

## Where they went/Zambia

DIANE DANIEL

## Travelers to the core, but this was no safari

**WHO:** Linda, 56, and Roger Deschenes, 52, of Shrewsbury, and Linda's daughter, Tracy Grainger, 29, of Zambia

**WHERE:** Zambia

**WHEN:** 12 days in May

**WHY:** To visit Grainger at her post in the Peace Corps and travel together.

**UNIQUE JOURNEY:** "I'm a very experienced world traveler, and this was by far the most remarkable trip I've been on," Linda Deschenes said. "It also was the most difficult trip I ever planned." Standard tour operators didn't want to include travel to her daughter's rural home, Chobela, a village outside the town of Mpika, in the northeast arm of Zambia that borders the Democratic Republic of Congo. "Finally [online] I stumbled onto the Zambian Safari Company in the capital of Lusaka, and they were able to figure out everything, made lodging arrangements and hired a vehicle with Frank, our driver."

**BIG GAME:** The couple flew into Lusaka, where they met Linda's daughter and were picked up by their driver. "All of our lodging was in game reserves or national parks," Deschenes said. "We spent two nights in Kapishya Hot Springs and two nights in Buffalo Camp, both run by Mark Harvey, grandson of the legendary Sir Stewart Gore-Browne," a prominent figure in the history of what was until 1964 Northern Rhodesia. Harvey is "quite famous in the country," she said. "I called him Crocodile Dundee squared."

**CAMPING OUT:** Buffalo Camp, where they stayed in North Luangwa National Park (on the Malawian side of Zambia), "is one of the greatest wildlife sanctuaries in the world," Deschenes said. They stayed in one of four tree houses. "It turned out to be our favorite place because of the ruggedness of it," she said. "It was hard to sleep because you hear the lions, the baboons screeching, the hyenas. One day on a walk for eight miles we had a warthog follow us for several miles. You're always with a guide and an armed guard. You're bushwhacking through very high grass, and over hillsides and we walk single file."

**IN THE DARK:** A night ride from Kapishya Hot Springs was fascinating, she said. "We went out for an afternoon ride because the animals come out at dusk. Then we just stayed out while it got dark. That's when you could see the hyenas, and you could hear the lions. We were with Mark Harvey in the car, with his rifle, going through rivers, over mountainsides, straight up. It was pitch black. We drove through a herd of water buffalo. With our spotlight, we saw a boa constrictor, a spitting cobra. We saw so much activity. You could hear everything. We'd been on safari in Kenya. This is different. This is rough and tough."

**ISLAND LIFE:** Other nature stops included two nights in tent chalets in Chete National Park, a small island park inhabited by elephants, leopards, hippos, crocodiles, monkeys, and impalas. "One afternoon, Tracy and I had been walking and out in canoes and we got back and there were all these elephants headed toward where the tent was to graze. Roger was sitting out there and he had to get up and run into the tent. He had to stay in there for a few hours."

**MOTHER LAND:** Visiting Grainger's village was "the most anticipated day of the trip." Grainger had invited hundreds of people to the party, for which she had purchased a pig, a goat, and some chickens. "Our first stop was at Chief Mukungala's place, where we presented him with gifts. He oversees nine villages of about a thousand people." As they drove into the village, "people were lining the route, dressed in their best outfits." There was singing and dancing and at least 100 testimonials to Grainger, as is the tradition. One of Grainger's several surrogate mothers spoke to Deschenes. "Without speaking the language, I understood exactly what she was saying, one mother to another. She wanted me to know that Trace is much loved and cared for. There was a strong mother-to-mother kinship."



To see more reader vacation snapshots, visit [www.boston.com/where-theywent](http://www.boston.com/where-theywent). Send story suggestions to [ddaniel@globe.com](mailto:ddaniel@globe.com).



## Destinations/Events

JUNE WULFF

## Return to 'Nebraska'; cubism in San Francisco

## New York Guitar Festival

**NEW YORK** Jan. 14-Feb. 8

According to founder David Spelman, "The original idea behind the festival was to put guitars into the hands of New York City school students with no strings attached." You can hear plenty of strings at the 20 concerts showcasing 60 guitarists playing jazz, classical, rock, pop, and traditional at venues around the city. The free 8 p.m. opening concert at the World Financial Center's Winter Garden is "The Nebraska Project," celebrating the 25th anniversary of the classic Bruce Springsteen album. Performers offering new interpretations of Boss tunes include Laura Cantrell, Dan Zanes, Vernon Reid, and Michelle Shocked. The next day, at the 92d Street Y, "The Guitar Marathon: 450 Years of Spanish Guitar" runs from 2 to 10 p.m., with a break at 5. Tickets are \$50, or \$30 for half the day.

[www.newyorkguitarfestival.org](http://www.newyorkguitarfestival.org).

## International Rubik's Cube Competition

**SAN FRANCISCO** Jan. 14

You may be busy with Sudoku puzzles these days, but surely you remember spending hours twisting your Rubik's Cube to line up the colors. Competitors going for the fastest times include 14-year-old Shotaro Makisumi, who

holds the record for the one-handed solve (23.76 seconds) and Tyson Mao, who set the record for the blindfold solve in 1:58.32. Sponsored by the California Institute of Technology, and hosted by Caltech's Rubik's Cube Club, the competition is open to everyone and registration is from 10 to 11 a.m. Admission, which includes the Exploratorium, the museum of science, art, and human perception, is \$13 for adults; \$10 for ages 13-17, college students, seniors, and people with disabilities; \$8 for ages 4-12; free under 4.

*Exploratorium, Palace of Fine Arts, 3601 Lyon St., 415-397-5673*  
[www.exploratorium.edu](http://www.exploratorium.edu).

## St. Patrick's Day Parade

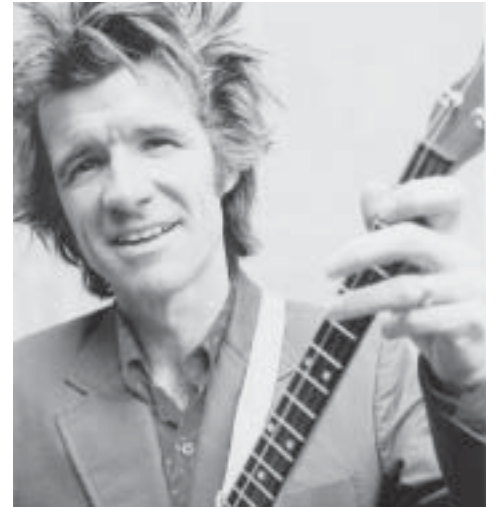
**LETTERKENNY, IRELAND** March 17

With a population of 15,000, Letterkenny is the largest town in County Donegal (and the only place in the northwestern county with traffic lights). The 17th-century market town honors Ireland's patron saint with a 3 p.m. parade through the center of town. Vintage cars, floats, marching bands, cartoon characters, and elephants make up the one-mile parade that follows a 1 p.m. indoor and outdoor carnival of music and roving entertainers. Free.

011-353-7491-26678 (-24866);



Letterkenny, County Donegal, will fete St. Patrick in March; Rubik's Cubers compete next month; Dan Zanes, formerly of the Del Fuegos, offers his take on a Springsteen tune in New York.



[www.irelandnorthwest.ie/individual\\_results.asp?SID=31768](http://www.irelandnorthwest.ie/individual_results.asp?SID=31768).

## Cioccolato

**TURIN, ITALY** March 24-April 3

In February, Turin will be all about gold, silver, and bronze while it hosts its first Winter Olympics. In March, the city is all about chocolate. The northern industrial city of more than 2 million people has been in the chocolate business since 1700 when it introduced the gianduiotto, a confection made with cocoa and hazelnut that was the first chocolate candy to be wrapped in paper. Cioccolato, the Great Festival of Chocolate, is 10 days of tastings, music, a competition for the best chocolate cake, and a "Chocolate Factory" set up in Piazza Castello, among other events. Admission and some tastings are free. Folks who are in town for the Olympics (Feb. 10-26) can purchase a 24- or 48-hour ChocoPass at information areas and enjoy pralines and other yummys (\$13, \$18).

*Piazza Carrignano, Piazza Castello, www.turismotorino.org.*

*Events sometimes are canceled, rescheduled, or sold out; call or check online to confirm.*

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## Finds/Chicago cafe

KELLY PUCCI

## Windy City chocolatier debuts with a splash

Chicago likes its food big and hearty: chewy deep-dish pizzas, juicy beef sandwiches, plump hot dogs with everything. No wonder the newest candy store in town designed chocolate to please the Windy City palate.

At the Chicago Chocolate Company's cafe, shelves are stocked with brick-size chocolate candy bars wrapped in foil and a paper sleeve bearing the likeness of the famous Chicago El tracks. Thick chocolate — white, milk, and dark — cascades down multi-

tiered fountains as customers sip Mexican Hot Chocolate from cobalt blue mugs, or sample meatball-size peanut-butter-and-chocolate malted milk balls, Lincoln Park Mints (chocolate squares with a hint of real mint oil), or RubyRed Cherries (tart Michigan cherries covered in red-finished milk chocolate). Chocolate by the pound (\$10-\$18) and 5- and 10-pound bars (\$35, \$70).

*Chicago Chocolate Cafe, 847 West Randolph St., 312-738-0888. Order through [www.chicagochocolate.com](http://www.chicagochocolate.com) or 888-568-1733.*



JOE PUCCI/FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Bars at the Chicago Chocolate Co. cafe are wrapped in foil and a paper sleeve with the likeness of the famous El tracks.

## Philosopher on the road to the heart of things Buddhist

By Clare Innes  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

"Doctor Who" meets "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance" in this lively and unholy pilgrimage through Cambodia.

Stephen T. Asma was a thirtysomething professor of philosophy and interdisciplinary humanities at Columbia College in Chicago when in 2003 he was invited to teach a graduate seminar to Cambodian students at the Buddhist Institute in Phnom Penh. In "The Gods Drink Whiskey: Stumbling Toward Enlightenment in the Land of the Tattered Buddha," Asma takes us through this bewildering, war-torn country in search of traces of the oldest form of Buddhism, known as Theravada.

Fueled with spirited fascination and wry wit, he takes us to locations that illuminate Buddhism and the culture that nursed it into being. No stranger to the purest forms of reverence, his moving description of meeting the Venerable Maha Ghosananda, the holiest man in Cambodia, will make your fingertips tingle.

Along the way, Asma navigates a choppy emotional sea at the infamous Killing Fields from the Pol Pot regime. At another historical hot spot, he contemplates the street corner where, in 1963, the Buddhist monk Thich Quang Duc sat in seeming placid meditation as he immolated himself, a scene seared into the memory of anyone who has seen the fa-

## The Gods Drink Whiskey: Stumbling Toward Enlightenment in the Land of the Tattered Buddha

By Stephen T. Asma  
*HarperSanFrancisco, 272 pp., \$24.95*

mous newspaper photograph.

We accompany Asma and some friends on an alcohol-soaked visitation to a back-alley massage parlor. Fear not: Our hero (whose pregnant wife awaits him back in Chicago) submits only to a massage, but we get to ride around inside his head as he watches his pals, one by one, disappear behind the curtains in these dark, slightly ominous little places.

Asma uses the experience to probe the labyrinthine rationales of the sex industry, its existence as the best and worst of how women survive in a society where men demonize women for causing their own cravings, and the loopholes of Buddhism where, technically, "activities and life choices are always weighed pragmatically as to whether they contribute to or detract from dukka [suffering], and the answer to that evaluation largely depends on who is asking."

No wonder the gods drink whiskey. Intoxicants are on the blacklist for Buddhists, however, and Asma savors one of the paradoxes that lies at the heart

of Buddhism in Cambodia.

Animistic Brahmanism flavors Buddhism with a belief in troublemaking spirits that inhabit buildings, trees, roads, and so on. Travel anywhere in Cambodia and you will see little spirit houses built in hopes of enticing the spirits to live there, rather than on farms, in businesses or homes, or even Buddhist temples, where it is believed they cause misfortune. Typical offerings include incense, flowers, and precious trinkets. But if you really want to get on the good side of these spirits, you leave them a shot of whiskey.

Asma goes on to survey Buddhist temples containing the purported tooth and eyebrow of the Buddha, whose cremated remains were scattered throughout Asia. Twelve of these 2,500-year-old relics have been gathered for permanent exhibit at the United Nations headquarters in New York. They can be seen on Vesak Day, the holiest in the Buddhist calendar, commemorating the day of the Buddha's enlightenment, which falls on the full moon in May.

Asma, author of "Buddha for Beginners" (1996) and "Stuffed Animals and Pickled Heads: The Culture and Evolu-

tion of Natural History Museums" (2003), sharply details his distaste for what he calls "California Buddhism," a "neutered" form of Zen Buddhism that many Westerners who consider themselves practicing Buddhists embrace without comprehending its most basic underpinnings.

**'Often the stuff that passes for "Eastern" in the West would be unrecognized in the East. Eastern ideas in the West float about like little self-esteem life-preservers.'**

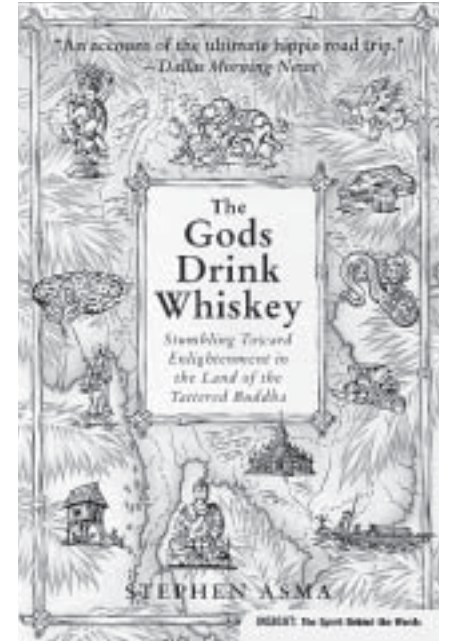
STEPHEN T. ASMA

"Often the stuff that passes for 'Eastern' in the West would be unrecognized in the East," he writes. "Eastern ideas in the West float about like little self-esteem life-preservers."

He explores the Buddhist doctrine of impermanence at a site where monstrous banyan trees spill over the crumbling temples of Ta Phrom "at glacial speed, over the tops of the temple walls, wrapping around pillars, and pouring into the nooks and crannies between the bricks. Teratological rhizomorphic tentacles grow over the ruins. . . . Green creeping vines bubble out of every crevice and embrace the collapsing sandstone architecture."

In the end, Asma finds a "transcendental everydayness" that helps guide modern-day Buddhists and lends him a resonance of his own.

"The atmosphere is so thick with unfamiliarity that I couldn't help but be rapt in infantlike wonder all the time," he



writes of daily life in Cambodia. As he sits in a streetside cafe, "an elephant lumbered by slowly, and a man with no legs or lower torso rolled up on a cart and took my shoes off for shining, and a snack plate of barbecued insects appeared on the table — and then the streets might literally flood in minutes with monsoon rains. I had to practice mindfulness by necessity."

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