each individual aspect.

But how do you build this understanding? First, we need to study the 'hard facts' by thoroughly researching the countries we will visit. Whilst this will provide us with a solid basis, the deeper understanding of these hard facts will come from interviews we will have along the way with people who live and work in those countries. To help us understand these "hard facts", we are planning interviews with doctors, teachers, business leaders, government officials, people working for various NGOs, and expatriates working for multinationals, but are also allowing time to interview people we will meet along the way.

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However, understanding these 'hard facts' only gets you half way. The facts remain to be something impersonal, and far away from our world and day-to-day life. But the people who live in Africa are real people, living real lives. They have real happiness and sorrows, real worries and real fun. Understanding *that*, and how in that way we are all the same, makes people, countries and cultures come to life. This is why we believe that one of the most important elements of understanding a county is to understand the people.

Understanding people can really only be done in one way: you have to meet them, talk to them, and eat with them. Listen to their hopes and passions, try to understand their worries. Observe how they interact with each other. See how families live. What do people do when they go to work? What do children learn in school, and what games do they play? What stories do they tell each other, and what do they dream of when they go to sleep? In short, you have to live with them. To be able to do that, we have made sure that we have sufficient time in each country we visit, and have the flexibility to move away from the beaten track.

Explain

Although living with people builds an intimate, personal understanding of Africa, it is another challenge to make these experiences come to life for other people, in a way that has a profound and long lasting effect. To most people in Europe and America, Africa plays only a minor role in our lives. The continent and what happens there is miles away, and our understanding is mostly based on coverage of isolated events and issues.

African issues penetrating our world...

What African issues are we familiar with? Most of us know of the 1980s Ethiopian famine and the "We are the World" campaign, or the reports of the 30 million Africans infected with the HIV virus, but not many will think of the 2 million starving Eritreans not receiving food because the world's focus in summer 2004 shifted to the Darfur region in Sudan, or know of the summer 2004 locust plague destroying millions of acres of crops in over 7 countries? Will this not become news until the locust plague hits the Darfur region?

Only at moments of high urgency, do issues manage to penetrate our world. It is at these moments that western media manage to create a sudden sense of involvement with what is going on in certain parts of Africa. And though these sudden bursts of interest are very powerful in creating involvement, it is usually short-lived.

Once these 'waves of interest' have fulfilled their initial purpose of pointing out the urgency and creating involvement, they fade from the media – with that, wrongfully creating the impression that the problem is solved. Involvement then moves to the back of our mind.

So, how do we solve the problem of building understanding and creating long lasting involvement? Although this is a complex issue, we believe that there are ways to tackle this issue. By putting situations into context and personalizing them, we can help individuals deepen their understanding of Africa, making it easier for them to recognize how these situations relate to their own world.

Context - People all over the world have different needs, and because of that have different views on life and society. At the same time we believe – and have seen proof of that in the more than 50 countries in the world we have visited – that in essence, people are the same all over the world. It is for that reason that in explaining the countries we visit, we will try to explain our experiences in terms of understandable differences and recognizable similarities.

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Another way to help people put situations into context is by painting the bigger picture. By reading descriptive and reflective stories, hearing a balanced amount of positive *and* negative stories, and learning the human side of stories, people can understand the issues Africa faces in a more rounded and balanced way.

Hearing a balanced amount of positive and negative stories...

... 'There were flies everywhere, not to mention the rats and scorpions. It is a very hostile environment, even without people attacking you as happened to many of the refugees on their long journey,' she said. She described seeing a tiny baby in one of the camps, who was 'the most malnourished I had ever seen'. 'I'm sure the baby is probably dead by now – those conditions would kill a child very quickly,' she added.

'But, despite the immense hardship, the people showed a courage which defied belief', she said. 'Walking around later that day I noticed people were so friendly and lovely, and they will still laughing,' she added. 'They are so strong even in this situation, which would probably finish us off. It was unbelievable. They are just trying to stay alive, and I felt humbled by their strength.' ...

From an interview with Oxfam press officer, Helen Palmer, upon returning to Sudan after visiting the Sudanese refugee camps in Chad. From UK Metro newspaper article, 'Sudan: illness, A brutal cycle of hunger and death', written by Oliver Stallwood (30 July 2004).

Personalization - Involvement also grows with personalization. Personalization, as *the process of relating and incorporating external factors into our own personal world*, allows us to see them in relation to our own experiences. With that, these experiences become a more integrated part of our persona, and involvement naturally grows. By sharing our experiences and observations on a *continuous* basis, we give people a chance to travel along with us and become part of our adventure, and in that way, increase their potential involvement with Africa.

It is through these elements – context and personalization – that we aim to increase involvement with Africa and its inhabitants. As Africa becomes a larger and more understandable part of day-to-day life, the need to address issues before they become problems becomes more relevant.

Personalization and Context...

I'm watching CNN – the dollar went down again – and now we're zooming in to another bomb explosion in Iraq. Twenty people died. It's sad, and it worries me that this seems to become an almost daily event. But when we zoom in to the next item, the thought has already left my mind – too many things to feel sad about, and I'm ready to hear what is going on the rest of the world. This time it's the flood in Sumatra. I edge forward on my seat. I hope that's not – but it is. The flood of the Bohorok river washed almost the entire village of Bukit Lawang off the face of the earth, taking hundreds of people with it. With it, also the little restaurant where we ate so many times. With it, maybe also the people who treated us so friendly – the owner, with whom we had so many talks about the improving political and economic situation in Indonesia. With it, maybe his sweet and always smiling wife. With it, maybe, while he was playing on the river banks, their young son, whose birthday party we were invited to. And while they're interviewing tourists who lost their backpacks in the flood, my mind float off. I see the wild river rushing down – debris and trees mixed with the grey water. There it floats: the little blue baseball cap we bought the boy for his birthday – the little boy's body not to be found for another week. The next item is on, but I can't concentrate, and turn off the TV.

This flood happened because of illegal logging. Something I know shouldn't be done, but, except for the fact that our last pieces of rainforests are vanishing rapidly, has never been very high on my agenda. This time, I feel differently. This time I remember the sounds and scents of the village that was struck. This time I know the faces of the people that lost their homes, family, friends and lives. This time I have seen the Orangutan rehabilitation center, before it too was washed away.

This time I can't hide in anonymity – this time I have to care.

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Two year journey

To be able to truly understand all the different aspects of a country – rather than form our opinions on first impressions and brief encounters – we need to spend a significant amount of time in each country. We estimate that we will need at least two years to cover the majority of the African continent.

Our trip is based on the ‘quality over quantity principle’, meaning we prefer to spend a significant amount of time in a smaller set of selected countries, allowing us the time to get to know and understand the country, rather than rushing through as many countries as possible. We intend to follow our pre-determined plan as closely as possible, but want to remain flexible, and keep the option open to alter our original plan as we move from country to country.

Overland

As previously mentioned, to be able to understand people, you need to live with them. For us that means that rather than Hilton-hopping our way through the continent, we want to be able to visit the more remote areas that are not readily accessible for most people. By driving our own 4WD, we will travel through untouched areas, pitch our tent in small communities, and spend time with people living there which allows us to experience the purity and true African spirit in these remote places. Of course, traveling through Africa in this unique way doesn’t mean that we won’t visit any of the most popular and well-known locations. After all, these too are things that make Africa such a fascinating continent.

Fully documented

Of course – apart from a wonderful personal experience – all of our insights and experiences are ‘lost’ unless we share them with others. For that reason, all relevant material from the first day of our two-year long preparation phase of this project, through each day of our African adventure, until the first months after we return from our journey, will be thoroughly documented. This wealth of information, combined with our personal insight and experiences, will form the basis for the articles and photos we will publish, the interactive education programs we will deliver, the updates on our website, as well as future guidebooks and advisory services.

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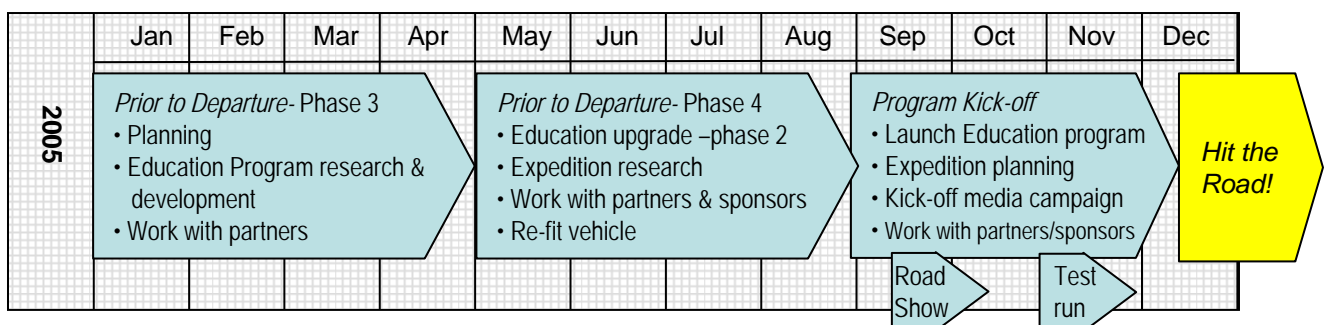
Setting the level of detail of your planning is always a difficult thing. It is one of the things that determines the success of the journey. Planning too little will leave you unprepared, and might get you into trouble when a particular route you wanted to take turns out not to be feasible. Moreover, not having a good view on where you're going makes it difficult to properly research a country, its culture and history, and lacking this insight, you may not fully appreciate the country. On the other hand, planning too much makes your journey rigid, and eliminates the true sense of adventure. More importantly, no plan can be made that accounts for all contingencies. For our journey, we tried to find a balance that makes us feel confident that we are adequately educated on overland travel and the countries we intend to visit, while leaving plenty of flexibility for our plans to change. After all, things go wrong, road and safety conditions change, and a certain country may just not be as interesting as we originally thought.



Things don't always go as planned...

It was a typical travel day for us in one of Australia's beautiful national parks. What was planned as a great day for a long hike and a beach picnic, turned into two days of phone calls, repair shops and long distance driving from junkyard to car wrecker to find replacement parts for our van. We found that a few laughs and some persistence got the job done without too much problem. Wilson's Prom National Park Victoria, Australia

Timeline – 2005



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Our planned itinerary:

**Morocco (and Western Sahara)
Mauritania
Senegal
The Gambia
Guinea-Bissau
Guinea
Côte d'Ivoire
Ghana
Togo
Benin
Burkina Faso
Mali
Niger
Nigeria
Cameroon
Central African Rep.
Chad
Sudan
Uganda
Tanzania
Zambia
Botswana
Namibia
South Africa
Lesotho
Swaziland
Mozambique
Zimbabwe
Malawi
Tanzania
Kenya
Ethiopia
Djibouti
Eritrea
Sudan
Egypt**

By combining our goals with practical constraints, we selected the following guidelines to design our initial plan:

- **Itinerary:** London – Cape Town – London, which for Africa translates into the 'triple C triangle': Casablanca – Cape Town – Cairo.
- **Countries:** As shown in the sidebar, we plan on visiting approximately 35 African countries.
- **Time:** Approximately two years, making it possible to cover most of the African continent. We estimate it will take just over a year to get to South Africa and will spend the remaining time traveling back North.
- **Transport:** Overland only with our own 4WD, limiting ourselves to continental Africa, and ruling out shipping of the car.
- **Safety first:** Ruling out those countries that are (currently) considered to be unsafe, but continuously monitoring stability of each country.
- **Quality over quantity:** Spending a significant amount of time (typically one month) in selected countries.
- **Off the beaten track:** Factoring in the time spent in major cities and attractions for sightseeing, administration, and restocking, we expect to dedicate approximately 50% of our time to off the beaten track locations.
- **Routes:** When possible, partially following 'famous routes', e.g. the Paris-Dakar rally, the Slave Route, Livingstone's explorations, etc.
- **Flexibility:** Allowing for a change in plans when necessary.

We focus our research and preparation on this itinerary. But, since we expect our plans to change as our journey progresses (either because we want them to change, or because circumstances force us to change them), we are factoring in as much flexibility as possible.

Tire Tracks Education Program

As the Tire Tracks team explores the African continent, students and teachers around the globe will have the opportunity to participate - *at no cost* - in the Tire Tracks interactive, web-based, pilot program. This real time, multi-media program, focused on ages 9-12, relates expedition-driven, Africa-based content to subjects taught in social studies (geography, citizenship, history), science, technology and reflective writing courses, and engages students and teachers in an education community that builds on and integrates their feedback. Curriculum integration and ease of use is ensured by the dedicated team of over 50 co-developing teachers from seven countries. Over 1000 classrooms will have the opportunity to interact with the expedition team as well as schools in places as Ghana, India, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, UK, and the USA.

In September 2005, the Preparation and Planning phase of the pilot will be launched. Students and teachers will have the opportunity to participate in lessons, activities and discussions that familiarize them with the expedition, and prepare them to discover the African continent with the Tire Tracks team. In January 2006, the Explore Africa! phase of the pilot program will kick-off, as the expedition team hits the road.

Objectives

- By translating our knowledge, insight and experiences gained from our African expedition into useful classroom applications, we show, by example and application, how science, exploration, culture and technology impact every day life.
- By engaging students in exploration and discovery of a culturally diverse continent, and inspiring them to apply their knowledge and understanding to solve real-life problems, students better identify and connect with new concepts. Consequently they improve their understanding and appreciation of their own culture, the African region and world societies as a whole. Armed with this understanding, students, from an early age, can see through cultural barriers, which better prepares them to make balanced decisions on a global, local and personal level.

Program Elements

Through the Tire Tracks dedicated Teachers (<http://teachers.tiretracks.org>) and Kids (<http://kids.tiretracks.org>) websites, students and teachers can discover the sights, sounds and stories of Africa's diverse regions and cultures with the Tire Tracks Explorers.

During their 104-week adventure through 35 African countries, the team will continuously deliver interactive, multi-media content from the field via internet and satellite technology. Students and teachers can access daily and bi-weekly content, participate in monthly and semester-end projects with other classes, and interact with the Tire Tracks Explorers as well as other participating schools from around the globe. By delivering content that reinforces concepts taught in traditional Social Studies (geography, citizenship, history, culture), Science (earth science, health, life science/biology, general science), Language Arts (research, vocabulary, media), Math (problem solving, number theory, statistics), technology and reflective writing courses, the Tire Tracks Explorers help make the traditional learning experience more fun, dynamic and alive. In turn, students will be more encouraged to increase their understanding of scientific, cultural and technological concepts and, as the Explorers do, apply them to everyday situations.

Upon completion of the pilot, a full-scale education program will be launched around the globe. The continued interactivity and topicality of the program is ensured by the organization of new, annually recurring, overland expeditions through Africa.

In addition to the full development of the Africa-based education programs and tools, the Tire Tracks team is also planning development of similar education programs for other parts of the world.

Teachers interested in participating in the pilot program can sign up on the Tire Tracks website.

Tire Tracks Education Program

Tire Tracks Kids Website (<http://kids.tiretracks.org>)

The Kids Website is a lively, vibrant site, designed to be informative, yet entertaining. Kids can easily navigate through the site at their own pace, inside and outside of the classroom, and easily interact with the Explorers, and other students and teachers in a moderated forum. A wide-range of written, visual and auditory content is available to suit multiple learning styles. Highlights include:

Dynamic & Interactive Tool Kit (Expedition-driven, Africa-based content)

- **Daily Reports-** Short daily updates so students can follow the team from day-to-day
- **Bi-weekly logs-** Stories & photos related to each pre-selected expedition theme
- **Monthly Special Edition Reports-** Special coverage of encounters and global issues
- **End of Season Projects-** Specially-selected semester end projects
- **Adventure Photo Journal, Video & Sound Clips-** Pictures, videos and sound clips allow students to experience African sights, sounds and movement
- **Vocabulary-** Highlights new vocabulary we learn on our journey
- **Current Events-** Continuous, up-to-date news on what's happening in Africa
- **Ask the Explorers-** Interact with the Explorers in the field
- **Talk to Participating Schools-** Ask questions, and share ideas with other students using the program, from places like Europe, USA and Africa

Static Tool Kit

- **Background Research-** Facts & figures on African countries
- **Expedition-specific Content-** Route/timeline, preparation, Explorer profiles, etc.
- **Homework Help-** Extensive list of useful links and resources

Student Benefits

- Reinforces concepts taught in geography, citizenship, science, history and ICT courses
- Makes subjects taught in the classroom come to life, and increases understanding through real life examples
- Increases understanding, and builds awareness of Africa
- Heightens cultural awareness through interaction with the expedition team in Africa as well as with participating schools in other countries
- Increases understanding of the use of modern technology, such as internet
- Helps make the traditional learning experience more fun, dynamic and alive
- Exposes students to global experiences, and encourages them to pave their own path
- Provides a specialized resource for students that is fit for their generation

Tire Tracks Education Program

Tire Tracks Teachers Website (<http://teachers.tiretracks.org>)

The Tire Tracks Teachers website is designed to make it easy for teachers to integrate the lively, multi-media content from the Tire Tracks Kids website into current teaching practice, without diverting from current curriculum. With **multiple entry points** to select from, such as a subjects taught in Science or Social Studies; an expedition theme as Nature & Wildlife, Life & Society, or Trade & Travel; one of the African countries and/or one of the textbook connections, teachers can quickly and easily find relevant material fit for the classroom.

The website also provides a useful **Teacher Preparation Tool Kit** which includes:

- Background Research, and Reading
- Lesson Plans, Worksheets and Activities
- Interactive, Global Teacher Forum- Exchange ideas/lesson plans
- Helpful Links

In addition to the above, the Tire Tracks website also offers teachers using the program the opportunity to receive **customized content** from the field, as well as provide **feedback** that will be considered in the frequent, website upgrades. We aim to make the content and layout of the websites user-friendly, provide content that reinforces current topics taught in the classroom, and provide background, instructional and interactive content that helps instructors reinforce scientific, geographical, digital and cultural literacy skills in a fun and exciting way.

Teacher Benefits

- Easily fit content into current teaching practice
- Quickly and easily find relevant material fit for the classroom
- Use of a highly effective teaching aid that helps to transfer knowledge and increase understanding of underlying concepts
- Helps teach scientific, geographical, cultural and digital literacy skills in a fun and exciting way
- Provides access to a wealth of lesson plans and activities
- Provides links with other teachers, from around the globe, using the program
- Raises profile of and reinforces the value of geography
- Provides experience with an innovative program that brings global perspectives into the classroom

Sponsors

Your commitment is instrumental to our success!

By contributing to the Tire Tracks unique African expedition, you will help the Tire Tracks team gain direct access to the necessary research facilities and resources required for them to explore, experience and report on the true Africa.

We have committed our own time, resources and money to making this expedition a reality and with your added help, we will meet our budget for the expedition and delivery of the education program.

Any contribution (monetary or in kind) you can make to help us unravel the great African mystery, and/or any help you can give us to raise awareness about this project, is greatly appreciated.

We also seek partnerships and alliances with organizations with similar or complementing goals and activities.

Sponsor Benefits

To thank you for your support, all sponsors are displayed on our dedicated Sponsor web page, and have the option to receive first-hand accounts of the Explorer's adventures as they explore the African continent.

For significant contributors, the Tire Tracks team offers additional benefits:

- Delivery of our final expedition report which includes details of the Tire Tracks project, research performed and our achievements.
- Placement of sponsor's products and/or logo during media events and presentations.
- Provide product or service testimonials for marketing purposes.
- Public appearances or interviews at company events, presentations or trade shows.
- Reference sponsor in expedition-related publications.
- Display of sponsor's logo and web links on the Tire Tracks education website.
- Upon request, testing and reporting on specified products throughout our two year African adventure.
- Upon request, delivery of special reports, on the road interviews, special photos or video footage to use in marketing campaigns.
- Upon request, delivery of special reports, on the road interviews, special photos or video footage with employees in overseas offices for use internal communications.

Please contact us or check our website (www.tiretracks.org) for more information on sponsorship contribution levels and related benefits.

Tire Tracks is an initiative of

LIVING FOOTSTEPS

Step into the World

About Living Footsteps

Mission

We aim to “make the world a smaller place”, by creating a deeper understanding of countries and cultures all over the world. We achieve this by sharing our *knowledge, insight, and experience* of the countries we cover. By setting up projects that research and explore regions in the world in a unique way, we develop a true understanding of the regions we cover. The combination of a unique travel experience and deep understanding of the countries we visit, allows us to not just explain countries and cultures, but do so in a vivid and relevant way.

We are led by the following guiding principles:

- Provoke thought by offering information and insights. We provide different perspectives and views without forcing opinions or a ‘single truth’.
- Rather than focusing on isolated issues and subjects, we aim to point out the interrelationships between them, and put them into a broader context.
- Explain countries and cultures in terms of understandable differences, and recognizable similarities.
- Make our insight and experiences relevant and recognizable by accentuating the human perspective. Our work is *about real people, by real people, and for real people*.
- Breathe the spirit of adventure and exploration.

With this, Living Footsteps aims to inspire you to *step into the world* with us, but to *pave your own path*.

Business activities

We believe that knowledge, insight and experience are best transferred through a combination of media and activities. We therefore focus our business on four forms of sharing:

Sharing through media

- Writing
- Photography
- Other media

Sharing through education

- Interactive education programs and teaching aids

Sharing through advice

- Consulting services in the field of international market assessment
- Consulting services in the field of sustainable tourism development
- Consulting services and training in the field cultural awareness

Sharing through experience

- Writing up-to-date guidebooks, and providing personalized trip planning advice

LIVING FOOTSTEPS

Step into the World

About Living Footsteps

This mix of focus areas not only allows us to share our knowledge, insight, and experience with a wide variety of audiences, but also, because different audiences require different views, forces us to research and approach the regions we cover from different angles and perspectives.

By sharing through a mixture of media, we focus on painting a complete and vivid picture of the countries we cover. Writing typically focuses on observations, conversations and thought, photography focuses on visual elements, whilst sound brings texture to day-to-day situations and video captures movement.

For our education programs, we focus on translating complex situations and concepts into basic and understandable notions. To be successful in our advisory services, we need to have a deep understanding of socio-economic dynamics in each country, and consider regions in terms of economic development and their potential for development of sustainable tourism.

Lastly, to enable others to follow in our footsteps, we look at locations from a traveler's perspective, and document our day-to-day activities so we can provide accurate and practical travel tips.

We strongly believe that combining these different approaches both broaden and deepen our understanding in each of the separate focus areas – media, education, advice, and experience – and in that way, allows us to deliver superior quality to our audiences.

Organization

Living Footsteps (www.livingfootsteps.com) is a knowledge- and research-based organization. All facts derived from research, as well as knowledge, insight and understanding derived from experiences, field research and interviews during our travels, are stored in our knowledge repository. This ensures the availability of detailed, accurate information at all times.

Our business model is based on flexibility and scalability. We work with a minimal permanent staff and a network of experts allowing us scale up or down according to the requirement of each project. In this way, we ensure access to the most relevant expertise at acceptable costs.

Our values

RESPECT	SENSE OF HUMOR	ADVENTURE
CURIOSITY	INTEGRITY	HONESTY
TOLERANCE	KNOWLEDGE	RELIABILITY

Sharing through media

To paint a complete picture, we use a combination of media, which, either combined or in isolation, can be published through a variety of channels, such as periodicals, books, television and internet.

Writing

What is travel writing? To some a journal-like enumeration of events that string together to form the account of a trip. Granted, you will have to do a bit of that. If only for yourself, to keep track of what has happened. But more so, it is about painting a picture, about bringing people along on your journey, and telling a good story.

So what are those stories about? Of course, you are inspired to write about your experiences. Especially when most of them are full of adventure, in a continent where beautiful scenery and wildlife are so abundant. But though tempting, it's all too easy to just describe the wonderful and the great. Moreover, in doing so, you're failing your audience, because traveling isn't just about a great hike, a beautiful safari or a famous building. Of course, that's an important part of it, but it's also about the little observations on how a country and its people are different from every other country you know – and how in other things, it is exactly the same. It's about the thoughts that run through your mind when traveling and what being there has taught you.

So, if in your stories you want to take people along with you, you have to write about all of these things – the great and the trivial, the good and the bad, the exciting and the dull. So sometimes instead of writing another story about a national park, you choose to write about a three-hour talk you had with someone in the market, because it made you understand the county a little bit better. Or when you do write about that hike, you also write about the thoughts that run through your mind, because sometime those reflections will make someone better grasp the real atmosphere of the place. It's a mixture of all the aspects of traveling that make the story come alive.

We believe that to take people along on our journey, we have to write two distinct types of stories about the counties we visit: descriptive and reflective. The more descriptive stories tell about our journey. They describe the places, the people and the idiosyncrasies of traveling. On the other hand, there are the more reflective pieces that narrow in on a specific subject. They describe the thoughts a country evokes, explain a culture and how it relates to our own, or provide an unusual view on the country. While neither of these types of stories in itself paints a complete picture, the combination of the two brings the experience to life.

Sharing through media

Writing examples

Nepal- Beyond the First Impression

The plane teetered back and forth with the turbulent air, as the pilot dipped the plane's wings below the clouds just long enough for us to catch a glimpse of the half-sunlit, snow-streaked mountain peak below. "Is that *really* Mount Everest?" The sight of the mountain sent electric shocks through my veins. Like many others, I had come to this place to see for myself what magic the Himalayas held, but I didn't expect the sight of the mountain alone to make such a strong impression on me. Although this sight never left my thoughts, my Nepali experience let me discover more than the jagged, white mountain terrain and crystal-clear, blue skies, and find out for myself, why the country beams with so much character and hope.

...After the trek, my mission was to deliver books, sent by sponsors of Room to Read, to a Nepali school, located thirty minutes from the town of Besisahar in eastern Nepal. After spending the morning counting and recording the new shipment of almost 200 children's books with the regional school commissioner, the local elementary school's principle and teacher, we headed up towards the school in Banjhakhet. On the way to the three-room school house, the teacher tried to convince kids that were playing along the trail to come to the school ceremony, even if it was only for a few hours. Most kids, with minimal convincing (candy always helps!), decided to come along and join the ceremony. As the school came into sight, I could already feel the electricity and excitement of the teachers and kids. The fifty or so kids could barely sit still, all lined up on the school benches brought into the courtyard for this ceremony. Within minutes of arriving, I was offered lay after lay of the local, sweet-smelling flowers, as the kids—some shy, some bold—shouted "Namaste! Namaste!" (Hello! Hello!). The festivities started with speeches from the school officials and teachers as well as my presentation of books for their new library, and then the real party started. Groups of kids, aged 5-10, each in turn, came to center stage to perform their practiced dances and singing chants. It was hard for me to sit still, and before I knew it, I was up dancing and clapping, trying to mimic their chants, and flow with their dance moves. An amazing experience, to say the least, and after a tour through the school, and many clicks of the camera, I was on a local bus back to Kathmandu, thinking about this wonderful day.

During the seven hour bus ride back to my initial departure point, with loud Indian movies playing in the background, women and kids crowded onto our seats, and men sitting on tiny stools in the aisles, I couldn't help to think that my first impressions — the beauty of the mountains, the crisp, mountain air, the serenity of the nature — didn't sufficiently describe the magnificence or mystery that the Himalaya mountain region held. The true story of Nepal would only be complete by adding the heart-warming nature of the people, the beaming love and warmth of the teachers, and the eagerness of the children, all so thankful, so willing, to be part of the future of the Nepali magic.

Excerpt from a story on Nepal

A place like any other?

"Please, sir?" The crippled man, sitting on a small, rickety cart with wooden wheels, sticks out a three-fingered hand. "Landmine." His other hand points at his legs that are cut off just above the knee. His face is friendly, almost content, as if his misfortune doesn't bother him at all. Maybe it doesn't. Maybe, compared to the one and a half million people that were slaughtered by the Khmer Rouge, he is one of the lucky ones that came out alive.

So this is it – the killing fields. The entrance is marked by a Stupa with high glass windows on all sides – inside the skulls of some 10,000 people piled up to the roof. The same amount is still buried in the mass graves that haven't been dug up yet. Those skulls are still buried because no one could stomach the task of digging up those graves anymore.

This Stupa is the only thing that really tells the story of what went on here. For the rest, it looks very much like any other place. Still, I can somehow feel the weight of this place push me down. It's not what you see or hear, or what you do not hear, so it must be all in my head. Well, maybe not completely. There are large holes in the ground. Not really pits - they're just as grassy as the rest of the fields. They're just holes, but they're not natural; you can see they shouldn't be there. So maybe these fields do look a tiny bit different. But not that different that it should make so much of an impression.

No, it's my mind that tells me they are mass graves. It's the story of kids being grabbed by their feet – an overweight baseball bat – to smash their skulls against the trees (bullets were too expensive to waste on something as fragile as a child's life), that makes me feel sick about this place. It's the knowledge of what has been going on here that weighs me down. I walk around, and know the rags I see lying in the mud – just like you see rags lying around in mud in any other place – are not just old rags. Not just an old shirt that was torn, and had no use anymore. The old torn shirts here had no use anymore for a very different reason. They had no use anymore, because they were on the bodies of dead people – bodies so cold that no shirt can warm them anymore.

And again I think – *no, those holes shouldn't be there.* They really aren't natural. It's thoughts like these that involuntary make me look down, and as I'm staring at the ground, I realize that this place really isn't like any other place. Not just because history made this a different place, but what looked the same from a distance, isn't close up. Half of what I thought were just sticks lying around, are really bones. Pebbles really teeth. The place is littered with them. No, none of this is natural; none of this should be here...

Excerpt from a story about the Killing Fields in Cambodia

Sharing through media

Photography

A picture says more than a thousand words. Sometime this is true, but not every picture says more than a thousand words. Most pictures are the postcard-type ones of a mountain (taken from such an angle that you don't see the ugly hotel at the foot of the mountain), an elephant or tiger, or a hill tribe woman who makes a living out of posing for tourists. And trust me, we have thousands of those, and will take thousands more. But that doesn't mean that with those, we have millions of words.

A good picture tells a story. A story nothing else can tell. It's the look in someone's eyes, the strange situation, the color of the light. It's the unexpected. It shows vulnerability, strength, happiness or surprise. It tells a story of what has been going on, or sometimes of what will happen. It tells of people or animals that are not in the picture. It explains history, culture, or relations between people. It provokes thought or points out the different.

What a good picture does not have to be is 'esthetically beautiful' or 'soothing'. A good picture may be ugly or unnerving. It does not have to confirm our views. A good picture doesn't even have to be true. After all, different angles tell different stories. But a good picture does have to be honest. Decisions about composition, light, or angle should not be made for esthetic, but for artistic reasons. It can be a shot of daily life, or that one special moment. Sometimes you have to wait days and days before you find what you're looking for. Sometimes you just stumble upon it – it's just there, in the perfect light. All you need is a good eye. A good eye for the picture, but maybe even more, a good eye for the story it tells.

We believe that this is exactly what pictures should do. Of course, a good picture needs to be a technically good shot. Composition and light should represent skill. But without a story, it is "just" a good picture. It is the story the picture tells that complements writing and other media, and explains something only that picture can explain. And it is in that capacity that we use pictures to bring people along on our journeys.

Sharing through media

Photography examples

Sometimes you just stumble upon it...

This picture was taken in the South of France. We pulled off the main road onto a mud road to have a picnic lunch before heading further south. After half an hour, we had to break up our lunch quickly because of the incoming rain. As we were about to pull back onto the main road, this is what we ran into.

The picture tells several stories. The first one is obviously that you should be very careful entering this road. This is a story of the present – it talks of the situation at the moment the picture was taken. The second one is equally obvious, but tells a story of the future. The dark sky, and the greenish light tell us that a huge thunderstorm is



about to hit us. The third one is less obvious. This is the story of what went on here before. Who ordered those twenty signs to be placed on this insignificant crossing? And why? Was there a surplus of stop signs? Did the cousin of the person in charge of road-works in this region own a stop sign factory? Was the order to place these stop signs accidentally given five times instead of once? All to different contractors, who all did their jobs without questioning the reason? I may never know the real reason behind it, but whenever I look at this picture, I can't help but think about it.



Different angles tell different stories...

I am at a cemetery. To some people that may be a bit strange, but I have a thing for graveyards. I like to study the way people treat their dead. It tells you a lot about how people look at life and how they value their existence. They don't bury people over here, which is probably just for practical reasons. It's just too much effort to dig a hole in the hard rock. Instead, they put them in crypts in small memorial buildings, that are usually family graves. Their little tympanum-like roofs make them look like little houses. A resemblance that is emphasized by the narrow cobblestone streets that run between them.

That's when I got it. All I need to do is find the right spot and the right angle. I walk a bit up the mountain and there it is. Through my lens, the cemetery looks just like a little mountain village. It's completely deserted though, which makes it look a bit like a ghost town. And that is of course exactly what it is. Click!

Sharing through media

Other Media

When appropriate, we will use other media to complement writing and photography. After all, as powerful as these media may be, photography and writing both are highly dependent on visual imagery.

Sound

How do you describe the sound of the jungle at night, a street vendor calling out, muffled in the busy city noise, or the over-the-top laughter of little kids playing a game? Though most of our memories are visual, almost nothing can tickle the imagination in such a direct and different way as sound. A five second sound clip can immediately bring us back to a location that had slipped so far back into our memory, that we are surprised when we suddenly remember it. Because of this highly associative impact, and the fact that a sound recorder is a fairly unobtrusive medium, we believe that sound clips will bring an extra dimension to explaining unknown countries and cultures.

Video

The handheld video camera is becoming an almost unbearable intrusion on our lives. At every event and in just about any holiday location, it pops up to record whatever comes in its line of sight. And though the versatility of the medium offers almost unlimited possibilities, most of the time, it is used as a lazy way of taking snapshots. You don't really have to think about composition, or wait for the right photo opportunity to arrive. You just keep the camera running, and eventually something good is bound to show up.

When used in the right way, however, it can be used to capture those moments that only come to full bloom in moving images. Short – image only – scenes can give an insightful peek into day-to-day life. We therefore believe that they can be especially useful in explaining how all over the world, some things are exactly the same and others completely different.

Television

With the combination of sound and movement, television reports and stories are, even in their most basic form, a powerful medium to bring people along on our journeys. If you add to this the possibilities that editing the material provides, the medium becomes even more powerful.

Narrative and interview quotes explain a scene in a powerful way, while simultaneously, the scene makes the narrative relevant. Music or sound bytes enhance the atmosphere of scenery, and by sequencing short shots, you can tell a complete story in relatively short time. Combining these different elements allows you to create a very compelling story. Compelling, on one hand because of its high entertainment value, but more so because the simultaneous use of these elements strings separate stories together into a coherent set, and allows you to compress time, without losing the essence.

It is because of this capacity to tell people a story in a condensed manner, and the incredible reach of television, that we look for alliances with TV production companies, as yet another way to bring people along on our journeys.

Sharing through education

Transferring knowledge into understanding

In this day and age, grasping the amount of information readily available to us can seem quite overwhelming. With technological advances allowing people to exchange information more quickly and easily than we have ever before, it seems that at every turn, we are bombarded with new facts, ideas, and beliefs. Many pieces of information sink in, and help to build our knowledge base, but many times, a larger part slips by. With this in mind, now more than ever, it is essential that people not only continually add to their knowledge base, but even more so, transform this knowledge into understanding. Understanding a subject enables us to predict the outcome in different, but similar situations, assess the validity of information, and formulate hypotheses and opinions on certain subjects, even when we don't have all the facts. In other words, we focus on using our intelligence, rather than using our memory.

If we continually aim to put knowledge into a context of understanding, we create a powerful knowledge engine that makes concepts relevant, useful and re-useable, as well as points out the relations and connections with other concepts. Based on this, we can formulate solid opinions, put them into perspective, and relate them to other people's thoughts and ideas. We can evaluate the 'bits of true', the 'bits of false' in existing theories and other opinions. With this, we also develop the ability to identify the essential gaps in our knowledge, and from that, 'hunger for knowledge' grows. Therefore, every bit of knowledge that can be transformed into a solid understanding counts.

Beyond the theory

In practice, translating knowledge into understanding is not as easy as it appears to be. In the classroom, this is where the greatest teaching challenge arises. With an ever increasing variety of concepts to teach, and faced with standardized testing requirements that assess students' progress over time, a teacher has the difficult task of transferring an enormous amount of knowledge to students in limited time. At these times, teachers are challenged to find a delicate balance between finding time for teaching students the required facts in order to meet the fixed evaluation points, and time for moving that knowledge beyond the facts into deeper understanding.

Our interactive education programs and teaching aids provide teachers with an exciting way to engage students in the learning process. Through our exploration of different cultures and societies all over the world, we will add extra, unique tools to the teacher's tool kit that incorporate relevant, high-quality content, based on actual experience, into lively, interactive frameworks. In essence, we aim to help make the learning experience fun and dynamic. By doing so, students will be encouraged to think more deeply about what they have learned and be more inspired to put their knowledge into action.

Sharing through education

Specifically, our education programs and teaching aids incorporate our knowledge, insight and experiences, and recommend ways to deliver the content, in what we believe to be, some of the most influential ways knowledge can be transformed into understandable realities. Our content is focused on elements learned in primary and secondary school (ages 5-18) and are best applied to concepts taught in social studies (geography, citizenship, history, culture, government, economics), science (earth science, health, life science/biology, general science), language arts (research, vocabulary, reading/writing, media), math (problem solving, number theory, statistics), technology as well as any subject that incorporates thinking skills and reflective writing elements. We recommend transferring knowledge by using the following principles:

Example and Experience

- In order to make students feel part of the curriculum, and make the material relevant for them, students need to see concepts in practical, real-life situations. It is this hearing, seeing and doing, that explains why it is relevant to learn about this subject.

Self-Reflection

- Reflecting on concepts, facts and theories by relating them to your personal situation, allow students to personalize them. This personalization creates additional relevance to the student. Secondly, relating the subject to (prior) experiences allows student to (re-) interpret them in a different context, and in this way, deepen the understanding of the subject as well as previously learnt subjects.

Big Picture and Relationships

- In order to analyze information presented, students need to see how specific criteria fit into the 'big picture.' By reviewing the relationships and connections between elements, students start to recognize how the pieces fit into the puzzle.

Practical Perspective and Applications

- By seeing examples of concepts and applying them to real-life situations, students develop practical learning skills that help them to continuously learn how to use and apply information they have.

Abstraction

- Identifying the underlying concepts and theories of a subject enables students to re-apply them to new situations, and compare and evaluate different subjects on a deeper level.

In collaboration with teachers, we design our education programs and teaching aids to meet the needs of teachers and students at various educational levels.

Sharing through advice

Our advisory services aim to help organizations gain a better understanding of their location, employees, and clients, by identifying new opportunities and helping them overcome barriers. We aim to 'share our world' by helping people make connections, build awareness and better integrate into the society they are working in.

Our advisory services can be delivered while on the road or after our travels. Our three types of services are described below.

Consulting services in the field of international market assessment

Global companies modify their approach to continuously deliver high-quality products or services. To remain competitive, they need to understand the needs of their target markets, operate efficiently and build solid communication networks both on a local and global level. Especially in developing and emerging markets, assessing market potential and staying up-to-date with market and cultural trends, is complex and time consuming. However, the pay-off of becoming a major player in these markets is very high.

With founders that both have over seven years of experience working with international clients from strategic and operational perspectives, as well as first-hand experience gained from in-depth research, and field research on location, we can help companies achieve these goals. By delivering market assessments, and formulating strategies on how to effectively develop these markets, we help clients grow their business.

Consulting services in the field of sustainable tourism development

Many tourists are attracted to destinations where they can explore and enjoy historical, natural and cultural treasures. However, most tourists will also pick their destination based on elements like accessibility, comfort, ease of travel and safety. Tourism associations, tourism agencies as well as government organizations and NGOs, work to build a solid, stable infrastructure that makes their country available and accessible to tourists, but also aims to preserve its authenticity, minimize environmental impact, increase local community involvement and awareness, and contribute to alleviating poverty by creating jobs and income at various levels. With parts of the world becoming more accessible than they ever were before to a greater amount of people, it is vital that tourism continues to allow tourists to explore the wonders of their country, but does so in a sustainable way.

By sharing our knowledge, insight and experience gained from interviews with stakeholders involved in tourism development, by absorbing our surroundings, and studying the market, as well as our founder's consulting experience and travels, we can help tourism-related organizations expand their sustainable tourism initiatives. By delivering practical advice, shedding light on trends in sustainable tourism and marketing, and educating staff, we can provide an important, practical framework for tourism organizations to build and grow their business.

Sharing through advice

Consulting services and training in the field cultural awareness

At home, when you do your daily shopping or take a walk in your neighborhood, or even when you are traveling in a country you know very well, it is difficult to pinpoint the typical elements of a culture. This is not because you are unaware of its existence, but simply because the differences and the little 'oddities' blend in with the normalcy of day-to-day life. But when you travel or work abroad, all these little 'oddities' stick out because they are new or different. Even stronger, at these moments, these 'oddities' become a big part of your day-to-day life because they interest you, or because you have to deal with behavior you don't understand.

Over time, and upon dealing with different cultures, you not only learn to pick out differences and similarities that exist between your culture and others, but you also can put them into context. By doing so, you build a 'cultural reference' framework that you use to help you adjust and re-act to foreign and unfamiliar situations.

In an international business situation, having a solid 'cultural reference' framework to draw upon is critical. You must be able to quickly pick out, understand and integrate cultural factors into your actions and re-actions in a diplomatic way. Very often, cultural misunderstandings and perceptions influence the closing of a big deal, the relationship with key contacts, or the success of an international project.

Drawing on our founders combined fifteen years of consulting experience, advising and training international companies, as well significant time spent experiencing day-to-day life in over 50 countries, we can help organizations and people deal with cultural differences. Though our training courses are based on a solid theoretical framework for identifying and dealing with cultural differences, they also focus on practical, real-life situations.

Based on our extensive 'cultural reference' framework, ranging from working on international projects, to talking our way through a closed border crossing, or spending time with local communities in a variety of countries, we can provide participants with practical tips on how to quickly identify and analyze cultural differences and how to act in unexpected situations. By doing so, we move participants' understanding beyond the theory, and help them effectively interact and do business in different cultures.

Sharing through experience

One of the best ways to understand and appreciate other cultures and environments is to experience a country first-hand. Based on your own observations and experiences, you can formulate your own opinions on the look and feel of a place, the spirit of the people, taste of the food and values of the culture, which helps put a society's history, culture and surroundings into your own personal perspective.

We encourage others to explore and reflect on the world around them. However, not everybody has the time, experience, or even the desire to explore the world on their own. We therefore believe that it is important to make our knowledge and experiences available to others, to enable them to follow in our footsteps, and explore the world.

Both during our trips and upon return, we share our travel experiences with travelers in a variety of ways. These range from writing and updating guidebooks and books on expedition planning to providing personalized travel advice on various places and attractions all over the world. Our knowledge repository, as well as alliances we seek with travel organizations and guidebook publishers, will guarantee accurate, up-to-date information on the countries we cover.

Our thoughts on traveling

Strange as it may sound, but like in any profession, being 'successful' in your travels for a large part depends on experience. Not just because this experience makes the daily hassles of traveling – finding the best accommodation, determining what the best seat is for a 24-hour bus ride, exchanging money, haggling over a taxi ride, bribing your way across a border – a lot easier, and actually transforms each hassle into an enjoyable part of your travels, but more so, because it determines the 'success' of your travels in a much more profound way. With experience, you start to develop an eye for the true gems of travel. And most of the time, these true gems of travel are not the things you originally set out to see, like that special national park, or those Inca ruins. Most of the time, they are little traveler's treasures that suddenly make you understand the country, a weird situation, or a talk you had with someone. With growing appreciation for different countries and cultures, combined with becoming more comfortable with the 'traveling life', this eye for the beauty of travel develops, and with it, the curiosity and the ongoing desire to explore.

At the same time, since traveling is part of our profession, and a means of doing our research, we have a daily routine of planning, researching, logging events, and reporting back. Though these activities may not be the most exciting part of traveling, they do allow us to get the most out of our travels, and share them with others in an effective way.

"...So here are some of the things I really love about traveling. They're just tiny things – some pretty, some funny, some just the little travelers' delights, but they make your day, and sometimes make you wonder what we lost in becoming a 'civilized' country.

How good it is to be in a new country again, and notice all the differences (no matter how small they are). To start exploring what these people will be like – get their typical sense of humor, try to understand what they are all about. How good it is to be in a town where 90% of the cars are taxis. How funny it is to see tuk-tuks again (even though I'm not in Asia). To see people take care of each other – the street vendor leaving his goods alone for a moment to help an old lady cross the street. How good it is to walk barefoot. To see a guy in a Santa suit at 32 degrees Celsius. How good it is to be near the ocean again - apart from the seafood. To notice that your Spanish is finally getting good enough to start making some jokes. Sitting in the park, reading a book, and suddenly being surrounded by five little kids who are very determined to spend the rest of the afternoon with this strange gringo. Every time you notice your backpack is still there after a bus trip. How nice it is to have a little buzz in the afternoon after having some beers in the sun, during lunch. Noticing that the big painful pimple on your ass has mysteriously disappeared on the morning you're taking that 18-hour bus trip. To walk past a group of little boys, and upon passing them, hear the bravest of them whisper 'Hey, mister, what's your name?'. Or better yet, when a four-year old girl comes walking besides you. She looks up a few times, smiling, and then, when she thinks it's OK, quickly grabs your hand. To see the smile on her face, as we walk hand in hand, until our ways part. How normal it is to hold hands here anyway. Or when you walked in the rain, and are soaked to the bone, and then, just like they said, they really do have hot water in the guesthouse. How good it is to feel the sun burn on your skin. To hear people say 'que pasa bien' (may good things happen to you) when they say goodbye, and see in their eyes that they really mean it. How good it is that every day has a bit of an adventure in it. That boys and girls whistle at each other so often over here, that birds started to imitate it. Realizing you must have an angel on your shoulder, because they've only picked your empty pockets. Small town girls doing nothing all day but hanging around in the plaza. To rediscover that people, in the essence, are the same, all over the world. And maybe most of all, how much I like it to be traveling, and exploring all of this...."

Excerpt from a report while traveling through South America

About the founders

Patrick Wenckebach



Patrick was born and raised in the Netherlands. Living in a country where a two hour drive brings you to its borders, made traveling a natural part of his life. By the time he finished his Master's degree in Quantum Physics and studied Econometrics, Europe held no secrets anymore, so it became time to discover South America, Australia and Asia. Patrick has been a Marketing Strategy Consultant for blue chip companies for the last eight years. He is a well-respected speaker and published writer in the consumer goods industry. Even though he managed to devote several months a year to travel, eventually the

lure of exploring foreign countries and cultures became too strong, and Patrick started a new career by founding Living Footsteps. Apart from traveling, Patrick also has a passion for outdoor activities, cooking, photography and writing. Patrick speaks five languages and is still working on making this a longer list. In the years of traveling abroad (both as business traveler and backpacker) he has visited over 40 countries. His biggest fear is that at some point in his life, he may run out of new countries to visit.



Corinne Overman

Since the days when her mother couldn't leave her alone for a second before she was up to something, Centerville, Ohio-born Corinne always possessed the spirit of adventure, and the desire to help others understand that the world isn't full of oddities, but understandable differences. First venturing off to Indiana, Corinne earned her university degree in Accounting from the Kelley School of Business, before moving onto San Francisco, and then later to Holland where she dedicated her career to helping global companies improve their internal operations. During those seven years, Corinne was also lucky enough to have her business endeavors and personal travels allow her to explore a spectrum of different cultures, and regions in over 25 countries in North & South America, Europe, Asia and Australia. Now faced with the challenge of making her passion a reality, Corinne chose to use her business skills,

love of travel and sense of adventure to not only continue to explore the world around her, but also to dedicate her life to helping others understand the hope and beauty of the people and the world around us.



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Tire Tracks is a Living Footsteps initiative

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