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my life in travel

Paolo Rosso

Planhotel Group's vice president talks about how travel led him to the other love of his life

What I love most about the travel industry is the opportunity to fulfil your curiosity, the need to discover, to experiment with new sensations and enrich your life experience. My need to travel started when I was a child, and my father gave me the collected works of Italian author Emilio Salgari. He wrote about Sandokan, the Malaysian pirate, and described the locations with such accuracy that my imagination carried me there.

The strangest thing I've eaten while traveling has to be the hundred-year egg I tried in China. I'm Italian and, at first, all the dishes that were not part of my culture were strange. But when you travel you have to forget about your habits and be curious and experiment with local dishes. I'm now very fond of Thai, Indian, Mexican, Chinese and other foods of the world.

The best thing I've brought home from traveling is my wife (pictured). In July 1979, after graduating, my father sent me to work in Kenya as a tour leader, where my job involved meeting tourists at the airport, organizing their transfers and assisting them with their needs. That's where I met my wife to be.

The best sunset I've ever seen is very difficult to pinpoint. I've seen beautiful sunsets over a Swedish archipelago and in Leningrad on the longest day of the year, but those on the equator are probably the most beautiful. We've a hotel on the shores of Zanzibar, Diamonds Gemma dell'Est, where you can enjoy a spectacular sunset sitting on the jetty while sipping a glass of Champagne and watching the sun dropping into the ocean in front of you.

Our company is very excited about our two fantastic new projects. The View Lugano is one of the most beautiful boutique hotels in Switzerland, with 16 junior suites and two suites. The Diamonds Mequi is located in a beautiful bay south of Pemba, in Mozambique, built on the sand dunes with



The View Lugano Hotel

50 luxury rooms. The location is completely unspoiled (we're the only hotel in the space for 18.5 miles north or south), and it aims to be the most luxurious resort in the country.

The first thing I do when I arrive in a new city is check out the best restaurant around. I often like to go back to a place to refresh my culinary experience. I can tell you that the best crab dish I've ever eaten was ginger crab in a restaurant on the island of Kisite, south of Mombasa.

My favorite traveling partner is my wife. She has the same drive to explore, and never despairs if things don't turn out as expected.

The most romantic place in the world is Polynesia, as I spent my honeymoon there. I believe that a holiday in an overwater bungalow at one of our Maldives resorts, or a stay in a villa at our Diamonds Star of the East, in Zanzibar, is equally romantic.

The closest encounter I've had with wildlife while traveling was on safari in Kenya. I was walking toward my tent on a small path from the restaurant when I rounded a corner and found myself face to face with an elephant. I stopped walking and breathing, and the 10 seconds it took the elephant to move from the path into the cover of the trees felt like a year.

The first holiday I ever remember taking was going to Rimini in Northern Italy with my mother and my brother. I was eight years old, my brother six, and neither of us knew how to swim. We ventured into the water with an inflatable mattress, my brother lying on it as I pushed it into deeper water. He was trying to scare my mother by leaning over into the water, until a wave made him lose his balance and he fell into the sea and disappeared underwater. I saw my mother shouting for help on the beach, so I put my head and arms underwater, felt around for my brother's hair and pulled him back onto the mattress.

