

*Inspiring Escorted Journeys*



18th June 2017

Hi Everyone,

I've recently been looking into new travel destinations for our Byroads travellers and will head off towards the end of year to research some new itineraries in Oman, Georgia and Armenia.

In this newsletter we feature the historic Hotel Casantica in the beautiful southern Mexico town of Oaxaca and on the southwest coast of Sri Lanka we highlight the strange practice of stilt fishing. We also take a look at the advantages of Australians signing up to the Australian Government's 'smartraveller.gov.au' service when travelling overseas.

Finally we have a special feature article written for Byroads by Claire Beyer who joined a tour group in April travelling through Iran. Claire works for the travel publisher Lonely Planet and apart from her great love of travel she is also a keen photographer and has had a number of exhibitions featuring her travel photography. Enjoy Claire's article and let her enthusiasm for Iran whet your appetite to take the plunge and visit this fascinating and friendliest of destinations.

If you have any questions on any of my Byroads tours please feel free to write to me at [admin@byroads.com.au](mailto:admin@byroads.com.au).

Cheers - Steve

### **Sri Lanka's Stilt Fishermen**

Along sections of the south west coast of Sri Lanka, out beyond the breakers, fishermen can be seen perched on a single stilt and crossbar made from almond wood, casting their fishing poles. Stilt fishing is generally carried out during the movement of the tide at sunrise, noon and sunset with the successful catch including such fish as the spotted herring and small mackerel.

The practice of stilt fishing started in Sri Lanka during the food shortages of World War II. With the beaches crowded by fishermen some entrepreneurial Sri Lankans decided to move off the shore and erected stilts into the fish rich coral reefs. Perched up to 2 metres above the water, away from the more crowded shore, the art of stilt fishing soon flourished.

Unfortunately the 2004 Tsunami devastated the Sri Lankan fishing industry and these days it is not uncommon for the fishermen to have to obtain supplementary work in order to make a living. It is possible that the art of pole fishing could disappear completely in the future. In fact there are some fishermen who find it more lucrative to pose for photographs taken by fascinated visitors to the region. Serious stilt fishing normally halts during the monsoon season when fish stocks are lower and is most commonly seen between the towns of Unawatuna and Weligama.

The Byroads '[Secrets of Sri Lanka](#)' tour visit the coastal area around Galle where the art of stilt fishing can still be seen. The 13 day tour commences in Colombo on the 15th of March 2018.



### **Byroads Featured Accommodation - Hotel Casantica - Oaxaca, Mexico**

Our feature hotel this newsletter is the historic Hotel Casantica in the beautiful southern Mexican city of Oaxaca. Our Byroads 15 days '[Mexico & the Yucatan](#)' tour spends two nights here. It starts in Mexico City on the 2nd February 2018.

Housed in an historical 16th century building located in the centre of Oaxaca the hotel was originally a convent of the Franciscan nuns of the Virgin Mary. This atmospheric hotel evokes the colonial charm of a bygone era. Situated around two small courtyards the hotel has recently

undergone a renovation with the addition of a swimming pool, perfect for relaxing in after a day out exploring. Being a former convent the bed rooms are not large however they are charming, clean and comfortable. The hotel also has an excellent restaurant located in what was once the convent's chapel.

Perhaps the most impressive feature of the hotel is its location. Casantica sits in the very heart of the historical centre and is within walking distance to everything Oaxaca has to offer including the main museums, galleries, theatres, cafes and the best restaurants in town.





### Incredible Iran - by Claire Beyer

When I told people I was about to head to Iran the reactions were varied. From absolute envy and excitement to, and mainly, looks of alarm and cries of, are you crazy?! Luckily I had known a couple of people who had travelled there recently and had nothing but wonderful things to say about the destination so I was not deterred. I'm so glad I wasn't, as it turned out to be one of the most interesting and truly memorable travels experiences I've had to date. Iran is, in a word, magical.

I travelled with a couple of girlfriends as part of a small group in April of this year. I had been told that the Iranian people were some of the friendliest you could encounter but nothing prepared me for just how welcoming and friendly they were. Walking down the busy streets of Tehran on our first day we were greeted with, welcome to Iran! I hope you enjoy our country! It became the norm for people to greet us and stop to chat. Curious about where we were from, what we thought of their country and hopeful that we would enjoy our stay. Iranians are nothing but proud of their Persian heritage and rightly so.

Iran has 21 listed UNESCO World Heritage sites but many more on the considered list. Standing amongst the magnificent ruins of Persepolis was a definite highlight and a reminder of just how sophisticated and artistically advanced the ancient Persians were. A visit to any of the bazars showcases perfectly how this artistry has continued as well with beautiful handwoven rugs, block printed cloth, ceramics and hand painted tiles all on show to tempt you. The antique bazar in Kashan in particular was an incredible assault on the senses and we happily got lost wandering its historic alleys.

From royal cities to pre-Islamic Zoroastrianism fire temples, beautifully designed gardens to silk road caravanserais', the richness of Iran's history is what makes it such an incredible travel experience. That and the warmth of Persian hospitality. I cannot wait to return.

The 15 Days Byroads '**Persia Unveiled**' trips start in Tehran on the [23rd of October 2017](#) and on the [22nd of October 2018](#).





Agha Bozorg Mosque - Kashan



Antique Bazaar - Kashan



Mausoleum of the King of Light - Shiraz

### Be a 'Smartraveller'

Most Australians know the importance of taking out good travel insurance when they head off overseas and in fact it is a requirement for anybody who travels with Byroads. Many travellers

however are not aware of the benefits of registering with the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade's service known as 'smartraveller.gov.au'.

By registering and subscribing to this free service, 'smartravellers' can have their travel plans recorded. Not only can you then receive travel advice updates relevant to the countries you are travelling to but it will also allow DFAT to contact you or your family in the event of an emergency. At Byroads we recommend travellers to avail themselves of this service whether travelling as part of a tour or independently.

[Click here](#) to register for smartraveller.gov.au.

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## Byroads Tour Program 2017 & 2018

### 2017 - MOROCCO, UZBEKISTAN & IRAN

- [16 Days Moroccan Mosaic](#) - Departs Rabat 14 September 2017
- [13 Days Uzbekistan](#) - Departs Tashkent 8 October 2017
- [15 Days Persia Unveiled](#) - Departs Tehran 23 October 2017

### 2018 - MEXICO, CUBA, SRI LANKA, MONGOLIA, MOROCCO, UZBEKISTAN & IRAN

- [15 Days Mexico & the Yucatan](#) - Departs Mexico City 2 February 2018 \*\*\* **New**
- [14 Days Rhythms of Cuba](#) - Departs Havana 18 February 2018 \*\*\* **New**
- [13 Days Secrets of Sri Lanka](#) - Departs Colombo 15 March 2018
- [14 Days Mongolian Discoverer](#) - Departs Ulaanbaatar 4 July 2018 \*\*\* **New**
- [16 Days Moroccan Mosaic](#) - Departs Rabat 13 September 2018
- [13 Days Uzbekistan](#) - Departs Tashkent 7 October 2018
- [15 Days Persia Unveiled](#) - Departs Tehran 22 October

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