



Meet a traveller: Kevin Raub, Lonely Planet author and South America expert

By Emma Sparks

It will take a seasoned South America expert to guide us through the colour and chaos of this year's World Cup in Brazil. But it's safe to say that Kevin Raub is the right person to throw into the fray as our author-on-the-ground.

Kevin has written guide books for Lonely Planet covering Brazil, Colombia, Venezuela and Chile, to name just a few. Kevin will be travelling the length and breadth of the nation (taking 20 domestic flights!) to capture the buzz of the World Cup host cities, share his experiences at local celebrations, and perhaps indulge in a caipirinha or three. You can follow his journey and share the ways you're celebrating Brazil at lonelyplanet.com/world-cup.

We caught up with Kevin ahead of the kick-off in Brazil, to get the lowdown on all his travel dreams and disasters.



Kevin swings in a hammock in Alcântara, Brazil. Image courtesy of Andre Maceira

WHERE WAS YOUR LAST TRIP?

I just came back from [Bonito](#), Brazil. It's a gorgeous aquatic wonderland that is steeped in sustainability and wows travellers with a unique natural phenomena: its crystal-clear waterways spring from subterranean sources nearly free of clay, which releases calcium carbonate into the water that calcifies impurities that then sink to the bottom. Snorkelling in the Rio da Prata there is like jumping into a giant aquarium!

WHERE IS YOUR NEXT TRIP?

As Lonely Planet's author on the ground for the World Cup 2014 in Brazil, I will be travelling all over the country, live tweeting, Instagramming and Vining from host cities, FanFests, matches, and bars (and beaches) throughout the tournament. I have 20 domestic flights booked! It's going to be...*interesting*. Suffice to say I won't be checking any luggage. After that, research trips to Colombia, India and Chile are on the cards.

WHAT IS YOUR FIRST TRAVEL-RELATED MEMORY?

My first travel-related memory was poring over my mom's travel albums when I was a child. My father was a very successful State Farm insurance agent, and he always sold enough to win the incentive trip at the end of each year, so my parents were always gallivanting off to Mexico, London, Paris, etc. I used to spend hours combing through their photos, fascinated by the different colours, textures, foods, languages, hairstyles – I was enthralled. I owe every desire I have ever had to seek out the unknown to them.

AISLE OR WINDOW SEAT?

Window. No question. I feel some sort of a (false) sense of security being next to the window. Besides loving the bird's-eye view of the next place of exploration, I feel safer in that giant steel bird if I can look out and see that we aren't plummeting to the ground. It's a nightmare when I have to use the bathroom, though.

DO YOU HAVE ANY TRAVEL HABITS OR RITUALS?

I'm definitely an over-planner. I tend to plan all my meals and movements when I'm on vacation down to the last hour, which in a way is good, since I ensure I don't miss all the amazing places I must eat at and see, but in a way is bad, because I'm less susceptible to divine intervention, which usually brings about the most memorable travel experiences.



View of the Himalayas from Nargakot, Nepal. Image courtesy of Kevin Raub

FAVOURITE CITY OR COUNTRY OR REGION?

The one written on my next boarding pass.

WHAT IS YOUR BEST TRAVEL SOUVENIR?

A few years ago I went to Laguiole, [France](#) - a region famous for knives and wine openers. I had a one-on-one knife making class with an artisan knife maker there, who taught me how to do it all. I made my own knife/wine opener, complete with the bumble bee logo of Laguiole; and I know in the back of my mind that if this whole writing thing doesn't work out for me, I possess a real-world, hands-on skill that I can call upon. Kevin Raub: Artisan Knife Maker. It has a nice ring to it. Needless to say, that wine opener has opened its share of fine wine since.

WHAT IS THE WORST PIECE OF TRAVEL ADVICE YOU'VE RECEIVED?

I was updating the Honduras chapter of Lonely Planet's [Central America on a Shoestring guide](#) a few years back and a local told me about a shortcut between two cities; I ended up missing the (very poorly) marked split in the road and instead stayed on an unpaved single track road that went deeper and deeper into a canyon. I was feeling uneasy but convinced myself to continue a little further – it was a shortcut, after all. About 10km in, the road ended abruptly and I didn't have enough room to turn my rental truck around. I tried nonetheless and ended up stuck with the truck precariously close to the edge of a 10m drop. I had to abandon it, deep in this canyon – no cell phone coverage, no food, no water – in a country that isn't exactly safe and walk out dragging my luggage in the heat of the afternoon. Luckily, after a few kilometres, I met a family collecting firewood along the side of the road. They looked shocked to see me, to say the least. The guy took me under his wing and drove me back to the town I started in – a true angel. But these are the sort of bumps in the road we face as LP authors!



Drinking chai at sunrise in India. Image courtesy of Kevin Raub

WHAT'S YOUR BIGGEST TRAVEL FAIL?

I'm loath to admit it here: after working on two editions of Lonely Planet's India guide, I decided to take my wife over to introduce her to the country. We had a 5am train from [Delhi](#) to [Agra](#) and I hadn't read the scams in the Delhi chapter close enough. Sure enough, a somewhat official looking guy came up to us while we waited to go through security, asked to see our tickets, told us they needed to be 'validated' in an office off the premises, yadda yadda yadda. I'm a seasoned India traveller, but he caught me off my game and we fell for it. After a few minutes, I realised we had been had, and managed to get back to the station with about a minute to spare before our train departed. And sure enough – this very scam is outlined in very specific detail in the Delhi chapter. Total fail!

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE A FIRST TIME TRAVELLER?

Keep on keepin' on.

Keep up with Kevin's adventures and the global furor this June and July on our [#celebrazil](#) [page](#). Share the ways you are celebrating Brazil for a chance to win Brazil book bundles!

Kevin tweets at [@Raubontheroad](#), and shares what he sees on [Instagram](#) and [Vine](#).