



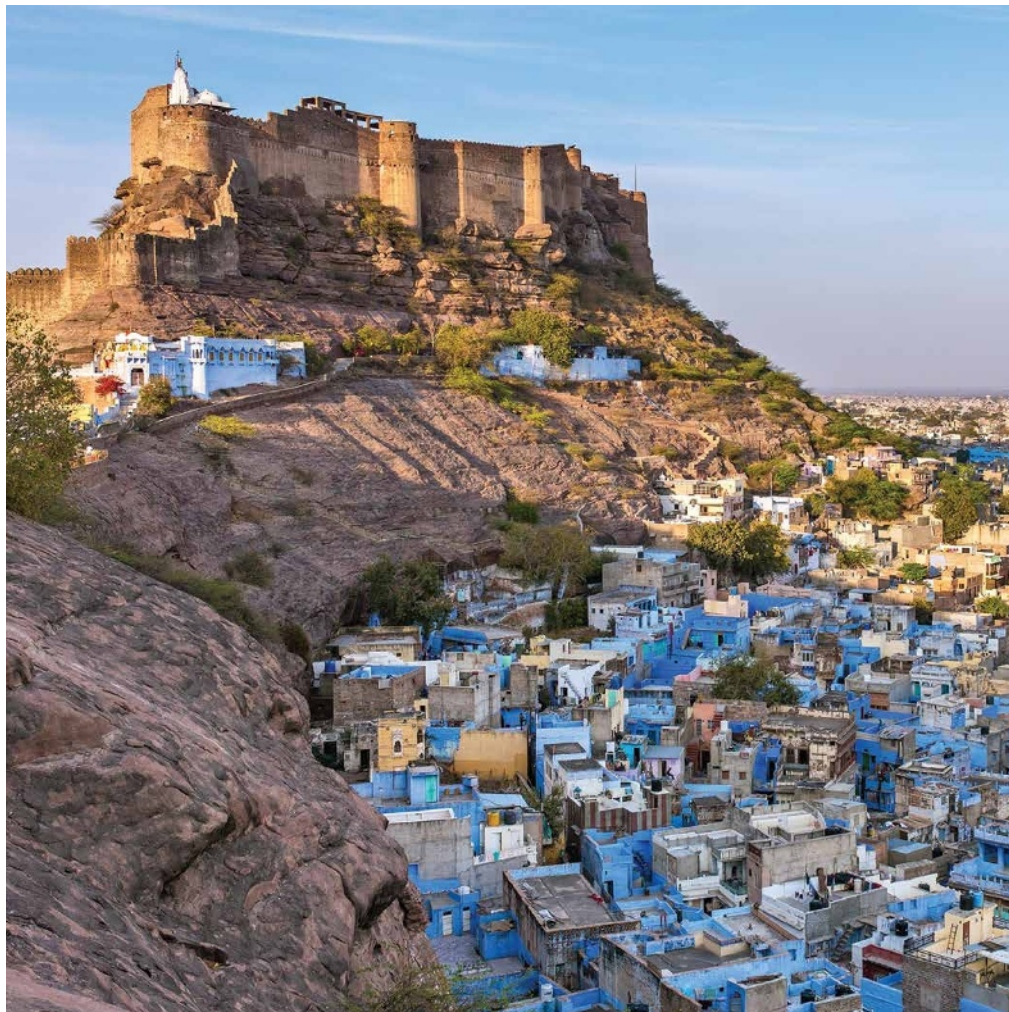
Why I Travel

Savoury breakfasts and a love of all things Italian inspire Tracy Berkowitz.

INTERVIEWED BY SUSAN SKELLY

TRACY BERKOWITZ, FROM INNER-city Melbourne, can't get enough of Italy, Africa, and Greece, seeking both the comforts of a path well worn and the rewards that cultural curiosity elicits. Tracy, 51, a primary school teacher, and her husband Peter, 54, a furniture retailer, travel several times a year, and usually call on their friend Yvonne Verstandig, a Melbourne-based travel agency executive, to buff and polish the itineraries. "We travel for fun, excitement, to absorb other cultures, and to tap into anything that's a bit different," Tracy says. The couple's three children – Emily, 25; Justin, 23; and Amber, 17 – have shared in their adventures over the years.

Yvonne knows how we like to travel: Not full-on biking, hiking, running, and such, but activities that involve the outdoors. Enjoying a private Sicilian picnic of arancini, pasta, olives, salads. Zip-lining over the mountains near Mehrangarh Fort in Jodhpur, Rajasthan's beautiful "Blue City." Jet boating on New



Zealand's North Island. And practising tai chi at sunrise on the deck of a private boat in Vietnam's Ha Long Bay.

There are so many things to love about

Greece: Athens, and the way it buzzes at midnight, the streets full of people of all ages; Mykonos, with incredible beach clubs like Principote, Nammos, and Scorpios; Naxos, with its stunning beaches; Santorini for its sunsets and the view from the patio of our apartment.

We like staying at classic hotels. The Royal Livingstone by Anantara near Victoria Falls in Zambia was a real standout. They welcomed us with luxurious hand massages. I have this beautiful memory of sipping cocktails at sunset in front of the magnificent Zambezi River and seeing wild animals – giraffes, zebras, and monkeys – roaming around the property.

We did three safaris when we visited Botswana one time. One was on the Okavango Delta. I had vowed not to go

out in a *mokoro*, a traditional dugout canoe, because I was scared of hippos. But I relented, and the experience was thrilling (and terrifying at the same time).

The best views are from an open-sided

helicopter. We saw buffalo, elephants, and giraffes. I love the safari experience and seeing animals in their natural habitats. Next on the bucket list are orangutans and gorillas.

I would walk miles to get the best meal

in town, whether that's pizza or a picnic. We love eateries that source everything locally, where the chef cooks what's in season, and where tomatoes taste like real tomatoes.

In Mumbai we were guests at a wed-

ding. The bride wore a stunning red sari and gold jewellery, her body intricately decorated with henna applied at pre-wedding parties. There were hundreds of people and a procession rich with drums and fascinating music.

(THE BERKOWITZES, FRIENDS, AND PASTA) TRACY AND PETER BERKOWITZ (JODHPUR) MAZZUR/GETTY IMAGES, (BOTSWANA) LABRIO/GETTY IMAGES



“I collect maps, museum tickets, great restaurant cards, and itineraries – they all jog your memory and bring a trip front and centre again.”



For us, the evergreen country is Italy.

In Sicily, we met a cheesemaker and a baker, whose families have been providers in the town for generations. We met the cheesemaker’s son, a shepherd tending his flock, and learned that sheep’s milk is used to make ricotta and pecorino. There were all sorts of delicious breads to sample, from focaccia and breadsticks to pizza bases.

We just got back from Sicily, where gelati comes in a brioche bun. With hazelnut, lemon, coffee, and berry flavours offered, it’s the ultimate ice-cream sandwich and a cooling snack that’s perfect in the heat.

Once when we were travelling from New York City to Jamaica, the takeoff was delayed by snow. While we were waiting for the weather to clear, we were entertained by Jamaican women singing traditional folk songs. We missed our planned New Year’s Eve with friends, but the performance more than compensated.



Clockwise from far left: Peter and Tracy Berkowitz enjoy Matera, Italy; Mehrangarh Fort in Jodhpur; Botswana’s Okavango Delta; pasta daydreams in Rome; and Tracy (right) with Yvonne Verstandig (centre) and acclaimed Sicilian pastry chef Corrado Assenza in his Caffé Sicilia.

One of my most memorable breakfasts would have to be Indian dosas, giant paper-thin pancakes made from rice flour and or lentil flour. I prefer masala dosas, filled with curried potatoes. Quite a change from Vegemite on toast!

My travel mementos tend to be simple. I collect maps, museum tickets, great restaurant cards, and itineraries – they all jog your memory and bring a trip front and centre again. I actually use these mementos to make photo books of our trips.



WHERE NEXT?

Maybe Norway for the fjords and the northern lights – Yvonne is organising a group. We might sneak in another trip to Italy first. We’ve yet to get to the Amalfi Coast or Lake Como. **VL**