

OMAN
Walking a literal
tightrope in the
Al Hajar mountains
helped Lisa look
forward to the future

TRAVEL FOR A BROKEN HEART

Just weeks before her wedding, Lisa Harvey's fiancé left her. But travelling the world slowly helped her piece her life back together



Wadi Bani
Khalid, Oman



Lisa in Oman



A mosque in
Muscat, Oman

'Perhaps you should still go?' my dad said gently. It was summer 2015 and my fiancé had just left me for someone else, 12 weeks before we were due to get married. So, in what was once our cottage in Buckinghamshire, my dad and I were wading through the list of cancellations and had reached the honeymoon safari. 'When you feel ready,' he added. 'I don't think I'll ever be ready,' I replied numbly.

Twelve years earlier, the man I thought I'd marry appeared to be everything you could want from a life partner. Then, after promising to be by my side forever, he left. And just like that, I was on my own. The shock of his unspoken goodbye imploded like a sudden death.

But that isn't the end of the story. Three years later, I'm writing this as I sit alone on a rock in Australia overlooking a beautiful bay, after hiking bushland trails past rainforest waterfalls and Aboriginal carvings. I think back to the grief that softened me, the suffering that strengthened me, and realise I'm happy – and grateful – to be where I am. Travelling the world, and allowing those experiences to swallow me whole, has healed me in ways I never thought possible.

Not long after that conversation with my dad, my youngest sister Georgina and I boarded a plane to South Africa's sacred Timbavati area. Nothing prepares you for honeymooning without your husband – but Georgina was there, her love and humour supporting and distracting me. One night, after a stargazing excursion in the open bush, we spotted leopard cubs drinking from the dam, and I chose to focus on the person who was by my side. It was a bonding week of sunrise coffees laced with Amarula and boma dinners with hippos chortling and lions roaring nearby.

I've been on around 30 trips since, and each one has pieced me back together – into a different, better version of myself, with a new sense of wonder. Through the pain, there have been journeys worth taking – and remembering. Makanyi Lodge, Timbavati Private Nature Reserve; suites from £577pp per night (includes meals, drinks and two daily game drives); makanyilodge.com

TWO MONTHS ON: THE HOLIDAY WHERE I HAD TO BE MY OWN HERO

'It won't start!' said my friend Alex, as our motorboat bobbed on the water. We'd been staying in Hvar and had rented a boat for some island hopping. After a quick demo, we headed out into the Adriatic Sea, feeling like fearless sailors – in reality, we were more like a hungover Patsy and Edina, who had all the gear and no idea. Within an hour of dropping anchor just outside a deserted cove, we were screaming for help.

'What are we going to do?' Alex said, pale with panic. After weeks of feeling lifeless, something mustered inside me: 'I'll get help.' Once the tide had taken us towards the rocky edge, I climbed the cliff in my flip-flops. As I scrambled up, I recalled reading that most of the islands are uninhabited. Eventually, I spotted a washing line, and while making theatrical gestures to an old woman, who stared blankly, a man came to help. We rushed back to Alex, who was balancing starfish-style on the rocks, trying to stop our boat from crashing into them. Turns out we'd forgotten to pull the choke out. And, yes, that (over) dramatic day at sea kept me smiling weeks after the Hvar bubble burst.

Youth Hostel Villa Marija; private apartments from around £132 per night, room-only; vmh.hr

FOUR MONTHS ON: THE TRIP THAT GAVE ME BACK PEACE OF MIND

Keeping busy was a way to escape the anxiety-inducing scenes that played incessantly in my head. But I needed to turn them off for good – and that's where Sri Lanka came in. A work trip took me to the mystical city of Kandy, surrounded by jungle-clad mountains and mist-covered tea plantations. It was an extreme and exotic

change, and taking lakeside strolls past ancient temples made it impossible not to relax. It gave me space to notice, and accept, the sadness – but signalled the start of letting those feelings go. OZO Kandy, Dream Lake doubles from around £70, room-only; ozohotels.com

ONE YEAR ON: THE TRADITION THAT TAUGHT ME ABOUT LOVE

I've been going to Portugal since I was a baby. When I returned with my family a year after 'it' happened, all together in a friend's villa, there were days I could feel myself healing, as if it were physical: morning-coffee chats on the terrace with Mum, twilight runs with my sisters and long, laughter-filled barbecues.

As my nine-month-old niece reached for my hand as we built a sandcastle, memories of bringing him there flooded my mind. Back during my most broken days, I questioned where the love you have for someone goes after they leave. But being on that Vale do Lobo beach – surrounded by people who knew and loved me before, and after, him – I was reminded of exactly where it goes. Just like the waves that lap those ochre-coloured cliffs, my family will always be my constant. >



PORTUGAL
The place where
Lisa learnt
there was more
than one kind
of love

The streets of Faro

Vale do Lobo golf course

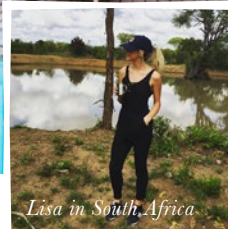
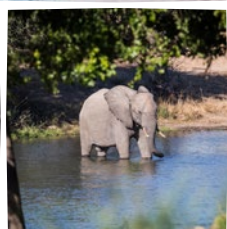
A beach
in the Algarve



SOUTH AFRICA
Sister bonding in the beauty of the African bush eased the wilderness of Lisa's heartbreak



Nankini Lodge, South Africa



Lisa in South Africa

THIRTEEN MONTHS ON:

THE MINIBREAK THAT GOT ME EXCITED TO START OVER

'No, no,' my friend Holly laughed. 'You've got to stretch your arms reaaaally high and then spread them out and down – like a palm tree.' It was about 5.45am in Ibiza and, after partying all night, we were watching the sunrise – and channelling our inner palm trees. Just, well... because. We'd soaked up six days of fun and flings with Spanish guys, and on that final morning, as the sky broke into a million pastel hues and the morning light bounced off the tranquil sea, the two of us sat there and laughed – about nothing, and everything. For 20 years, we had made plans and changed plans, but right there, we were living and laughing completely in the present. If there's ever proof that a trip with your

best friend can pull you out of the trenches of heartbreak, and get you feeling excited about new beginnings, it was in that moment.

Hotel MiM Es Vivé, doubles from around £109, room-only; hotelmimiziza.com

TWO YEARS ON:

THE CITY THAT GAVE ME CLOSURE

Within a couple of years, I'd found my single rhythm and was learning to trust the timing of my life once again. As I celebrated friends getting engaged and having babies, I realised that, at 32, I'd never travelled solo – and I couldn't shake the feeling that I really should. So, in September 2017, I left my job to go freelance and, wanting to turn something sad into something good, I sold my engagement ring to pay for a plane ticket to New York. Spending a few months alone in a different country was

a big step, but it was a chance to take back control and find out who I really was.

I'll never forget catching a glimpse of that skyline from my cab. Over the next 90 days, I fell for the gritty history and vibrant street art of East Village, the brownstone buildings and jazz bars of West Village – even the cloud-piercing skyscrapers and blazing horns of Midtown. I discovered my own NY nooks and found out where locals went for pizza. I never tired of walking across Brooklyn Bridge, cycling through Central Park or taking the ferry past the Statue of Liberty. I went to museums and bars by myself. I talked to strangers, I made friends and I dated. I stuck it out in Airbnbs with cockroaches and dodgy tenants, and found cosy apartments with fun flatmates and eye-popping rooftops.

I had isolating moments but I learnt how to be alone. My time there gave me confidence I never knew I had, and closure for something I never thought I'd get over. It's a fast and, at times, infuriating city, but it does make you believe that anything is possible. It gave me hope, and that's what I came home with.

TWO AND A HALF YEARS ON:

THE ONE THAT LEFT ME WANTING MORE

Just so you know, we can't turn back from here,' my guide said, clipping himself on to the iron cable. We'd been climbing part of the Al Hajar mountain range in Oman, and were making our way towards the route's steepest rock face, which twisted upwards via a single, tightrope-style bridge. Reaching the point of no return, I paused, feeling petrified, but my nerves were soon overridden by adrenaline and awe. I made it over the bridge – and beyond. I forced myself to look down, and I took in every mind-blowing view ahead of me. It was a real-life 'feel-the-fear-and-do-it-anyway' cliché – but a defining metaphor for how far I had come.

Stepping out of my comfort zone, and pointing my inner compass towards adventures such as these, has given me an inspiring perspective to base my future on. And if I could go back to the person who once feared the path ahead of her, I'd tell her that, yes, it will be hard as hell at times, but to embrace it, because it will also enrich and empower her like nothing else.

My passport will always remind me of the memories that restored me – and the world that's out there waiting for me.

Alila Jabal Akhdar, doubles from around £470, (the Via Ferrata climb is offered by the hotel and their guides); alilahotels.com



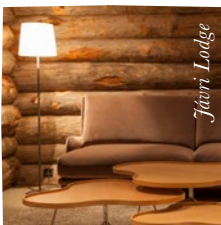
The ice-fishing hut near Jávri Lodge

LAPLAND, FINLAND

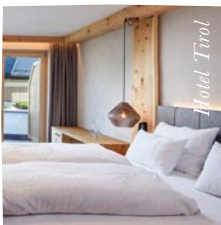
JÁVRI LODGE

Hidden away 150 miles north of the Arctic Circle, there is something Bond-esque about Jávri Lodge. Maybe it's being able to ski right up to the massive front door, the cool Nordic interiors and womb-like lighting, or knowing that former Finnish president Urho Kekkonen hosted top-secret Cold War talks here in the Seventies. But now it's luxury not politics on the agenda, from the Michelin-star-winning meals made by chef/owner Juha Mehtajarvi to the 13 luxe rooms, some with floor-to-ceiling windows through which you can watch the stars and, if you're lucky, the northern lights. Venture out to try ice fishing, husky sledding, snowmobiling or cross-country skiing, and return to steam in the sauna, wallow in the indoor pool or curl up by one of the log fires.

Red Savannah (redsavannah.com) offers three nights at Jávri Lodge from around £2,216, full board, with one daily activity and return Finnair (finnair.com) flights from London Gatwick to Ivalo



Jávri Lodge



Hotel Tirol



MEET ME IN...

Husky-sledding, snowmobiling, piste-pounding – we have your snow adventures covered

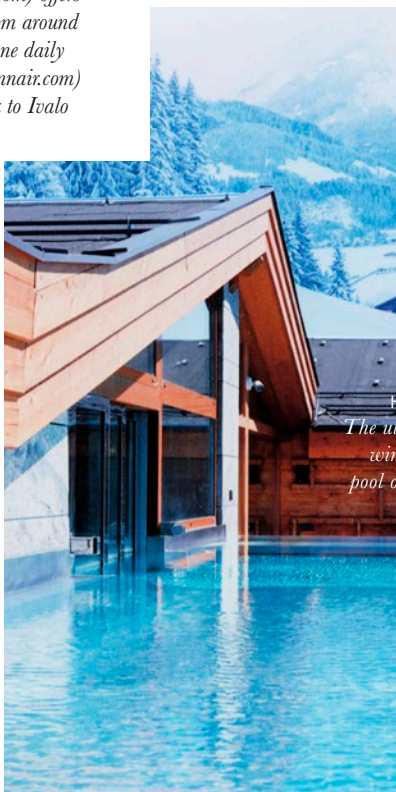
JÁVRI LODGE
Cue stunning interiors and a snowy forest location – how long can we stay?

FISS, AUSTRIA

HOTEL TIROL

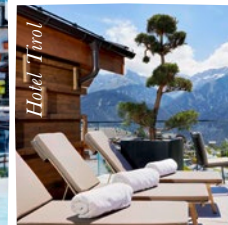
Traditional chalet-style on the outside, but pleasingly modern inside, this cosy, family run mountain hotel has 60 bedrooms – most with balconies and some with small gardens. It's all simple, clean lines and pale wooden floors, with the large bathrooms lined in dark slate. Breakfast on warm-from-the-oven bread and honey from the family's hives before a day on the piste (it's just a five-minute walk to the ski lifts), and when you're done, chill out in the hotel spa's Finnish sauna, Kneipp therapy pool and steam room. The brave can even take a moonlit dip in the Tirol's outdoor rooftop pool.

Doubles from £176, half board. British Airways (ba.com) has return flights from London Gatwick to Innsbruck from around £120



HOTEL TIROL

The ultimate base, whether winding down in the pool or living it up on the white stuff



Hotel Tirol

Collages: Gus & Stella. Photographs: Getty Images. Words: Kirsty Dale and Susan Ward Davies