

Welcome

The 2019/20 Guildford Travel Club season has got off to a great start with an exceptional talk from John Pilkington and the story of an amazing challenge from Olie Hunter Smart. Thank you for completing the feedback survey, it is very useful to have your views.

Membership renewals have been very strong with our membership is now full. We are delighted to welcome back many friends as well as welcome a number of new members to the club. Thanks to our members who have written 'Postcards' about their travels for the newsletter and to Rosie for writing a book review on Leon McCarron's latest book.

Next month we have our annual social evening on 3rd December which this year, we have combined with our members slide evening. See below for more details of the exciting programme for the evening.



Social & Members Evening - 3rd Dec

Our annual **Social and Members evening** will be similar to previous years, but this year will be followed by a number of short talks from our members.

During the first half there will be a travel quiz, courtesy of Harry and Jean, to be completed with fellow members, whilst enjoying the finger buffet. Wine and soft drinks will be provided courtesy of the club.

In the second half, we are grateful to our members for offering to share some of their recent travel experiences: This year there will be talks by:

- **Chris Beyon - St Lucia** - Chris will show that there's more to this Caribbean Island than beaches and upmarket marinas.
- **Sharon Collins - Senegal: St Louis and surrounds** - Sharon goes to northern Senegal to the island town of St Louis, with its faded colonial grandeur, the lively fishing community of Guet N'Dar and the wonders of nearby Djoudj National Park.
- **Dave Williamson - Cycling in the Karst Mountains of South-West China** - Dave will talk about a cycle trip in the limestone mountain region of SW China visiting rural communities and seeing cormorant fishermen in action.

Spaces are limited for this evening to 100 members, as we will all be seated around tables. We ask for everyone attending to bring a plate of finger food, either savoury or sweet, ready to be shared on the buffet.

Please do sign up to attend at the next meeting or contact Barbara through info@guildfordtravelclub.org.uk to secure your space.

Photos: Above Senegal, Below SW China & St Lucia © Sharon, Dave, Chris



Nominated Charity

This year the committee have decided to support the charity "Seeds for Development" which works with very poor farming communities in northern Uganda. They are a small charity locally based in Shalford.

Seeds of Development: We listen to, and learn from, the farmers ensuring that we support them with what they need and not what we think they should have.

Through education, empowerment and farming, we help people rebuild their lives, and develop resilient, self-sustainable communities, after a 20 year war that raged between the rebel Lord's Resistance Army and Ugandan Government Forces. Up to two million people spent many years living in camps for internally displaced people. We support six communities in northern Uganda helping them move towards a happier and more hopeful life where they eat regular meals, send their children to school, build new and safer homes and set up businesses.

We look forward to supporting this worthy charity this season. For more information on the charity see their [website](#).

'Postcards' from our members

We would like to encourage members to share their travel experiences through 'postcards' in the newsletter. Thank you to those who have shared so far and we look forward to receiving more in coming weeks. Please email newsletter@guildfordtravelclub.org.uk.



Sofia to Southern Greece by Train - Rosie Spalding

'All train journeys in Bulgaria seem to take seven hours' my friend commented. How right she was. If you want to travel slowly and see some stunning scenery at a gentle pace take the train from Sofia and head east to Kazanlak. Late May, early June is the time of the rose harvest in this area and we enjoyed the tail end of the celebrations with Bulgarian folk music and dancing a plenty. Did you know 70% of the world's rose oil is produced in Bulgaria and some of it is used in the space industry as it has low freezing point? Plovdiv, with its Revivalist houses and impressive Roman amphitheatre, came next and then the spectacular train journey from Septemvri to Bansko along the single gauge track laid by the Germans. After some walking in the Pirin Mountains it was over the border to trendy Thessaloniki and then the amazing monasteries atop the spectacular outcrops at Meteora. A trip to the beautiful Pelion Peninsula followed and then it was a final journey on an intercity express between Volos and Athens. Indeed, it was an express. It only took four hours.



Bolivia - Sharon Collins

Bolivia may be one of the poorest countries in South America, but it is certainly rich in landscapes, wildlife and culture.

My recent two week trip took me from the lowlands to the Altiplano. I started in Santa Cruz - most international flights now fly here rather than into La Paz - but barely had time to explore this vibrant city. Instead I headed straight for Amboro National Park where I spent two days walking, swimming under waterfalls and soaking up birdsong.

Sucre - the de facto capital city of Bolivia - was full of charm, historical sights and culinary surprises. You have to try a 'saltena' (a local delicacy a bit like a pasty) at El Patio cafe. In fact, Sucre turned out to be a foodies' delight. 'Native' restaurant's tasting menu was a real treat. Each course is inspired from cuisine from across Bolivia and matched with a drink.

It used to be de rigueur to take a stick of dynamite and a bottle of 98% alcohol with you on a visit to the mines at Cerro Rico - the mountain which dominates the town of Potosi. Not any more, although you can still visit the miners and listen to their jocular banter (the work is tough and dangerous, you have to have a good sense of humour our ex-miner guide, Wilson, told us).

My favourite part of the trip was the salt flats and the incredible landscapes and colourful lakes close to the border with Chile. It's definitely worth taking the 3-day 4WD tours out of Uyuni to witness this (and more flamingos than you can shake a stick at).

In the hustle and bustle of La Paz I found it relaxing to ride the cable car (Mi Teleferico), which gives you unrivalled views across the city and into peoples' backyards!

And finally, a couple of days on Sun Island in Lake Titicaca. There is no motorised transport here so everything is carried by llama or mule. It's wonderfully relaxing. It's also believed to be the origin of the Inca civilisation.

Bolivia really is a land of contrasts, with something for everyone. Just take a sense of adventure with you!

Next Talks



The back roads of Iberia

November 5th

Duncan Gough

Duncan has travelled over 50,000 miles on back roads around Iberia and will encourage visitors to get off the beaten track to experience unique insights. For full description see the [GTC website](#).



On the Road in N America

November 19th

Chris Forse

A celebration in words, pictures and music of the great American Road trip, including the deserts and mountains of the American and Canadian west and the Appalachians. For full description see the [GTC website](#).



On Foot in the Middle East

December 17th

Leon McCarron

Leon travelled on foot from Jerusalem to Mount Sinai, following ancient trading routes and modern-day hiking paths, to search for another side to a misunderstood region. For full description see the [GTC website](#).



Guildford Travel Club

travel for travel's sake



2019 – 2020 Season

Ethiopia - Iberia - Mongolia - Japan -
The Amazon - Georgia - UK...
just some of the places visited

Mongolia photo © Janette Asche

Followed by:

21st January - **Modern Mongolia** - Jess Brooks

4th February - **A Journey Around Our Archipelago** - Patrick Barkham

18th February - **Saudi Arabian Journeys** - John Weatherburn

See the [GTC Website](#) for the full programme

Book Review

'The Land Beyond' by Leon McCarron

Reviewed by Rosie Spalding

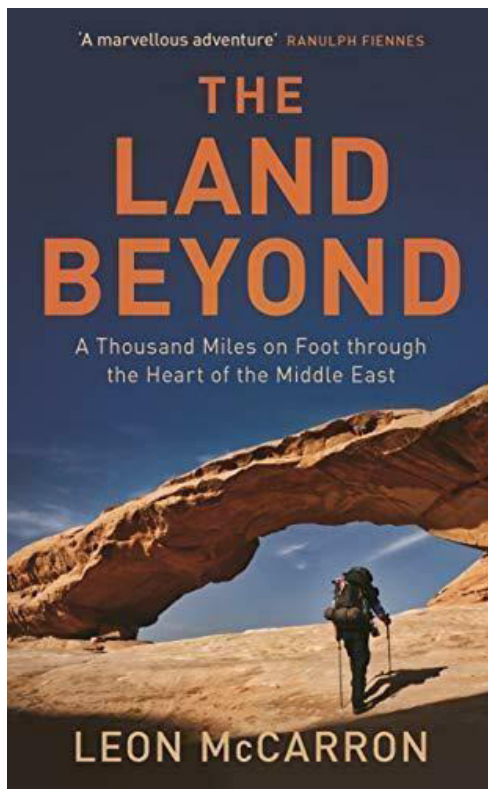
On Dec 17th our new president Leon McCarron is giving a talk on his trip to the Middle East. He has written a book about his trip which has been shortlisted for the 2018 Edward Stanford Travel Writing Awards. I have recently enjoyed reading this warm-hearted account of his journey.

In December 2016 Leon McCarron set out from Jerusalem to walk 1000 miles to Mount Sinai and it took him nearly six months to complete the trek. He headed north through the West Bank to Umm Qais and then south via Amman, Petra, Aqaba and finally to the summit of Mount Sinai. In his book of just 260 pages he manages to cover a wealth of subjects from history to wildlife, religion to politics and he describes the landscapes he passes through vividly. Leon's Northern Irish background makes him well-placed to understand this complex area and see contrasting sides of an argument, particularly a religious one. He shows a real understanding and empathy for the people he meets whatever their background.

Leon's enthusiasm for walking as a means of travel is infectious. He finds it a very effective way of meeting and engaging with the locals and he certainly meets an eclectic mix of people along the way including a Samaritan priest who believes that Eve caused all the present problems in the world, the Bedouin who has three wives but thinks two is better and Abdullah who is the only hiking guide he's ever met with a distaste for walking. His various travelling companions include Dave Cornthwaite, who many of you will remember, Mohammed who loves the desert landscape and is an expert in tracking down water in the wadis, Tony and Di Taylor who were instrumental in carving out the hiking trails in Jordan and Ghasson who advises on the Masar Ibrahim Trail. 'To spend an hour with Ghasson was at once a crash course in Palestinian studies and an experience akin to sitting in a tumble drier on full spin'. He doesn't forget historical characters who have passed this way and comments from such illustrious travellers as Gertrude Bell and Mark Twain are included too.

Leon has included a series of informative notes which develop themes covered in the text. His aunt has drawn a beautiful map of his journey and he offers practical advice for anyone wishing to walk any of the trails. For those preferring to do their treks from the comfort of their living room Leon is the perfect companion to accompany them along the dusty road.

If you have read any good travel books



lately perhaps you would like to write a short review for the next newsletter. It doesn't have to be associated with any of the season's talks. Please send your reviews to newsletter@guildfordtravelclub.org.

Notices

Travel Shows: The annual travel shows this year are:

- **Adventure Travel Show:** Sat 18th and Sunday 19th January at Olympia. <https://www.adventureshow.com/>
- **Destinations Show:** Thurs 30th Jan to Sun 2nd Feb at Olympia. <https://www.destinationsshow.com/london>

Oli's film on India: If you attended Oli lecture and are interested in seeing the film and didn't buy the video, they are able to purchase it online [here](#).

Volunteers: Thank you to those who have signed up to help with chairs, refreshments and the welcome desk, your support is much appreciated. We do however need more volunteers for future evenings particularly to help put out the chairs so please sign up on the lists in the hall or contact Tempe through volunteers@guildfordtravelclub.org.uk.

Contacts

Membership: Barbara Rogers

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Chair: Tom Garside

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You are receiving this email because you were a member of Guildford Travel Club in 2018/19

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