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nature

THE CANNON

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Go Do NOTHING

Navin Vanderwert

I think we tend to view ‘nothing’ as the absence of anything, but I like to think of it as a saturation of little things. So when I say I enjoy sitting in nature and doing nothing, that’s... not really what I mean. It’s enjoying the infinite interactions around me: watching energy build and dissipate in plants and water, thinking about how time shaped each crack and tree around you, and wondering how differently it’s experienced by each creature and rock. ‘Nothing’ is filling, it’s a reminder of a simple fact: so much happens when nothing is going on, and I can never not be part of nature. It tells me that I belong while giving me perspective, shows me that I’m intertwined in a system which doesn’t care that I exist.

I find this an interesting parallel to the city. It allows for all the same things that I just listed: energy builds and dissipates in the sky-scraping towers and decaying lights, time molds the character of neighbourhoods and their streets, and each individual carries their own unique perspective on it all.

But none of this brings the same comfort that nature does. You’re once again reminded that so much happens when nothing is going on, but this time you feel that you must act to stay ingrained in it. Discomforting and strenuous as this may be, it’s proof of the opposite fact: that there are few greater feelings than being in sync with everything around you, staying on top of everything in a well-timed dance.

So when I say I enjoy being outside and doing nothing, I mean that I enjoy how it contrasts to living in a city: the sense of falling into place automatically, of being content without constantly struggling to stay that way. Because I can’t stop participating in nature, I’m allowed to let go and simply... be. If the built environment is a peak to reach and balance on top of, the natural one is a valley to fall into and rest.

Both of these feelings, to me at least, are important in equal measure - which is why it’s incredibly frustrating how easily the ideals of typical city life overwhelm those of nature. Accessing nature isn’t always easy: it can require time, money, and a huge amount of effort. All of these things are precious commodities in the city, their value heightened by the tradeoffs they demand. As a result, outdoor time can be plagued by the unhealthy feeling of needing to ‘optimize’ it and extract as much as you can in exchange for the resources you gave it.

And, funnily enough, I find that outdoor time is the perfect solution to this unfortunate mindset. It gives the contented mind a chance to relax, examine its thought patterns and un-wind these unhealthy ruts. A magnificent tree grown crooked and gnarled is the incarnation of choosing good over perfect, and a fallen rock shows that long-lasting structures can give way to change.

Pockets of green in seemingly dark corners remind us that life can always find a way, and an ant struggling to carry a leaf reminds us that our problems might only look so big to us. Experiences like this reframe urban systems in the basic laws of nature, allowing for better identification of what’s truly important.

We all need time to sit in nature and do nothing, and that’s something I struggle to give myself. The parasitic urge to do everything to its fullest extent tells me to save my nature time and spend it ‘wisely’ on some unique location or experience, a direct contradiction to the lesson I hope to learn: you can go sit in a nearby park, or a tree on campus, or a little group of plants filling a roundabout, and just do nothing. Think about life, think about that cool leaf or weird bug, or think about nothing at all – any of it could be the spark that lets you relax and reframe just a little bit better. ♦



the non-verbal memory of a dormant volcano

Nathanael Kusanda

On the shoulder of this volcano, I am briefly entranced. I am one of many lining its clavicle, mesmerized by smoke gracefully emanating from the center of a crater, coalescing with a cloud. What is a volcano but a cavity that transcends itself? Tephra layers testify to eruptions both four and 40,000 years before us. I imagine family lines circumnavigating its smoke for generations, boiling eggs in its water in a blissful collective forgetfulness, only to be muted immediately by its latent but innate identity as fire in a hole. It is a cavity that remembers, but its memory is non-verbal, impersonal. It will never know my name.

I think about this country, how my conception of Indonesia has transformed over the years. How I neglected this place for my inability to speak and move independently within it, but which I grew to yearn for in my North American exile. I realize that in my lifetime I will not even begin to scratch the surface of the history beneath its 17,000 islands, or 15,000 at high tide, the never-ending tapestry of cultures I partake in in pieces. On three of these islands – Belitung, Sumatra and Java – my family defined a life for themselves over three generations. And just like a volcano, those generations did not store themselves in words. Although I know one can never store themselves

fully in writing, and that their tongues curled to generate dialects that would be largely inaudible to me, it's agony to know that I could not even begin the process of knowing them. I only know them in the friction between a parent and a child that must've carved a soul, a friction

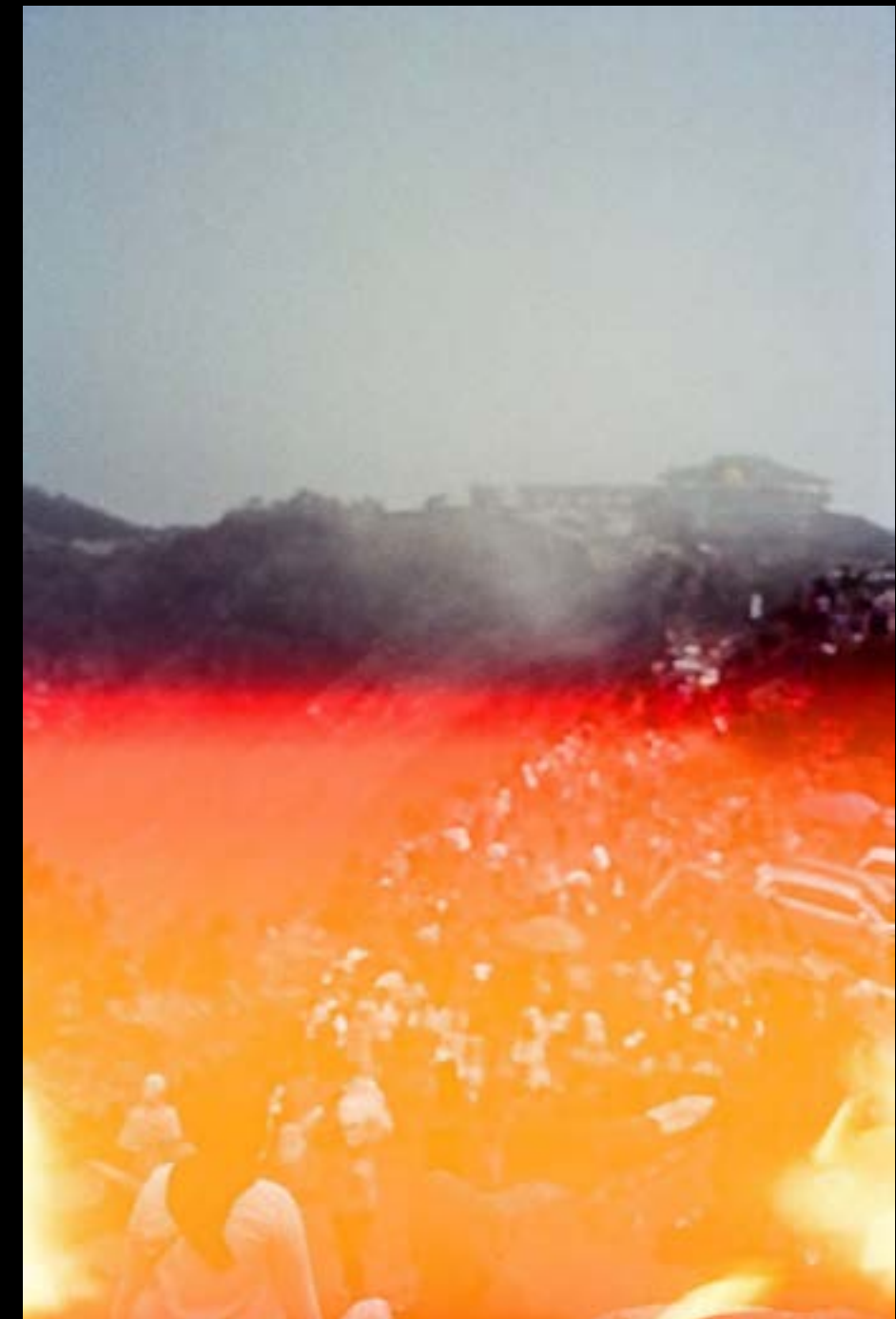
translated through three generations and culminating inexplicably in me.

In precisely four days, a relationship I felt I had always known will come to an end. I reflected recently that when you're in a relationship with someone, an unspoken responsibility one

bears is to help them heal from the trauma contained within their lived experience. When that relationship ends, that project must necessarily come to a close. It was never your project to begin with. Even so, you are the only person that stores that particular, unfinished version of them. But in

the exact moment of their departure, they have already evolved unknowably from the version you hold.

I think about this earth, about our role in it. How we are perpetually guaranteeing the impossibility of continued life within it, but how the earth will



heal long after us. The cavities we dug out of this planet to transcend its capacity will be our burial ground. This volcano will erupt, the trees will become barren, the soil will regenerate under rain as the volcano sleeps, the trees will resurrect Eden until the

volcano awakens. And under each layer will be our decomposing bodies, not granted permanence even in death. With each cycle, the imprint of our existence is clouded over by another layer of lava and foliage. We are the only ones that bear a verbal testament to

our existence. We store ourselves in writing, photographs, and the memories of others – leaky jade teapots that cannot even hold themselves fully.

Overlooking the crater, the smoke clears briefly to allow a vendor selling

souvenirs to help take photos of us. My younger sister and I buy matching necklaces that may or may not contain some unspoken remnant of the crater itself, smoothed into a cloudy sphere. The vendor asks about me, and I speak to him in the little Indonesian

I can muster, just enough to reveal that I have never lived here. “Yes, but you’re still Indonesian,” he affirms, “you carry your parents within you.” I attempted to capture this trip and freeze it in my film camera. In a moment of hubris, I opened my camera mid-roll, damaging that testimony irrevocably. Sunlight poured into the celluloid, promising to scar the memories I had stored in them forever. Still, I sent them to be developed in vain, biting my nails in hope that I would have something to look back on, to retain a certain version of myself in. The images came out granulated but visible. They were not pristine but they did the job of freezing something in time. Maybe the sunlight inspired the roll to transcend my contrived framing of the natural world, permeating into the trepidation of my emotional landscape and freezing it in a frantic granularity. My fear of disappearing, my obsession with memory, the agony of being marooned – they all seep into the celluloid and are laid bare in the dirtiness of the images. My mother, my father, my younger sister, just clear enough for my memory to revitalize. In one image, sunlight scars precisely half the frame, flooding people on the clavicle of this volcano in fire. It was out of focus, anyways. I think it’s perfect this way. ♦



Branching Out

Shuja Khwaja





Flow

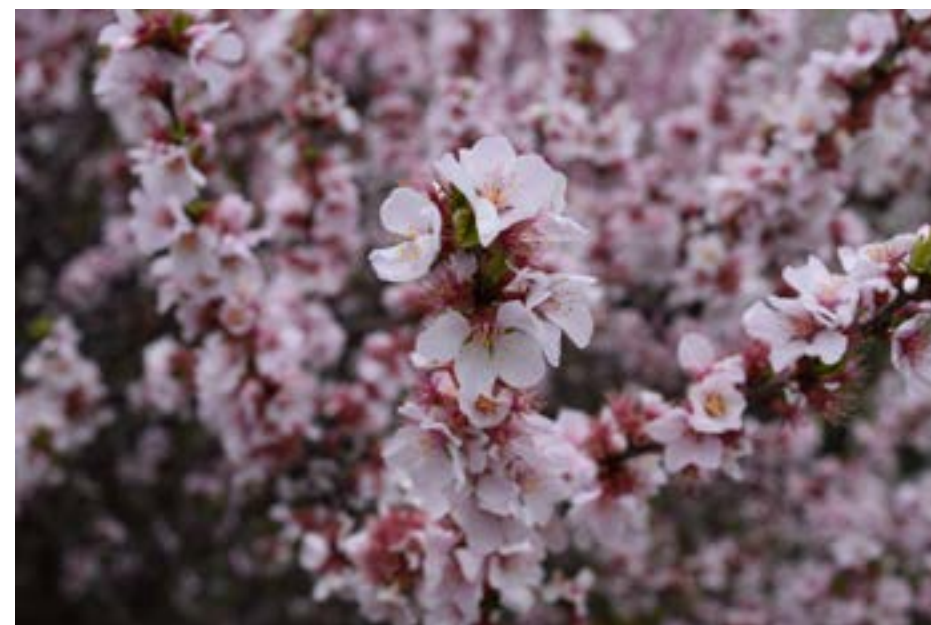


Bloom

Kaija Mikes



From BC, to Alberta, to Niagara Falls to lakes around Ontario, water flows through every part of Canada. I wanted to show off the colours that exist around water, from the greenery of plants and the gray of stones to the yellows and oranges of Fall. I don't know why I gravitate towards water, but I always find there is something beautiful anywhere I find water.



I started taking photos of nature when I was about 9 or 10. It's always been something where I felt I could express the way I see the world without needing to use words. When I look back on my old work it's a way of looking at who I was back then and how I have grown and changed over my life. Photos don't only capture the subject of the camera, they also capture a piece of your own artistic process as you take that photo. That's why I like to learn about other people's work because I'm also learning more about them and how they see the world.

森林浴

SHINRIN-YOKU

Johnny McRae

Humans are animals. Approximately 7 million years ago, the lineage of our ancestor primate split into what would become many of the primates we recognize today. We evolved alongside orangutans, chimpanzees, bonobos and gorillas to become the humanity we recognize today. It is easy to undermine the detailed growth of humanity with jokes like “We made Bluetooth outta this” while standing in a forest, but the truth of the matter is that in spite of daytime dramas, social media influencers, binge-watching and the newest iPhone, we are mammals. Humans are animals.

Once we delve deeper into this conversation, human animality’s unexpected and obscenely intuitive points become rather apparent. Speaking solely from personal experience, reconnecting with nature can be incredibly grounding. The feeling when a wild animal locks eyes with you and the emotion of a loud symphony of wind running through a kingdom of trees. The comfort of warm rain running down your body or the sensation of standing barefoot in grass while cool soil cushions the pads of your feet. It isn’t just trivial experiences that support this notion; there is evidence as well. Complete submersion in water has counterintuitive effects. Rather than an adrenaline spike, our heart rates begin to slow, and specific blood vessels constrict, redistributing our blood from our limbs to our brain, heart, and other central organs. The positive effects that existing in nature has on humans have been noted and

can be harnessed. One way this is practiced is through Shinrin-Yoku or Forest Bathing.

Sometimes described as simply “Taking in the forest’s atmosphere,” Shinrin-Yoku is a term born in Japan in the early 1980s. Its primary purpose was to help people cope with the burnout commonly felt by the overuse of modern technology. When the practice became widely popular in the ’90s in Japan, scientists began to look into the unanimously positive response that people were having and discovered one of the least shocking pieces of information I’ve ever had the pleasure of researching, “Time spent in nature is good for us.”

Forest Bathing focuses on intentionally slowing down and observing the nature around you. No devices and no distractions; try and immerse yourself as much as you can in your surroundings. Walk slowly and think about what you are seeing, touch the moss on a rock and look for the birds you can hear chirping overhead. Take deep breaths, and if your surroundings allow you to do so safely, leave the path set for you and begin to wander. Many people prefer not to speak to feel more connected to their surroundings during this time. A common response to learning about forest bathing is to immediately discredit it and poke jokes at the simplicity of “going outside.” However, the benefits that have been observed are no joke.

A study done by the Institute of Biomedical and Health Studies at Hiroshima University, Japan, found that of the 155

participants who had partaken in forest bathing, ALL participants showed significant decreases in SBP and DBP, which represent the pressure in your arteries in your heart while the heart is beating and resting respectively. Participants were also tested on their negative POMS (Profile of Mood States) before and after the forest bathing. 37% of participants were diagnosed with depressive tendencies, and these individuals had significantly higher negative POMS.

Afterwards, all participants showed decreases in negative POMS. The study concluded that there are significant positive psychological and physiological effects on working-age individuals practicing Shinrin-Yoku.

The good news for you is that Toronto has one of the largest ravine systems in the world, which is a perfect place to start. Approximately a 10-minute drive from campus are two of Toronto’s most impressive ravines. The

Rosedale Ravine can be entered at Sherbourne and Bloor, just a few stops east on line 2 from U of T’s campus. It has over 8 km of luscious walking paths spanning Yonge and St.Clair. Nordheimer Ravine is straight north on Spadina, easily accessed by the Spadina streetcar and is home to one of the city’s largest aggregations of mature oak trees. It is easy to get swept away by university life in a big city, but the importance of being in nature mustn’t escape us. ♦



URBAN NATURE

Daniel Perry



LION'S HEAD

Zack Fine



UPS AND DOWNS

Tudor Sigmund

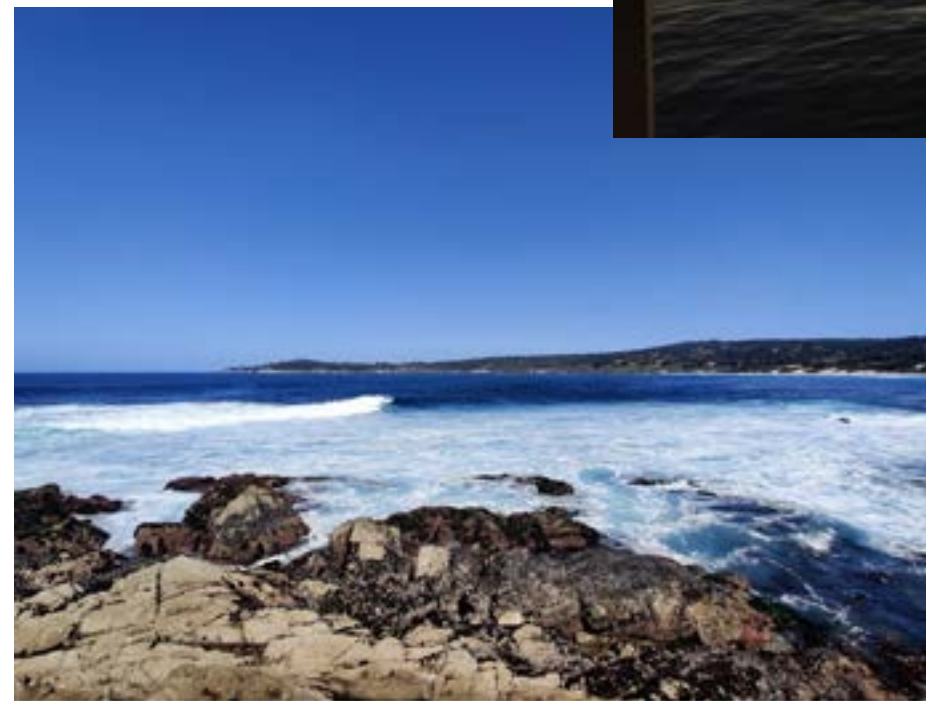
People come in all shapes and sizes. With different ideas, experiences, and perspectives we find that no two people are alike. However, what unites us all together as humans is our equal love and mystery for the great outdoors. There's something about the imperfections of nature, the years of growth and deformation that truly takes your breath away, showing you the true perfection that lies in imperfection. Nature lovers united, there is one thing that separates nature lovers into two categories: are you a beach person or a mountain person?



This argument to me is as divisive as cats or dogs, red or blue, summer or winter and so on. It's a fundamental question that will lead someone to share their best experiences with both beaches and mountains, leading to some great stories and amazing connections. But why are we divisive when it comes to beaches or mountains, why can't we enjoy both and why does one have to be better than the other? The easy answer is, one doesn't have to be better than the other. You're allowed to take in the nature around you in either setting. It's just that we as humans like forming opinions and being divisive by nature almost. So let me break down the things that I like about both, and then let you know which I like more.

BEACHES

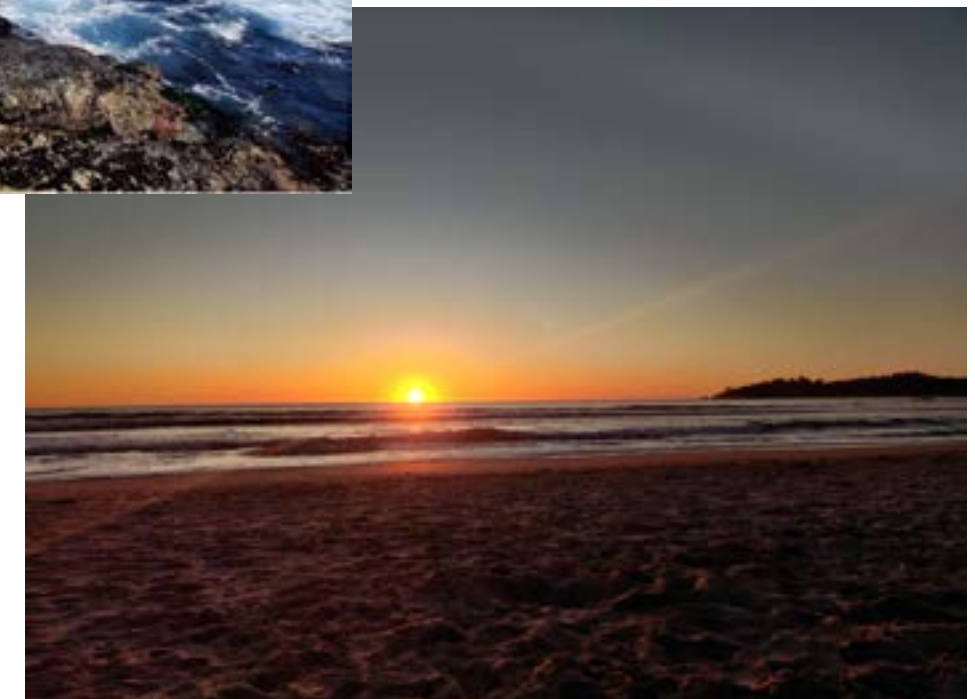
Oh, the sound of waves breaking on the shoreline. The smell of salt in the air. The sun shining down on your skin, giving you the sensation that your skin is tanning. The waves slowly pull you in and pushing you back as you take your first steps into the water. The water reveals none of its mysteries as you try to peak at what might be in it. The beach is truly a marvelous place to be.



feels raw and untamed. Hiding the mysteries beneath the surface, I always wonder if a shark is waiting to say hi to me, or if a turtle wants me to take a ride on an ocean current with it. But then I look into the horizon. I see just how vast this world is and I realize how small I am and how big the world ahead of me is. I'm reminded of how much is ahead of me, and how much there still is left to do.



For me the beach has always meant relaxation. Tanning on the sunbeds with a good book, hearing the white noise of waves always made me feel at peace. If it's too cold I bundle up my towel and try to fight off the wind. If it's too hot I jump into the water and swim around with the fish. The beach



MOUNTAINS

The sound of the wind rustling through the leaves of trees. The smell of dew coming from the plants beneath you. The sun peaking through the trees above, hitting you right when you need it most. Your feet scrambling from one rock to another to move further and further up the trail. The peak of the mountain occasionally coming out to show you where you're trying to go and how much longer you have left. The mountains can truly be spectacular. For me the mountains have always been a place for exploration. Stepping through the bushes following paths that many have stepped on before me for hundreds of years. Bundling up in my layers in the early morning, when the sun has yet to come up only to take them off the more I progress into my hike. The mountains feel vast and unconquered. With layers



of trees hiding the mysteries of the ecosystem, I always wonder if I'll encounter a bear or a friendly bird who would sing to me. Reaching the top of the mountain after hours of effort, one step ahead of the next thinking that there's no way I will reach the top, I look down and see the vastness of the world. I see how much I've traveled and how far I've come to get to where I am. It reminds me of how far I've come to get to where I currently am.

There are plenty of good things when it comes to beaches and mountains. However, for me personally, I'd take a day hiking, over a day at the beach. I just prefer the beauty of mountain ranges and the activity of hiking is just so amazing and freeing to me. But that's just how I see it. I know that you may have a different opinion and that's okay but do one thing for me. Go and see the world. Don't just keep going to your favorite beach and favorite mountain range. Trying something new for me every now and then. Expand your horizons and who knows, maybe you'll find a new favorite, or you might even change your opinion. But you won't know until you go out there. ♦



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The Seven Wonders of the Ancient World

Rauha Ahmed

In the annals of human history, there exist monuments that stand as a testament to the boundless creativity and ingenuity of ancient civilizations. These architectural marvels, known collectively as the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, transcend mere constructions of stone and mortar and embody the profound connection between humanity and the natural world. They also show the fleeting nature of even the grandest physical achievements as nature, human behaviour, and the passage of time have destroyed all but one. From the majestic pyramids of Egypt to the lush Hanging Gardens of Babylon, these wonders not only captivated the imagination of their contemporaries but continue to evoke a sense of wonder and admiration in the modern world.

These Seven Wonders of the Ancient World were originally chosen by Hellenic travellers passing through Persian, Babylonian, and Egyptian lands. They made careful note of these structures in travel guides, artwork, and poems, and although lists of wonders were created as early as the fifth century B.C.E., the most famous example was developed by the second-century Greek writer Antipater of Sidon, who celebrated these feats of human ability through poetry.

1. The Great Pyramid of Giza

The Great Pyramid is the only Wonder that still exists, standing as the world’s tallest human-made structure for nearly 4,000 years. Erected around 2560 B.C.E. on the west bank of the Nile River, the Great Pyramid served as the tomb of the fourth-century pharaoh Khufu (Cheops), and it is the largest of the three Pyramids at Giza. The proportions of the Pyramid are colossal—even for the modern era. The original height from the base to the peak was around 147 meters —though time has worn away the height to around 138 meters. The length of each side at the base averages around 230 meters, and over its 20-year construction period, around 2.3 million stone blocks were crafted to create this 5.22-million-metric-ton monolith.

2. Statue of Zeus

It took the most renowned sculptor of the ancient era, Phidias, to create a statue worthy of celebrating the fabled god Zeus. Housed in the Temple of Zeus at Olympia in western Greece, the statue showed Zeus seated on a throne crusted in gold, precious gems, ivory, and ebony. Zeus held a statue of Nike, the goddess of victory, in his right hand. A sceptre topped with an eagle was held in his left hand. Many of those who gazed upon the 12-meter statue commented that the proportions of Zeus inside the temple were off. Regardless, the statue was revered by most as a stunning earthly representation of the great god that filled passersby with awe—until it was destroyed in an earthquake in the fifth century B.C.E.

3. Hanging Gardens of Babylon

Despite being named one of the Seven Ancient Wonders, there is not much firsthand evidence that the gardens truly existed. Those who claimed to have witnessed the gardens, including Greek historians Strabo and Diodorus Siculus, described them as marvels of agricultural engineering. An amazing array of blooming flowers, luscious fruit, exotic foliage, and impressive waterfalls were said to have filled them. The hanging gardens were believed to have been built around 600 B.C.E., by Nebuchadnezzar II, who ruled Babylonia from 605–562 B.C.E.

4. Temple of Artemis

In Ephesus (an ancient city in what is now western Turkey), a temple was constructed that was reportedly so magnificent it caused Philo of Byzantium to say:

“I have seen the walls and Hanging Gardens of ancient Babylon, the statue of Olympian Zeus, the Colossus of Rhodes, the mighty work of the high Pyramids and the tomb of Mausolus. But when I saw the temple at Ephesus rising to the clouds, all these other wonders were put in the shade.”

The temple, originally constructed to celebrate Artemis, the Greek goddess of the hunt, became a revered place of worship. It went through several phases of destruction and rebuilding. The most famous iteration, completed in 550 B.C.E., was about 115 meters long, 55 meters wide, included 127 Ionic-styled columns, and was decorated with many fine sculptures and paintings. Its final destruction was initiated by Herostratus, who sought fame by destroying the magnificent creation, and along with the ravages of time, all but a few remains of the grand temple have been obliterated.

5. Mausoleum of Halicarnassus

Among the most impressive structures to house the deceased was the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus. The mausoleum was designed between 353 and 350 B.C.E. by the Greek architects Satyrus and Pythis. It

was created for Maussollos, a governor in the Persian Empire, and his wife and sister Artemisia II of Caria, who initiated its construction upon her husband’s death. The mausoleum stood approximately 41 meters high and was adorned with intricate exterior carvings and precious works of art. Despite standing for centuries and even surviving a raid by Alexander of Macedonia, a series of earthquakes finally rocked it to its core. All that remains are a few scattered pieces of its foundation.

6. Colossus of Rhodes

Visitors to ancient Rhodes, an island in the eastern Aegean Sea, were greeted by a statue of the Greek god Helios. Erected between 292 and 280 B.C.E. by the sculptor Chares of Lindos, and standing at about 33 meters, the statue was a victory monument designed to honour the defeat of the invading army of Demetrius in 304 B.C.E. After standing for only 56 years, an earthquake destroyed the statue in 224 B.C.E. Despite snapping at the knees and falling onto the island, the ruins remained a popular attraction for more than 800 years.

7. Pharos (Lighthouse) of Alexandria

This ancient lighthouse, considered a technical masterpiece that served as the model for all lighthouses that followed, was constructed on Pharos, an island in the harbour of Alexandria in Egypt, known as Kemet by its ancient citizens. It was completed between 285 and 247 B.C.E. Standing over 107 meters tall and conceived as a navigational landmark for voyagers along the Egyptian coast, the lighthouse was constructed in three distinct stages: a square stone base; an octagonal middle section; and a cylindrical section at the top. At the apex, a mirror was erected to reflect sunlight during the day. At night, a fire was lit to guide travellers. The Lighthouse of Alexandria was severely damaged by earthquakes in 965 C.E., 1303 C.E., and 1323 C.E. It was completely gone by 1480 C.E. Today, visitors to the site where the lighthouse stood encounter the Egyptian fort Qaitbay, which was built using some of the stones from the lighthouse ruins. ♦



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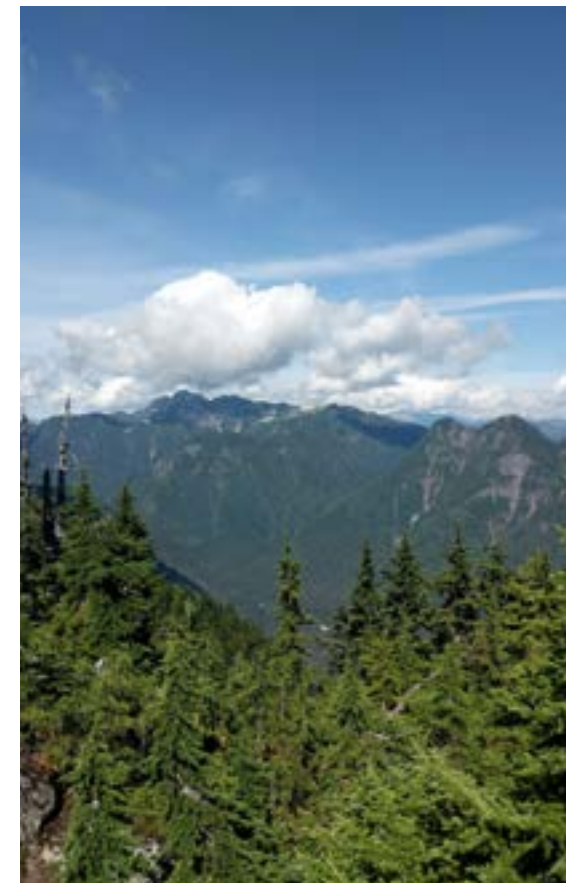
Mohammed Khan



An Ode to the Pacific Northwest

Tobin Zheng

The more time I spend in Toronto, the more I realize how fortunate I was to have grown up near the lush forests of the Pacific Northwest. I have vivid memories of going to overnight camp at Capilano Park with my third grade class, walking on trails weaving between cedars and firs that seemed to stretch to the clouds. The smell of skunk cabbage hung in the moist air, its bright yellow flowers standing out against greens and browns. At our feet, the forest floor seemed to reach out endlessly in every direction, but every square foot contained something to pique my interest, whether it be leafy ferns exploding out of the soil, bracket fungi clinging to a fallen tree trunk, or a banana slug lazily crawling off the gravel path.



My appreciation of the outdoors is about slowly taking in my surroundings - feeling the warmth of dappled sunlight through the leaves, running my fingers through wet moss on decaying bark, following a stream and breaking out of the dense forest to a bright pebble beach and picking up rocks with interesting patterns and colours (and forgetting them in my jacket pocket for months). In the summer, I would snack on ripe salmonberries and blackberries still warm from the afternoon sun as I walked my dog in a wooded park just a 10-minute walk away from my house, go for bike rides around the seawall between the shimmering waters of the Burrard Inlet and the shady woods of Stanley Park, and hike up to Quarry Rock before going for ice cream at Deep Cove.

I have travelled from coast to coast and seen so many different places around the globe - all wondrous in their own right, but I think it took me a long time to truly appreciate the adventure right in my backyard, the sanctuaries of wilderness preserved both within and at the edge of the cities. In my childhood home, I would be able to see the evening lights up on

Mount Seymour out of the window where I was doing my homework, and I always knew which way was north from the mountain ranges creating jagged blue peaks against the bright sky. To me, the beauty of the Pacific Northwest is unique and unparalleled. There is no place quite like it, where the salty sea laps at evergreen-carpeted earth, soaring into the skies above. ♦



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