

*Cathleen's Odyssey*

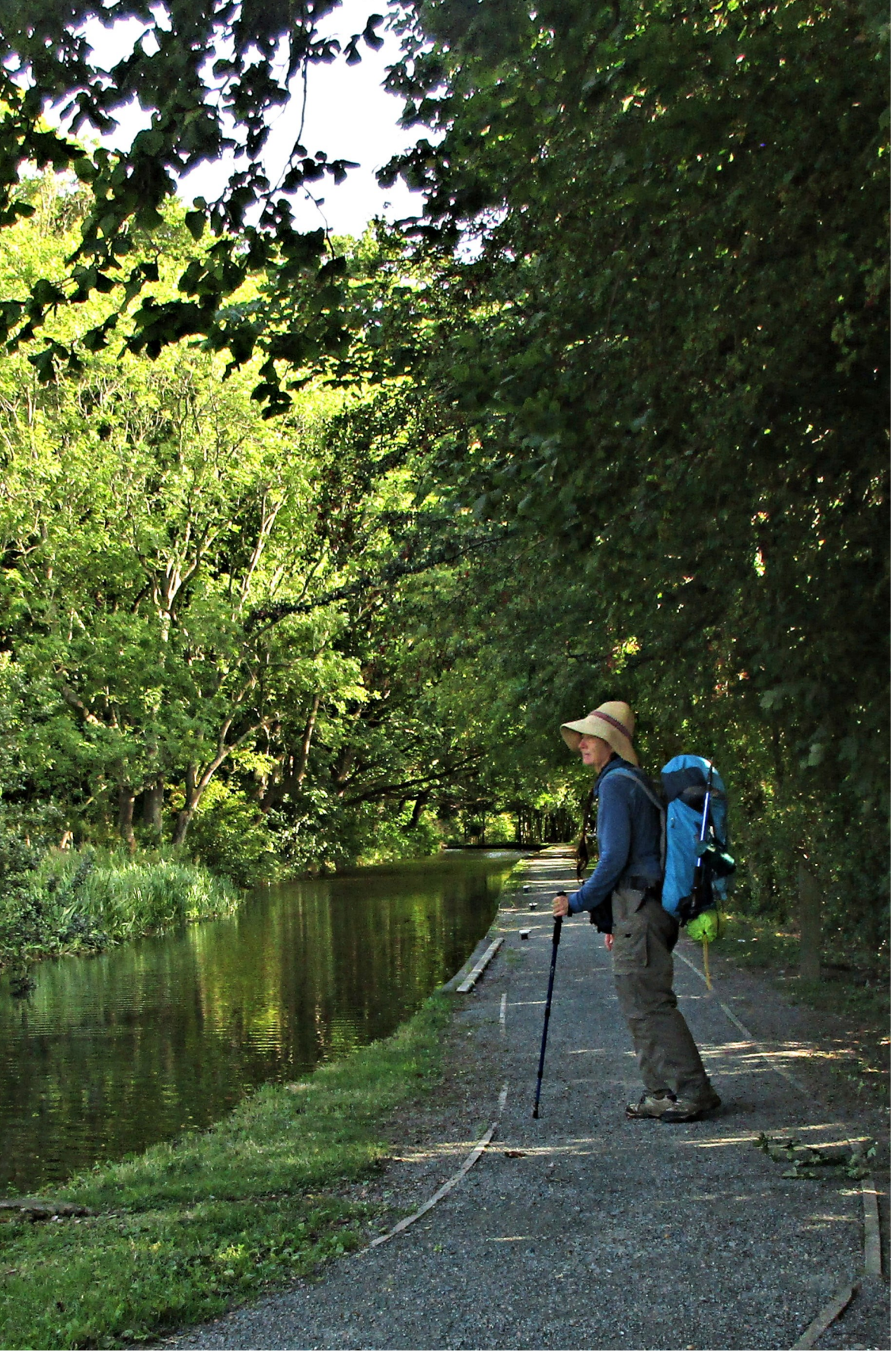
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# An Image Summons a Thousand Words

Cathleen Fulton









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# INTRODUCTION

I am writing these stories from the perspective of month twenty-one of an eight-month trip. Yes, you read that right. When I left the United States in July 2018, I expected to be home for Christmas—February at the latest. But as I passed through country after country, I found I loved the solo traveling lifestyle. People I met would say something like, “Oh, you should go to Bali.” (And I did, eventually.) Some would almost beg me to visit their country. (That is how I ended up in Sri Lanka for *three* months!) One day, I received an email from my travel insurance company, “Five Reasons You Should Go to Kyrgyzstan.” I did not even know where Kyrgyzstan was or that it even *was* a country, but I went anyway. And now, here I am on a tiny island, Gili Air in Indonesia, writing a book to share highlights of this lifestyle with you

I have thousands of photographs and videos. Most are such poor quality or composition that they should be deleted, But as I peruse them, a few from each country stand out and evoke a strong memory...and a story. This is a collection of some favorite photos and their stories.

I am no great photographer. When a photo turns out good, it is mostly by accident. I have also gotten reasonably good at cropping images to improve the composition. Many of my favorite photographs are not particularly good ones. But there is value in the

◀ *The surprising Birmingham Farmer’s Market in England.  
Story on page 29.*

memory. The tattoo photo is one of those. To be 64-years-old and getting my first tattoo in Sri Lanka—now that is a tale. (I surprised the heck out my kids!)

There is not much to say about canal walking...You walk along a well-worn path that is very flat. But oh, just looking at the picture of a swan family sliding by in single-file calms me all over again.

Unbelievable sand “sketches” created by the ocean in the Outer Hebrides turned a boring hike into a memorable one.

Some images, like the last grapes clinging to a stem in a mist-shrouded Portuguese vineyard in November—well, they did not make it into that year’s Port wine, but they still remind me of a lesson well learned. (See the cover image.)

I make no apologies for the inconsistency in the lengths of stories. Most never came close to a thousand words despite the title’s claim. In others, I just have much more to say.

I hope you enjoy these tales. Perhaps they will encourage you to start your own collection of photographic essays.

Catheen Fulton  
Gili Air, Lombok, Indonesia  
March 2019

*This is the first in a planned series of e-books about my two-year journey around the world. If there is something you would like to know about my trip, or how I go about my solo, independent, slow travel lifestyle, visit my website and blog at*

**[CathleensOdyssey.com](http://CathleensOdyssey.com)**

*or drop me a line at*

***[cathy@CathleensHands.com](mailto:cathy@CathleensHands.com)***





# JUST A DAY AT THE OFFICE

Back in 2014, when I made my first foray into solo, independent travel, I had not yet begun harvesting my Social Security benefits—that bit of gold at the end of the rainbow that we always claimed we would never see. I am a book designer. That means that I design the insides—the guts—of books and prepare them for publication. I also take on other graphic design jobs as well as some administrative work. I can do all of these things remotely. Indeed, there have been jobs where I have never even met my client face to face. (Once was an administrative assistant helping move a rather large estate through the probate process. I met the executor once during the two-year process, and never met the lawyer or accountant!) With access to the internet almost universal, working on the road is pretty much a piece of cake—well, as long as some file does not end up in a black hole and I have to go through and chase it down.

## “HOW MUCH IS YOUR TRIP TO PERU COSTING YOU?”

In 2014, I was in Peru doing some design work for my friend Daniel. It was February—summer in Peru, but a long, gray winter in the northern United States where he lived. Daniel has traveled in and has many fond memories of Central America. After one two-hour business conversation via Skype, he was lamenting the cold, wet weather.

“Where do you work? Do you have an office, or what?” he asked.

◀ *My office overlooking Lake Titicaca, in the village of Chucuito, Peru*







# THE OCEAN AS ARTIST

In April 2018, I was in the Outer Hebrides. (Doesn't that sound exotic and little bit out of this world?)

Because it was still low season there, everywhere I hiked, I was alone. The solitude was a sensual delight.

A few days earlier, I had experienced one of the most beautiful hikes of my trip on the southern island of Barra. Today, I would hike all around the isle of Berneray. It was lambing season, so all the fields were full of the entertaining tail-wagging beasts. Despite the lambs, about three kilometers in, the hike was beginning to feel boring. I had not planned to walk down on the beach. I had been to several Hebridian beaches and figured I would not see anything new. But from the highest point on the island, I could tell that this trail wasn't going to be anything to write home about. So, I decided to take a path down to the beach, just for something different. I told myself, that if I did not enjoy it, I would abandon the hike.

I am glad my original plans ended up being boring, for this was to be a captivating journey through an artistic wonderland. I spent about two hours on the beach and never saw a soul. But surely a sand artist had been there? No...the ocean had created this gallery, just for me, just for today.

As the tide recedes, remarkable charcoal-like sketches—and sometimes mixed-media collages—are recreated daily on the lonely beach.

*You can see a slide show of more of these images here:  
[CathleensOdyssey.com/oceanart](http://CathleensOdyssey.com/oceanart)*

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cathy Fulton has been a world nomad since 2014. She is a citizen of the United States, but she does not have a permanent residence. Traveling solo and independently has become a way of life for her. This means that she plans and books all her own travel and does not go on organized tours. Her goal is to travel cheaply so that it is financially sustainable. This means that hostel dorm rooms and small guest houses are usually her temporary homes. Cathy is always looking for ways to save while still experiencing the cultures deeply. She has found the best way to engage with locals is through common interests such as cooking and the fiber arts (knitting and spinning).

You can learn more about Cathy's way of life on her website and blog, [CathleensOdyssey.com](http://CathleensOdyssey.com).



Walk with Cathy Fulton across a beach where the ocean exhibits its artistry, along serene English canals, or through some very foggy vineyards in Portugal's Douro Valley. Learn about *hintelagets* and *fabada*. And discover what it means to find gratitude in disappointment.

From the perspective of her twenty-first month as a solo independent traveler, Cathy shares a few favorite photographs from her odyssey along with the stories behind them—some touching, some funny, some to make you think, and all to inspire you to follow your own dreams—whether you are a traveler or not.

**Cathy Fulton** has been a world nomad since 2014. Her solo, independent and frugal travel style has become a way of life. She hopes to inspire others to take a step outside their comfort boundaries and follow their dreams as well.



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