



A TRAVEL MEMOIR BY BASHO

Trials & Tea Ceremonies

Misadventures in Far Away Places

*“A love story disguised as a travel memoir.
Or perhaps, the other way around.”*

PAGES	COUNTRIES	PAPERBACK	EBOOK
282	12	£12.99	£3.99

OVERVIEW

A love story disguised as a travel memoir

What happens when ‘normal’ life feels... *wrong*? Like a splinter in the mind? Ever had that nagging “Is this it?” doubt — the job, the routine, the quiet erosion of evenings? The feeling that life is an endless pilgrimage, chasing a destination that never quite satisfies?

Staring down thirty-something complacency, our relationship fraying under unspoken strains, Cesca and I did the mad thing. We quit our jobs, packed two rucksacks, and set off for a year across twelve countries — testing not just the world, but us. But this wasn’t a postcard holiday. The real thread was our marriage, laid raw on the road and healing in unexpected ways — from tense silences in third-class trains to quiet hand-holds under the Bodhi Tree, proving that love, when tested, can rewrite the map entirely.

Perfect for readers of *Wild*, *Eat Pray Love*, and *Notes from a Small Island*, this is more than a travelogue. It’s a deeply personal, often hilarious answer to that nagging, thirty-something question: “*Is this... it?*”

This memoir reveals...

- ◆ Popping the ‘backpacker bubble’ with third-class train tickets in Mumbai — genuine, sweat-soaked connections that smell more of chai and chaos than Instagram filters.
- ◆ A comedy of errors, from alpacas launching dry spit volleys and gut-wrenching food poisoning in Goa to a perpetual dance with giant spiders in the tropics.
- ◆ A shift from life’s ‘pilgrimage’ grind (school > job > promotion) to embracing it as ‘music’, sparked by Zen gardens in Kyoto and Daoist climbs in China.
- ◆ The ultimate relationship test: navigating Varanasi’s deathly rivers and Tokyo’s neon contradictions with two rucksacks and frayed nerves — discovering that love thrives on shared resilience, not comfort.

CRITICAL PRAISE & RECOGNITION

What reviewers are saying



“Loved it! A reflective travel memoir that looks beyond destinations... very readable, and left me with a renewed sense of curiosity and wanderlust.”

RACHEL SHARP · REEDSY DISCOVERY — 4 / 5 STARS

[REEDSY.COM/DISCOVERY](https://reedsy.com/discovery) →

“An engaging and compelling travelogue with a vital and strong emphasis on connection and experience over ticking off the bucket list... Overflowing with the author’s curious spirit.”

LOVEREADING — FEATURED AS AN “INDIE BOOKS WE LOVE”

[LOVEREADING.CO.UK](https://lovereadings.co.uk) →

“This book reminded me why we travel: not for the postcard moments, but for the mishaps, characters, and revelations along the way.”

ALASTAIR HUMPHREYS — ADVENTURER, AUTHOR & SPEAKER

“A richly written, unexpectedly profound journey. The book highlights how travel can add richly to the meaning of one’s life.”

MIKE RICHARDS — BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF THE TRAVELLING APE

“For a hearty dose of mind, body, spirit, travel, and Zen in remarkable places — take yourself somewhere magical, wherever you are.”

GORAN POWELL — BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF WAKING DRAGONS

“A story of perseverance, agility, the happy, the sad, and the tests of faith and belief.”

AKENGA EVANSON, [ONLINEBOOKCLUB.ORG](https://onlinebookclub.org) — RATED 5 / 5 STARS

THE AUTHORS

Basho & Cesca



BASHO & CESCA

Basho (James Bell) is a philosopher, writer, and filmmaker. For over a decade, his blog *Outside Context* has been a platform for long-form articles on travel, philosophy, and culture. His work has been licensed by Air New Zealand, published by Cambridge University Press, and used in global advertising by Google.

By day, James is a Director of AI & Data for a large corporation, an AI Ethicist, and a Fellow of the British Computer Society. It was from this high-pressure corporate world that he and his wife, Cesca, stepped away to embark on the journey documented in this book.

Cesca is a visual storyteller known for capturing quiet moments and overlooked beauty. Drawing on a background in international branding and garden design, her photography showcases life lived in motion, one frame at a time — and runs throughout the book. *Trials & Tea Ceremonies* is Basho's debut travel memoir.

Specifications

TITLE	Trials & Tea Ceremonies	SUBTITLE	Misadventures in Far Away Places
AUTHOR	Basho (James Bell)	PHOTOGRAPHY	Cesca
GENRE	Travel Memoir / Non-Fiction	PUBLISHER	Outside Context Publishing
DISTRIBUTION	Gardners / IngramSpark	RELEASE	Available now
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Key themes & interview topics

THE MILLENNIAL CRISIS

Turning 30 and asking, “Is this it?” — and what to do with the answer.

AUTHENTIC TRAVEL

The deliberate effort to escape the “backpacker bubble” and find genuine human connection.

KEY ANECDOTES

From the world’s largest spider in a Laotian toilet to chaotic farm stays and tea ceremonies in Japan.

QUITTING THE RAT RACE

The reality of walking away from a successful corporate career in AI and finance.

TRAVEL AS A COUPLE

The trials, tribulations and triumphs of a year-long, high-stress adventure with a partner.

THE DUAL PERSONA

Balancing life as a high-tech AI Ethicist with the philosophical mindset of a travel writer.

Contact & links

For media inquiries, review copies, hi-res images, or interview requests:

CONTACT

Basho Matsuo (James Bell)

masterbasho@googlemail.com

ONLINE

outsidecontext.com

linktr.ee/BashoMatsuo

Instagram / TikTok ·

[@trialsandteaceremonies](#) · [@master_basho](#)

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