

Five Miles Up: Dr. Jane Goodall isn't slowing down at 80

Bekah Wright April 1, 2014



Bring on the bubbly, cake and balloons! There's lots of celebrating to be done for Dr. Jane Goodall this week. Today, the world-renowned conservationist and authority on chimpanzees releases her latest book, "Seeds of Hope," giving readers a glimpse unlike any other into botany of the world. Then on Thursday a live, global 80th birthday party will be thrown in her honor on YouTube/Google+Hangout. What we're wondering? What Mr. H will be wearing for the occasion.

What's something you never fail to pack in your suitcase?

I always take Mr. H (a stuffed monkey) with me, but never in my suitcase. Unfortunately, what I have to take is clothes! I wish I were an animal with fur.

Carry-on or check-in?

Both.

Window or aisle?

Aisle on a long flight, unless I'm upgraded to business on a flight where there's a divider, then I'd choose a window, as it's more private.

How many hours are you in the field?



(Photo: The Jane Goodall Institute / Chase Pickering)

This is all in the past. My days now are lectures, hotels and planes. Many of these days are long, and weekends are no different.

Describe a typical day doing research.

When I was in the field, I climbed into the mountains before dawn and stayed out following a selected chimpanzee, until he or she made nest for the night. Or until I lost them.

What are the conditions like in the field?

In Gombe, a paradise. Apart from a few poisonous snakes, it's a friendly environment. There were buffalo

when I arrived, but they were hunted to extinction. In the wet season, it's very, very wet and can seem cold with the wind chill.

What's your idea of the perfect vacation?

I haven't had a vacation since 1986, when I stopped doing research to travel and talk about problems we've inflicted on the world. Working vacations are the only kind for me.

Tell us about a vacation you've taken that's come close thus far.

Every spring I go to see the spring migration of the Sandhill Cranes on Platte River in [Nebraska](#). It revives my spirit watching the thousands of birds come in to roost on the sandbars at night with their wild crane voices.

What's the worst mishap you've encountered in your travels? We understand you got locked in a Malibu hotel room once before a speaking engagement. Hope this was the worst...

The very worst mishap was in the 1970s when a small four-seater plane crashed in a remote national park in [Tanzania](#) (Ruaha). We were lucky. I detest traveling by air these days.

I love traveling by train. My best ever journey was my first trip to Africa, which started with sailing on the Old Kenya Castle. It was all one class and went from the UK around [Cape Town](#) to [Kenya](#). From there, I took the train to [Nairobi](#), then a car to what was then the highlands. I stayed there with a school friend on her family farm.

Otherwise, a common travel mishap are flights cancelled when hundreds of people are waiting for me to come and give a lecture. These days, many journeys are plagued by delayed or canceled flights. Once my luggage got mislaid for about five days. During that time, I had only the clothes I was wearing.

Getting locked into the hotel room was enormous fun! Though very distressing for Pierce Brosnan and his wife Keely, who were filling in for me at the fundraiser they'd organized. It worked out in the end.

Where's your favorite destination?

Once it was Gombe. Now, as I'm on the road 300 days out of the year, and exhausted by the pace, my favorite place is home – [Bournemouth](#) in the UK.

What's the silliest/most unusual/decadent souvenir you ever came back with?

I was given a life-sized, infant bonobo in a basket wearing a baby gown and diaper and wrapped in a blanket. The (toy's) head lolled the way a baby's does and it had staring eyes.

Ever try a food that you wished you hadn't?

Very, very hot, spicy Asian food. I only had one mouthful, but it took ages before I could taste anything again.

Favorite hotels you've ever stayed in?

The [Roger Smith](#) in New York and Eaton Delta in [Toronto](#). Because I'm working with the owners of both, which are working on becoming environmentally friendly, so the rooms are free.

Then there's Tom Mangelsen's cabin on the Platte River. Simple. Dogs. River outside. Log fires.

The best of all, though, is a small tent in the middle of nowhere.

The one thing you're willing to splurge on above all else.

Special gifts to surprise very special people.

Where would you take someone visiting your hometown for the first time?

The cliffs above the sea where I roamed as a child with my dog Rusty.

You only get one more trip in your lifetime. Where will it be?

I hope to heaven!