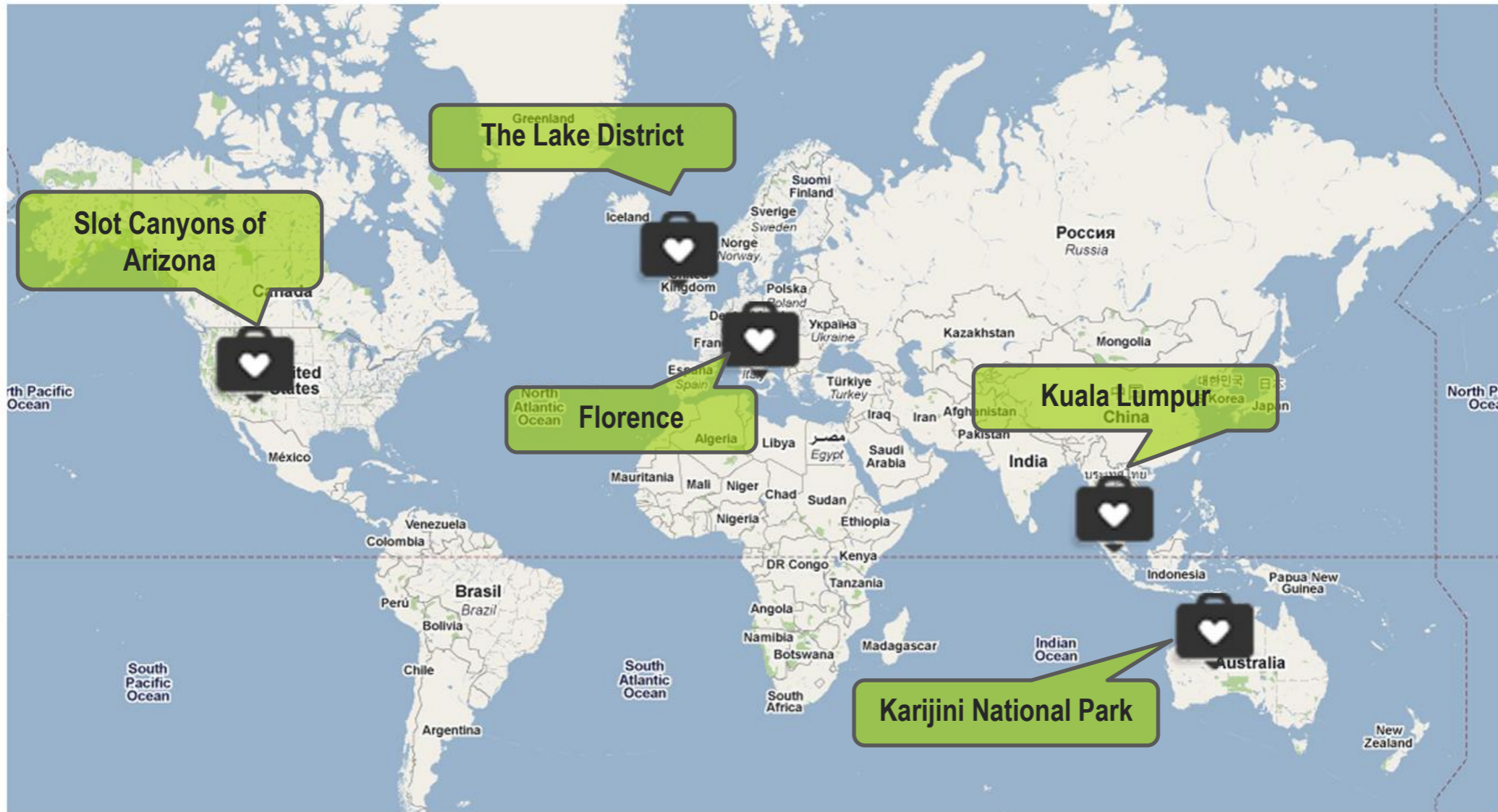
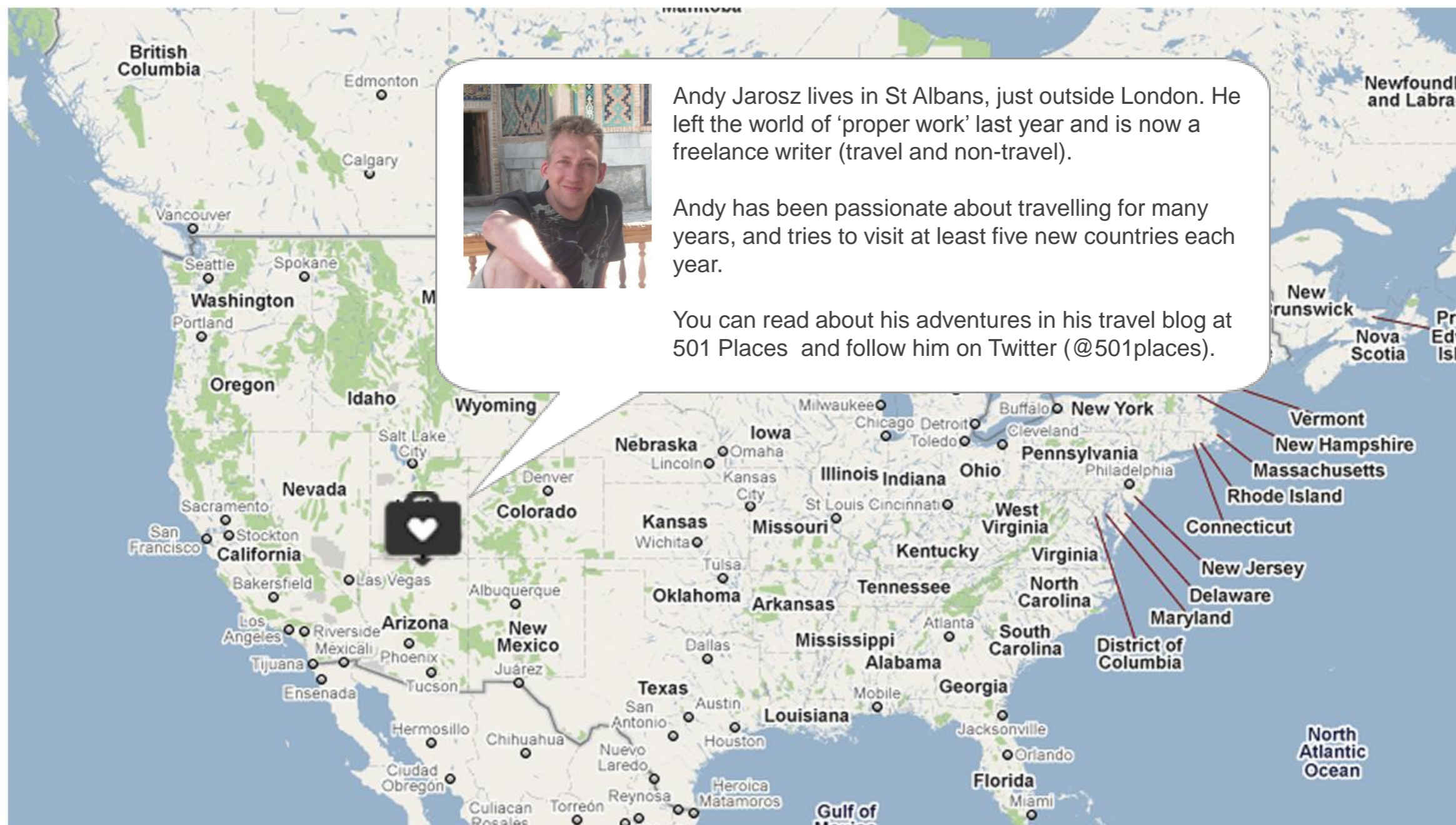


Top of the World

Experiences from top travel bloggers



Slot Canyons of Arizona (USA)



Andy Jarosz lives in St Albans, just outside London. He left the world of 'proper work' last year and is now a freelance writer (travel and non-travel).

Andy has been passionate about travelling for many years, and tries to visit at least five new countries each year.

You can read about his adventures in his travel blog at [501 Places](#) and follow him on Twitter ([@501places](#)).

Slot Canyons of Arizona (USA)

Slot Canyons of Arizona: the world's most underrated natural wonder?

This entry was posted on Sunday, November 1st, 2009 at 11:33

The Grand Canyon is surely one of the most famous and instantly recognisable natural wonders of the world. Yet surprisingly few people are aware that just over an hour's drive from the Grand Canyon, not far from the crowds of the South Rim, is a natural wonder that rivals the beauty of the Grand Canyon and is truly unique.

Even in the town of Page the canyons are barely promoted, with the entire marketing effort being directed at the water based activities on Lake Powell.

Perhaps it is because the slot canyons are located on Navajo land and the city has left the Navajo people to conduct their own PR. I just don't know. But given the impressiveness of the site I am amazed that most Americans are unaware of this place. For goodness sake, even being used as a location for a Britney Spears video has failed to raise the profile of these wonders!



It looks like nothing from ground level. A crack in the desert floor by a desolate car park, with a tatty sign directing from off the highway. You are greeted by the caretakers who will only allow visitors into the canyon if there are no potential risks of flash floods.

Lower Antelope Canyon from ground level

The safety concerns are closely followed ever since a tragedy in Lower Antelope Canyon where 11 tourists drowned in a flash flood when storm water higher up the system came gushing through without warning. There are now sophisticated alert systems in place to avoid a recurrence.

Slot Canyons of Arizona (USA)

On paying a modest entry fee at Lower Antelope Canyon, you are then left to your own devices to enter and explore. From above there is no clue as to the marvels that lie hidden in the canyon. Only a fissure running through the rocks betrays the presence of something to explore. Yet as soon as you descend down the small staircase, it is as if you have stepped into another world.



The canyons are popular spots for photographers, as the colour of the rocks changes with almost every passing minute as the sun illuminates another section of the canyon. Many parts of the canyons only receive direct sunlight for a few minutes in a day, and at those moments an eerie shaft of light throws a beam onto a rock, temporarily transforming it from a dull pink to a bright and vivid orange colour. The professional cameramen who are semi-resident in the canyons know exactly where and when a sunbeam will appear, so if you are nice to them you will be able to catch the perfect picture.

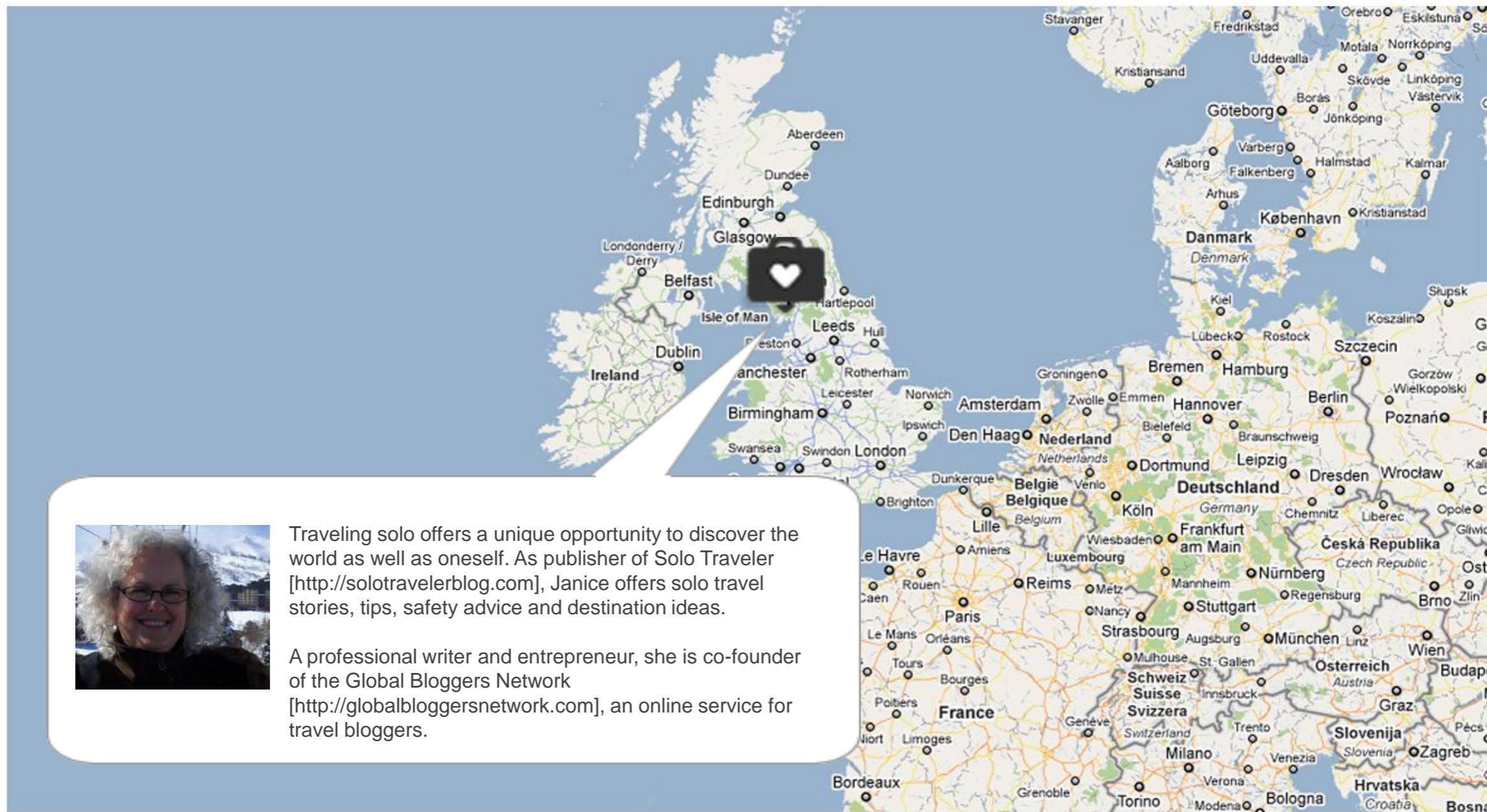
Getting through Lower Antelope Canyon takes no more than 20 minutes, but you will no doubt choose to linger and admire its beauty. The walk is easy, although we did find a lot of standing water that came up well over the ankles, so a pair of flip-flops can be more advisable than hiking boots.

While you are able to wander through the lower canyon alone, there are restrictions on when and how many can pass through Upper Antelope Canyon. It is a higher system, and while it is a very easy walk through with no scrambling or water, it is a little less exciting to explore, especially as you have to enter with a group at a set time. Upper Antelope Canyon does however have the single best known location in the canyon system, and the tour times are scheduled to catch the light at exactly the right time for “the” picture – the one I managed at the top of the post.

A truly amazing place to visit, these canyons are living proof of the fact that some of the most spectacular natural wonders can still exist in almost complete obscurity.

<http://www.501places.com/>
<http://twitter.com/501places>

The Lake District (United Kingdom)



Traveling solo offers a unique opportunity to discover the world as well as oneself. As publisher of Solo Traveler [<http://solotravelerblog.com>], Janice offers solo travel stories, tips, safety advice and destination ideas.

A professional writer and entrepreneur, she is co-founder of the Global Bloggers Network [<http://globalbloggersnetwork.com>], an online service for travel bloggers.

The Lake District (United Kingdom)

Falling in Love in The Lake District

This entry was posted on Monday, November 16th, 2009 at 11:45 pm



The Lake District has a romantic past. William Wordsworth and the Lake Poets drew attention to this special area in the northwest corner of England during the 19th century. It has since become a destination for nature lovers and walking enthusiasts everywhere. It was the focus of a recent solo trip. I went to the Lakes for a digital detox – to escape the always online digital world. In the process I acquired a new love.

Walking the fells.

There are over 200 walks in the Lake District so deciding which to take was my first step. After a consultation with Allan, my host at the Rysdale Guesthouse and walk advisor extraordinaire, I headed to scale Loughrigg, the fell (mountain) that could be viewed from my room of my lovely Edwardian B&B. Ok. Scale might be a bit of an overstatement but then, walking is an understatement. This fell is 1100 feet to the pike (top) and there were times that I was climbing, hands and feet over rocks, to get to the next level.

After an hour or two, I thought I had reached the top, took the photos to prove it and continued along the path to go down only to discover that I had to go up some more. It was at this point that I wondered: is this fun? Do I like this? Is the notion of walking better than the actual doing? I did finally reach the top and was rewarded with a stunning view highlighted by a beautiful rainbow.

I could just leave that hint about the weather there but, as any of you who read between the lines already know, a rainbow means rain. Yes, the weather in the Lakes was not perfect when I was there. In fact, it rained numerous times every day. Half my walk was in the rain and all of it was through water. While I held the motto, “there is no bad weather, only bad clothing”, I wondered: is this really any fun?

Yet, I awoke the next day eager to go out again.

The Lake District (United Kingdom)

The falling in love part.

The next day I took it a bit easier by walking the coffin route from Ambleside to Grasmere. This is the path that people in Ambleside would take to carry their dead to a consecrated burial ground in the neighboring village in the 19th century. It meanders up and down but there is no real climb. Along the way there are a few large stones called coffin rests – they are there for the coffin carriers to take a break on route.

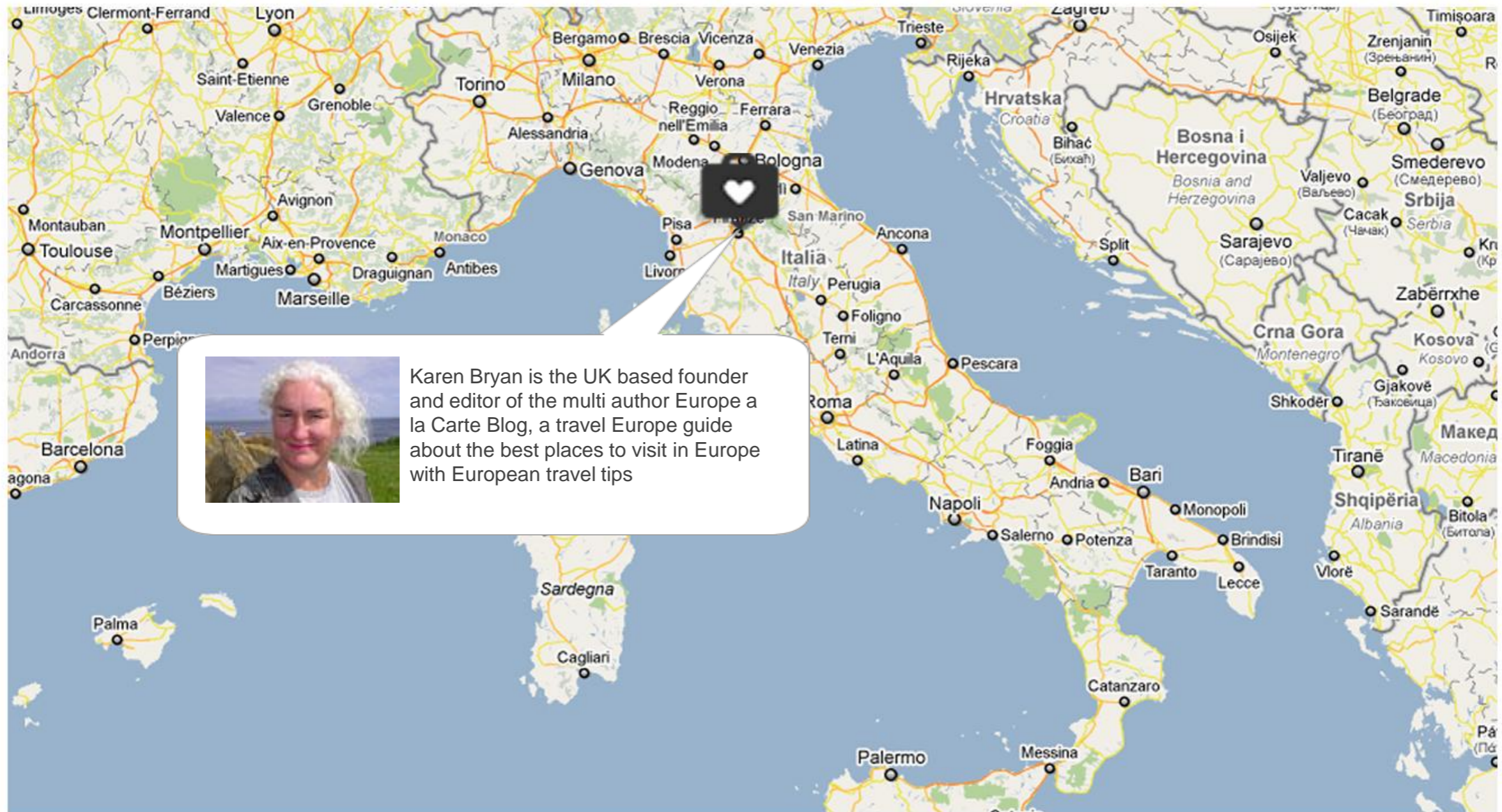
On my final day I decided that my objective would be Wansfell Pike – a steep climb of 1500 feet. It was a foggy, damp day and it didn't get any better as I climbed. The pike was in a cloud. The visibility was maybe a few hundred feet. I couldn't see Lake Windermere and the various fells and villages but a local described everything I would have seen had the weather been with me.



Descending the other side, I started the journey home and was stopped suddenly by an absolutely stunning view of Lake Windermere. At that moment, all the views I had enjoyed, the pleasure of physical exertion, the satisfaction of having walked for three days straight, converged and I was in love. The Lakes now hold a truly special place in my heart.

<http://solotravelerblog.com/>
<http://twitter.com/solotraveler>

Florence (Italy)



Karen Bryan is the UK based founder and editor of the multi author Europe a la Carte Blog, a travel Europe guide about the best places to visit in Europe with European travel tips

Florence (Italy)

My three favourite piazzas in Florence, Italy

This entry was posted on Monday, December 7th, 2009 at 3:53 pm

The Tuscan city of Florence is home to some of the most beautiful piazzas (squares) in Italy.

Below are videos of my three of my favourites. I knew very little about the history of these squares but that was not an impediment to my appreciation of the beauty and architecture of these squares. I wandered around, gazing in awe at the grand buildings and numerous statues.

Piazza della Signoria is an L shaped piazza with the Palazzo Vecchio, the Old Palace, being one of the star attractions.

I found it even more enchanting after dark. I really enjoyed walking through the cluster of statues in a covered area, as you could see their reflections on the white wall behind.

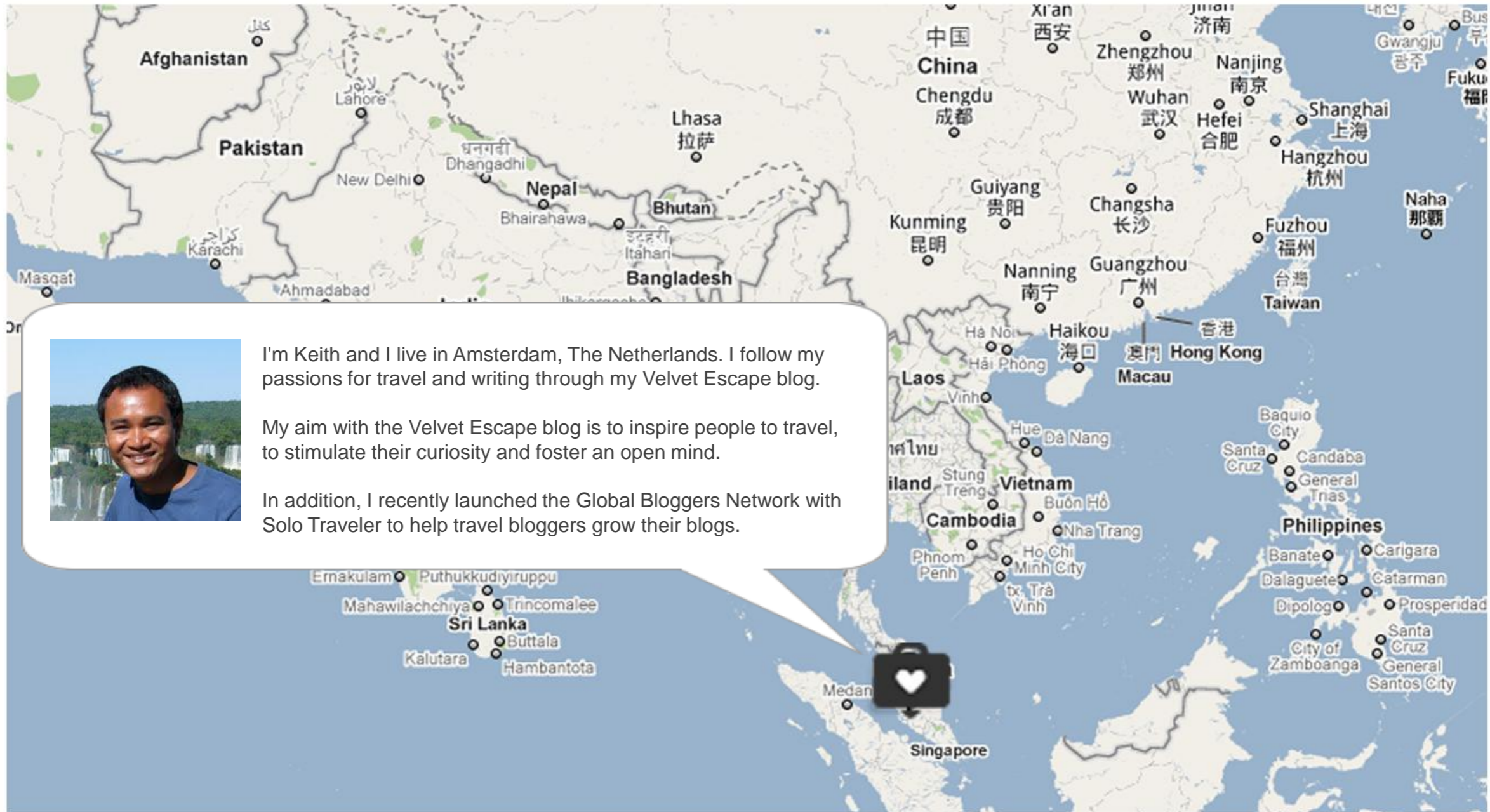


The views over Florence are wonderful from Piazzale Michelangelo. We walked up from the Forte di Belvedere at the riverside to the piazzale. The path zigzags up, so it's never that steep.

We came upon Piazza della Santissima Annunziata when we got lost in Florence. It proved to fortuitous as we stumbled upon the opening day of the Fiorgen Art Exhibition at the Archaeological Museum, just off the piazza.

Which of my three favourites do you prefer or do you have another favourite Florentine piazza?

Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia)



I'm Keith and I live in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. I follow my passions for travel and writing through my Velvet Escape blog.

My aim with the Velvet Escape blog is to inspire people to travel, to stimulate their curiosity and foster an open mind.

In addition, I recently launched the Global Bloggers Network with Solo Traveler to help travel bloggers grow their blogs.

Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia)

Ten things to do in Kuala Lumpur

This entry was posted on Monday, December 7th, 2009 at 3:53 pm

Kuala Lumpur (KL), the capital of Malaysia, is a fascinating city that is constantly on the move. It offers stunning architecture, an amazing array of cuisines, a broad variety of shopping and an exciting and varied nightlife. Anyone planning to spend some time in Southeast Asia should have KL on their itinerary.

1. Shop till you drop. From swanky high-end malls along Bukit Bintang Street to roadside stalls in Chinatown, KL is a shoppers' paradise!
2. Explore Petaling Street in Chinatown and the nearby Central Market (a popular place for local handicraft). Petaling Street is an atmospheric outdoor market with hundreds of stalls selling a myriad of merchandise and food. Don't forget to bargain!
3. Stand at the foot of the Petronas Twin Towers, the tallest twin towers in the world. You can opt to walk across the Skybridge on the 47th floor (entrance is free and is on a first-come-first-serve basis; get there before 8am for the best chance of getting tickets).
4. Visit the KL Bird Park in the Lake Gardens. It's one of the largest aviaries in the world. The Rhinoceros Hornbills are pretty impressive birds!



5. Take a walk along some of KL's historic landmarks. Walk from the Moorish-inspired Old Railway Station, past the electric blue dome of the National Mosque to the Merdeka Square (Independence Square. The huge flag mast is the tallest in the world) and end at the confluence of the Klang and Gombak Rivers (the birthplace of KL).

Don't forget to visit one of my favourite mosques, the Masjid Jamek, that sits proudly at the edge of where the two rivers meet, and the nearby little India neighbourhood.

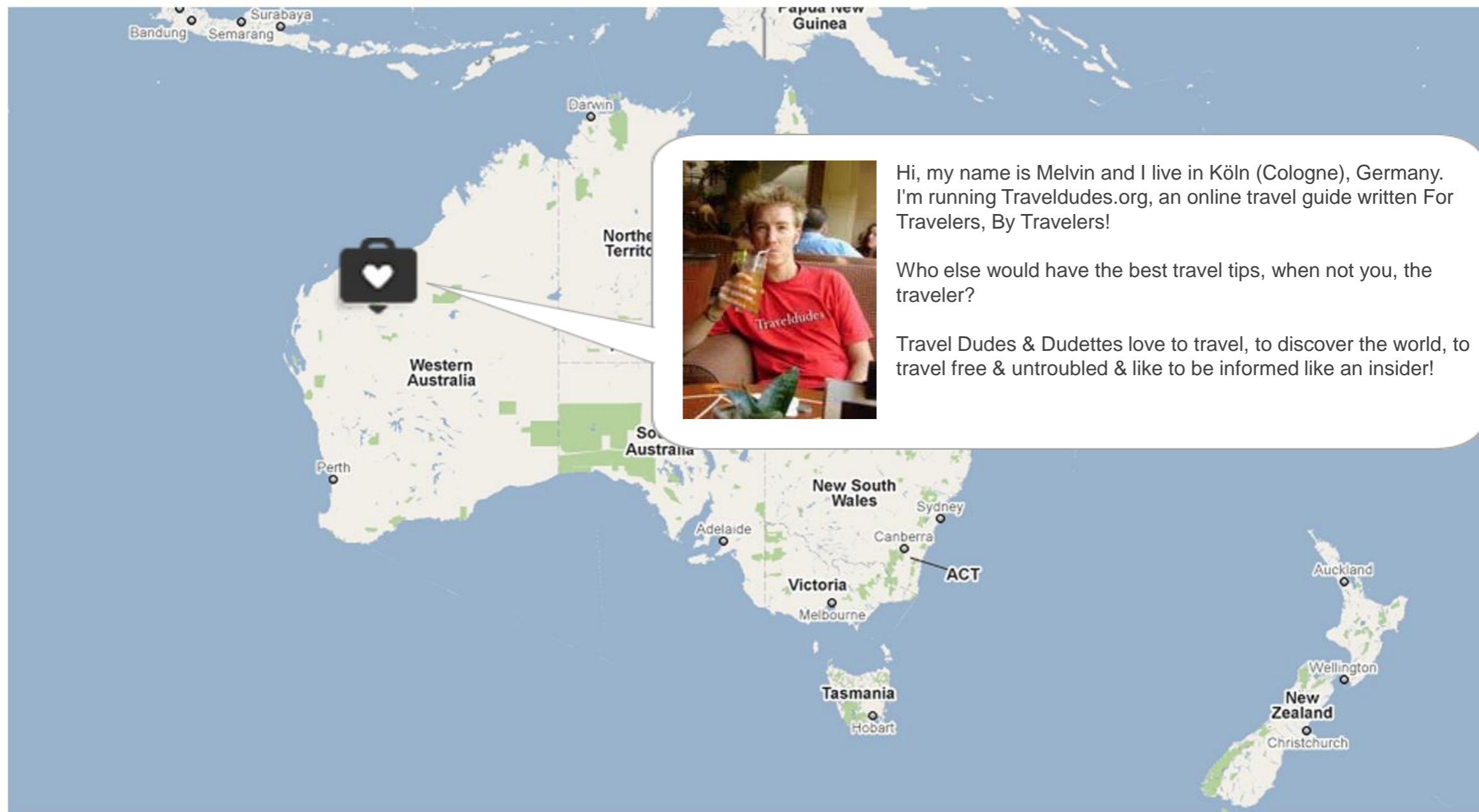
Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia)

6. Go to the observation deck of the 421 m high KL Tower (Menara KL) for unbeatable views of the city. From here, you'll have unparalleled views of the spires of the Petronas Twin Towers. Go before sunset and watch as the city lights up and the skyscrapers turn to gold.
7. Visit the historic Hindu temples in Batu Caves. Located 13 km north of KL, the Batu Caves are an intriguing place. A massive limestone outcrop houses a series of caves and cave temples. Get ready to climb the 272 steps to the main cave temple.
8. Visit the Aquaria next to the Petronas Twin Towers for a preview of what to expect in the Malaysian seas.
9. Have an exotic meal at the food stalls along Jalan (street) Alor. Located parallel to Bukit Bintang street, Jalan Alor is often regarded as the heart of KL's local cuisine. The hundreds of food stalls serve a mind-boggling variety of Malay, Chinese, Indian, Thai and Indonesian specialities. The atmosphere is electric and the many types of food available will leave the first-time visitor in a daze. Try the satay (lamb or chicken skewers served with a spicy peanut sauce) or the grilled stingray.
10. Take a ride on the KL Monorail for a different view of the city from above the trees.



<http://velvetescape.com/blog>
<http://twitter.com/velvetescape>

Karijini National Park (Australia)



Hi, my name is Melvin and I live in Köln (Cologne), Germany. I'm running TravelDudes.org, an online travel guide written For Travelers, By Travelers!

Who else would have the best travel tips, when not you, the traveler?

Travel Dudes & Dudettes love to travel, to discover the world, to travel free & untroubled & like to be informed like an insider!

Karijini National Park (Australia)

Insider travel tip Karijini National Park, Australia

This entry was posted on 9th June 2009

The Karijini National Park is my favorite insider travel tip for Australia! You'll find it in Western Australia and around 300 km south of Port Hedland and east of the city Tom Price. The highways between Port Hedland and Tom Price are tarred, but the street (Banjima Drive) to the Park itself is a dirt road.

The gorges are very typical and famous for the Karijini Park and with it, the highlights. At the eastern end of the Banjima Drive you'll find the Dales Gorge with its Fortescue Falls and the Circular Pool. Here you'll find water all year round. Here you'll also find the Fern Pool, a very spiritual place for the Aborigines. You can have a quiet swim here, but please respect this spiritual place and don't jump from the rocks. Close by is also a really beautiful lookout... the Oxer Lookout. Here you'll see 4 gorges meeting each other at one point.

That spot is especially nice at sundown. The gorges are called Hancock Gorge, Joffre Gorge, Red Gorge and Weano Gorge and they will offer you some great experience and adventure!



The Joffre Gorge and the Hancock Gorge have the famous Miracle Mile. You should just do this walk if you are really fit and if you are not afraid of heights etc. Here you have to pass 20 meter high walls with just a bit of space to put your feet on and you have to jump into a pool which is about 10 below you. Very important: if you want to do this walk, you have to get informations from the rangers!

The Weano Gorge is also a great experience, but a bit easier and you don't need any further informations. Walk into the gorge and keep right then to enter the part to the Handrail Pool. You might have to walk through knee deep water (or higher) and it will also get smaller. Later there will be just a meter to walk through. Then you'll get to a big natural pool with high walls around it. There are just two chances to keep on going. First is to jump into the water, but I would suggest to use the metal handrail, as you don't know how the deep water is and I'm sure you don't want to break you legs at this part of the world. 😊

Karijini National Park (Australia)



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When you are in the water there is only one way to keep on going... to swim through the pool to the other end. There you can keep on for another... I would say 100 – 200 adventourus meters! Definitely worth it!

Another great adventures track through a gorge takes you to the Kermit Pool. But before you have to pass the Spider Walk! Guess why it's called like that? No, wrong. Ok, you'll find many spiders, but that's not why it's called like it. At some points, the walls get so close, that you can only pass it like a spider, with your legs and hands left and right and the water beneath you. Really great!

To start the spider walk you have to climb into the Hancock Gorge, then follow the stream to the left. You'll might even to swim at a few passages, so beware to take some water proof bags with you for your cameras. Then you'll find the Amphitheatre, where you can rest a bit, but please, don't forget to take your rubbish with you again. If you now keep on walking, and you should, the spider passage will have to be managed. It's easier then it sounds. Right afterwards, surrounded by 20 meter high walls, you'll reach the Kermit Pool. Take a nic bath, but check the water pegel and rocks beneath the water, before you might jump into it. Here is the video of the spider walk:

I've heard of travelers who even kept on for another couple of meters from this point on. Officially the walk ends here and it is just allowed to keep on with a guide and with special equipment.

<http://traveldudes.org/>
<http://www.twitter.com/traveldudes>



Thank you!