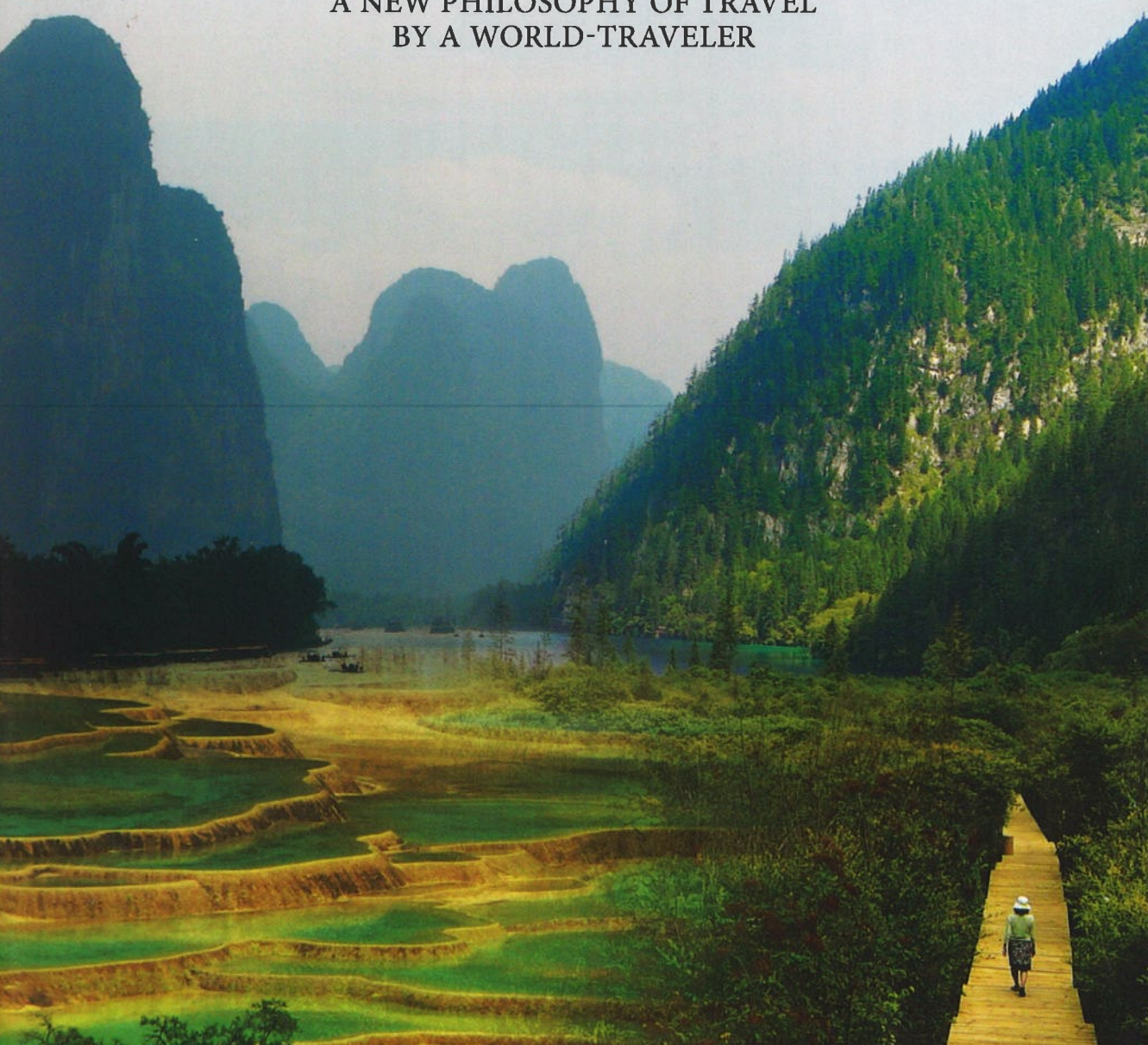


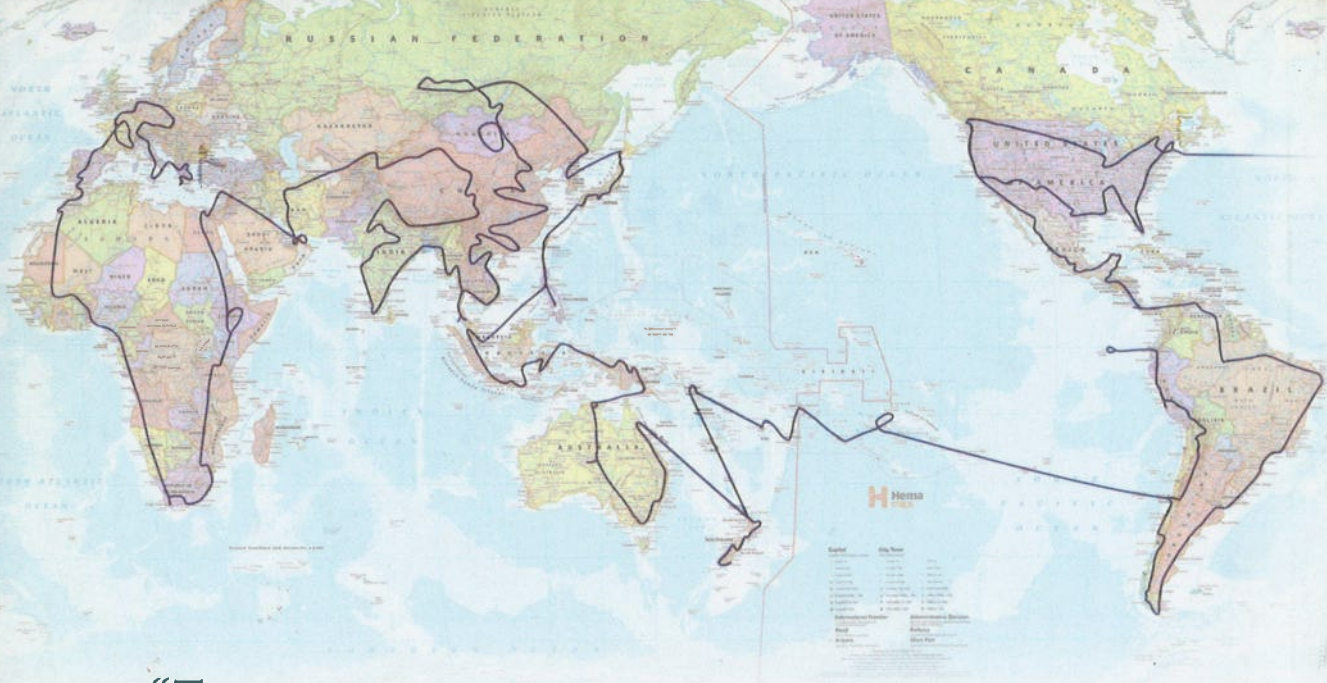
NICOS HADJICOSTIS

# DESTINATION EARTH

A NEW PHILOSOPHY OF TRAVEL  
BY A WORLD-TRAVELER







*“Travel is the departure from one’s little pond. It is the bold renouncement of the petty comforts that hold us prisoner. It is a movement away from the known towards the unknown and unimaginable. Travel is expansion, widening, opening-up...”*

After years as a media executive, Nicos Hadjicostis abandoned the business world and set his sights on a larger and more fulfilling goal: to explore our planet as if it were one huge country, *a single destination*. Starting from New York and traveling west for six-and-a-half-years, the author visited six continents and seventy countries delving deep into their peoples, cultures and natural wonders.

*Destination Earth* is the result of this life-transforming journey. While many travelers today concern themselves with destinations solely for amusement, relaxation, and entertainment, the author proposes a more meaningful, rewarding, and fulfilling way of viewing Travel and its relation to Life. Enriched with travel incidents and some of the author’s best travel photos, *Destination Earth* sheds light on both Travel and Life. Ideas and experiences are interwoven into a newly created Philosophy of Travel that is practical and easy to read.

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**NICOS HADJICOSTIS** studied physics at King’s College, London. For over a decade he managed the largest media group in his birthplace, Cyprus. In 2003, he left his country in order to explore the world and himself. He is now a writer and a world-traveler. This is his first book.



Nicos Hadjicostis

# DESTINATION EARTH

*A New Philosophy of Travel*  
*by a World-Traveler*

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Chapter title photos:

Chapter I: *Sunset at Fox Glacier. South Island, New Zealand.*

Chapter II: *The eerie Guilin karsts enveloping the Li River. Guangxi, China.*

Chapter III: *An Indian drying his sarongs. Pushkar, India.*

Chapter IV: *The traveler-hermit. Jiuzhaigou National Park, Sichuan, China.*

Chapter V: *Turning bike tricks at sunset. Bora Bora, French Polynesia.*

Front Cover: *A photo composition of three Chinese landscapes:*

*Huanglong calcite pools, Jiuzhaigou National Park, Guilin carsts.*

## No Thanks, But Thanks

*On a superficial level, the giving of thanks is merely a social convention. Its forms vary greatly. In some societies the absence of all verbal expressions of thanks indicates not a lack of gratitude, but rather a deeper awareness of mutual belonging than our society has. To the people in question, an expression like "thank you" would seem as inappropriate as tipping family members would seem to us.*

—David Steindl-Rast

### Copper Canyon, Mexico

I BOUGHT ICE CREAM for a group of Tarahumara Indian women and their children who were weaving traditional baskets in front of the hotel. None of them thanked me. They didn't nod, didn't smile acknowledgingly. Some did not even raise their head to see the Greek bearing gifts! One of them glanced at the ice cream cup and with her left hand moved it closer without interrupting her work, as if to say "got it." Only after a few minutes did she stop her work in order to eat it. I couldn't figure out why she didn't eat it immediately—after all, ice cream melts quickly. Probably, she waited a bit longer in order to savor the moment. Still, her overall reaction was that of a woman showing that her daily job of weaving was more important than the surprise gift. When she finally started eating it, she became just as engaged with the new pleasure as she was previously with her work. Even though every single Western-type of thankfulness was absent, I somehow *felt* the women's gratitude through the absolute naturalness by which they received the gift as something ordinary, and through the way they were enjoying it in a most genuine manner.

Later on, I would encounter this same attitude and behavior in other parts of the world. In non-Christianized Papua, the locals would simply grab the gift abruptly from my hands and immediately share it (if it was food) or simply engage with it. In India, beggars would never nod or smile or say anything. In Ethiopia and Cameroon, kids would simply smile upon receiving something, and run to share their joy with others. In all these places, as I finally came to understand, thankfulness is implied in the acceptance of the gift or the helping gesture. Explicitly expressing one's thanks in words is unnecessary or meaningless for them.

Accepting a gift without verbal thanks is just one of the many social conventions a world-traveler comes to recognize. Many of the normal rules of propriety are culturally specific, yet we assume that our rules are universal since they have been ingrained in our psyche from a young age. We consider it normal to say a hundred *pleases* every day, even between family members, as if this word constitutes some type of magic spell permitting any transaction. We would never dare eat a bowl of rice with our bare hands, yet this is what people do in most Muslim countries as well as in India, the South Pacific, and many other places. We would never dare slurp our soup in front of others or spit in a crowded street, yet this is what the Chinese do and for good reasons—slurping allows more flavors to enter the nose, thus making the soup tastier, while spitting in a very polluted metropolis covered in smog is the minimum one can do to remain healthy. And of course, the Chinese do not say "sorry" when they touch you or push you lightly in order to overtake you in a crowded street or the train—can you imagine a billion Chinese saying a billion *sorrys* with every passing touch?!

It is actually through observation, understanding, and the final (partial or whole) adop-