

## Reinvent yourself

### Author says travel has the capacity to reflect a different you

By Reb Stevenson, The Ottawa Citizen  
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You can't afford the trip. Giraffes scare the bejeezus out of you. Adventure travel is for young men with six-pack abs.

Go on ... make all the excuses you want. But Carol Patterson won't buy them.

The Calgary-based author of a new book called *Reinventure: How Travel Adventure Can Change Your Life*, Patterson urges you to tackle risks head-on. Why? Not so you can flaunt a stamp-riddled passport or show off a new Turkish carpet at your next neighbourhood gathering.

For Patterson, the true reward of travel is something intangible: personal growth.

"Inner adventure is the best part of travel," she says. "Travel can be that mirror that shows you that what you think you're like isn't exactly right."

Patterson confronted her own reflection in 1985.

Her passion was for working with animals, but she had settled into a safe, humdrum career as an accountant. Volunteering with the Calgary Zoo was just a hobby. But when an educational trip to Africa was offered, she pounced. That's when everything changed.

"As I waited on the side of the road for the helicopter that would take me into a remote mountain lodge, I realized that travel had taken me literally and figuratively to another place," Patterson writes. Patterson quit her job and founded her own company, Kalahari Management. She now travels the world working with government agencies to develop environmentally sensitive tourism plans.

Her book, which she calls a "celebration of travel," is a collection of inspiring tales from the road. Whether it's trekking into a snowstorm with llamas, encountering an elephant in Zimbabwe or creeping through a cave full of bat droppings, Patterson exposes her own fears and shortcomings -- but always with a positive spin.

"As we get older, there's a natural tendency to get entrenched and do the same things over and over," she says. "People go the same places year after year."

Patterson's term "reinventure" is about identifying those ruts and getting out of them. She suggests trying one little activity to shake up your routine. Go zip lining, for example, or try skinny dipping or stop at that funky little museum you've been "meaning" to visit for the last decade.

"It doesn't mean you have to risk life and limb -- just do something on the road that might help you see yourself in a different light."

Patterson says her book is especially directed at successful women in their 40s and 50s who continually sacrifice their own needs.

"Instead of being somebody's mom, a wife or a volunteer, do something for yourself," she says.

Many women have the impression that adventure travel is the domain of hard-bodied athletes. Patterson wants to quash that misconception.

"Many experiences are offered to middle-aged women. Sure, you might have some exertion ... but no more than if you were chasing after a two-year-old," she says.

And adventure travel needn't entail a long-haul flight. Some of Patterson's own life-changing experiences happened in Newfoundland, Alberta and British Columbia. There are no extra points for discomfort, either.

"People think I'm out there lying on a bed of nails, drinking swamp water and chewing on the leg of a gazelle," she laughs. "But I don't like sleeping in a tent unless it's a deluxe one."

Above all, Patterson believes that anyone can reinvent themselves through travel.

"It's not like I was born into a family of Arctic explorers. I'm just a regular person who has some interesting experiences based on the choices I've made."

Reinventure: How Travel Adventure Can Change Your Life (Trafford Publishing) is available for \$18.99 at [www.reinventuretravel.com](http://www.reinventuretravel.com).

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