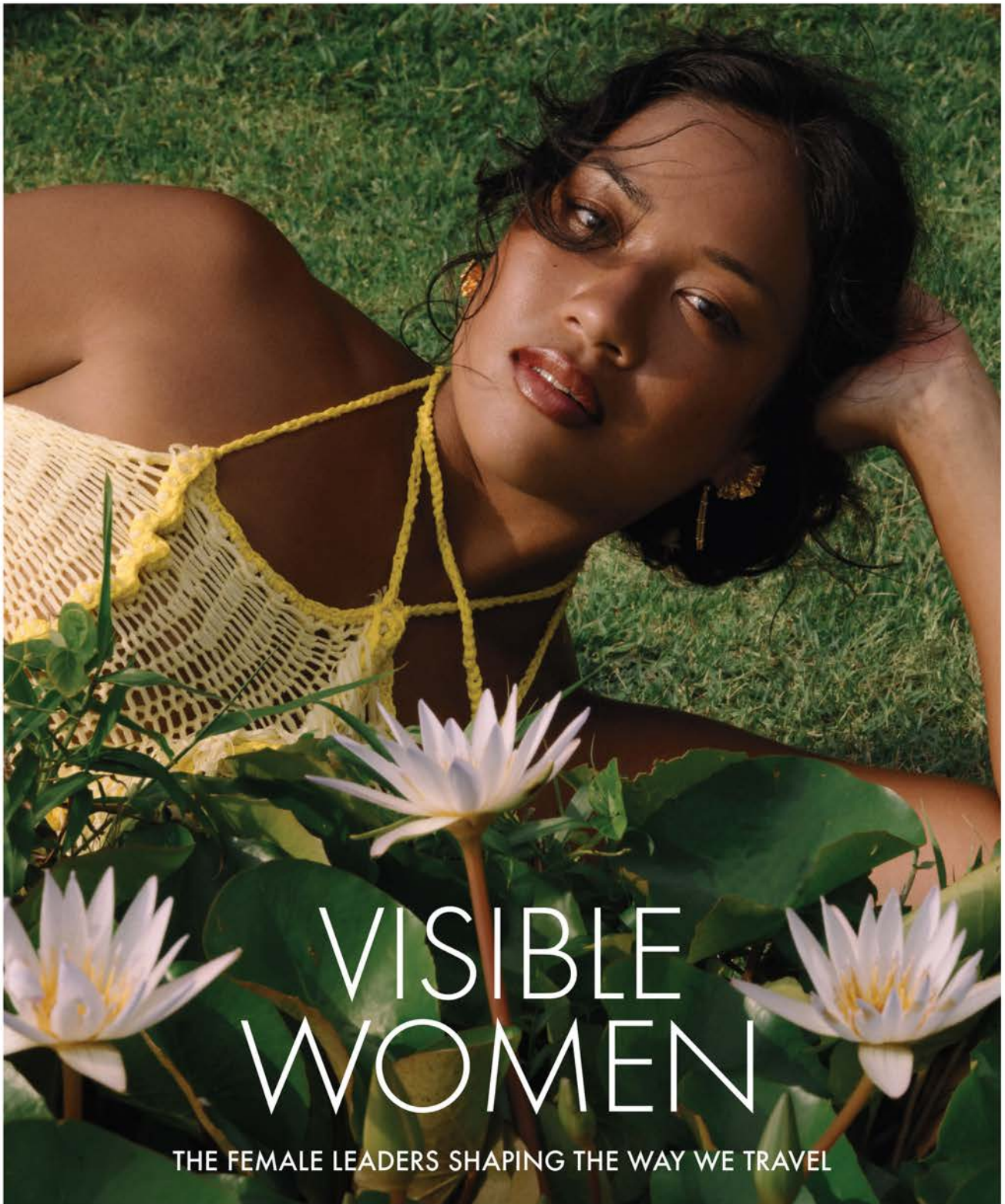


# WORD OF MOUTH

UPDATES ON EVERYTHING GROUND-BREAKING IN TRAVEL. EDITED BY OLIVIA SQUIRE



PHOTOGRAPH: SHARON ANGELIA

## VISIBLE WOMEN

THE FEMALE LEADERS SHAPING THE WAY WE TRAVEL

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Clockwise from this picture: Lake Toba; Rahel Stephanie; barbecued pork at Suksma BBQ + Love; Chef Wayan; his rujak ikan dish; RM Aryani. Previous page: Rahel Stephanie

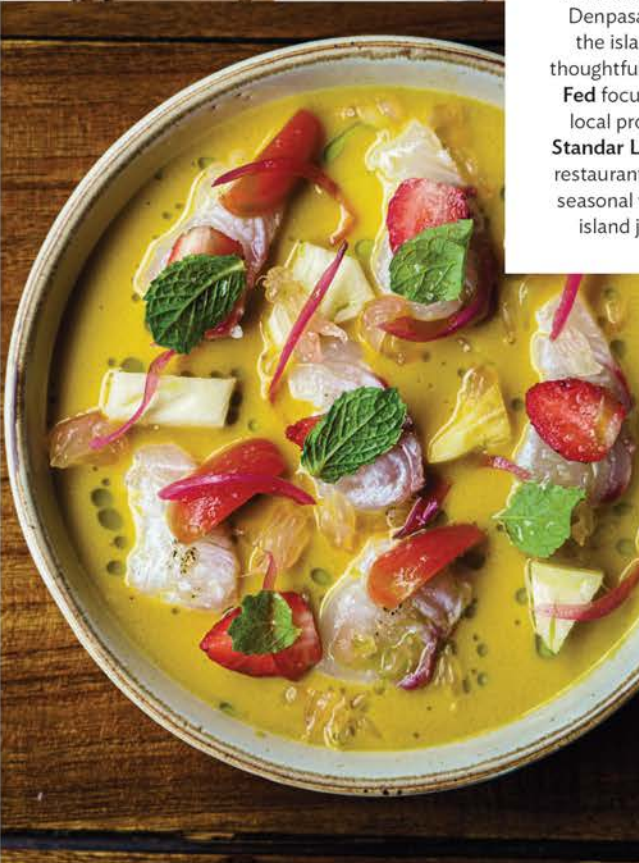
## THE CHEF RAHEL STEPHANIE

London-based chef Stephanie founded her Spoons supper clubs to champion regional Indonesian cuisine in cities across the globe. As well as filming a documentary on Ubud's culinary culture with Wonderful Indonesia, she's published a spicy cooking zine, *Pedas*, whose sweet follow-up, *Cantik Manis*, is out this spring.

**WHERE ARE YOU EXCITED TO TRAVEL TO NEXT?** "I'm feeling a strong pull to explore more of Indonesia beyond the familiar circuits of Bali and Jakarta. It's one of the most underestimated countries in the world in terms of scale and diversity. I'd love to return to Lake Toba in North Sumatra – my ancestral land, which I haven't visited in four years – but also discover places I've never been."

### WHAT ARE YOUR TOP HAUNTS IN BALI?

"**RM Aryani** is one of my favourite spots for Indonesian seafood, and **Suksma BBQ + Love** in Denpasar serves some of the best barbecue on the island. **Home by Chef Wayan** showcases thoughtful, ingredient-led Indonesian cooking, and **Fed** focuses on modern plates using exceptional local produce. One of my most-loved places is **Standar Lokal** in Tabanan: a humble, home-based restaurant known for its smoked pork sausage and seasonal vegetables. I'd drive for hours across the island just to eat there." OS @eatwithsp00ns





## THE FOREST GUARDIAN RAHIMA NJAIDI

Winner of the 2025 Tusk award for conservation in Africa, and executive director of Mjumita, Tanzania's only community-driven forest conservation network, Njaidi leads more than 15,000 members across 504 villages to secure land rights, strengthen forest governance and develop sustainable livelihoods.

**WHAT ARE YOU WORKING ON?** "A value chain project in the Tabora Region, constructing a honey collection and processing centre for local beekeepers; and creating two fish ponds and palm tree nurseries to improve the livelihoods of village game scouts in the Nyerere-Udzungwa Wildlife Corridor."

**WHERE ARE YOU EXCITED TO TRAVEL TO NEXT?** "Udzungwa Mountains National Park – although I'm not a good hiker, I'd love to walk its rainforest trails, hear the calls of endemic birds and primates, and stand at the foot of Sanje Falls.

Or **Forodhani Gardens** in Zanzibar, to wander between the food stalls drinking fresh sugar cane juice while dhow boats drift past the waterfront."

**WHAT ARE YOUR TOP TIPS FOR TANZANIA?**

"Serengeti National Park, which celebrates its 75th anniversary this year. I'm drawn by the open plains that seem to stretch endlessly, and the chance to witness the rhythm of life: the herds on their seasonal migration, predators at dawn and sunset over the savanna. But the Serengeti isn't just about wildlife sightings, it's about absorbing the stillness, drama and timeless beauty of one of the world's greatest ecosystems." OS [mjumita.or.tz](http://mjumita.or.tz)

PHOTOGRAPHS: MEGAN AHRENS/GETTY IMAGES; ANITA ALFRED, MJUMITA COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER; SHAAHINA ALI; SHARON ANGELIA; PARLEY FOR THE OCEANS; OLIVER PILCHER; GENI PRADNYANA/@MANGPRAD; RUMAH MAKAN ARYANI BALI; CHRIS SCHALKX; @SEEFROMTHEOCEANS/HUSSAIN AIMAN; DANIL SHAMKIN/NURPHOTO VIA GETTY IMAGES



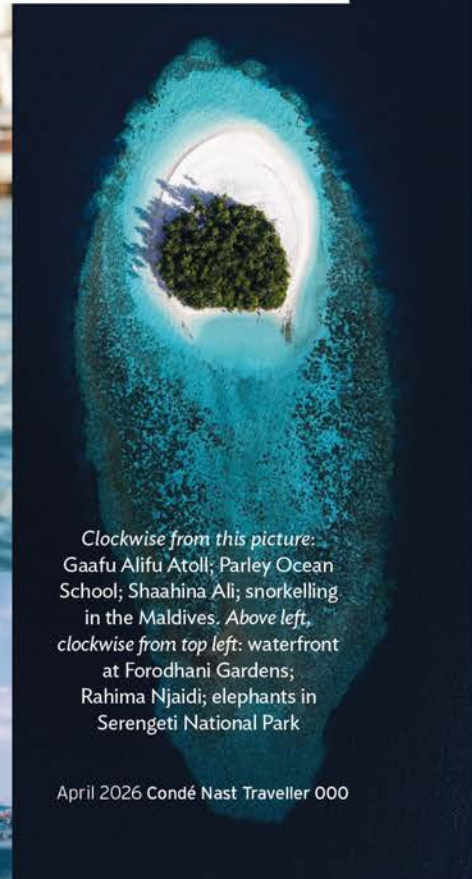
## THE PLASTIC PIONEER SHAAHINA ALI

As executive director of marine conservation NGO Parley Maldives, Ali organises education and recycling programmes across the archipelago. These include coastal clean-ups that have collected more than 3,000 tonnes of plastic from islands up to 250 miles from the capital, Malé – a logistical feat for which she was honoured in 2025 with a Ramon Magsaysay award, often likened to the Nobel Prize of Asia.

**WHAT ARE YOU WORKING ON?** "Collaborating with The Maldives National University to establish our Ocean Lab at Park Hyatt Maldives Hadahaa as a field outpost for graduate students' applied research, and getting to know the guests at the hotel through our Snorkelling With Purpose programme."

**WHERE ARE YOU EXCITED TO TRAVEL TO NEXT?** "I'll be spending significant time with communities in Gaafu Alifu Atoll in the south of the country to support the establishment of effective waste segregation and waste management practices, and strengthen local environmental stewardship."

**WHAT ARE YOUR FAVOURITE THINGS TO DO IN THE MALDIVES?** "Diving and snorkelling in remote areas such as the Huvadhoo Atoll, with its deep lagoon, and Fuvahmulah island, which has a unique geography of amazing marshlands, perfect surfing waves and even pebble beaches." XERXES COOK [parley.tv](http://parley.tv)



*Clockwise from this picture:* Gaafu Alifu Atoll; Parley Ocean School; Shaahina Ali; snorkelling in the Maldives. Above left, clockwise from top left: waterfront at Forodhani Gardens; Rahima Njaidi; elephants in Serengeti National Park

## WORD OF MOUTH

### THE F1 RACER SUSIE WOLFF

As head of F1 Academy, Monaco-based Wolff lives in motion, darting from Shanghai to Las Vegas while steering the all-women racing championship – now the focus of a Netflix series. A former professional driver, she's redefining ambition for women in motorsport.

**TELL US ABOUT YOUR LATEST PROJECT** “My book, *Driven*, charts my story through racing. It's also about my journey as a wife and mother, so I hope it resonates with people beyond motorsport fans.”

**WHERE ARE YOU EXCITED TO TRAVEL TO NEXT?**

“New York, for my book tour. My husband, Toto, and I dig people-watching, and when we're jet-lagged, we get up early to walk the streets. Because I travel so much, it's weekends with my family in the Scottish Highlands that I really look forward to – I'm from Oban in West Scotland. The Austrian mountains are where we go to recharge our batteries; we stay in a place just outside Kitzbühel that I love in both summer and winter.”

**WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE RACE TO TRAVEL FOR?**

“I'll never forget my first time taking the Shinkansen to Kyoto before heading to the Suzuka Circuit, but Montreal is one of my favourites because the city takes on such an energy.”

ARATI MENON Wolff appears on this year's “*Condé Nast Traveller*” *The Women Who Travel Power List*



Kris Tompkins. Above, clockwise from top: Scottish Highlands; Susie Wolff; New York

### THE CONSERVATION LEGEND KRIS TOMPKINS

Former Patagonia CEO Tompkins and her late husband, Douglas, started buying up land in South America in the '90s to protect it from development. Tompkins Conservation has now purchased more than two million acres to create or expand 17 national parks in Chile and Argentina, spread across Patagonian steppe, ancient forests, wetlands, rivers and lakes.

**WHAT ARE YOU WORKING ON?** “The rewilding of threatened or regionally extinct species with Tompkins Conservation legacy organisations, Fundación Rewilding Chile and Fundación Rewilding Argentina. In Chile we're creating a new national park at the southernmost tip of mainland South America, Cape Froward, a wild and windswept jewel with vast peatlands and kelp forests, key to carbon sequestration.”

**WHERE ARE YOU EXCITED TO TRAVEL TO NEXT?**

“A new programme called Jaguar Rivers Initiative unites Fundación Rewilding Argentina with nonprofits in Bolivia, Brazil and Paraguay to bring back landscape connectivity through rivers, helping animals such as jaguars and giant river otters to recover. For wildlife watching, it doesn't get better than that.”

**WHAT ARE YOUR TOP CHILEAN RECOMMENDATIONS?**

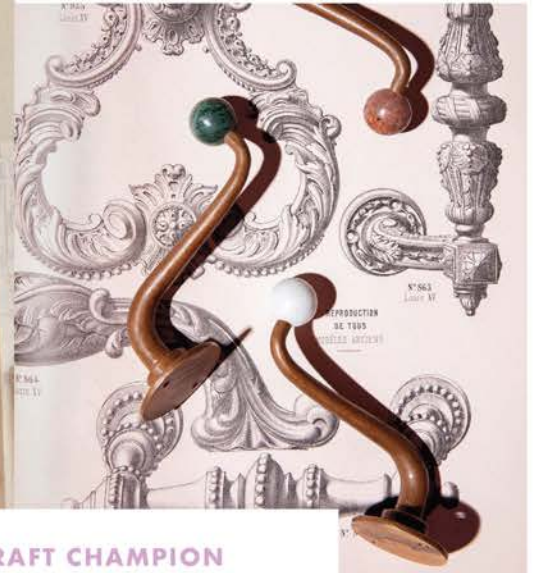
“Regional artisan products, such as the woven goods of the Tejedoras del Bosque in Alerce Andino National Park, sold through the shops of Artesanías de Chile, thanks to Fundación Rewilding Chile's Amigos de los Parques programme.”

KAREN GARDINER [tompkinsconservation.org](http://tompkinsconservation.org)

PHOTOGRAPHS: BRIAN CHORSKI/KINTZING/CONNECTED ARCHIVES; MONTSE GARRIGÀ; CARLOTTA GRAU; KIRSTY MCLACHLAN/KINTZING; TAMARA MERINO; SAMMY ROYAL; SANE SEVEN; NEIGE THEBAULT



Clockwise from this picture: Marta de la Rica; coat hooks designed by The Lab; Biarritz beach; more Lab designs; page in *Biarritz, A Vocabulary of Colour*; Gaztelur



## THE CRAFT CHAMPION MARTA DE LA RICA

Interior designer de la Rica is based in Madrid, but it's her childhood trips to the flea markets of Biarritz with her father that sparked a fascination with artisanal design and craftsmanship. Recent projects include the Cristine Bedfor hotel in Málaga, the Club de Mar beach club in Palma and her book *Biarritz, A Vocabulary of Colour*.

**WHAT ARE YOU WORKING ON?** "The second collection from my design studio, The Lab, which will spotlight wool artisans, and the second edition of my book."

**WHAT ARE YOUR TOP HAUNTS IN BIARRITZ?** "**Lobita Café** is part of my morning ritual; **Chéri Bibi**, right in the centre, remains a favourite for fun dinners; and I love visiting my friend Isabelle Marc's antique shop. Biarritz is surrounded by small towns such as Ahetzte and Arcangues that are rich in brocantes and flea markets; it's always best to arrive early. I have to mention my father's maison, **Gaztelur**, in Arcangues, which is very close to my heart. Beyond its antiques and decorative objects, there are beautiful flowers arranged by Mar López Díaz, and David Gonzalez and Borja Susilla lead the kitchen. I also like going to **Auberge d'Achtal**, where we enjoy long lunches while the kids play outside."  
DIPAL ACHARYA [martadelarica.es](http://martadelarica.es)



## WORD OF MOUTH

### THE CULTURAL GUIDE SYLVIE FRANQUET

Artist Franquet studied Arabic and Islamic history at the University of Ghent before moving to Egypt, where she lived for many years. She now leads trips there, with new ones to Iraq coming in September with Steppes Travel.

**WHAT ARE YOU WORKING ON?** “An exhibition of my artwork, textiles and needlepoints. My art is partly inspired by early civilisations in Mesopotamia and Egypt. I love that in Islamic art words carry a message but are also decorative patterns.”

**WHERE ARE YOU EXCITED TO TRAVEL TO NEXT?** “I’m fascinated by ancient Mesopotamia and am excited to lead trips to Iraq. It contains so many beginnings of civilisation as we know it: the first writing, first city and many Biblical connections. We’ll see ancient sites such as Ur and Uruk, and early Islamic Abbasid architecture, including the **Great Mosque of Samarra** with its spiral minaret.”

**WHAT ARE YOUR TOP HAUNTS IN CAIRO?** “Downtown Cairo is going through a bit of a revival. I’d recommend a traditional koshari – rice, noodles, lentils, fried onions and chickpeas with spicy tomato sauce – at the fabulous **Abou Tarek**. The rooftop restaurant **Mazej Balad** serves Egyptian dishes with an interesting twist. The best galleries are on the island of Zamalek, including **Tintera**, **Ubuntu Art Gallery** and **Yassin Art Gallery**. And I’m eager to see the new **Grand Egyptian Museum**.” OS [steppestravel.com](http://steppestravel.com)

*Clockwise from top left: Sylvie Franquet; artefact in the Grand Egyptian Museum; Cairo architecture; dishes at Mazej Balad; terrace there; building in Cairo*

## SINGLE-MINDED TRAVEL

### ALONE TOGETHER

New membership concept **Club Avandra** offers women “the freedom of solo travel combined with the reassurance, quality and connection of a curated community,” says lifestyle director, Marianne Jones. Its first small, women-only trips led by female experts will take place in Malta, Jordan and Helsinki, with events and content filling the gap between travels. OS

### MAKING NEW MYTHS

Ólöf Ýrr Atladóttir, former head of the Icelandic Tourist Board, will host eight women as part of a ski tour with **Mabey Ski** in Iceland’s Troll Peninsula this March, including 3,600-foot descents finishing with a dip in a geothermal pool. Atladóttir will pass down her memories of long winters on the ice, while Icelandic pilot and ski guide Sara Hlín Sigurðardóttir leads the expedition along high ridges to the Arctic shore.

ANNABEL ILLINGWORTH

### ON HER BIKE

In London the female road-cycling community is thriving, with regular workshops and rides.

Now Luca Kuhn, founder of women’s cycling-wear brand **Luca**, is planning global female bike trips for 2026. As well as solo rides in Costa Rica and Mallorca, she’s taking 10 women to the Dolomites to race the Maratona, one of the most iconic cycling events in the world. MEGAN MURRAY

### SECOND HALF

**Grit & Grace** is one of many companies responding to the increasing number of midlife women who want to travel, often solo, with like-minded females. Trips are as varied as exploring Moroccan culture and a yoga safari in Botswana. At **Gutsy Women Travel**, single-occupancy rooms are the default, be it on a European city break or hiking in Patagonia. **Somewhere Sunny**, **Sisterhood Travels** and **Green Edventures** also cater to older women. MEERA DATTANI

### UNCHARTED TERRITORY

As traditional benchmarks such as marriage and home ownership happen later – if at all – women are seeking alternative rites of passage. **Wildernessence**’s Wild Woman Passage offers women the chance to camp alone near New Mexico’s Chama River. **True Nature**’s Wild Woman retreats are held in Dartmoor National Park. And **Te Hine Ruru**’s rituals for the different seasons of womanhood take place on a 40-acre site in New Zealand’s Bay of Islands. IMOGEN LEPERE