

A LENS TO THE WORLD

Text by:
Lynsey
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Photos by:
Julie-Anne
Davies unless
otherwise
stated



In two days she's off to Ladakh (India) for three weeks, where she will be leading a photography trip, looking for nomads who live in tents on the Tibetan Plateau.

It'll take 48 hours of travel to get there, as it's a remote region in India on the border of Pakistan and Tibet. Hired by a company called Wild Images, the expedition will focus on tribes of Ladakh. "This company gives a huge donation to The Women's Alliance of Ladakh, and they hike in supplies, seeds and give them money to get their own business going. It's a really cool give back of this program."

As one of the most worldly individuals I've ever had the pleasure of brain-picking, she tells me she will be printing off the images to bring back to the locals. "Many of these people have never seen a picture of themselves," says photographer, mother and nearly life-long Kimberley girl Julie-Anne Davies. "These images are more for preservation."

Someone who has seen many corners of the earth, she feels that the world that is opening up and the sense of community and once deep-rooted traditions will be lost. "These traditional ways of dressing and living — within a decade a lot of this is going to be gone." It's a tide that can't be held back. This tide is what motivates and inspires Julie-Anne to venture to the most remote places, to preserve what was.

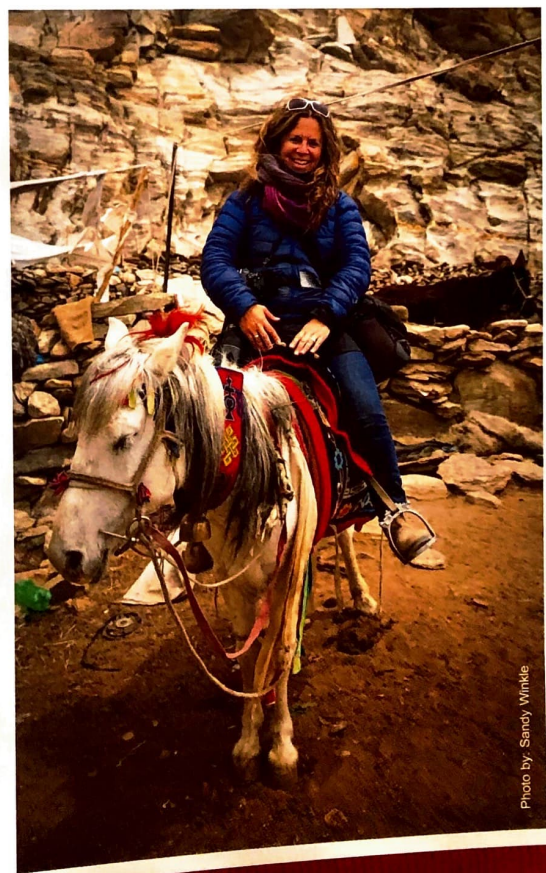
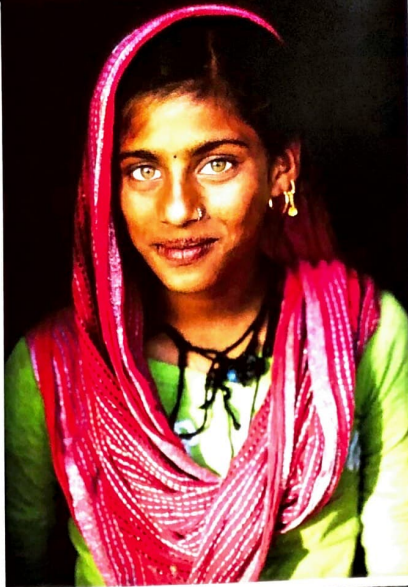


Photo by: Sandy Winkle



“That’s a lot of what photography is, it documents things not knowing what the images are for, but knowing it’s preserved”

As a young girl, Julie-Anne recalls lying on her stomach in the living room leafing through National Geographic magazines. “I was obsessed with the outside world,” she says. And on her 10th birthday, she was given a Kodak camera, an event that Julie-Anne refers to as a glory moment. “From that day on I knew I wanted to be a photographer. I was taking pictures of nothing and everything.”

After acquiring a degree in political science (and a pass to the university’s darkroom), she made a B-line for the mountains to practice as a mountain guide in Revelstoke and then New Zealand. “All I wanted was to be outside, I couldn’t be inside,” says the adventurous soul brimming with wanderlust. “I’m a full blown gypsy to the core. If I’m back for a day or two [from a trip] and I’ve done my laundry, I’m ready to go again.”

For Julie-Anne, it’s always been about people. While she will never pose or touch a subject, she likes to keep her photography sessions and travel images light and natural. She keeps her distance; they go for a walk and stay outside, somewhere gorgeous. “That’s one of the things I love most about photography is that it completely breaks down those barriers of language and cultural differences if you can approach it in a slow manner.”

A branch of her photography career is teaching. “I try to teach my students that the most authentic, beautiful moments tend to be the moments ‘in-between’, when you lower your camera for a minute and your subjects think you are not watching them. They relax with each other, giggle, cuddle up, and those are the moments that you need to quickly capture. Life is like that - the subtle, beautiful nondescript moments are truly the real



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Photo by: Sandy Winkie

real moments that make up our lives. That is where the beauty happens.

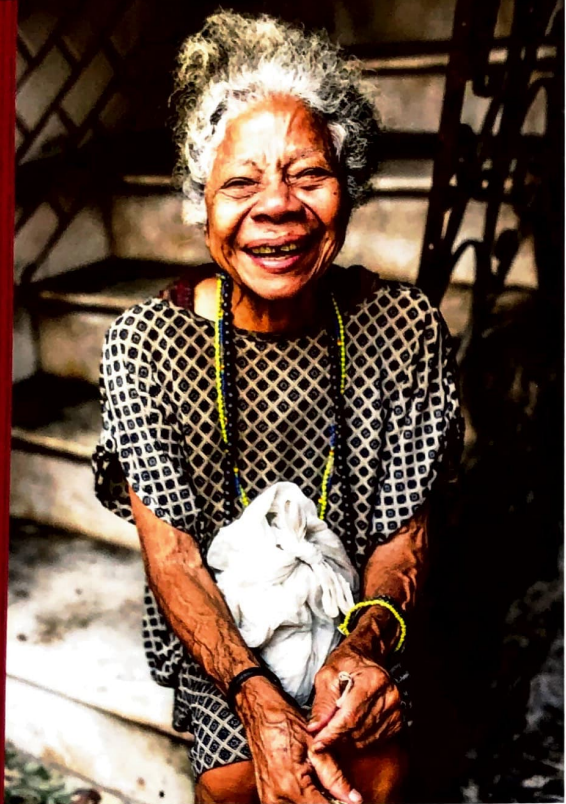
Julie-Anne recalls a trip into a remote village that wasn’t even open to tourism. There were no hotels and no air bnbs. In these communities where she describes Westernization on their doorstep — it forces her to slow down and interact with the locals. “I never go up to someone and point my camera at them,” she says. “I always make eye contact and smile, we’re usually just doing these funny hand signals at each other. If someone makes eye contact and smile, I show these women who have never seen a picture of themselves and they start giggling. If they stiffen up and look away, to me that means no. I never ask twice.”

In the past year alone, Julie-Anne has gone to the Galapagos for under water photography, to the Amazon, to Moab, to the Baja to photograph whale sharks and grey whales, to Bhutan, and to Ladakh twice.

“I love how it ties you and connects you. It makes me realize that there’s a real human connection that you don’t see unless you slow down,” she says of her time spent travelling. “And you get to spend time with people that you wouldn’t otherwise interact with.”



KOOTENAY LIVING



When she's back at the acreage up St. Mary Lake Road hanging with her kids who are 11 and 14 and her husband Mark who is an adventurous homebody, it hits home how relatively easy life is in western society. The state of the world — the political unrest, pollution and poverty, it doesn't detour Julie-Anne, in actuality, it fuels her curiosity. "I am so fascinated by the world and it feels like there's such a small time to see how much there is."

As a photographer, she finds herself searching for truth. While many of these places are considered to be dangerous, Julie-Anne says she has no fear when going in. "The world is very open and I have a very deep trust in humanity. I know things can go wrong, it's not a naive trust, it's more of starting from a place in believing in the good," she says. "We are all the same, no matter where I go. No matter how different linguistically or culturally, we are all the same."

Once told by her boss that what she was doing was her children's lens to the world, she realized it was possible for someone to be a mother and to see the world. However, it doesn't come with a lot of stress and struggle. "I find day-to-day and domestic stuff to bog me down more than hopping on a crazy bus in the third world," she says. "I need to feel wind in my hair, sun on my face, and dirt between my toes."



Julie-Anne and her family have been to Nepal where they hiked for 40 days in the Himalayas. They've travelled to Costa Rica and Thailand, and been to Nicaragua and have seen families living in tin shacks and have gained perspective and appreciation. And as a family who lived in a yurt for 10 years, the kids felt as though they lived in a castle in comparison.

"This is really what I want to be doing, I can't imagine doing anything different. I feel like there's a fire lit under my butt to get to these places to capture them, because I know it's going. I feel a bit of urgency to document that," she says. ■

