

# The Sag Harbor Express.

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## A Traveler Reports Back to Us

BY ANNETTE HINKLE

There are tourists....and then there are travelers.

Michael Clinton definitely falls into the latter category.

"There's a distinction between tourists and travelers," notes Clinton. "People always say, 'What do I do if I go to a place for a first time?' If you've never been there, then by all means, do the touristy thing."

"But a traveler goes to neighborhoods," he adds. "Travelers get lost in the ether of the city they're visiting — they go off the track and try to discover things that make the city the place that it is ... places that are local."

By day Clinton is the president, marketing and publishing director of Hearst Magazines, but whenever the chance presents itself, he hops a plane to some remote destination — like the Atacama Desert in Chile or Paris, that magical city of light.

And whether he's traveling for business or pleasure, for Clinton, life is about the journey.

The travel bug bit Clinton, a native of Pittsburgh, early. He saved his money and at the age of 12, traveled alone to Ireland to visit relatives he had never met. And despite his high profile profession in the world of publishing, going places has come to define a huge part of his being.

"I think it becomes part of who you are," says Clinton. "I came back from that first trip and said, 'Mom and Dad, I have to see the world.' As a kid in high school I started the college travel fund. I didn't want a car. I wanted to buy plane tickets."

And he's been to a helluva lot of places since.

"I'm at 122 countries — Mongolia will be 123," notes Clinton, who, by the way, is keeping count.

Tracking the numbers is important for membership in the Travelers' Century Club, an organization for those who have visited more than 100 of the world's countries and territories (Guinness uses it to tally things related to world records, and for the record, there are currently a total of 317 places on the list).

Clinton has just come out with "The Globetrotter Diaries," a new book that's filled with photographs and writings detailing his travel experiences over the years — from climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro to celebrate his 40<sup>th</sup> birthday, experiencing mysterious Bhutan where "gross national happiness" is a way of life, or trekking in Nepal.

This weekend, Clinton will be closer to home (there is a Hamptons chapter in the book, by the way, devoted to simple pleasures) for the opening of "Wanderlust," an exhibition of his travel photographs at Tulla Booth Gallery in Sag Harbor. The reception is 6 to 8 p.m. this Saturday, June 29 and Clinton will be signing copies of "The Globetrotter Diaries" as well as his five previous books of photography.

Though it's a travel book, "The Globetrotter Diaries" is not one for the road. A hardcover with



**BUENOS AIRES, by Michael Clinton**

lush reproductions and thick, luxurious paper, it's an armchair read for dreamers and takes would-be travelers on a visual journey to many places Clinton has visited. It's also punctuated by helpful tips from Clinton and other savvy travelers who share their knowledge of things like packing techniques, choosing flights, making friends abroad and the importance of meticulous planning balanced with the magic of impromptu adventure.

"The trips have to be planned with precision because I have a busy day job," notes Clinton of his own travels. "I'll ask people, 'What are you going to do this summer?' Often they say, 'I have to figure it out.'"

"That's a disconnect to me. I've planned through next summer. I'm a big planner and do block out the time, because life takes over," says Clinton who adds that he also tries to keep some things loose — because it's in the unplanned where life truly happens.

"I like to walk the streets and roam without a camera and just have a vague idea where I might want to go," says Clinton. "I think it's important to have open days."

"I'm not an over-planner unless I need to be."

One of Clinton's most memorable trips was to Namibia in southwestern Africa. A place sparsely populated and seldom traveled, it is home to remarkable scenery and wildlife, including the desert elephants who live along the Skeleton Coast. Having a pilot's license didn't hurt the experience

either.

"I learned how to fly in East Hampton," says Clinton who traveled with a group of friends (as he often does). "We had two planes for a week. By law, we had to have a South African pilot but I took the controls a lot of the time, it was very open skies. We would land on these dirt runways in the middle of nowhere at a camp site that had been all set up by people who were sent ahead."

Flying also enabled him to get some fantastic shots — including the cover photo for his book which features an aerial view of Namibian coast and one of those planes, taken from the other in which he was riding. The Tulla Booth exhibit will feature about 25 of Clinton's photos from around the world and ironically, despite the prolific nature of his photography and his travels, Clinton didn't think of himself as a photographer until he had his first show in a Soho gallery in 2000.

"I was in a high state of anxiety and thought I would do it as a benefit," says Clinton. "I sold a lot of photographs for the Starlight Foundation — it's like Make A Wish — I was on the board. The show was a great success and I ended up having another show and another one and it just started happening."

Seeing that the exhibits could raise money for non-profits encouraged Clinton to do more of them for that reason. His travels also inspired him to start a non-profit organization in 2010 — Circle of Generosity, whose mission is to deliver random acts of kindness to individuals and families in need around the world.

Along the way, Clinton has set some ambitious personal goals in his travels, among them running a marathon on all seven continents.

"The number six marathon will be Mongolia in August," explains Clinton who will travel with a group of runners, including his sister, Peg Pardini who still lives in Pittsburgh.

The seventh marathon, in Antarctica, will follow next March. Which leads one to wonder, where in the world has Michael Clinton not been?

"I have not been to New Guinea, I have not been to southern India and Sri Lanka, I have not been to West Africa, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria," says Clinton who hopes to one day have the opportunity to add many of those to the list and further his incredible collection of travel experiences (and his Travelers' Century Club tally).

"For our parents, travel was a luxury," he says. "But for my generation — baby boomers — it was a right to our life experiences. We weren't going to wait till we retired. Travel is now part of life experience."

And for the record, Clinton's been to 47 states — among the three he's missing are the Dakotas.

"Wanderlust" by Michael Clinton runs through July 18 at Tulla Booth Gallery, 66 Main Street, Sag Harbor. A book signing and reception is Saturday, June 29 from 6 to 8 p.m. Call 725-3100 for details. To see how your own travel tally stacks up against Clinton's visit [www.travelerscenturyclub.org](http://www.travelerscenturyclub.org) and click on "Countries & Territories."