

NEW YEAR NEW FEAR

Now that we have welcomed in 2016 it is time to consider the annual ritual of resolutions. Instead of the traditional ones of losing weight, exercising more or cutting back on vices, why not resolve to do something more meaningful?

How about facing a personal challenge? Or conquering an inner fear? With a considered approach to travel this year you can do both as well as visiting some inspiring places. So take a deeper look at your own goals and aspirations, then tackle them head on and see yourself and the world in a new light – be it for you or an exec who is in search of a stimulating challenge. **Philippe Brown** suggests how to travel more meaningfully in 2016 and proposes five places with purpose

ALLOW US
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LEARN TO LOVE THE DARK IN LAPLAND

Possibly the most primal of all our fears and one that many children suffer with is fear of the dark. Yet by spending time in Lapland, where the sun doesn't rise for two months a year, you can learn to love the dark.

Although the sun never fully appears, it does bathe the landscapes in an eerily navy-esque hue and it is the perfect time to spot the amazing Northern Lights.

Then sled through forests and snowy landscapes; ride snowmobiles; enjoy a snow safari; rally cross with an ex-Formula 1 champion. For children, we can arrange for them to stumble across and discover Father Christmas amongst the darkness for an insight into life in the Arctic.

In your private bespoke camp, you'll be totally immersed in the darkness, whilst enjoying a level of comfort that brings familiarity and a sense of inner peace. This juxtaposition of fun, comfort and darkness will move the sensation of darkness into something positive place rather something to be feared.

Our fears are usually based on misunderstandings, or simply not understanding something at all. By having the darkness explained, and seeing the positive impact it plays in this part of the world, you'll overcome your fear through learning.

The cost for spending four days in Lapland during the winter solstice is approximately £15,000 per person, including flights.

MAKE PERSONAL CONNECTIONS IN BRAZIL AND VENEZUELA

In today's hectic and impersonal world it's easy to find yourself living a superficial life. Making Facebook friends is easy, but connecting with people in person can be much harder. Head to one of the most remote places on earth to discover the joy of real life interactions and make new friends.

Close to the Brazil-Venezuela border in the Amazon basin, meet the Yanomami, one of the most established local forest-dwelling tribes, and the uncontacted group known as Moxateu.

They enjoy very primitive lives; and are unaffected by modern vices and distractions. You can learn much from their communal existence, belief in equality, democratic processes and ability to live in harmony with their surroundings. They take only what they need from the jungle and have minimal impact on the ecology – all traits the developed world aspires to and admires in a world of dwindling natural resources.

Spending time with these people will give you a new perspective on your own life, appeal to your more primitive side and help put your priorities into perspective. This community is fighting to preserve its culture and existence; making the concerns of our modern world seem insignificant. Here you'll strengthen your connection to the world around you, creating a bond that will endure forever and have a marked impact on your own life.

A week with the Yanomami costs approximately £15,000 per person, including internal flights and donations.

FACE THE UNKNOWN IN CHINA

This type of fear manifests itself as needless worry about all of the bad things that could happen if you decide to make a change in your life.

There are few places better to face the unknown than China, a vast, diverse and populous country with a seemingly terrifying language barrier. However a trip here is the perfect time to try something new and step out of your comfort zone.

Many people misconceive Chinese culture, not understanding its traditions. So why not face your fear and go for a full immersion experience and stay with a Chinese family? They will make you feel comfortable with their warm welcoming smiles, help you adapt to the unknown and explain their customs. After a very short time it will be easy to see that we're not so different after all.

You'll discover that with the proper care, there is no risk of getting hurt. Gain a newfound confidence and realise that the unknown should not be feared but embraced.

Enjoy 10 days' full immersion in China from £6,000 per person, excluding international flights and visas.

ACCEPTING LOSS IN CAMBODIA

Spending time in a country that has lost so much can teach you how to remain positive and hopeful.

Cambodia has been scarred by civil wars and the infamous Khmer Rouge atrocities that killed more than 1.7 million Cambodians. Along with the deaths, this genocide also brought much suffering, with intellectuals and professionals being targeted and imprisoned.

Knowing and accepting this history is vital when visiting the country. Spend a little time here and you'll realise how the population has fought to keep going through adversity and prosper.



YOU CAN LEARN THE IMPORTANCE OF WELCOMING CHANGE YOURSELF.

Almost everyone has lost someone close to them – if not their entire family. Yet when Cambodians speak of the past they refuse to let it define them and preserve a positive outlook for the future.

You can learn to face loss, accept it and discover ways to see the positives in even the greatest losses.

A seven-day journey to Cambodia starts at £5,000 per person, excluding international flights and visas.

WELCOME CHANGE IN ROMANIA

Today's world is ever-changing, however many people still fear change itself. They resist it, causing them to become stagnant and miss some of life's greatest opportunities. Take a trip to Romania and learn how important change is and why it should be desired, not dreaded.

Despite the fall of communism almost 30 years ago, Romania still displays the scars from the Soviet era and beyond, where you can get a sense how life was in medieval times.

Therefore it is the perfect location to see the power of change as a force for good. Whether it's in the cool, underground bars and restaurants opening in Bucharest; the long needed development of farming practices; or the protection of Romania's beautiful forests from illegal deforestation.

Although it has a reputation in some corners for being 'stuck in the past', it is actually a great example of people adapting the old ways to fit modern times, allowing themselves to thrive – exactly what someone who is afraid of change needs.

With bears, wolves, a burgeoning wine scene and counts who will open up their estates to those interested, there is much to do in this stunning country. And as its people become more aware and learn how to harness change for their benefit, so you can learn the importance of welcoming change yourself.

Spend 10 days in Romania from £8,000 per person, including flights and donations.

LETTING GO IN CUBA

As successful PAs you're used to controlling the elements around you and may be scared of letting go to enjoy each day as it comes. With its relaxed Caribbean vibe and easy going way of life there's nowhere better than Cuba for simply relinquishing control.

This country is in such a state of flux that everything is evolving so fast and even the best laid plans sometimes count for nothing – but that is part of its charm. Allow us to show you the wonders of going with the flow and throwing your inhibitions out of the window.

Explore the streets of Old Havana, a wonderful mix of colonial beauty, swashbuckling history and revolutionary spirit, so be prepared to be seduced by its charismatic allure. From world-class musicians, prominent politicians and movie producers to photographers and rural farmers, we'll introduce you to the inspirational characters who have defined Cuba's past, as well as those shaping its future.

Will everything work exactly to plan? Almost certainly not. But by embracing Cuba's unique way of life and culture you'll unearth wonderful surprises around every corner – proving that sometimes it pays to let go. If you stick rigidly to the plan you might miss out on some fantastic spontaneous delights.

The cost of a 10-day Cuban immersion is from £5,000 per person, excluding international flights and visas.

Brown+Hudson can tailor packages to suit your requirements

