

lonely planet

THE JOY OF QUIET PLACES

With a foreword by Erling Kagge

Switch off your phone and discover 60 of the world's most serene spaces with a further 120 ideas for quiet places to visit. Enjoy the restorative effects of truly tranquil destinations and discover how slowing down and enjoying some peace and quiet can bring more joy and wellbeing to your life. Expert insights and practical advice help you connect to these quiet places.

Find time for reflection on Italy's Aeolian islands or Kerala's backwaters. Seek silence in Oman's Empty Quarter, Tasmania's Tarkine or the Hoh Rainforest. Trek South Korea's Healing Forests or Scotland's Knoydart Peninsula. For urban escapes, try New York's cloisters, Tokyo's gardens or Dublin's libraries.

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The Joy of Quiet Places

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Contents

Introduction	4
Foreword	8

Africa & The Middle East

Lamu Island, Kenya	14
Volcanoes National Park, Rwanda	18
Empty Quarter, Oman	22
Vanilla Coast, Madagascar	26
Skeleton Coast, Namibia	30
Lake Natron, Tanzania	34
Erg Chigaga, Morocco	38
Konya, Turkey	42



Americas & Antarctica

Hoh Rainforest, USA	48
Nemiah Valley Lodge, Canada	52
Bonaire National Marine Park, Bonaire	56
Mojave Desert, USA	60
Volcán Barú Crater, Panama	64
Grasslands National Park, Canada	68
Very Large Array, USA	72
Riviera Maya and Yucatán, Mexico	76
Redwood National and State Parks, USA	80
Torres del Paine National Park, Chile	86
Mission Point Lighthouse, USA	90
Ilha do Mel, Brazil	94
The Met Cloisters, USA	98
Salar de Uyuni, Bolivia	102
Ilulissat Icefjord, Greenland	106
Antarctica	110

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Asia

Iya Valley, Japan	116
Kerala, India	120
Wat Pha Lat, Thailand	124
Kyrgyzstan's steppe	128
Seogwipo Healing Forest, South Korea	132
Thimphu's monastic trails, Bhutan	136
Tokyo's gardens, Japan	140
Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park, Vietnam	144
East Taiga Tsagaannuur, Mongolia	148
Yangmingshan National Park, Taiwan	152
Hampi, India	156
Kumano Kodo, Japan	160



Europe

Alicudi, Italy	166
Black Forest, Germany	170
Vías Verdes of Andalusia, Spain	174
Cambrian Mountains, Wales	178
Non-Catholic Cemetery of Rome, Italy	182
Cognac, France	186
Dartmoor, England	190
Františkovy Lázně, Czechia	194
Knoydart Peninsula, Scotland	198
Postman's Park, England	202
Hornstrandir Nature Reserve, Iceland	206
Col du Grand-St-Bernard, Switzerland	210
Hydra, Greece	214
Madeira, Portugal	218
Marker Wadden, Netherlands	222
Svalbard, Norway	226
Vall de Boí, Spain	230
Old Library in Trinity College, Ireland	234
Lentiira, Finland	238



Oceania

Sir John Gorge (Banjay), Fitzroy River, Australia	244
Doubtful Sound (Patea), New Zealand	248
Aitutaki, Cook Islands	252
The Tarkine (Takayna), Australia	258
Waimangu Volcanic Valley, New Zealand	264
Index	268





Introduction

Do more of what you love. In our busy, stressful world, with increasingly vociferous distractions and demands, nothing is more healing to the mind and spirit than finding a special place of peace and quiet. Feeling your heartbeat slow, your muscles release and your thoughts start to expand and drift. Opening your senses to your surroundings and noticing tiny details you might otherwise have overlooked – this is the joy of quiet places.

This book presents 180 quiet places all around the world. When we asked our writers for ideas we were inundated with responses. The concept of finding pleasure in tranquillity seems to resonate with everybody.

It was a broad scope we allowed ourselves when making our selections, with the only essential criteria being that they must provide joy (you won't find solemn war memorials here). Quiet, of course, doesn't always mean silent. Sometimes it does – we feature One Square Inch of Silence in the United States and official Quiet Parks as designated by acoustic ecologists. The places of almost pure silence include seemingly endless deserts, cathedral-like forests and lonely moors. But quiet places are often full of the sounds of nature – water running, birdsong, wind singing in the grass or sand, or even the crack and boom of calving ice.

Our quiet places may also be situations where sound is muffled, such as underwater in Bonaire, underground in Vietnam's caves or France's wine cellars, or a Japanese valley cloaked in sound-dampening mist.

They also include manmade places where human voices are hushed from a sense of the sacred – Thai

temples, ancient Mayan ruins, museums, libraries, and the home of the mesmerising Turkish sema ritual.

There are places where traffic is permanently stilled – carless islands, where the pace of life is slow, and a lighthouse at the farthest end of the road.

And some are pockets of respite in the middle of a busy city, where the urban cacophony might still be heard but can fade into the background, making the moment of peace all the more precious, such as the heartwarming memorial of Postman's Park in London or the Zen-inspired gardens of Tokyo.

How to use this book

This book highlights 60 special quiet places from all over the world organised by region, each accompanied by two more suggestions of places that are similar or nearby. The feature profiles provide at-a-glance reasons to go, plus the optimal month or months to visit. We tell the story of the place – why it is special, its history, its challenges and the quality of joy you may feel while you're there, and we list three 'don't miss' experiences. In the Q&A panel, you can read the insights and thoughts of experts closely associated with the places. Alternatively, the My Quiet Joy panel gives a personal account of the delight experienced by the writer of the piece. Then, to help you start planning your trip, there is a factbox detailing how to get there, how accessible the site is, and other useful information such as accommodation options. Check the index to find places listed by country and type.

By Bridget Blair



Foreword

By Erling Kagge

To visit quiet places – at Svalbard, in southern Spain or on a sandy islet in the Pacific Ocean – is about rediscovering, through pausing and, hopefully, wondering, the things that bring us joy. To find and to appreciate silence is about getting inside what you are doing. Experiencing rather than over-thinking. Allowing that being present is enough. To listen to the silence, to look up, gaze into the world, and not down at your screen. To spend time in peace at a quiet place is not about turning your back on your usual surroundings, but rather the opposite: it is seeing the world a bit more clearly, staying a course and trying to love your life.

The best things in life have no lasting forms. Quietness can be your friend: it is a quality, something exclusive and luxurious, and a key to unlock new ways of thinking. I don't regard it as a renunciation, but rather as a practical resource for living a richer life. Or, to put it in more ordinary terms: as a deeper form of experiencing life and the world, rather than a cacophony of traffic noise and thoughts, music and machinery, buzzing iPhones and, for us Norwegians, snow ploughs.

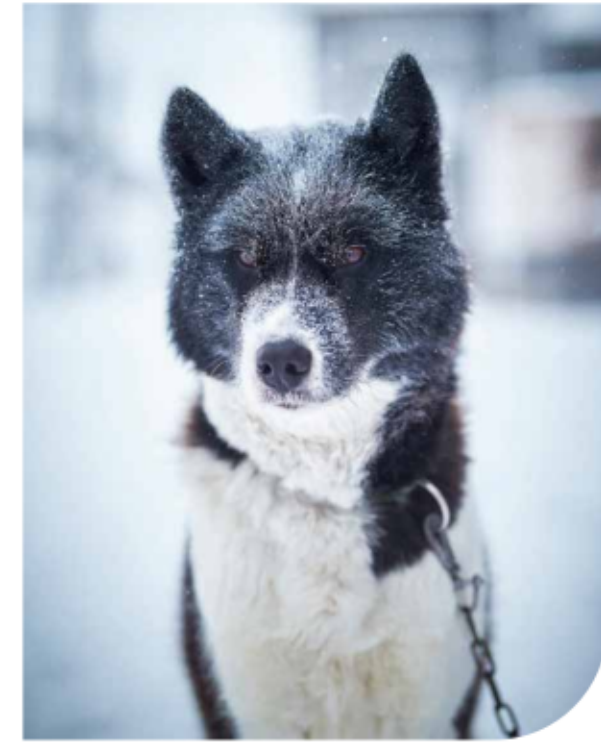
Silence contains a quality more exclusive and long lasting than the more ordinary luxuries. It is an experience that can be had for free. One of my daughters went further, to my delight, during our summer vacation a few years ago and said that silence is the only need that those who are on the constant look-out for the latest trend can never attain. I believe a quiet place is an understated luxury. Understated because the

business of luxury is about attaining something by continuously adding to it. More and more. The dopamine in the brain of the customer constantly craves more. Silence, on the other hand, is about subtracting something. The question that Humpty Dumpty poses to Alice in Wonderland remains: 'Which is to be master – that's all.' You, or someone you don't know?

A quiet place is often close to nature. I love that. Nature has its own language, experiences and consciousness. It tells us where we come from and what we should do on the road ahead. I grew up without a television or a car (my father considered both to be dangerously unhealthy) and spent a lot of my free time in the forest, by the sea and in the mountains, so I have been spoon-fed with this knowledge. Today, when we are expected to be always available, grounding yourself in nature can be hard. I forget about it sometimes and, when I look around, I get the feeling that many people forget about it all the time.

The more I remove myself from nature and the more I increase my availability to the modern world, the more restless I become. The more unhappy, too. I am no scientist, but my experience has been that feelings of insecurity, loneliness and depression to a large extent stem from the flattening of the world that occurs when our lives are about noise. There is, of course, much to be said in favour of new technology, but our eyes, nose, ears, tongue, skin, brain, hands and feet were not created for choosing the road of least resistance. Mother Earth is 4.54 billion years old, so it seems to me to be arrogant

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when we don't listen to nature and instead place our trust in the noise around us.

I believe everyone must discover their own path to find peace, or your own North Pole, in a quiet place. It doesn't necessarily come by itself. I remember visiting the library at Trinity College in Dublin. It was quiet and beautiful, but I still had to find silence within myself to appreciate it. The brain at work can feel like noise. My head that day was flooded with pent-up thoughts so I was unable to shut out the world and to appreciate the quietness. One day I will go back to Dublin and try again.

If you wish to find peace, you must sometimes cease thinking. Do nothing. Quietness is a tool helping us to escape the world in which we usually live. The electricity in the air changes when the world is shut out and the present is embraced. It may last for a long time or only for a fraction of a second. Time stands still, as the philosopher Søren Kierkegaard discovered.

Keep in mind that the silence you experience at a quiet place is different from that which others experience. Everyone possesses their own. That which is soundless within you remains a mystery. I don't think you should expect otherwise.

One feeling I often experience in a quiet place, in addition to peace after a few days and nights has passed by, is gratitude. I'm grateful for seeing the sunrise, feeling the wind, being able to walk slowly. To observe a hundred of variations of green, smell something new and hear sounds I never recognize when I am surrounded by noise. Somehow, the quieter it gets, the more I hear. Sometimes I wonder if the landscape is changing during the days away, but I am wrong. My surroundings remain constant; I am the one who changes. Pauses remind us that we don't need to be constantly interrupted, by interruptions engendered by other interruptions. A quiet place can give us the pause we need to wonder. I am grateful for that, too. For the brain is, as the poet Emily Dickinson concluded, 'wider than the Sky'. The most important book you can read is, after all, the one about yourself. It is open.

Erling Kagge is a Norwegian explorer, art collector, publisher and author. He was the first person to reach the North Pole, the South Pole and the summit of Mt Everest on foot. His book *Silence: In the Age of Noise* (Penguin Random House) was published in 2017.

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Previous spread:
Scenes from
Svalbard, Norway

Left: Soaking up
the silence of the
Hoh Rainforest in
Olympic National
Park, USA

Right: The
Library of Trinity
College Dublin,
Ireland



Africa & the Middle East



Drift into an African sunset, sailing a traditional Kenyan dhow



Meditative happiness, tradition, magic



November to February

Breathe into the silence, marvelling at nature's nightly fire show. The sun is sinking quickly into the Indian Ocean. The water is smooth as glass, everything is bathed in gold. Magic surrounds you, everyone and everything looks more beautiful than at any other time – your friends, the sail's creamy fabric, the colourful cushions, the dhow's polished wood propelling you through the water. Sailing into the channel off Lamu Island, among the mangroves, the water is completely still. The boat drifts slowly as the sky erupts into a kaleidoscope of colours.

Anxiety antidote

A sunset ride on *Hippo Dhow* is



the antidote to anxiety. It is one of the most meditative experiences you can have on Lamu Island. Powered by the wind, these boats – which have been plying the East African coastline for centuries – feel timeless. Many serve as a bridge between generations, as the life's work and livelihood of its captain. *Hippo Dhow* passed from father to son, and current captain, Yusef. It is a complete work of artisan handicraft. Everything from the handpicked teak and mangrove wood to the individually formed nails made from melted copper to the specially designed sail, exudes love and legacy.

Timeless and traditional
Lamu Island, off Kenya's east coast about



Right: The captain guides a dhow through Lamu's mangroves

Below: Evening light catches the classic triangular sail of a dhow in Lamu archipelago



Q&A

What is a dhow? A dhow is a traditional handmade sailing boat used for trade for centuries along the Swahili Coast, as well as Arabia, India and China.

So why sunset? Sunset time is one of the most peaceful, relaxing times in Lamu. It is a time to slow down and take a break from the demands of everyday life. This is especially important during the month of Ramadan when the community breaks the fast (*iftar*) with the call to prayer as the sun sets into the horizon.

What do you love most about sailing? I love harnessing the wind and using the forces of nature to get around the Lamu Archipelago. It is a feeling of freedom and accomplishment and a connection to our ancestors.

Kelly S Campbell, cofounder of Village Experience, Lamu Island



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Left: Shela Village perches on the edge of Lamu Island

Right: Morokos ply the waters of the Okavango Delta

Don't Miss

- The moment after the sun disappears, when the sky blazes pink and purple
- Savouring the silence
- Feeling present in the moment

30 miles (48km) south of Somalia, is home to the oldest continuously occupied Swahili town in East Africa. Time appears to stand still here. Dhows, which once served mainly as a source of transport between Lamu, islands in the archipelago, and the mainland, are now a source of income for locals. They take travellers on meditative journeys, where the past and present collide as smoothly as the sun disappears into the Indian Ocean's darkening blue hues.

Whether on the dhow or on land, life moves with the

rhythms of the tides on Lamu. The island is void of cars, but there are plenty of donkeys, and more than 400 cats wander its narrow, twisty streets. There are only a handful of lodging options and restaurants; none are large. Days can be spent shopping the unique local boutiques, indulging in a samosa cooking class, swimming in the calm, clear blue sea, or reading from a guesthouse's breezy balcony, the silence only interrupted by the lyrical call to prayer from one of the island's more than 30 mosques.

A happy place

Every second of a sunset dhow sail feels at once emotionally supercharged and timeless. Take the time to feel the moment. To embrace it. This is a happy place. Worries cannot touch you here, in these minutes before the sky fades to black velvet. So, sink into the soft cushions. Breathe in. Breathe out. Enjoy the ride.

Find Your Joy

Getting there

The best way to reach Lamu Island is to fly to Manda Airport on Manda Island, just across the

channel. Multiple airlines fly here from Nairobi and Kenyan coastal cities, including Malindi and Diani. From the airport it is a five-minute boat trip to Shela Village, where most travellers stay.

Accessibility

The dhow is not accessible for wheelchairs. However, sails are chartered per group, and calm and

quiet, so people with sensory disabilities can easily be accommodated.

When to go

Sailing is best during the dry season, which runs from November to February. December into mid-January are the busiest months on Lamu and advance booking is imperative. February sees fewer crowds and is an

ideal month to absorb Lamu's essence.

Further information

- Admission charge. Booking required.
- Full-day and lunch dhow sail charters offered. Refreshments included in rate.
- facebook.com/hippodhow

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Other Quiet Boat Trips in Africa

Okavango Delta, Botswana

During the rainy season Botswana's Okavango Delta becomes one of Africa's most unique, and peaceful, safari experiences. A large inland river, the delta floods during the June-to-October rainy season, and you can explore the Moremi Game Reserve in a traditional mokoro (dugout canoe).

Don't miss

Looking for hippos emerging from the water as the setting sun turns the sky gold then pink.

Orange River, South Africa

The Orange River is South Africa's longest, running from the Drakensberg mountains in Lesotho west towards the Atlantic Ocean on the border of South Africa and Namibia. The section of the river in the Richtersveld wilderness is a place of solitude. Join a multiday canoe trip and paddle through a desert landscape of lunar-like rocks juxtaposed against the deep blue of the Orange River.

Don't miss

Looking for birds; more than 195 species have been recorded in the Richtersveld.

Come face to furry face with mountain gorillas



Wildlife, rainforest, forest hiking



June to September

The hour is early and mist shrouds the forest like a damp cobweb. The mud squishes beneath boots and the rough wood of a walking pole steadies every step. You pass the deep imprint of a just-missed forest elephant. Each crack and rustle pricks the ears. The eyes roam the foliage looking for shadows. The breath gets heavier, but you try to cage it to keep the quiet. Then the guide speaks: 'Leave your walking poles and water bottles here with the porters – they're close...'

You enter an opening in the thicket and lock gazes with a pair of perfectly round, ebony eyes. A baby gorilla riding piggyback on her



mother, so close you can see the raindrops on their frizz of black fur. And in those eyes, you recognise a piece of yourself. The gap between human and ape dissolves.

Embrace Africa's oldest park

There are just 1063 endangered mountain gorillas left in the wild and of the three countries where they are found, Rwanda is the most accessible and renowned. Created in 1925 and originally known as Albert National Park, Volcanoes National Park in the northwest of the country spans five of the eight dormant volcanoes that make up the Virunga Mountains. The forest is also home to elephants, golden monkeys and 300 species of bird, including the magnificent Rwenzori double-collared sunbird.



RWANDA

Right: A young member of the Kwitonda family group



Below: The tops of the Virunga Mountains are lost in cloud



Q&A

You must have a fascinating job. What do the gorillas mean to you? Gorillas mean jobs to many people. Tourism gave many poachers a better way to make their income. **Definitely. How should visitors behave around the gorillas?** Stay together as a group and always follow instructions from the guide. **What should visitors not do when in their presence?** Never try to get too close or run away. **What's the funniest behaviour you've observed?** Sometimes a gorilla will sniff a human, or even give one a friendly kick or shove. **You sure it's friendly?** It's an honour really!

Prosper Uwingeli, chief park warden at Volcanoes National Park, Rwanda



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