



WILD PLACES OF EUROPE

Astounding views of the continent's most beautiful nature sites

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Lannoo



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PEARLS OF NATURE

When you read this, there's a good chance that I'll be out somewhere on the road, looking for atmospheric landscapes, and searching out rare animals and other wildlife. All of them offered, just like that, by Mother Nature, free for the taking. The list of remarkable locations waiting to be visited is impressive. How or when I want to see them – that's for me to choose. Marvellous! Enchanting!

Truth to tell, I've hardly ever strayed beyond the borders of Europe. There's so much to see here that it seems that I'll never get round to it all. In fact, I've been travelling this alluring continent all my life. I've feasted my eyes, cursed, cried with joy and endlessly enjoyed it. But perhaps what has amazed and astounded me most, is just how brilliant our nature really is. Photographing her, I've come to know her in a very intense way. From almost every trip I return with great stories. Nature experiences of the purest kind that I'm more than happy to share, backed by fine visual material.

Displaying all this beauty in one single book is almost impossible. That is why I've bundled together some of the most beautiful natural pearls for you, a taster if you like, with pictures and stories that will hopefully encourage you to discover superb areas yourself. This book is first and foremost a picture book, the result of infinite patience, endless journeys and masses of perseverance. A book to roam and dream away with, relaxing in your easy chair with photos that will make you want to go out on your own. Not to distant places. Simply, into Europe, on foot, by bike or, like me, in a converted four-wheeler.

Time now perhaps for the distant tropics, Antarctica or other exotic places? No, my journey of discovery through Europe has only just begun. I hope the same for you, that Europe will enthuse you as much as it does me!

Wouter

JULIJSKE ALPE

SLOVENIA





NATURE ON A LONELY HEIGHT



Shaped by wind and weather, inhospitable and surprisingly colourful in autumn, this mountain range stretching across Italy and Slovenia defies all imagination. It's early November. Packed warm, I trudge in my snowshoes through a thick layer of snow in the Julian Alps. For a moment I imagine myself in higher spheres, overwhelmed by the picturesque landscape as I pace along the shore of a mountain lake. An icy wind howls through the valley and despite the cold I'm sweating. Keep going, I tell myself. I'm approaching the top; the view should be breathtaking. With the spectacular panoramas already flashing through my mind and my head literally and figuratively half in the clouds, I see a group of ibex in the distance. Like true Olympians, they're balanced on a precariously narrow ledge on their way to lower regions. Real daredevils!

I've worn out just about a whole store of boots in many mountainous areas, but this mountain range is just about my favourite. The sharp peaks, the deeply incised gorges and the beautiful forests... In one way or another this place stands out from many others. But it's tough grub here.

In the meantime I've reached the top and am treated to brilliant views. This will be my sleeping place for the night! *A room with a view*, any 5-star hotel room must humbly defer to it. As I doze off, an unadulterated late-night show unfolds in the night sky. Counting sheep is impossible. I think I'm ready for dreamland.











FEATURED

The world's most beautiful mountain range? No doubt everyone has their own opinion in this matter. In any case, the Julian Alps will be near the top of many people's shortlists. Perhaps the most famous mountain range in these Alps, the Dolomites, synonymous with craggy peaks, flowery alpine meadows and delightful nature, is located in Italy. The mountain range has been on the UNESCO World Heritage List since 2009. And deservedly so since the Dolomites offer a surprising mix of Alpine and Mediterranean life. Alpine traditions go hand in hand with Italian lifestyle and cultural diversity, and all that while surrounded by a landscape that simply blows you away. Pack and go!