

DAVID SKILLAN'S WORLD OF TRAVEL . . .

NEWSLETTER

Winter 2015–2016

Travelling the World Since 1951 → Leading Tours Since 1970 → Publishing Newsletters Since 1978

Dear Fellow Traveller:

Tennyson said it best:

*I cannot rest from travel; I will drink
Life to the lees. All times I have enjoyed
Greatly, have suffered greatly, both with those
That loved me, and alone . . .*

*For always roaming with a hungry heart
Much have I seen and known—cities of men
And manners, climates, councils, governments . . .*

I am a part of all that I have met . . .

I've always thought those words were addressed directly to me.

Once in a while, I read or see something about a place where I lived and worked during my grand world tour of the 1960s. A piece in *The Guardian Weekly* recently caught my eye. It was about *Balls and Bulldust*, a book of photographs by Håkan Ludwигson that captures the brutal beauty of the Australian Outback. Dramatic images of Victoria River Downs, once the biggest cattle station in the world, vividly portray the unforgiving conditions, exhausting work and enigmatic charm of the Outback. They also tell the stories of men and women who find this existence compelling.

I was one of those individuals, drawn by the area's remoteness during my year-long journey around Australia, and I have the (now slightly blurry) pictures to prove it. That's me in the photo to the right. My four-month stint as a jackeroo (station hand) in 1966 were thrilling. Life was harsh, but rewarding. Working in the searing heat, on horseback or in a pick-up, I did odd jobs, boundary checks, fence repairs, cattle mustering, and supply delivery to the outstations of Pigeon Hole and Moolooloo. I was even the station butcher for a couple of weeks, when the regular guy took a walkabout. Not one of my favourite jobs.

The pictures in *Balls and Bulldust* bring back memories of massive road trains, flocks of pink and white galah birds, herds of brumbies (wild horses), unforgettable people, and ever-present, swirling red dust that permeated everything.

Much has happened since those days.

And much has happened since I mailed my last newsletter, in the summer of 2014. The sudden closure of Safari Studio last December took me and others by surprise. Fortunately, two other travel companies were aware of my experience and expertise, and offered to take over my existing tours. I chose to go with Goway Travel, one of Canada's largest, most prestigious travel firms, beginning with last April's tour of Japan.

Partly because of these events, I've decided to wind down my own David Skillan tours, and focus on leading tours on behalf of Goway. The low Canadian loonie and unsettling world events are causing some to rethink their travel plans, so I've cancelled my May 2016 Japan tour and postponed my Myanmar tour to February of 2017, with apologies for the inconvenience. Things usually go back to normal, though, and when they do, I expect to do more tours with Goway.



Looking Back . . . and Ahead—Every year at this time I reflect on the 1960s, when I set off to achieve my boyhood ambition of seeing the world. When I left England in September of 1962, I had no idea my odyssey would take six and a half years and change my life forever. I've been in the travel industry ever since, in various roles. I've overcome a fear of flying and extreme seasickness, faced danger and hardship during some of my early adventures, and enjoyed introducing tour members to exotic locales and luxurious game lodges in my later years.

This variety of experience has made me good at my job. Thanks to boarding school, military service, and those early adventures on the road, I'm tough both mentally and physically, and I love the travelling life. Not bad for a shy, sensitive kid who was pretty hopeless at school.

*I no longer worry about
revolutions, financial crashes,
and natural disasters.
Things always settle down eventually,
and travelling becomes
safe and exciting again.*

Nothing lasts forever, of course, but I'm not ready to give it all up. Throughout my adult life, I've lived and breathed travel, and I'm still passionate about it. A friend recently said to me, out of the blue, "You still rock, man! Never mind your age!" And just last week someone guessed my age to be 58, which I thought was a bit of a stretch. But I still have the wanderlust, so I'm taking my own advice to keep doing what I love . . . even if I do reduce the number of tours I lead each year.

Living and working in a dozen countries has given me a global perspective. I no longer worry when I hear about revolutions, financial crashes, and natural disasters in parts of the world I like to visit. Things always settle down eventually, and travelling there becomes safe and exciting again.

Because I'm shifting my focus from running David Skillan tours to leading Goway Travel tours, this is the last newsletter I'll print and mail out. I'll stay in touch through periodic email updates, though. Please make sure I have your current email address, so you'll always know what I have available for you to enjoy. I'll continue to market the tours I lead through my website (www.skillansafaris.com), too, so bookmark and check it often.



Seeing South Africa—I'm pleased to report that I'll be hosting two of Goway's *Holidays of a Lifetime*, both to my beloved Africa. Entitled **Magic of Africa 1** and **Magic of Africa 2**, both of these tours focus on spectacular **South Africa**—one of my favourite destinations. It's an astonishingly beautiful and varied country.

Magic of Africa 1 departs in April of 2016 and runs for ten days. Magic of Africa 2 leaves in July for thirteen days. Although the tours are similar, the one in April focuses solely on South Africa, while the one in July includes Victoria Falls in **Zambia** and the Chobe River in **Botswana**, where we'll spend two days and nights aboard the luxurious *Zambezi Queen*. Both tours include superlative hotel and game lodge accommodations, meals, and excursions. The prices reflect the fact that the July tour takes place during the high season. For information and a detailed itinerary, please contact **Tanya Winkler** at 800-838-0611, local 6257, or tanya@goway.com.



And Parts of Asia—It's been many years since I visited **Myanmar** (or **Burma**, as it was known then), and I can't wait to go back. Now that Aung San Suu Kyi's party has finally claimed victory and stands ready to form the next government, it's widely expected that Myanmar will play catch-up with its neighbours Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia. This will take time, because Myanmar is so far behind—which adds greatly to its charm.

If you're curious about this little-known destination, with its colourful temples, gorgeous scenery, and friendly people, please join me in

February of 2017. Our fifteen-day tour includes two days of sightseeing and shopping in Hong Kong. The price for this one-of-a-kind tour has yet to be determined, but I expect it to be around \$6,000. For information, contact **Frank Lin** at 800-838-0611, local 6204, or frank@goway.com.

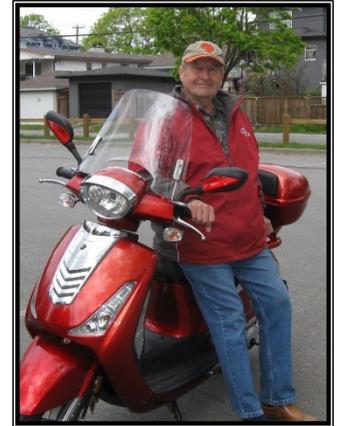
Keep Moving!—I was listening to Dick Van Dyke on CBC radio the other day. The likeable, hyperactive singer, actor, and dancer turns ninety this month, and has written a book called *Keep Moving: And Other Tips and Truths About Aging*. He gives some good advice. Among other things, he says, “A little exercise is better than none.” He’s a fine example of how seniors can stay healthy. His own recipe for longevity and happiness? “You need something to do, someone to love, and something to hope for. And above all, stay active!”

Ziping Around—I have a new form of transportation—a bright red scooter. It’s not the colour I’d have preferred, but I’m having a lot of fun with it. Ever since I rode one around the tropical islands of Penang and Bali in my younger days, I’ve wanted a scooter of my own.

I bought the most reasonably priced one in the shop. It’s very economical. Two dollars buys me a tank of gas, which can take me between sixty and seventy kilometers. I can zip along at up to seventy-five kilometres per hour, which is fast enough for me. It’s also easy to park. These days I hardly use my car, though that will change as winter approaches—I don’t want to court trouble.

If you’re thinking of buying a scooter, a word of caution: riding a scooter, like a motorcycle, is reasonably straightforward, but it requires maximum concentration. You have to have your wits about you all the time, especially in city traffic. Some drivers do dumb things!

Looking for Warmth—As the nights draw in and temperatures drop, I keep thinking about lying under a palm tree on a tropical island, surrounded by books. Much as I like the four seasons, winter doesn’t much like me. Unlike my wife Yuriko, who’s content to remain at home in Vancouver, I need to go somewhere warm for part of the winter.



*If you or someone you know
has a property in a warm climate
that needs looking after
for a week or a month,
please let me know.*

I thought I’d start with you, my readers and clients. If you or someone you know has a property in a warm climate that needs looking after for a week or a month (taking care of pets, watering plants, etc.), please let me know. Or perhaps you know of a reasonably priced holiday location, or have a favourite B&B in a warm climate such as Mexico. I promise to keep the information confidential—I’m well aware that sharing too much information can make a place so popular that there’s no room at the inn when you try to book!

I’ve considered some of the places I know and love, but I’d prefer someplace closer to home. Much as I enjoy fine hotels, I don’t need luxury. The simpler, the better. I’m looking for somewhere warm to temporarily hang my hat, rest my head, read, write, and explore. By putting the word out, I’m hoping one of you can help me find my own little hideaway in the sun.

Go Now!—Because I’ve seen countless natural and manmade disasters over my long career, I always urge people to *go now*. You never know what tomorrow will bring. Recent events in Paris and San Bernadino remind us that we can’t take anything for granted. We have to enjoy life *today*. The world, though it can be unfair, is still magnificent! (And as my late mother would say, it’s up to all of us to make it fairer.) There’s a lot to see and experience out there, so take time today to plan the trip of your lifetime. I’m sure you’ll see something you like among my upcoming tours.

As always, Yuriko and our daughters Julie and Jane and their families join me in wishing you and your loved ones much joy and happiness over the festive season. Good luck, good health, and *safari njema* (travel safely) in the New Year, wherever your wanderlust takes you.

Yours in everlasting travel,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David".

David (Around the World in Eighty Months) Skillan
Incurable romantic, free spirit, and restless vagabond . . . ➔



DAVID SKILLAN'S WORLD
An Overview of Upcoming Tours and Safaris
Presented in Cooperation with Goway Travel

"I speak of Africa and golden joys."

~William Shakespeare, *The Second Part of King Henry IV*, Act V, Scene III

"Africa grabs hold of a piece of your heart and never quite lets go."

~Robert Ruark, author of *Uhuru*, *The Honey Badger*, and *Poor No More*

"On safari . . . each breath you draw gives pleasure, [and] you wake with a new sense of wonder . . ."

~Elsbeth Huxley, author of *The Mottled Lizard* and *The Flame Trees of Thika*



MAGIC OF AFRICA 1

Departs April 12, 2016 → 10 days → \$8,149 (sharing) plus airfare and taxes

Travel to spectacular South Africa, and experience sights that leave you breathless! Visit Cape Town, one of the world's most beautiful cities. Travel to Franschhoek and the Cape Winelands, and sample some of South Africa's award-winning wines. Take a boat to Robben Island, and step into Nelson Mandela's prison cell. Explore Kruger National Park, one of Africa's largest game reserves, and watch for the Big Five (lion, elephant, buffalo, rhino, and leopard) among the countless animals and birds that move across the landscape. This thrilling tour includes first-class hotels and deluxe game lodges. ***Don't miss this trip of a lifetime!***

MAGIC OF AFRICA 2

Departs July 16, 2016 → 12 days → \$13,075 (sharing) plus airfare and taxes

See spectacular South Africa, beautiful Botswana, and exotic Zambia in one magical tour! Visit Cape Town, one of the world's most beautiful cities. Travel to Franschhoek and the Cape Winelands, and sample some of South Africa's award-winning wines. Take a boat to Robben Island, and step into Nelson Mandela's prison cell. Explore Kruger National Park, one of Africa's largest game reserves, and watch for the Big Five (lion, elephant, buffalo, rhino, and leopard) among the countless animals and birds that move across the landscape. In Botswana, spend two glorious days and nights floating peacefully along the Chobe River aboard the luxurious *Zambezi Queen*. In Zambia, feel the spray on your face as you stand next to the thundering Victoria Falls. This thrilling tour includes first-class hotels and deluxe game lodges. ***Book now for this grand adventure!***



MARVELOUS MYANMAR

Departs February 2, 2017 → 15 days → Price to be announced

One of humankind's earliest homes, Myanmar—once known as Burma—is one of the world's most captivating places to visit. The country reached its peak of power and creativity in the eleventh through fifteenth centuries. Decades of isolation have preserved physical features and cultural traditions that have been lost in other parts of Asia. Wedged between the great civilizations of India and China, Myanmar blends the cultural features of both with local traditions. Our tour includes remarkable history and art, festivals, and friendly people, as well as breathtaking snow-capped mountains, vast agricultural plains, and a long coastline of unspoiled golden beaches. We'll visit the former capital of Rangoon, with its crumbling colonial architecture, the shimmering Shwedagon Pagoda (aka the Great Dragon Pagoda or the Golden Pagoda) in Yangon, the magnificent temples of Pagan, vestiges of ancient cities in Mandalay, the pretty town of Pindaya, and Inle Lake, with its serene stilted villages and interesting tribal markets. On the way home, we'll stop in Hong Kong for two days of sightseeing and shopping. **Spoil yourself—book a seat on this remarkable tour!** →

THE DAVID SKILLAN TRAVEL COLLECTION

A Special Series of the Finest Personally Escorted Tours and Safaris

2016			
April 12	MAGIC OF AFRICA 1	10 days	\$8,149 plus airfare and taxes
July 16	MAGIC OF AFRICA 2	12 days	\$13,075 plus airfare and taxes
2017			
February 2	MARVELOUS MYANMAR	15 days	Price TBA
<p><i>Tour prices are per person, in Canadian dollars.</i></p> <p><i>Prices include fine accommodations, most meals, and all sightseeing, as outlined in the respective itineraries.</i></p> <p><i>All dates, itineraries, and prices are subject to change.</i></p> <p><i>Most tours can be extended.</i></p>			

These tours and safaris are marketed exclusively by Goway Travel. For full details, including the itinerary and booking information, please contact Goway Travel directly.

<p>Goway Travel #1050 - 1200 West 73rd Avenue Vancouver, BC V6P 6G5 800-387-8850 or 604-264-8088 frank@goway.com or tanya@goway.com www.goway.com</p>

Call now for colour brochures and detailed itineraries! →

CONFESSIONS OF A TOUR LEADER

Anyone can manage? Don't believe it!

*This article first appeared in the travel pages of The Vancouver Sun in 1978.
It's as valid today as it was then.*

Funny how just about everyone thinks they can lead a tour. But have you ever wondered how you really *would* react if you were faced with up to 25 strangers whom you had to look after and live with for two or three weeks?

A former colleague of mine, well established in the marketing and promotional side of the travel business, always thought managing a tour was a piece of cake—until the opportunity of escorting one himself cropped up. Off he went, convinced of doing a masterly job. He duly returned, confident that the tour had been a success. Then the completed questionnaires came in, and his face fell. All were critical of the tour manager—him. Then the penny dropped. So busy had he been having a good time himself, he had unwittingly neglected the clients. A cardinal sin.

Prior to assignment, you delve into your flight bag, to ensure that you haven't forgotten anything. You check your passport, to see that it's still valid and that your visas are in order, while your tender left arm confirms that you've had the necessary shots. Your small flag, useful in the crowds of India and Japan, is getting a bit tattered, but it will do for one more trip. You run through your manual, which contains relevant tour information, contact addresses, and company rules. You also check your first aid kit. (It's surprising how many people graze their knees while gazing at the sights!) You've got your Imodium tablets, not fancying another attack of Delhi Belly (elsewhere known as Montezuma's Revenge, Gypsy Tummy, or the Tanzania Trots), and your miniature brandy flask (for use in emergencies) is filled to the brim. You've also got your accommodation vouchers, airline tickets, Swiss army knife, flashlight, and needle and thread.

Armed to the teeth, you're ready for anything . . . or so you think. But your equipment doesn't cover all contingencies, and unusual problems occasionally create headaches.

Lost luggage is, for both client and tour manager, a pain in the neck. And, like anything else that goes wrong, it's all *your* fault. Take the incident involving a particularly difficult woman from New York, whose baggage was missing on arrival at Entebbe airport. The tour consisted of a two-week safari through Uganda and Zaire, a rather remote part of the world. Although I made exhaustive inquiries about the missing baggage during our 24-hour stay at the nearby exclusive Lake Victoria hotel, there was still no sign of the lost item when it was time to continue the trip. I assured the woman that everything possible was being done to retrieve her suitcase, but while I sympathized with her, I must admit that I didn't hold out much hope.

For the next two weeks, I led a dog's life, as this woman descended on me every opportunity she got. "Where's my baggage? Why hasn't it turned up? Why aren't you doing more?" As if I could pursue it, with no access to a telephone and miles from anywhere. It reached the stage where I dreaded facing her. But guess what? On our return to Entebbe airport, her baggage was waiting for her, intact. It had been delivered on another flight the day after our departure.

An ex-hospital matron, and a military one at that, once created a fuss on another tour through South America. At one place, our hotel had obviously seen better days, and when the matron saw her somewhat dingy room, she threw up her hands and exclaimed, "Under no circumstances am I sleeping in there!" Despite my pleas that "It's only for one night!" she stood her ground—all 200 pounds of her. Fortunately, where there's a will, there's a way. She, of course, ended up in my room, while I occupied hers.

Another time, in Istanbul, two male members of my group wanted a night on the town. Naturally, they turned to me. What would you do? It's your first time there too, but as the "knowledgeable" host, you don't let on. Neither can you let the clients down. A taxi ride later, you're surrounded by nightclubs, but haven't a clue which one to choose. Apprehensively, you settle for the nearest and keep your fingers tightly crossed. No sooner do you all step inside than, by sheer luck, a belly dancer links arms with your companions and shows off the jewel in her navel. Two hours later, you arrive back at the hotel, sighing with relief and smiling to yourself as you overhear one friend saying to the other, "What did I tell you? It's always best to go with someone who knows."

The majority of your clients are considerate, understanding, and appreciative. But there are exceptions. Such as the control freaks, who want to organize everything and everybody. The demanding ones, who want more than they paid for. The retired executives, who can't let go and want to take over the show. And, of course, the ones who buttonhole you, no matter how busy you are, every time you meet.

There's no retirement age for tour managers, but I know at least two who became alcoholics and one who became a nervous wreck. Speaking for myself, I love the work. I just wish I could get rid of this peculiar twitch . . . ✈

Excerpts from Recent Emails, Cards, and Letters



"I thoroughly enjoyed my time in Japan, and felt the itinerary was an excellent overview of the country. The mix of group activities and free time was much appreciated. I was especially impressed with Japan's kind and gentle people and the country's overall beauty and transportation system. Thank you for your expertise in group travel and for keeping a careful watch over all of us."

~Sherry A. (Vernon, BC)

"So nice to hear from you again. Always enjoy reading about your escapades. We long to do Africa again! Keep on doing what you love."

~Larry and Anita F. (Oliver, BC)

"Thanks for the welcome home message! As always when travelling with you, Mom and I had a wonderful time, and now comes the pleasure of reliving it through several hundred photos! [The unescorted extension to] Zanzibar was terrific, though we felt a little leaderless without you and we suffered from having to think for ourselves!"

~Vicki S. (Prince George, BC)

*Thank you for your expertise
in group travel
and for keeping a careful watch
over all of us.*

"Thanks for another great adventure. We want to especially thank Yuriko for providing a greater insight into Japanese culture, traditions, and customs. Hopefully we can all meet again on one of your future trips."

~Roy G. and Desi G. (Coquitlam, BC)

(Roy is an ace photographer who takes lots of photos and sends them to all participants at the end of each tour he takes with me. He took the picture of me and Masayo, our Japanese tour guide, on page 8. ~DS)

"On my recent solo trip to Australia and New Zealand, I used a lesson or two I learned on the trips my mother and I took with you to Africa. I can understand why you return so often to these countries. I'm now home safe and sound after our superb trip to Kenya, Tanzania, and Zanzibar. Thank you for the best trip ever!"

~Hilary M. (Victoria, BC)

"We will never forget our tour of Kenya and Tanzania tour with you. It was a highlight of our lives. Please keep your travel updates coming. Hopefully, we'll be travelling with you again one of these days."

~Sandy G. and Garry G. (Winnipeg, MB)

"Thanks again for taking us on an extraordinary tour of Ethiopia. It was one of the best trips I've ever taken. I can't get some of the images and experiences out of my mind!"

~Jennifer H. (Calgary, AB)

"Our best trip ever was with you! Just today we took our videotapes in to be put on disks before they disintegrate, so we can enjoy them as long as we last!"

~Gladys C. and Cliff C. (Victoria, BC)

"We haven't been idle since returning from our tour of Japan last spring. We're making a scrapbook of photos and memorabilia for future enjoyment. We always spend a lot of time preparing for a trip, but in spite of our preparations, this trips was full of surprises—all of them good."

~Mary Lou P. and Richard P. (Victoria, BC)

"Sixteen years after enjoying the most wonderful safari to Kenya with you, I'm still reliving it in memory. I'm very thankful that Jim and I had the means and the opportunity to visit so many of those faraway places with strange-sounding names during our lifetimes."

~Trudi D. (Victoria, BC) ➔

This newsletter comes to you with my compliments.

In return, I ask that you kindly pass it on. It's intended to create a greater awareness of the world we live in, promote worldwide travel and tourism, and foster understanding and goodwill between people.

My mission is to encourage, motivate, and inspire you to get the most out of life. Get up and go! I invite you to join me soon on one of my life-enriching tours. ➔



From Japan, with love . . .

Words of Wisdom . . .

“He has the most who is the most contented with the least.”

~Diogenes

“There can be no happiness if the things we believe in are different from the things we do.”

~Freya Stark

“Travelling makes one modest—you see what a tiny place you occupy in this world.”

~Gustave Flaubert

“The aim of life is to live, and to live means to be aware, joyously, drunkenly, serenely, divinely aware.”

~Henry Miller

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Globetrotter David Skillan is a semi-retiring tour leader who has travelled, lived, and worked all over the world, including the Far East, Australasia, Europe, Africa, and Latin America. His love affair with travel and adventure began in childhood. Since 1970, he has hosted more than 250 tours abroad, including more than 130 to the African continent. He has been publishing articles and newsletters about his life, travels, and tours since 1978.

When he's not travelling, you'll find David reading, writing, volunteering, spending time with his two daughters and four grandchildren, and riding his fire-engine-red scooter around the streets of Vancouver. ➔